Is left/right still the ‘super glue’? The role of left/right ideology and issues in electoral politics in Western and East Central Europe

Walczak, A.

Publication date
2012

Document Version
Final published version

Citation for published version (APA):
Walczak, A. (2012). Is left/right still the ‘super glue’? The role of left/right ideology and issues in electoral politics in Western and East Central Europe.
“Is Left/Right Still the ‘Super Glue’? The Role of Left/Right Ideology and Issues in Electoral Politics in Western and East Central Europe”

on Wednesday December 19th
at 14:00
in the Agnietenkapel of the University of Amsterdam (Oudezijds Voorburgwal 231, 1012 EZ Amsterdam).

The defence will be followed by a reception in the Agnietenkapel and a soiree in VOC Café De Schreierstoren (Prins Hendrikkade 94/95, 1012 AE Amsterdam) at 20:30.

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Is Left/Right Still the ‘Super Glue’?
The Role of Left/Right Ideology and Issues in Electoral Politics in Western and East Central Europe

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IS LEFT/RIGHT STILL THE ‘SUPER GLUE’? THE ROLE OF LEFT/RIGHT IDEOLOGY AND ISSUES IN ELECTORAL POLITICS IN WESTERN AND EAST CENTRAL EUROPE

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus
prof. dr. D. C. van den Boom
ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties ingestelde commissie,
in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Agnietenkapel
op woensdag 19 december 2012, te 14:00 uur
door
AGNIESZKA WALCZAK
geboren te Radom, Polen
PROMOTIECOMMISSIE

Promotor: Prof. dr. W. van der Brug
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Faculteit der Maatschappij- en Gedragswetenschappen

"Przeto chciejmy wziąć przed się myśli godne siebie,
Myśli ważne na ziemi, myśli ważne w niebie;
Servi poczciwej sławie, a jako kto może,
Niech ku pożytku dobra spólnego pomoże."

Jan Kochanowski, Pieśń XIX

This dissertation has been made possible by the financial support of the Marie Curie Initial Training Network (ITN), FP7-PEOPLE-ITN-2008, ELECDEM – Training Network in Electoral Democracy, Project Number: 238607.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation completes a long journey which I started exactly ten years ago. Back in 2002, when Poland was still outside of the European Union, I left my home country in order to study ‘in the West’. Being from one of the first generations in post-communist countries that had the opportunity to study anywhere in Europe, I was very eager to learn and to experience European integration. This dissertation crowns this studious period, full of beautiful moments and tough challenges, which accompany the life of an expat. Here, I would like to thank numerous people who have given me support and inspiration on this long journey.

In the first place, I would like to thank Wouter van der Brug for his guidance and excellent cooperation during my PhD track. Wouter, I am very grateful to you that you helped me bring this project to a successful completion in such a short time with your valuable advice and extensive comments. I would also like to thank you for your support and understanding during the last stage of my PhD programme when I did not only need to finish the project and revise papers for publication, but also needed to find a job. Those three years have been very valuable for me as under your supervision I have learned rigorous academic work, which I value a lot. Furthermore, I would like to express my thanks to Mark Franklin, who has been my mentor during my stay at the European University Institute in Florence. Mark has a great capacity to inspire his students to think unconventionally and rigorously, which he combines with great interpersonal skills. I am grateful for the possibility to learn from him and enjoy his support during my stay at EUI and beyond. Moreover, I would like to thank Catherine de Vries for her thought-provoking comments on my work and a healthy dose of scepticism with regard to the ptvs. Our exchanges have taught me a lot about ideological wars among methodologists and have inspired
me to find my own way. Further, I would like to thank Geoffrey Evans, my mentor during my stay at the Nuffield College, University of Oxford. I greatly appreciate his comments on the earlier versions of my work and his willingness to help in times of supervision crisis. Last but not least, I would like to thank Dave Armstrong from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee for very useful tips on how to graph in R.

Next, I would like to thank the whole ELECDEM team for the challenging three years that we have shared. A special thanks goes to Susan Banducci for putting together the ELECDEM network, and to Fiona Raffael, who has successfully and gracefully solved all problems resulting from the complicated structure of an FP7 grant. I would like to thank my fellow Early Stage Researchers for the great time shared at conferences, summer schools, methods workshops and secondments. In particular, I would like to thank Kathrin Thomas and Markéta Bílská for having a good time while sharing rooms at conferences, and Zoltan Fazekas, Federico Vegetti and Ben Stanley for fruitful and inspiring exchanges on methodological and theoretical problems. It was a pleasure to work with you all.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my colleagues from the University of Amsterdam, the Vrije Universiteit, the European University Institute and the University of Oxford for providing a great working atmosphere. In particular I would like to thank my roommates, Paul van Hooft, Sarah Hardus, Julia Poskakukhina for sharing with me the ups and downs of a PhD project. I greatly appreciate your good word in difficult times and your understanding for my small peculiarities, such as eating in the office in spite of all the mice terrorising us. Further, I would like to thank Matthijs Rooduijn for helping me around with academic questions and solving cross-cultural puzzles, and Lutz Hoffer for being the brave gentlemen who had the guts to remove a couple-of-days-old dead mouse from my office. I am also deeply grateful to Trajche Panov for his great support during my stay at EUI. Further thanks go to Elmar Jansen for his advice on STATA/WORD/R-related problems. I would also like to thank Michelle Allport, with whom I did not only share a room in the first year of the PhD programme, but also with whom I shared frustrations about a PhD life, next to interesting discussions about politics, the life in Europe and Dutch peculiarities. In addition, I would like to thank Tom van der Meer, Annemarie Walter, Basje Bender, Madeleine Moret, Benno Netelenbos, Gijs Schumacher, Bouchra Arbaoui, Laura Sudulich, Daphne van der Pas, Marc van de Wardt and all other members of the CPPC club who have commented on my work and provided a very friendly working atmosphere. Also many thanks to Elias Dinas, Carolien van Ham and Nina Liljequist for fruitful exchanges on the canteen terrace of the EUI or at High Table at the University of Oxford. It was a pleasure to meet you all.
Introduction
SETTING THE SCENE: BLURRING LEFT AND RIGHT

Until the 1990s, behaviour of parties and voters alike has been largely structured by left/right (Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990; Klingemann et al., 1994; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Hix, 1999). Citizens use the left/right dimension to orient themselves in a complex political world (Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990; Zechmeister, 2006). They use information about their left/right positions and those of parties to assess which party is ideologically closest to their own position and which party to vote for at the ballot box. Similarly, political parties refer to their left/right positions to inform voters about their positions on concrete issues. Given these characteristics, left/right has been the most important predictor of party support in European democracies (Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990; Franklin et al., 1992; Klingemann et al., 1994; Oppenhuis, 1995; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996). However, there are reasons to believe that the capacity of left/right to structure party competition and voter behaviour has weakened over the last two decades.

In the first place, the meaning of the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ has become less clear (e.g. Mair, 2009). This is partially caused by the processes of globalisation and European integration, as a result of which the traditional meaning of left/right has changed. Scholars have shown that economic liberalisation has not only restructured conflicts among economic actors (Hiscox, 2005) but also reshaped mass politics as traditional issues have become less salient and new ‘globalisation issues’ such as immigration and EU integration have become more salient (e.g. Kriesi et al., 2008; De Vries et al., 2011a). Market integration, both globally and within the European Union, has led to the formation of a new structural cleavage, while old cleavages have been reshaped (Kriesi et al., 2008). The cultural, economic and political forms of competition have led to new disparities between social groups structured along gains and losses from globalisation. The traditional cleavages such as social class and religion are being overshadowed by new divides around the level of education and the form of occupation. In addition, the traditional moral or religious issues, or issues advocated by new social movements, which have long defined the meaning of left/right, have become less important than the issues of immigration and EU integration (Kriesi et al., 2008). As with the passage of time some issues become associated with left/right, while other issues become less structured by left/right (e.g. De Vries et al., 2011a), the left/right dimension may lose its importance as a cue for conveying information about issue positions.

Secondly, there is a trend among mainstream parties to converge on the ideological centre, which can be traced both to historical developments and to processes of globalisation. In the aftermath of the victory of democracy after the Cold War and the absence of any serious contemporary alternative to the market economy, mainstream parties began to share more and more of their policies. This trend has been strengthened by the process of globalisation that has imposed policy constraints on political parties in government (Mair, 2009: 216). Such a programmatic convergence of mainstream parties has made them look more similar in the eyes of voters (Pennings and Keman, 2003). As a result of this convergence, left/right may have become a less effective instrument for voters to choose a party at the ballot box.

Thirdly, the traditional meaning of ‘left’ and ‘right’ has been undermined by the emergence of parties that have generated support by campaigning on issues which are weakly related to the traditional left/right...
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Radical, post-materialist and often green political parties which have emerged on the left side of the political spectrum have little attachment to conventional working-class organisations that used to dominate the political left (Mair, 2009: 215). These parties “conform neither to traditional conservative nor to socialist programs, but link libertarian commitments to individual autonomy and popular participation with a leftist concern for equality” (Kitschelt, 1988: 195). Similarly, right-wing populist parties have emerged that combine right-wing appeals to decrease immigration with traditionally left-wing appeals to protect the rights of women and homosexuals or a clear separation of church and state (Akkerman, 2005). As a consequence of these developments scholars noticed that the left/right positions of parties are less clear-cut and less meaningful to voters (e.g. Mair, 2009: 217).

Last but not least, the meaning of left/right has changed as a result of developments in the character of political parties. In recent years scholars have observed a shift towards a more presidential as opposed to a bottom-up form of decision making in political parties, in combination with the emergence of cartelised party systems and the professionalization of the political leadership of parties (Katz and Mair, 1995; 2002; Puguntke and Webb, 2005). This has led them to prioritise office-seeking above policy-seeking electoral strategies and it promoted a style of competition that relies on issues of political management and efficiency rather than engagement with substantive political or ideological oppositions. As a result of these changes, the ideological terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ have become less relevant (Mair, 2009: 216).

Given these developments, this dissertation examines the role of left/right ideology in relation to issues in contemporary electoral politics. While we know a lot about the importance of the abstract left/right dimension for party competition and voter behaviour (e.g. Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996), our knowledge of the role of issues and their inter-relationship with left/right ideology in the electoral process is limited. Although left/right ideology has been described as structuring diverse policy issues, the link between left/right and concrete issues has often been assumed but rarely explicitly tested. This dissertation fills these lacuna by examining the role of the abstract left/right dimension and issues in electoral politics. It focuses on two aspects of electoral politics. The first aspect focuses on the choice process and the second relates to the outcome of this process, namely political representation (or the lack thereof). For both aspects of electoral processes (party support and representation), this dissertation studies how individual and contextual heterogeneity mediate the role of left/right and issues.

Studies contained in this dissertation tie into the picture of considerable changes in the electoral behaviour that scholarly literature has painted over the years. Scholars have observed that a process of de-alignment has been under way in the last decades. Since the 1960s stable electoral patterns with voters strongly tied to specific parties began to crumble and traditional cleavages such as social class, religion and the urban/rural divide started to lose their importance for electoral politics (e.g. Franklin, 1992; Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000). Recent literature shows that also left/right ideology has lost some of its importance for the electoral process in Western Europe (Van der Brug et al., 2007; Van der Brug, 2010). These processes have allegedly been accompanied by the increase in the importance of issues and performance evaluations for voting behaviour (e.g. Rose and McAllister, 1986; Nieuwbeerta and De Graaf, 1999; Karvonen, 2010). Other scholars have pointed out that, rather than de-alignment, a process of re-alignment along the socio-cultural
dimension is under way in Western Europe (Kitschelt 2003; Kriesi et al., 2008). As a result of intensified
globalisation, new cultural issues such as immigration and EU integration have become more important in the
electoral process. At the same time, the traditional divisions of social class and religion have been
overshadowed by new divisions in the society such as educational divide or the ‘new class’ divide between
unskilled workers and socio-cultural specialists (Kriesi et al., 2008: 248). This dissertation ties into the
literature on trends in electoral politics by examining the role of left/right and issues for party support and
representation in contemporary Europe.

This introductory chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, I elaborate upon the connection between
left/right and issue attitudes. Secondly, I discuss the research questions that will be answered in this
dissertation and I elaborate on the importance of a comparative research design. Thirdly, I present the plan of
this dissertation.

BACKGROUND: LEFT/RIGHT IDEOLOGY AND ISSUE ATTITUDES OF VOTERS

Positions of political parties and preferences of voters towards political issues have been frequently described
in European countries in left/right terms (Downs, 1957; Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976; Klingemann, 1979a,
1979b; Van der Eijk et al., 2005). The left/right dimension has been seen by scholars as an abstraction for
political conflicts in a political system (e.g. Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976; Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990;
Hix, 1999). It has been considered an ideology which summarises positions of voters and political parties
towards a number of issues important in a political system (Lewis-Beck et al., 2008: 207). As left/right
summarises a variety of issues in the political arena (Huber, 1989; Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990), it has been
dubbed an ideological ‘super issue’ (Pierce, 1999: 30). What scholars understand under issues are general or
specific political questions which arise in a political system (Lewis-Beck et al., 2008: 161). They may be
related to the domestic arena, such as the issue of redistribution of wealth to the poor, or to the international
arena, such as the issue of a country’s engagement in a military mission abroad. In addition, a distinctaion can
be made between position and valence issues (Stokes, 1963). Position issues are those on which various
stances can be taken, for instance some voters and parties support redistribution of wealth to the needy, while
other voters and parties oppose it. With regard to valence issues there is a broad agreement about a desired
goal e.g. achievement of low unemployment, but the ways of tackling this problem or the question of
competence in solving it play a role in electoral considerations.

Attitudes towards all sorts of issues are expected to be important for electoral processes (Lewis-Beck et
al., 2008). Attitudes denote preferences for certain issue positions or ways of tackling problems (Rokeach,
1968: 124). Attitudes differ from political opinions as the former are characterised by a higher degree of
stability (Feldman, 2003: 479; McCarty and Shrum, 2000: 272). When opinions have a certain degree of
stability and are well organised they are referred to as political attitudes. Further, if attitudes towards a
number of issues are related to each other, or constrained to use the phrase coined by Converse (1964),
scholars refer to them as an attitude structure, a belief system or an ideology (Converse, 1964; Lewis-Beck et
The left/right dimension has been described as such an ideology because it constitutes a dimension of well constrained attitudes towards a number of basic policy issues which are of importance in a political system.

How people see themselves in left/right terms depends, among other things, on their social background and their attitudes towards political issues (Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976; Freire, 2006). According to the sociological approach in electoral research, social characteristics such as, for example, social class or religious denomination, affect how voters’ see themselves in ideological terms (e.g. Campbell et al., 1954, 1960; Butler and Stokes, 1969). For instance, having a working class background may lead someone to consider herself to be left-wing. Similarly, socio-structural factors affect issue attitudes of voters. Belonging to a certain social class or having a certain level of religiosity affects issue attitudes. We can imagine that the working class would be more in favour of income redistribution than the upper class, and that religiousness influences attitudes towards abortion. Although the relationship between social characteristics on the one hand and issue positions and ideology on the other has diminished, it still remains important (e.g. Franklin et al., 1992; Van der Brug, 2010). Furthermore, which attitudes voters hold towards issues affects how voters see themselves in left/right terms (e.g. Huber, 1989). For instance if a respondent is against state involvement in the economy, she will probably see herself as right-wing. However, the relationship between left/right positioning and issue attitudes may be reciprocal (e.g. Weber and Saris, 2010). Scholarly literature offers evidence that voters can deduce their positions on issues from where they see themselves in left/right terms (e.g. Peffley and Hurwitz, 1985). This causal relationship between socio-structural factors, issue attitudes and left/right is graphically displayed in Figure 1.0.
While studying the inter-relationship between issue attitudes and left/right, two phenomena have to be acknowledged. Firstly, voters do not necessarily hold clear-cut attitudes, but their attitudes may be ambivalent (e.g. Alvarez and Brehm, 1995; 1997; 1998; 2002). Ambivalence denotes that respondents are uncertain or contradictory in their attitudes. Such ambivalent attitudes exhibit lower levels of temporal stability than non-ambivalent attitudes and people holding them are more open to persuasion (Martinez et al., 2005; Armitage and Conner, 2000). The ambivalence of attitudes may affect the way voters see themselves in left/right terms, but this linkage has not been empirically explored yet and it will remain out of the scope of this dissertation. Secondly, the relationship between left/right and issue attitudes is affected by competition dynamics among political parties (Huber, 1989; Kitschelt and Helleman, 1990; De Vries and Edwards, 2009; Lachat, 2011). Political elites can influence the meaning of left/right through agenda setting i.e. which issues they bring on the political agenda and how they link them. If parties discuss issues in left/right terms, voters will associate left/right with these issues and the ideological position of voters will be affected by such issues. Kitschelt and Helleman (1990) have demonstrated that green parties have influenced the content of left/right by mobilising ‘new politics’ issues such as the environment and lifestyle issues. Freire (2006, 2008) has shown that in highly ideologically polarised systems, political attitudes of voters are more strongly anchored by the left/right dimension. Similarly, there is evidence that when elites take more polarised positions, voters are more likely to follow party cues and match their issue preferences with their party and ideology (Baldassari and Gelman, 2008; Levendusky, 2010). This dissertation acknowledges the importance of party agency for the meaning of left/right and the ambivalence of voter attitudes, but does not explicitly focus on the consequences of party agency for electoral politics.

The left/right dimension structures attitudes on important issues. The salience of issues varies across countries and over time. Therefore, the meaning of left/right may be different across countries and within these countries over time (e.g. Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990; Gabel and Huber, 2000). Knutsen (1995a, 1995b) stresses that the meaning of left/right may become modified by incorporating new issues when such new issues appear on the political agenda. In the course of time left/right, at least as it has been studied in Western Europe, has structured several issues which can be classified in three issue domains. The first
domain which has been traditionally linked to left/right contains various socio-economic issues, in particular those related to the functioning of the free market and to the role of the state in the economy (e.g. Hix, 1999; Hooghe et al., 2002). With regard to these issues, the left stands for state involvement in the economy and a more equal distribution of income and wealth in society, while the right is connected to economic freedom of individuals devoid of state control and support for income differences. These issues were originally associated with left/right as in the post-war industrial societies the left/right division was related to the materialist conflicts between social classes. In this dissertation, I refer to these types of ‘materialist’ conflicts as ‘socio-economic’ issues.

The second domain encompasses attitudes towards societal and personal freedoms such as equality of women and rights of sexual minorities as well as issues related to law and order and the importance of authority (Inglehart, 1977, 1984, 1990; Dalton et al., 1984; Flanagan, 1987; Hooghe et al., 2002; Knutsen, 2006). This issue domain has been labelled post-materialist/materialist (Inglehart, 1990), new politics/old politics (Franklin et al., 1992), or green/alternative/libertarian (GAL) vs. traditional/authoritarian/nationalist (TAN) (Hooghe et al., 2002). In this dissertation, I refer to these issues as ‘libertarian-authoritarian’ issues.

The third domain is related to attitudes towards immigration and EU integration. Recent literature asserts that these issues form together with the libertarian-authoritarian issues a dimension which at the level of parties and voters is weakly related to socio-economic attitudes (Kriesi et al., 2006, 2008; Bornschier, 2010). However, Van der Brug and Van Spanje (2009) have questioned this finding by showing that positions of parties are largely structured by one single dimension, with the sole exception of positions on European unification. Attitudes of voters are indeed structured by two dimensions. Given this academic discussion, this dissertation will take such issue domains into account which both traditionally and since recently have been associated with the left/right ideology.

This dissertation sheds light on the relationship between the left/right dimension and its issue-based component (Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976). It focuses on two aspects of electoral politics – party support and representation. Left/right predominates in electoral research, but the role of its issue-based component in the electoral process remains largely unexplored. A considerable number of studies examine the role of the left/right distance between voters and parties in determining party support (e.g. Van der Eijk and Oppenhuis, 1990; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Van der Brug et al. 2008). Similarly, several scholars have focused on how well represented voters are on the left/right dimension and which factors affect the congruence between voters and governments or political representatives on this dimension (e.g. Powell, 2000; Powel and Vanberg, 2000; McDonald and Budge, 2005; Blais and Bodet, 2006). However, our knowledge is more limited with regard to the role of issues in electoral politics. Some studies have contributed to the literature on party support or representation by including issues, although such literature remains scarce (e.g. Van der Eijk et al., 1996; Thomassen and Schmitt, 1997; Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999). The need to look beyond the abstract left/right dimension into its issue-related content becomes more salient as scholarly literature of the recent years has observed a decreasing role of socio-structural factors and left/right for electoral politics and an increasing importance of issues with this regard (e.g. Rose and McAllister, 1986; Franklin et al., 1992; Nieuwbeerta and De Graaf, 1999).
The central question that this dissertation addresses is which role left/right and issues play in contemporary electoral politics.

The role of left/right and issues in the electoral process will be examined by focusing on two aspects thereof, namely party support and representation. With regard to party support, this dissertation asks two sub-questions. Firstly, which factors can explain cross-country differences in the effects of left/right and issues on party preferences? And secondly, can we observe differences across generations in how the effects of left/right and issues affect party preferences? With regard to representation, this dissertation asks how well voters are represented in issue domains that are associated with left/right and which factors account for the voter-elite congruence in these issue domains.

In order to better understand the role of left/right and issues in the electoral process, a cross-national comparative perspective is employed in this dissertation. A cross-national approach allows for exploring the contextual variation in the importance of left/right and issues. While extensive literature exists which looks into the role of left/right in a single country or several countries in Western Europe, there are very few studies which analyse a wider spectrum of countries. With the view to explore the relationship between left/right and its issue-based component it is necessary to ‘go comparative’ because only a comparative study offers enough contextual variation to allow for generalisations on this relationship. This dissertation undertakes such a comparative approach by including 27 countries of the European Union. This results in an interesting cross-country variation as the current EU countries encompass both established democracies of Western Europe with a long tradition of democracy and consolidating democracies of East Central Europe with a long period of communism and relatively short democratic history. There are two reasons why a broad cross-country variation is important within the framework of this study.

The first reason stems from the different societal and political cleavages that the established and consolidating democracies may have. Western and East Central European countries have a different historical background, which has resulted in different historical legacies. Western European countries have a long tradition of democracy. Understandably, variation exists also within Western European countries such as Greece, Cyprus, Malta, Spain and Portugal, which had their first parliamentary elections in the 1960s and 1970s. East Central European countries were under communist rule for over 40 years and democracy has been introduced in the region slightly over 20 years ago. These different historical experiences may have resulted in various issues being on the agenda across countries and regions. As a consequence of such cleavages, left/right may take a different meaning both across West and East and across countries because it may structure different issues. Scholars have indeed pointed to observable differences in how socio-structural characteristics of voters and the issue of EU integration affect electoral behaviour in West and East Central European countries (Tworzecki, 2002; Van der Brug et al., 2008; De Vries and Tillman, 2011). Similarly, the role of left/right and issues can vary across regions and countries. A comparative study which spans established and post-communist democracies offers sufficient cross-country variation to explore how contextual variables moderate the effects of left/right and issues.
The second reason lies in the differences with regard to how electorates have been socialised in the established and consolidating democracies. Western European countries have experienced democratic freedoms and a substantial level of wealth for decades. In turn, East Central European countries have had a lower level of material wealth and political freedoms have existed there for a relatively short period of time. Nevertheless, in Western European countries political debates have been waged on various issues, with certain issues becoming more salient over time or new issues such as environmental issues in the 1980s or immigration more recently appearing on the political agenda. In these countries left/right has structured several issue domains and has played an important role in the electoral process in the last 50 years (e.g. Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996). In turn, in the much younger electoral systems of East Central Europe voters had less time to get acquainted with political conflicts structured along the left/right dimension. Scholarly literature demonstrates that it took some time for political parties in East Central Europe to mobilise voters on cleavages such as social class and to structure political conflicts in left/right terms. As a result, in the first elections considerations regarding left/right and social class were less important for voters than in subsequent elections (Szelényi et al., 1996). As the electorates in the East have been to a lesser degree socialised into the use of left/right in comparison to the electorates in the West, we may see differences in the role that left/right and issues play for party support and representation across established and consolidating democracies. This dissertation explores this natural variation in the political context across established and consolidating democracies.

In addition to cross-country variation, this dissertation accounts for the heterogeneity at the individual- and party-level. The individual-level heterogeneity relates to political sophistication and belonging to specific generational cohorts. Political sophistication matters in the context of this research as the ability of respondents to recognise and link their issue attitudes to their left/right position and recognise where parties are located on the left/right dimension depends on how knowledgeable and how interested in politics people are (Converse, 1964; Klingemann, 1979a, 1979b; Zaller, 1992). In addition, generational differences in how left/right and issues affect party support are important to study given the extant literature which shows the decreasing importance of social class, religion and the urban/rural divide alongside the potentially increasing role of issues for electoral behaviour (e.g. Franklin et al., 1992; Van der Brug et al., 2007; Van der Brug, 2010). As socialisation is key for the political expression of attitudes (Inglehart, 1985; Hooghe, 2004), generational replacement may play a role with regard to the changes in how left/right and issues affect party support. Generational change may be of particular importance in East Central Europe where only the youngest cohorts have been socialised in a democratic system, while older cohorts have experienced repression of political attitudes and political participation under the communism. Another source of heterogeneity accounted for in this dissertation stems from the large variety of political parties. This source of variation is of particular importance for representation as parties stress different issues and may ultimately vary in how they represent voters on these issues.

This dissertation employs the European Election Study 2009 (EES 2009; Van Egmond et al., 2010) and the European Parliament Election Candidate Survey 2009 (EECS 2009; Giebler et al., 2010). These are representative surveys of citizens and political elites in 27 countries of the European Union. The EES 2009 is a population survey which was fielded immediately following the elections to the European Parliament in
June 2009, with independently drawn samples of over 1000 respondents in each of 27 EU countries. The EECS 2009 is a survey of 6500 political candidates running for the elections to the European Parliament. A great advantage of these surveys is that they tap into left/right self-placement and attitudes of citizens and political elites towards a range of basic policy issues, using exactly the same questions in the two studies. With their rich variation in political context these studies lend themselves perfectly to examining the inter-relationship of left/right and issues in electoral politics.

**PLAN OF THE BOOK**

Next to this introductory chapter and a concluding chapter, this dissertation consists of four empirical chapters. Chapter 1 and 2 focus on the role of left/right and issues in party support, while Chapters 3 and 4 tackle the question of representation. In short, we present here the leading research question of as well as the data and methodology employed in each chapter.

**Chapter 1**

This chapter explores which factors account for the differences in the extent to which left/right and issues affect party preferences in 27 countries of the EU. Scholarly literature has revealed significant cross-country variation in the extent of structural voting, ideological voting and issue voting. Several of these studies focus on such a variation between established democracies of Western Europe and consolidating democracies of East Central Europe. This chapter looks beyond such a crude East-West distinction by setting out to explain cross-country variation in the effects of issues and left/right on party support with a general model. This chapter employs the European Election Study 2009 and employs a research design developed by Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996).

**Chapter 2**

This chapter explores cross-generational differences in the extent to which long- and short-term factors affect party preferences in the established democracies of Western Europe and the consolidating democracies of East Central Europe. Scholars have shown that younger cohorts in Western Europe are less likely to be guided by their background, in terms of social class, religion or the place of residence, as well as left/right considerations. Little is known, however, about the extent to which cross-generational differences exist in how short-term factors such as issue attitudes and performance evaluations affect party support. Similarly, our knowledge about how long- and short-term factors affect party support across different generations in the consolidating democracies of East Central Europe is very limited. In exploring cross-generational differences in party support, this chapter employs the European Election Study 2009 and a research design developed by Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996).
Chapter 3

This chapter examines whether a common belief system exists among mass publics and political representatives to the European Parliament and whether this belief system varies for citizens with different levels of political sophistication. Moreover, it explores at the aggregate level how well voters are represented by parties they voted for in the EP elections. Scholarly literature sees a common structure of attitudes between mass publics and political elites as a precondition for effective representation. This chapter examines the presence of a common belief system on a range of issues. It employs Mokken scale analysis on the European Election Study 2009 and the European Parliament Election Candidate Survey 2009.

Chapter 4

This chapter examines which individual-, party- and system-level characteristics influence the issue congruence in various issue domains between voters and their representatives in the European Parliament. Congruence of issue attitudes between representatives and mass publics has been seen as crucial for representation. While substantive literature has established that preconditions for effective representation are fulfilled in European elections, little is known about factors that affect issue congruence. This chapter employs a multi-level model to analyse issue congruence on a range of issues. It employs the European Election Study 2009 and the European Parliament Election Candidate Survey 2009.
Chapter 1

The Electoral Trade-Off: How Issues and Ideology Affect Party Preference Formation in Europe

Co-authored with Wouter van der Brug

This chapter is largely based on an article that was accepted for publication in the Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties.
Abstract

Political science has shown increasing interest in cross-country differences in the extent of structural voting, ideological voting and issue voting. Several studies have identified how voting behaviour is structured in post-communist democracies of East Central Europe and established democracies of Western Europe. This chapter looks beyond a simple East-West distinction by developing a more sophisticated general model to explain cross-country variations in the effects of issues and left/right on party support. We demonstrate that the more issues are related to left/right, the stronger is the effect of left/right on party preferences. This effect occurs at the expense of the effects of issues on party preferences, which become weaker. These general findings help explain why the effect of left/right on party preferences is weaker in post-communist democracies than in more established democracies. Our proposition is empirically substantiated in a two-stage analysis using the European Election Study 2009.
Scholars of comparative electoral behaviour have been increasingly interested in cross-country differences in the extent of structural voting, ideological voting and issue voting. Several of these studies focus on the differences in the determinants of party support between established democracies in Western Europe and formerly communist countries in East Central Europe. Studies which treat established and consolidating democracies as homogenous blocks of countries show that in the latter the effect of social class and left/right distance on party support is weaker while the effects of religion and EU issue voting are stronger than in established democracies (Trowezeki, 2002; Van der Brug et al., 2008; De Vries and Tillman, 2011). However, these studies have not yet fully accounted for differences within the two groups of countries. The ambition of this study is to fill in this lacuna by proposing and testing explanations for cross-country differences in the effects of issues and left/right on party preferences.

The major argument of this study is that cross-country differences in the effects of issues and left/right placement on party preferences can be explained with 1) the extent to which left/right structures issues in these countries and 2) the degree to which voters agree about the positions of political parties on the left/right dimension. Scholarly literature points us to two opposing hypotheses on the extent to which these contextual variables affect party preferences. One line of reasoning leads us to expect that these contextual variables moderate the effects of issues in the same way as the effects of left/right ideology. When left/right structures issues to a high extent and when voters agree about the positions of political parties in left/right terms, the effect of left/right and issues on party preferences will be strong. The other line of reasoning is that there would be a trade-off between the effect of left/right and the effects of issues on party preferences i.e. when the effect of left/right on party support is high, issues will structure party preferences to a lower extent. Below we will elaborate on these opposing expectations. When testing hypotheses regarding the effect of contextual variables, we will distinguish between groups of citizens with different levels of political sophistication. The ability of voters to link their attitudes towards issues to their left/right position and their capacity to recognise where parties are located on the left/right scale depends on how knowledgeable about and interested in politics they are (Converse, 1964; Klingemann, 1979a, 1979b; Zaller, 1992; Kinder, 2006). Therefore, we expect that the strength of the explanation offered by our opposing hypotheses will vary for the less sophisticated and highly sophisticated voters.

Our analysis is based on a two-stage procedure, in which we first explore the effects of issues and left/right on party preferences at the level of individual countries, and then explain the differences in the size of the effects across countries. The major finding of this study, based on the aggregate (second-stage) analysis, is that in countries where left/right structures voters’ attitudes towards issues to a considerable extent, the observed effect of issues on party support is weak. In turn, in countries where left/right structures issue attitudes to a much lesser extent, we see much stronger effects of issues on party preferences. This is related to the effect of left/right: the more left/right structures issues, the stronger is its effect on party preferences. This pattern exists across different levels of sophistication. Our finding offers an explanation for the picture that has emerged from the comparative literature on Western and East Central European countries.
so far: the low effect of left/right on party preferences in the East can be largely attributed to the fact that left/right is less strongly related to the most important issues in these countries.

The chapter proceeds as follows. In the next section we discuss the relevant literature, set out our model and elaborate on the opposing expectations about the moderating effect of contextual variables. We will test these expectations in a two-stage analysis based on a research design proposed by Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996). For this purpose, we employ the European Election Study 2009. Subsequently, we present our findings and conclude by discussing their implications for comparative research on party preferences.

THEORETICAL EXPECTATIONS

This chapter aims to explain differences in the effects of issues and left/right on party preferences across established and consolidating democracies. We argue that the explanation of such differences should not be narrowed down to a crude West vs. East distinction, because there is substantial variation among Eastern as well as among Western countries that needs to be explained as well. The contextual variables in our study should theoretically account for differences across all countries, East and West. We do not focus here on the historical roots of cross-country differences, which may be caused by different factors in the East and the West, but concentrate instead on characteristics of the electorates in each of the European countries. While the historical causes of variation across countries and regions are different, we expect these to yield similar consequences for the extent to which left/right and issues affect party preferences.

Issues, left/right and party preferences

The crucial explanation for the differences in the effects of issues and left/right on party preferences across countries may be related to the nature of left/right itself. The left/right dimension constitutes an ideological ‘super-issue’ (Pierce, 1999), which structures diverse policy issues in the domestic arena (Marks and Steenbergen, 2002). The meaning of the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ may vary across countries and over time, depending upon the issues that are salient at that time (Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990; Gabel and Huber, 2000; Dalton, 2006). When parties use the terms of ‘left’ and ‘right’ in explaining their attitudes towards concrete issues, voters will interpret these positions as being left- or right-wing. In various societies we may find differences in how issues relate to left and right. These differences arise as the way in which and the extent to which parties have politicised these issues varies across countries. Over time, certain issues may lose their connotation with the left/right, while new issues may become integrated into this conflict dimension.
Figure 1.1 Basic Model of the Causal Relationships between Socio-Structural Characteristics, Left/Right Self-Placement, Issue Attitudes and Party Preferences of Voters

Figure 1.1 presents the inter-relationship between the core elements of our argument. In short, socio-structural characteristics affect to some degree the ideological and issue positions of voters. Having a working class background may determine that a voter sees herself as left-wing and supports redistribution of income and wealth, although this relationship seems to have weakened in the recent years (e.g. Franklin et al., 1992; Van der Brug, 2010). The attitudes voters hold towards issues may be also partially determined by how they see themselves in left/right terms. According to the scholarly literature left/right has been the major dimension of competition between parties in European countries across the twentieth century and provided a cue for voters in their decisions at the ballot box (Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990; Middendorp, 1991; Klingemann et al., 1994; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Van der Brug et al., 2008). To the extent that parties discuss issues in left/right terms, voters’ attitudes towards an issue may be affected by their ideological position. Yet, this also works the other way around. When a new issue such as immigration is discussed in left/right terms, a voter who wants a more strict migration policy may see herself as more to the right (or further apart from left-wing parties who propose a more open border policy).

Socio-structural characteristics, left/right and issue attitudes will also exercise an independent effect on party preferences. It is well established in the literature that socio-structural factors such as age, gender or religion impact party preferences although left/right is found to exert the strongest effect on party preferences after controlling for issues and socio-structural factors (e.g. Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996). Left/right may also structure some issues to a high extent, while other issues may be independent from the left/right dimension (see e.g. Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009). For issues that have been structured by left/right, voters can take recourse to left/right to convey their attitudes towards such issues at the ballot box. However, left/right will not be a very useful cognitive short-cut for issues that are not structured by this dimension. In this case, direct recourse to issues will be necessary for voters to convey their preferences. This means that the effects of issues and left/right on party preferences can exist next to each other. In addition, we cannot account for all issues that define the meaning of left/right for voters in each country of our comparative
analysis. As a result the effects of left/right will still be in operation even after we control for some issues in
the model. While we will not (and cannot) estimate the reciprocal relationship between issue attitudes and
left/right positions, we argue that the answer to the question why the effects of issues and left/right on party
preferences vary across countries lies precisely in the nature of left/right, and in particular in the strength of
the relationship between issues and left/right.

This chapter does not examine issues which are specific to political discourse in each country in
particular, such as privatisation in post-communist countries or engagement in military missions abroad,
which appeared on the political agenda in e.g. Germany or the Netherlands. We focus on attitudes towards
basic political issues such as socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian issues, immigration and European
integration. The socio-economic issues that we consider here are related to the functioning of the free market
and the role of the state in the economy. They encompass citizen attitudes towards state involvement in the
economy vs. economic freedom of individuals without state control and a more equal distribution of income
and wealth in society vs. support for income differences. The libertarian-authoritarian issues encompass
greater societal and personal freedoms such as equality of women and rights for sexual minorities as well as
issues related to life-style and the functioning of the society such as law and order and the importance of
authority in education (Inglehart, 1977, 1984, 1990; Flanagan and Lee, 2003; Dalton et al., 1984; Flanagan,
1987; Hooghe et al., 2002; Knutsen, 2006). Finally, we include issues of European integration and
immigration, which according to a number of recent studies have gained importance in the recent years in
determining voters’ preferences towards political parties (Kriesi et al., 2006, 2008; Bornschier, 2010).

What explains cross-country differences?

We hypothesise that the relationship between the observable effects of issues on party preferences is
determined by two explanatory variables: firstly, the degree to which left/right structures voter attitudes
towards issues, which we call ideological constraint, and secondly, the degree to which voters agree on
where parties stand in left/right terms, which we refer to as perceptual agreement. Ideological constraint
denotes how well left/right structures attitudes that citizens hold on substantive issues. If citizen attitudes
towards issues coincide with how citizens see their stance on the left/right dimension, then we can speak of
issue attitudes being structured by left/right. It means that voters who see themselves as left-wing will have
certain attitudes towards an issue that are different from attitudes of voters that see themselves as right-wing.
A high degree of constraint, thus, means that the left/right dimension reflects differences in attitudes towards
this issue. In this case, we shall observe a strong correlation between citizen positions on left/right and
attitudes towards this issue. The stronger the relationship between issue attitudes and left/right self-placement
of voters, the more left/right structures this issue. In turn, when citizen attitudes towards issues do not
correspond to how citizens see themselves in left/right terms, we can say that left/right does not structure
these issues. Here, we will observe a very weak correlation, if any, between citizen stances on issues and
left/right.

How well left/right structures issue attitudes at the level of voters may reflect how issues are
appropriated by political parties in electoral competition. Differences between countries in the relationship
between issue attitudes of citizens and their left/right positions are likely to reflect the degree to which political parties have integrated these issues into the major dimension of competition and which issues they have politicised. We acknowledge, therefore, that the correlation between citizen issue attitudes and their left/right self-placement results from party agency. How this agency has evolved, however, is not central to our study. We are concerned here only with its observable outcome.

The second variable which may explain cross-country differences in the effects of issues on party preferences is perceptual agreement. It denotes the extent to which citizens in a country agree upon where political parties in their country stand on the left/right dimension (Van der Eijk, 2001). This perceptual agreement of voters has been seen as a precondition for voting on the basis of left/right as the left/right cue is only meaningful if there is a considerable agreement about what it signifies (Oppenhuis, 1995; Van der Eijk et al., 1996; Van der Bug et al., 2007). Citizens in one country may strongly agree about the positions of political parties on the left/right dimension, while citizens in another country may have very different perceptions. These differences may reflect historical legacies of countries or party system characteristics. Again, it is not our primary interest here what caused these differences, but we are concerned about how such an observable variation in perceptual agreement affects variation in party preferences.

The existing literature lets us develop two different scenarios with regard to the relationship between ideological constraint, perceptual agreement and the effects of issues on party preferences.

Positive Relationship Scenario

One line of reasoning is that we will observe a positive relationship between our outcome and explanatory variables. We know that voters use left/right positions as a cognitive shortcut to assess where parties stand on substantive issues (Downs, 1957; Johnston Conover and Feldman, 1984; Granberg and Holmberg, 1988). In countries where left/right structures issue attitudes to a weak extent, it will be less clear for voters what the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ stand for and where their own attitudes towards issues can be located on the left/right dimension. So, if left/right does not clearly structure issue attitudes, voters will find it more difficult to know where parties stand on substantive issues. As a result, they will find it more difficult to evaluate parties by these issues. In the positive relationship scenario we expect that in such countries we will observe a weaker effect of issues on party preferences. Similarly, when voters have difficulty distinguishing how their issue attitudes relate to the left/right dimension, they will be unsure what the left/right dimension signifies. Subsequently, they will agree to a lesser extent on where political parties stand in left/right terms. We expect, therefore, that in countries where there is little perceptual agreement on where parties stand on the left/right dimension (i.e. where perceptual agreement is low), the effects of issues on party preferences will be weak. In turn, in countries where left/right structures issues to a higher extent, voters will have more clarity about how issues relate to left/right and what left/right means in terms of practical policies. Consequently, voters will find it easier to evaluate parties in terms of their attitudes towards issues. As voters know better what the left/right dimension stands for, they will agree more on where political parties stand on left/right. As a result,
the effect of issues on party preferences will be stronger. In this scenario we expect a positive relationship between the effects of issues on party preferences on the one hand and ideological constraint and perceptual agreement on the other.

**Hypothesis 1a (Ideological Constraint and Issue Effects):** The stronger left/right structures issue attitudes of voters, the stronger will be the impact of these issues on party preferences.

**Hypothesis 2a (Perceptual Agreement and Issue Effects):** The higher the perceptual agreement among voters regarding where political parties stand on left/right, the stronger will be the impact of issues on party preferences.

Negative Relationship Scenario

A second and competing perspective leads us to expect a negative relationship between the effects of issues on party preferences and our explanatory variables. It is conceivable that in countries where left/right structures issue attitudes of voters to a high extent, voters are more likely to use left/right as a cognitive shortcut, as they know better what this shortcut means in practical policy terms. The same logic applies to perceptual agreement: when citizens agree more on the left/right placement of political parties in their country, they will be more likely to evaluate parties on the basis of their distance from the party on the left/right dimension. In these cases, a direct recourse to issues will be unnecessary as voters can evaluate parties on the basis of their left/right positions. In turn, in countries where left/right structures issue attitudes of voters to a weaker extent, the cognitive shortcut will prove less useful for voters as they will not be able to convey their attitudes effectively through simple recourse to their left/right stance. Similarly, as left/right weakly structures issues, voters will be unsure what the left/right dimension signifies in practical policy terms. Subsequently, they will agree less on where parties stand in left/right terms. Here, the direct recourse to issues will play a more important role for party support. According to this line of reasoning, there is a trade-off between the effect of left/right and the effects of issues on party support (Bellucci, 1984; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996). When the left/right strongly affects party choice, there is less room for issues to have an effect, and vice versa. This leads us to the prediction that there is more room for party support to be influenced by issues when left/right structures issues to a weak extent. In this negative relationship scenario we hypothesise as follows.

**Hypothesis 1b (Ideological Constraint and Issue Effects):** The stronger left/right structures issue attitudes of voters, the weaker will be the impact of these issues on party preferences.

**Hypothesis 2b (Perceptual Agreement and Issue Effects):** The higher the perceptual agreement among voters regarding where political parties stand on left/right, the weaker will be the impact of issues on party preferences.
While measuring the effects of our major explanatory variables, we control for one additional factor that has frequently been cited as one influencing the impact of issues on party preferences, namely **voter polarisation on issues**. Scholarly literature teaches us that the more political parties are polarised on a dimension of competition, the stronger is the effect of voters’ positions on this dimension on party preferences. It has been sufficiently proven that a stronger polarisation on the left/right dimension leads to a greater effect of left/right on party support (Van der Eijk et al., 2005; Knutsen and Kumlin, 2005; Ensley, 2007; Lachat, 2008; Dalton, 2008). In a similar vein, we expect that the more voters are polarised on an issue, the stronger will be the effect of this issue on party preferences. Our hypothesis is as follows.

**Hypothesis 3 (Issue Polarisation and Issue Effects):** The higher the degree of polarisation on an issue, the stronger will be the effect of this issue on party preferences.

So far, we have outlined which factors may account for the observed differences in the effects of issues on party preferences. Now we turn our attention to the effect of left/right. We have imagined two alternative scenarios regarding the effect that issues will have on party preferences – when left/right strongly structures issue attitudes of voters, issues will have either a stronger effect (positive relationship scenario) or a weaker effect (negative relationship scenario) on party preferences. However, left/right remains an important cue if it has a meaning for voters i.e. if it assimilates issues to a considerable extent. When left/right strongly structures issue attitudes of voters, voters will know better what left/right positions signify in terms of practical policies and will use this cognitive shortcut while choosing political parties at the ballot box. In this case, we expect left/right to have a stronger effect on party preferences. Conversely, in countries where issues are weakly structured by left/right, the left/right is not a helpful cognitive device for voters in evaluating policies that parties propose. As a consequence, left/right distances between parties and voters will not be a strong determinant of party preferences. Therefore, we hypothesise as follows.

**Hypothesis 4 (Ideological Constraint and Left/Right Effect):** The stronger left/right structures issue attitudes of voters, the stronger will be the effect of left/right on party preferences.

**Individual level moderators**

Now we turn to individual differences in the extent to which voters are capable of recognising the abstract dimension of competition and linking their own attitudes to it. Scholarly literature tells us that the degree to which voters recognise which issues belong to the left/right spectrum varies across levels of political sophistication. Similarly, how well voters’ issue attitudes are constrained by left/right depends on how politically sophisticated voters are (Converse, 1964; Klingemann, 1979a, 1979b; Zaller, 1992). Political sophistication does not necessarily overlap with the level of education (Zaller, 1992). Even highly educated voters may display a low level of sophistication if they are not politically interested or if they lack political knowledge. The importance of political sophistication in attitude formation leads us to expect that the postulated relationships will play out differently for voters with a high and low level of political sophistication. Highly sophisticated voters have the capacity to recognise the left/right dimension of competition and relate their issue attitudes to it. Thus, we expect that the hypothesised relationships (if
supported) will be more robust for this group of voters. Conversely for less sophisticated voters the postulated relationships will be less easily detectable as they will be blurred by the constrained ability of these voters to recognise the higher dimension of competition and link their issue attitudes to it. Therefore, our hypothesis is as follows:

**Hypothesis 5 (Political Sophistication):** For voters with a high level of political sophistication the relationships postulated in Hypotheses 1-4 will display a clearer pattern than for less sophisticated voters.

Now we turn to the discussion of the data and methodology we have chosen in this study.

**DATA AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study explains differences in the effects of issues and left/right on party preferences across countries of the European Union. For this purpose, we use the European Election Study 2009 (EES 2009; Van Egmond et al., 2010), which is a representative study of the electorates of all EU countries. Although the data was collected at the time of the elections to the European Parliament, we do not study electoral behaviour in these elections. Our research questions pertain to party preferences in general, not to specific elections. The EES 2009 data lends itself for such an analysis as it contains questions on general party preferences. Our analysis involves 28 political systems. The total sample size of the database amounts to 27,369 respondents.

We conduct separate analyses for voters with high and low levels of political sophistication. We measure political sophistication with the degree of political interest and political knowledge that voters display. Political interest is operationalized with a question in which respondents report their level of interest in politics, ranging from 1 (‘very interested’) to 4 (‘not at all interested’). Political knowledge is measured by the respondents’ answers to 8 factual questions about national and EU politics. In order to assess whether the questions on political interest and knowledge relate to a single latent dimension, responses to these items were analysed for each country separately by means of non-parametric Mokken scaling (Mokken, 1971; Van Schuur, 2003). In all countries we were able to construct a satisfactory political sophistication scale,
including at least two items. For each country we created an index where we added the responses of voters to the political interest and political knowledge questions. We grouped respondents as highly sophisticated if their score on the index was higher than the average country score. In turn, voters displaying a low level of political sophistication are those whose responses are located below the country average.

The purpose of our study is to explore and explain cross-country differences in the effects of issues and left/right on party preferences. In order to do this, we need to employ a methodology which allows for a meaningful comparison of party preferences across 28 systems. We use ‘propensities to vote’ which measure the observed strength of support of a respondent for each of the political parties in his/her country. Propensities to vote are measured with a question, asked in each country, how likely it is (on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 to 10) that a respondent will ever vote for a specific party. This question is asked separately for each of the parties in each country. This measure has similar properties as the better known thermometer scores (or ‘party sympathy scores’). Yet, compared to the latter, the ‘propensity to vote’ scores are more strongly related to actual party choice (see e.g., Van der Eijk et al., 2006). The great advantage of this variable is that it provides a measure of party preferences that is comparable across parties and countries, whereas this is not the case for measures of party choice, which is a different nominal variable in each country.

We employ a two-stage approach. In the first stage, we use propensities to vote as the outcome variable and left/right position, socio-structural characteristics and issue attitudes of voters as explanatory variables. We create a stacked data matrix for each of the 28 political systems under study. As we divide voters into 2 levels of political sophistication, we end up with 56 stacked data matrices. The stacked data matrix is derived from a survey data matrix, in which the unit of analysis is transformed from the respondent to the respondent*party combination (Tillie, 1995; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Van der Eijk et al., 2006; Van der Brug et al., 2007). The respondent appears here as many times as there are parties for which party preferences are measured. Thus, the level of analysis is effectively changed from the individual level to the individual*party level.

This research design requires us to transform variables so that they reflect the relationship between a respondent and a political party. For left/right, we create a variable that measures the distance between a voter’s left/right self-placement and her perception where each of the parties in the party system stands in left/right terms. The left/right distance variable is measured on an 11-point left/right scale. To estimate the effects of issues, another procedure has to be followed since party positions are not measured. The procedure which makes it more appropriate for assessing latent dimensions of political knowledge questions that we use in this analysis.

Finland is the only country where two questions form a common latent scale. In most of the countries, three, four or five questions form a common scale. In Italy and Slovenia a scale is formed out of 6 items, while in Cyprus, Malta ad Portugal it is formed out of 7 items.

The correct answers to political knowledge questions have been coded with 1, 0 otherwise. The political interest question has been collapsed into a binary one, where 1 stands for ‘very’ and ‘somewhat’ interested in politics and 0 otherwise.

If the respondent did not answer the question on the position of a particular party, we replaced the missing value with the national sample mean of the perceived party position. In this way, we lost only respondents who failed to place themselves on the left/right scale.
is that bivariate linear regressions are conducted in which preferences for each political party are explained by positions on a single issue. These regressions per party yield one predicted score (y-hat) for each respondent for each predictor. The predicted scores contain two important components. The first component consists of the extent to which the predictor explains party preferences, and the second component reflects the popularity of the party in question that is not generated by the predictor. The second component is eliminated by centring the predicted scores around the mean (per party) so that the y-hats reflect only variations caused by differences in the independent variable. After these centred y-hats have been computed for each political party separately, they are saved. These y-hats are simply linear transformations of the original independent variables, so that they can be used as explanatory variables in the analysis. As a result of these transformations their values are now comparable across parties, because they reflect the extent to which the predictor explains preferences for each of the parties (the validity of this procedure has been shown by Van der Eijk et al., 2006). These variables are then ‘stacked on top of each other’.

Issue attitudes and socio-structural variables have been constructed using this y-hat procedure. We have data on 12 issues - 4 from the socio-economic domain, 5 from the libertarian-authoritarian domain, 2 related to immigration and 1 on EU integration. Within the socio-economic domain, we use questions on whether private enterprise is the best way to solve the country’s economic problems (variable called Enterprise), whether major public services and industries should be in state ownership (Ownership), whether politics should abstain from intervening in the economy (Intervention) and whether income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people (Redistribution). Within the libertarian-authoritarian domain, we employ questions on whether same-sex marriages should be prohibited by law (Same-Sex Marriage), whether women should be free to decide on matters of abortion (Abortion), whether women should be prepared to cut down on their paid work for the sake of their family (Family), whether people who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days (Law & Order) as well as whether schools must teach children to obey authority (Authority). Furthermore, we use questions on immigration – whether immigrants should be required to adapt to customs of the receiving country (Adaptation of Immigrants) and whether immigration in the country of respondents should be decreased significantly (Decrease of Immigration). Voters’ stance on EU integration is measured with the question whether EU unification should be pushed further or whether it has already gone too far (EU Integration).8

For the socio-structural variables, Age is created by regressing the propensity to vote for political parties over a numerical variable describing the age of respondents. Gender uses a dummy for male/female in the same procedure. Social class is created with a subjective measure of self-assessed belonging to a particular class location. Education is represented by respondents’ self-placement according to various levels of education specific for each country. Religion is a composite variable of religious denomination, church attendance and level of religiosity, which are regressed separately in a y-hat procedure.

8 As literature on attitude formation and party choice postulates the presence of clear socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian and integration-demarcation dimensions in Western Europe (Kitschelt and McGann, 1997; Kriesi et al., 2006, 2008), we analysed by means of non-parametric Mokken scaling whether each set of issues forms a common scale in each country under study. In most of the political systems, especially those in East Central Europe, no dimensions were found. In some countries attitude dimensions were found, but the issue items forming them varied significantly across countries. Therefore, we treat each issue separately in the analysis.
In the first-stage analysis, we regressed propensities to vote on 12 issues and controlled for socio-structural variables (e.g., Van Deth and Scarbrough, 1995) as well as left/right distance. We include socio-structural controls because we want to obtain issue effects which are not contaminated by considerations relating to cleavages or differences in social stratification of voters (for a similar approach see Knutsen and Scarbrough, 1995). This approach allows us to measure to which extent issues affect party preferences net of considerations regarding the distance between voters and political parties in left/right terms and considerations flowing from voters’ social standing. We conduct this analysis for 28 political systems and 2 levels of sophistication of voters. We perform linear regressions, using the Huber-White-Sandwich estimate of variance to account for the dependency among observations pertaining to the same respondent (Rogers, 1993; Williams, 2000).

Subsequently, we stored the coefficients for 12 issues in 2 separate datasets. The first dataset contains coefficients from analysis of voters with a high level of sophistication, while the second contains coefficients for voters with low level of sophistication. The number of observations in each dataset equals the number of political systems, namely 28. These datasets are subsequently used in the second-stage analysis, in which we explain the differences in the effects of issues on party preferences across political systems. As in the first stage, the second stage employs linear regression with White’s heteroscedastic consistent standard errors in order to account for heteroscedasticity (Lewis and Linzer, 2005). The choice of the two-stage design, rather than hierarchical modelling, has been dictated by constraints inherent in the y-hat procedure that we discussed above (for details see e.g. Van der Eijk et al., 2006; Van der Brug et al., 2008).

In the second stage we test our Hypotheses 1-3, where we regress the effects of each of 12 issues at a time on the following explanatory variables: 1) ideological constraint, 2) perceptual agreement, and 3) voter polarisation on issues. The number of explanatory variables that we can include in this analysis is limited as in the second-stage analysis we have only 28 observations at each level of sophistication. We test Hypothesis 5 by comparing the effects of our explanatory variables across two levels of sophistication. We express Ideological constraint as a correlation between voters’ left/right self-placement and voters’ position on each issue separately. This procedure yields a single correlation for each issue per each party system. As we are interested only in the strength of the correlation, we take its absolute value as the explanatory variable. To measure perceptual agreement, we used a question where respondents were asked to place each political party on the left/right scale ranging from 0 to 10. Following Van der Eijk (2001), we measured for all political parties in a party system a coefficient of perceptual agreement, which is appropriate for rating scales with a fixed number of categories. It runs from -1 (maximum disagreement) to +1 (maximum agreement). The measure of system agreement for a country is a weighted average of the perceptual agreement scores for parties, where the weights are based on the proportion of valid votes that each political party obtained in the national parliamentary elections preceding the elections to the European Parliament in 2009. The third contextual variable is the voter polarisation on issues. For each political system we obtain the standard deviation of the positions of voters on each of the issues separately.

However, excluding the left/right distance as a control variable from our analysis does not lead to a substantive change in the interpretation of our results.
In order to test Hypothesis 4, we assess the relationship between how well left/right structures issues and the effect of left/right on party preferences. The extent to which left/right structures issues is measured by the Adjusted R². It is obtained in a linear regression where voters’ left/right self-placement is the outcome variable and voters’ attitudes towards 12 issues are the explanatory variables. Here, we use the original (un-stacked) EES 2009. The higher the value of the Adjusted R² obtained in a linear regression, the more voters’ attitudes on issues are structured by left/right. In order to obtain the effects of left/right distance between voter and party on party preferences, we use the 56 stacked data matrices and regress vote propensities on left/right distance in each political system. We use left/right distance as a predictor and control for socio-structural factors as we are interested in the effect that encompasses the effect of issues but is devoid of the effects of cleavages. As we seek to show the relationship between how well the left/right structures issues and the effect of left/right on party preferences, we need to consider the effect of left/right which includes potential issue considerations, but is controlled for socio-structural factors determining party preferences.

As the analyses employed here involve several stages, we briefly recapitulate the steps of our analysis. In order to test our Hypotheses 1-3 and Hypothesis 5, we employ a two-stage procedure. In the first stage, we create 56 stacked data matrices (for each of 28 political systems and for 2 levels of sophistication of voters). The unit of analysis here is the respondent*party combination, which amounts to 169,943 observations. We look here at the effects of 12 issues on party preferences, controlling for socio-structural characteristics of voters and left/right distance. For each party system and for each level of sophistication we obtain an issue effect. These issue effects are gathered in 2 databases, the first for voters with low levels of sophistication and the second for voters with high levels of sophistication. Each database contains 28 observations (one issue effect per party system). In the subsequent second-stage analysis, these 12 coefficients for issue effects are used as the outcome variables. Here, we explore which factors explain the variation in the issue effects for each level of sophistication. The explanatory variables are: ideological constraint, perceptual agreement and voter polarisation.

In order to test Hypothesis 4, we employ the original (un-stacked) EES 2009 and the 56 stacked data matrices. In the EES 2009 we have 27,369 observations with individuals as units of analysis. In order to assess to which degree left/right structures issue attitudes of voters we regress their left/right self-placement on their positions on 12 issues. We do this for 28 political systems and 2 levels of voter sophistication separately. As a result, we obtain 56 Adjusted R²’s. With the 56 stacked data matrices, we regress vote propensities of voters on their left/right distance to parties (controlled for socio-structural factors) for each level of sophistication in each party system. The obtained effects of left/right distance (the unstandardized regression coefficients) are combined with the Adjusted R²’s in two dataset, with 28 observations for each level of sophistication. According to Hypothesis 4, these two should be positively correlated.

**Findings**

Before we proceed with the tests of our hypotheses, we present an overview of how left/right affects party preferences in countries of the European Union and report exemplary results for the first-stage analysis for one country (full results of the first-stage analysis are presented in Appendix I). Figure 1.2 shows the
regression coefficients with 95% confidence intervals of left/right distance on party preferences which have been obtained in the first-stage analysis where we controlled for issues and socio-structural factors. The effects of left/right distances are negative because larger distances between voters and parties decrease the propensity of support for these parties. We see in Figure 1.2 that nearly all the effects of left/right in established democracies of Western Europe (with the exception of Spain) are stronger than -.4 (indicated by a vertical line), while nearly all effects of left/right in consolidating democracies of East Central Europe (with the exception of Hungary and Cyprus) are weaker than -.4.

Figure 1.2 Regression Coefficients of the Impact of Left/Right Distance between Voters and Parties on Party Preferences within Established and Consolidating Political Systems in the EU

Notes: Figure 1.2 presents the effects (unstandardized regression coefficients with 95% confidence intervals) of left/right distance between voters and parties on party preferences in 28 political systems of the European Union. The effects of left/right are negative because larger distances between voters and parties decrease the propensity of support for these parties. Countries have been listed here by the size of the left/right coefficient.

Since we estimated 56 regressions in the first stage of our analyses, two for each of the 28 political systems, we decided to present exemplary results for one country – Austria. In this country we observe the largest difference in the effects of left/right on party preferences across voters with high and low level of political sophistication. Figure 1.3 graphs the effects of left/right, issues and socio-structural factors with 95%
The effects of left/right are negative, while the effects of other explanatory variables are positive. Where confidence intervals include the value of 0 (indicated by a vertical line), the effects fail to reach statistical significance at the .05 level.

Figure 1.3 Regression Coefficients of the Impact of Various Predictors of Party Preferences for Voters with High and Low Level of Sophistication in Austria

Austria

Voters with High Level of Sophistication

Voters with Low Level of Sophistication

Notes: Figure 1.3 presents the effects (unstandardized regression coefficients with 95% confidence intervals) of left/right distance between voters and parties, issue attitudes and socio-structural characteristics of voters on party preferences, obtained in the first-stage analysis, for Austria. For this country we observe the biggest difference in the effects of left/right on party preferences between citizens with the highest and lowest level of political sophistication. The explanatory variables have been listed according to the strength of their coefficients.

Table 1.1 presents the results of the second-stage analysis, in which we explain the variation in the effects of the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian issues, immigration and EU integration on party preferences for voters with the low and high level of political sophistication across 28 political systems. For each issue
effect (i.e. Enterprise, Ownership, Intervention, Redistribution, Same-Sex Marriage, Abortion, Law & Order, Authority, Family, Adaptation of Immigrants, Decrease of Immigration and EU Integration) we conducted a separate linear regression. In each of these regressions, the unstandardized regression coefficient of that particular issue is the outcome variable (which varies across 28 systems). The explanatory variables of these regressions are ideological constraint, perceptual agreement and voter polarisation on the particular issue. The upper part of Table 1.1 presents the results for voters with the high level of sophistication, while the lower part shows results for voters with the lower level of sophistication. For each sophistication group, we first present the effects of all three explanatory variables on the outcome variables. Subsequently, we show bivariate regressions of outcome variables on the ideological constraint variable.

The results of our analysis support the negative relationship scenario. For both levels of sophistication there is a negative relationship between the degree to which issue attitudes of voters are correlated with their position on left/right (ideological constraint) and the effect of these issues on party preferences. Since the original effect of issues is positive, the negative relationship between ideological constraint and issue effects means that in countries where left/right structures voter attitudes towards issues to a larger extent we observe lower effects of these issues on party preferences. This finding supports Hypothesis 1b. Among highly sophisticated voters, the relationships are in 10 out of 12 cases significant. Only two effects fail to reach statistical significance, even though the parameters have the same (negative) sign. For voters with a low level of political sophistication, the negative relationship between ideological constraint and the effects of these issues on party preferences holds as well. As the multivariate analyses for less sophisticated voters show, 11 out of 12 coefficients are negative. Of the 12 coefficients only 7 reach statistical significance, all of these being negative.

A brief look at the bivariate regressions confirms the differences between voters with a high and a low level of political sophistication. For the highly sophisticated voters all ideological constraint coefficients, except the one for Redistribution, are strong and significant. In turn, for less sophisticated voters less than half do not reach the level of conventional statistical significance. These findings confirm our Hypothesis 5, where we expected that the relationship between issue effects on party preferences and ideological constraint will be clearer for more sophisticated voters.
Table 1.1 Relationship between Ideological Constraint, Perceptual Agreement and Voter Polarisation and the Effects of Issues on Party Preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Socio-Economic Issues</th>
<th>Libertarian-Authoritarian Issues</th>
<th>Immigration</th>
<th>EU Integration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enterprise Ownership</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Redistribution</td>
<td>Same-Sex Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Sophistication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological constraint</td>
<td>-0.66***</td>
<td>-0.56**</td>
<td>-1.87**</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptual agreement</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voter polarisation</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>0.47*</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bivariate regression</td>
<td>R²: 0.29</td>
<td>R²: 0.27</td>
<td>R²: 0.28</td>
<td>R²: 0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Sophistication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological constraint</td>
<td>-1.18***</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>-1.73**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptual agreement</td>
<td>-0.54**</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voter polarisation</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bivariate regression</td>
<td>R²: 0.25</td>
<td>R²: 0.13</td>
<td>R²: 0.23</td>
<td>R²: 0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Table 1.1 presents the results of the second-stage analysis for voters with a high and low level of political sophistication. The outcome variable consists of the effects of each issue on party preferences obtained in the first-stage analysis for each political system in the EU separately. For the second-stage analysis, we present the multivariate results, where the effects of each issue have been regressed on ideological constraint, structural agreement and polarisation of voters on an issue, and bivariate results, where the effects of each issue have been regressed on ideological constraint variable alone. *** significant at p < 0.01 ** significant at p < 0.05 * significant at p < 0.1 (one-tailed).
An inspection of the effects of the perceptual agreement leads us to dismiss both Hypothesis 2a and Hypothesis 2b. For both levels of political sophistication we cannot conclude that perceptual agreement has the capacity to explain cross-country differences in the effects of issues on party preferences. Most of the coefficients of this explanatory variable do not reach statistical significance. Furthermore, the direction in which perceptual agreement affects our outcome variables is not clear. For some issues, we find a positive relationship between perceptual agreement and issue effects, while for others this relationship is negative. However, most of the relationships turn out not to be significant, which applies to both levels of political sophistication.

We obtain similarly mixed results for voter polarisation. Also for this variable the direction of the relationship between voter polarisation and our outcome variable is not clear i.e. for some issues we see a negative, while for others a positive effect. However, the only statistically significant effects of voter polarisation are positively signed. It is the case for Ownership, Intervention and Abortion (.19, .47, .46 respectively) for highly sophisticated voters, and for EU Integration (.54) for less sophisticated voters. These results suggest that stronger issue polarisation among voters in a country is related to a stronger effect of this issue on party preferences, which is in line with Hypothesis 3. However, since these effects were only observed for a few issues, the findings are not sufficiently robust to draw strong conclusions. Another conclusion from Table 1.1 is that these models explain a reasonable proportion of the cross-country variation as it is shown by the quite high R-Square.
Figure 1.4 Relationship between Ideological Constraint and the Effect of Left/Right on Party Preferences for Voters with High and Low Level of Sophistication

Notes: Figure 1.4 presents the relationship between ideological constraint i.e. the degree to which left/right structures issue attitudes of voters (measured by the adjusted R² of issues) and the effect of left/right on party preferences (in absolute value) in each country. The coefficient for highly sophisticated voters is .45 (robust standard error of .15) and is significant at p < .001. For low sophistication group the coefficient is .55 (robust standard error of .27) and with p = .054 barely reaches the level of conventional statistical significance.
The evidence so far clearly shows that the direct effects of issues on party preferences decrease when these issues have been strongly structured by left/right. But how does this relationship correspond to the effect of left/right on party support? Figure 1.4 shows that the more issues are structured by left/right, the stronger the effect of left/right on party preferences will be. This explains the observation from the comparative literature on the established democracies of Western Europe and consolidating democracies of East Central Europe, which shows weaker effects of left/right on party support in East Central Europe (Van der Brug et al., 2008). Our results presented in Figure 1.4 show that this low effect is related to the incompleteness of left/right in structuring the most important issues in the consolidating democracies. This finding does away with the stereotype that voters in consolidating democracies think less in left/right terms and less often take recourse to spatial considerations. In fact, such voters may be making the same calculus as voters in established democracies, but for them left/right positions do not provide as much information about parties’ positions on issues, which is why it is only natural that these voters do not rely on it as much as voters in the West.

The x-axis of the graphs displays the adjusted R² of individual level regressions within each country, where left/right positions are explained by 12 issues. This tells us to what extent the left/right dimension summarises attitudes towards substantive issues. The y-axis of the graph represents the effect of left/right on party preferences, when controlling only for socio-structural variables. In this way, we estimate the total contribution of left/right to party preferences. Figure 1.4 presents separate boxes for citizens with a high and low level of political sophistication (full results of the regressions are presented in Appendix II). In both we have marked with country abbreviations which political system the observations stand for. Both graphs display a positive relationship between the adjusted R² and the effect of left/right on party preferences. In other words, the more issues are structured by left/right in a political system, the stronger is the effect of left/right on party preferences. This finding thus supports Hypothesis 4. This relationship holds both for voters with a high and a low level of political sophistication, although for the latter group it barely reaches the conventional level of statistical significance.

For highly sophisticated voters the value of the coefficient from the bivariate regression is .45 (significant at the level of p < .001). For less sophisticated voters, the coefficient takes the value of .55 and it is significant at the level of p = .054, which is acceptable given the small number of observations in the second-stage analysis. Although the direction of the relationship between the adjusted R² and the effect of left/right on party preferences is no different for voters with a high and low level of political sophistication, we can clearly see in both boxes of Figure 1.4 that left/right assimilates issues to a lower extent for less sophisticated voters. Here, the spread of the political systems on the axis depicting the adjusted R² is smaller for less sophisticated than for highly sophisticated voters.

We can also see in both boxes that in East Central European countries left/right structures voters’ attitudes towards issues to a weaker extent than in Western European countries. East Central European democracies gather at the bottom-left of the regression lines. As in the consolidating political systems issue attitudes are structured by left/right to a lower extent than in established democracies, we observe

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10 In these analyses we do not control for the effects of issues since the relationship between issues and left/right is reciprocal. In countries where the effect of left/right strongly reflects issue preferences, we would then underestimate the total contribution of left/right to party preferences.

11 As we see in Figure 1.4, Spain is an outlier. When we remove it from the analysis, we obtain a significant relationship. In this case, the value of the coefficient is .64 with p < .05 and R² of .23.
CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study shows that cross-country differences in the effects of issues and left/right on party preferences are related to the extent to which left/right structures issue attitudes of voters. In countries where left/right is more encompassing, the impact of issues on party preferences is smaller. In turn, in countries where issues are weakly structured by left/right, the observed impact of issues on party support is stronger.

These findings directly relate to the so far postulated relationship of complementarity between the effects of issues and left/right on party preferences (Bellucci, 1984; Van der Eijk et al., 1996). They extend our knowledge about the role of left/right as a mediator in the formation of party preferences. Recent literature shows that left/right is an important cognitive determinant in the formation of attitudes towards immigration (Pardos-Prado, 2011) and it enhances issue voting as long as voters perceive that political parties relate these issues to the dominant dimension of competition (De Vries, 2007a, 2007b). Our study highlights another feature of how left/right affects party preferences, this time pertaining to the degree to which left/right structures issue attitudes. The more comprehensive left/right is in summarising attitudes towards specific issues, the stronger the effect of left/right will be on electoral preferences, and vice versa. These structural differences, which may result from varying degrees of stability of the party systems, provide us with an explanation why in certain countries issues exercise a stronger direct effect on party preferences than in others.

Our findings also contribute to the existing knowledge on the ways in which voters use information. In his model of rational electoral behaviour, Downs (1957) paid much attention to the notion of information costs. He conceived of left/right as a cognitive device that would enable voters to choose rationally in the absence of concrete and detailed information about specific issues. More recently, studies have demonstrated that the extent of policy voting increases when voters have more information (Alvarez, 1997; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Van der Brug, 1998). Our study shows that voters’ use of left/right increases when attitudes towards substantive issues are more closely linked to left/right positions i.e. when left/right is more informative of actual policy positions. This is precisely what one would have expected on the basis of Downs’ model.

The general pattern presented in this study holds both for voters with a high and low level of political sophistication, although it is considerably clearer for the first group of voters. It is validated in an analysis involving a wide spectrum of issues, encompassing socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian issues as well as immigration and EU integration. Furthermore, this study explains why the effects of left/right on party preferences are weaker in consolidating democracies of East Central Europe than in established democracies Western Europe (Van der Brug et al., 2008). It points out that the effect of left/right is weaker in the former as left/right does not structure voters’ issue attitudes to such an extent as it is the case in Western European countries. However, our analysis goes beyond this regional comparison by showing that countries of Western Europe or Central Eastern Europe are not monolithic and that considerable differences exist within both country groups in the extent of these effects.

weaker effects of left/right on party support in the former. This offers an explanation for the weak effects of left/right in East Central Europe found in the literature to date.
Our findings have two limitations that constitute avenues for further research. Firstly, our analysis takes an aggregate-level perspective and examines how in the electorate as a whole, the issue attitudes of voters have been structured by left/right. In a further step, we could extend our findings by introducing how individual-level characteristics affect the differences in the effects of issues and left/right on party preferences. Secondly, our study necessarily focuses entirely on variables that characterise voters. The small sample size in the second-stage analysis prevents us from including a higher number of predictors. In order to fully understand the differences in the effects of issues and left/right on party preferences, however, a next step would be to develop hypotheses and measures to capture how party system characteristics determine cross-country differences in the effects of issues and left/right on party support. Notwithstanding these avenues for further research, our findings offer a theoretical and empirical contribution to our understanding of cross-country differences in the way party preferences are structured by left/right and issues.
Chapter 2

Long- and Short-Term Determinants of Party Preferences:
Analysis of Inter-Generational Differences in Western and East Central Europe

Co-authored with Wouter van der Brug and Catherine E. de Vries

The final version of this chapter has been published in Electoral Studies, issue 31 (2012), pp. 273-284.
Abstract

In this chapter we study differences between generations in the degree to which long-term and short-term factors affect party preferences in established and consolidating European democracies. Scholarly literature has shown that younger cohorts in Western Europe are less likely to be guided by social class, religion and left/right than older cohorts. Little is known, however, about the extent to which such differences exist for the effects of short-term factors. Similarly, inter-generational differences in the effects of long- and short-term factors in post-communist countries have remained largely unexplored. Based on the European Election Study 2009, we show differences between generations that are compatible with de-alignment of younger generations along traditional cleavages. Yet, we also see an increased importance of attitudes towards immigration among the younger generations, which could signal a form of re-alignment.
INTRODUCTION

Generational replacement is one of the main driving forces behind social and political change. As new generations reach the ballot box, they bring new considerations to the fore, reflecting the period in which they were socialised (Inglehart, 1985; Hooghe, 2004). People acquire certain behavioural habits early in life, which often tend to be very stable. Aggregate political changes may thus arise due to cohort effects where new generations have different party loyalties or different issue attitudes than the older generations which they replace.

Scholarly literature has indeed taught us that generational replacement is partially responsible for the declining impact of structural factors and ideology on party preferences in Western Europe (Franklin et al., 1992; Van der Brug et al., 2007; Van der Brug, 2010). These studies show that voting behaviour of younger generations is structured to a lesser degree by traditional cleavages such as social class and religion compared to older generations. In addition to these generational changes, electoral researchers have also demonstrated that left/right considerations have lost some of their capacity to structure party preferences in the recent years (Van der Brug et al., 2007). This is mainly due to the emergence of issues, such as immigration, which are not or only weakly related to left/right ideology (Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009) and the fact that larger political parties, especially those in the mainstream, have become less distinct in left/right terms (Pennings and Keman, 2003; Green and Hobolt, 2008). This decline in the importance of long-terms factors coincided with an increase in the explanatory power of short-term determinants, such as issue attitudes and performance-based factors (Van der Brug, 2010; Karvonen, 2010). So far, no systematic research exists that examines the role of generational change in the alleged increase in importance of short-term factors affecting party preferences. Confronted with these intertwined processes of diminishing cleavage-based voting and the allegedly increasing importance of short-term factors, electoral researchers have been facing new challenges in capturing what motivates voters at the ballot box. This study addresses the question to which extent these processes might be driven by generational replacement. We will therefore systematically compare different generations of voters in the extent to which their party preferences are determined by long- and short-term factors.

In this endeavour we look separately at the established democracies of Western Europe and consolidating democracies of East Central Europe. Western European societies have experienced a market economy and democratic freedoms for decades, so that the generational cohorts in these countries have lived in similar political circumstances. However, even within Western European countries, large differences exist in how long countries have been democratic, with Greece, Cyprus, Malta, Spain and Portugal having first parliamentary elections in the 1960s and 1970s. In turn, in Central and Eastern Europe, many of the generations grew up under communist rule. As scholarly literature so far lets us expect similar trends in the effects of long- and short-term determinants of party preferences in Western European countries (e.g., Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996), we develop expectations pertaining to the whole region. However, we account for possible variance by carrying out analyses for subgroups of countries and single countries, where we expect the effects to be different. Inclusion of East Central European countries in this study allows us to vary key economic, social, political and institutional contexts in which generations are socialised.
To date we know very little about the extent to which structural, ideological, issue- and performance-based factors structure voting behaviour across generations in the new member states of the European Union. The electorates of these countries have undergone utterly different socialisation processes, connected to the experiences of communism and transition to market economy than the electorates in Western Europe. Previous research taught us that the effects of vote determinants on party preferences indeed seem to vary across established and post-communist democracies (Van der Brug et al., 2008; De Vries and Tillman, 2011). The variation in the extent to which voter behaviour is structured in the post-communist countries and the varying conditions under which voters have been socialised in these countries point us to expectations which diverge from expected patterns in Western Europe. This chapter utilises this natural variation to test whether the determinants of party preferences between these two contexts indeed reflect differing trends across differently socialised generations. By means of a cross-generational comparative analysis of Western and East Central Europe we can infer whether we observe similar or diverging patterns in both regions.

The study proceeds as follows. In the next section, we discuss the relevant literature and derive expectations on the extent to which long- and short-term factors explain party preferences in established democracies of Western Europe and consolidating democracies of East Central Europe. Next, we test these expectations in a research design proposed by Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996). For this purpose, we employ the European Election Study 2009. Subsequently, we present our findings and conclude by discussing their implications.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Inter-Generational Change in Western Europe

Over the last three decades long-term structural determinants of party preferences (social class, religion, the urban/rural divide) and ideological considerations have lost their capacity to explain party preferences for voters in Western Europe (Dalton et al., 1984; Crewe and Denver, 1985; Franklin et al., 1992; Rose and McAllister, 1986; Evans, 1999; Oskarson, 2005; Lipset, 1981; Nieuwbeerta and de Graaf, 1999; Van der Brug et al., 2007). Before the 1970s, cleavages largely structured electoral processes as political parties claimed to represent interests of voters stratified by social categories. These categories, in turn, provided voters with party loyalties. In the course of the 1970s, the voter-party ties have weakened, leading Franklin et al. (1992) to conclude that “almost all of the countries (...) show a decline in the ability of social cleavages to structure individual voting choice”. Apart from social class, the capacity of religion to structure party preferences of Western European voters has also weakened. With the declining level of religiosity, voters’ support for confessional parties has diminished (Van der Eijk and Niemöller, 1983; Norris and Inglehart, 2004; Jagodzinski and Dobbelaree, 1998). Although the third of the traditional cleavages – the urban/rural divide – has been less significant in Western Europe, with the exceptions of Ireland and the Scandinavian countries, its capacity to structure party preferences has declined as well (Rose and Urwin, 1969; Lijphart, 1982).

A similar trend has been observed for ideological considerations. Many previous studies have shown that across various European systems the behaviour of parties and voters alike has been structured largely
by the left/right dimension, which until the 1990s remained the dominant ideological dimension of competition (Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990; Klingemann et al., 1994; Hix, 1999; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Van der Brug et al., 2008). The left/right dimension constitutes an ‘ideological super-issue’ (Pierce, 1999), which summarises diverse policy issues in the domestic arena (Marks and Steenbergen, 2002). The meaning of the left/right dimension is not fixed, but may vary across countries and over time as new issues emerge, which are integrated in the left/right dimension (Gabel and Huber, 2000). Recent research points to a gradual decline in the extent to which left/right structures voters’ choices at the ballot box (Van der Brug et al., 2007; Van der Brug, 2010). In addition to period effects by which these processes have been driven, the decline in the capacity of long-term factors to structure party preferences has a generational component (Franklin et al., 1992). Structural voting is mostly found among the generation of voters born before 1950s, which have been socialised in the era of cleavage politics. For younger generations, traditional cleavages do not explain voting preferences that well. Similarly, for voters born between 1950 and 1970, and socialised in the period of ideological polarisation, ideological considerations structure party preferences better than for younger generations (Van der Brug, 2010).

This brings us to the question which factors currently shape voters’ party preferences and whether their effects are driven by a generational change. Scholarly literature suggests that short-term considerations such as voter issue attitudes or performance assessments have become increasingly important for voters (Enelow and Hinich, 1984; Rose and McAllister, 1986; Thomassen, 2005). Although there is considerable variance with regard to which issues are important in each country, research so far lets us expect three predominant issue domains. The economically booming years of the 1960s brought forward new generations of voters for whom libertarian considerations regarding life-style and society have become more important than for older generations (Inglehart, 1977; Scarbrough, 1998; Abramson and Inglehart, 1995). Among these issues, attitudes towards abortion, sexual minorities and the role of women in society have begun to weigh more heavily on voters’ party preferences. In turn, for the older generations, socialised in the austerity of the post-war world, economic issues remained the predominant considerations. Recent literature suggests that nowadays the issues of immigration and EU integration have overshadowed other considerations in established democracies (Kriesi et al., 2006, 2008). In the process of globalisation, which accelerated in the 1970s, Western European societies have become more economically and culturally affected by immigration and the process of European integration, which has repercussions for voter preferences at the ballot box. In addition to issue considerations, scholarly literature points to the fact that voters choose the political parties more according to their performance in the government, the appeal of the leaders or their assessment of policies (Thomassen, 2005; Green and Hobolt, 2008). These performance-based factors seem to play a bigger role in structuring party preferences of the younger voters (Van der Brug, 2010).

Apart from a period effect which drives the changes in the issue- and performance-based voting, there are likely generational changes that are important. We will address this aspect in this chapter. The above considerations lead us to the following expectations on inter-generational differences. We expect structural voting to be most prominent among citizens born before the 1950s and to decline in strength for younger generations (H1). We expect left/right distance to be most prominent among voters born between 1950 and 1970 (H2). Moving to short-term determinants of the vote, we expect voting on economic issues to be strongest for generations socialised before the economic boom of the 1960s, i.e. those who were born before the 1950s (H3). Considerations regarding life-style and society will exercise stronger effect
on party preferences for generations born after the 1960s (H4). In turn, for generations born after the 1960s and socialised in and after the 1970s we expect immigration, EU integration and performance-related factors to structure party preferences stronger than for older generations (H5).

Inter-Generational Change in East Central Europe

Generational replacement in East Central European countries may result in patterns of long- and short-term factors structuring party preferences which are distinctive to those found in Western Europe. Cleavage voting takes on a different form in post-communist democracies as social class structures party preferences of voters to a weaker extent (Van der Brug et al., 2008). In East Central Europe social class stratification is weakly developed, as in the communist period class differences were thwarted. During the transition period, the capitalist class and the independently organised working class existed to a very limited extent and class divisions in political interests were weak (Lipset, 1994; Tworzecki, 2002; Kitschelt, 1992; Kitschelt et al., 1999). The market economy unleashed processes of economic interest formation, which were followed by party mobilisation aligned with these interests. As a consequence, class interests started to appear and structure party support (Evans, 1997; Evans and Whitefield, 2000). Subsequently, expectations have been aired that as the market economy gets fully established, the role of social class in structuring party preferences will increase (Szelényi et al., 1996, 1997; Evans, 1997, Jasiewicz, 2009). We may thus expect young voters, socialised in the transformation period (these born in and after the 1980s), to form their party preferences more on the basis of social class than older generations. As the former were socialised in a period where class interests were developing and were being picked up by the political system, social class may prove to be a more useful cue for them in getting their interests represented.

In contrast to class identification, religion plays a more important role for party preferences of voters in post-communist countries when compared to Western Europe (Van der Brug et al., 2008). This may appear surprising given the fact that religious expression was limited under communism. However, behind the secular façade of the regime, East Central European societies displayed different levels of religiosity (Flora et al., 2005), which were activated as an easy cue to guide voters’ preferences in the politically unstable transition period. The religious cue became especially important in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland, where religion was visible in the public life (Herbert and Fras, 2009) and where the church vs. state cleavage developed (Hloušek and Kopček, 2008). However, the resurgence of religion after 1989 was paralleled by a process of secularisation, which encompassed generations born in the 1970s (Norris and Inglehart, 2004; Dalton, 1996; Need and Evans, 2001). Therefore, we expect religion to be more important in forming party preferences for generations of voters born before 1970 for whom religion may have become a reference point after the fall of communism. For generations born after the 1970s, we expect religion to play a less important role, because these groups were socialised after processes of secularisation set in.

With regard to the third structural factor – the urban/rural cleavage – we do not expect any clear generational differences. Post-communist countries have a particularly high level of social disadvantage in rural areas (Shucksmith et al., 2009), which translates into political behaviour and determines party
preferences (Lubecki, 2004; Jasiewicz, 2009). As this social gap between urban and rural areas has not diminished in the last twenty years of transformation, we expect that the urban/rural divide will play a comparable role in structuring party preferences for all generations of voters.

Next to these expectations about the structural basis of party preferences, we expect ideology to structure party preferences of East Central European voters to a lesser extent compared to their Western European counterparts (see also Van der Brug et al., 2008). Since the transition period, ideological considerations have played a minor role for voters in deciding which party to vote for, because the party systems have been in flux, with new parties constantly emerging or elites changing political affiliation (Szelényi et al., 1997; Tavits, 2008). Moreover, larger parties have converged on economic policies due to the legacy of communism and the prospect of entering the EU (Tavits and Letki, 2009; Vachudova and Hooghe, 2009). This has made left/right a less useful cue for East Central European voters. Even 20 years after the end of communism, the East Central European party systems do not appear fully consolidated. No generation of voters in post-communist countries has been socialised into a stable political system, where voters could fully undergo the learning process with regard to where to locate party positions in left/right terms. Therefore, we expect that the degree to which left/right structures party preferences does not differ much across generations.

Similarly, we expect few differences across generations in the degree to which issue attitudes structure party preferences in post-communist countries. The post-materialist value revolution, as described by Inglehart, appeared in industrialised democracies but did not encompass communist countries. In the latter, both economic considerations and concerns over personal freedoms and the structure of society have been important for all generations of voters (Szelényi et al., 1997; Tucker, 2006). The only issue examined in this study where we expect a cross-generational difference is EU integration. Since 1989, EU integration has been a salient issue and its impact on party preferences has been greater than in Western Europe (De Vries and Tillman, 2011). For the youngest voters, born after 1989, this issue may structure party preferences to a higher extent than for other generations. The youngest voters have been socialised in a political environment where the EU has been discussed either due to economic preparations before the accession or in the context of EU membership after the accession. In turn, the immigration issue plays a minor role in post-communist countries as these countries are mainly the ‘sending’ countries. Therefore, we expect no generational differences in the extent to which immigration structures party preferences.12

We develop similar expectations for short-term performance-oriented factors such as government performance and economic evaluations. As for the most part of the transformation period there was a consensus on which economic policies needed to be implemented (Vachudova and Hooghe, 2009; Tavits and Letki, 2009), the economic issues developed into valence issues where the performance of the government in economic terms has been important for voters in their choices at the ballot box. Roberts (2008) finds evidence of hyper-accountability in post-communist countries where vote shares of governments are strongly affected by economic performance. However, this pattern may not display generational differences as there is no reason to suspect that economic evaluations will be stronger for any particular generation of voters.

12Certainly, some East Central European countries grapple with problems connected with ethnic and/or language minorities, but this is a different category to immigration on which we focus here.
To sum up, we expect to find the following generational trends in post-communist countries. Religion will explain party preferences better for generations born before 1970, but less for those born after 1970s (H6). For voters born in and after the 1980s we expect that social class will structure party preferences to a larger extent than for older generations (H7). We expect no generational differences in the degree to which the urban/rural divide, the left/right ideology and short-term predictors structure party preferences. This latter prediction pertains to socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian issues, economic performance and government evaluation. The only exception, however, pertains to EU issue voting, which we expect to be stronger for voters born after 1989 (H8).

**DATA AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

In this chapter we employ the European Election Study 2009 which is a representative study of the electorates of all countries in the European Union. In order to meaningfully compare the effects of long- and short-term factors on party preferences across country groups and across generations, we employ a research design proposed by Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996). We create a stacked data matrix in which the unit of analysis is the respondent*party combination (Tillie 1995; Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; Van der Eijk et al. 2006). The outcome variable is the observed strength of support that a respondent assigns to all political parties in her party system. In each country, voters are asked how likely it is (on an 11-point scale) that they will ever vote for a list of political parties. These propensities to vote depict what makes a vote for a particular party attractive to voters. Propensities can be regarded as preferences, because voters generally decide to vote for the party they most prefer. In the stacked data matrix the respondent appears as many times as there are parties for which voters' propensities to support are measured. Thus, the level of analysis is effectively changed from the individual level to the individual*party level. For the purpose of our study, we have created two stacked data matrices, one for established democracies, including Cyprus and Malta, and the other for consolidating post-communist democracies.

Our variables of interest are long- and short-term determinants of party preferences. As our outcome variable in the stacked data matrices reflects preferences of voters for all political parties, the explanatory variables need to be transformed in order to reflect the relation between a respondent and each of the political parties. The effect of left/right ideology is estimated by a variable, which expresses the distance between each respondent and each of the political parties in terms of left/right. We employ a question which requires the respondent to indicate how she would place herself on an 11-point left/right scale, as well as how she perceives the political parties on an identical left/right scale. For most respondents would vote for the party to which they give the highest propensity score. The use of vote propensities to analyze the determinants of party preferences has been validated by Tillie (1995) and Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996). Cyprus and Malta appear in this study as established democracies, because their party systems are more consolidated and their electorates have been socialised to electoral rules since those countries gained independence in the 1960s. In turn, the East Central European countries have enjoyed democracy only for the last 20 years, where only the youngest generation has been socialised in a free electoral system. The distance variable is computed as the absolute difference between a respondent’s left/right position and her perception of where the political party stands in terms of left/right. If the respondent did not answer the question on the position of any particular party, we replaced the missing value with the national sample mean of the
variables, no distance measures can be constructed, so that the link between the voter and the party has to be constructed inductively. We do this before we construct the stacked data matrix in a set of separate analyses, one for each party in each political system, in which we predict party preference from the respondent characteristic(s) in question. For example, when creating a variable measuring the affinity between the respondents’ social class and party preference, we run a series of regression analyses predicting the propensity to vote for each party on the basis of respondents’ social class. The predicted scores of these regressions per party, y-hats in statistical parlance, are saved and used as the new explanatory variable. These y-hats are simply linear transformations of the original explanatory variables, scaled according to the outcome variable (i.e. the 11-point vote propensity scores). They can be added to the stacked data matrix since they are comparable across parties and countries. Although we do not have distance measures for these variables, and thus we cannot express the voter-party relationship in the data matrix deductively, this transformation provides an inductive means to express that relationship. In this way, we created explanatory variables, one at a time, party-by-party and country-by-country, which could be included in a stacked data matrix in which the outcome variable is composed of party preferences for all parties across all countries.

The original dataset contains approximately 1000 respondents per country, so that the whole data set has 27,000 respondents. The propensity to support-question has been asked for 6 to 7 parties on average. Since the number of parties varies per country, countries with a large number of parties would weight more heavily on the results. To avoid this, we weighted the cases in such a way that each country has the same number of respondents*party combinations (6,115 per country). The stacked dataset employed in this study contains 165,105 records.

Our explanatory variables are operationalized as follows. Religion is a composite variable operationalized as the y-hats obtained in a regression where propensities to support parties are predicted by categorical variables which indicate whether respondents belong to a religious denomination, how often they attend religious services and how religious they see themselves. Social class is created in the same procedure from a question in which respondents were asked to indicate their occupation. The EES 2009 contains 12 categories of occupational status which are identical in all countries, and which have been included in the analyses by means of 11 dummy variables. The urban/rural divide is operationalized with the question whether respondents live in a rural area or village, small or middle-sized town, suburbs of large town or city or large town or city.

In order to tap into socio-economic issues, we use voters’ responses to the following statements: “Private enterprise is the best way to solve your country’s economic problems” (Enterprise), “Major public services and industries ought to be in state ownership” (Ownership), “Politics should abstain from intervening in the economy” (Intervention), “Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people” (Redistribution). For libertarian-authoritarian issues, we employ the following statements: “Same-sex marriages should be prohibited by law” (Same-Sex Marriage), “Women should be free to decide on matters of abortion” (Abortion), “People who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days” (Law & Order), “Schools must teach children to obey authority” perceived party position. In this way, we lost only respondents who did not place themselves on the left/right scale.

These scores present problems of analysis unless they are centred around the same mean for all parties. In practice we subtract the mean value for each party, turning all of them into deviations from zero.
(Authority) as well as “A women should be prepared to cut down on her paid work for the sake of her family” (Family). In order to measure the impact of Immigration, we use voters’ responses to the following statements: “Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of your country” and “Immigration to your country should be decreased significantly”. Voters’ responses are measured here on a 5-point Likert ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’. For the purposes of operationalizing EU integration, we use questions on whether respondents regard EU membership of their country as a good or bad thing or neither, and whether they think that European unification has gone too far or should be pushed further. Finally, Government Performance uses the question whether respondents’ approve or disapprove of the government’s record to date and Retrospective Economic Evaluation uses the question how the respondent assesses the economic situation in the country compared to 12 months ago.

In order to explore inter-generational effects, we have divided the respondents in 8 cohorts where each of them represents respondents born in 10 consecutive years. The oldest cohort gathers voters born before 1929, while the youngest stands for voters born in and after 1989, i.e. after the fall of communism in East Central Europe. We regress in each stacked data matrix the propensities to vote for political parties on our variables of interest for each generation. In order to account for the dependency among observations pertaining to the same respondent, we use the Huber-White-Sandwich estimate of variance (Rogers, 1993; Williams, 2000).

We will compare the effects of different predictors for each generational cohort, on the basis of the Adjusted R², which is an indicator of the extent to which the variable of interest explains the total variance in our outcome variable i.e. party preferences. The R² values obtained for every generation are gathered in a separate dataset, on the basis of which we will visually present our results. Formally speaking, there are no statistical tests of the differences between the different generational cohorts, because the analyses are not nested. Yet, it is important to realise that we have a very large sample of respondents, so that we think it is safe to interpret any meaningful patterns as real and not resulting from sampling errors. This is, after all, mainly a problem when dealing with smaller samples. However, we have conducted significance tests to assess whether R²’s from regressions improved significantly when adding a new variable to the equation. The analyses showed that improvements of the R² of .005% or more are statistically significant.

17 We explored the dimensionality of voters’ attitudes towards socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian issues, EU integration and immigration in each political system with non-parametric Mokken scaling (Mokken, 1971; Van Schuur, 2003). Socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian issues scale differently across countries, thus we treat each item as a separate predictor. In turn, items related to immigration form a common scale both in countries of Western Europe and East Central Europe. In established democracies, the Loevinger H coefficient amounts to .44, while in the consolidating democracies the value of this coefficient is .32. Similarly, items related to EU integration form a common scale in Western European countries (H coefficient is .37) and East Central European countries (H coefficient of .52). Therefore, we have combined the items related to immigration in one scale and the items pertaining to EU integration into another scale before applying the y-hat procedure.
FINDINGS

The analyses of generational differences in the extent to which long- and short-term factors determine party preferences across eight generational cohorts are presented in two figures. Figure 2.1 presents the analysis for the established democracies of Western Europe, while Figure 2.2 shows the results for the consolidating democracies of East Central Europe. The horizontal axis depicts eight generational cohorts, while the vertical axis shows the value of the increase in $R^2$ when adding the respective variable to a model. In these models we follow the logic of the ‘funnel of causality’ from the Michigan model (Campbell et al., 1960) where stable long-term predictors precede more unstable short-term predictors of the vote. When computing these $R^2$’s, we present the increase in $R^2$ when a short-term predictor is added to a model that includes more long-term predictors of party support. Following this logic, the effects of social class, religion and urbanisation are simply the $R^2$’s of bivariate regressions. These predictors are considered to be the most stable characteristics of voters, which are not affected by ideology or issue preferences. Since the purpose is to assess the total effect of these variables, we do not need to control for short-term predictors of party preferences. The effect of left/right distance is measured as the differences in $R^2$ between a model that includes only structural variables (religion, social class and urbanisation) and a model that includes these variables as well as left/right distance. Left/right positions may to some extent derive from religious affiliations and class positions, but not the other way around. The effects of the other (short-term) predictors of the vote are assessed by taking the difference between a model that includes structural predictors and left/right distance and a model that includes these variables as well as the respective predictor. In this chapter, results from such a ‘funnel of causality’ model are presented.18

We first turn to the results for the established democracies of Western Europe, which are presented in Figure 2.1. In line with our theoretical predictions, the upper left box shows that religion has the most explanatory power for generations born before 1949 (5% of variance explained). The predictive power of this variable decreases for younger generations and is minor for the youngest generations (2.5%). However, the effect of social class seems to be stable across generations. For each cohort the variance explained oscillates around 4%. As far as the urban/rural divide is concerned, its effect on party preferences is negligible, which is in line with previous studies. For each generation, this variable explains less than 1% of the total variance in party support. In addition to separate regressions of party preferences on each structural factor at a time, we conducted regressions for three factors combined and graphed the variance explained for each cohort. The pattern depicted by the line ‘structural’ shows that for the oldest generations (born before 1949) structural factors have more explanatory power (10%) than for the younger ones (around 6%). For the youngest cohort (born after 1989) structural factors explain the smallest amount of variance (5%). We can confirm our hypothesis H1 with regard to the inter-generational effect of religion and all structural factors combined, while the isolated effect of social class proves to be stable across generations. Left/right considerations, in turn, explain party support to the highest extent among all factors under study. For voters born before 1949, left/right considerations explain 15% of the total variance in party preferences. For the generation born between 1949 and 1959 the variance explained is the highest and amounts to 16%. For each subsequent generation, left/right explains party support to a lesser extent. For the youngest cohort born after 1989, left/right accounts for

18 However, in order to cross-validate these results, we have conducted bivariate regressions of propensities to vote on each of the explanatory variables separately. These results, presented in Appendix III, do not substantially differ from the ‘funnel of causality’ model.
12% of the total variance. This finding points in the direction of our expectations, according to which we would find the strongest effect of left/right among generations born between the 1950s and 1970s (H2), but this pattern is rather weak.

Now we turn to results pertaining to short-term determinants of party preferences. Since the effects of these variables are much weaker than those of the long-term determinants, we changed the scales on the y-axes in order to better visualise the inter-generational changes. None of the socio-economic variables has a strong effect on party preferences: the increase in $R^2$ as a result of adding these variables is never more than 2%. We see only small differences between generations in how these issue attitudes structure party support. To the extent that there are differences, the effects tend to be weaker for the older generations than for the younger ones. This is in contrast to H3. Moving to libertarian-authoritarian issues, we see a similar pattern as for socio-economic issues. The effects of these issues are generally weak. There are small differences among generations, but the effects are slightly stronger among the younger generations. The latter finding is in line with H4. In turn, we see a clear generational effect for the immigration issue. For voters born before 1929 attitudes towards immigration have hardly any effect on party preferences (around .05%). Yet, for each subsequent cohort the effect of immigration on party preferences is stronger. The effect is particularly strong for each of the cohorts born after 1959. For the youngest cohort, immigration explains 3.5% of variance in party preferences, nearly as much as social class. While this finding provides support for H5, we do not see a comparable pattern for attitudes towards EU integration. The impact of these attitudes on party preferences is quite stable across generations, but it is weaker for the oldest and the youngest cohorts.

The last box in Figure 2.1 shows that government performance explains a substantive amount of party support. The effect is stronger than the effects of issues, and very similar to the effects of structural factors. For cohorts born before 1969, the variance explained amounts to an increase in $R^2$ of around 4 to 5%. Surprisingly, the explanatory power decreases for younger generations, while H5 predicted an increase. Equally surprising is the fact that economic evaluations have a rather weak effect on party support and there is little difference between the generations. In sum, the analyses for Western Europe

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19 We also conducted some robustness checks to assess whether there are important differences in inter-generational trends among Western European countries. First, we divided these countries in two groups according to how long they have been democratic. The first group encompasses oldest democracies with Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK. The second group counts Spain, Greece, Portugal, Malta and Cyprus. In both groups we see the same inter-generational patterns regarding structural factors. The variance explained by religion and all structural factors combined decreases for generations born after 1949, while the effect of social class seems to be stable across generations. Furthermore, left/right explains the least amount of variance in party preferences for the younger generations born after 1969. With regard to generations born between 1950s and 1960s it is only in the first group of countries that left/right accounts for most variance in party preferences. In the second country group we do not see such a pattern. Secondly, we conducted a jack-knife test, where we excluded each country at a time from the analysis and re-estimated the variance explained. Also here, the results were substantially the same.

20 The stronger effect of immigration is particularly visible in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK. Here, the variance explained by immigration raises to 4% for generations born after 1979, while for oldest generation it is lower than .05%. A similar, although weaker, trend we observe for Spain, Greece, Portugal, Malta and Cyprus, where variance explained by immigration for the younger generations reaches 2%.

21 The low variance explained cannot be attributed to a small number of observations for the youngest cohort. In fact, in the cohort born after 1989 we have 3227 observations, which is enough to yield substantive results. In addition, we find the same inter-generational trends for evaluations of the economy and government performance in separate analyses which we conducted for Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Ireland,
provide little support for the various hypotheses we derived from the literature. How about the consolidating democracies in East Central Europe?

**Figure 2.1 Impact of Long- and Short-Term Determinants of Party Preferences in Western Europe across Generations**

*Notes: Figure 2.1 shows the extent to which long- and short-term factors determine party preferences in Western Europe for eight generations of voters. The vertical axis depicts the total variance explained in the outcome variable (i.e. party preferences) by each of the structural factors, left/right distance, attitudes towards issues and performance-oriented factors separately.*

Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK on the one hand and Spain, Greece, Portugal, Malta and Cyprus on the other. These results hold if we remove one country at a time from the analysis.
Figure 2.2 depicts the extent to which long- and short-term factors determine party preferences across eight generations in East Central European countries. We focus first on long-term determinants. The most striking result is the strong effect of religion, particularly for the generation born before 1929. Here, religion explains around 16% of the total variance in party support. For subsequent generations born between 1939 and 1979 the amount of explained variance is much smaller and amounts to a bit more than 6%. For the youngest cohorts born after 1979 the variance explained by religion is the smallest, amounting to exactly 5%. This finding is consistent with H6.

As for social class, we see a slight increase in the amount of variance explained by this factor across generations. For generations born before 1939 social class explains only about 1.5% of the total variance. For the subsequent generations the explained variance increases to 3.5% and is the highest (with 4%) for the youngest generation born after 1989. This finding is consistent with H7. The third structural factor, i.e. the urban/rural divide, structures party preferences of East Central European countries to a weak extent. We find here no distinguishable differences between generations, as predicted by H8. When we look at the variance explained by all structural factors, we see a more or less stable line, where variance oscillates around .8. This does not surprise us as it is a composite of all effects, two of which – religion and social class – show opposite trends across generations.

The last long-term factor under consideration here – ideology – has a good capacity to explain party preferences of East Central European voters. For generations born before 1949 left/right considerations explain around 9% of total variance in party support, while for the generations born after 1949 this factor explains slightly less, namely 8% of total variance, and is quite stable across the younger generations. For the youngest generation born after 1989, left/right structures party preferences to the weakest extent, i.e. the variance explained in party preferences amounts to 5.5%. We did not anticipate that we would see a declining pattern in the extent to which left/right considerations affect party preferences of East Central European voters, which resembles the one in Western Europe.

Now we turn to the degree to which short-term factors explain party preferences in East Central Europe. In accordance with our expectations we see hardly any distinguishable generational variation in the extent to which libertarian-authoritarian issues and immigration structure party preferences in post-communist countries. Furthermore, the effects of these variables are quite weak within all generations. In turn, we see that attitudes towards socio-economic issues explain slightly more variance for voters born before 1939, but this pattern is very small. Furthermore, we observe that EU integration explains party support best for the generation born after 1989, which we expected. For this cohort, attitudes towards EU integration explain over 3% of the total variance in party support. However, the effect of this issue is also relatively strong for the generation born during or shortly after World War II, which we had not anticipated.

As far as performance-related factors are concerned, we see that evaluations of government performance explain party preferences of East Central European voters quite well. Perhaps surprisingly, Figure 2.2 shows that this factor structures party preferences better for older than for younger voters. For generations born before 1939 government performance adds almost 6% to the explained variance in party

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22 This drop in the variance explained has not been caused by the small amount of observations for the generation born after 1989. In consolidating democracies the size of this cohort amounts to 1741 observations.
preferences, while for younger cohorts it drops substantially. For voters born after 1989 government performance explains hardly any variance in party support (slightly above 1%). A similar, although not so steep, pattern, can be observed for retrospective economic evaluations. All these findings support our hypothesis H8, except for the part regarding ideology as we did not expect weaker effects of this factor for the youngest generation.

Figure 2.2 Impact of Long- and Short-Term Determinants of Party Preferences in East Central Europe across Generations

Notes: Figure 2.2 shows the extent to which long- and short-term factors determine party preferences in East Central Europe for eight generations of voters. The vertical axis depicts the total variance explained in the outcome variable (i.e. party preferences) by each of the structural factors, left/right distance, attitudes towards issues and performance-oriented factors separately.
CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Since the late 1960s, we have been witnessing a decline in cleavage-based voting throughout Western Europe (e.g. Franklin, et al., 1992). Traditional models of vote choice painted pictures of stable electorates strongly tied to specific parties through deeply rooted social divisions (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). This electoral landscape has been dramatically disrupted in the 1960s. Due to the processes of social and political modernisation, traditional linkages between parties and voters began to weaken, resulting in a steady rise of electoral volatility (Franklin, et al., 1992; Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000). This process of electoral change also gave rise to issue- and performance-based voting (Dalton, 1996). Confronted with these intertwined processes of diminishing cleavage-based voting and the allegedly increasing importance of short-term factors, electoral researchers have been facing new challenges in capturing what motivates voters at the ballot box. This study addresses the question to which extent these processes might be driven by generational replacement. We explored this question by comparing generational differences within established and consolidating European democracies. As the socialisation of the electorates has been starkly different between Western and East Central Europe, we utilised this natural variation to test if the determinants of party preferences between these two contexts indeed reflect differing trends across differently socialised generations.

Our study has shown that in established democracies long-terms factors such as social class and religion as well as left/right ideology exert weak effects on the party preferences of younger generations of voters. To a certain degree structural factors and left/right have been replaced by a stronger effect of issues among younger generations, particularly attitudes towards immigration, which explain party preferences of younger voters much better than for older cohorts. Since this study relies on cross-sectional data, we cannot clearly distinguish between life-cycle effects and generational effects. Prior studies have provided convincing evidence that early adulthood socialisation affects people’s political behaviour also later in life (e.g. Franklin 2004; Lyons and Alexander 2000; Hooghe 2004). Therefore, it seems safe to assume that the differences in behavioural patterns between generations will, at least to some extent, remain to exist also later in life. On the basis of this assumption, we may interpret these results as evidence of de-alignment as well as re-alignment. To the extent that behavioural patterns of young voters are stable, their behaviour can be explained less well by long-term determinants than the behaviour of older generations. This suggests de-alignment. Yet, their party preferences are more strongly affected by attitudes towards migration policies, which suggests re-alignment along a libertarian-authoritarian dimension.

One of the guiding hypotheses of this chapter was that that young voters form their party preferences on the basis of short-term factors and older generations on the basis of long-term factors. Yet, this hypothesis has not been confirmed. Firstly, the differences between generations are quite minor. Left/right distance remains the strongest determinant of electoral preferences among all generations. Secondly, evaluations of performance of the government and the economy play a weaker role in decisions of younger generations than of older generations.

With regard to the consolidating democracies of East Central Europe, we observe larger differences between generations. For the pre-war generations in East Central Europe, religion is a very important cue that helps these citizens to orient themselves in a new party system that is sometimes still in
Social class, on the other hand, has a stronger capacity to structure party preferences for the young generations, socialised in the transformation period. Attitudes towards the EU are also very important for these younger cohorts, while, just as in Western Europe, left/right considerations and performance-oriented factors have a weaker capacity to explain party choice.

These shifts have implications for the nature of political support, party platforms and political conflict. Furthermore, they may be at the root of electoral volatility (Crewe and Denver, 1985). Until the 1960s, parties with a large membership socialised younger generations to have party attachments on the basis of social cleavages. Parties are nowadays campaign parties without a large membership base. They do not socialise young voters to base their party preferences on social cleavages nor on ideological considerations. As a result, electoral decisions of younger generations are bound to become less structured, and hence more volatile.

What remains unexplained, and deserves further research, is why the performance-related factors account for party preferences of voters born after 1989 to such a weak extent. Both in established and in consolidating democracies we observe that the degree to which the evaluations of the government and the economy explain party preferences declines across generations, but it is particularly weak for the youngest cohort. The question arises whether this effect is attributable to a life-cycle effect. The youngest voters may still need time to develop the perceptual capacity of party promises and performance to be able to use the evaluation judgments at the ballot box. With the electoral maturing of these voters, we may see that performance evaluations may play a greater role for them in choosing which political party to vote for. Irrespective of this question that deserves further inquiry, we show that the process of de-alignment has been under way in both Western and East Central Europe. In the West, the issue of immigration has clearly become more important for younger cohorts, while in the East social class and EU integration explain party choice better for the generations socialised after the fall of communism. These processes may likely become more pronounced with further generational changes.
Chapter 3

The Lack of a Shared Belief System:
Why Most European Voters Will Not Have Their Attitudes Represented in the European Parliament?
Abstract

A necessary precondition for effective representation in democratic systems is that attitudes of representatives are structured in the same way as those of citizens. This chapter employs the European Election Study and the European Parliament Election Candidate Survey 2009 to examine the extent to which this precondition is fulfilled in the European elections in 27 EU member states. It analyses whether a common belief system exists among mass publics and political representatives to the European Parliament and whether this belief system varies for citizens with different levels of political sophistication. Furthermore, it explores how well voters are represented at the aggregate level. The results point to substantive gaps in representation both in Western and East Central Europe.
INTRODUCTION

In representative democracies citizens elect others to represent them in the political domain. Since these representatives act on behalf of the citizens they represent, the quality of the democratic representation depends to a large extent on the link between citizens and their representatives. Democratic representation is therefore a crucial topic in the study of democratic political systems (e.g. Miller et al., 1999; Shapiro et al., 2010).

In European research, questions of representation have been studied mostly with the focus on political parties, because parties, rather than individual candidates, are the prime actors in elections. The strong party discipline in European countries ensures that “citizens in Western democracies are represented through and by parties” (Sartori, 1968: 471). There are different normative perspectives on what parties ought to represent (interests, attitudes, or social and demographic characteristics) and on the question whether parties ought to act on behalf of the electorates or as their trustee. This study will not enter into such debates, but will focus only on the quality of representation of citizen attitudes. Since there are various links in the “political chain of democratic command and control” (Keman, 1996), the relationship between citizens and their representatives is very indirect. The responsible party model (e.g. Thomassen, 1994) has outlined a number of preconditions for effective representation in parliamentary systems. Next to several requirements imposed on parties and voters, such as different policy programmes and internal cohesion of parties on the one hand and voter capacity to distinguish between such offers on the other, the responsible party model names a common belief system between citizens and political elites as a crucial requirement for effective representation. The main research question that we pose in this chapter is whether citizens of 27 EU member states and candidates for members of the European Parliament share such a common belief system.

Several contributions to representation literature have argued that the mass-elite linkage will be effective, both in national and European elections, as long as party platforms and citizen attitudes are structured by one single ideological dimension, namely left/right (Thomassen, 1999, 2009). In that case, voters could simply vote for a party that is close to their position on the left/right dimension, and this party would then represent their attitudes towards the major issues. If the positions of parties and voters are structured by more dimensions, representation is still possible, but many parties need to exist to satisfy the supply as the various combinations of positions on different dimensions increase exponentially with the number of dimensions. Recent empirical observations offer indications that left/right has lost its capacity to structure behaviour of parties and voters as mainstream parties have converged on the left/right dimension (e.g. Green and Hobolt, 2008; Pennings and Keman, 2003) and citizen attitudes on several issues, such as immigration and EU integration, are weakly structured by the traditional left/right dimension (Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009). Therefore, in examining a common belief system we need to go beyond left/right and look whether attitudes of political elites and voters on basic packages of policy issues are structured in the same way.

This chapter examines the quality of the mass-elite linkage in elections to the European Parliament by asking two questions. Firstly, is there a common belief system between citizens and political candidates for elections to the European Parliament? Secondly, are there differences among citizens with different levels of political sophistication in how well their belief system corresponds to that of elites? This study is the first to investigate the correspondence of attitude structures between citizens...
and candidates to the European Parliament. Research to date has mostly focused on how attitudes are structured in particular countries, especially those of Western Europe. Very few studies exist on East Central European countries, primarily due to the lack of appropriate data. A considerable amount of research has been carried out on how attitudes are structured at the level of political parties. However, little is known about the structure of attitudes among political elites. This chapter fills this lacuna by employing cross-country datasets - European Election Study and European Parliament Election Candidate Survey 2009.

When analysing the positioning of voters and candidates to the European Parliament in the dimensional space, we focus on the parties rather than on party groups. Even though (national) parties are organised in party groups in the European Parliament, EP elections are still organised at the national level. As the process of representation in the European Parliament first and foremost runs through the election of national parties, we study attitude congruence between voters and representatives of the party they voted for in the European election.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The next section outlines the theoretical framework. The third section explains the methodology and data used for this study. Section four presents our findings, while the final section discusses the implications of this research.

**THEORETICAL DISCUSSION**

This chapter addresses the problem of representation from the perspective of the existence of common belief structures among citizens and political elites. It does not study the process by which common belief structures emerge at the level of voters and political elites. To some degree citizens probably rely on the cues they take from political elites when relating values and ideological orientations to position taking on concrete issues. Similarly, political parties may adjust their attitudes towards issues on the basis of opinion polls. However, in this study we do not focus on the dynamic relations between position taking of voters and elites. Instead, we take a snapshot and focus on the ways in which attitudes are structured at the level of voters and political elites and how congruent they are.

Scholarly literature to date has mainly focused on three aspects of representation - symbolic, descriptive and substantive (Pitkin, 1967). Research on symbolic representation has examined whether the presence of representatives with certain ascriptive characteristics, such as race or gender, affects attitudes of groups which hold the same characteristics (e.g. Lawless, 2004; Childs, 2008). For research on descriptive representation it is of primary interest whether and to which extent representatives with such ascriptive characteristics can represent groups that possess the same characteristics better than other representatives (e.g. Mansbridge, 1999; Pantoja and Segura, 2003). Substantive representation, in turn, looks at the correspondence of issue attitudes of citizens with issue attitudes of representatives and subsequent policy outcomes. Here, studies of voter-party or citizen-government congruence, both on the left/right and substantive issues, and the mediating effects of electoral systems predominate (e.g. Huber and Powell, 1994; Blais and Bodet, 2006; Golder and Stramski, 2010). Our study speaks to literature on substantive representation.
A common belief system between citizens and political elites is an important precondition for substantive representation. As the focus here lies on the ‘representation’ of attitudes, we study politicians who aspire to fulfill the function of representatives. Therefore, we use the terms ‘political elites’ and ‘candidates’ interchangeably. An attitude structure exists when a person’s attitudes towards two or more issues are related to each other, in other words, when they are constrained (Converse, 1964; Luskin, 1987). In turn, if all individuals combine their attitudes towards different issues in idiosyncratic ways, there is no ‘common belief system’, and we are not able to observe constraint empirically. If attitudes towards a number of issues are constrained we can speak of a comprehensive attitude structure, or a belief system (Converse, 1964; Lewis-Back et al., 2008: 203-204). An attitude structure which combines attitudes towards a broad range of important issues has been described as an ideological dimension (Campbell et al., 1960: 192).

This chapter focuses on the existence of a common belief system i.e. a structure of attitudes on basic issue packages among European voters and political elites. The presence of a shared belief system is important for the mass-elite linkage in every democratic election, be it at the local, national or European level. If issue attitudes of political elites and citizens are structured in the same way and if representatives take positions in this dimensional space similar to their voters, these representatives do indeed represent the attitudes of their voters. Thus a common attitude structure and a common location in that structure will guarantee that political candidates have the same worldview as their voters, which bodes well for substantive representation.

If attitudes of citizens and political elites are structured in the same way, citizens have the most opportunities to have their attitudes represented through democratic elections. In particular, a one-dimensional space offers opportunities for accurate representation. In a one-dimensional attitude space, e.g. left/right, political parties offer policy packages which differ only in direction (left-leaning or right-leaning) and in terms of how moderate or radical the position is. In such a constellation, most voters will find a party that is close to their most preferred position on all issues structured by this dimension. Representation will be more difficult in a multi-dimensional space. In such a space, the number of possible combinations of attitudes among citizens and of policy positions among political parties is much greater. With two dimensions e.g. socio-economic left/right and progressive-conservative, there are four possible attitude combinations i.e. left-conservative, left-progressive, right-conservative and right-progressive, while with one dimension, e.g. left/right, voters can only make distinction among left-wing and right-wing policy proposals. If attitudes of voters are structured by several dimensions, more parties will be needed in a party system to satisfy the demand for all possible attitude combinations. The number of parties needed to cover the demand increases exponentially with the number of attitude dimensions.

The positioning of parties and citizens in the dimensional space is crucial as well. Attitudes of citizens will be well represented in a one- or multi-dimensional space if parties and voters are positioned in the same place on each dimension. However, if there is a mismatch in the positioning of citizens and political elites, voters will not be represented on a number of issues (or ideological dimensions). For instance, if parties offer only certain packages of attitudes e.g. right-conservative and left-progressive in a two-dimensional space, it will be difficult for some voters who combine right-libertarian attitudes to find a party that offers this combination of attitudes. A similar mismatch in the demand and supply of issue positions will arise if the issue space at the level of political representatives is constrained by fewer
dimensions than among citizens. Here again, the political party that voters choose may be close on the
dimension that structures party competition, but congruence on other issues will be difficult to reach. This
may result in a trade-off with regard to which issues voters consider to be important.

A common belief system is important for political elites as well. As previous literature asserts,
representatives tend to estimate policy views of their voters on the basis of the ideological stand of their
party (Thomassen, 1999). If attitudes of political candidates and citizens are structured in the same way,
political elites will be able to correctly estimate the issue positions of their supporters. This estimation is
simplest if attitudes are structured by one dimension as all issues are aligned in the same way. If
representatives have a correct notion on which issue positions citizens hold, they are more likely to act in
accordance with the “wants, needs and demands of the public in making the government policy”
(Luttbeg, 1974), because this is likely to increase their electoral support. In turn, when attitudes of elites
and mass publics are structured differently, inference on where citizens stand on issues is more difficult.
As a result, representatives are less likely to be responsive to the policy preferences of their potential
voters.

The first question that we pose here is how attitudes of citizens and political candidates for the
European Parliament are structured. Research so far has offered some indications with regard to which
attitude structure we may find among citizens. However, this knowledge is limited mostly to Western
European countries, while very little is known about consolidating democracies in East Central Europe.
There are indications that common attitude dimensions exist in Western European countries. Left-wing
socio-economic attitudes are associated with green, alternative and libertarian attitudes (GAL), while
right-wing socio-economic attitudes go together with traditional, authoritarian and nationalist attitudes
(TAN). In East Central Europe, in turn, there is an affinity between left-wing socio-economic and TAN
attitudes, while right-wing socio-economic attitudes are associated with GAL (e.g. Kitschelt, 1992;
Vachudova and Hooghe, 2009). Because prior research observed differences in attitude structures
between East and West, we have decided to study the established democracies of Western Europe and
consolidating democracies of East Central Europe separately.

When it comes to political elites, scarcely any research exists on how their attitudes are structured.
In a study of representatives to the European Parliament, Thomassen and Schmitt (1999) have shown that
by the end of the 1990s, attitudes of candidates for the European Parliament were structured by two
dimensions, which encompassed attitudes towards issues in the socio-economic and libertarian-
authoritarian domain. At this point, only representatives from Western European countries were taken
into account. In East Central Europe, in turn, there is some evidence that attitudes of political elites have
been structured by several dimensions. In the mid-1990s, dimensions pertaining to socio-economic and
libertarian-authoritarian attitudes as well as those indicating religious-secular and privatisation vs. anti-
privatisation divides were uncovered (Markowski, 1997).

When it comes to mass publics, however, attitudes appear to be structured along two dimensions
in Western European countries (e.g. Kriesi et al., 2008; Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009). The first
dimension encompasses attitudes towards issues associated with the traditional division between greater
role of the state in the economy and market liberalism. The second dimension consists of issue attitudes
towards lifestyle, ecology, cultural diversity, nationalism and immigration. This dimension of
contestation has been labelled in the literature as post-materialist/materialist, new politics/old politics,
green/traditionalist and libertarian/authoritarian (e.g. Inglehart, 1990; Kitschelt and McGann, 1997).

However, it is contested whether citizen attitudes towards EU integration and immigration belong to these dimensions. Gabel and Anderson (2002) show that citizen attitudes towards EU policy issues are organised along one dimension, which is independent from all other attitude dimensions. However, other studies show that attitudes towards European integration and immigration have been assimilated by the dimension encompassing libertarian-authoritarian issues (Kriesi et al., 2008). Some evidence exists that attitudes of citizens in East Central Europe are structured by two dimensions as well. Studies of citizen attitudes in the 1990s have found a socio-economic dimension similar to that in Western Europe, while the second dimension was defined by cultural issues, including de-communisation and clericalism (Markowski, 1997; Tworzecki, 2002). Based on previous research, we could expect that we will find a two-dimensional structure of attitudes at the level of citizens and political elites, but what is the exact content of these dimensions remains an empirical question. Thus, this chapter will uncover the structure of belief systems at the level of political elites and mass publics in both regions of Europe.

The second question that arises here is whether we will observe differences across citizens in how well their belief system corresponds to that of elites. There is a considerable variation among citizens with respect to the level of political sophistication (Converse, 1964; Luskin, 1987). Scholarly literature offers substantive evidence that individuals who are more knowledgeable about politics are more likely to possess real attitudes i.e. attitudes which they hold with conviction, in contradistinction to non-attitudes held by less sophisticated citizens. Well-informed citizens exhibit issue attitudes which are more constrained and more stable over time. Thus, such citizens are more likely to possess a well-organised structure of interconnected attitudes on a broad scope of issues (Converse, 1964; Klingemann, 1979a, 1979b). This also applies to political elites, which by the virtue of their engagement in the political discourse have more organised attitudes on political issues (Converse, 1964; Zaller, 1992). In turn, less sophisticated citizens hold attitudes which are much less constrained or even ambivalent (Converse, 1964; Alvarez and Brehm, 2002). Research shows that more knowledgeable citizens are more likely to use ideological concepts correctly and they are more adept in using heuristics (e.g. Converse, 1964; Lau and Redlawsk, 2001). Furthermore, political information strengthens the relationship between positions that citizens take on issues of the day and deep-seated attitudes they hold (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Zaller, 1992). Given substantive evidence in the literature about the role of political information in cognition and attitude structuration, we expect that political elites and citizens who are more politically informed will hold a clear attitude structure. In turn, for less sophisticated citizens we expect to find a less constrained belief system. In the following, we will explore whether differences between citizens exist in how their belief system is structured.

DATA AND RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to explore the dimensionality of attitudes among citizens and candidates for the European Parliament (MEP candidates), we employ the 2009 European Election Study (EES 2009; Van Egnont et al., 2010) and the European Parliament Election Candidate Survey (EECS 2009; Giebler et al., 2010). The voter study (EES) was fielded immediately following the EP elections of June 2009, with independently drawn samples of over 1000 respondents in each of EU’s 27 member states. The candidate survey (EECS) was carried out shortly before and after the EP elections on more than 6500 candidates and 260 parties.
running in the elections. The survey of candidates is the best available measure of where party representatives stand on substantive issues.

In these surveys, both voters and MEP candidates were asked to express whether they agree or disagree (on Likert scales ranging from 1 to 5) with the following statements: "Private enterprise is the best way to solve your country’s economic problems" (we call this item Enterprise), "Major public services and industries ought to be in state ownership" (Ownership), "Politics should abstain from intervening in the economy" (Intervention), "Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people" (Redistribution), "Same-sex marriages should be prohibited by law" (Same-Sex Marriage), "Women should be free to decide on matters of abortion" (Abortion), "People who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days" (Law & Order), "Schools must teach children to obey authority" (Authority), "EU treaty changes should be decided by referendum" (Referendum), "A woman should be prepared to cut down on her paid work for the sake of her family" (Family), "Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of (country of respondent)" (Adaptation of Immigrants) and "Immigration to (country of respondent) should be decreased significantly" (Decrease of Immigration). Attitudes towards EU integration are measured with the question whether EU unification should be pushed further or whether it has already gone too far (EU Integration). These items were re-coded on the same scale so that low scores indicate left-wing or libertarian attitudes and high scores indicate right-wing or authoritarian attitudes.

We explore the dimensionality of attitudes for voters stratified according to three levels of political sophistication. We measure political sophistication with the degree of political interest and political knowledge that voters display. Political interest is operationalized with a question in which respondents report their level of interest in politics, ranging from 1 (‘very interested’) to 4 (‘not at all interested’). Political knowledge is measured with respondents’ answers to 8 factual questions about national and EU politics. In order to assess whether the questions on political interest and knowledge relate to a single latent dimension, responses to these items have been analysed for each country separately by means of Mokken scaling (Mokken, 1971; Van Schuur, 2003). This procedure stems from Item Response Theory.23 The Mokken scale analysis shows that the question on political interest and political knowledge questions form an underlying dimension, although the number of the items that fit the scale varies from country to country. Thus, we constructed a political sophistication scale for each country separately. In all countries this scale includes the political interest question and at least 2 political knowledge items.24 The correct answers to political knowledge questions have been coded with 1, 0 otherwise. The political interest question has been collapsed into a binary one, where 1 stands for ‘very’ and ‘somewhat’ interested in politics and 0 otherwise. We created an index consisting of three levels of political sophistication by adding the responses of voters to the political interest and political knowledge questions. We grouped respondents as highly sophisticated if they scored 1 on at least 75% of items. The least sophisticated voters are those who scored 1 on fewer than 25% of the items. So, the classification of respondents in groups is based on their knowledge relative to the knowledge in their country.

23 Van Schuur (2003) shows that in cases where items have a different distribution, Principal Component Analysis yields invalid results. The likelihood of this happening is particularly large when items are dichotomous, which is the case with the political knowledge questions. We therefore prefer to analyse the dimensionality of these items with an IRT-based model, such as the Mokken scaling method.

24 In Finland only 2 political knowledge questions are included in a common latent scale. In most of the countries, 3, 4 or 5 political knowledge questions form a common scale. In Italy and Slovenia 6 items belong to a scale, while in Cyprus, Malta ad Portugal the scale includes 7 items.
In order to uncover the dimensionality of attitudes for citizens and political candidates, we again take recourse to Mokken scale analysis. We perform Mokken scale analysis on responses to the above issue items for citizens and candidates from the established democracies of Western Europe and the consolidating democracies of East Central Europe separately. The decision to treat established and consolidating democracies separately is based on indications from the literature that issue attitudes correlate differently across Western and East Central European countries (e.g. Kitschelt, 1992; Vachudova and Hooghe, 2009). If this is the case, an analysis on all countries combined could obscure the existing patterns of dimensionality. Furthermore, we are precluded from performing analysis on each country separately as we have too few observations per country at the level of MEP candidates. In order to assess whether these results are sensitive to the patterns in specific countries, we will also conduct a series of ‘jack-knife tests’, where we remove from the analysis one country at a time and re-estimate the measurement models on the remaining group of countries.

In our analysis we also explore the positioning of representatives and citizens in the emerging dimensional space. We look here at where parties, which form party groups in the European Parliament, and voters of these parties are located on the emerging attitude dimensions. In order to determine the position of a political party on an attitude dimension we compute the mean positions on each dimension of the MEP candidates running for this party. We have included here only these parties for which we have information on the position of at least two MEP candidates. Although the small amount of candidates observed for some parties may not give us the exact position of these parties in the dimensional space, it nevertheless gives us some approximation of where these parties can be located. We have information on 168 parties in total, from which 105 are from Western Europe and 63 from East Central Europe. The minimum number of voters voting for these parties in Western Europe amounts to 3, in East Central Europe it is 2, while the maximum number of party voters in each region is 269. For citizens who voted for this party in the European elections, we compute the mean position on each attitude dimension. In order to make the positioning of parties and voters comparable, we create the mean on each dimension only from these issues which are common to attitude dimension of both citizens and representatives.

**Findings**

Is there a common belief system between citizens and candidates to the European Parliament? We can provide a positive answer to this question only for political elites and highly sophisticated citizens in Western Europe. Our results from the Mokken scale analysis are presented in Table 3.1. This table lists groups of items which form a scale and which can therefore be interpreted to be constrained by an underlying dimension. Next to each scale, we provide in brackets the Loevinger H coefficient, which indicates the strength of scales. According to Mokken (1971) H-values below .30 indicate that the items do not form a scale, between .30 and .40 the items form a weak scale and above .50 they form a strong scale. The first conclusion that we can draw from examining the results in Table 3.1 is that the attitude

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25 We also conducted Principal Components Analysis and obtained substantively identical results.
26 The group of established democracies encompasses all Western European countries, which were members of the European Union before 2004. We include here Cyprus and Malta as their party systems are more consolidated and their electorates have been socialised to electoral rules since these countries gained independence in the 1960s. Among the consolidating democracies of East Central Europe we include all remaining countries which entered the EU in and after 2004.
structures of political representatives and citizens are weak as the H-values of each scale reported in Table 3.1 are between .30 and .40.

Table 3.1 Dimensionality of Attitudes for Political Elites and Citizens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Established Democracies of Western Europe</th>
<th>Consolidating Democracies of East Central Europe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Elites</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale 1: Abortion, Adaptation of Immigrants, Authority, Decrease of Immigration, Law &amp; Order, Family (H: .38)</td>
<td>Scale 1: Adaptation of Immigrants, Authority, Decrease of Immigration, EU Integration, Law &amp; Order, Same-Sex Marriage, Family (H: .36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale 2: Enterprise, Ownership, Redistribution (H: .32)</td>
<td>Scale 2: Enterprise, Redistribution (H: .34)</td>
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<td>No of obs.: 802</td>
<td>No of obs.: 212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citizens with the Highest Level of Sophistication</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale 1: Abortion, Adaptation of Immigrants, Authority, Decrease of Immigration, Law &amp; Order, Same-Sex Marriage, Family (H: .36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale 2: Ownership, Redistribution (H: .31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of obs.: 3164</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Citizens with the Medium Level of Sophistication</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale 1: Abortion, Adaptation of Immigrants, Authority, Decrease of Immigration, Law &amp; Order, Same-Sex Marriage, Family (H: .35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of obs.: 6550</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citizens with the Lowest Level of Sophistication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale 1: Authority, Adaptation of Immigrants, Decrease of Immigration, Law &amp; Order (H: .34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale 2: Same-Sex Marriage, Family (H: .36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of obs.: 4881</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Attitude scales have been established using the Mokken scale analysis. Loevinger H coefficient is provided in brackets next to each scale.

In Western Europe, attitudes of MEP candidates are structured by two scales. The first scale, which we call the libertarian-authoritarian dimension, encompasses attitudes towards immigration, abortion, law and order, authority, and the role of women in society. The second scale, which we will call the socio-economic dimension, consists of attitudes towards the role of free enterprise in economic activity, state ownership and redistribution of income and wealth. Attitudes towards European integration are not part of either dimension. Results show that attitudes of West European citizens with the highest level of sophistication are structured by two dimensions which are highly similar to the attitude structure we observe among political elites. The first scale structures attitudes towards immigration, authority, law and order and same-sex marriage, while the second scale consists of attitudes towards state ownership and redistribution of income and wealth. Both for MEP candidates and highly sophisticated citizens the socio-
economic scale is quite weak, with the Loevinger H coefficient slightly higher than the critical value of .30.27

Among citizens with medium and lower levels of political sophistication we only observe a certain degree of constraint in attitudes towards libertarian-authoritarian issues. The least sophisticated citizens display a constraint of attitudes towards immigration, authority, law and order. Attitudes towards same-sex marriage and family are also related, but they do not form a common dimension with the former. However, for citizens with medium level of sophistication all these attitudes are structured by one dimension. For low and medium sophistication groups, attitudes towards socio-economic issues are not structured at all. These analyses thus imply that in Western Europe only citizens with the highest level of political sophistication, which amount to around 20% of respondents in the employed dataset, have a chance to have their attitudes on a broad set of issues represented by political elites as they share a common belief system with these elites.

In East Central Europe the differences between citizens and elites appear to be even larger than in Western Europe. Mokken scaling analyses yield a two-dimensional structure in the attitudes of political representatives. Among representatives we see a clear libertarian-authoritarian dimension, which structures attitudes towards immigration, authority, law and order, same-sex marriage and role of women in society. This scale also assimilates attitudes towards European integration, unlike in Western Europe. The socio-economic dimension structures attitudes towards the role of enterprise in the economy and redistribution of income and wealth.28 For citizens with the highest level of political sophistication only attitudes towards libertarian-authoritarian issues such as immigration, law and order and authority are structured, while we observe no constraint in the socio-economic domain.29

Barely any constraint exists in the attitudes of less sophisticated citizens. The Mokken scale analysis indicates that for medium and low sophistication level only two items are sufficiently related to interpret them as stemming from an underlying dimension, while attitudes towards all other issues are independent. These findings show that attitudes of citizens in consolidating democracies are less structured than attitudes of citizens in more established democracies. We can speak of a belief system only for the most sophisticated citizens here, but even this structure is narrow as it encompasses few issues. Issue attitudes of less sophisticated citizens in East Central Europe are in fact idiosyncratic. As the libertarian-authoritarian dimension is the only attitude scale which emerges for citizens in consolidating democracies and as political elites in this region have a two-dimensional belief system, the observed incongruence is likely to have repercussions for the quality of representation.

The results presented so far raise serious questions about the extent to which attitudes of citizens will be adequately represented. However, effective representation does not only depend upon the existence of a common belief system which citizens and elites share, but also on the question whether

27 The jack-knife tests conducted on the candidate data reveal that the two-dimensional structure among political representatives is much stronger if we exclude representatives from Italy (65 observations) and the UK (150 observations). In that case, the socio-economic scale displays the Loevinger H coefficient of .61, while the libertarian-authoritarian scale shows H of .48. Attitudes of representatives from Italy and the UK are structured by one (weak) dimension.
28 Jack-knife procedure shows that when we exclude Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Slovenia at a time, attitudes towards state ownership appear next to Enterprise and Redistribution in the socio-economic scale.
29 When we exclude Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia at a time, attitudes towards same-sex marriages appear in the libertarian-authoritarian scale.
they are located on the same positions in the dimensional space. In order to assess the extent to which this is the case, we graph the positioning of parties that candidates represent and of citizens who voted for these parties in the last European elections. We look here at political parties and the most sophisticated voters as only for the latter group we found attitude structures that resemble to some extent the attitude structure among candidates. In order to meaningfully compare the position of parties and citizens, we use only these items for scale creation which structure attitudes of both MEP candidates and highly sophisticated citizens in Western Europe and East Central Europe separately.\textsuperscript{30} Although no socio-economic dimension emerges for most sophisticated citizens in East Central Europe, we graph the positions of such citizens on this scale by taking their mean position on two items – \textit{Enterprise} and \textit{Redistribution} – which form a scale for MEP candidates. This procedure allows us to compare the position of most sophisticated voters to that of political elites in East Central Europe, although voter positions on the socio-economic dimension, which were acquired by taking the mean of two items that do not scale, may be more centrist.

In the graphs, the horizontal axis depicts the socio-economic dimension, where 1 stands for economically left-wing attitudes (support of state ownership of public services and industries, state control of the economy and redistribution of income towards ordinary people) and 5 for economically right-wing attitudes. The vertical axis stands for libertarian-authoritarian dimension, where 1 indicates libertarian attitudes (e.g. immigrants should not be required to adapt to customs of the country, no harsher sentences for criminals, children should not be thought to obey authority at school, the number of immigrants should not be decreased) and 5 stands for authoritarian attitudes indicating the opposite. Figure 3.1 shows the positioning of MEP candidates and highly sophisticated voters in Western Europe, while Figure 3.2 shows the same for East Central Europe. List of political parties included in these figures can be found in Appendix IV, while the positioning of MEP candidates and highly sophisticated voters in the two-dimensional space in each country is presented in Appendix V.

\textsuperscript{30} In Western Europe, these are Ownership and Redistribution for the socio-economic dimension and Adaptation of Immigrants, Authority, Law & Order and Decrease of Immigration for the libertarian-authoritarian dimension. In East Central Europe, we use Enterprise and Redistribution, and Adaptation of Immigrants, Authority, Decrease of Immigration and Law & Order for each dimension respectively.
Figure 3.1 Position of MEP Candidates and Voters in the Two-Dimensional Space in Western Europe
Figure 3.2 Position of MEP Candidates and Voters in the Two-Dimensional Space in East Central Europe
The first finding that we can draw from eye-balling the figures is that parties are more polarised on both dimensions than voters are. In Western Europe, the standard deviation of party positions on the libertarian-authoritarian dimension (at the aggregate level) is .85 and on the socio-economic dimension is .91, while for party voters the standard deviation on each dimension approximates .6. In East Central Europe, in turn, voters vary much less on the socio-economic dimension (standard deviation of .65), but the spread on the libertarian-authoritarian dimension is the same as among Western European voters (standard deviation of .6). Parties in consolidating democracies are more polarised, with the standard deviation on each dimension of around .8. As expected, we find a difference between established and consolidating democracies in the way both dimensions are correlated. In Western Europe, there is a positive correlation between the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian dimension for MEP candidates (.46 at the aggregate level), which is much stronger than for voters (.26) at the aggregate level. This means that economically left-wing attitudes are positively related to libertarian attitudes, while economically right-wing attitudes go together with authoritarian attitudes. This relationship is strong for MEP candidates, but weaker for voters. In turn, in East Central Europe, socio-economic attitudes are negatively correlated with attitudes towards libertarian-authoritarian issues, which we have expected from previous research. However, it appears as surprising that at the level of parties both dimensions are nearly orthogonal (very weak correlation of -.05), while the correlation at the level of voters (aggregated to the party level) is substantial (-.29).

Secondly, we find substantial differences regarding the location of parties and voters in the two-dimensional space. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show the positioning of parties and voters in the established democracies of Western Europe and consolidating democracies of East Central Europe respectively. Most parties in Western Europe are located in the bottom-left quadrant, which represents left-wing economic and libertarian attitudes (38.32% of parties). At the lowest part of the scales in this quadrant we find radical left parties, while social democratic and green parties occupy less extreme positions in this corner. Slightly fewer parties can be found in the upper-right corner, which stands for economically right-wing and authoritarian attitudes (31.78%). Most of the parties in this quadrant belong to the conservative and liberal families, although Christian democratic parties can also be found here. At the extreme libertarian-authoritarian dimension in this corner we find radical right parties. A small group of mainly liberal parties combine libertarian attitudes with right-wing positions on the socio-economic dimension (in the bottom right of the graph). In the upper-left and bottom-right corner we find much fewer parties (16.82% and 13.08% respectively). The upper-left corner combines left-wing socio-economic attitudes and authoritarian attitudes. We see here only a few radical right parties, with parties from other families in centrist positions.

When it comes to voters in Western Europe, the largest group combines economically right-wing with authoritarian attitudes: 44.51% of all voters and 45.90% of the highly sophisticated voters are located in the upper right quadrant. What is striking is that an almost equally large group of voters is located in the upper-left quadrant, which combines economically left-wing and authoritarian attitudes (38.26% of all and 32.39% of the most sophisticated voters). Here, we find only 16.82% of parties in
Western Europe. Moreover, in the bottom-left quadrant, where most of the parties are located, we find the smallest number of voters (7.13% of all and 9.5% of the most sophisticated voters). These findings show that in Western Europe the overwhelming majority of voters have authoritarian attitudes (around 88%), while half the parties display libertarian stances on libertarian-authoritarian issues (around 51%). A particularly large gap exists for the numerous voters with economically left-wing and authoritarian attitudes, as there are few parties on the supply side to represent their attitudes. However, voters combining left-wing socio-economic and authoritarian attitudes will have a meaningful choice in elections as long as at least one party located in the upper-left quadrant is present on the political scene. According to the candidate survey data, this is the case for most political systems in Western Europe, except for Belgium Wallonia, Denmark, Germany, Portugal and Sweden.

We observe similar disparities in the positioning of parties and voters in East Central Europe. Here, the majority of parties combine economically right-wing and authoritarian attitudes (upper-right quadrant with 52.38% of parties). Fewer parties can be found in the bottom-right (23.81%) and the upper-left quadrant (14.29%). The bottom-left corner, with economically left-wing and libertarian attitudes, is the least populated with only around 9% of parties. Most voters in consolidating democracies combine economically right-wing and authoritarian attitudes (upper-right corner with 57.44% of all and 53.17% of highly sophisticated voters). The second most populated quadrant is the one with economically left-wing and authoritarian attitudes (upper-right with 29.52% of all and 36.10% of most sophisticated voters). This shows that in consolidating democracies the majority of voters and parties display economically right-wing and authoritarian attitudes. However, a large group of citizens holds economically left-wing, and authoritarian attitudes. There are much fewer parties that represent this bundle of attitudes, which we also saw in Western Europe. Again, East Central European voters will have a meaningful choice if at least one party is present in the upper-left corner. This is not the case for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Very few voters in consolidating democracies hold libertarian attitudes (around 17% of all voters and around 7% of the most sophisticated). At the supply side, around 33% of representatives are more libertarian. Although the representation gap of voters with economically left-wing and authoritarian attitudes is substantive, it is not as pronounced as in Western Europe. Unlike in the West, it is also very difficult to indicate which party families predominate in each quadrant as they are much less cohesive in terms of their positioning on both dimensions than their Western European counterparts.

CONCLUSION

The congruence of attitudes between citizens and policymakers is important for the functioning of democracies (Huber and Powell, 1994: 282). The mass-elite linkage requires the existence of a belief system shared by citizens and representatives (Thomassen, 1994, 1999, 2009). This chapter has examined whether there is a common attitude structure between political elites and mass publics in established democracies of Western Europe and consolidating democracies of East Central Europe. Our analysis shows that we can speak of a shared belief system among political elites and citizens only in Western
Europe and that there are substantive differences in how attitudes are structured across levels of political sophistication of voters. This study has three important implications and avenues for further research.

Firstly, a common belief system exists only in established democracies and only for highly sophisticated citizens. This implies that a small number of citizens in Western Europe have a chance to have all their attitudes represented on the basic policy packages. No group of voters in East Central Europe is in this luxury position. As attitudes of citizens are less structured, they will face a hard decision process at the ballot box. Many voters will have to choose between groups of parties, none of which offers a combination of issue attitudes similar to theirs. Similarly, if there is significant incongruence in how attitudes are structured, it becomes harder for political elites to represent citizen attitudes. If issue attitudes of representatives are differently related to each other than it is the case for citizens, political elites can misinterpret which issue positions their voters hold. This can have direct consequences for the quality of substantive representation. It deserves further study to which extent the lack of congruence between issue attitudes of citizens and representatives affects policy outcomes.

Secondly, this study shows that citizen attitudes towards market competition and the role of the state in the economy are either very weakly structured or not structured at all. Among the large majority of the populations of Western and East Central Europe, issue attitudes that traditionally gave meaning to the left/right dimension are weakly related to each other. Instead, attitudes towards immigration, structure of society and individual freedoms form a prevalent dimension for all groups of citizens both in the West and the East. The question that arises here is whether this finding constitutes a permanent shift towards greater significance of libertarian-authoritarian attitudes and a possible redefinition of the meaning of the left/right dimension. Or does this finding solely capture a temporary state of attitudes in the socio-economic domain, brought about by the economic crisis? The European election surveys were conducted in 2009, when the consequences of the economic crisis were well underway. Citizen attitudes towards the intervention of the state in the economy and the importance of the market economy for economic development might have shifted, as a result of which we observe no structure of socio-economic attitudes at the aggregate level. This surprising finding calls for further research.

Thirdly, the analysis of where political parties and highly sophisticated voters are positioned reveals a significant gap in representation. Around 40% of citizens of Western Europe hold economically left-wing and authoritarian attitudes. They have very few parties to turn to which offer this combination of attitudes (see also Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009). A similar gap, although not so prevalent, exists in East Central Europe. Here, around 30% of voters combine economically left-wing stances with authoritarian attitudes. Looking at these findings, one may think that the winning formula of Herbert Kitschelt (De Lange, 2007; Kitschelt and McGann, 1997) has shifted from the upper-right to the upper-left quadrant. Kitschelt claimed that new populist parties could garner a substantive amount of votes if they combined liberal appeals in the economic domain and authoritarian appeals in the cultural domain. Nowadays, it seems that these political parties could attract more voters if they offered a combination of economically left-wing and authoritarian policy stances. The question that flows from this finding is how voters with economically left-wing and authoritarian attitudes make decisions at the ballot box, if the supply side does not offer many options. Do these voters abstain? Which attitudes play a stronger role in determining the choice of a political party? These questions emerge from our study, which has drawn attention to the quality of citizen representation in contemporary Europe.
Chapter 4

Representation in the European Parliament:
Factors Affecting Attitude Congruence of Voters and Candidates in the EP Elections

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This chapter has been accepted for publication in European Union Politics.
Abstract

This chapter examines the extent to which individual-, party- and system-level characteristics affect attitude congruence of voters and candidates for elections to the European Parliament. It analyses attitudes towards basic policy packages in the socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian issue domains as well as immigration and EU integration. The analysis is based on the 2009 European Election Study and European Election Candidate Survey covering 27 EU countries, 162 parties and over 11,500 respondents. It shows that the European Parliament suffers from inequalities in representation for different groups of citizens, representing much better attitudes of educated, middle class and politically knowledgeable voters. Furthermore, it uncovers significant differences across political parties in how well they represent voters. It provides tentative evidence suggesting that voters are better represented in open and ordered ballot systems.
INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores factors determining how well voters are represented in the European Parliament (EP). In their quest to explore the quality of representation in democratic elections, many scholars have employed the Responsible Party Model (e.g. APSA, 1950; Katz, 1987; Thomassen, 1994), which sees political parties as major actors by and through which representation is realised (also: Sartori 1968: 471). Studies based on this model have established that preconditions for effective representation are largely fulfilled at the European level. Voters in European elections have a choice between a considerable number of parties which are ideologically as distinctive and cohesive as national parties (Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999). Voters are able to recognise ideological differences among parties and consider them at the ballot box in European elections (Van der Brug and Van der Eijk, 1999). In addition, the party space in the EP reflects the national political space, with left/right as the major dimension of competition (e.g. Hix, 1999; Schmitt and Thomassen, 2000). When it comes to the left/right dimension, voters, at least those from Western Europe, are well represented in the European Parliament. However, little is known about the quality of representation in the EP beyond left/right, although there are some indications that representation on issues is much poorer than on left/right (Thomassen and Schmitt, 1997, 1999; Thomassen, 1999). What has also remained unexplored so far is whether the quality of representation in the EP varies for different groups of citizens, parties and countries. These lacunae in our knowledge of representation at the European level lead us to inquire which individual-, party- and system-level characteristics influence the quality of democratic representation of voters on political issues.

This study is based on the delegate model of representation to analyse the quality of the link between voters and their representatives. In the delegate model, representatives are expected to act as the voice of those who are not present in the representative body (e.g. Pitkin, 1967: 133). This link between voters and representatives will be effective if political decision makers enter the policy process with the same issue preferences as those who voted for them (Dalton, 2002: 217). If attitudes of representatives resemble those of voters, their actions and decisions can be expected to be in line with the political preferences of the citizens they represent (e.g. Thomassen, 1994; Holmberg, 1999). In order to examine the mass-elite linkage this chapter focuses on the congruence of issue attitudes between voters and their representatives in the European Parliament. It focuses on attitude congruence on basic packages of policy opinion in the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian issue domains as well as on issues of immigration and EU integration. In doing so, it contributes to an extensive literature on substantive representation, which investigates whether issue positions of governments, political parties and their representatives reflect attitudes of voters (e.g. Huber and Powell, 1994; McDonald and Budge, 2005). This literature takes a well-established place in research on representation, next to studies on symbolic and descriptive representation (see: Pitkin, 1967), which examine whether the presence of representatives with certain ascriptive characteristics, e.g. race or gender, affects attitudes of groups with the same characteristics and the extent to which these representatives represent such groups better than other representatives (e.g. Childs, 2008; Pantoja and Segura, 2003).

The major aim of this chapter is to assess which voters are best represented in the European Parliament and which party- and system-level characteristics account for the congruence in positions of voters and parties. So far, our knowledge about determinants of representation in the European elections is very limited. The few studies that focus on representation in these elections teach us that parties which
project clear cues represent their voters better than parties with less clear cues. We also know that representation is better in countries with proportional representation and in countries with a large number of parties (e.g. Dalton, 1985; Thomassen and Schmitt, 1997; Thomassen, 1999). However, little is known about the extent to which individual-level characteristics affect representation. Moreover, conclusions reached so far about representation in European elections are limited in scope. They focus on representation in terms of left/right or on issues related to the EU, whereas there are other domains that have not been studied.

This chapter sheds light on the determinants of the fit between positions of parties and their voters in the European Parliament by employing the European Election Study and the European Election Candidate Survey 2009. It proceeds as follows. The next section outlines the theoretical framework and expectations on individual-, party- and system-level factors affecting the quality of representation in European elections. The following sections describe the employed data and methodology, present our findings and, finally, outline our conclusions.

REPRESENTATION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The linkage between the public and political decision makers is one of the most important topics in the study of democratic political systems (e.g. Miller et al., 1999; Powell 2000; Shapiro et al., 2010). Although there are various links in the “political chain of democratic command and control” (Keman, 1996), the congruence of issue attitudes of voters and their representatives has been a key topic in studies on representation. In this perspective it is assumed that policy outcomes are likely to reflect citizen preferences if representatives share opinions of their voters (e.g. Miller and Stokes, 1963). The concept of congruence between issue attitudes of representatives and citizens has been acknowledged as important for analysing the quality of representation (Powell, 2000; Diamond and Morlino, 2005). In European parliamentary systems political parties are central to the process of representation (e.g. Thomassen, 1994). Therefore, studies of representation in Europe have mostly focused on the voter-party dyad. We follow this approach and examine the congruence between attitudes of voters and representatives from the party they voted for in the last EP elections. Certainly, policy outcomes may be suboptimal from the perspective of voters even if representatives share issue attitudes with their electorate, because in the process of decision-making many factors play a role. This chapter will not consider the complex picture of what determines representative policy outcomes, but will simply focus on the congruence of issue attitudes of voters and their representatives as an indicator of representational quality.

We will consider congruence on basic packages of political attitudes, which have been of importance to political competition in all parliamentary systems in both Western and East Central Europe (e.g. Kriesi et al., 2008; Vachudova and Hooghe, 2009).33 We distinguish between issues in the socio-economic domain, the libertarian-authoritarian domain as well as issues related to immigration and EU integration. The socio-economic domain relates to attitudes towards state ownership, the role of private enterprise and state intervention in the economy and redistribution of income and wealth, while the libertarian-authoritarian domain concerns attitudes towards societal and personal freedoms, such as equality of

33 In this chapter we do not study differences between issue publics i.e. differences in attention of citizens to various issues which arise from different interest structures. Instead, we focus on basic policy packages.
women or rights for sexual minorities, life-style and functioning of the society. In addition, we conduct separate analysis for attitudes towards immigration and European integration as these issues have gained importance in political discourse in recent years (Kriesi et al., 2008; Bornschier, 2010).

The congruence of attitudes between voters and representatives may vary across issue domains. Scholarly literature shows that attitudes of voters and political elites are structured by at least two dimensions (Thomassen and Schmitt, 1999; Kriesi et al., 2008). As there is no consensus on whether attitudes towards immigration and European integration are strongly related to these dimensions (Kriesi et al., 2008; Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009), we have decided to treat issues of immigration and EU integration separately from the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian domains. As public opinion is structured by several dimensions, voters may not be equally well represented in all issue domains by the party of their choice. Our cross-country analysis focuses on factors which generally account for better representation in all issue domains and also includes variables (mostly at the level of parties) which may account for better representation in some issue domains, but not in others. In the following, we examine which individual-, party- and system-level characteristics affect the congruence of attitudes between voters and their party on socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian issues, immigration and EU integration.

**Individual-level characteristics**

There are reasons to expect that MEP candidates will better represent the more educated, middle and higher class strata of society. Candidates running for the EP elections are likely to be highly educated, potentially coming from middle or upper class themselves. These candidates are ready to live in a different country and interact on an international level and are less reliant on national identity in their perceptions of political problems (e.g. Hooghe and Marks, 2008). Studies show that after having been elected to the EP, the majority of candidates pursue European careers (Scarrow, 1997). This might be indicative of a certain self-selection of political candidates given their background and readiness to leave the national political sphere in favour of the European. There is also evidence that representatives at the local and national level are mostly middle class and well educated, which can result in better representation of these particular groups (Schattschneider, 1975; Barnes, 1977). Another reason why more educated and higher class voters may be better represented in European elections can be related to party strategy. As better educated and middle class voters are more likely to turn out in the EP elections (e.g. Franklin, 2007), parties and their candidates may strategically ignore less educated voters. In this case, opinion congruence between EP representatives and voters in each issue domain will be better for more educated and higher class voters. We hypothesise as follows.

**Hypothesis 1 (Education):** Education has a positive effect on attitude congruence between voters and their representatives.

**Hypothesis 2 (Social class):** For voters belonging to the middle and upper class attitude congruence between them and their representatives will be better than for voters from the working class.

How politically informed voters are may also play a role for opinion congruence. Democratic elections will function well as a process by which voters are represented, if voters are aware of political stances of candidates and parties (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996). Literature shows that there is considerable
variation across individuals in how informed they are about politics (e.g. Converse, 1964; Zaller, 1992; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). Research has shown that the more informed voters are, the more certain they are about their attitudes towards political issues and the more likely they are to act upon their attitudes while at the ballot box (e.g. Palfrey and Poole, 1987; Basinger and Lavine, 2005; De Vries et al., 2011). Moreover, well-informed voters are better able to recognise which ideological profiles parties have and which positions they take on concrete issues (Van der Brug and Van der Eijk, 1999). As politically informed voters are well aware of where parties stand and are most likely to vote upon their attitudes, we can expect them to be most likely to cast an informed choice at the ballot box. This means that the party that they choose will reflect their preferences better than parties chosen by less informed voters.

When studying political involvement, scholars distinguish between political knowledge and political interest. As Luskin (1987) has shown, these two variables tap into the same latent trait, but measures of political knowledge are less affected by social desirability bias because they are not based on self-reported political interest or involvement. So, we will examine the effect of political knowledge on the quality of representation. We hypothesise as follows:

**Hypothesis 3 (Political knowledge):** Political knowledge has a positive effect on attitude congruence between voters and their representatives.

Next to political knowledge, exposure to mobilisation efforts in the run-up to the elections may play a role for attitude congruence. Mobilisation relates to persuasive actions of, among others, parties, political candidates and media actors, which stimulate individuals to turn out to vote. As a result of these efforts, voters are provided with information about party stances on issues and about characteristics of candidates that they may find appealing (e.g. Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). So, exposure to mobilisation efforts means exposure to politically relevant information. As a result of this exposure, voters acquire certain knowledge. We feel that it is important to distinguish between exposure to mobilisation efforts and political knowledge because the latter measures voters’ general levels of political information, while the latter refers to how much information they are exposed to before the elections.

European elections are less important for voters than national elections as they do not result in government formation which would directly affect them (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). Particularly in a second-order election, mobilisation efforts are crucial for providing information about parties and convincing voters to turn out to vote (Franklin and Wessels, 2010). The more voters are exposed to party messages ahead of EP elections, the more we can expect them to be able to assess which party bests suits their preferences, which may have consequences for representation. We hypothesise as follows:

**Hypothesis 4 (Exposure to mobilisation efforts):** More exposure to mobilisation efforts leads to more attitude congruence between voters and their representatives.

On the basis of theoretical considerations, we developed four hypotheses about individual level variables that might be related to attitude congruence between voters and their party. In addition to the four variables for which we have theoretical expectations, we also included the following individual level control variables for which we do not have such expectations: religion, gender, age and place of residence.
Party-level characteristics

Scholarly literature suggests that sound representation depends partially on the clarity of party positions (e.g. Dalton, 1985; Pierce, 1999). Political parties with a clear ideological profile are more likely to provide clear cues which inform voters on their policy positions. Literature so far has assumed that mass parties and non-centrist parties display such ideological clarity (e.g. Dalton, 1985). However, from the perspective of voters this may be far from true as they may know the ideological position of some mass or non-centrist parties, but not of others. A significant variation in ideological clarity of parties can be also expected across party systems. It is in general less clear for voters in consolidating democracies of East Central Europe what the ideological profiles of parties are as the party systems are relatively new and fluid (Van der Brug et al., 2008; Tavits, 2008). Given the variation within and across party systems, we conceptualise ideological clarity not with dichotomies but with the extent to which voters in a country agree about the position of political parties in left/right terms. If there is a high level of agreement in a party system where political parties are located on the major dimension of competition (left/right), it is easier for voters to consider which party is closest to their own preferences, so that they are more like to vote for a party that represents their preferences.

We expect variations across issues in how ideological clarity enhances representation. Van der Brug and Van Spanje (2009) show that left/right positions of voters are only weakly related to their opinions on immigration and EU integration. Clarity of ideological profiles of parties’ left/right positions will then not help voters to assess where parties stand on these ‘new’ issues. Yet, it will offer information on issues that traditionally belong to this ideological dimension: issues in the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian domains. Our hypothesis is therefore:

Hypothesis 5 (Ideological clarity): More ideological clarity of a party in left/right terms leads to more attitude congruence between this party and its voters in the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian domain.

Irrespective of ideological clarity, some parties may represent their voters better on some issues than other parties. Not all parties in a party system have a clear position on all issues. While older mainstream parties have clear stances on traditional socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian issues, new parties often have a clearer profile on issues which are weakly related to the traditional dimension of competition (Meguid, 2008). Among the new issue parties, radical right parties have a clear profile on issues such as immigration and EU integration (e.g. Kitschelt and McGann, 1997). In turn, green parties strongly stress environmental issues, although these issues remain closely related to economic stances. Moreover, green parties normally take a clear (left-wing) position on socio-economic issues (e.g., Hix, 1999; Burchell, 2002). Also radical left parties take clear stances on a set of issues in the socio-economic domain (Ezrow, 2010). It seems plausible that parties with a particular profile will represent their voters better in related issue domains – radical right parties will better represent their voters on the issue of immigration and EU integration, while radical left parties will better represent voters on socio-economic issues. Since green parties tend to position themselves clearly at the left side of the socio-economic dimension (e.g., Kriesi et al. 2008; Van der Brug and Van Spanje 2009), we hypothesise that they will represent their voters well on these issues. We expect that:
Hypothesis 6a (Radical right parties): Voters of radical right parties will display high attitude congruence with their parties on the issues of immigration and EU integration.

Hypothesis 6b (Green and radical left parties): Voters of green and radical left parties will display high attitude congruence with their parties on socio-economic issues.

System-level characteristics

Scholarly research has shown that the type of electoral system affects the quality of representation (e.g. Huber and Powell, 1994; Mattila and Raunio, 2006). In 2002, the EU passed legislation establishing Uniform Electoral Procedures for elections to the European Parliament. However, this legislation allows for substantial differences between member states, so that the electoral systems vary with regard to the type of ballot structure (open, ordered or closed) and the average district magnitude (Farrell and Scully, 2005, 2007, 2010). We can outline two scenarios with regard to how the type of electoral system affects the quality of representation.

In the first scenario we expect closer attitude congruence between voters and their EP representatives in an open ballot system, particularly if the ballot system has large districts. In an open system, candidates campaign more on the basis of their personal reputation than on the basis of the reputation of their party. Such personal vote-seeking increases with the size of the electoral district (Carey and Shugart, 1995). In electoral systems with larger districts, candidates have a higher incentive to cultivate personal vote as they need to differentiate themselves from other candidates (of their own party as well as of competing parties). This way of campaigning leads them to providing information to voters about their policy stands on issues, which, in turn, makes it easier for voters to choose a candidate who represents their views well. In contrast, in closed electoral systems candidates choose between party lists with little influence on who will be their EP representative.

The increased personal vote-seeking in an open ballot system means that the divergence of attitudes between a candidate and the party may have a positive effect on representation. If candidates stress their own issue positions ahead of the elections, they are more likely to attract voters who share their stances. If voters do not fully agree with some candidates of one party, but are attracted by one candidate of this party, the open electoral system allows them to choose this candidate directly, which may have positive effects on representation. This line of argument leads to the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 7a (Electoral system): In an open ballot system, attitude congruence between voters and their representatives will be better than in other ballot systems.

Hypothesis 8a (Open ballot system*District magnitude): In open ballot systems with larger districts, attitude congruence between voters and their representatives will be better than in such systems with smaller districts.

Hypothesis 9a (Open ballot system*Candidate’s deviation from party position): In an open ballot system, a candidate’s deviation from his/her party’s position will positively affect attitude congruence.
In the second scenario we expect exactly the opposite as the party is the major actor in a political system. Political parties develop distinct policy programmes and compete by mobilising supporters on the appeal of these programmes. Only internally cohesive parties can send a clear message to the electorate before elections and implement their policy proposals after elections. Since the party as a whole is the major point of reference for both voters and candidates, we can expect that mass-elite congruence will be stronger if candidates campaign on the platform of their political party. Personal vote-seeking in an open ballot system involves taking positions or actions that may not correspond fully with the party platform. This may dilute the programmatic message of the party and introduce personal aspects related to the representative which may constitute a departure from the cohesive party line. Since incentives for personal vote seeking increase with the size of electoral districts, the party message becomes more diluted in larger districts. In turn, in a closed ballot system, representatives have the least incentive to pursue personal vote-seeking and care more about party reputation and party programme, because their electoral prospects depend on the votes cast for their party (Carey and Shugart, 1995). We would, thus, expect that in an open ballot system parties will be less able to send a clear, undiluted, signal to voters regarding their parties’ stances on a range of issues and any deviation from the party opinion will affect representation negatively. We hypothesise as follows:

Hypothesis 7b (Electoral system): In an open ballot system, attitude congruence between voters and their representatives will be poorer than in other ballot systems.

Hypothesis 8b (Open ballot system*District magnitude): In open ballot systems with larger districts, attitude congruence between voters and their representatives will be poorer than in such systems with smaller districts.

Hypothesis 9b (Open ballot system*Candidate’s deviation from party position): In an open ballot system, a candidate’s deviation from his/her party’s position will negatively affect attitude congruence.

At the system-level, we control for how many years a country has been a member of the EU as party positions on issues in the EP elections might be more clear in countries with longer membership.

DATA AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employs the 2009 European Election Study (EES 2009; Van Egmond et al., 2010) and the European Parliament Election Candidate Survey (EECS 2009; Giebler et al., 2010) as both surveys contain identical questions which tap respondents’ attitudes on a broad range of basic policy issues. The voter study was fielded immediately following the EP elections of June 2009, with independently drawn samples of over 1000 respondents in each of EU’s 27 member states. The candidate survey was carried out shortly before and after the EP elections and contains information on representatives from 160 parties, which is over 60% of the parties that were contacted in the course of the survey. In order to examine the attitude congruence of voters and their representatives, we combine data from the voter and candidate survey, which yields information on 28 political systems, 162 parties and over 11,500 respondents in the

Belgium is effectively a two-system country as it is not possible for voters in the Flemish region to cast a ballot for Wallonian parties and vice versa. For this reason, Flanders and Wallonia are treated as two separate systems.
We create a multilevel data structure, where voters are nested in parties according to their party choice in the last EP elections, and parties are nested in 28 political systems.

Both surveys asked respondents to indicate on a scale from 1 to 5 (Likert-scale) how much they disagree/agree with a number of statements. These statements tap into attitudes on a number of socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian issues, as well as immigration and EU integration. Items in the socio-economic domain are: “Private enterprise is the best way to solve your country’s economic problems” (we call this item Enterprise), “Major public services and industries ought to be in state ownership” (Ownership), “Politics should abstain from intervening in the economy” (Intervention), “Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people” (Redistribution). Among issue items in the libertarian-authoritarian domain are: “Same-sex marriages should be prohibited by law” (Same-Sex Marriage), “Women should be free to decide on matters of abortion” (Abortion), “People who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days” (Law & Order), “Schools must teach children to obey authority” (Authority), “EU treaty changes should be decided by referendum” (Referendum), “A woman should be prepared to cut down on her paid work for the sake of her family” (Family). Attitudes towards immigration are tapped by two questions: “Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of (country of respondent)” (Adaptation of Immigrants) and “Immigration to (country of respondent) should be decreased significantly” (Decrease of Immigration). Attitudes towards EU integration are measured with the question whether EU unification should be pushed further or whether it has already gone too far (EU Integration).

We measured the congruence between attitudes of voters and the party they voted for in three steps. We first determined the position of each party on each issue by computing the mean position of all MEP candidates from each of the parties. So, the position of party A on an issue is the mean of the positions of all candidates of party A. In the second step we computed for each respondent for each issue the distance between her own position and the position of the party. In the third step, we established congruence in each issue domain by computing for each respondent the average distance between her and the party she voted for across all issues belonging to this domain. In the final step, we took the negative value of this score, so that high values indicate that the voter is (on average) well represented in a particular domain and low values (i.e., large distances) that the respondent is not well represented.

Our individual-level explanatory variables are Education, Social class, Political knowledge and Exposure to mobilisation efforts. For Education we employ the cross-country measure included in the EES 2009 which is based on ISCED coding. This measure provides information on the highest level of education completed by respondents and consists of six categories coded as follows: 0 stands for pre-

55 This study includes only parties for which we have observations both at the level of EP representatives and voters. As the candidate survey lacks observations for a substantive number of parties, the exclusion of voters of such parties from the analysis leads to a reduction in the number of observations at the individual level. Parties on which we have few observations from the Candidate Survey belong to the ethnic/linguistic and agrarian party families. In Western Europe we have information on issue attitudes of only 22 candidates from ethnic/linguistic parties and 39 from agrarian parties, while for other party families in this region we have information on 70 candidates per party family at the minimum. In East Central Europe, the ecologist, agrarian and ethnic/linguistic party families remain underrepresented with information on 10, 11 and 12 candidates respectively, while for each of the remaining party families we have information on 20 candidates at the minimum. Still, information on 28 systems, 162 parties and over 11,500 individuals provides sufficient observations to conduct multilevel analyses.

56 As some positions of voters on substantive issues are missing, we have performed multiple imputation in STATA in order not to lose observations on voters.
primary education, 1 for primary education or first stage of basic education, 2 for lower secondary or second stage of basic education, 3 for upper secondary education, 4 for post-secondary non-tertiary education, 5 for first-stage or tertiary education and 6 for second-stage or tertiary education. Although the ISCED measure does not capture distinct values of vocational education (Schneider, 2010), it is the best measure in the EES 2009 comparing educational attainment across countries.

Social class is operationalized by occupational categories, which is in line with much recent work in this area. The EES contains a categorisation in 11 occupational groups, which match up very closely to categorisations employed in recent work on class voting (e.g., Müller 1999; Oesch, 2006; Kriesi et al. 2008; Evans and De Graaf, 2012). This is the categorisation used in this chapter.

Political knowledge is measured by the factual correctness of respondents’ answers to seven statements about national and European politics contained in the EES 2009. We coded the correct answers for each question as 1, 0 otherwise. In order to assess whether these questions relate to a single latent dimension, the responses to these items were analysed on a pooled sample of all countries by means of an ordinal IRT model (Mokken, 1971). Constructing a scale on the basis of all countries allows us to adequately construct an index which measures the same concept across countries. We use an ordinal IRT model as it accounts for various levels of difficulty across items and thus constitutes a more valid dimensionality test than other data reduction methods (Van Schuur, 2003). We were able to construct a satisfactory political knowledge scale (with Loevinger H coefficient of .33) on the basis of 3 items: whether Switzerland is a member of the EU, whether the EU has 25 member states and whether every country in the EU elects the same number of representatives to the European Parliament. The additive index for Political knowledge ranges from 0 to 3, where 0 indicates the lowest and 3 the highest level of political knowledge.

In order to construct Exposure to mobilisation efforts we perform Mokken scaling for all countries together on questions how often voters 1) watch a program about the election on television, 2) read about the election in a newspaper, 3) talk to friends or family about the election, 4) attend a public meeting or rally about the election and 5) look into a website concerned with the election. We have recoded each item so that 1 indicates ‘never’, 2 ‘sometimes’ and 3 ‘always’. A common scale can be constructed for the first four items (with Loevinger H of .35). The index we constructed here is the average of responses on all items and ranges from 0 to 3.

At the party level we have four explanatory variables. Ideological clarity is a party characteristic which denotes the level of agreement among citizens about where a party stands in ideological (left/right) terms. To measure the perceptual agreement among voters, we use a question where respondents were asked to place each political party in their party system on the left/right scale ranging from 0 to 10. Following Van der Eijk (2001) we calculate here a coefficient of agreement which describes the distribution of citizen responses regarding each party. The value of this coefficient runs from -1 (maximum disagreement) to +1 (maximum agreement). Radical right parties and green and radical left parties are distinguished by means of dummy variables, constructed on the basis of the classification of the Comparative Manifesto Project (Klingemann et al., 2006; Volkens et al., 2010).

At the country-level, we create a variable denoting Electoral system, which is coded as 0 for closed, 1 for ordered and 2 for open ballot system. District magnitude is a continuous variable with the
number of districts used for EP elections. We adapted the classification of district magnitude and ballot systems from Farrell and Scully (2007). In order to test the hypothesis on the effect of district magnitude in open ballot systems, we created an interaction between District magnitude and a dummy for Open ballot system. Candidate deviation from party position has been operationalized as the standard deviation from the mean party position on an issue (domain), where the mean party position is given by the mean positioning of all candidates belonging to a party. Finally, EU membership in years stands for the number of years since a country joined the EU.

We employ multilevel analysis as our model has a hierarchical structure: individuals are nested in parties according to their choice in the last EP elections, and parties are nested in political systems. In order to facilitate interpretation of the model, we have centred explanatory variables which do not contain the baseline of 0 (Hox, 2010: 59-63).

**FINDINGS**

Before we conduct causal analysis, Table 4.1 presents some descriptive statistics for four outcome variables – congruence in the socio-economic domain, libertarian-authoritarian domain, immigration and EU integration. The outcome variables are bound between (and include) -5 and 0, where the former stands for the maximum difference in the positions of voters and representatives on an issue (domain) and the latter indicates perfect congruence. Table 4.1 reveals that on average the differences in attitudes of voters and EP representatives are smallest for the socio-economic domain (mean of -1.14 and minimum of -3.33). In turn, we observe the highest average difference on EU integration (mean of -1.29).

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics for Outcome Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome variables</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic domain</td>
<td>-3.33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1.14</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libertarian-authoritarian domain</td>
<td>-3.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1.25</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>-4.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1.21</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU integration</td>
<td>-4.38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1.29</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The outcome variables are bounded between (and include) -5 and 0, where the former stands for the biggest difference in stances of parties (consisting of EP representatives) and their voters and the latter indicates perfect congruence.

Table 4.2 presents results from multilevel analyses for four outcome variables: congruence in the socio-economic domain (Model I), the libertarian-authoritarian domain (Model II), immigration (Model 37 The centred variables are: Exposure to mobilisation efforts, Ideological clarity, District magnitude and EU membership in years. 37

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III) and EU integration (Model IV). These model estimates were obtained from models which also included as control variables: place of residence, gender and religion. Since we have no theoretical expectations about the effects of these individual level control variables, we decided not to present these effects in this chapter. The full results are available in Appendix VI. In each model in Table 4.2 we present two versions – Model A and Model B –, which include different interactions. We tested these interactions with system-level variables in separate models, because the limited number of observations at this level (N=28) does not give the tests enough power when testing them in one joint model. In all models, positive coefficient of an explanatory variable indicates that this factor contributes positively to representation.

38 We checked for possible failures of normality of the residuals, linearity and homoscedasticity at all levels of the multilevel models and we found no departures from these assumptions.

39 Models which included occupational categories and age did not converge. When age was included in a model with subjective social class, its effect was significant and negative. Its inclusion in those models did not substantially change any of the conclusions about the effects of the other variables, therefore we have no reasons to assume that the failure to control for age affects any of the conclusions.

40 Models B contain slightly fewer observations than Models A as the former contain the standard deviation of party positions on an issue domain. As for 5% of parties we have information on issue position of only 1 candidate, the standard deviation for these parties is missing. Inclusion of this information into Models B results in a lower number of units. If we exclude from our analysis parties for which we have information on only 1 candidate, our substantive results do not change.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model IV (EU Integration)</th>
<th>Model III (Immigration)</th>
<th>Model II (Libertarian-authoritarian domain)</th>
<th>Model I (Socio-economic domain)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual-level variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.01 (.003)**</td>
<td>.02 (.004)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occupation (ref. never worked)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional &amp; technical</td>
<td>.02 (.02)</td>
<td>.03 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher administrative</td>
<td>.02 (.03)</td>
<td>.04 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>.03 (.02)</td>
<td>.04 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.01 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>- .01 (.02)</td>
<td>- .01 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skilled worker</td>
<td>- .02 (.02)</td>
<td>- .01 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-skilled worker</td>
<td>-.05 (.03)**</td>
<td>-.05 (.03)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unskilled worker</td>
<td>- .04 (.03)</td>
<td>- .04 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farm worker</td>
<td>- .04 (.03)</td>
<td>- .01 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farm proprietor/manager</td>
<td>-.04 (.04)</td>
<td>-.03 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill in education</td>
<td>.03 (.03)</td>
<td>.03 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political knowledge</td>
<td>.02 (.004)**</td>
<td>.02 (.01)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exposure to mobilization efforts (c)</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>-.02 (.01)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Party-level variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ideological clarity (c)</td>
<td>-.22 (.11)**</td>
<td>-.27 (.11)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radical right parties</td>
<td>-.06 (.05)</td>
<td>-.02 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green parties</td>
<td>.11 (.05)**</td>
<td>.08 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radical left parties</td>
<td>-.13 (.05)**</td>
<td>-.2 (.06)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
System-level variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electoral system (ref. closed ballot system)</th>
<th>Ordered ballot syst.</th>
<th>Open ballot syst.</th>
<th>District magnitude (c)</th>
<th>Open ballot syst.*District magnitude (c)</th>
<th>Candidate’s deviation from party position</th>
<th>Open ballot syst.*Candidate’s deviation from party position</th>
<th>EU membership in years</th>
<th>cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ordered ballot syst.</td>
<td>0.04 (.06)</td>
<td>-0.01 (.10)</td>
<td>-0.04 (.05)***</td>
<td>0.008 (.001)***</td>
<td>-0.06 (.10)</td>
<td>0.01 (.01)</td>
<td>-1.24 (.05)***</td>
<td>0.01 (.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open ballot syst.</td>
<td>0.01 (.06)</td>
<td>-0.01 (.06)</td>
<td>-0.02 (.05)***</td>
<td>0.001 (.0005)***</td>
<td>-0.04 (.06)</td>
<td>0.000 (.001)***</td>
<td>-1.24 (.07)***</td>
<td>0.01 (.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District magnitude (c)</td>
<td>0.20 (.05)***</td>
<td>0.11 (.09)</td>
<td>0.04 (.001)***</td>
<td>0.03 (.0005)***</td>
<td>-0.07 (.12)</td>
<td>0.02 (.09)***</td>
<td>-1.50 (.06)***</td>
<td>-0.001 (.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open ballot syst.*District magnitude (c)</td>
<td>0.01 (.002)</td>
<td>0.02 (.002)</td>
<td>0.006 (.0008)</td>
<td>0.002 (.0004)</td>
<td>-0.04 (.09)</td>
<td>0.007 (.004)</td>
<td>-1.57 (.07)***</td>
<td>-0.009 (.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate’s deviation from party position</td>
<td>-0.06 (.1)</td>
<td>-0.04 (.09)</td>
<td>-0.07 (.12)</td>
<td>-0.08 (0.20)</td>
<td>0.25 (.22)</td>
<td>0.15 (.10)</td>
<td>-1.24 (.05)***</td>
<td>-0.001 (.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open ballot syst.*Candidate’s deviation from party position</td>
<td>-0.08 (0.15)</td>
<td>-0.06 (0.14)</td>
<td>0.25 (0.22)</td>
<td>-0.08 (0.20)</td>
<td>0.25 (0.22)</td>
<td>0.15 (0.10)</td>
<td>-1.24 (0.05)***</td>
<td>-0.001 (0.001)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Random effects

| Intercept for political systems | 0.08 (.02)          | 0.09 (.02)       | 0.0005 (.0002)       | 0.07 (.02)                              | 0.38 (.06)                              | 0.38 (.06)                                  | 0.12 (.04)            | 0.13 (.03) |
| Party intercept                | 0.15 (.01)          | 0.15 (.01)       | 0.21 (.01)           | 0.14 (.01)                             | 0.29 (.02)                              | 0.27 (.02)                                  | 0.27 (.02)            | 0.23 (.02) |
| Residual                      | 0.43 (.003)         | 0.43 (.003)      | 0.38 (.002)          | 0.37 (.003)                            | 0.61 (.004)                             | 0.60 (.004)                                 | 0.92 (.006)           | 0.90 (.006) |

Variance explained at:

| Individual-level               | 1.5%                | 4.2%             | 9.6%                  | 9.6%                                   | 2.5%                                     | 7.4%                                        | 2%                    | 5.8% |
| Party-level                    | 17.8%               | 17.8%            | 11%                   | 60%                                    | 3.2%                                     | 20.6%                                       | 1.3%                  | 3.0% |
| System-level                   | 45%                 | 27%              | 90%                   | 56%                                    | 49%                                     | 49.7%                                      | 32%                   | 17.5% |

N of political systems          | 28                   | 28               | 28                    | 28                                     | 28                                      | 28                                          | 28                    | 28   |
N of parties                    | 162                  | 134              | 162                   | 133                                    | 162                                     | 134                                         | 162                   | 136  |
N                                 | 11161                | 9482             | 11161                 | 9171                                   | 11161                                   | 9590                                        | 11161                 | 9873 |

Note: *** significant at p < .01, ** significant at p < .05, * significant at p < .1; centred variables have been indicated with (c)
With regard to individual-level explanatory variables, we see that representation in the European Parliament improves with levels of education. In each issue domain under study – socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian, immigration and EU integration – we see a positive coefficient of education in each of the Models A and B. This confirms Hypothesis 1. Table 4.2 reveals that social class matters very little for representation in the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian domain. Yet, on the issues of European integration and especially immigration, workers are less well represented than other groups, even when controlling for education. Since attitude congruence for middle class voters is higher in two domains than for the working class, Hypothesis 2 is partially confirmed.

The level of political knowledge matters for attitude congruence as well. Table 4.2 displays a positive effect of knowledge on congruence in the socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian domains and for the issue of immigration. This pattern cannot be confirmed for the issue of EU integration, however. With the exception of EU attitudes, our expectation with regard to the effect of political information on the quality of representation (Hypothesis 3) can be confirmed. Surprisingly, voters’ exposure to mobilisation efforts does not play a role for attitude congruence. The only significant effects that appear here – those in the libertarian-authoritarian domain - are negative, while effects for other issue domains are positive and non-significant. Here, we have to reject Hypothesis 4.

Among party-level variables, ideological clarity plays a role for congruence of issue attitudes. A clearer ideological stance of a party in left/right terms, leads to more congruence with its voters in the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian domains. This is precisely what we expected in our Hypothesis 5. Furthermore, radical right parties represent their voters better on immigration and EU integration than other parties, which confirms Hypothesis 6a. However, there is no evidence that green and radical left parties represent their voters better on socio-economic issues. The effect for radical left parties is in several cases negative. The significant effect for green parties in Model IA is not enough to draw any conclusions on this matter. Hypothesis 6b should thus be rejected.

With regard to system-level variables, there is some evidence for more congruence in open and ordered ballot systems than in closed ballot systems in the libertarian-authoritarian domain, where three of the four effects are positive and significant. In all other cases the effects are insignificant, and they are sometimes positive and in other case negative. These results thus provide only limited evidence for Hypothesis 7a. As the effect of an open ballot system may be conditional on district magnitude, we have introduced an interaction between a dummy for open ballot system and measure of district magnitude (Model A presents this interaction for every issue domain). The obtained coefficients are positive, suggesting that the higher the district magnitude in an open ballot system, the higher the opinion congruence between voters and  

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As a robustness check we have estimated the same models with measures of education standardised per country, which did not lead to substantively different results.

As an additional test, we included in our analysis an index of intra-party efficiency, which assumes a non-linear relationship between district magnitude and representatives’ personal vote-seeking activities based on the degree of openness of the ballot system (Carey and Shugart, 1995; Shugart, 2001). The index, adopted from Farrell and Scully (2007: 130) assumes that representatives’ personal reputation is worth more as district magnitude rises in open systems and less when magnitude rises in closed systems. Also here, we obtain a non-significant effect in all models.
EP candidates from the party of their choice. However, these effects do not reach conventional statistical significance. This points us to our Hypothesis 8a, but because of the low number of cases we have to be cautious in our conclusions. We remain similarly cautious on how candidates’ deviations from their parties’ positions affect representation in an open ballot system. In three domains the effects are negative and insignificant, but in the case of European integration the effects are positive and significant. Last, but not least, how many years countries have been members of the EU does not play a role for the quality of representation of their citizens in European elections.

The last note goes to the variance explained at each level of analysis, which we report in Table 4.2. As usual, our models are least able to explain individual-level variance, ranging from 1.5% to 9.6% depending on the issue domain. Party-level variance can be much better explained. The $R^2$’s range from 1.3% to 60%, although for the issues of immigration and EU integration their explanatory power is very low. Variance at the system-level can be explained most accurately, with explained variance ranging from 17.5% to 90%. Although there are differences in variance explained across issue domains, there is a general pattern showing that the system-level factors explain most of the existing variance, while individual-level factors do not explain much. So, the extent to which individuals are represented does not depend very much upon their social class, education, or their political knowledge.

CONCLUSION

This study analysed which individual-, party- and system-level characteristics account for the quality of representation in European elections.

The first main finding of this study is that the level of educational attainment and political knowledge as well as belonging to middle class increase voters’ congruence with attitudes of political elites. These results show that the European Parliament suffers from a similar bias towards more educated middle-class citizens as it is the case in national parliaments (e.g. Schattschneider, 1975; Barnes, 1977). The reasons behind these inequalities in representation can be multiple. Better representation of more educated middle class voters can be a natural consequence of the fact that EP candidates are likely to be highly educated and middle-upper class themselves. There may be also strategic reasons involved, because EP candidates may ignore less educated lower class voters as these voters are less likely to turn out in EP elections. Finally, cognitive skills of voters may play a role. More educated, knowledgeable middle-class voters may be more aware of candidate’s attitudes, while less educated lower class voters may not realise which candidates can represent them well.

The inequalities in representation of different groups of voters speak to the discussions about the democratic character of the EU. With the recent extension of powers to the EP, which took place through the Treaty of Lisbon, an attempt has been made to alleviate the democratic deficit in the EU. The findings of this chapter highlight the fact that even if the problem of democratic deficit is addressed, the EP will suffer from inequalities in representation for different groups of citizens, just as it is the case at the national level.
Inequalities in representation imply that not all EU citizens are able to influence the direction of the policy agenda to the same extent, which is likely to have repercussions for the direction of policies formulated at the EU level. At the same time, we should also emphasise that variations at the individual level cannot be explained very well with these socio-structural variables.

The second main finding of this study is that important differences exist between the different domains in how well groups of voters are represented. In the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian domain, better educated and more knowledgeable voters are better represented, but when controlling for these variables, social class does not have an additional effect. Yet, in the issue areas of immigration and European integration, the working class is significantly less well represented than other groups. A possible reason could be that the working class tends to often vote for left-wing parties, which they agree with on socio-economic policies, but disagree with on the issues of migration and European integration. Van der Brug and Van Spanje (2009) pointed to the representation gap at the national level, which stems from the fact that the ideological profile of the ‘authoritarian worker’ (Lipset, 1960) is not represented in the national party space. Our findings are in line with their idea.

Thirdly, parties with clear ideological profiles present their voters best in the socio-economic and in the libertarian-authoritarian domain. Controlling for ideological clarity, radical left-wing parties present their voters less well in these domains. So, the traditional established parties with clear ideological profiles (mainly social democratic, Christian democratic, conservative and liberal parties) represent their voters best in these domains. However, radical right parties represent their voters on average much better in the field of immigration and European integration. This speaks to recent literature which has demonstrated that the issue of further European integration has increasingly become subject to political competition among political parties and increasingly affects voters’ electoral choices (e.g. Tillman, 2004; De Vries, 2007). Our findings show that even if voters more frequently rely on their attitudes towards EU integration in casting a ballot, the extent to which they will be represented on this issue by the party of their choice will vary. So, even if considerations regarding EU integration have begun to guide voters in their party choice, putting an end to the period of ‘permissive consensus’ (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970), significant differences can be observed with regard to how voters are represented on this issue and, ultimately, in the extent to which their vote can influence the direction of integration.

The last finding of this study suggests that in open and ordered ballot systems there is more attitude congruence between voters and their party in the libertarian-authoritarian domain. Several scholars have hypothesised that representation would work best in open ballot systems, especially when there are large districts (e.g., Farrell and Scully, 2007). Hobolt and Hayland (2011) also expected the quality of candidates to be positively affected by these characteristics of electoral systems, but did not find significant effects. The results from our analyses are mixed, but provide some tentative evidence that attitude congruence increases with the district magnitude. In such systems, a candidate’s deviation from his/her party’s position positively affects representation, but only in the field of European integration, where the largest representation gap was noted (see also: Van der Eijk and Franklin 2009). These findings extend existing knowledge about ballot systems, since their recent introduction for the EP elections (e.g. Wessels, 1999). Our findings offer some
tentative evidence for a better voter-candidate congruence of opinions in more open ballot systems. Dependent on their further investigation, these findings have potential policy implications for bringing voter preferences closer to representatives at the European level.
Conclusion:

The Changing Role of Left/Right and Issues in Electoral Process
In this dissertation I studied the role of left/right ideology and issues in contemporary electoral process. I focused on two aspects of the electoral process: party support and political representation. Although numerous studies exist which look into the role of left/right ideology for party competition and voting behaviour, little is known about the inter-relationship between left/right and issues in electoral politics in contemporary Europe. This concluding chapter presents the main findings of this dissertation, discusses their implications and proposes directions for further research.

**SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Chapter 1 has set out a general model to explain cross-country differences in the effects of left/right and issues on party preferences. Scholars of electoral behaviour have observed that significant differences exist between established democracies of Western Europe and post-communist countries of East Central Europe in the extent to which left-right and issues affect parties’ electoral support. Not only has this chapter offered an explanation for this puzzle but also it has gone beyond the crude West-East distinction by pointing to significant differences across countries in these effects on party support. It has shown that differences in the effects of issues and left/right on party support can be largely explained with the extent to which left/right structures issues. Based on a two-stage analysis, this chapter has shown that in countries where issue attitudes of voters are structured by left/right, such issue attitudes have a weak effect on party support. In turn, in countries where left/right structures issue attitudes to a much lesser extent, stronger effects of issues on party preferences can be observed. The effects of issues are inversely related to the effect of left/right. Subsequently, the more left/right structures issues, the stronger is its effect on party preferences. This inter-relationship of the effects of left/right ideology and issues on party support can be observed for voters both with a high and low level of sophistication, although the pattern is slightly weaker for the latter group. The findings of this chapter point to the fact that the weaker effect of left/right on party preferences in East Central European countries can be largely attributed to left/right being less strongly related to issues in these countries than in Western European countries.

Chapter 2 examined how generational replacement explains the extent to which left/right ideology and issues affect party support in established democracies of Western Europe and in consolidating democracies of East Central Europe. It speaks to the literature showing that long-term factors such as social class, religion, the urban-rural divide and left/right ideology have lost their importance in structuring party preferences, while short-term factors such as issues and performance evaluations have allegedly become more important for structuring party preferences. In this chapter, a systematic comparison is presented of differences between generations of voters which have undergone utterly different socialization processes across established democracies of Western Europe and consolidating democracies of East Central Europe. It showed that in established democracies left/right, alongside structural factors, exerts weaker effects on party preferences for cohorts born after 1959 when compared to older cohorts. At the same time, stronger effects for younger generations can be observed for the immigration issue. In turn, in consolidating democracies of East Central Europe there are minimal differences across generations with regard to how left/right and issues structure
party preferences, with the notable exception of the issue of EU integration. This issue plays a much stronger role for generations born between 1979 and 1989. This chapter does not find evidence for an increased importance of performance-based factors in structuring party support for younger cohorts either in the West or in the East. The general picture emerging from this chapter is the one of de-alignment along structural factors and left/right ideology and re-alignment on the issue of immigration in Western Europe, with no particular trends in East Central Europe.

Chapter 3 assessed the extent to which a common belief system exists that structures political opinions of political elites and citizens in established democracies of Western Europe and consolidating democracies of East Central Europe. A common attitude structure and common location in this structure shared by citizens and political elites has been considered a precondition for effective representation. The chapter distinguishes between three groups of citizens with different levels of political sophistication. A common belief system is assumed to exist if a set of opinions are constrained, i.e., if they are so strongly correlated, that they form a scale. This is studied by means of a series of Mokken scaling analyses. These analyses demonstrated that only highly sophisticated citizens share a common belief system with political representatives in Western Europe. The other two groups of citizens do not share a belief system with their representatives. In East Central Europe, citizens do not share a belief system with the political elites. In Western Europe, a two-dimensional structure of attitudes emerges among political candidates and highly sophisticated voters, with the first dimension encompassing libertarian-authoritarian issues and the second structuring socio-economic issues. In East Central Europe, attitudes of political elites are two-dimensional, while at the level of citizens only attitudes towards libertarian-authoritarian issues form a scale. Among citizens, attitudes towards socio-economic issues are not structured at all. With regard to the location of political parties and highly sophisticated voters in a two-dimensional space, this chapter has revealed a significant representation gap. The numerous voters in Western Europe that hold economically left-wing and culturally authoritarian attitudes have very few parties to turn to which offer this combination of attitudes. A similar gap, although not so prevalent, exists in East Central Europe.

Chapter 4 has analysed which voters are best represented in the European Parliament and which party- and system-level characteristics account for the congruence between positions of voters and political candidates on basic packages of policy opinions in the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian issue domains as well as on issues of immigration and EU integration. The analyses were based on (three-level) hierarchical modelling. These revealed that for more educated, middle class and politically knowledgeable voters a better congruence can be observed between their issue positions and those of political candidates from the party they voted for. Moreover, a clearer ideological stance of a party leads to more ideological congruence between attitudes of parties and their voters. In addition, radical right parties represent their voters better on issues of immigration and EU integration than other parties. With regard to system-level factors, this chapter provides some tentative evidence that in open and ordered ballot systems voters are better represented by parties they vote for in the European Parliament than voters in closed ballot systems.
IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

This dissertation contributes to various debates that have been waged in the literature on electoral behaviour over the last two decades. In this section I discuss how the main findings of my dissertation contribute to such academic debates.

Is left/right still the ‘super glue’?

Research in many West European countries has shown that left/right has been seen as a prevalent ideology, which structures party politics and which guides considerations of voters at the ballot box. Left/right is considered to be a ‘super issue’ because it structures, or ‘glues together’, attitudes towards a number of issues (e.g. Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990; Pierce, 1999). In the post-war period until the 1980s, left/right was associated mostly with socio-economic issues such as, for instance, redistribution of welfare or involvement of the state in the economy. In the course of time and with the emergence of new issues, left/right has incorporated these new issues, such as environmentalism, so that its meaning has been extended beyond the traditional economic understanding of political conflict along the economic lines (e.g. Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990; Knutsen, 1995; Kitschelt and McGann, 1997).

This dissertation points to an evolution of left/right in Europe. The findings show that most citizens in Western European countries and all citizens in East Central Europe display idiosyncratic, or unstructured, attitudes towards economic issues. Only among the highly politically sophisticated citizens in Western Europe a weak structure of attitudes towards economic issues could be found. Even at the level of political elites, attitudes towards socio-economic issues are only rather weakly correlated, even though a socio-economic dimension emerges among them in the established as well as in the consolidating democracies. These results show that the structure of attitudes which has been assumed to form the traditional left/right division is barely present among mass publics in Western Europe and not present at all among citizens in East Central Europe. Instead, attitudes towards immigration, authority, law and order and individual freedoms are more clearly correlated and form a scale for political elites and citizens in the West and East. These findings offer some evidence that immigration and libertarian-authoritarian issues have increased in importance. At the same time, the importance of socio-economic attitudes for defining left/right may have diminished as there is barely any structure of socio-economic attitudes among mass publics. If left/right is the predominant dimension structuring attitudes of voters, then the results of this dissertation suggest that its meaning may have become more rooted in public attitudes towards libertarian-authoritarian issues and immigration. However, the findings of this dissertation also show that the degree to which left/right structures issues varies considerably across countries. In established democracies of Western Europe left/right structures issues to a higher extent than in consolidating democracies of East Central Europe. This implies that left/right has more issue-based meaning and is thus a more important cue for voters in the West than in the East.

These findings speak to the recent literature which has painted the picture of changes in electoral politics due to the process of globalisation. In the last decades, the attitude structure of citizens has undergone a considerable change. Kriesi et al. (2008: 238-239) have observed that in Western Europe the socio-
economic and libertarian-authoritarian attitude dimension have become more independent at the level of voters. They have shown that in the 1970s the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian attitude dimensions were to a certain degree interrelated, while in the 1990s the distinction between the economic and libertarian-authoritarian dimension of attitudes has become more clear-cut at the level of voters. Further literature shows that, as a result of changes in party competition where parties have started to mobilize on culturally rooted issues related to traditional life-style, immigration and Islam (Kitschelt, 1994; Kitschelt and McGann, 1997; Dalton, 1996; Kriesi et al., 2008), left-right identification of voters has undergone substantive changes. Evidence from the Netherlands has shown that the left/right position of Dutch voters has become more rooted in attitudes towards immigration and, to a lesser extent, in attitudes towards redistributive issues (De Vries et al., 2011a). This dissertation ties into these latest findings by showing what may be a further step in the evolution of voter attitudes. The findings of this dissertation have shown that while the libertarian-authoritarian dimension is clearly structured among citizens both in Western and East Central European, such a clear structure is absent in the socio-economic domain among a sizeable group of the European population.

In addition to new insights on the developments in Western Europe, this dissertation extends our knowledge of the role of left/right and its issue-based component in consolidating democracies of East Central Europe. By doing so, it contributes to the extensive literature which has stressed the commonalities and differences between the electorates in post-communist democracies as compared to established democracies in Europe (e.g. Evans and Whitefield, 1995; Kitschelt et al., 1999; Tworzecki, 2002; Evans, 2006; Marks et al., 2006; Van der Brug et al., 2008). With a comparative analysis spanning the total of 27 Western and East Central European countries, this dissertation contributes to solving the puzzle why the strength of the effects of left/right and issues vary across Western and East Central European countries. It shows that left/right ideology does not ‘glue’ issue attitudes together to the same extent in all European countries. In consolidating democracies, the relationship between left/right and issues is much weaker than in Western democracies. Such a comparative exploration of the extent to which left/right ‘glues together’ issues allowed us to explore which implications the inter-relationship of left/right and issues has on electoral behaviour. Voters in East Central European countries rely on left/right ideology to a much lower extent at the ballot box than Western European voters because in the former countries left/right does not structure issue preferences as much as in the latter. This comparative analysis suggests that left/right in consolidating democracies has not (yet) developed into an overarching framework that voters use as a cue to orient themselves in the party system.

How does representation evolve beyond left/right?

The findings of this dissertation contribute to the discussion on how well voters are represented by political elites in contemporary Europe. The question on the quality of representation gains particular prominence within the context of globalisation. Recent literature has shown that the intensified economic and cultural globalisation has resulted in the formation of new structural cleavages and has transformed the main dimensions of the political space (e.g. Kriesi et al., 2006, 2008; Bronschier 2010). With the example of West European countries, Kriesi et al. (2008) show that while in the 1970s the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian attitude dimensions were to a certain degree interrelated, in the 1990s they have become more
clear-cut at the level of voters. This development has propelled Kriesi et al. (2008) to conclude that "a single left/right dimension to express voters’ attitudes is an inadequate simplification" (Kriesi et al., 2008: 243). This observation ties into substantive literature, which has shown that left/right has declined in importance for electoral politics. Given the evolution of structural cleavages and the political space, it has become imperative to raise the questions how well citizens are nowadays represented beyond the traditional left/right dimension, namely on basic policy issues, and which factors account for congruence between voters and political elites on these issues.

The findings of this dissertation contribute to the debate on electoral politics in the time of globalisation by pointing to a significant gap in representation. This dissertation shows that most citizens both in Western Europe and in East Central Europe, those with a medium and low level of political sophistication, do not share a belief system with political elites. While attitudes of political elites are structured by two dimensions — one encompassing socio-economic issues and the other libertarian-authoritarian issues —, attitudes of citizens with low and medium levels of sophistication are not structured as clearly. One dimension was observed encompassing some libertarian-authoritarian issues, but opinions towards the other issues are rather unrelated. Such a discrepancy between how attitudes of voters and political elites are structured may have considerable consequences for electoral politics. When attitudes of voters are structured in a different way than attitudes of political elites, it will be impossible for voters to find a political party which is close to their preferred position on all issues. As a result, voters will be represented on some issues, but not on others. Given that issue salience varies across elections, this may lead to increased volatility from one election to another. In addition to the discrepancy in structuration of attitudes between political elites and voters, this dissertation shows that even among the highly sophisticated voters who display the same structure of attitudes as political elites there is a substantive group of voters that does not have all their attitudes represented in the emerging dimensional space. Citizens that hold left-wing attitudes towards economic issues and authoritarian attitudes towards cultural issues have very few parties to turn to in the elections (see also Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009). This is the case both in Western Europe and East Central Europe.

This dissertation also contributes to the extensive literature on voter-party congruence. While most studies focus on congruence between voters and political parties on the left/right dimension (e.g. Huber and Powell, 1994; Powell, 2000, 2006; McDonald and Budge, 2005; Golder and Stramski, 2010), this dissertation joins the few studies focusing on issues (Thomassen and Schmitt, 1997, 1999; Thomassen, 1999). It draws attention to inequalities in representation of voters with regard to various issue domains. While most studies have analysed voter-party congruence from the aggregate perspective, this dissertation has employed a multi-level model to extend our understanding of which individual-, party- and system-level factors determine congruence of issue positions between mass publics and political elites. Examining how well voters are represented by elites who run for representative functions in the European Parliament, this dissertation has shown that more educated and politically knowledgeable voters and those belonging to middle class are better represented by political elites. Inequalities in representation also exist across political parties and electoral systems used for EP elections. Radical right parties represent their voters better on the issue of immigration than other parties. The clarity of party ideology also helps for representation — for parties that have a clear ideological profile a closer congruence can be observed between the position of these parties and their voters.
on a range of issues. Furthermore, this dissertation has shown some evidence that in open ballot system the congruence between voter and party positions is better. This finding contributes to extensive literature on how the type of electoral system affects representation in national elections (e.g. Huber and Powell, 1994; Wessels, 1999; Mattila and Raunio, 2006) and how electoral system used in the EP elections affects behaviour of political candidates and representation (e.g. Bowler and Farrell, 2011; Farrell and Scully, 2005, 2007, 2010; Hix and Hagemann, 2009).

Does the importance of left/right for party support decline in favour of issues and other short-term factors?

Over the last thirty years scholars have provided substantial evidence showing that structural factors such as social class and religion have become less important for electoral politics (e.g. Dalton et al., 1984; Franklin et al., 1992; Dogan, 2001; Van der Brug et al., 2007; Van der Brug, 2010; Dalton and Wattenberg, 2002). Lately, a similar downward trend has been observed for the capacity of left/right ideology to structure voters’ choices at the ballot box (Van der Brug et al., 2007; Van der Brug, 2010). The decline of structural and ideological factors has pointed towards the processes of modernization and individualization that have shaken European societies (Franklin et al., 1992; Klingemann and Fuchs, 1995; Thomassen, 2005). As a result of socio-economic developments, such as rising levels of education, the growing size and diversity of the mass media as well as the increasing geographical and social mobility of citizens, the traditional links between voters and political parties have weakened. Faced with processes of individualization and modernization, scholars have put forward the expectation that voters would increasingly decide from one election to another what party they will vote for, taking into account which issues are on the political agenda, how well political parties have performed while in the government or how appealing political leaders are. Such short-term evaluations were expected to become factors which would play an increasingly important role in determining party support (e.g. Thomassen, 2005). However, the results that have been delivered to date on the alleged increase in importance of short-term factors vis-à-vis the structural and ideological factors are mixed at best. Some scholars report that some issues indeed play a stronger role for voters’ choices at the ballot box (e.g. Inglehart, 1997; Franklin, 1985; Franklin et al., 1992; Rose and McAllister, 1986), while others show stability or inconstancy in how issues affect party support (e.g. Knutsen and Scarbrough, 1995; Aardal and Van Wijnen, 2005; Knutsen and Kumlin, 2005). Similarly, there is little evidence to date that evaluations of government performance, retrospective judgments of economic development and evaluations of political leaders have become more powerful in explaining party support (e.g. Clarke et al., 2004; Listhaug, 2005; Aardal and Van Wijnen, 2005; Karvonen, 2010).

The findings of this dissertation contribute in three ways to this debate. Firstly, on the basis of the results presented in this dissertation, it seems very likely that the decline in importance of socio-structural factors and left/right for party support is partly driven by generational replacement. It shows that the electoral behaviour of younger cohorts is least affected by social class, religiosity, area of residence, or by left/right proximity. Moreover, the findings complement the existing literature on short-term determinants of party support by pointing out that no cross-generational differences can be observed in the extent to which evaluations of government and economic performance affect party support. This finding adds another stone to
refuting the expectations that performance evaluations would nowadays play a more important role, in particular for younger voters. Interestingly, this dissertation offers some evidence that particular issues, such as that of immigration in Western Europe or EU integration in East Central Europe, have visibly increased in importance for the party preferences of younger cohorts.

Secondly, this dissertation extends the literature on electoral trends, which is very much developed in the context of established Western democracies, by incorporating in the analysis the consolidating post-communist democracies of East Central Europe. Scholars to date have predominantly focused on exploring trends in electoral politics in established Western democracies, while much less is known about the electorates in post-communist countries of the EU. These countries are especially interesting to study as the electoral systems have been formed slightly more than 20 years ago and most of their citizens have been socialized under the communist rule. Due to these particularities of the region, the expectations with regard to electoral trends are much different than what scholars have assumed for Western Europe. This dissertation has contributed to the existing literature by systematically comparing generational trends in the electoral process across the group of consolidating and established democracies. A broad look across all EU countries, which lies at the heart of this dissertation, has revealed that left/right has indeed experienced a slight decline in its capacity to structure party support in favour of the issue of immigration, but it is only the case for Western Europe. In East Central Europe no remarkable trends have been observed, except for a slightly stronger impact of EU integration for the youngest generation of voters. Furthermore, this dissertation reveals that the differences between the Western and East Central European countries are not as big as the different historical background of these regions would have us expect. In both established and consolidating democracies, left/right ideology is the strongest predictor of party support and its impact is weaker for younger cohorts than for older ones. Issues exercise a rather weak effect both in the East and in the West. Similarly, performance-oriented factors matter less for younger generations of voters in both regions than for older cohorts.

Thirdly, the findings of this dissertation speak to the on-going debate on de-alignment and re-alignment in Europe. We find some evidence on re-alignment along the socio-cultural dimension. The results show that in Western Europe the issue of immigration has become more relevant for younger voters in their choices at the ballot box than for older generations, while in East Central Europe the issue of EU integration has been more important for the youngest generation born after 1989. Although we find some indication for re-alignment, we do not see that socio-economic issues have become less relevant for younger cohorts of voters. Furthermore, we do not observe re-alignment in terms of social class, religion or other social cleavages. Our analyses of representation across various levels of occupation do not reveal substantial differences in how voters from different occupational groups are represented in the various policy domains. What we do see, however, is that radical right parties represent their voters better on the issue of immigration, and to a certain extent on the issue of EU integration. This finding supports the expectations of Kriesi et al. (2008) that radical right parties are the first to pick up issues connected to the new integration-demarcation dimension.
AN AGENDA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This dissertation points to four potential avenues for further research which I will briefly outline.

Firstly, the question arises whether the lack of structure of socio-economic attitudes, and thus the traditional left/right division among mass publics in Europe, just reflects a particularity of the period under study or whether it points to a more permanent development of the left/right dimension in contemporary Europe. This dissertation has just shown a snapshot of the political space in the year of 2009 when the economic crisis was well underway. Further research could take a more dynamic approach to advance our understanding of whether the meaning of left/right has indeed become more associated in the last decades with libertarian-authoritarian issues and the issue of immigration at the expense of socio-economic issues. De Vries et al. (2011a) have provided the first step in this direction by showing that due to the mobilization of culturally rooted issues in the Netherlands over the last 30 years left/right self-placement of Dutch citizens has become more strongly linked to the issue of immigration and less strongly to the issue of redistribution. Further research could build upon this single-country study by examining how the meaning of left/right has developed over the years across different contexts. This would allow us to establish whether the meaning of left/right has indeed shifted from the traditional socio-economic issues towards libertarian-authoritarian issues or whether this dissertation solely captures a temporary state of attitudes. It would be also interesting to see whether different kinds of dynamics are at play in East Central European countries as the issues dominating political discourse in that region are considerably different from Western Europe, as a result of the recent transition from socialism to democracy and market economy.

Secondly, this dissertation opens potential discussions on the importance of external stimuli in shaping the meaning of left/right. The importance of party agency in shaping voters’ self-placement in left/right terms has been widely acknowledged (e.g. Huber, 1989; Kitschelt and Helleman, 1990; Lachat, 2011; De Vries et al., 2011a). An important angle for further research would be to study whether external stimuli, such as economic crises, can affect the extent to which left/right structures issues. This dissertation has revealed that when the economic crisis was well underway in 2009, citizen attitudes towards economic issues were mostly unstructured. In the same way as party agency leads voters to perceive issues to be linked to left/right, events with protracted consequences for the economy and society, such as an economic crisis, may exert similar effects. Whether it is the case remains to be seen. The snapshot provided in this dissertation has solely shown that in the times of a severe economic crisis, citizens’ attitudes towards socio-economic issues appear unstructured. It might be the case that when the economic crisis kicked in, citizens revised their attitudes towards involvement of the state in the economy. For example, economically liberal citizens who are normally sceptical towards redistribution of wealth towards the poor and towards state ownership, may have declared in the EES 2009 survey that they are proponents of state intervening in the economy. As a result, and given the fact that this survey contains only four questions tapping into socio-economic attitudes, no structure of socio-economic attitudes can be observed at the aggregate level in the year 2009. Further research, ideally using a broader number of questions tapping into socio-economic issues, should examine whether the times of economic austerity coincide with the weakening of the socio-economic dimension or whether the observed lack of structuration is a result of a longer process of stronger mobilization of
libertarian-authoritarian rather than socio-economic issues. It is also possible that the economic crisis will bring socio-economic issues back as part and parcel of the meaning of left/right. During the economic and financial crises of the last years, economic issues have become politicized and debates have been waged across all EU countries about the involvement of the state in rescuing the economy. If political parties stress their positions on socio-economic issues more fiercely, these issues may again become more closely related to left/right ideology. Whether socio-economic issues will become more strongly anchored again by left/right and whether this process will be comparable in the established and in the consolidating democracies remains to be investigated in the future.

Thirdly, an important angle for further research would be to study the electoral participation and voting behaviour of left-authoritarian voters: those with left-wing attitudes towards socio-economic issues and authoritarian attitudes towards libertarian-authoritarian issues. The combination of left-wing preferences for the economy with authoritarian views in the society was identified decades ago in the literature (e.g. Lipset, 1959). However, we do not know whether these citizens behave in any way different than other groups of voters. The fact that there are very few parties that represent their combination of positions might drive them to behave differently from other voters whose views are represented. The questions that arise here are whether voters holding this combination of attitudes abstain in elections, whether they participate in some elections and not in other elections and if this is the case then how the alternating participation in elections can be explained.

Last, but not least, it deserves further study why performance-based factors explain party preferences of young generations of voters to such a weak extent, although scholarly literature has predicted an increase in the importance of performance evaluations for structuring party choice. The question that arises here is whether the declining effect of performance evaluations across generations with the weakest effect for the cohort born after 1989 is attributable to a life-cycle effect. It can well be that younger voters may need time to develop the perceptual capacity of party promises and party performance in order to be able to use the evaluation judgments at the ballot box. With the electoral maturing of these voters we may see that performance evaluations may play a greater role for them in choosing which political party to vote for. As this dissertation has relied on cross-sectional data, it has been impossible to distinguish between generational and life-cycle effects. Further research could build upon this dissertation by dissecting the generational and life-cycle effects in the extent to which long- and short-term considerations affect party support in contemporary societies.
APPENDIX I Full Results of the First-Stage Analysis for Voters with High and Low Level of Sophistication (Chapter 1)

Tables below show the unstandardized coefficients of left/right distance and 12 issues which have been obtained in the first-stage regression for voters with a high and a low level of political sophistication. In this analysis, propensities to vote for political parties in each country were regressed on voters’ distance to political parties in left/right terms and on voters’ attitudes towards 12 issues, controlled by gender, social class, religion, education and age. 95% confidence intervals are provided in brackets.

### High Sophistication

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>LR Distance</th>
<th>Enterprise Ownership</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Redistribution</th>
<th>Marriage</th>
<th>Abortion</th>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Adaptation of Immigrants</th>
<th>Decrease of Immigration</th>
<th>EU Integration</th>
<th>R²</th>
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<td>.18</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.25</td>
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<td>.19</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.29</td>
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<td>(.015, .31)</td>
<td>(.25, .68)</td>
<td>(.003, .35)</td>
<td>(.18, .51)</td>
<td>(.08, .21)</td>
<td>(.1, .3)</td>
<td>(.02, .35)</td>
<td>(.02, .35)</td>
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<td>(.04, .29)</td>
<td>(.15, .39)</td>
<td>(.1, .42)</td>
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<td>.31</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.36</td>
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<td>.22</td>
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<td>.19</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.38</td>
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<td>(.04, .51)</td>
<td>(.02, 4)</td>
<td>(.03, 6)</td>
<td>(.03, 9)</td>
<td>(.28, .84)</td>
<td>(.15, 105)</td>
<td>(.0, .4)</td>
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<td>(.08, .35)</td>
<td>(.06, .35)</td>
<td>(.22, .73)</td>
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APPENDIX II Regression Results of the Relationship between Ideological Constraint and the Effect of Left/Right on Party Preferences for Voters with High and Low Level of Sophistication (Chapter 1, Figure 1.4)

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<td>Outcome var.: Effect of left/right distance on party preferences</td>
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<td>Ideological constraint (Adj-R² of Issues)</td>
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<td>(.26, .39)</td>
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No. of observations: 28
F statistic: 9.3
Prob>F: .005
R²: .2

Notes: Appendix II presents results from a linear regression where the absolute value of the effect of the left/right distance on party preferences is the outcome variable. The explanatory variable is ideological constraint i.e. the value of the adjusted R² obtained in a linear regression where voters’ left/right self-placement was regressed on voters’ attitudes towards issues (Enterprise, Ownership, Intervention, Redistribution, Same-Sex Marriage, Abortion, Law & Order, Authority, Family, Adaptation of Immigrants, Decrease of Immigration and EU Integration). The adjusted R² is a measure of how well voters’ attitudes towards issues predict voters’ left/right self-placement i.e. how well left/right structures attitudes towards those issues. The outcome variable has been obtained in the first-stage analysis, where propensities to vote for political parties have been regressed on left/right distance and controlled for socio-structural variables i.e. gender, social class, education, religion and age of voters. The second-stage analysis contains 28 observations (for each level of sophistication) which represent the political systems of the European Union. In order to account for the fact that we perform a linear regression on coefficients, we use White’s heteroscedastic consistent standard errors. *** significant at p < .01, ** significant at p < .05, * significant at p < .1 (one-tailed); 95% confidence intervals are reported in brackets.
APPENDIX III Results of Bivariate Regressions (Chapter 2)

Impact of Long- and Short-Term Determinants of Party Preferences in Western Europe across Generations (Bivariate Regressions)

Notes: This figure displays the effects of long- and short-term factors on party preferences in Western Europe for eight generations of voters. These effects have been obtained in bivariate regressions i.e. propensities to vote have been regressed on each explanatory variable separately.
Impact of Long- and Short-Term Determinants of Party Preferences in East Central Europe across Generations (Bivariate Regressions)

Notes: This figure displays the effects of long- and short-term factors on party preferences in East Central Europe for eight generations of voters. These effects have been obtained in bivariate regressions i.e. propensities to vote have been regressed on each explanatory variable separately.
### APPENDIX IV List of Political Parties Included in the Analysis in Chapter 3

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<th>Party Name in English</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (SPO)</td>
<td>Social Democratic Party of Austria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP)</td>
<td>Austrian People’s Party</td>
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<td>Die Grünen – Die Grüne Alternative (GRÜNE)</td>
<td>The Greens</td>
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<td>Hans Peter Martin</td>
<td>List of Hans Peter Martin</td>
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<td>Junge Liberale (JL)</td>
<td>Young Liberals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kommunistische Partei Österreichs (KPO)</td>
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<td>Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPO)</td>
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<td>Human Democratic Centre</td>
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<td>Mouvement Réformateur (MR)</td>
<td>Reform Movement</td>
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<td>Parti Socialiste (PS)</td>
<td>Socialist Party</td>
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<td>Ecologistes (ECOLO)</td>
<td>Écolo</td>
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<td>New Flemish Alliance</td>
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<td>Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria</td>
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<td>Ред, Законност, Справедливост (RZ)</td>
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- Christian Democratic Union of Germany/Christian Social Union of Germany
- Social Democratic Party of Germany
- Alliance 90 / The Greens
- The Left
- Free Democratic Party
- Social Democrats
- Radical Left
- Conservative People’s Party
- Danish People’s Party
- Left – Denmark’s Liberal Party
- Estonian Reform Party
- Estonian Centre Party
- Pro Patria & Res Publica Union
- Social Democratic Party
- Greens of Estonia
- People’s Union of Estonia
- Social Democratic Party of Finland
- Finnish Centre
- National Coalition Party
- Left Alliance
- Green Alliance
- Swedish People’s Party in Finland
- Finnish Christian Democrats
- True Finns
- Extreme Left (New Anticapitalist Party/Workers Struggle)
- European Ecologists
- Socialist Party
- Democratic Movement
- Union for a Popular Movement
- National Front
- Left Party/Left Front
- New Democracy
- Panhellenic Socialist Movement
- Popular Orthodox Rally
- Ecologist Greens
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Smer – Sociálna Demokracia (SMER) Direction – Social Democracy
Slovenská Demokratická a Kresťanská Unia – Democratic Strana (SDKU) Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party
Strana Maďarskej Koalície – Magyar Koalíció Pártja (SMK-MKP) Party of the Hungarian Coalition
Kresťanskodemokratické Hnutie (KDH) Christian Democratic Movement
Slovenská Národná Strana (SNS) Slovak National Party
Slovenske forum (SF) Free Forum

Slovenia

Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia
Liberal Democracy of Slovenia
Slovenian People’s Party
Slovenian National Party
Social Democrats
For Real
New Slovenia – Christian People’s Party
Youth Party – European Greens

Spain

People’s Party
Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party
Union, Progress and Democracy

Sweden

Left Party
Social Democratic Workers’ Party
Centre Party
Liberal People’s Party
Moderate Rally Party
Christian Democrats
Environment Party
Swedish Democrats

United Kingdom

Labour Party (L)
Conservative Party (CP)
Liberal Democrats (LD)
Scottish National Party (SNP)
Plaid Cymru (PC)
UK Independence Party (UKIP)
British National Party (BNP)
Green Party (GP)
APPENDIX V Position of MEP Candidates and Voters in the Two-Dimensional Space Per Country (Chapter 3)

Western Europe
East Central Europe
Notes: The graphs show the position of parties and voters of these parties in the two-dimensional space with the socio-economic dimension (horizontal axis) and libertarian-authoritarian dimension (vertical axis). The position of parties reflects the mean of stances of MEP candidates of these parties on each dimension, while the position of voters is the mean of stances of party voters. Only voters with the highest level of sophistication have been depicted in the graphs as for this group we find a two-dimensional attitude structure. Under each graph we provide the correlation of both dimensions at the aggregate level. We denote the belonging of each party by party family with the following symbols: • Green • Radical left + Social democrats • Liberal ○ Christian democrats ◊ Conservative ◇ Radical right △ Agrarian × Ethnic/Regional
### Appendix VI Full Results of the Analysis of Attitude Congruence between Voters and Party Candidates in EP Elections (Chapter 4)

#### Model I (Socio-economic domain)

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<td>.04 (.02) **</td>
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BIBLIOGRAPHY


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NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

Dit proefschrift bestudeert de rol van de links/rechts ideologie en issues in hedendaagse verkiezingen en richt zich op twee aspecten hiervan: partijkeuze en politieke vertegenwoordiging. Hoewel een aantal studies bestaat naar de rol van de links/rechts ideologie voor de electorale concurrentie tussen partijen en het stemgedrag van kiezers, is er relatief weinig bekend over de relatie tussen de links/rechts ideologie en issues. Om de rol van de links/rechts ideologie en issues bij stemgedrag en politieke vertegenwoordiging te onderzoeken, maakt dit proefschrift gebruik van de European Election Study 2009 en van de European Parliament Election Candidate Survey 2009.

Hoofdstuk 1 presenteert een algemeen model ter verklaring van de verschillen tussen landen in de effecten van links/rechts ideologie en issues op partijvoorkeuren. De bestaande wetenschappelijke literatuur laat zien dat er belangrijke verschillen bestaan tussen gevestigde democratieën in West-Europa en postcommunistische landen in Centraal-Europa in de mate waarin de links/rechte ideologie en issues partijvoorkeuren beïnvloeden. Dit hoofdstuk biedt een verklaring voor deze verschillen en laat zien dat verschillen in de effecten van issues en links/rechts ideologie op stemgedrag grotendeels verklaard kunnen worden door de mate waarin de links/rechts dimensie issues structureert. In dat geval heeft iemands positie op de links/rechts schaal dus een goede voorspellende waarde voor zijn/haar opvattingen over concrete politieke issues. Op basis van een twee-stappen analyse met een stacked data matrix toont dit hoofdstuk aan dat in landen waar de posities van kiezers tegenover issues door links/rechts worden gestructureerd, deze issues zelf weinig toevoegen aan de verklaring van de partijvoorkeuren. In deze landen hebben links/rechtsposities juist een sterk effect. In landen daarentegen waar standpunten ten aanzien van issues slechts weinig samenhang vertonen met links/rechts posities, is het omgekeerde het geval. Daar zijn de effecten van issues op partijvoorkeuren sterker, terwijl het effect van links/rechts ideologie dan juist zwakker is. Er is dus een uitruil tussen de sterkte van de effecten van issues aan de ene kant en de sterkte van het effect van links/rechts anderzijds. Dit patroon geldt voor verschillende groepen kiezers, alhoewel het patroon het sterkst zichtbaar is bij kiezers met veel politieke kennis en belangstelling. De bevindingen van dit hoofdstuk wijzen erop dat het relatief zwakke effect van links/rechts ideologie op stemgedrag in Centraal-Europese landen kan worden verklaard door het feit dat links/rechts ideologie in these landen minder sterk samenhangt met issues dan in West-Europese landen.

Hoofdstuk 2 onderzoekt verschillen tussen generaties in de mate waarin de links/rechts ideologie en issues het stemgedrag beïnvloeden. Uit wetenschappelijke literatuur blijkt een sterk afgenomen belang van lange-termijn factoren zoals sociale klasse, religie en woonplaats (platteland of stad) voor de verklaring van stemgedrag. Het belang van korte-termijn factoren, zoals issues en performance-gerelateerde factoren (bijvoorbeeld evaluaties van de prestaties van de regering), zou juist zijn toegenomen. Dit hoofdstuk onderzocht de invloed van zulke lange- en korte-termijn factoren op stemgedrag bij verschillende generaties burgers in West- en Centraal-Europa. De analyses laten zien dat in Westerse gevestigde democratieën structurele factoren (zoals sociale klasse, godsdienst en opleiding) en links/rechts ideologie het meest bepalend zijn voor de partijvoorkeuren van deze oudere generaties. Het migratie-issue heeft daarentegen een sterker effect; voor jongere generaties dan voor oudere. In de consoliderende democratieën van Centraal-Europa zijn er minimale verschillen tussen generaties in de mate waarin de links/rechts ideologie en issues het stemgedrag beïnvloeden, met één opmerkelijke uitzondering: het issue van Europese integratie. Dit

Hoofdstuk 3 analyseert de mate waarin burgers en politieke elites in gevestigde democratieën van West-Europa en consoliderende democratieën van Centraal-Europa een ‘stelsel van overtuigingen’ delen. Hiervan is sprake van verschillende (groepen) burgers die opvattingen over politieke issues op eenzelfde manier met elkaar verbinden. Empirisch uit zich dat in een sterke samenhang tussen standpunten op verschillende issues. Een noodzakelijke voorwaarde voor effectieve vertegenwoordiging is dat burgers en politieke elites dezelfde structuur van opinies ten aanzien van politieke vraagstukken hebben en dat burgers eenzelfde positie in deze structuur innemen als hun vertegenwoordigers. Dit hoofdstuk maakt onderscheid tussen drie groepen burgers met verschillende niveaus van politieke kennis. Mokkenschaal-analyses tonen aan dat alleen West-Europese burgers met veel politieke kennis een ‘stelsel van overtuigingen’ delen met hun vertegenwoordigers. Hun attitudes worden gestructureerd langs twee dimensies, een libertair-autoritaire dimensie en een sociaaleconomische dimensie. In Centraal-Europa is de structuur van houdingen van de politieke elites tweedimensionaal, terwijl op het niveau van de burgers slechts houdingen ten opzichte van libertair-autoritaire issues een schaal vormen. Houdingen ten aanzien van sociaaleconomische vraagstukken hangen te zwak samen om een schaal te vormen. Uit de analyse van de posities van politieke elites en burgers met veel politieke kennis blijkt dat er veel kiezers in West- en Centraal-Europa zijn met linkse sociaaleconomische opvattingen op de ene dimensie en autoritaire houdingen op de andere dimensie, terwijl weinig politici deze combinatie van houdingen vertegenwoordigen.

Hoofdstuk 4 analyseert de invloed van factoren op het niveau van individuen, partijen en landen op de mate van politieke vertegenwoordiging in het Europese Parlement. Dit laatste wordt vastgesteld door de congruentie te meten van posities van kiezers en de kandidaten van de partij waarop zij hebben gestemd in Europese verkiezingen. Dit is apart onderzocht voor vier domeinen: het sociaaleconomische domein, het sociaal-culturele domein, issues rond immigratie en issues rond Europese integratie. Het onderzoek in dit hoofdstuk is uitgevoerd met een zogenoemde ‘multilevel’ analyse op drie niveaus. Uit de analyse blijkt dat beter opgeleide en goed geïnformeerde kiezers uit de middenklasse beter vertegenwoordigd worden dan andere burgers. Partijen met een duidelijk ideologisch profiel vertegenwoordigen de opvattingen van hun kiezers beter dan partijen die dit niet hebben. Radicaal rechtse partijen vertegenwoordigen hun kiezers beter op issues van immigratie en Europese integratie dan andere partijen. Verder lijken de opvattingen van kiezers in het sociaal-culturele domein beter vertegenwoordigd in landen met een kiesstelsel met open kandidatenlijsten dan in landen met gesloten lijsten.

De belangrijkste theoretische implicaties van deze bevindingen zijn vierdelig.

Ten eerste wijst dit proefschrift op een evolutie van de links/rechts ideologie in Europa. Uit het onderzoek blijkt dat de structuur van opvattingen die traditioneel de links/rechts tegenstelling vormden nauwelijks bestaat bij de burgers in West-Europa en al helemaal niet bij de burgers in Centraal-Europa. In plaats daarvan hangen houdingen ten opzichte van immigratie, het gezag en individuele vrijheden duidelijker samen en vormen een schaal voor burgers en politieke elites in het Westen en in Centraal-Europa. Als links/rechts ideologie de belangrijkste dimensie is die de houdingen structueert, dan suggereren de resultaten van dit proefschrift dat links/rechts tegenwoordig meer verankerd is in houdingen ten opzichte van immigratie en libertair-autoritaire issues.
Ten tweede laat dit proefschrift zien dat er tegenwoordig een aanzienlijke kloof in vertegenwoordiging bestaat. De opvattingen van de meeste burgers uit zowel West- als Centraal-Europa vertonen een andere structuur dan de opvattingen van hun politieke vertegenwoordigers. Zelf onder de kleine groep kiezers die dezelfde structuur van attitudes hebben als hun politieke vertegenwoordigers, bestaat er een substantiële groep wier opvattingen niet worden vertegenwoordigd: de opvattingen van diegenen met economisch linkse en autoritaire houdingen.

Ten derde dragen de resultaten van dit proefschrift bij aan onze kennis over factoren die het stemgedrag beïnvloeden in tijden van individualisering. Dit proefschrift laat zien dat sociaal-structurele factoren en links/rechts ideologie voor jongere generaties kiezers minder bepalend zijn dan voor eerdere generaties. De resultaten duiden echter ook op het ontstaan van nieuwe soorten oriëntaties in West-Europa rond het immigratie-issue, maar laten ook zien dat korte-termijn factoren geen grotere rol spelen bij het stemgedrag van verschillende generaties.

Is Left/Right Still the ‘Super Glue’?
The Role of Left/Right Ideology and Issues in Electoral Politics in Western and East Central Europe

Agnieszka Walczak

Invitation

Agnieszka Walczak cordially invites to the public defence of her PhD dissertation:

“Is Left/Right Still the ‘Super Glue’?
The Role of Left/Right Ideology and Issues in Electoral Politics in Western and East Central Europe”

on Wednesday December 19th at 14:00 in the Agnietenkapel of the University of Amsterdam (Oudezijds Voorburgwal 231, 1012 EZ Amsterdam).

The defence will be followed by a reception in the Agnietenkapel and a soirée in VOC Café De Schreierstoren (Prins Hendrikkade 94/95, 1012 AE Amsterdam) at 20:30.

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