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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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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 fulfil 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*” (Luttberg, 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 Egmont 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 and 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.²⁵ 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.²⁶ 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

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

Established Democracies of Western Europe	Consolidating Democracies of East Central Europe
Political Elites	
<i>Scale 1:</i> Abortion, Adaptation of Immigrants, Authority, Decrease of Immigration, Law & Order, Family (H: .38)	<i>Scale 1:</i> Adaptation of Immigrants, Authority, Decrease of Immigration, EU Integration, Law & Order, Same-Sex Marriage, Family (H: .38)
<i>Scale 2:</i> Enterprise, Ownership, Redistribution (H: .32)	<i>Scale 2:</i> Enterprise, Redistribution (H: .34)
No of obs.: 802	No of obs.: 212
Citizens with the Highest Level of Sophistication	
<i>Scale 1:</i> Adaptation of Immigrants, Authority, Decrease of Immigration, Law & Order, Same-Sex Marriage (H: .36)	<i>Scale 1:</i> Adaptation of Immigrants, Authority, Decrease of Immigration, Law & Order (H: .35)
<i>Scale 2:</i> Ownership, Redistribution (H: .31)	
No of obs.: 3164	No of obs.: 1308
Citizens with the Medium Level of Sophistication	
<i>Scale 1:</i> Adaptation of Immigrants, Authority, Decrease of Immigration, Law & Order, Same-Sex Marriage, Family (H: .35)	<i>Scale 1:</i> Law & Order, Authority (H: .31)
No of obs.: 6550	No of obs.: 3021
Citizens with the Lowest Level of Sophistication	
<i>Scale 1:</i> Authority, Adaptation of Immigrants, Decrease of Immigration, Law & Order (H: .34)	<i>Scale 1:</i> Adaptation of Immigrations, Decrease of Immigration (H: .36)
<i>Scale 2:</i> Same-Sex Marriage, Family (H: .36)	
No of obs.: 4881	No of obs.: 2075

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.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 – *Enterprise* and *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.

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

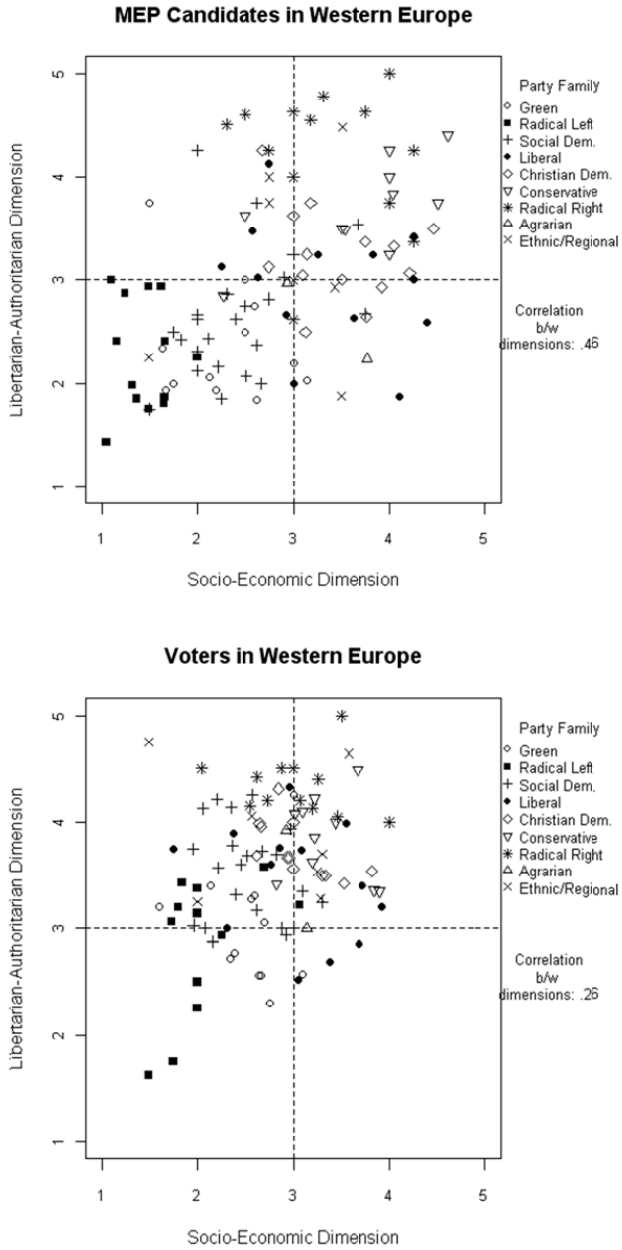
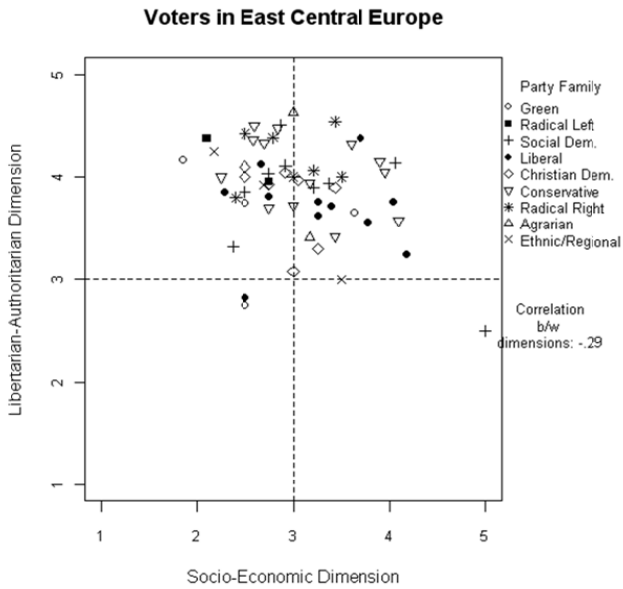
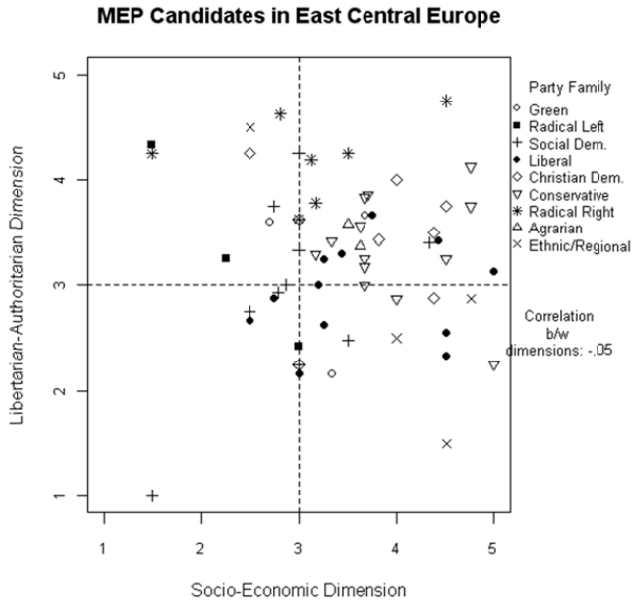


Figure 3.2 Position of MEP Candidates and Voters in the Two-Dimensional Space in East Central Europe



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 .45), 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.³¹ 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).³² Here, we find only 16.82% of parties in

³¹ After removing the outliers, the correlation at the level of voters settles at .2.

³² The upper-right corner includes voters who score 3 or more than 3 both on the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian dimensions. As there are many voters who score exactly 3 on the socio-economic dimension (around 1000 respondents), we observe in Figure 3.1 (Voters in Western Europe) that at the aggregate level many party voters are aligned around the cut-off point of 3 between the upper-right and upper-left quadrant (voters of 20

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 European, 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

parties in the aggregate). These voters are counted to the upper-right quadrant. As a result, we obtain that 44,51% of all voters are found in the upper-right corner (at the aggregate, these are voters of 37 parties). In turn, the upper-left corner counts voters who score less than 3 on the socio-economic and 3 and more than 3 on the libertarian-authoritarian dimension (38.26% of all voters). At the aggregate they are presented as voters of 24 parties.

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.