

Perception des différences, polarisation, et attitudes anti-démocratiques
Panel Chair : Pierre Baudewyns

Papier 1 : De Briey Laurent

Titre : Une démocratie consociative centripète : Le vote multiple et le cas belge

Résumé :

La situation politique en Belgique illustre le fait que l'utilisation d'institutions consociatives dans des sociétés divisées peut garantir un environnement politique pacifique, mais qu'elle ne parvient pas à réduire ses tendances centrifuges et la polarisation des espaces publics. La distanciation de plus en plus forte des paysages politiques flamands et francophones menacent de rendre à nouveau extrêmement complexe la constitution d'un gouvernement fédéral au lendemain du scrutin de juin 2024.

Dans ce contexte, un élément de réponse pourrait consister dans l'ajout d'incitations centripètes au cadre consociatif via une réforme de notre système électoral. Cependant, la solution habituellement proposée à cette fin - la création d'une circonscription fédérale - serait selon moi insuffisante. C'est pourquoi je voudrais à travers cette communication préconiser l'adoption d'un nouveau système électoral : le vote multiple (MPV pour Multiple Proportional Vote). Le MPV a pour objectif de maintenir l'objectif consociatif d'inclure les différentes communautés dans le parlement, ainsi que de renforcer les tendances centripètes vers la modération, en donnant deux voix à chaque électeur : la première étant destinée à voter, comme aujourd'hui en faveur d'un candidat de sa propre communauté, et une seconde afin d'exprimer ses préférences pour les candidats des autres communautés.

En favorisant dans un cadre consociatif des votes transcommunautaires et en incitant les responsables politiques à chercher un support dans l'ensemble de la population, le MPV suggère que le consociationalisme et sa principale alternative théorique, le centripétalisme, sont loin de s'exclure mutuellement.

Papier 2 : Emilien Paulis, Bjarn Eck

Titre : Breaking the codes: public resentment against ruling parties and support for (anti-)democratic reforms in 16 European democracies

Résumé:

The scientific community is extensively worried about the rampant distrust towards representative institutions among the public. As such, scholars have investigated potential remedies to this enduring challenge and what reforms would be appealing for citizens adopting negative attitudes towards parties and governments. On the one hand, we know that what some want is more involvement in policy making. This is probably why representative institutions have increasingly called to democratic reforms and commissioned different participatory processes (Geissel and Newton 2012, Elstub and Escobar 2019). Among these, referendums, as main instrument of direct democracy, and mini-publics, as main instrument of deliberative democracy, have often been implemented during the last decades (Hollander 2019, Paulis et al. 2020). On the other hand, we know that some want rather less involvement. Scholars have indeed developed gloomy narratives about populist backsliding and the fact that citizens living in Europe could be more and more tempted to back anti-democratic, authoritarian models of governance (Malka et al. 2020). Furthermore, we know that political distrust is a strong predictor of supporting technocratic, non-partisan experts as policy makers (Bertsou 2019).

Against this backdrop, building on instrumental and psychological considerations, we develop an argument which is that voters who strongly dislike parties in power will be more open to any reforms able to challenge the incumbent government, be it democratic or not. Yet, their preference for democratic or anti-democratic reforms should vary according to their ideological extremism. In terms of democratic reforms, moderates are expected to favor mini publics (deliberative democracy), while radicals favor referenda (direct democracy). As far as anti-democratic reforms are concerned, radicals should be the main supporters of more disruptive changes triggered by authoritarian leadership, whereas moderates should be more into soft alternative and greater power to independent experts (technocracy).

All of this could translate that, if citizens opposed to government do share a willingness to challenge the status quo, they do not all want to adhere to the same rules of the game to do it. To test this, our study relies on public opinion survey data (N=28,500) collected in 2021 in 16 European countries.

Papier 3: jérémy Dodeigne

Titre: From political adversaries to political enemies? Evolution of political styles in European democracies since the 1960s.

Résumé:

Hardly a week goes by without reports of elected officials—often depicted as ‘populists’—having used vitriolic language and viciously attacked their opponents. In a context of ‘restyling of politics’ the style of political actors is presented as increasingly emotional and confrontational. Some scholars have argued that these styles directly challenge the democratic functioning of our modern societies. Yet in the absence of longitudinal studies such claims remain trivial intuitions and anecdotes that are as old as politics. Do the styles of modern politicians constitute new trends or reflect old habits? What are the factors constraining or favouring certain styles? In the face of a form of nostalgia for good old times, I critically challenge the idea that emotional and confrontational styles are peculiar threats in contemporary democracies. The feeling that something has changed in politicians’ styles relies on definitions of what style encompasses: I argue that styles increasingly focus on individuals and their personal traits and life. This change has occurred at the expense of political issues and policy orientation. While ‘politics is all about conflicts’ the real democratic threats concern ‘personal conflicts without politics’. This contribution will present the POLSTYLE project and how it intends to make radical empirical methodological and theoretical breakthroughs by analysing the evolution of political styles in four European democracies since the 1960s studying performance of actors’ style in distinct arenas (TV, print press, parliamentary debates and Twitter)

Papier 4: Luca Bettarelli, Emilie van Haute, Andres Reiljan

Titre: Territorial disparities as drivers of affective polarization in Europe: disentangling within- and between-country dynamics

Résumé:

In recent years, a number of political events - such as Brexit and the triumphs of populist/far-right parties and leaders in several countries - have made it evident that the political realities can vary significantly between different regions within countries. These developments that have been shocking for many people have often been framed as a pushback from the

territories that are (or at least feel) “left behind” as compared to some other parts of their country. At the same time, this rise of populism and radicalism has induced scholarly attention on a previously overlooked form of political polarization, namely *affective polarization*. Broadly defined as the divergence in feelings between one’s political in- and out-groups, affective polarization has proven to be particularly harmful for society, leading to a myriad of problematic consequences both in- and outside of the political sphere. Due to the severe ramifications that are associated with affective polarization, the potential drivers of this phenomenon have been under increasing scrutiny. This rapidly growing body of research has aimed at explaining the causes of affective polarization either from country, party or individual level perspective. In our own recently published work we have, however, demonstrated that there is scope for investigating affective polarization also at the regional level, since country-level analyses hide significant within-country heterogeneities: our results indicate that the range of affective polarization scores is larger across regions than between countries, with over half of the variation in scores being attributable to within-country heterogeneity. Yet, no attempts have hitherto been made to study the predictors of affective polarization from a regional perspective.

In this paper, we address this research gap and aim at explaining this substantial cross-regional variation in the levels of affective polarization. We put special emphasis on economic performance and quality of institutions, hypothesizing that regions which perform worse – especially compared to other regions in the same country – are affectively more polarized. To test our hypotheses, we employ the commonly used party like-dislike data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) dataset and restrict our analysis to countries with the Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics (NUTS) classification system provided by the European Commission. We compute the levels of affective polarization for almost 200 regions (nested in 30 countries) during the time span of 2000-2020, giving us significantly more statistical leverage as compared to a country-level approach. Making use of econometric techniques, we then analyze (i) the impact of a set of explanatory variables on regional levels of affective polarization; (ii) if such direct effects are mediated by between- and/or within-country dynamics. Also accounting for the commonly used political variables (ideological polarization, partisanship), cultural aspects and socio-demographic structure in our analysis allows us to juxtapose our potential explanation to the currently dominant theories regarding the drivers of affective polarization. Thus, our findings will contribute to a better understanding about the structural foundations of affective polarization, emphasizing the relevance of regional factors.