

The cultural dimension: cleavage theory revisited

Session 05

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Overview of the last sessions

Overview of the last sessions

Take-home points from Session 1 to 4 (**who's up for a summary?**):

① Session 1

- European **party systems are rooted on the social transformations that led to state formation**. They reflect the structure of conflict within each country and are shaped by reinforcing political institutions. From the 1920s to the 1960s, they remained mostly unchanged

② Session 2

- **Since the 60s**, a transformation in the economic structure and generational replacement led to a **shift from materialistic to post-materialistic values**. This provided the necessary context to initiate some changes in the configuration of party systems, **mainly driven by green and new left parties**

Overview of the last sessions

Take-home points from Session 1 to 4:

③ Session 3

- **As a counter-reaction** to the changes initiated in the 60s, a wave of **new far right parties** took place, introducing a **progressive transformation on the** traditional class cleavage and the overall **conflict structure**

④ Session 4

- In contrast to the progressive cumulative change in NWE, some **SE countries**, that had been less affected by the green and PRR wave, **experienced a series of party systems shock after political and economic crises**

Introduction to the spatial model I: the unidimensional model

Introduction to the spatial model I: the unidimensional model

- But how can we make sense of these changes?
- In this session we will cover the most recent **updates of the cleavage theory**, that account for the transformation of western European party systems
- To follow these updates, we will first review some basic notions of the **spatial theory of voting and party competition**

Introduction to the spatial model I: the unidimensional model

- The spatial (or economic) theory of voting and party competition was proposed by **Downs** (1957)
- He proposed an analysis of elections as **electoral markets** in which the **demand side** was the electorate and the **supply side** was the competing parties
- In his initial **model**, based on the USA context, two parties competed to **maximize voters** over **one dimension**
- We will use this basic set-up for simplicity, although **Europe** is mostly characterized by **multi-party systems**

Introduction to the spatial model I: the unidimensional model

- So first of all, what do we mean by a **dimension**?
 - ① Mathematically -> a vector that represents a set of preferences over a continuum
 - ② In our setup -> policy preferences that range from 0 (the left) to 10 (the right)

the left 0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10 the right

Introduction to the spatial model I: the unidimensional model

- To recall:
 - ① Models are simplifications of reality
 - ② “All models are wrong, but some are useful” (G. Box)
 - ③ The key for interpreting any model: understanding the assumptions
- The **main assumptions of the Downsian model** are that parties aim to **maximize votes** to win the election
- The second assumption is that each voter have a fixed policy preference over the continuum (**preference distribution**) and **will vote to the closest party if there is one closest alternative**

Introduction to the spatial model I: the unidimensional model

- Each party depart from a different side of the spectrum (representing **each side of a cleavage**)
- Then, each political party takes the **policy stance** (i.e., position over the continuum) that maximizes its chances of winning the election by **approximating the preference of the median voter** (i.e., the preference that leaves an equal number of voters at each side of the distribution)
- Let's imagine that in our case we have two parties, each of them representing each side of the left-right ideological dimension, that want to maximize their chances of winning the next election by moderating their positions
 - ① The first party is a **centre-left party**, that takes a value of **4**
 - ② The second party is a **centre-right party**, that takes a value of **6**
 - ③ **Preferences are normally distributed** within the population

Introduction to the spatial model I: the unidimensional model

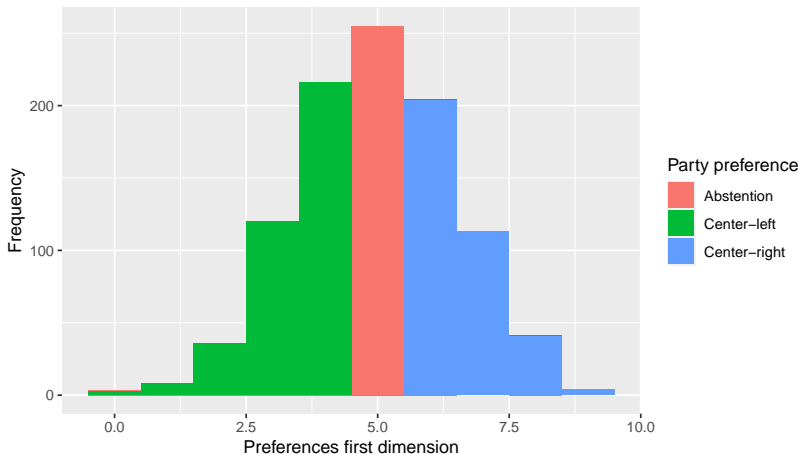


Figure 1: Unidimensional space with two parties and abstention

Introduction to the spatial model I: the unidimensional model

- Let's play with this set-up a little!
 - ① What happens if we add a **centre-party** to the model?
 - ② And if we add a **extreme-right party**?
 - ③ And if we add a **extreme-right and extreme-left party**?
 - ④ What happened if the distribution is slightly **skewed to the right** (i.e., more voters in the left)?
 - ⑤ And **to the left** (i.e., more voters in the right)?
 - ⑥ What happens if **extreme voters are apathetic**?
 - ⑦ What happens if the **centre-right party is in government and the economy is doing good**?
 - ⑧ And if **the economy is doing bad**?
 - ⑨ What happens if the position of the parties is **3 and 7** respectively and they have **programmatic constraints/reputation** (i.e., they cannot credibly shift without a cost)?

Introduction to the spatial model I: the unidimensional model

- In sum, **the Downsian model**, as well as models in general, are **a tool that help us understand the reality**, by providing means to summarise (theoretical) expectations graphically and mathematically
- **Representing cleavages with dimensions of competition** help us to **analyse the interaction between parties (i.e., party systems)** as well as **parties and voters (i.e., electoral competition)**, under a given set of conditions

Introduction to the spatial model II: the bidimensional model

Introduction to the spatial model II: the bidimensional model

- So far, however, we have only discussed a situation in where two parties compete over a single dimension
- However, we know that **cleavages can overlap or cross-cut each other**
- If they don't completely overlap, we can interpret the **cross-cutting cleavage as a second dimension**
- Let's say, for example, that two parties compete in **Catalonia (Spain)** where there are two important dimensions
 - ① The **left-right economic dimension** is rooted in the **class cleavage**
 - ② The **pro-independence - anti-independence** is rooted in the **centre-periphery cleavage**

Introduction to the spatial model II: the bidimensional model

- We have **two hypothetical scenarios**:
 - ① In **Figure 2** the two dimensions are **partially coincidental/overlapping**
 - This could be the case if the second dimension was **not at all salient/divisive**
 - ② In **Figure 3** the two dimensions are **completely independent** (i.e., orthogonal in mathematical terms)
 - This could be the case if the second dimension was **extremely salient/divisive**

Introduction to the spatial model II: the bidimensional model

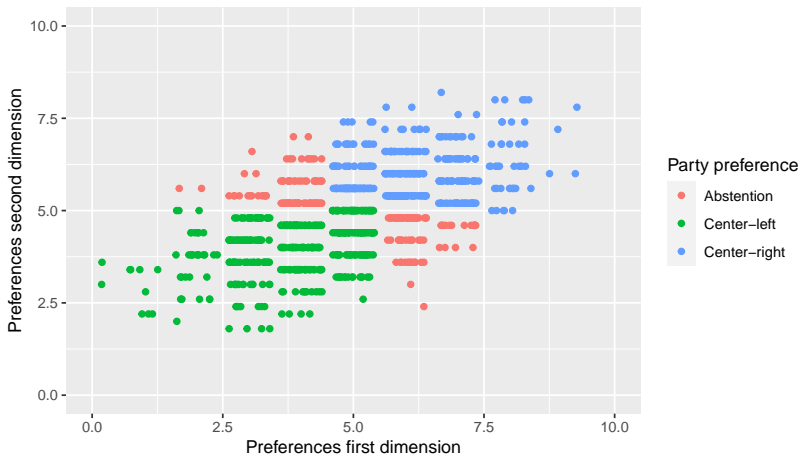


Figure 2: Bidimensional competition with two parties and correlated preferences

Introduction to the spatial model II: the bidimensional model

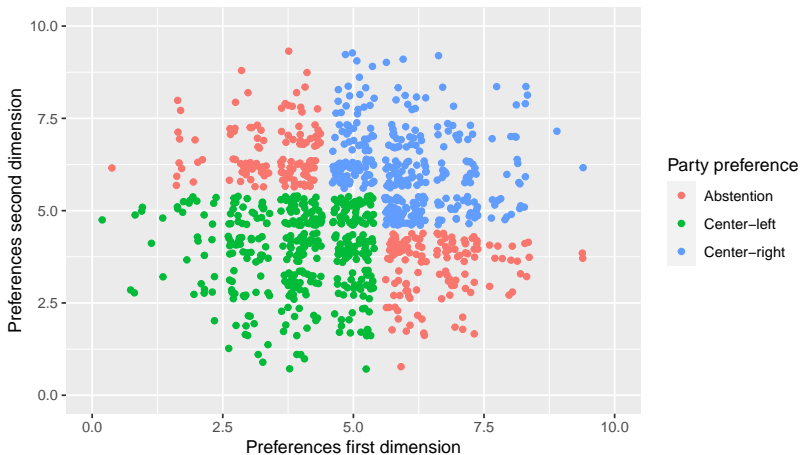


Figure 3: Dimensional competition with two parties and orthogonal preferences

Introduction to the spatial model II: the bidimensional model

This lead to a series of implications, most importantly:

- ① As the **dimensions** become **more cross-cutting**, the **space opened for new parties** becomes **larger**
- ② The **larger** becomes the **space opened for new parties**, the **party system** will tend to be **more fragmented**
- ③ As **more dimensions** cross-cut each other, the **space opened for new parties** becomes **larger** and the **party system** will tend to be **more fragmented**

The emergence of a new value-based cleavage? Introducing the cultural dimension

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- In previous sessions we have discussed the importance of the **class-cleavage**
- This is the **main cleavage structuring the political competition Western Europe**
- In fact, the **left-right (or first order) dimension**, which is the most used dimension in European political studies, captures preferences **deeply rooted in the class cleavage**

The emergence of a new value-based cleavage? The cultural dimension

- The rest of cleavages discussed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) have country-specific manifestations and, with some exceptions, have weakened with time
 - ① The **state-church cleavage** has eroded as a result of growing secularization
 - ② The **urban-rural cleavage** (although re-emerging according to some scholars) have eroded with massive migration from the country side to the city
 - ③ The **centre-periphery cleavage** is the only exception, since it has become even stronger in some cases (e.g., Catalonia in Spain or Scotland in the UK)

The emergence of a new value-based cleavage? The cultural dimension

- None of them, however, explains the rise of new left and new right parties
- This has led scholars to **two alternative conclusions**:
 - ① Either **cleavages have lost their explanatory power** and political competition dynamics are now driven by issue voting, short-term strategies and opportunistic/charismatic leadership
 - ② Or a **new cleavage** is structuring the political conflict in Europe
- This is why scholars situated on the latter tradition argue that **Western Europe is increasingly structured by a two-dimensional political space**¹

¹And the reason why I wanted to be sure that you understand the party-system implications of spatial models with two dimensions

The emergence of a new value-based cleavage? The cultural dimension

- There is a series of names that different scholars have given to the new cleavage:
 - ① Integration-demarcation (e.g., [Kriesi, 1998](#))
 - ② Universalistic-communitarian (e.g., [Bornschieer, 2010](#))
 - ③ Green/alternative/libertarian(**GAL**)-Tradition-authority-national(**TAN**) (e.g., [Hooghe & Marks, 2018](#))
 - ④ Winners-losers (of globalization) [Hutter & Kriesi \(2019\)](#)
- But all of these accounts coincide on some **basic features**

The emergence of a new value-based cleavage? The cultural dimension

- *Basic features* of the new cleavage:
 - ① The cleavage is rooted on (1) the expansion of **educational rights**, (2) the transition **from an industrial to a post-industrial society** and (3) the process of **globalization**
 - ② These three processes have generated groups of **winners** and **losers**, i.e. people that have benefited or been harmed as a result, that constitute the two sides of the conflict
 - ③ The cleavage raises opposed **cultural values and preferences**. Losers tend to manifest traditional, nativist and authoritarian-oriented values while winners tend to support progressive, multiculturalist and libertarian policies
 - ④ The parties that better represent each of the poles of this conflict are the **new left parties** for the winners and the **PRR** parties for the losers

Cross-country variation and current trends

Cross-country variation and current trends

- However, this second-dimension is **not completely orthogonal** to the first dimension
- Also, **traditional parties** (i.e., mainstream or dominant) have sometimes been **dominant on the second-dimension** too (e.g., Social Democratic parties that accommodated the demands of NSM)
- There are important regional differences:
 - ① In **NWE**, the second and first dimensions are **more orthogonal** and **new parties** have been the main drivers of shifts to the second dimension
 - ② In **SE**, the second and first dimensions are **less orthogonal** and **traditional parties** more frequently *own* second dimension issues

Cross-country variation and current trends

- **Why these differences?**
 - ① Authoritarian legacies
 - ② Party system formation during the silent revolution (i.e., more permeable party systems)
 - ③ Weaker economic development
 - ④ Lower levels of immigration
 - ⑤ Already segmented party systems that absorbed the new demands
 - ⑥ Others?
- The **recent** irruption of PRR parties in Portugal and Spain suggest some **degree of convergence**

The emergence of a new value-based cleavage? The cultural dimension

- **Final activity!** Let look at two paradigmatic cases visualized with real data from 15 years ago: **what can we say about them?**
What do they tell about recent events?

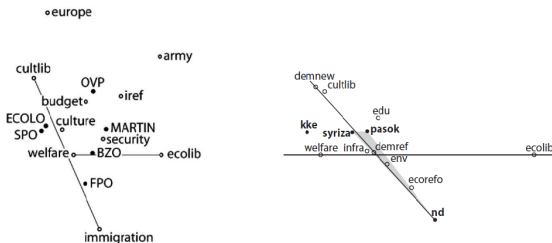


Figure 4: Austria 2006 and Greece 2007 compared / Source: Bornschier (2010) and Hutter and Kriesi (2019) respectively

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