

The cultural dimension: cleavage theory revisited

Session 05

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Spring Term 2021-2022

- ① Overview of the last sessions
- ② Introduction to the spatial model I: the unidimensional model
- ③ Introduction to the spatial model II: the bidimensional model
- ④ The emergence of a new value-based cleavage? Introducing the cultural dimension
- ⑤ Cross-country variation and current trends
- ⑥ References

Overview of the last sessions

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- **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**

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- 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

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- 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**

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- We will use this basic set-up for simplicity, although **Europe** is mostly characterized by **multi-party systems**

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 - ② In our setup \rightarrow policy preferences that range from 0 (the left) to 10 (the right)

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- The **main assumption of the Downsian model** is 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, which gives place to a **preference distribution**

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- 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)

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 - ③ **Preferences are normally distributed** within the population

Introduction to the spatial model I: the unidimensional model

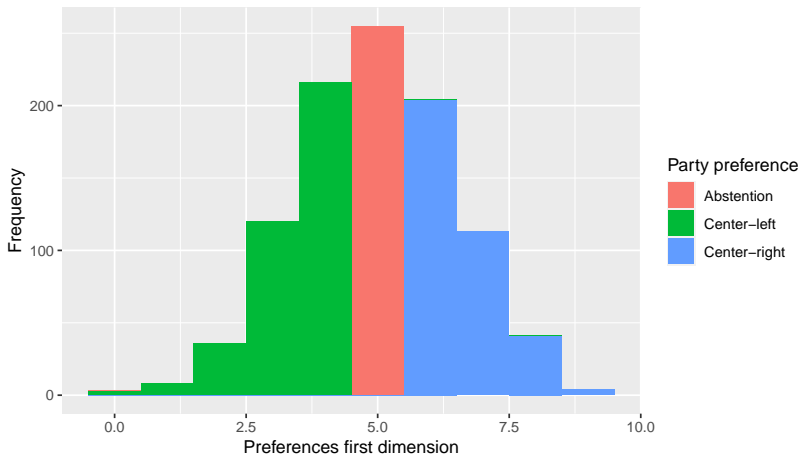


Figure 1: Unidimensional space with two parties and abstention

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 - 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)?

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- **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

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 - ② The **pro-independence - anti-independence** is rooted in the **centre-periphery cleavage**

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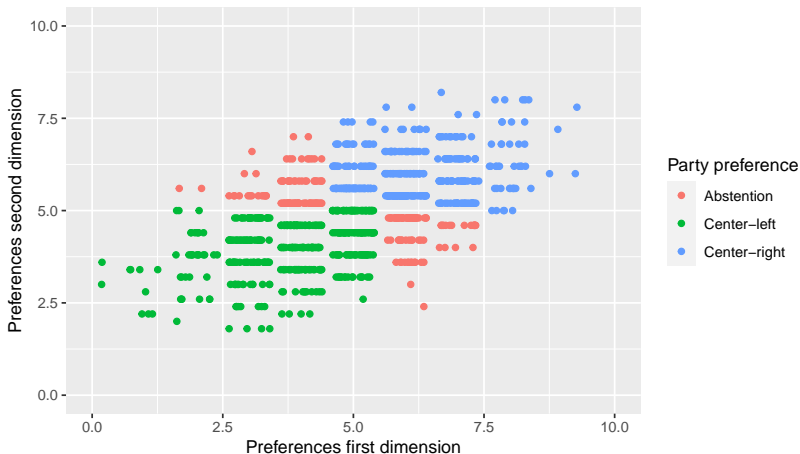


Figure 2: Bidimensional competition with two parties and correlated preferences

Introduction to the spatial model II: the bidimensional model

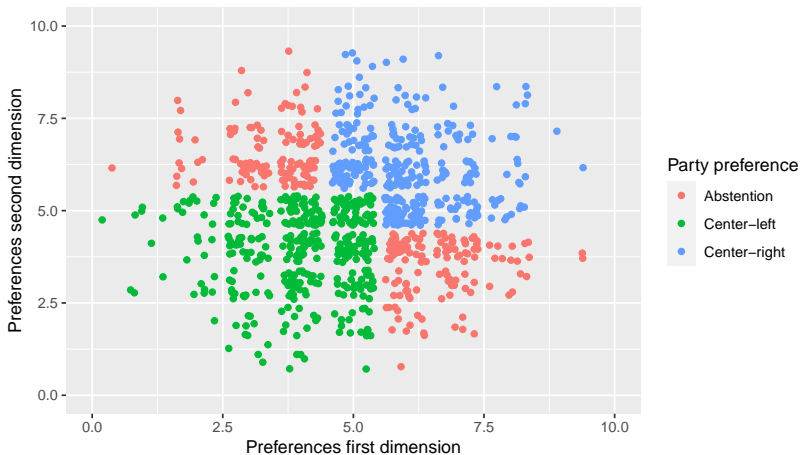


Figure 3: Dimensional competition with two parties and orthogonal preferences

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- 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**

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- 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**

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 - 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)

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- 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

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- But all of these accounts coincide on some **basic features**

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 - 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

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 - ② In **SE**, the second and first dimensions are **less orthogonal** and **traditional parties** more frequently *own* second dimension issues

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- 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?

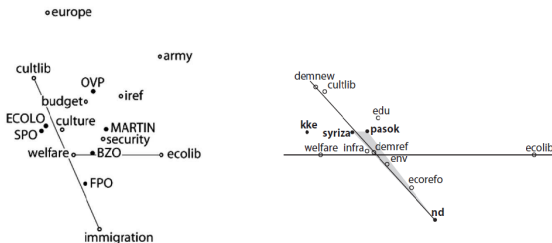


Figure 4: Austria 2006 and Greece 2007 compared / Source: Bornschier (2010) and Hutter and Kriesi (2019) respectively

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