

Economic Inequality and Legislative Agendas in Europe

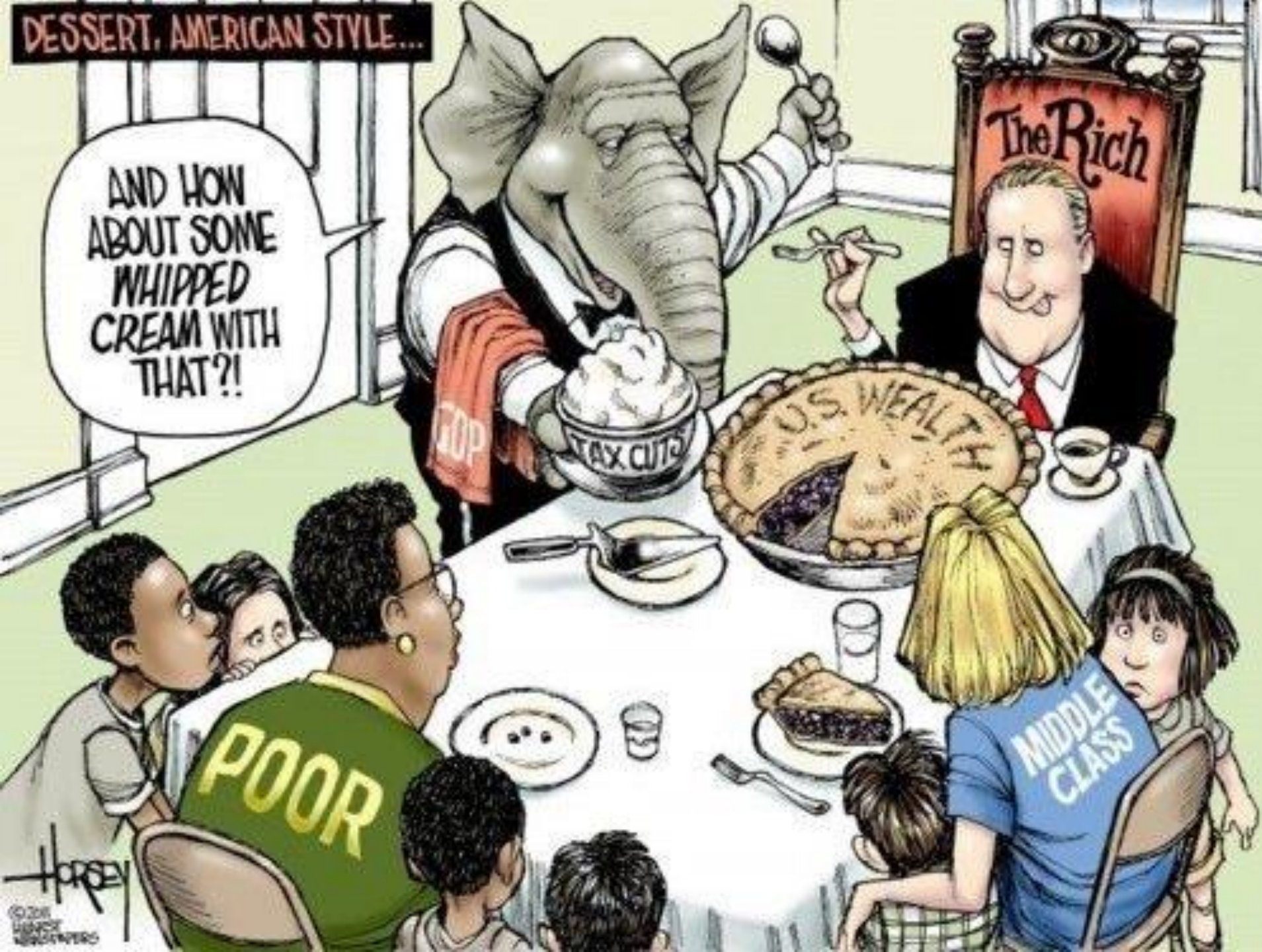
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MIKE LUCKOVICH ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION © APRIL 12, 2011

DESSERT, AMERICAN STYLE...

AND HOW
ABOUT SOME
WHIPPED
CREAM WITH
THAT?!



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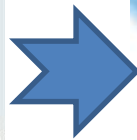


What are the effects of income inequality on the policy attention of European legislators?



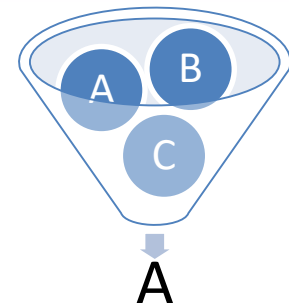
Problem responsiveness hypothesis

As income inequality grows, there will be a corresponding **increase** in legislative attention to social-safety net issues



Negative Agenda Power hypothesis

As income inequality grows, there will be a corresponding **decrease** in legislative attention to social-safety net issues and the overall agenda will become **less** topically diverse



Data

Policy topic coding of bills and laws (legislative agenda) according to **21 topics** of the Comparative Agendas Project in **9 countries**: Belgium, Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the UK



Two dependente variables

Entropy measure

- If, in a given year, every law was on the same topic, then the system would have a very low entropy score for that year
- Shannon's diversity index ranging from 0 (low entropy) to 1 (high entropy)
- **Is entropy increasing or decreasing as inequality grows?**

Compositional DV

- It expresses change in attention to topic x as a relative to topic y
- 4 topics: economy, social order, social safety net, other
- **Is attention to social-safety issues increasing or decreasing relative to other groups as inequality grows?**

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Entropy of Laws

Public Laws

Gini Index

0.9

0.8

0.7

0.6

0.5

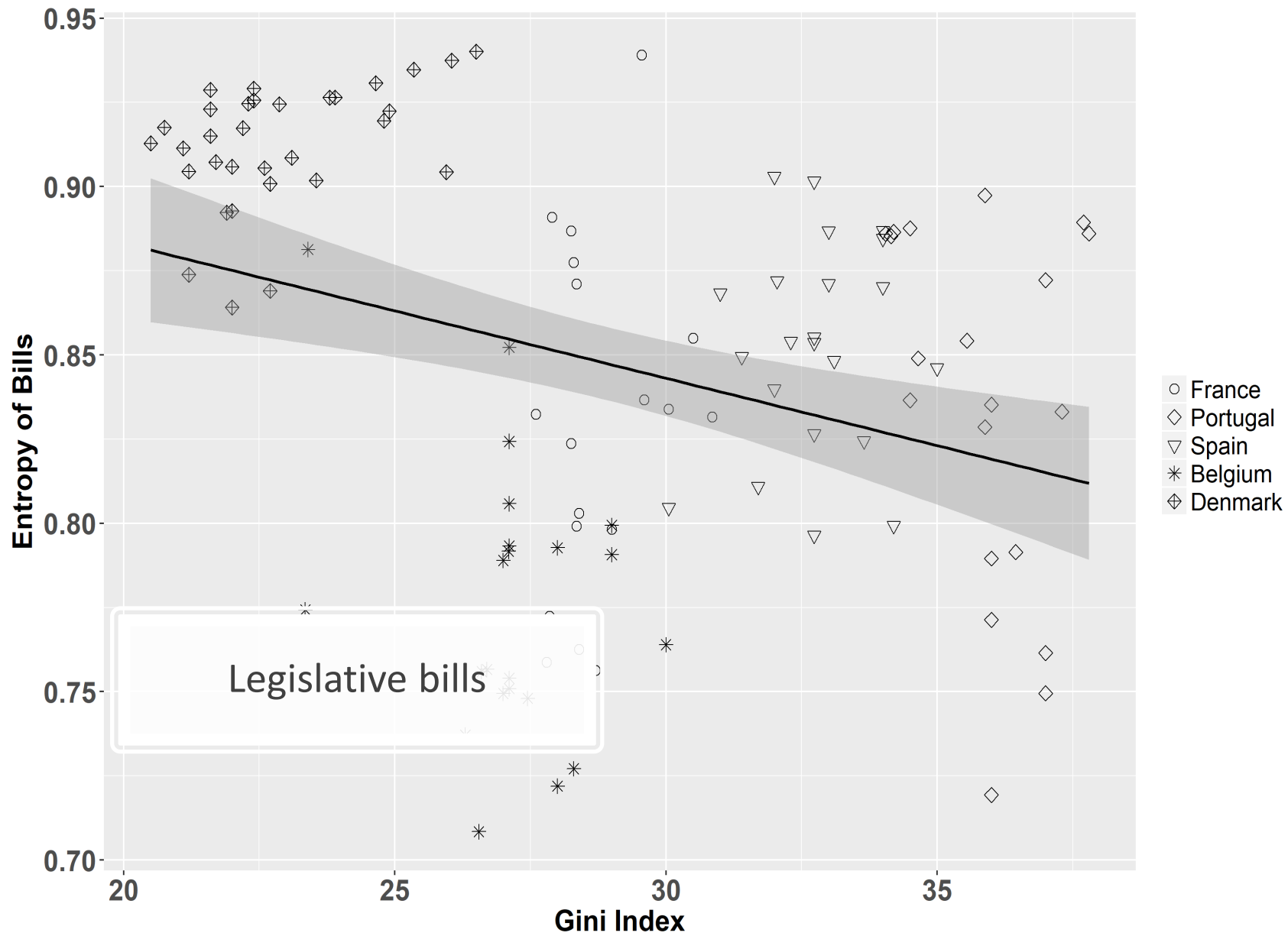
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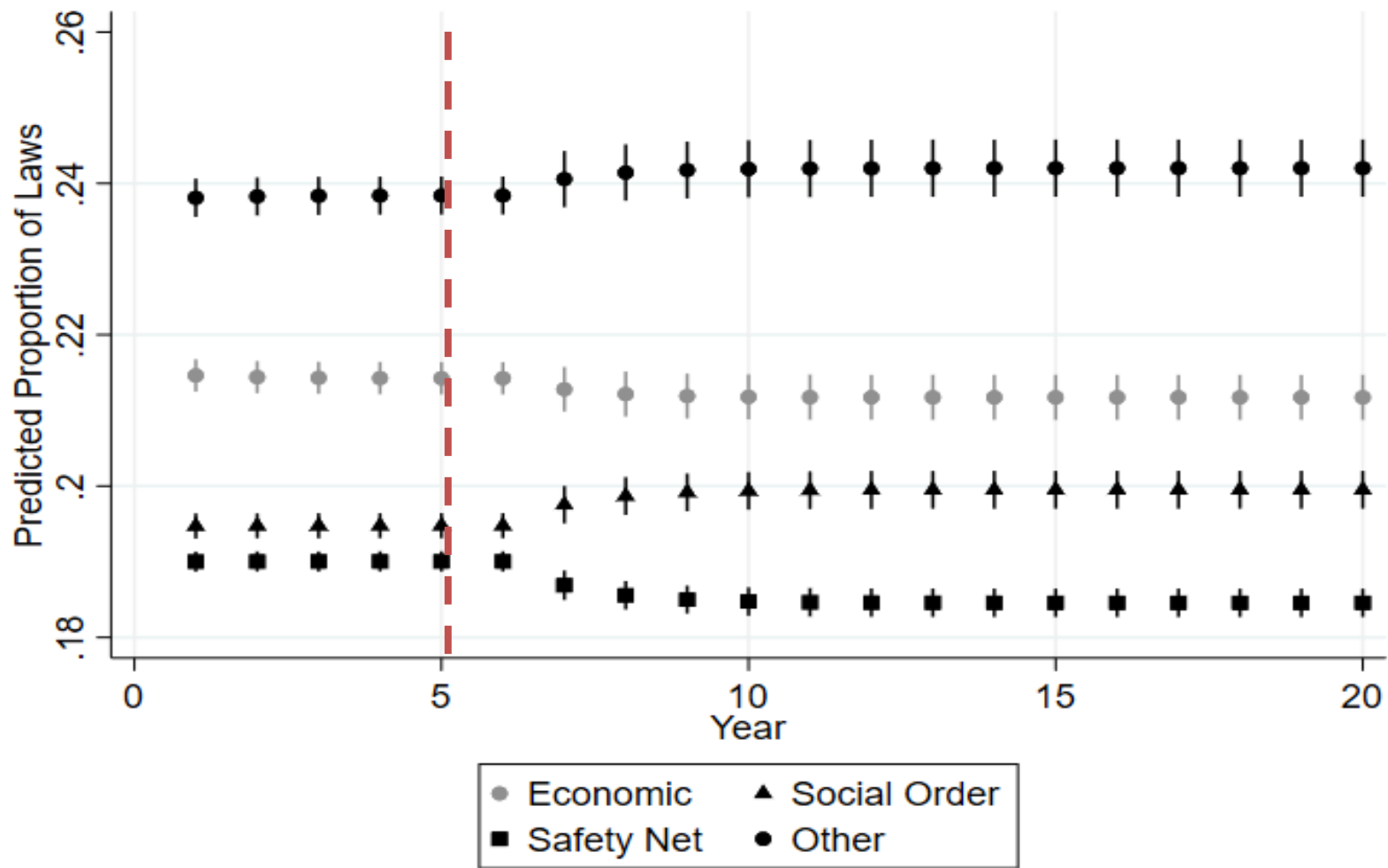
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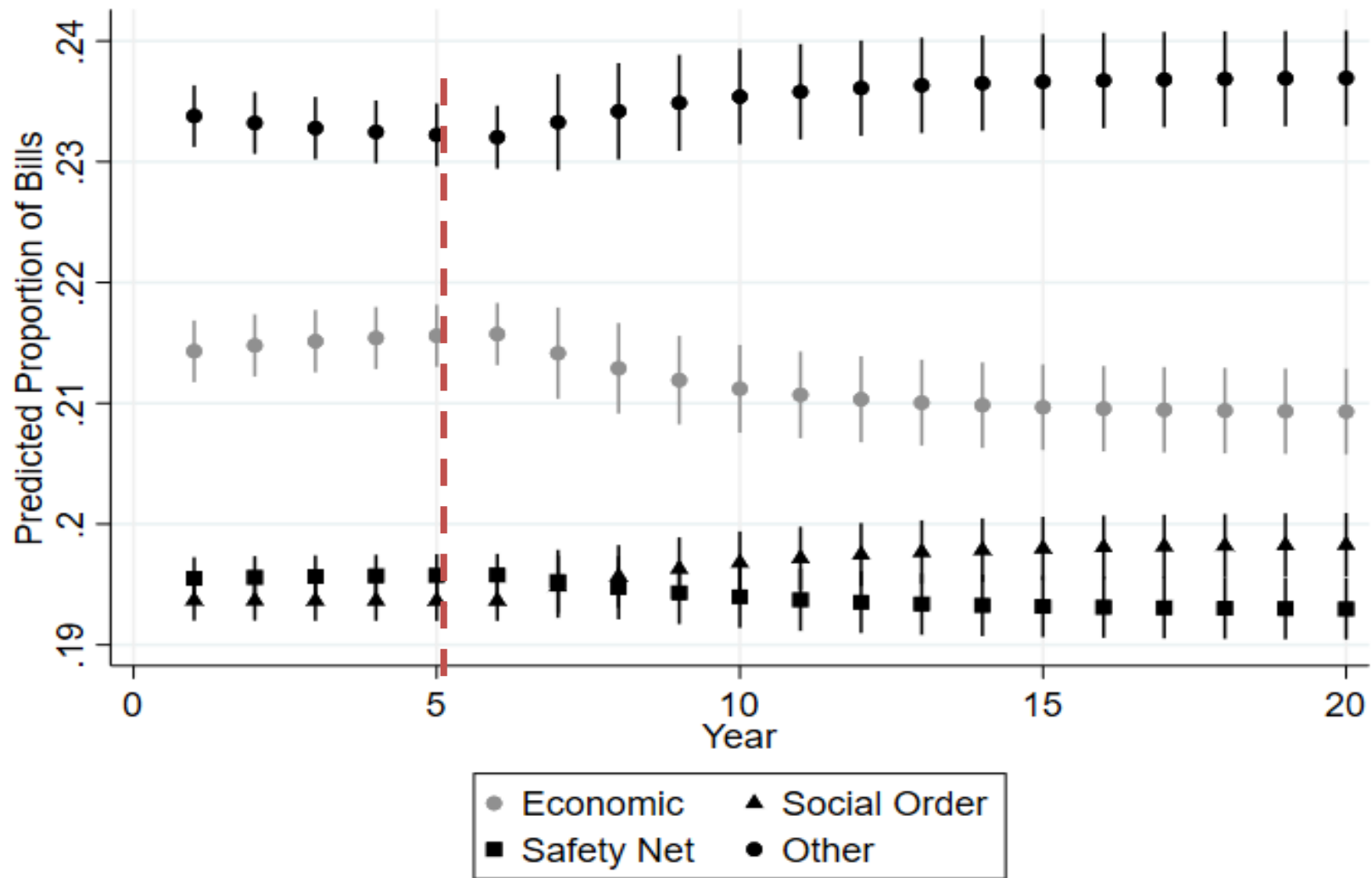
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- * Belgium
- ◇ Denmark
- France
- × Hungary
- ⊠ Italy
- △ Netherlands
- ◇ Portugal
- ▽ Spain
- ⊠ United Kingdom





Simulated attention to Public Laws



Simulated attention to Legislative Bills

What is the impact of income inequality on policy attention?

As income inequality increases, legislative agendas are:

- less diverse
- less focused on social safety issues (with respect to other macro issues)



