EUENGAGE Workshop: Measuring Euro-Scepticism

January 27, 2018

Università degli Studi di Roma
UNITELMA SAPIENZA
Aula Magna, Viale Regina Elena, 295 00161 Roma

Programme

12:30 h Informal get-together for a buffet lunch

13:30 h *Welcome* and Introduction by Hermann Schmitt, Mannheim and Nicolò Conti, Rome

13:45 h ***Measuring Euro-Scepticism of the Public: Problems and Prospects of Transnationally Organised Cross-Sectional Random Sample Surveys***
Presentation by Pascal Chelala and Nicolas Belcuwe, Kantar Public, Brussels, Belgium

14:30 h ***Measuring Euro-Scepticism in the framework of New Social Media Communications: Politicising Europe***
Presentation by Zoltan Fazekas, University of Oslo and Sebastian Popa, MZES, University of Mannheim

15:15 h ***Euroscepticism in the News Media: Automated Text Analysis of Media Coverage of the EU***
Presentation: Marina Popescu, CEU Budapest

16:00 h Coffee break

16:15 h ***The changing relationship between ideological dimensions and party positions on European integration***
Presentation: Daniela Braun, LMU University of Munich,

17:00 ***United they Fight the EU: Exploring Populist Radical Right Parties' Opposition to the EU in the EP***
Presentation: Benedetta Carlotti, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence

17:45 h ***The Ideological Embedding of Euro-Scepticism: Expert Survey Evidence from Britain and Germany***
Presentation: Hermann Schmitt, Universities of Manchester and Mannheim

18:30 h *End of workshop*

Abstracts

Analysing Euro-Scepticism in the framework of New Social Media Communications: Politicising Europe

By Zoltan Fazekas, University of Oslo; Sebastian Popa, Universities of Newcastle and Mannheim; Pablo Barbera, LSE London; Hermann Schmitt, Universities of Manchester and Mannheim; and Iannis Theocharis, University of Groningen.

We develop a theoretical and empirical approach that captures the degree of issue politicization through three components: salience, conflict, and diffusion. As politicization is a communicational process among politicians, we rely on elite communication on social media. This choice allows us to address important limitations in the literature and study all three facets simultaneously. Using a combination of human coding and machine learning we examine if and how MEP candidates politicized the EU in the 2014 European Parliament elections. We show that when mainstream party candidates face constraints related to their control of salience and conflict around the EU dimension, they will resort to disengaging the public in order maximize their electoral gains. This contributes to lower levels of politicization compared to national issues and offers a communicational mechanism for the success or failure of issue entrepreneurship. In sum, by taking the multifaceted nature of issue politicization into account, we are able provide new insights on why and how issues become politicized.

Euroscepticism in the News Media: Automated Text Analysis of Media Coverage of the EU

By Marina Popescu, MRC Bucharest; Martijn Schonvelde, VU Amsterdam; Gabor Toka, CEU Budapest; Adina Marincea, MRC Bucharest; and Erik de Vries, University of Stavanger.

Our presentation shall discuss how various state-of-the-art methods of text analysis can contribute to the measurement of Euroscepticism in cross-national news content. We look specifically at how the EU was depicted in the mass media in the 10 member states covered by EUENGAGE as well as Romania, and how these depictions appear to vary by media system and political system characteristics. The specific focus is on negative coverage of the EU as a whole in news on specific policy topics that are often cited as critical for EU-support and Euroskepticism alike. We utilise media content data from 33 newspaper outlets in 11 member states to paint a week-to-week picture of how the EU referendum in the UK, immigration-related news, economic news and external security issues related to Syria and Lybia were depicted throughout 2016, both before and after the Brexit vote. To this end, we employ advanced automated content analysis methods like topic models and sentiment analysis.

After describing the logistics of our low-cost data collection and how its challenges were dealt with, we show simple ways of following the salience of specific actors and topics and to what extent they move together across countries and topic domains. Next, we present computationally feasible sentiment analysis regarding a particular topic or actor (like the EU) and whether this shows statistically meaningful and theoretically plausible variance across topic domains, countries and time, such as in a comparison of coverage before and after the Brexit referendum.

Automated text analysis of media content poses somewhat different and bigger challenges than analyses of political speeches, parliamentary debates or twitter based communication as the corpus

is more heterogeneous, harder to clean, and also potentially much bigger in volume, but it is an attractive source of data on e.g. cross-national and over-time variance that can explain trends in public opinion. Thus we round up the presentation with reflections and illustrations of how this type of media content can be linked with public and elite opinion data.

The changing relationship between ideological dimensions and party positions on European integration

by Constantin Schäfer, GUESS Mannheim, Daniela Braun, LMU Munich, Sebastian Popa, Universities of Newcastle and Mannheim, and Hermann Schmitt, Universities of Manchester and Mannheim

Empirical research shows that parties base their stances on European integration on existing social cleavages and political conflicts (Marks & Wilson 2000). While these stances used to be strongly influenced by an socio-economic conflict dimension (market liberalization vs. controlled economy) in the beginning of the integration process, it is today rather a socio-cultural conflict dimension (libertarian/cosmopolitan vs. authoritarian/nationalist values) that determines how parties position themselves towards European integration (Hooghe et al. 2002; Kriesi et al. 2008; Prosser 2016). But how and why have these relationships changed over time & space? Have critical junctures of the integration process, such as the Maastricht Treaty or the Euro Crisis, significantly altered party competition over Europe? And how have these developments varied between different member states?

In this paper, we argue that as the nature of the unification process changed from an economic cooperation into a genuine political project with Maastricht, party positions on European integration in Western Europe have profoundly realigned: away from an economic towards a cultural conflict (see also Van Elsas & Van der Brug 2015). Moreover, we assume that the pathways of party competition over European have diverged strongly during the Euro Crisis. In the most hard-hit countries in Southern Europe, the economic dimension has experienced an unexpected comeback (Otjes & Katsanidou 2017). In Western Europe, on the contrary, the crisis has accelerated the general 'cultural backlash' in Western societies (Inglehart & Norris 2016) thereby further strengthening the explanatory power of the cultural dimension.

In our empirical analysis, we shed light onto the changing relationships between party positions on European integration and their underlying ideological conflicts by analyzing electoral manifestos of parties competing in European Parliament elections (Euromanifestos) from 1979-2014. The results bear important implications for our understanding of political competition over Europe in different electoral contexts."

United they Fight the EU: Exploring Populist Radical Right Parties' Opposition to the EU in the EP

Benedetta Carlotti, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence

Fifty-two members of the European Parliament coming from radical right wing parties have been elected during the last EP elections. However, the predominantly media-driven thesis that

cooperation among such actors is only led by financial incentives deriving from EP internal rules is still widespread. This is mainly due to the fact that the core reason for the existence of radical right wing parties is largely based on concerns regarding national sovereignty and identity.

This last observation nevertheless goes hand in hand with a feature that equates such forces: their rejection of the EU, their Euro-scepticism. In other words, having different national origins, all of them contest the EU, its policies, its establishment, its institutions and its values in a pan-European environment (the one of the EP). This paper explores the activity of two components of the Europe of Nations and Freedoms (ENF) party group in the EP: the French National Front (FN) and the Italian Northern League (LN). It uses a reconceptualised definition of Euroscepticism (EU-opposition) and applies it to the study of the speeches delivered in the EP plenary debates by FN and LN's Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).

Since the EP is considered as an unrewarding location for Eurosceptic forces (especially those with a nationalistic background), this work observes if patters of convergence between LN and FN's EU-opposition exist. The results obtained through the empirical analysis demonstrate that some patterns of convergence between the two parties' EU-opposition exists. Further research is nevertheless needed to assess the causes of such changes.

The Ideological Embedding of Euro-Scepticism: Recent Expert Survey Evidence from Britain and Germany

Hermann Schmitt, Universities of Manchester and Mannheim, and Thomas Loughran, University of Manchester

The ideological space is normally conceived to be two dimensional, with the left-right dimension and some version of the liberal-authoritarian dimension being seen as orthogonal to (i.e. independent from) one another. The present contribution argues that both two-dimensionality and orthogonality are dubious, and that a structural equations modelling (SEM) based on stacked data matrices is more opportune research strategy. Four ideological dimensions are considered: general left-right, economic left-right, libertarian-authoritarian and communitarianism-cosmopolitanism – the latter being operationalised as support or otherwise for European integration. The paper finds that in 2017, British and German parties' location on these four ideological dimensions are starkly differing which leads to very different patterns of ideological polarisation. However, the underlying ideological structure is very similar. This suggests that the structure that is identified here is probably travelling far beyond the two countries analysed.