

Politics and Inequality across Nations and Time: Theoretical and Empirical Approaches

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Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences
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Titles and Abstracts

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Economic Inequality, Demand for Redistribution, and Redistributive Outcomes: Building the Empirical Foundations for Dynamic Comparative Research

Does rising income inequality in a country yield greater demand for more redistributive policy among its citizens? Does greater public demand prompt more redistribution? The answers to both of these questions are clearly not simply yes or no, but conditional on other circumstances. Assessing hypotheses regarding these circumstances will require comparable data--on inequality, on public opinion, and on redistribution--across space and time. This paper takes up that task. It first evaluates the author's long-running project, the Standardized World Income Inequality Database (SWIID), as a source of data on income inequality and redistribution for this purpose. It then applies the author's new approach, Dynamic Comparative Public Opinion (DCPO), to overcome the sparsity and incomparability of available survey data and provide comparable estimates of public opinion regarding redistribution for many countries over many years. Finally, it offers an appraisal of whether the combination of these two datasets can serve as a sound basis for further investigation of these two questions on the consequences of income inequality for politics and policy.

Catherine Bolzendahl
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Women's Political Empowerment: A Path toward Progress in Uncertain Times

Few social changes have been as dramatic and rapid as the increased political representation of women worldwide. Scholars and public figures rightfully tout these gains as remarkable evidence of greater gender equality, yet nowhere do women hold equal power to men in influencing and exercising political authority worldwide and efforts to increase women's political agency are often actively and violently repressed. Addressing these issues means the comprehensive inclusion of women's political empowerment as cornerstone of global research. I discuss how this is defined in my co-authored scholarship and using findings from my own current research I illustrate three axioms in this approach. First, women's political empowerment is not a zero-sum game, and gender equality opens, rather than closes, the political domain to all members of society. Second, sex and gender are used simultaneously to create status inequalities that disadvantage women, thus, women's political empowerment requires special attention given that women are the largest categorical group today experiencing long-term, ongoing barriers to political incorporation worldwide. Third, inequalities in political empowerment cut across multiple statuses and other sources of inequality. In sum, my work highlights the continued urgency of understand gender inequality through social and political research and data collection.

Session 1: Economic Redistribution and the Elite

Renira Angeles
Central European University, Hungary

Achim Kemmerling
University of Erfurt, Germany

How Redistributive Institutions Affect Pay Inequality and Heterogeneity among Top Managers

In recent years the incredible rise of executive pay has received a lot of scholarly interest. We argue that a crucial problem for attempts to moderate these increases remains: the heterogeneity among top managers. In particular, inequality among top managers' pay makes redistributive institutions better suited to deal with rising pay than other institutions. To show this, we use a novel data set on executive pay across 17 OECD countries. We compare the effect of different institutional factors: corporate and personal income taxation, the unions' bargaining power, as well as regulative attempts. We find that redistributive institutions, especially personal income tax and unions' bargaining power seem more effective in moderating high labour wages, especially for very large firms in terms of their stock market value.

Jan Falkowski
University of Warsaw, Poland

Do Political and Economic Inequalities Go Together? Mayors' Turnover, Elite Families and the Distribution of Agricultural Land

This paper studies the effects that the distribution of political power may have for the allocation of economic resources and the distribution of benefits resulting from policy intervention. Using local level data from Poland, we investigate the relationship between changes in political power and the distribution of public support for agricultural producers provided in the form of direct payments which are based on the area of land owned. Our results indicate that higher levels of concentration of political power are associated with more unequal distribution of rents created by land ownership. More specifically, we find that in municipalities where mayor's turnover is less frequent, elite families amass disproportionately large amount of wealth.

Matias Lopez
Catholic University of Chile, Chile

Elites and Redistribution: A Comprehensive Approach

What can drive elites to endorse redistributive policies? Previous studies posit that elites are willing to advance redistribution of income and social goods when negative effects of inequality, such as crime and conflict, threaten their own safety. Nonetheless, elite willingness to tackle inequality seems to be low throughout the developing world in spite of such extreme negative consequences. Drawing on survey and interview data with political and economic elites, I document how elites' perceptions of the poor mediate their response to threats resulting from inequality. Interview data reveal that, in explaining the challenges of redistribution policies, respondents consistently characterize the poor as ignorant, uninformed and irrational, in opposition to rational maximizing elites. I posit that these perceptions of the poor hinder elites' willingness to support redistribution, even when redistribution suits protection needs. This occurs because perceptions of the poor as ignorant and of the elite as maximizers reinforce the belief

that politicians will use policies to promote dependence on patronage schemes, rather than to promote a collective good for all elites. I test the relationship between perceptions of the poor and support for redistributive policies using randomized samples of elites in Brazil, South Africa, and Uruguay and find it to be robust. Then I expand the analysis to secondary data on elites in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela and find similar results. I also contrast the effect of perceptions with those of inequality itself, crime, and ideological orientation of the administration. Results once more corroborate the theory in question, showing that perceptions of the poor mediate the effect of more structural variables.

Session 2: Protest

Katerina Vrablikova
University of Bath, UK

Economic Hardship, Politicization and Protest in Western Democracies

How and why does economic crisis and similar situations trigger protest of poor? The paper argues that in addition to the expansion of the pool of deprived people, who can potentially protest (composition mechanism), events like the Economic crisis also provide a supportive political environment for political mobilization of socio-economically excluded groups (mobilization mechanism). As potentially very threatening and unpredictable event, economic crisis can skyrocket the salience of the economic problems in national politics. This opens space for the re-definition of economic issues and identities and for political mobilization of socio-economically deprived people, who, under normal circumstances do not participate much. The article uses data from four waves of European Social Survey that are combined with macro-economic data and aggregated survey data (Eurobarometer) on public concern about national economy. The results show that poor people were most likely to protest in times of the Economic crisis in countries where the economic problems raised a very high concern. In the period before the Great Recession and in countries where economic problems were not recognized as severe and salient, poor people are much less likely to protest. In this special situation of economic crisis, poor thus get mobilized and join the better-off protestors, who are the usual suspects at ordinary protests that get mobilized by salient issues also during normal times.

Viktoriiia Muliavka
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Exploration of Student Protest in Ukraine, 2011 – 2016

Protest is a way for students to voice their needs and preferences to academic administration and political elites. Much of the literature on student protests has focused on the US and Western Europe, with few studies on post-socialist states. In this presentation I ask, what have students in Ukraine protested about, under what conditions have they protested, and how have they protested? I explore the phenomenon of student protests in Ukraine under different structural conditions from 2011 to 2016. To identify student protests and select case studies of them, I use the Ukrainian Protest and Coercion Data project database that relies on media reports and provides data on size (number of participants), type (performances) and theme (what they protested about). Students protest about different issues; to narrow my focus, I analyze student protests over higher education policy. To explore the impact of structural conditions, I analyze three case studies of student protests that occurred before, during and after Euromaidan. In 2011-2016, there were a number of changes in higher education policies. Dmytro Tabachnyk's policies on commercialization of education produced a wave of student protests in 2012-2013. During Euromaidan, students occupied the building of the Ministry of Education and demanded changes

in higher education policies. A new law on higher education as a form of compromise between authorities and civil society was implemented shortly after Euromaidan. In September 2016, a scholarship guarantee provided by law was cancelled and a new wave of protests followed. In my presentation I discuss implications of these case studies for understanding student protest in Ukraine.

Olga Zelinska

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Was It Worth The Effort? The Impact of Local Maidan Protests in Ukraine

Social movements aim to change specific aspects of society, but how do we know if they change society in the ways that they aim for? In recent decades, social movement researchers have addressed the question of contention's immediate outcomes and broader social consequences. I seek to contribute to this topic by exploring the outcomes of the 2013-2014 Maidan social movement that occurred in cities, towns, and villages throughout Ukraine. This is a pilot study that aims to understand, from the participants' point of view, what the outcomes of local Maidans were. I analyzed 24 face-to-face interviews with 33 Maidan activists, representatives of local authorities and observers held in four Ukrainian communities during September-November 2018. By comparing across four case studies I contribute to a discussion on local Maidan's impact, including both immediate outcomes and long-term social changes, as seen by activists and observers. Further, I elaborate on the mechanisms that could have potentially lead to these changes and stress the important contextual characteristics which shaped protest dynamics and outcomes.

Session 3: Politics and Inequality

Gwangeun Choi

University of Essex, UK

The Link between Economic and Political Inequality in Cross-National Perspective

It is widely believed that there exists a debilitating feedback cycle linking economic and political inequality. However, there has been a lack of empirical evidence about this association, particularly, in cross-national comparative research. It is largely because cross-national measures of political inequality are underdeveloped. To fill this gap, this study introduces the Political Inequality Index (PII) and the Political Power Inequality Index (PPII). The PII is composed of the two dimensions: participation and representation, which are based on the reconceptualization of political inequality from the perspective of a middle-range conception. The PPII comes from the indicators that measure the distribution of political power across socioeconomic position, social group, and gender, which the Varieties of Democracy provides. This inquiry then investigates the two-way causal relationship between economic and political inequality. In the first causal direction, net income inequality is used as a proxy for economic inequality, while in the reverse causal linkage political inequality is supposed to influence market income inequality and redistribution separately, as income inequality is considered as an outcome of the two different distributive stages. In doing so, both causal directions between economic and political inequality are integrated into a unified framework. With respect to estimation techniques, a system GMM estimator for a dynamic panel data model, which is an increasingly popular estimation method, is mainly used to address the issue of endogeneity. The findings show that net income inequality does not significantly affect political inequality and that political inequality appears to have little impact on market income inequality, while political inequality seems to contribute to economic inequality by influencing redistribution in a negative direction

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Policy Polarization, Economic Inequality and Turnout

Past research on the relationship between income inequality and turnout has produced mixed results, with some studies suggesting that income inequality leads to lower turnout while other studies find little or no significant effects. One reason for these mixed results may be to do with the contingent nature of inequality on turnout, which plausibly depends upon the nature of the policy options that parties present to the electorate. Therefore, we investigate this possibility by identifying a novel, yet intuitive, explanation for the relationship between inequality and aggregate-level turnout by investigating the effect of inequality on turnout, and whether it is conditioned by the policy programs of parties. We test these expectations on data from national elections in 33 advanced democracies from 1965 through 2017. Regression analysis using country-level fixed effects reveals consistent evidence in favor of our hypotheses: Inequality tends to have a negative impact on turnout, especially in highly depolarized party systems, but as party system polarization increases the negative impact of inequality is significantly mitigated.

Irina Tomescu-Dubrow and Kazimierz M. Slomczynski

IFiS PAN, CONSIRT, and The Ohio State University, USA

Harmonization of Political Participation Items in Cross-national Surveys

Session 4: Gender and Politics

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The R. B. Zajonc Institute for Social Studies, Head of UNESCO Chair "Women -Society-Development", University of Warsaw, Poland

Gender Inequality and Its Sources: Comparison of Politicians and Scientists

Nika Palaguta

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Substantive Representation of Women's Interests in Ukrainian Parliament, 2002 – 2017

For improvement in the substantive representation of women, differences in and ideological positions of, elected representatives matter. Despite formal commitment to the principles of gender equity and some legislative support for descriptive representation of women in Ukraine, the mechanisms of representative democracy have not been well implemented in practice: women remain underrepresented and parliamentarians are divided over enforcement of equality

policies. To explore how Ukrainian parliamentarians of different ideological positions vote for women's interests, I combine data containing coded electoral manifestos of Ukrainian political party and blocs, data on parliamentary representation in Ukraine, and roll call voting data on over 145 legislative acts adopted between 2002 and 2017 dealing with women's interests. According to the manifesto data, all political parties in Ukraine have paid very little attention to either women's rights or gender equality. During the last decade and a half, the Ukrainian parliament's support of women's interests was mostly narrowed down to a set of legislative acts on family and reproduction. Parliamentarians who belong to more conservative parties and blocs tend to support this legislation. They also tend to show less support for the legislation dealing with implementation of international agreements on gender issues.

Session 5: Voting

Constantin Manuel Bosancianu

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Party–Voter Ideological Congruence and Socio-Economic Biases in Representation: OECD over the Past 5 Decades

Disparities in political representation between socio-economic groups, if perpetuated over time, can lead to growing disenchantment with the political process, dropout from political life, and even the appearance of new political movements that challenge representative institutions (Taggart, 2002). Starting with the early investigations of Gilens (2005, 2009, 2012) for the US context, a series of analyses have found disparities in political representation across a larger number of consolidated democracies (Elsässer, Hense, & Schäfer, 2018; Giger, Rosset, & Bernauer, 2012; Peters & Ensink, 2015; Rosset, Giger, & Bernauer, 2013; Rosset, 2013). Despite the consistent results, we continue to have very limited knowledge about the causes and mechanisms for these disparities.

This analysis probes into this issue. By relying on an original data set of merged voter studies in 25 OECD countries, going as far back in time as the 1960s and 70s, I compute a measure of ideological congruence between voters and political parties. Called the Earth Mover's Distance (Lupu, Selios, & Warner, 2017), it is based on citizens' self-placement on a standard Left-Right axis, as well as their placement of parties on the same scale (Powell Jr., 2009). By relying on voters' perceptions of parties rather than legislator self-placements (Lupu & Warner, 2018), my data overcomes the potential flaw of different understandings of "Left" and "Right" between people and political elites. This measure of congruence is then used to ascertain: (1) if representation gaps between voters at the opposite end of the socio-economic spectrum are found in my sample, and (2) whether the gaps in representation are associated with a demand-side characteristic (disparities in political participation between the same socio-economic groups) or a supply-side factor (party ideological changes over time).

Preliminary findings do little to dispel the mystery surrounding the causes of unequal representation for poorer citizens, though they conclusively establish that such a gap exists. Even when relying on a measure of participation disparities generated from individual-level data, no clear association exists between disparities in political voice and gaps in representation. Neither do party-system dynamics appear to explain the disparity in ideological convergence between income groups. Though inconclusive, the findings confirm those of Lupu and Warner (2018) and will hopefully spur the focus on additional mechanisms to explain the relative disadvantage in representation that poorer citizens are faced with.

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Voice or Exit: Education, Support for Right-wing Populist Parties, and Abstention in Central and Eastern Europe

The growth in the success of populist parties in many developed democracies has prompted a parallel increase in the studies on the electoral sociology of right-wing populist parties (RPP) in Western Europe and, to a lesser extent, in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). However, the relationship between populism and turnout has been understudied in the literature. Existing scholarship fails to clarify whether voting for RPP and abstention are two largely interchangeable outcomes provoked by a common set of factors or two alternative courses of action undertaken by different types of individuals. If the former were true, RPP might be corrective for democracy in terms of closing the representational gap for citizens whose preferences are unmet by the political supply of other parties. Thus, RPP might manage to reduce political inequality levels. This paper aims at examining the sociodemographic characteristics of those who vote for RPP and those who abstain, in comparison to those who cast their ballots for other parties. Specifically, we focus on explaining when low level of education leads to voice (voting for RPP) and when it increases the chances of exit (abstention). We estimate multinomial logistic regression models using cross-sectional data of the 2014 European Elections Study for 8 CEE countries. We show that RPP are successful in drawing to the polls some of the low educated and anti-immigrant or Eurosceptic citizens. Nevertheless, there is also a pool of anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic citizens that choose to stay home on the election day.

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Economic Voting in Poland as Clarity of Responsibility Mechanism

Roundtable: “Aggregating Survey Data: Problems and Solutions”

December 13, 11:30 – 13:00, Sala Staszica

The purpose of this Roundtable is to discuss problems with, and possible solutions for, constructing country-year indicators via aggregation of cross-national survey data. Aggregate measures of political behavior and attitudes are of special interest for the project “Political Voice and Economic Inequality across Nations and Time.” The project’s planned products include a publicly available database of country-year level indicators of political voice inequality, constructed on the basis of cross-national survey data and information from non-survey sources.

Social scientists frequently aggregate survey data – that is, they combine individual-level characteristics to capture features of groups that respondents can meaningfully constitute into. Countries – in given years or periods – are often the higher-level group to which survey data are aggregated, using various functions (e.g. proportions, means, ratios, inequality indexes, and other characteristics of the distributions of individual-level variable(s)). The 'new' indicators are then used, among others, to assess within- or between-country change. For example, one can compare the difference between political participation levels of men and women within a country across many years or between countries in a given year. These aggregate indicators are used in regression analyses, as either dependent or independent variables.

When using survey sample statistics as proxies for measures of population characteristics, researchers need to consider, among others, the extent to which: (i) the characteristic of a given country can be inferred from the characteristics of its residents; (ii) the sample on which the aggregate measure is calculated represents the respective population; (iii) individual-level measures used in aggregation are valid and reliable; and (iv) individual-level measures are comparable across countries (and time).

All these issues require both theoretical and methodological considerations. Taking them into account, it is not easy to assess the extent to which country-year indicators derived from survey data are valid, reliable, and comparable. The task is especially difficult if we consider aggregation of behavioral and attitudinal survey items, for which there are no external benchmarks against which to judge the summary statistics that survey data yielded.

We invite Roundtable participants to share their views on the potential and pitfalls of using cross-national survey data to construct aggregate measures of country-year characteristics. After panelists’ individual comments, the floor will be open to contributions by all in attendance. We provide a set of questions that feed into this debate but they are by no means exhaustive:

1. What concepts pertaining to political participation can be measured with aggregate survey data and how? Using proportions, means, ratios, inequality indexes, or something else?
2. For aggregate measures derived from survey data, how important is the standardization of the samples with respect to demographic or other population characteristics? What population characteristics should be taken into account and how? For example, survey samples differ with respect of the youngest respondents’ age – should we apply a common lowest age cut-off, or rely on the decisions of the survey producers regarding who they consider “adults”?
3. In calculating aggregate measures, should we account for differences in methods of sample construction, such as multi-stage probability samples, random-route samples, and other probability and non-probability samples? If so, how can we best account for sample effects?

4. When individual-level variables are aggregated, what happens with the measurement error that individual level items carry? Is it simply an “inheritance” issue, meaning that any methodological issues the individual-level variable exhibited will be carried over into the aggregate measure? Do individual-level errors combine when data are aggregated?
5. What are the main threats to the comparability of survey aggregate indicators across countries and over time? How to assess the functional equivalence of such measures? If we aggregate individual-level measures that are comparable would the resulting macro-level measures be comparable as well?
6. What assumptions would be necessary to proceed with constructing aggregate measures of political participation and political inequality from survey data? Are there specific assumptions pertaining to the use of cross-national survey data?

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