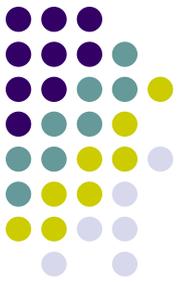


# Expert surveys: Cons

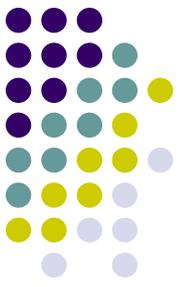


**Different considerations can play a role** when judging party positions. This can produce **misleading expert judgments**

**Fundamental question:** how do experts interpret the questions in expert surveys and how do they link substantive knowledge about parties to those questions?

What is the basis of the judgments that experts offer?

Do experts answer questions in the way they were intended?



## Expert surveys: Cons

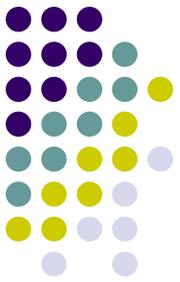
Several types of problems

**What ‘party’ is being judged by the expert?** - Is it the party in the electorate, the party in government or the party organization?

(E.g. M5S decision-making web or leader?)

(E.g. M5S judge left-right position mainly from economic policy or from social policy?)

(E.g. M5S position on “post-materialism” from proposal on immigrants, civil rights, or environment?)



## **Expert surveys: Cons**

**Several** types of problems

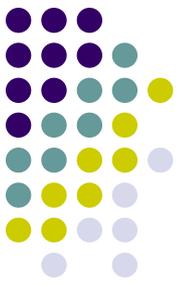
**What criteria do experts bring to bear when they judge party positions?** - for example, what do abstract labels like 'left' and 'right' mean to the expert?

**Do experts judge the intentions of parties or their behavior?**

**Different access to information**

**What is the time frame for the judgments that we ask experts to make?**

# Expert surveys: Cons



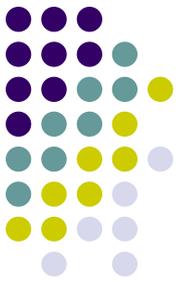
Expert surveys estimates are often **too much stable**;

Do not catch shifts in policy positions... why? always based on prejudices?

## Moreover: projection or rationalization problem

- An array of empirical studies argue that the estimation of party positions on the basis **of (any) survey** data is not always consistent, as respondents tend to place the parties they like **closer** to where they perceive themselves to be, and to place those parties they dislike **farther away** than their actual position would warrant – thus producing an ideological bias known as **rationalization or projection**

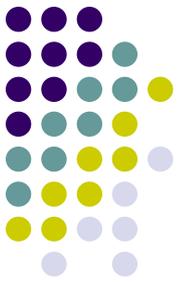
# Expert surveys: Cons



## Moreover: projection or rationalization problem

- In particular, **assimilation** effects refer to shortening the perceived ideological distance between oneself and those parties one favours, while **contrast** effects refer to exaggerating the distance between oneself and the parties one does not support

# Expert surveys: Cons



## Moreover: projection or rationalization problem

- Accordingly, if the subjective political views of the respondents to an expert survey **systematically interfere** with their supposedly ‘objective’ expert knowledge, then the very meaning of an expert survey – that is, experts’ answers providing indications of the (unobservable) ‘true’ spatial location of a party’s policy position – will be undermined

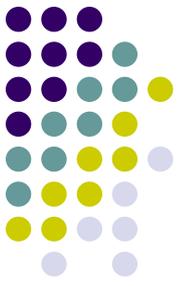
# Expert surveys: Cons



## Moreover: projection or rationalization problem

- Note that there is no problem if the experts share a common ideological position (more leftist or rightist)
- That is, the classic problem of a **sample bias** is not a concern in expert surveys, even if the experts we consult hold strong political preferences, **as long as** these preferences do not interfere with their expert knowledge
- It becomes a problem only if it affects their evaluation

# Expert surveys: Cons



How to deal with such problems?

**Solution:** expert survey good questionnaire will attempt to:

- ✓ identify a more circumscribed meaning indicating precisely what judgment should concern
- for example, in evaluating the **left-right position of parties**, experts may be asked to describe what ‘left-right’ means in a particular country or what criterion they used to define this dimension
- It is a good thing when policy positions present a secure «**anchor**» whereby respondents may determine homogeneous, intersubjective frame of reference (as we will see later)

# Expert surveys: Cons

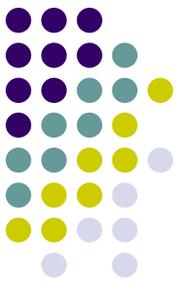


How to deal with such problems?

- ✓ specify time frames explicitly to limit variation on this dimension: **e.g.**: experts may be asked to judge the position of the party leadership on issue X during the past year

That is, the question must be designed so to put the experts in a common frame of mind so that they would be judging the same object, on the same dimension, at the same point in time

And the projection problem? Is it present? Is it relevant?  
More on this later...



# Expert surveys: an example

Benoit and Laver (2006) *Party Policy in Modern Democracies*

([http://www.tcd.ie/Political\\_Science/ppmd/](http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/ppmd/))

Survey conducted in 2002-2003

47 countries (including all of Western and Eastern Europe, Russia, North America, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Iceland, and Israel)

Largely deployed via the world wide web using the native language of the country under investigation, this survey reached more respondents than any previous expert survey of party policy positions

# Expert surveys



Substantive **policy dimensions** covered in the survey included for every country a hard core of four substantive policy dimensions. These were:

- *economic policy* (interpreted in terms of the trade-off between lower taxes and higher public spending);
- *social policy* (interpreted in terms of policies on matters such as abortion and gay rights);
- the *decentralization* of decision making;
- *environmental policy* (interpreted in terms of the trade-off between environmental protection and economic growth)

# Expert surveys

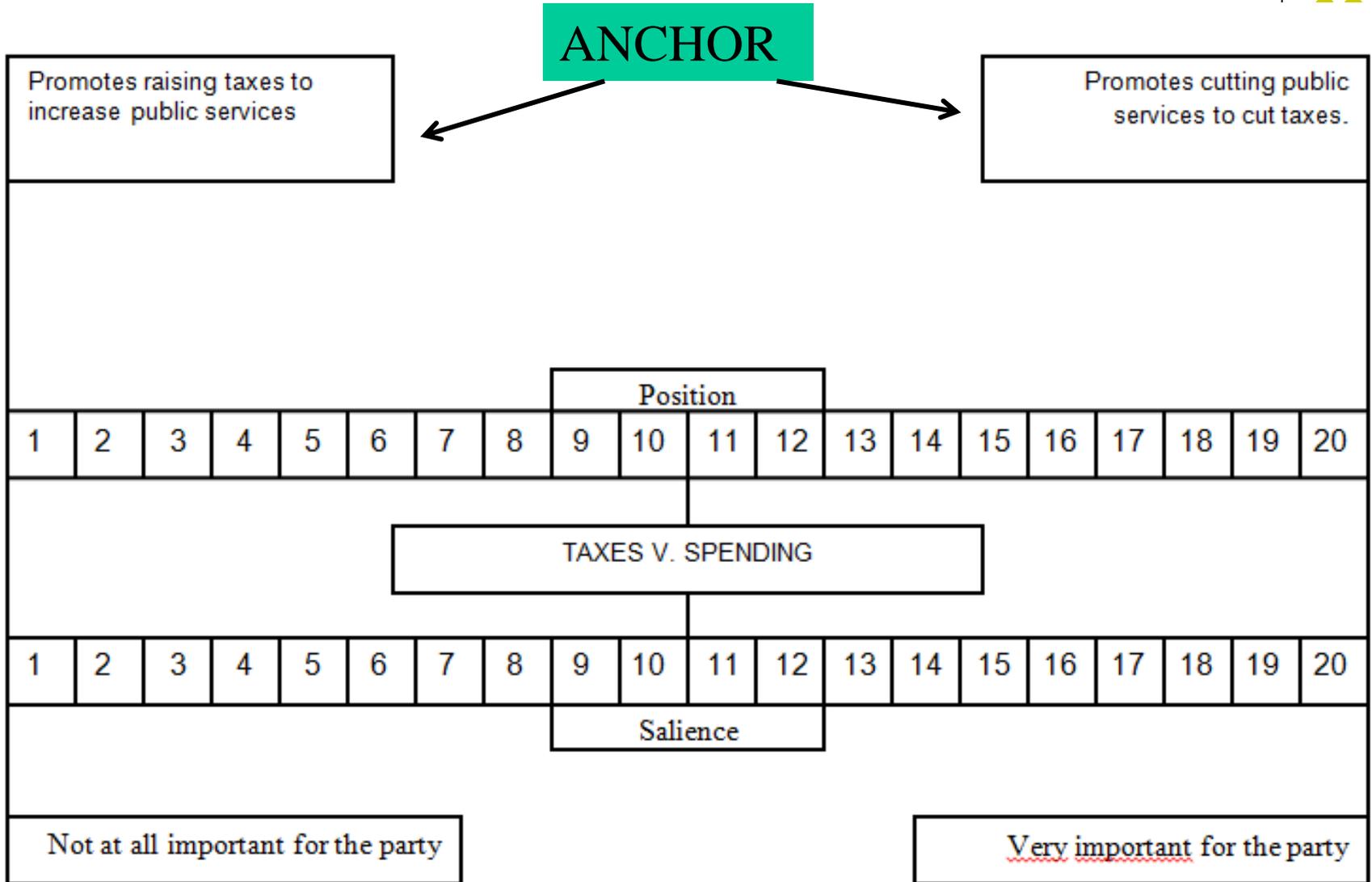


Additional substantive policy dimensions were deployed in each country, depending upon the advice of local specialists

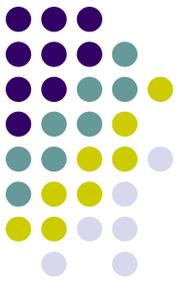
These dealt, according to local circumstance, with policy on matters such as: immigration, deregulation, privatization, religion, treatment of former communists, media freedom, EU policy, security policy, health care, and foreign ownership of land

For each substantive policy dimension, each party was placed on a scale describing its **position** (using metric of 1 to 20, with 1 generally corresponding the “left” position), but also on a scale (also 1 to 20) describing the **importance** of the policy dimension to the party in question

# An example: place the PD here!



# Expert surveys



In addition to estimating a set of substantive policy scales, the survey includes a direct measure of party positions on a **general left-right scale**

Leaving the precise interpretation of left and right to the respondent (...more on this later...), the general left right question asked, “*Please locate each party on a general left-right dimension, taking all aspects of party policy into account*”

# Expert surveys: Validity

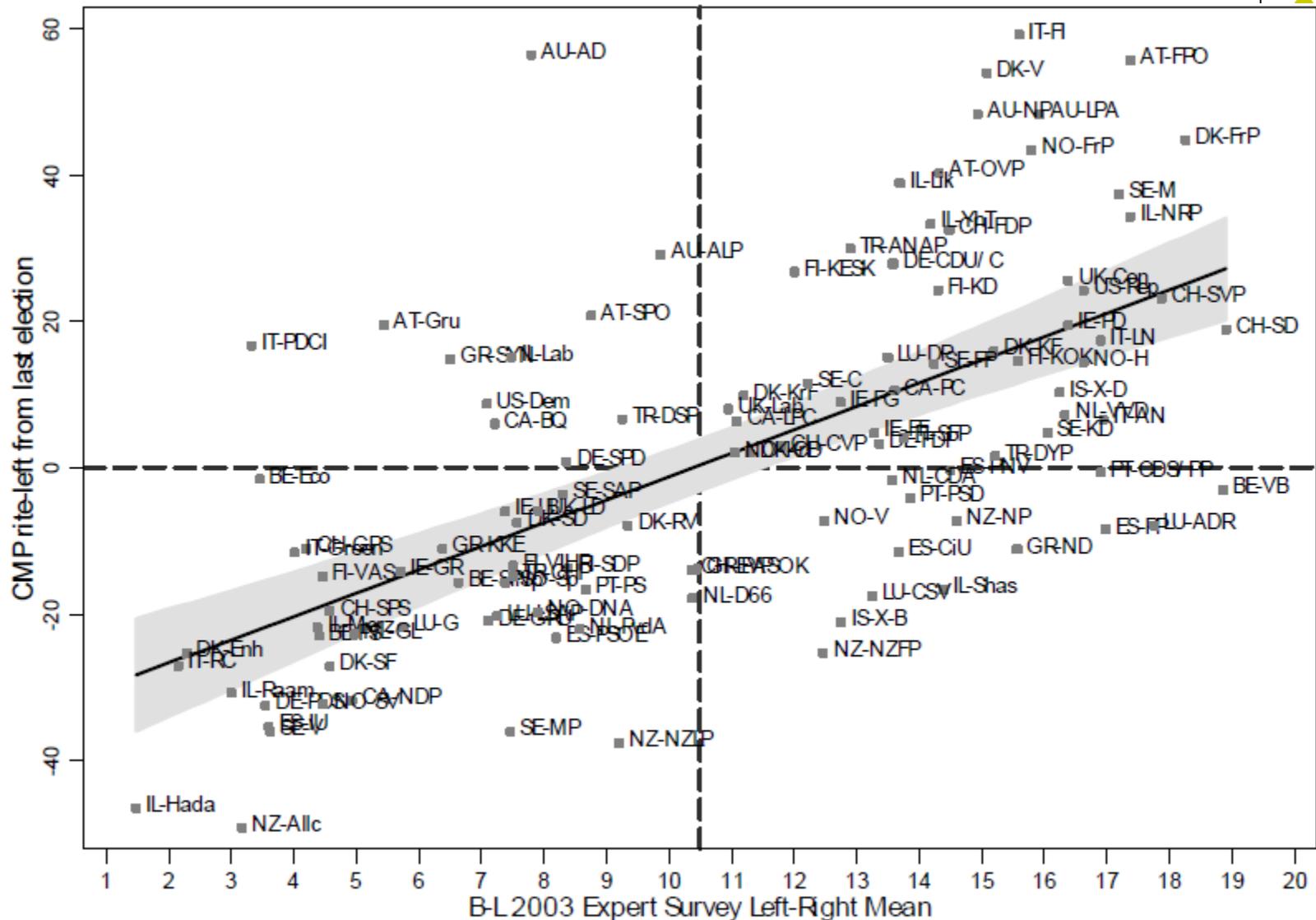
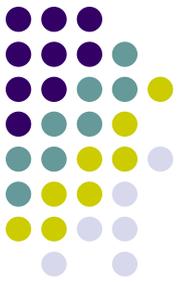


Figure 4.2 Across-Country Scatterplot of CMP Left-Right Scores versus Expert Survey Left-Right Estimates

# Expert surveys v/ CMP



Country	Party	Party Name	Left-Right Score		Standardized Residual
			Expert Survey	CMP	
<b>Expert Survey Says Left, CMP says Right</b>					
AU	AD	Australian Democrats	7.8	56.6	3.47
IT	PDCI	Partito dei Comunisti Italiani	3.3	16.8	2.13
AT	Gru	The Greens	5.4	19.7	1.90
AU	ALP	Australian Labor Party	9.9	29.3	1.65
GR	SYN	Synaspismos	6.5	14.8	1.46
AT	SPO	Austrian Social Democratic Party	8.8	20.8	1.39
IL	Lab	Labor	7.5	15.2	1.31
US	Dem	Democratic Party	7.1	8.8	1.03
CA	BQ	Bloc Québécois	7.2	6.1	0.87
TR	DSP	Demokratik Sol Partisi	9.2	6.7	0.55
<b>Expert Survey Says Right, CMP says Left</b>					
NL	CDA	Christen Democratisch Appe'l	13.6	-1.6	-0.64
NO	V	Venstre	12.5	-7.3	-0.75
NZ	NP	New Zealand National Party	14.6	-7.2	-1.11
PT	CDS/PP	People's Party	16.9	-0.7	-1.16
ES	CiU	Convergència i Unió de Catalunya	13.7	-11.5	-1.18
LU	CSV	Christian Social People's Party	13.2	-17.6	-1.44
GR	ND	Nea Dimokratia	15.6	-11.2	-1.49
IS	X-B	Framsóknarflokkurinn	12.8	-21.1	-1.54
IL	Shas	Shas	14.4	-16.7	-1.58
ES	PP	Partido Popular	17.0	-8.4	-1.60
BE	VB	Flemish Block	18.9	-3.0	-1.63
LU	ADR	Action Comity for Democracy and Pensions	17.8	-7.9	-1.70
NZ	NZFP	New Zealand First Party	12.5	-25.2	-1.71

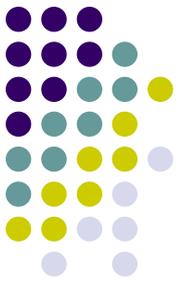
Table 4.1: Largest divergences between expert survey and CMP estimated left-right positions

US-Dem in 1997 so far from US-Rep?

Centrist perhaps?

Far-Right but... leftists elements

# Projection problem



Finally, in the Benoit and Laver expert survey we have also a “*sympathy scale*” that asks experts to place all parties on a scale indicating their own closeness to each party’s (1=maximum; 20=minimum)

We can use this last answer to test for any possible respondent **bias** by checking 1) whether parties’ positions are correlated with expert personal sympathy for a party’s policies; 2) if **this correlation** has a systematic impact on the way experts give “policy scores” to parties (i.e., rationalization problem)

# Experts sympathy (US)

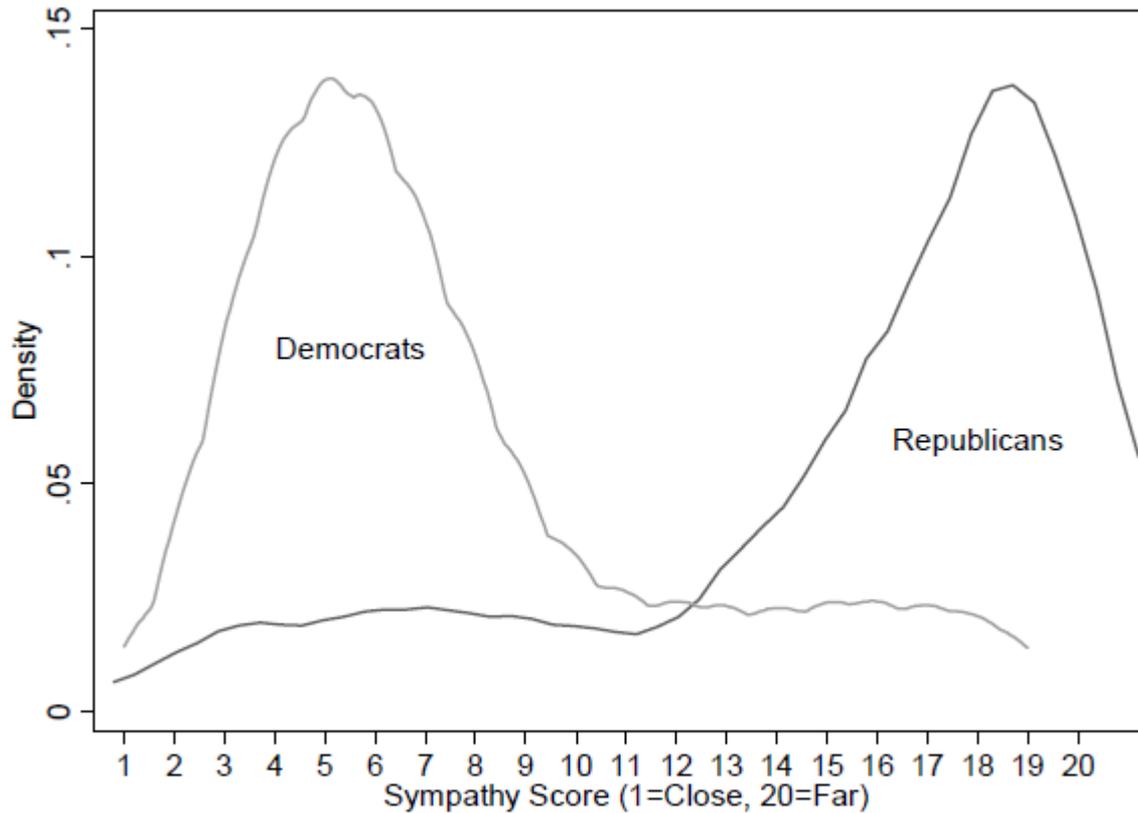
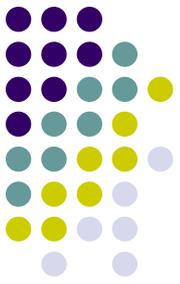
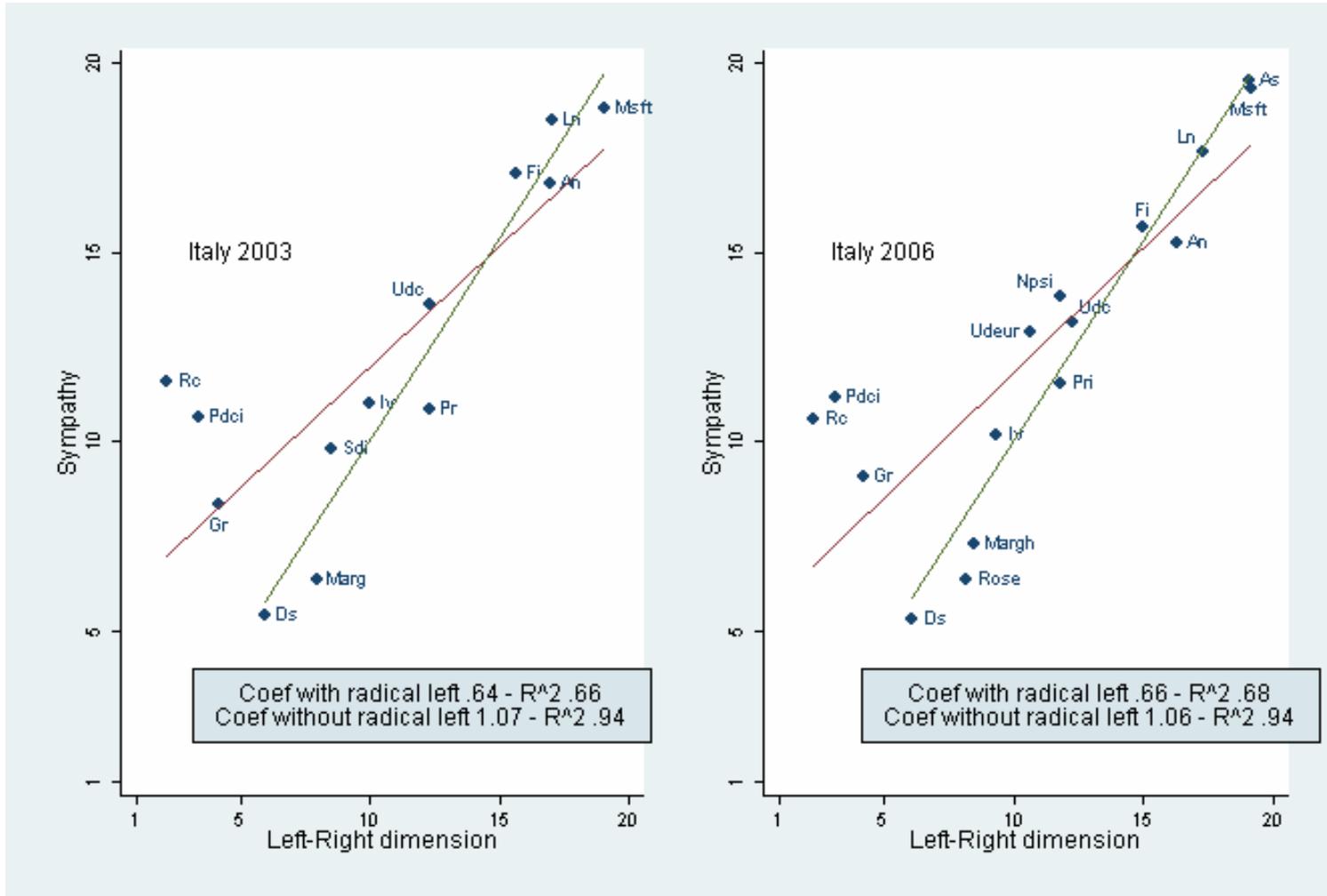
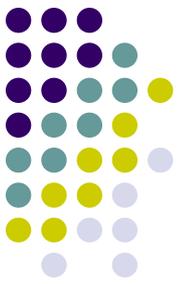
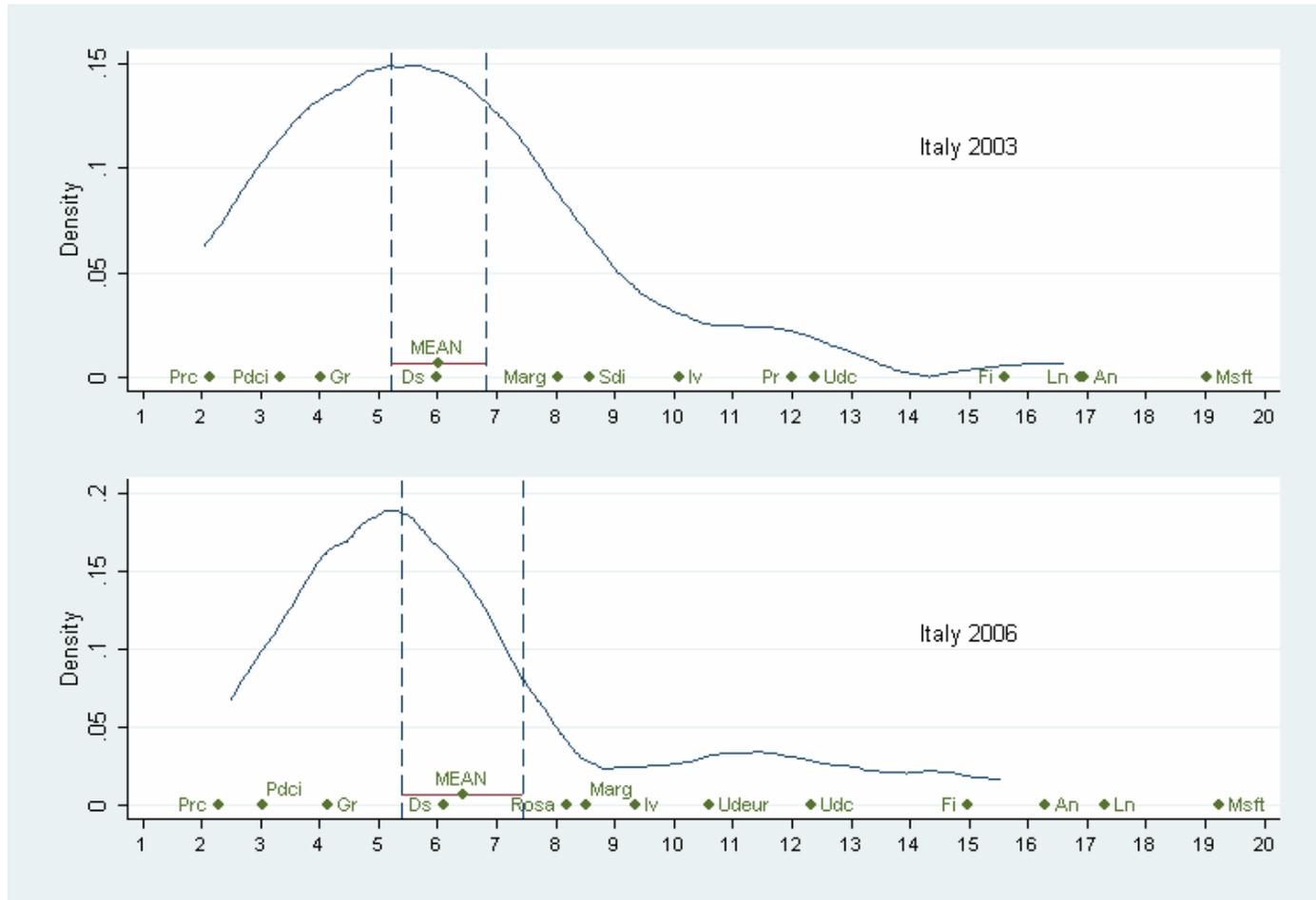
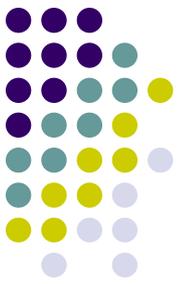


Figure 4.1: Distribution of respondent sympathy scores in the United States,  $N=164$

# Parties' scores and experts sympathy (Italy)



# From sympathy to ideological positions of experts (Italy)

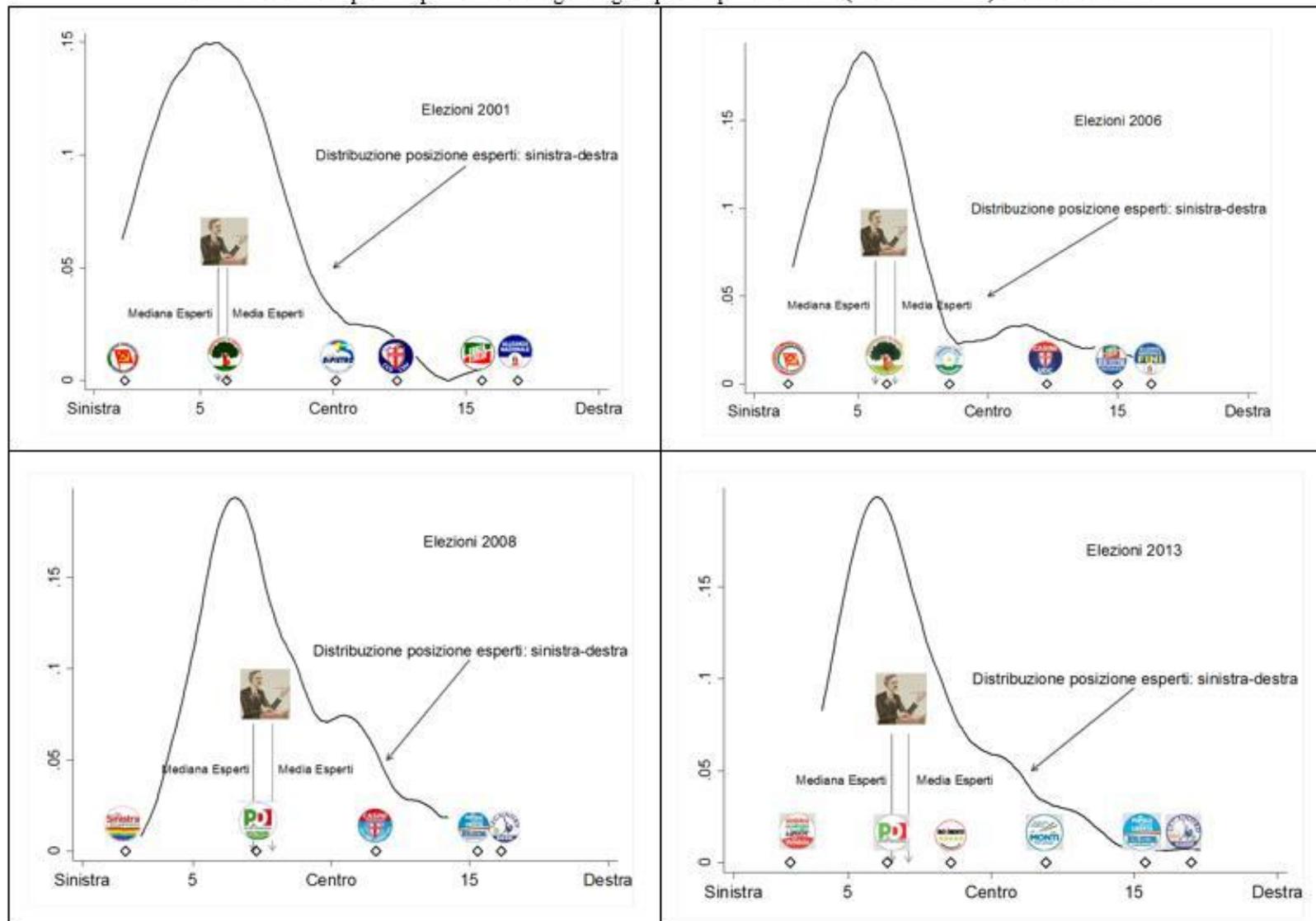


How to do that? Curini Luigi. "Experts' Political Preferences and Their Impact on Ideological Bias", *Party Politics*, 16(3), 2010, 299-321

# From sympathy to ideological positions of experts (Italy)

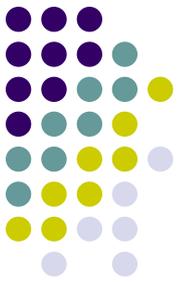


L'evoluzione nel tempo della posizione ideologica degli esperti di politica italiani (media e mediana): asse sinistra-destra

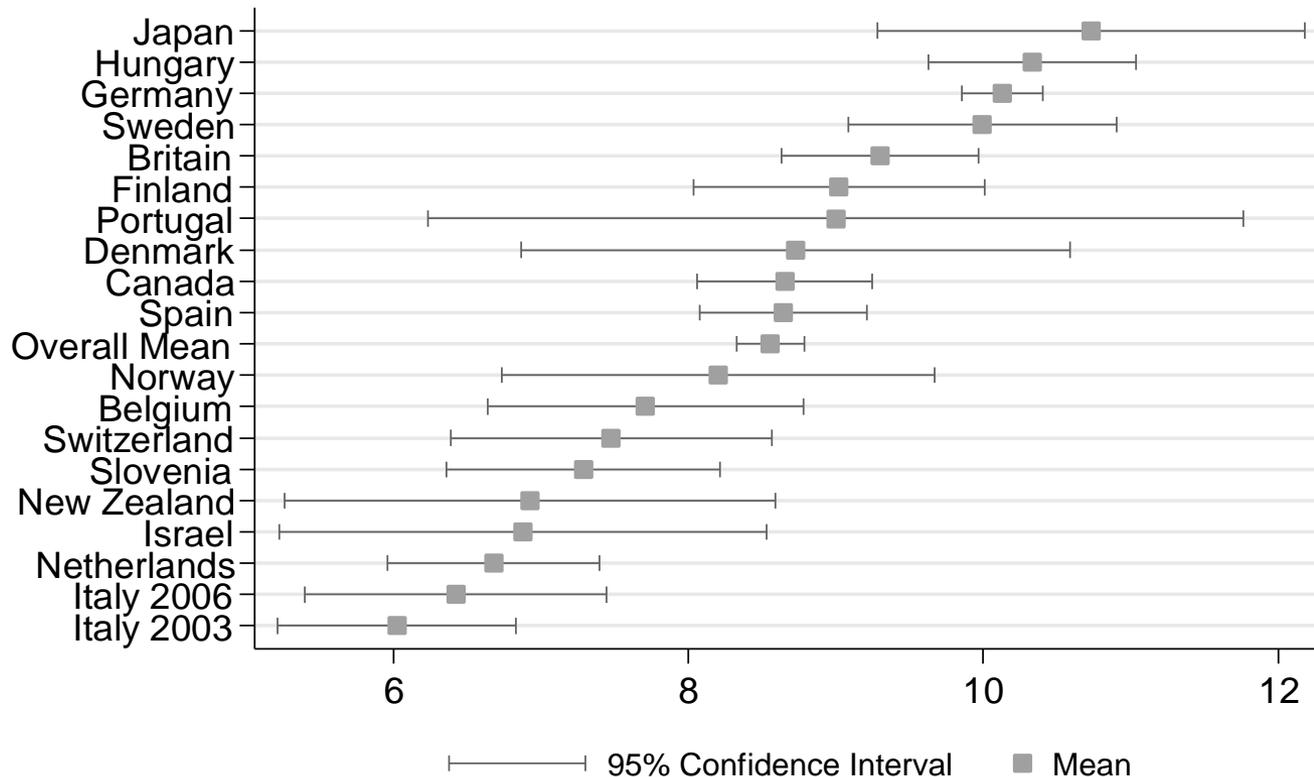


# Experts all over the world!

## One dimension



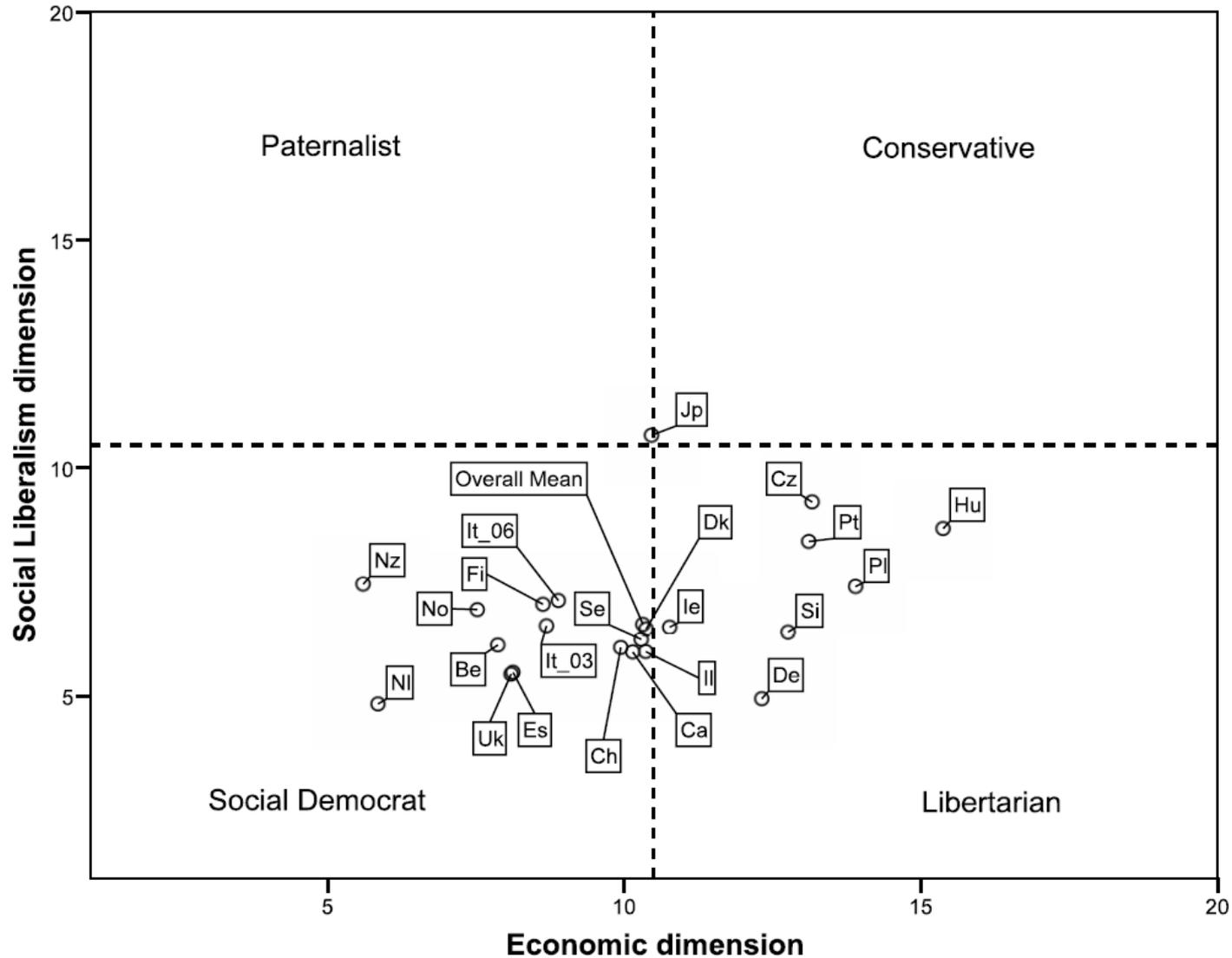
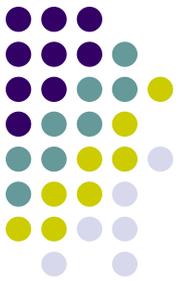
Ideological Experts' Position (estimated)



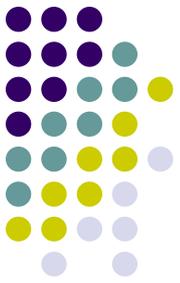
Source: Curini 2010

# Experts all over the world!

## Two-dimensions



# Sympathy: does it matter?

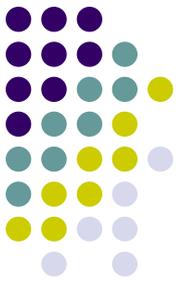


## RESULTS:

on a pool of 158 observations (i.e., the number of parties surveyed), the placements of 20 parties (**12.7%**) is systematically affected by a problem of rationalization/projection

Substantive impact on parties' placement: Partido Popular (Spain – actual score: 16.99; unbiased score: 14.63); Act New Zealand (actual score: 18.16; unbiased score: 16.09)

# Projection problem



The **projection bias** is far less pronounced when we pass from a label as “Left-Right” to less abstract policy dimensions

Which lesson? Once again, we should attempt to give a **more circumscribed** policy-meaning to the questions administered

# Projection problem



Neutralizing the effects of ideological bias on parties' scores?

Yes we can!

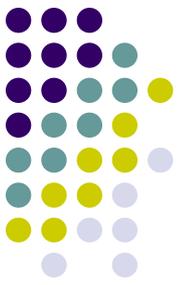
How to do that?

Curini Luigi. "Experts' Political Preferences and Their Impact on Ideological Bias", *Party Politics*, 16(3), 2010, 299-321

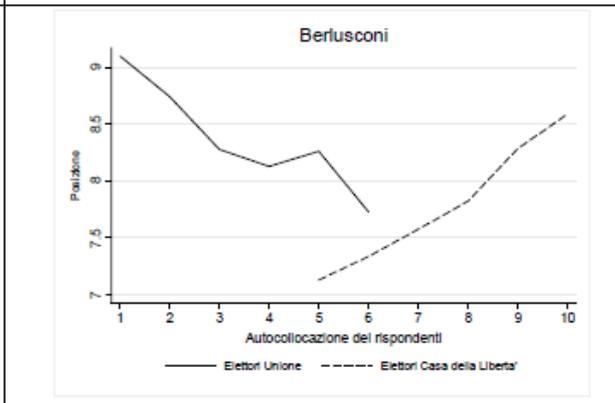
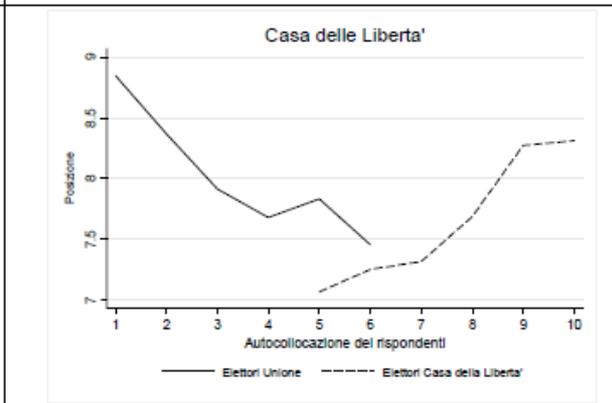
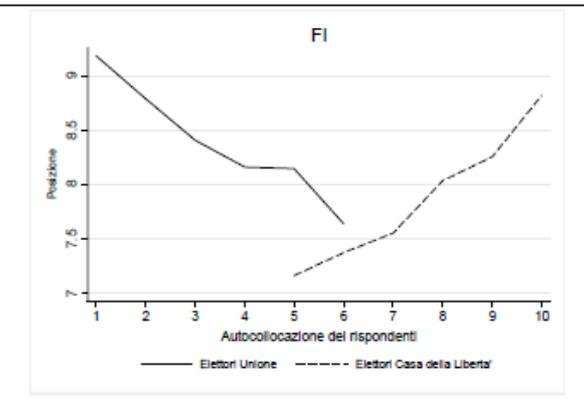
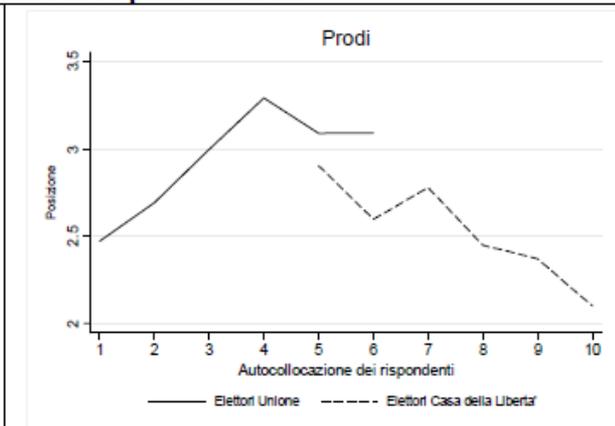
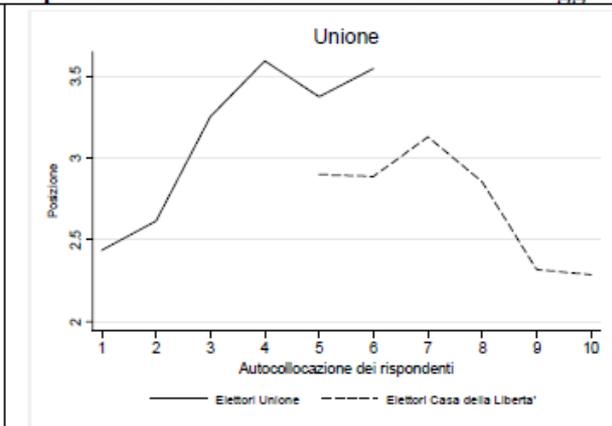
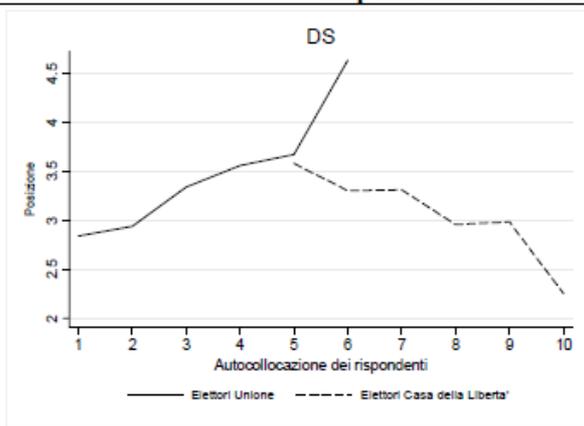
Merrill, Samuel III and Bernard Grofman (1997) 'Directional and Proximity Models of Voter Utility and Choice: A New Synthesis and an Illustrative Test of Competitive Models', *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 9(1): 25–48

# Projection problem in mass-surveys?

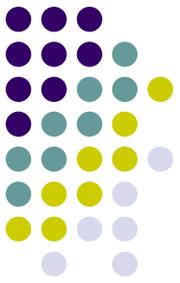
## Yes we have it as well!



La variazione nella percezione del posizionamento dei due principali partiti, delle coalizioni e dei rispettivi leader a seconda dell'autocollocazione del rispondente e del suo voto per una delle due coalizioni. Fonte: sondaggio Itanes 2006 post-elettorale



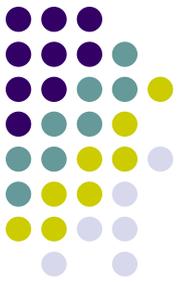
# Which salient dimensions?



We need to identify which policy dimensions among the ones included in the survey are actually **salient politically in a given setting**

When measuring relative dimension salience in each country, furthermore, we must be open to the strong possibility that different political actors attach **different levels of importance** to each dimension

# Which salient dimensions?

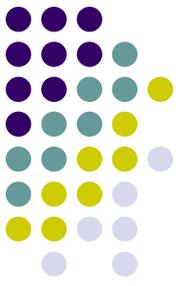


How to do that? **First option:**

To measure the overall relative importance of issue dimensions in each country, we can calculate the mean party-specific importance score for **each dimension**, **weighting scores** by the vote share received by each party

**Weighting** is necessary in order to avoid skewing the overall importance measures on the basis of scores for extreme or single-issue parties who might represent only a small proportion of a country's electorate

# Which salient dimensions?



Dimensions: step-by-step process

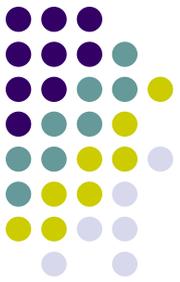
**First**, we compute the weighted mean saliency score for each dimension in each country

**Second**, the overall mean of these weighted mean scores across all dimensions is then calculated

**Third**, we calculate the weighted mean score of each dimension in each country, as a proportion of this overall mean. A score over 1.0 implies that the dimension is scored as more important than the mean score for all dimensions in the country; a score of less than 1.0 implies the dimension is rated as relatively less important

Let's see an example applied to the German 2005 case

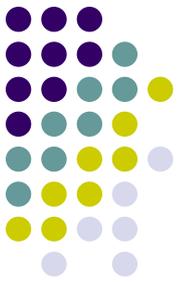
# The a-priori/a-posteriori research matrix



Policy content	Number of dimensions	
	A-priori	A-posteriori
A-priori		X
A-posteriori		

# Which salient dimensions?

Let's see an example of this first method applied to the  
**German 2002 case**



# Which salient dimensions?



## **ECONOMIC POLICY**

### TAXES V. SPENDING [1]

Promotes raising taxes to increase public services. (1)

Promotes cutting public services to cut taxes. (20)

## **SOCIAL POLICY [2]**

Favours liberal policies on matters such as abortion, homosexuality, and euthanasia. (1)

Opposes liberal policies on matters such as abortion, homosexuality, and euthanasia. (20)

## **ENVIRONMENT [5]**

Supports protection of the environment, even at the cost of economic growth. (1)

Supports economic growth, even at the cost of damage to the environment. (20)

## **DECENTRALISATION [12]**

Promotes decentralisation of all administration and decision-making. (1)

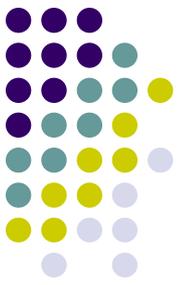
Opposes any decentralisation of administration and decision-making. (20)

## **IMMIGRATION [19]**

Favours policies designed to help asylum seekers and immigrants integrate into \_\_\_\_\_ society. (1)

Favours policies designed to help asylum seekers and immigrants return to their country of origin. (20)

# Which salient dimensions?



EU: PEACEKEEPING (EU-15 except France and Ireland) [17]

Favours \_\_\_\_\_ involvement in European security and peacekeeping missions. (1)

Opposes any \_\_\_\_\_ involvement in European military affairs. (20)

EU: ACCOUNTABILITY (EU-15 except France and Ireland) [23]

Promotes the direct accountability of the EU to citizens via institutions such as the European Parliament.  
(1)

Promotes the indirect accountability of the EU to citizens via their own national governments. (20)

EU: AUTHORITY (EU-15 except France and Ireland) [24]

Favours increasing the range of areas in which the EU can set policy. (1)

Favours reducing the range of areas in which the EU can set policy. (20)