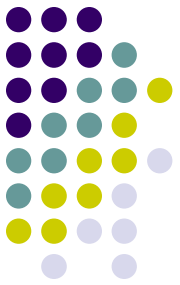


# CMP left-right alternative measure



## Ratio' scaling of Right-Left positions

To remedy this alleged bias however a 'ratio' scale has been proposed where only 'Left' and 'Right' emphases are used in the denominator, as follows:

RATIO (raw scores or percentage is the same in this case) =  $(R - L) / (R + L)$

# CMP left-right alternative measure



## Ratio' scaling of Right-Left positions

The measure ranges from -1 to 1, and makes explicit the range constraint hidden in Ratio. Dividing by  $R + L$  decouples the measure from variation in the importance a party assigns to any issue area (other than R and L)

Unlike RILE, this measure will not necessarily create an apparent move to a more centrist position if the party decides to focus on other policy areas

Indeed, comparing category counts only to counts in the opposing category rather than to counts of all quasi-sentences, makes the marginal effect of another sentence on the left or right side of the issue equals to:  
 $1/(R + L)$

# CMP left-right alternative measure



## Ratio' scaling problems

RATIO shares the assumptions embodied in RILE about the **fixed marginal effect** of another coded sentence and the existence of **fixed endpoints**

This has the unfortunate effect of forcing scores to the extremes, i.e., forcing the RATIO to -1 when  $R = 0$  **irrespective** of the value of L, or to 1 when  $L = 0$  **irrespective** of the value of R, leading to spikes at the boundaries of the scale

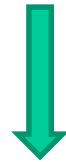
# CMP's data shortcomings



If you use a a-priori approach, CMP left-right measure consists of pre-defined and fixed scale components

- the constituent elements of the left-right scale are defined in the same way for all countries, at all time periods...

.....but the meaning of left and right can vary in time and space



CMP measure may not include relevant variables, that can explain much of the parties' variation, while considering unrelated ones

# CMP or Expert?

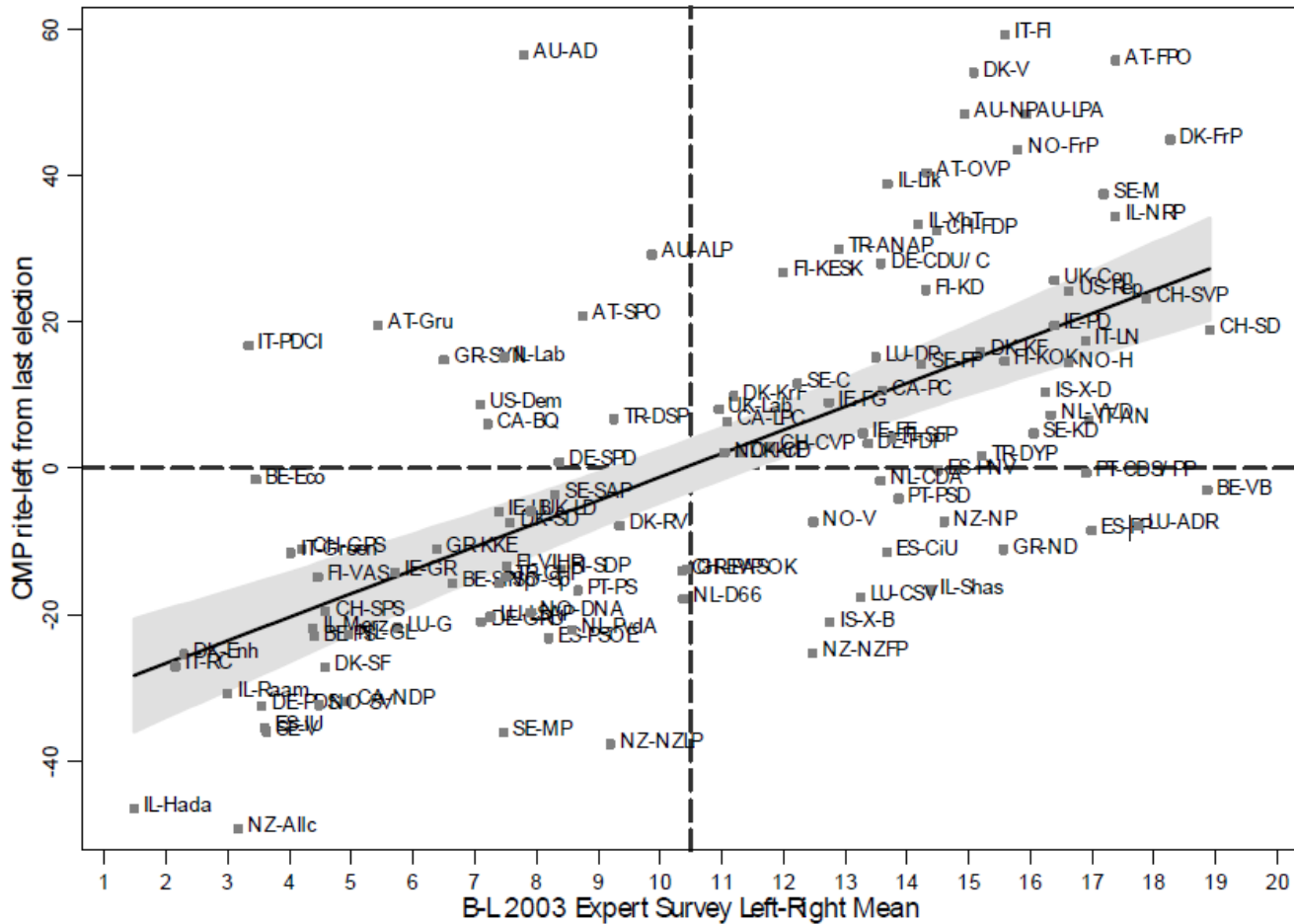


Figure 4. Across-Country Scatterplot of CMP Left-Right Scores versus Expert Survey Left-Right Estimates



# CMP or Expert?

The **first** general pattern of note in the Figure is the apparent lack of bias in the two measures, indicated by relatively good linear fit and by the nearly perfect intersection of the regression line through the (10.5, 0) midpoint of the scales

The second interesting pattern is that, despite the good linear fit, there is a lot of apparently **random noise**: the placements by country specialists explain only 40% of the variance in the CMP left-right scores

# Explaining differences between CMP scale positions and Expert Surveys judgements

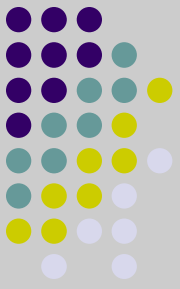


Therefore...computing the position of a party using an expert survey estimate may lead to different results than the ones of the CMP

**Why?** Although there is no pattern to explain these differences, there are a number of hypothesis that can be considered:

**First possibility:** party policies change between the time of the election for which CMP scored a party manifesto, and the time when the expert survey was conducted

# Explaining differences between CMP scale positions and Expert Surveys judgements



**Second possibility:** one of the two measurements contains significant error

**Third possibility:** they measure (partly...) **different quantities**

- party manifestos may have policy preferences not expressed in their election programmes and which hence cannot be captured in the scores provided by CMP
- no single pre-defined scale will accurately characterize the left right dimension of politics in all countries (and over time...)

Let's dig more into **this last point**



# Explaining differences between CMP scale positions and Expert Surveys judgements

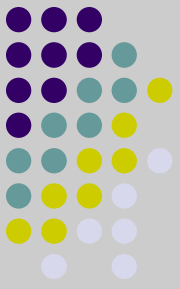


Back to the figure!

Some parties have been located wrongly on the left-right scales according to CMP: parties for which immigration, nationalism, or the environment are important issues

Because **none of these issues are components of the CMP left-right scale** used (despite the strong evidence that party positions for example on the **environment** are indeed **now** part of our contemporary understanding of left and right in politics) it is possible that CMP scores for parties emphasizing these issues **could differ** from the corresponding placements by country specialists on the left-right scale

# Explaining differences between CMP scale positions and Expert Surveys judgements



Remember that according for example to the RILE measurement, if a party in the CMP dataset starts talking more about the environment and less about other content categories in the CMP left-right scale, then it will appear to be becoming **more centrist**

But we might well feel that this party is not “really” becoming more centrist at all – but rather that the scale we are using is getting progressively more “out of date”

# Explaining differences between CMP scale positions and Expert Surveys judgements



This might explain why the CMP ranked as centrist the Austrian Greens and Belgian Ecolo parties, whereas the placements by country specialists of these same parties are considerably more left-wing

Likewise, CMP ranked as left-of-center several nationalist parties that were scored as right-wing by the country specialists, including the Belgian VB and the New Zealand First Party

Why that? For several reasons, including **possible ideological bias** of experts **and/or** the fact that they tend to classify parties making inference on their **“reputation”/“party family”** (communists, socialists, liberals, Christian democratic, conservatives, nationalists,...)

# Explaining differences between CMP scale positions and Expert Surveys judgements

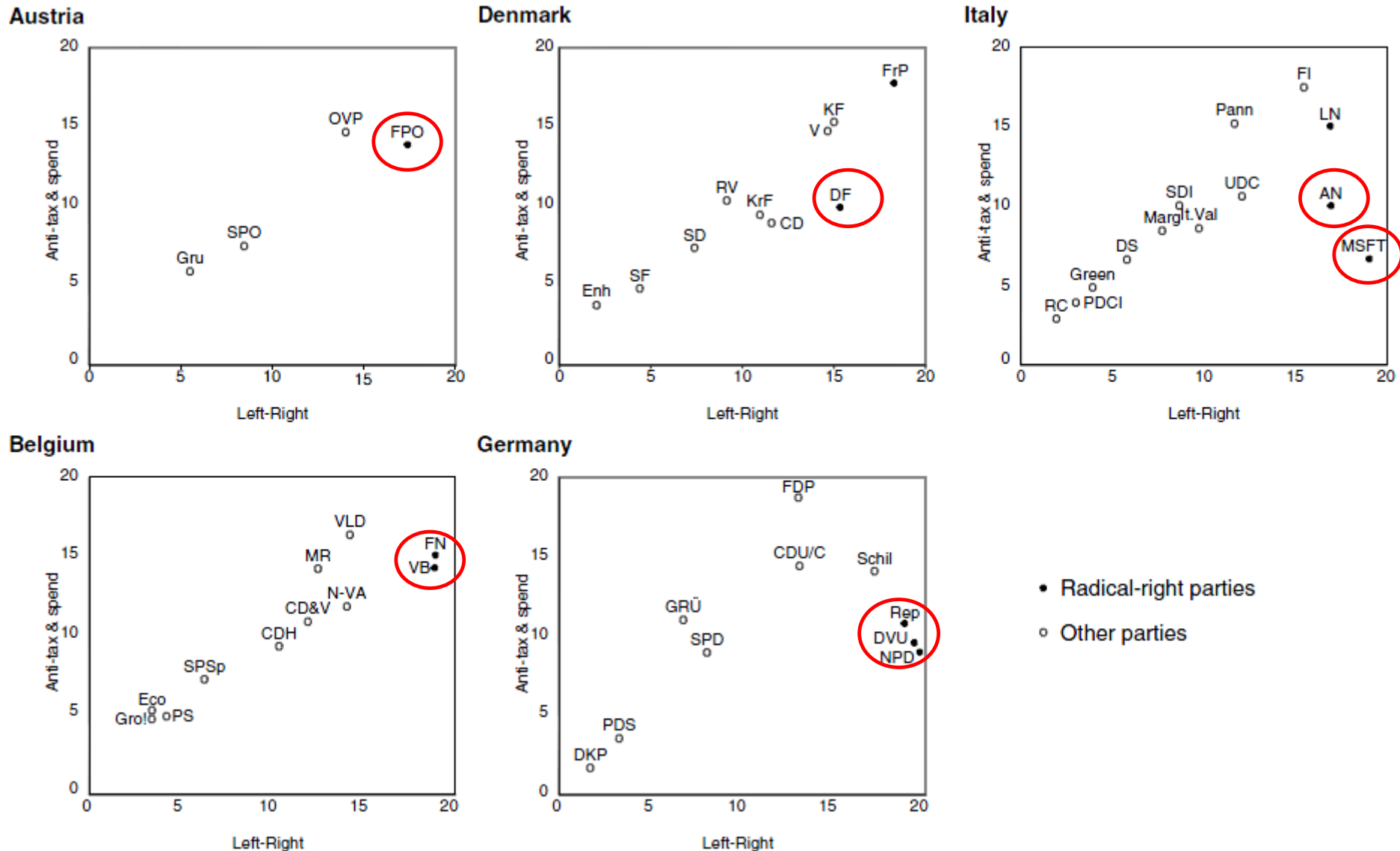


Fig. 4.3. Relationship between expert judgements of party Left-Right placement and tax and spend positions in five countries in 2003

# Explaining differences between CMP scale positions and Expert Surveys judgements



Because the constituent elements of the CMP left-right scale are defined in the same way for all countries at all time periods, they do not – and indeed cannot – reflect **temporal differences** in the meanings of the “left-right” dimension of policy...

...or **also local differences** in the meanings of the “left-right” dimension of policy

# Explaining differences between CMP scale positions and Expert Surveys judgements



And in fact, **local differences** do appear as relevant!

The fact that the Benoit-Laver expert survey asked respondents to locate each party on a general left-right scale, in addition to a set of substantive policy scales, allows to explore what the **country specialists had in mind in substantive terms** when they placed parties on the left-right scale, and thereby to infer the substantive meaning of left and right for any given country

# Explaining differences between CMP scale positions and Expert Surveys judgements



On the other side the CMP scale presents some other **advantages** over expert surveys judgments:

Expert survey scores have very little **dynamic variation**: expert surveys over time tends to give quite similar scores for the same party!

This is **troubling** because it presents us with the possibility that expert scores are operating as if they describe general left-right tendencies across time, a mean position for each party

But such fixed positions **preclude** analyzing party movements, if there are **real party movements**

# Explaining differences between CMP scale positions and Expert Surveys judgements



Theoretical relevance of that: a measurement record of **static party positions** when in fact party position taking is **dynamic**, would make it impossible to investigate:

- whether parties try to accommodate the position of the median voter
- adapt their positions to one another or to their own past success
- follow through on their policy promises to voters while in government
- supply sufficiently dynamic offerings to electorates so as to make parties in parliament and government accurately reflect the position of median voters in the long run



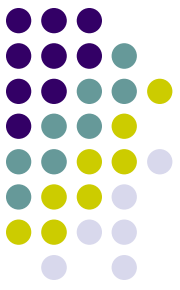
# Explaining differences between CMP scale positions and Expert Surveys judgements



In this sense, it seems that while expert surveys measure the **long-run general tendencies** of party left-right positions, CMP shows there are **systematic dynamics** to party left-right positions

Approx. **1 party out of 3** presents systematic policy changes  
(though only few made substantive changes)

# Explaining differences between CMP scale positions and Expert Surveys judgements



Moreover, expert surveys provide a static measurement of parties' left-right positions not only over time, but **across countries as well!**

Expert surveys do not carry us much beyond what could be achieved by scoring party **left-right positions according to each one's party-family affiliation**. The CMP, on the other hand, records **meaningful differences across nations**

The CMP measurements contain variation attributable to national differences: parties in Canada and Norway, for example, are relative more left-leaning within each party family compared to parties in the same family in the USA and Australia.

- remember Downs! Convergence toward median voter
- maybe median voter in Norway is more leftist than USA

# Explaining differences between CMP scale positions and Expert Surveys judgements

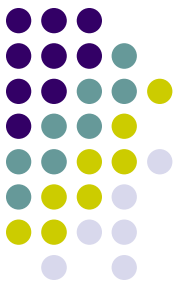


Table 4.3. Average party Left-Right positions by party family

Party family	N	Mean (std. dev.)			
		Manifesto project	Castles and Mair	Laver and Hunt	Huber and Inglehart
Communist	8	1.83 (.99)	1.70 (.48)	1.77 (.35)	1.86 (.43)
Social Democrat	22	3.75 (1.18)	3.54 (.98)	3.80 (1.08)	3.74 (.82)
Green	4	3.62 (1.29)	3.83 (.83)	3.45 (.70)	2.85 (.71)
Liberal	13	5.35 (1.52)	5.84 (1.17)	6.10 (1.33)	6.01 (1.30)
Agrarian	5	5.16 (1.60)	6.10 (.99)	6.19 (.66)	6.39 (1.35)
Christian Democrat	11	5.67 (1.08)	6.31 (.70)	6.79 (.49)	6.27 (.99)
Conservative	14	6.13 (1.63)	7.18 (.73)	7.12 (.87)	6.95 (.77)
Nationalist	2	7.89 (1.06)	9.45 (.50)	8.55 (.95)	9.63 (.53)
All parties	79	4.70 (1.91)	5.09 (2.08)	5.23 (2.05)	5.12 (2.06)
Summary statistics					
$R^2$		.553	.832	.844	.812
$R^{-2}$		.509	.815	.829	.793
$s_e$		1.336	.892	.850	.936

Notes: Table entries are for party families mean Left-Right locations based on 0–10 metrics for all four data-sets. Summary statistics come from regressing the party positions onto dummy variables for each of seven families, withholding one family to serve as the baseline category.

# Explaining differences between CMP scale positions and Expert Surveys judgements



We appear to be stuck between a rock and a hard place with respect to the CMP a-prior left-right scale!

If we do not change the definition of some policy scale in which we are interested, then it remains frozen at a particular time point and becomes progressively less valid

If we do change the content to reflect the changing political reality the scale is intended to measure, then how do we compare scale positions before and after the scale's definition has been changed?

Suggestion: the CMP generally preferred to expert surveys for analyses involving left-right party positions over an appreciable amount of time across countries