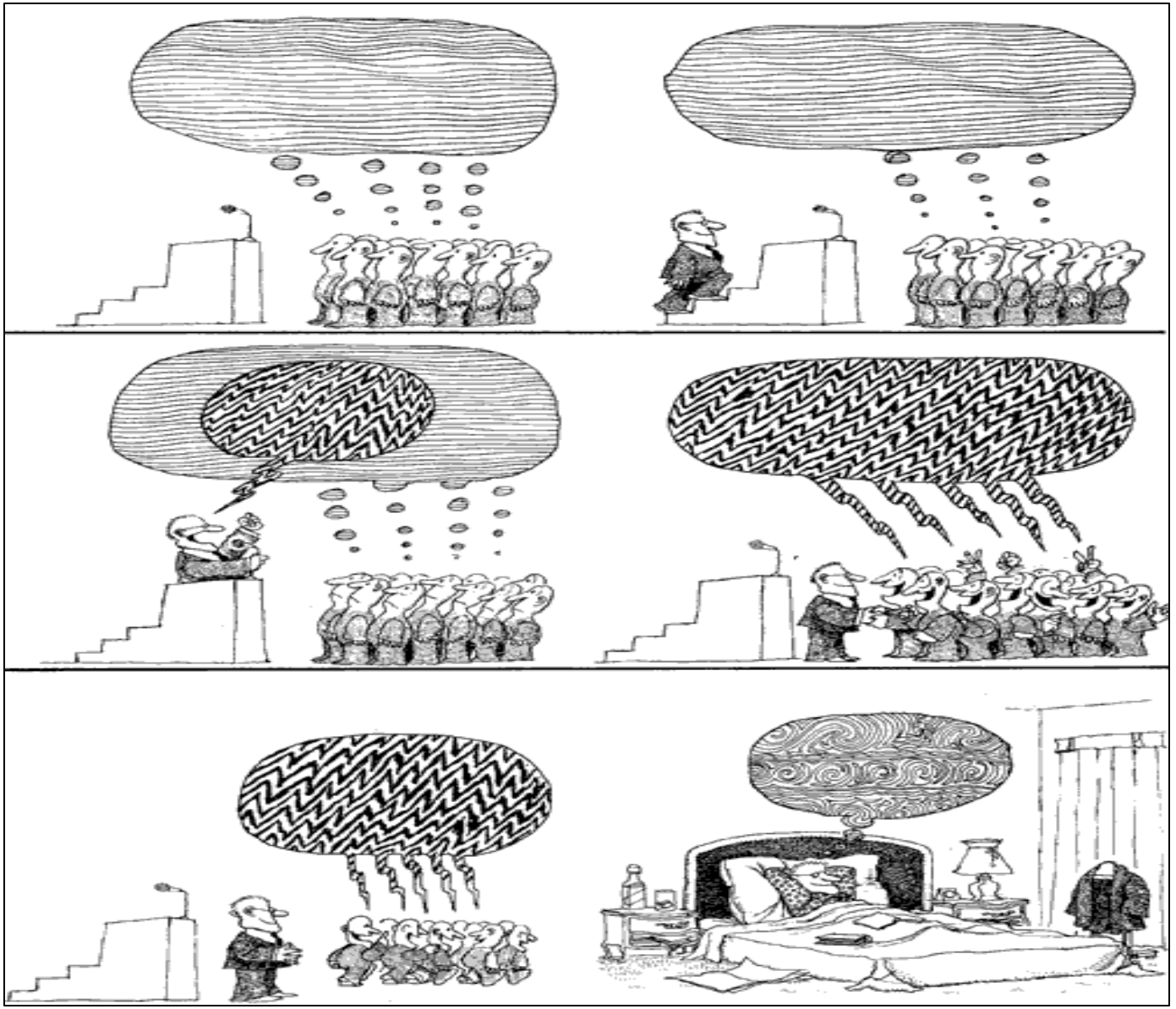
Parties and Electoral Competition: Theory and Evidence



Theory: Political convergence theorem

Electoral competition with two office-seekers candidates

If the electorate has single-peaked political preferences, there is a unique Nash equilibrium

$$g_A^* = g_B^* = g^M$$

Mechanism: Centrifugal forces

$$P(g_A, g_B) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{αν } W_m(g_A) > W_m(g_B) \\ 1/2 & \text{αν } W_m(g_A) = W_m(g_B) \\ 0 & \text{αν } W_m(g_A) < W_m(g_B) \end{cases}$$

…it is dominant strategy for both parties to choose g_M

Dates of Greek elections after 1974

November 17, 1974	October 10, 1993
November 20, 1977	September 22, 1996
October 18, 1981	September 4, 2000
June 2, 1985	March 7, 2004
June 18, 1989	September 16, 2007
November 5, 1989	October 4, 2009
April 8, 1990	May 6, 2012/ June17, 2012

Political agendas of the parties: How do we measure them?

Comparative manifesto project (CMP)

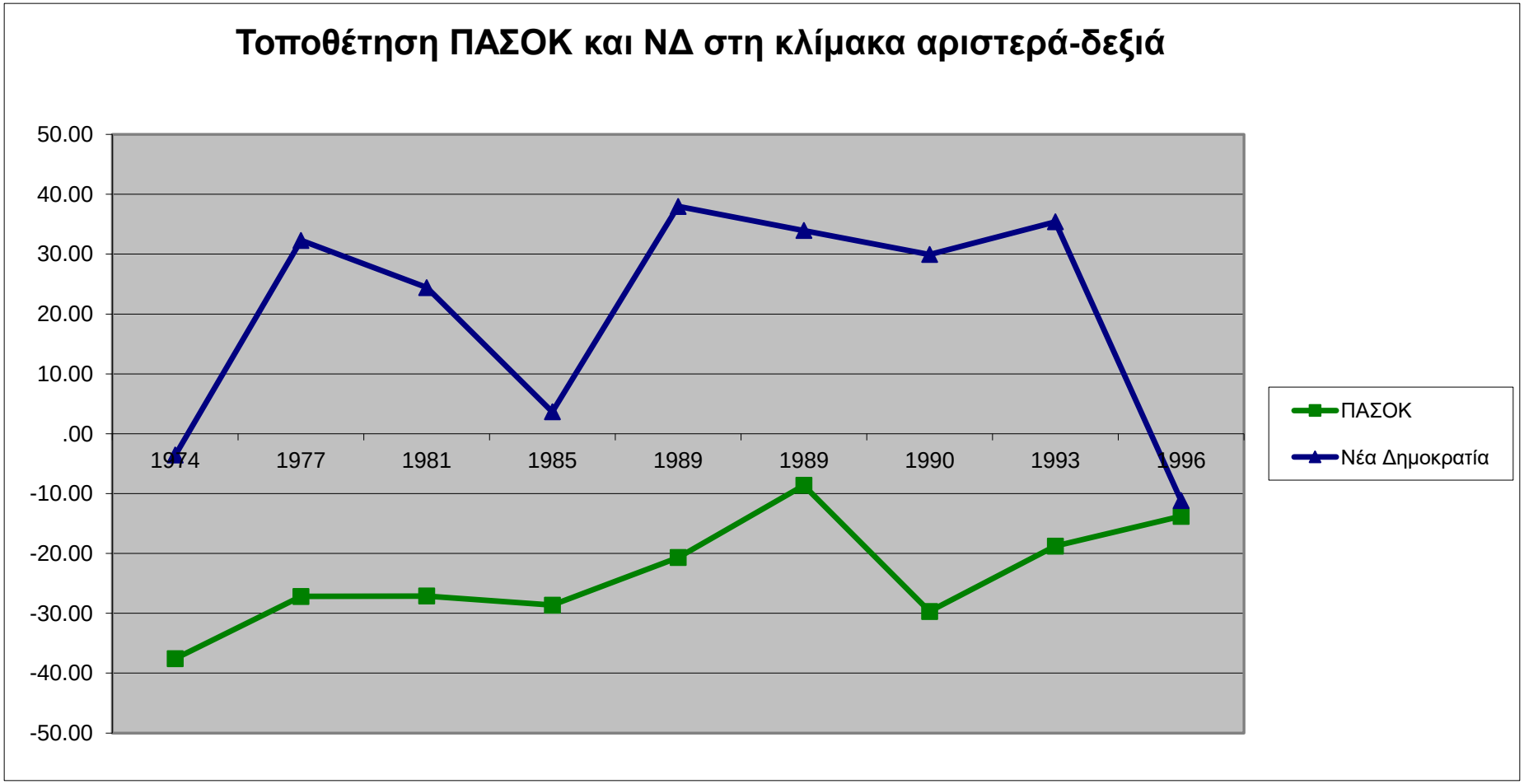
https://manifestoproject.wzb.eu/

- Measure pre-electoral agendas for different time periods
- Seven policy dimensions (i.e., economy, international relationships etc).
- Left/Right scale where -100 denotes extreme left and +100 extreme right

Median voter political preferences: How do we measure them?

Opinion polls. Eurobarometer (self placement and/or vote in the previous elections)

http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm


Τοποθέτηση ΠΑΣΟΚ και ΝΔ στη κλίμακα αριστερά-δεξιά
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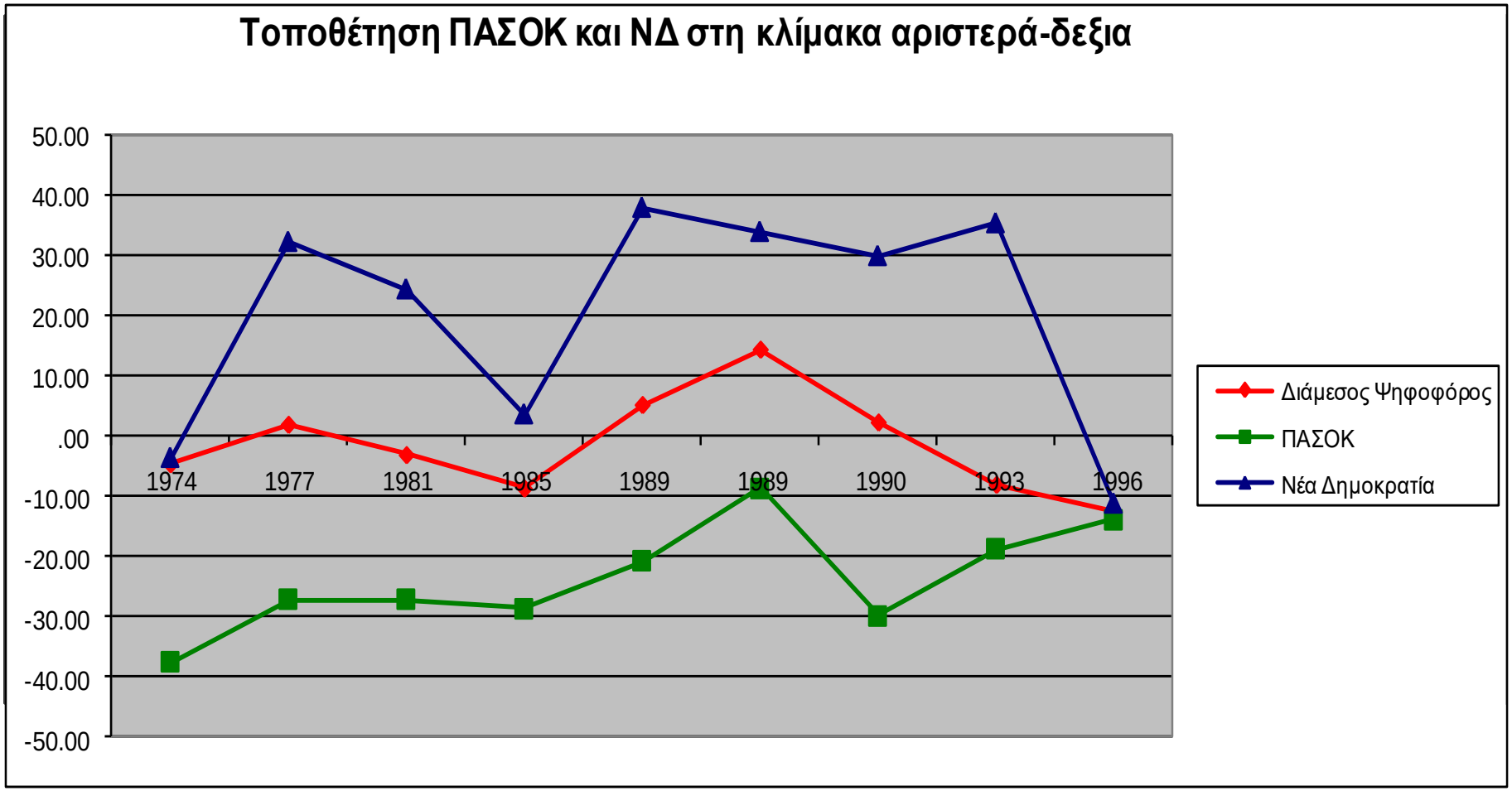
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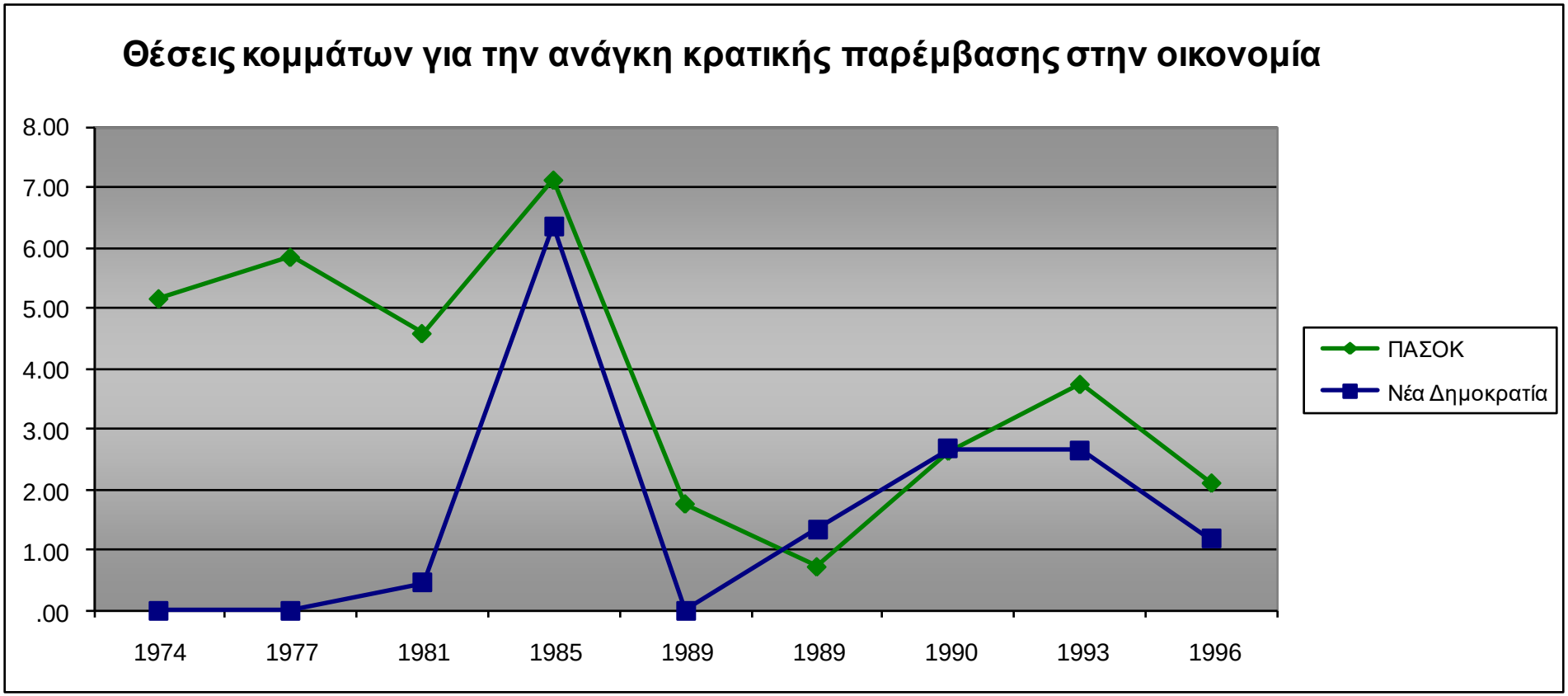
Θέσεις κομμάτων για την ανάγκη κρατικής παρέμβασης στην οικονομία
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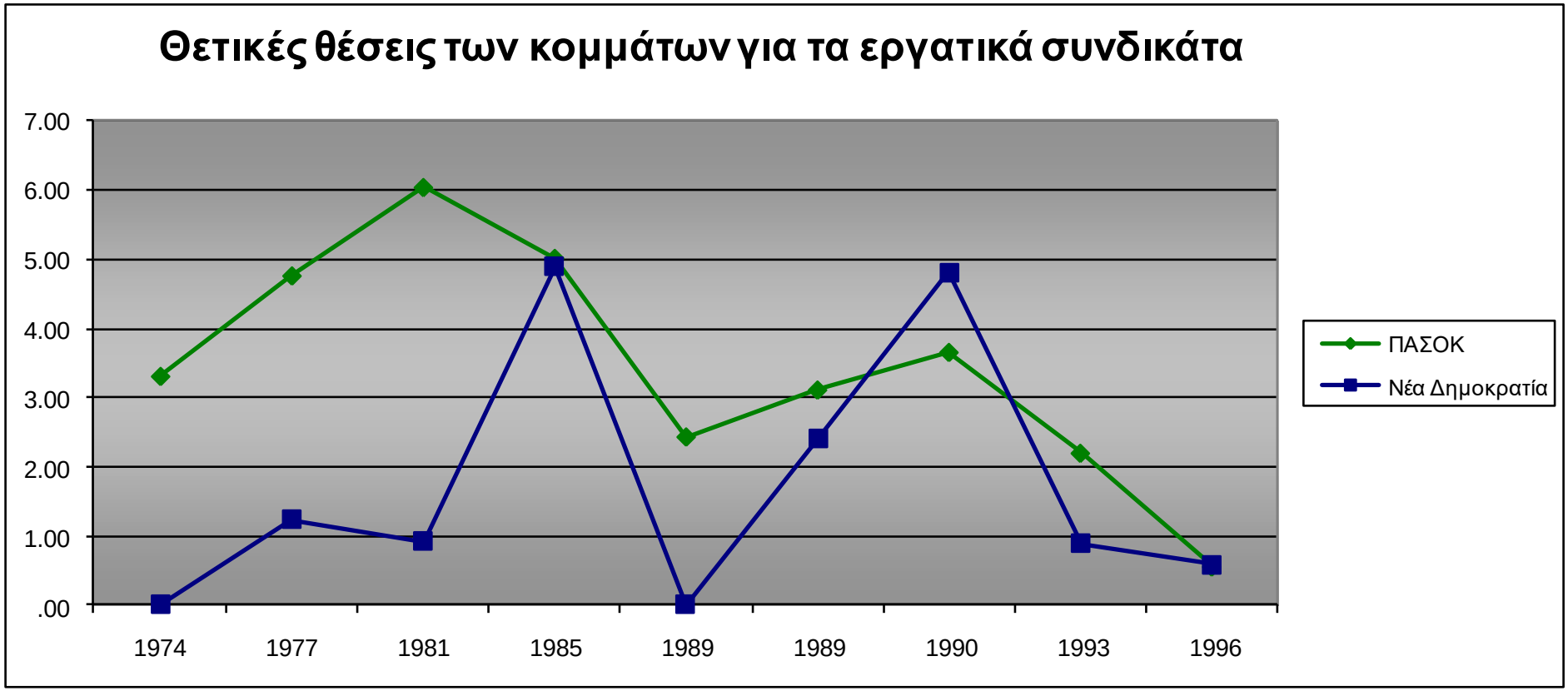
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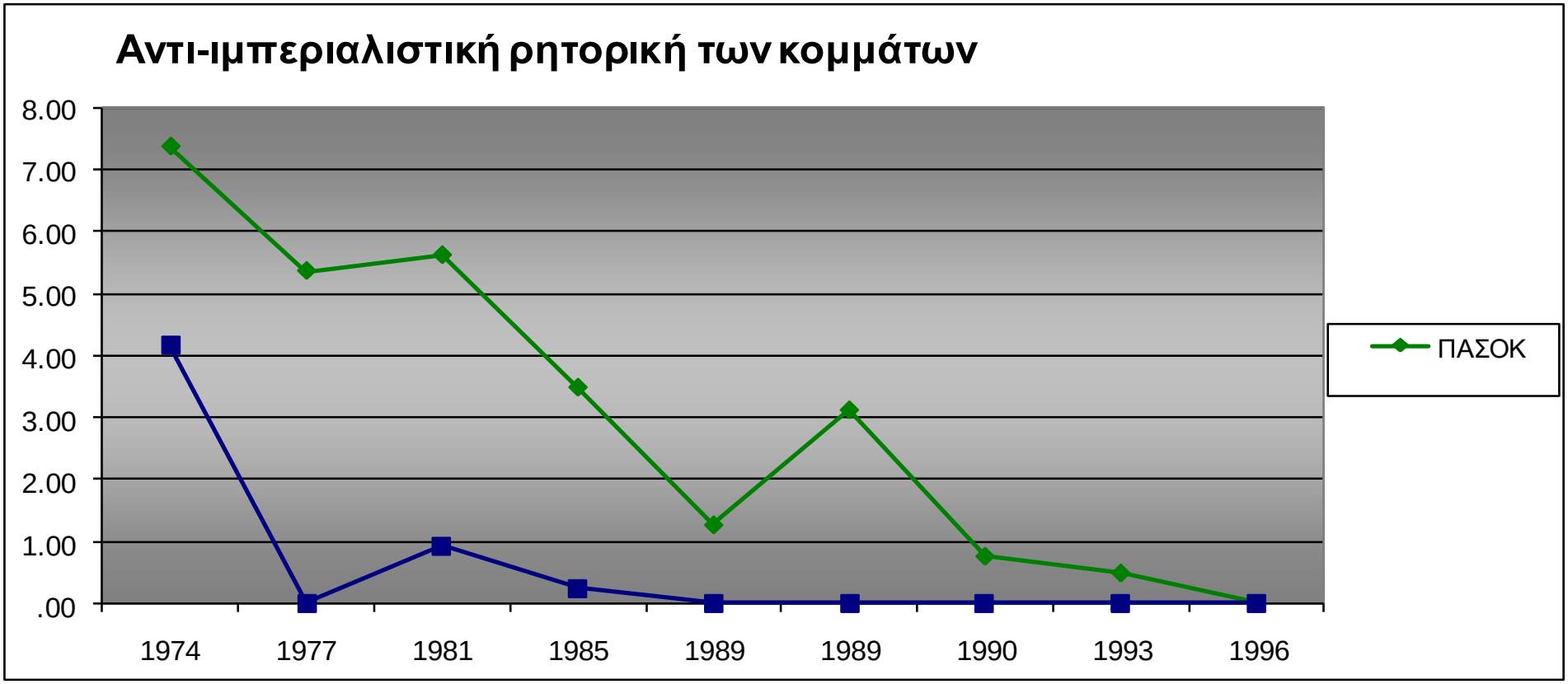
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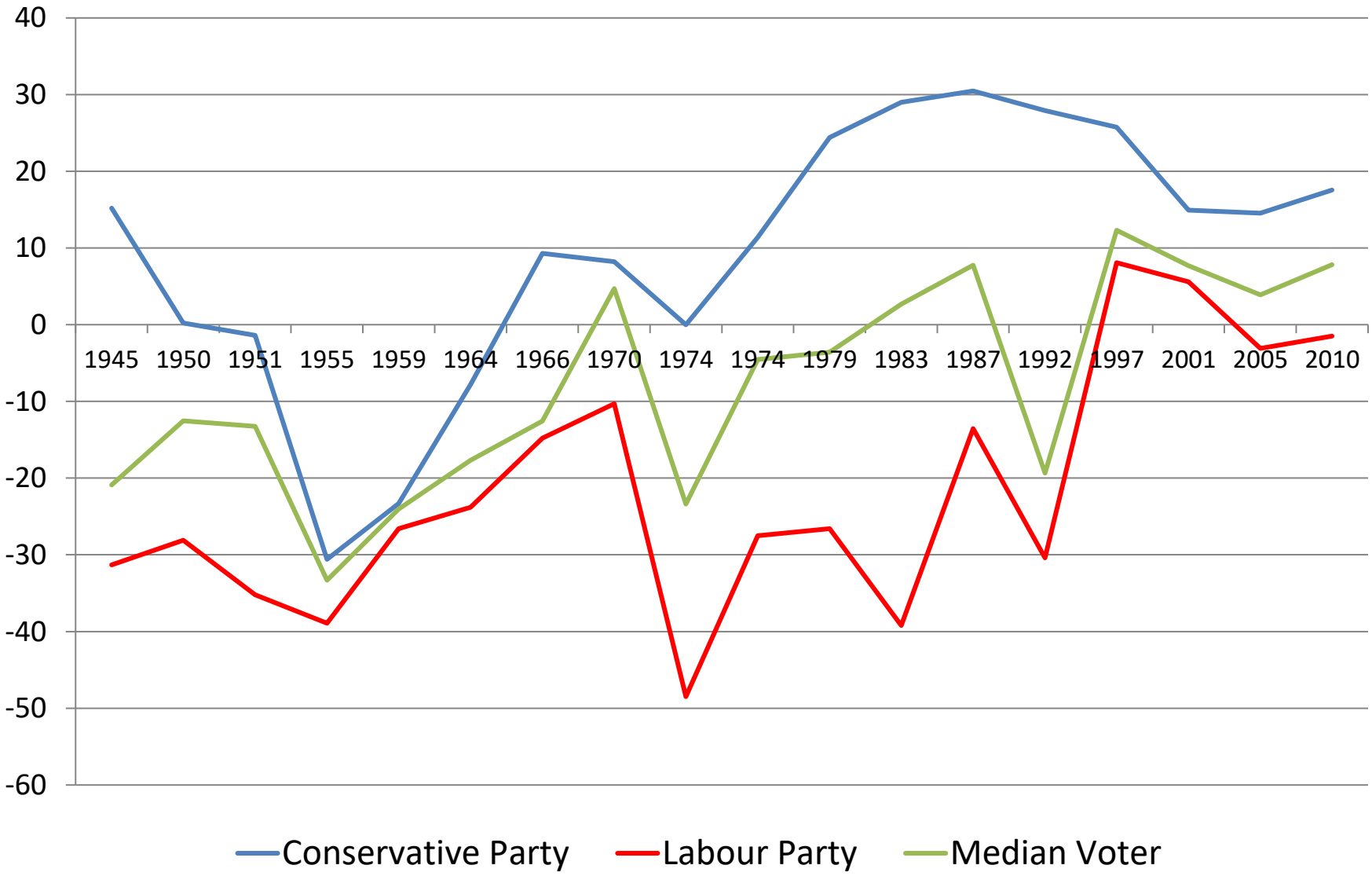
Στοιχεία από το Ηνωμένο Βασίλειο

Στοιχεία από το Ηνωμένο Βασίλειο



Evidence: Relevant Econometric studies

1) **Adams et al. (2004)** "Understanding Change and Stability in Party Ideologies: Do Parties Respond to Public Opinion or to Past Election Results?" *British Journal of Political Science* 34(4):589-610.

2) **Kluver and Spoon (2014).** **“**Who responds? Voters, Parties and Issue Attention” *British Journal of Political Science* 46, 589-610.

How do we work when we have to read an empirical paper?

STEP1:

***Dependent Variables (LHS)** : How do we measure?

Party's agenda (ideology) : usually RILE (left-right) scale (let's say from 0-10)

STEP2:

***Key explanatory/ Independent variable (RHS)**: How do we measure?

Ideology of the median voter : usually RILE of the median voter (Eurobarometer or other polls)

STEP3

What is the set of countries and years?

***DATA:** Panel 18 European countries over the period 1972-2011

STEP4

What is the theoretical hypothesis? The sign of the coefficient?

(i.e. the expected the relationship between LHS and RHS)

Simple relationship: When the effect of a variable (X) on another (Y)is "unconditional"

Example: Y=a+bX, **Derivative**: dY/dX=b

b>0 is positive for a positive relationship between X and Y

b<0 is negative for a negative relationship between X and Y

BUT in this case the effect of X on Y is always b (is "unconditional") and therefore a conditional effect diagram will not make any sense. If you experiment by trying to figure out a conditional effect diagram in such a case you will see that the function is always constant and equals to b.

Conditional relationship : When the effect of a variable (X) on another (Y) depends on a third variable (Z)

Example: Y=a+bZX, **Derivative**: dY/dX=bZ

So in this case the effect of X on Y is not a constant term and depends (is "conditional") on the size of Z. In this case a conditional effect diagram provides useful information since it allows us to investigate the effect of X on Y for different values of Z. If you experiment by constructing a conditional effect diagram in such a case you will see that the effect of X on Y (i.e. bZ) is "conditional" that means is a function of Z.

Note: The coefficient of the multiplicative term bZ that we obtain in the simple estimations (the Tables) is "the effect of X on Y for the average level of Z (in our sample)" whereas the conditional effect diagrams provide information for all the alternative values of Z.

Adams et al. (2004) "Understanding Change and Stability in Party Ideologies: Do Parties Respond to Public Opinion or to Past Election Results?" *British Journal of Political Science* 34(4):589-610.

Econometric Model

Direction and magnitude of harmful public opinion shifts

Direction and magnitude of benign public opinion shifts

$$\Delta P_J(t) = b_1 + b_2[\Delta V(t) \times DISAD_J(t)] + b_3[\Delta V(t) \times (1 - DISAD_J(t))] + b_4[\Delta P_J(t-1) \times \Delta VS_J(t-1)],$$

Electoral success of the party's ideological shift at the last election

$\Delta P_J(t)$ = the change in party J's left–right position in election t compared with its position at election $t-1$. Similarly, $\Delta P_J(t-1)$ represents the change in J's position in election $t-1$ compared to election $t-2$.

$\Delta V(t)$ = the change in the mean Eurobarometer respondent's left–right self-placement at the time of election t compared with the mean respondent placement at the time of election $t-1$.

$DISAD_J(t)$ = 1 if the party clearly is disadvantaged by the shift in public opinion between election $t-1$ and election t.
= 0 otherwise.[25]

$\Delta VS_J(t-1)$ = the change in Party J's vote share in the previous election $t-1$, compared with J's vote share in election $t-2$.

APPENDIX: PARTIES INCLUDED IN THE EMPIRICAL ANALYSES

Denmark
Socialistisk Folkeparti (Communist)
Socialdemokratiet (Social Democratic)
Radikale (Liberal)
Konservative (Conservative)
Venstre (Liberal)
Fremskridtspartiet (National)

France
PCF (Communist)
PS (Socialist)
UDF/RPR (Conservative)
FN (National)

Great Britain
Labour (Social Democratic)
Social and Liberal Democrats (Liberal)
Conservative (Conservative)

Greece
KKE (Communist)
PASOK (Social Democratic)
New Democracy (Christian)

Italy
PCI (Communist)
PSI (Social Democratic)
AN (National)
DC (Christian)
PLI (Liberal)

Luxembourg
KP/PC (Communist)
LSAP/POSL (Social Democratic)
CSV/PCS (Christian)
DP/PD (Liberal)

The Netherlands
PPR/PvDA/D'66 (Social Democratic)
CDA (Christian Democratic)
VVD (Liberal)
GL (Green)

Spain
IU (Communist)
PSOE (Social Democratic)
CIU/AP/CP (Conservative)
CDS (Liberal)

Notes: The names in parentheses indicate the 'party families' to which the parties belong. Party family designations are taken from the Comparative Manifesto Project, where the third digit of the party identification code represents a party's family. We note that for the purposes of our empirical analyses, the parties that the CMP classified as members of the Communist, Social Democratic and Green families were classified as left-wing parties in our analyses, while parties the CMP classified as belonging to the Conservative, Christian and Nationalist families were classified as right-wing parties. We classified as centrist all parties belonging to the CMP's Liberal family classification.

TABLE 2 *Explaining Parties' Ideological Shifts*

Explanatory variable	Basic	Country-specific intercepts†	Gabel-Huber data‡	Voter dispersion effects
Intercept	0.11*	0.11*	0.04	0.11*
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.18)	(0.05)
Harmful public opinion shift	*0.80***	*0.86***	*0.88**	*0.82***
	(0.29)	*(0.30)*	*(0.43)*	*(0.29)*
Benign public opinion shift	*0.19*	*0.22*	*0.10*	*0.19*
	(0.23)	*(0.25)*	*(0.35)*	*(0.23)*
Past election results	*0.01*	*0.01*	*0.00*	*0.01*
	(0.01)	*(0.01)*	*(0.02)*	*(0.01)*
Party's ideological shift ($t-1$)	−0.49**	−0.51**	−0.44**	−0.49**
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.12)	(0.08)
Party's ideological shift ($t-2$)	−0.20*	−0.23**	−0.25*	−0.22**
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.12)	(0.08)
Change in voter dispersion				0.87*
				(0.36)
Number of cases	167	167	109	167
Adjusted R^2	0.21	0.21	0.20	0.24

TABLE 2 *Explaining Parties' Ideological Shifts*

Explanatory variable	Basic	Country-specific intercepts†	Gabel-Huber data‡	Voter dispersion effects
Intercept	0.11* (0.05)	0.11* (0.05)	0.04 (0.18)	0.11* (0.05)
Harmful public opinion shift	*0.80*** *(0.29)*	*0.86*** *(0.30)*	*0.88** *(0.43)*	*0.82*** *(0.29)*
Benign public opinion shift	*0.19* *(0.23)*	*0.22* *(0.25)*	*0.10* *(0.35)*	*0.19* *(0.23)*
Past election results	*0.01* *(0.01)*	*0.01* *(0.01)*	*0.00* *(0.02)*	*0.01* *(0.01)*
Party's ideological shift ($t-1$)	−0.49** (0.08)	−0.51** (0.08)	−0.44** (0.12)	−0.49** (0.08)
Party's ideological shift ($t-2$)	−0.20* (0.08)	−0.23** (0.08)	−0.25* (0.12)	−0.22** (0.08)
Change in voter dispersion				0.87* (0.36)
Number of cases	167	167	109	167
Adjusted R^2	0.21	0.21	0.20	0.24

Όταν η κοινή γνώμη μετατοπίζεται κατά μια μονάδα στη κλίμακα 1-10 αριστεράς/δεξιάς, τα κόμματα που δεν ευνοούνται αλλάζουν κατά 0.8 μονάδες την ατζέντα τους ακολουθώντας την κοινή γνώμη

Kluver and Spoon (2014). "Who responds? Voters, Parties and Issue Attention" *British Journal of Political Science* 46, 589-610.

HYPOTHESIS 1: The more attention voters paid to a given policy issue in the previous election (t_{-1}), the higher the attention that parties pay to this issue in the current election (t_0).

HYPOTHESIS 2: Large parties will be more responsive to voters than will small parties.

HYPOTHESIS 3: Government parties will be less responsive to voters than will opposition parties.

HYPOTHESIS 4: Across issue areas, niche parties will be no more responsive than other parties; however, they will be more responsive to voters on their own issues.

How do we work when we have to read an empirical paper?

STEP1:

***Dependent Variables (LHS)** : How do we measure?

Party issue attention

The attention that political parties pay to policy issues is measured as the percentage of quasi-sentences devoted to a certain issue area

STEP2:

***Key explanatory/ Independent variable (RHS)**: How do we measure?

Voter issue attention

STEP3

What is the set of countries and years?

***DATA:** Panel 18 European countries over the period 1972-2011

STEP4

What is the theoretical hypothesis? The sign of the coefficient?

(i.e. the expected the relationship between LHS and RHS)

TABLE 1 *Issue Areas and CMP Policy Categories*

CMP policy category	Issue area
703: Farmers	Agriculture
201: Freedom and human rights 202: Democracy 603: Traditional morality (positive) 604: Traditional morality (negative) 705: Underprivileged minority groups 706: Non-economic demographic groups	Civil rights
502: Culture	Culture
401: Free enterprise 402: Incentives 403: Market regulation 404: Economic planning 408: Economic goals 409: Keynesian demand management 410: Productivity 412: Controlled economy 413: Nationalization 414: Economic orthodoxy 704: Middle class and professional groups	Economy
506: Education expansion 507: Education limitation	Education
416: Anti-growth economy (positive) 501: Environmental protection	Environment
108: EC/EU (positive) 110: EC/EU (negative)	European integration
203: Constitutionalism (positive) 204: Constitutionalism (negative) 301: Decentralization 302: Centralization 303: Government and administrative efficiency 304: Political corruption 305: Political authority	Institutional and administrative reform
101: Foreign and special relations (positive) 102: Foreign and special relations (negative) 103: Anti-imperialism (positive) 104: Military (positive) 105: Military (negative) 106: Peace (positive) 107: Internationalism (positive) 109: Internationalism (negative) 406: Protectionism (positive) 407: Protectionism (negative)	International politics
605: Law and order	Law and order
601: National way of life (positive) 602: National way of life (negative) 607: Multiculturalism (positive) 608: Multiculturalism (negative)	Multiculturalism
503: Social justice 504: Welfare state expansion 505: Welfare state limitation 606: Social harmony	Social welfare
411: Technology and infrastructure	Technology and infrastructure

TABLE 2 *Examining Party Responsiveness to all Voters*

DV: Party issue attention t_0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Main effects			
Voter issue attention t_{-1}	0.045***	0.036**	0.151***
	(0.011)	(0.018)	(0.036)
Party size	0.000	−0.009	−0.009
	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Government status	0.120	0.342**	0.378**
	(0.158)	(0.157)	(0.156)
Niche party	−0.063	−0.019	−0.065
	(0.220)	(0.218)	(0.214)
Left-right position	0.007*	0.008*	−0.003
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Average party system issue salience t_{-1}	0.390***	0.394***	0.443***
	(0.040)	(0.041)	(0.042)
Average district magnitude	0.001	0.001	0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Number of days since last election	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Interaction effects			
Party size × Voter issue attention t_{-1}		**0.002****	**0.001***
		(0.001)	**(0.001)**
Government status × Voter issue attention t_{-1}		**−0.037****	**−0.046*****
		(0.019)	**(0.016)**
Niche party × Voter issue attention t_{-1}		**−0.007**	**−0.018**
		(0.022)	**(0.023)**
Left-right position × Voter issue attention t_{-1}			0.002***
			(0.001)
Average party system issue salience t_{-1} × Voter issue attention t_{-1}			−0.005***
			(0.001)
Average district magnitude × Voter issue attention t_{-1}			−0.000
			(0.000)
Number of days since last election × Voter issue attention t_{-1}			−0.000
			(0.000)
Party issue attention t_{-1}	0.436***	0.432***	0.418***
	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.049)
Constant	0.693***	0.749***	0.524*
	(0.263)	(0.256)	(0.272)
N	4,993	4,993	4,993
R^2	0.58	0.59	0.60

Note: Results are from an OLS regression with clustered robust standard errors. ***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.10.

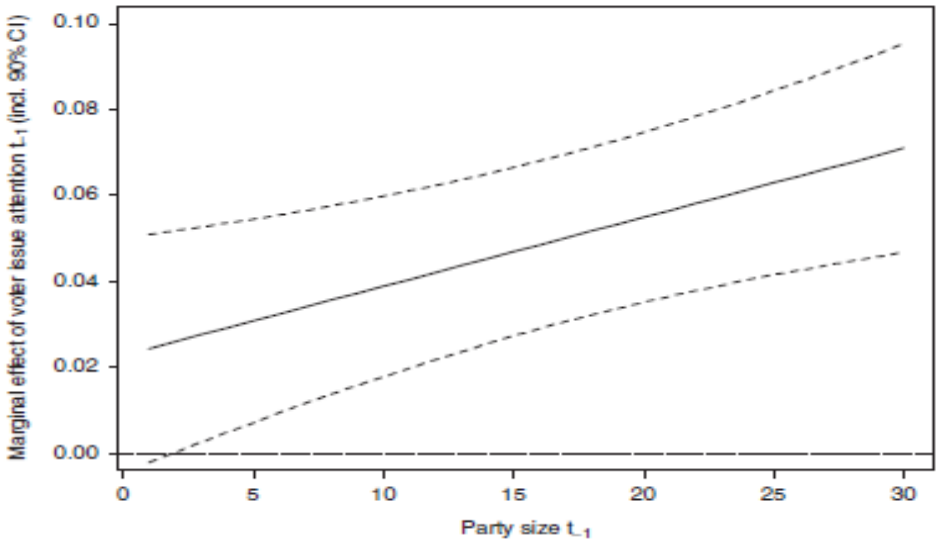


Fig. 1. The effect of party size on party issue responsiveness
Note: This figure is based on Model 2.

Example: Y=a+bZX/ **Derivative**: dY/dX=bZ

So in this case the effect of voter issue attention on party issue attention is not a constant term and depends (is "conditional") on the party size.

In this case a conditional effect diagram provides useful information since it allows us to investigate the effect of X on Y for different values of Z. If you experiment by constructing a conditional effect diagram in such a case you will see that the effect of X on Y (i.e. bZ) is "conditional" that means is a function of Z.

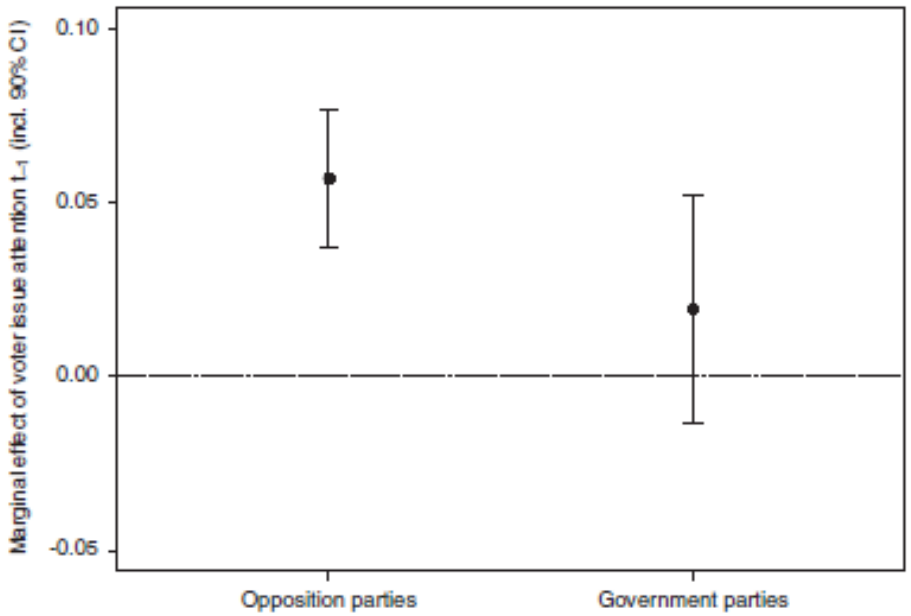


Fig. 2. The effect of government status on party issue responsiveness
Note: This figure is based on Model 2.

TABLE 3 *Examining Party Responsiveness in the Environmental Issue Area*

	All voters		Party supporters	
DV: Party issue attention t_0	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Main effects				
Voter/Supporter issue attention t_{-1}	0.046***	0.153***	0.044***	0.182***
	(0.012)	(0.035)	(0.012)	(0.040)
Party size	0.002	−0.009	−0.001	−0.011*
	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Government status	0.128	0.398**	0.124	0.284*
	(0.158)	(0.156)	(0.161)	(0.155)
Left-right position	0.008*	−0.004	0.008*	−0.000
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Average party system issue salience t_{-1}	0.406***	0.460***	0.426***	0.479***
	(0.042)	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.045)
Average district magnitude	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Number of days since last election	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Green parties	−0.284	−0.599**	−0.160	−0.410*
	(0.237)	(0.233)	(0.248)	(0.241)
Environmental issue	−0.151	−0.197	−0.359	−0.419
	(0.284)	(0.283)	(0.275)	(0.271)
Interaction effects				
Green parties × Environmental issue	3.816**	4.134**	2.815*	3.089*
	(1.623)	(1.634)	(1.663)	(1.683)
Green parties × Voter/Supporter issue attention t_{-1}	0.006	0.053	−0.028	0.007
	(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.023)	(0.026)
Environmental issue area × Voter/Supporter issue attention t_{-1}	−0.069*	−0.088*	−0.042	−0.051
	(0.041)	(0.048)	(0.037)	(0.041)
Green parties × Environmental issue × Voter/Supporter issue attention t_{-1}	**0.183**	**0.182**	**0.142****	**0.142****
	(0.151)	**(0.152)**	**(0.055)**	**(0.059)**
Party size × Voter/Supporter issue attention t_{-1}		0.002**		0.002**
		(0.001)		(0.001)
Government status × Voter/Supporter issue attention t_{-1}		−0.049***		−0.039***
		(0.016)		(0.015)
Left-right position × Voter/Supporter issue attention t_{-1}		0.002***		0.002***
		(0.001)		(0.000)
Average party system issue salience t_{-1} × Voter/Supporter issue attention t_{-1}		−0.005***		−0.007***
		(0.001)		(0.001)
Average district magnitude × Voter/Supporter issue attention t_{-1}		−0.000		−0.000
		(0.000)		(0.000)
Number of days since last election × Voter/Supporter issue attention t_{-1}		−0.000*		−0.000*
		(0.000)		(0.000)
Party issue attention t_{-1}	0.418***	0.399***	0.410***	0.389***
	(0.049)	(0.051)	(0.050)	(0.052)
Constant	0.717***	0.547**	0.755***	0.587**
	(0.265)	(0.273)	(0.268)	(0.272)
N	4,993	4,993	4,889	4,889
R^2	0.59	0.60	0.58	0.60

Note: Results are from an OLS regression with clustered robust standard errors. ***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.10.

Πόσες όμως είναι οι διαστάσεις της πολιτικής;