

**Values versus Interests Dynamics
of Parliamentary Campaigns**

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Abstract:

The paper explores the dynamics of parliamentary campaigns in Europe. Results obtained in the fields of pharmacology and psychology indicate that the emotional tension among the electorate rises as the election day draws closer. Therefore, parties should adjust their campaigning strategies accordingly. I am attempting to verify whether these dynamics influence the proportion between interest and value-related appeals within party communication. Using newly collected data from the Comparative Campaign Dynamics Project, I demonstrate that there is no general tendency towards the increasing saliency of either of the dimensions. However, the relationship under scrutiny becomes strong and robust after the moderating effects of inequality have been accounted for. Most strikingly, as the election draws closer, parties tend to focus more attention on economic issues only if the country experiences high or rising rates of inequality.

Key words:

party strategy, electoral campaign, campaign dynamics, emotions in politics, inequality

Introduction

Electoral campaigns are times of great activity of parties and politicians and elevated interest in politics among the citizens. Parties consciously construct their vote-seeking strategies which are largely determined by the social context (Spoon & Klüver 2014; Spoon & Klüver 2015; Ward et al. 2015; Farstad 2017) and their decisions matter for electoral results (Petrocik 1996; Tavits 2007; Evans & Northmore-Ball 2018). Despite identifying numerous factors influencing party strategies, most studies are targeted at explaining long-term dynamics and explore the change of party strategy between elections (Fagerholm 2016; see also Adams et al. 2009; Adams & Somer-Topcu 2009; Somer-Topcu 2009; Somer-Topcu & Zar 2014; Tavits

& Potter 2015). So far there has been a single article by Banda (2015) demonstrating that in course of a campaign parties' strategies of issue emphasis evolve. Therefore, the short-term campaign dynamics remain largely an underexplored topic. This article aims at filling this gap.

I depart from the assumption that social factors conditioning party behaviour such as inequality or social heterogeneity do not change during the campaign. I believe they are insufficient to directly explain any short-term alternations in the proportion of references to economic interests versus values. The contribution of the article lies in theoretically linking the social context and the rise of emotional tension in course of an electoral campaign (Waismel-Manor et al. 2011) with the short-term change of salience of issues associated with economic interests and social values as well as demonstrating the actual existence of this relationship.

The paper proceeds as follows: first I present the bases of the assumption of the elevation of emotional tension in course of electoral campaigns and link mental predispositions arising with it with premises for party issue emphasis strategy. Then I build the argument about how these premises are related to social context and formulate the hypotheses regarding the conditions under which parties should be inclined to talk about certain issues more at the end of the campaign. Next I describe the data used and controls. The data analysis follows. The final part of the article concludes and discusses the results in the context of the recent economic crisis.

Emotions in Electoral Campaigns

During a relatively short time of an electoral campaign the context characteristics such as the general economic situation or social cleavages within the society usually do not change dramatically, so they cannot directly explain the alternation of party strategy. However, Waismel-Manor et al. (2011) in a study involving measuring the level of cortisol among voters on the election day demonstrate that there is a significant rise of emotional tension in the course of a campaign.

Cortisol has profound consequences for attitude formation and decision-making: it strengthens memory connected with emotions and the propensity to emotional arguments (Kuhlmann & Wolf 2006; Payne et al. 2006; see also Zajonc 1980; Erdley & D'Agostino 1988). When the emotional tension is elevated close to the election day, voters' cognitive abilities are impaired and therefore they will rely on heuristics to a greater extent in their decision-making. This implies that appeals to issues associated with emotions and issues that are cognitively

accessible and strongly related to voters' living conditions should be made closer to the election day, when the emotional stress has been already elevated.

Linking Emotions to Issue Dimensions

Having established the significance of the rise of emotional tension for voter's cognitive capacities, I proceed to linking these prerequisites to the two dimensions of policy issues: interests and values. The question is which of them parties should emphasise more to take advantage of the elevated emotional tension among voters and their tendency to rely on heuristics.

The choice to distinguish these two particular dimensions believed to encompass all the domains of domestic policy follows the approach enrooted well in political science. Since Downs' (1957) seminal book economic postulates have been considered the underpinning of how parties differentiate themselves from others. They encompass the issues of social protectionism, welfare state expansion and protectionism. The political competition in many countries in the late twentieth century relied also on social issues that cannot be linked to economy, such as cultural identity and law and order, regulations associated with family life and sexual morality as well as national and minority rights. They make up the 'values' or 'social' dimension (Kitschelt 1994; Laver & Hunt 1992; Evans & de Graaf 2013).

The very nature of the issues constituting the values dimension suggests that this is the one that ought to be emphasized more when the emotional tension is elevated. Matters of national, ethnic or sexual identity are built into individual conscience during early childhood as a part of primary socialisation and are strong and durable. Social norms, habits and cognitive schemes derived from culture and religion and imprinted at this stage influence one's vision of self and individual lifestyle. These matters are principled in nature and therefore are not subject to negotiation or alteration (Domke et al. 1998; Shah et al. 1996; see also Coser 1964). Trading principles is considered treason, it is not easy to compromise on these matters (Riker 1982). Parties who change their positions on principled matters are punished by voters (Tavits 2007). Because issues related to social values are entrenched in the individual and group identity, they are also easier to politicise (Tavits & Potter 2015: 745) and more accessible when cognitive capacities are impaired due to emotional tension.

These considerations establish a link between value-based political issues and the elevated emotional tension at the end of an electoral campaign and lead to expecting a rise of relative salience of this dimension as the election day approaches. Also the final stage of the campaign is when less politically engaged and less knowledgeable citizens join in and make their elective decisions. They are more likely to rely on heuristics in their decision-making which leads to relying on value-related cues. The less politically sophisticated are also the ones who are less likely to make their decisions basing on the economic factors in general due to their complexity (Basinger & Lavine 2005). This leads to formulating hypothesis H1:

H1: As the election day approaches parties tend to move away from economic interests and turn to issues related to social values instead.

Social and economic conditions and important events contribute both to objective significance and cognitive accessibility of issues associated with them (Aldrich & Griffin 2003: 247; van der Brug & Berkhout 2015; Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2015: 749) so parties devote more attention to them during campaigns (Ansolabehere & Iyengar 1994; Spoon & Klüver 2015) and in their manifestoes (Tavits & Potter 2015). The argument about elevated emotional tension and greater tendency to rely on heuristics at the end of the campaign suggests that the cognitive accessibility generated by contemporary circumstances should be even more influential close to the election day and in regard to less politically knowledgeable voters who join later during the campaign. Thus parties ought to shift towards emphasising issues related to the contemporary context more at the end of the campaign.

Social heterogeneity contributes to greater salience and accessibility of issues associated with the social values dimension. People of different cultural backgrounds who use different languages, profess different religions and follow varying traditions and customs in their everyday life have a greater potential to find themselves in a conflicting situations when living in one country and vary in regard to their political attitudes. The diversity they experience in everyday like contributes to the salience of values for voting decisions. This leads to formulating hypothesis H2:

H2: The tendency to shift party appeals during a campaign from interests to values will be particularly pronounced in countries with high social heterogeneity.

Poverty, alienation and inequality contribute to discontent and political unrest and have been identified as the one of the principle factors driving voting behaviour, political change (Ost 2004; Finseraas 2009; Garand 2010: 1113) and party system polarisation (Pontusson & Rueda 2006; Garand 2010; Tavits & Potter 2015). As the inequality rises the living conditions of the median voter deteriorate leading to greater support of redistributive policies (Meltzer & Richard 1981; Kenworthy & Pontusson 2005; Milanovic 2000). High income inequality also contradicts one of the crucial components of the democratic ideal: the equality of citizens. When people significantly differ in the resources they own, they become unequal in the political domain (Scervini & Segatti 2012; Castillo et al. 2015; Cicatiello et al. 2015). Comparing one's situation with fellow citizens leads to calling for a change and contributes to the salience of economic issues and demand for redistribution (Powell & Whitten 1993; Anderson 2000; Alesina & Rodrik 1994).

The contradiction between inequality and democracy suggest the gap between pragmatic economic interests and principled value-related issues might be not as ample as it seems. Mass poverty and social degradation touches upon the very base of material preservation and individual lifestyle. In extreme cases it endangers one's existence in a capitalist society. Thus high or rising inequality will link emotions to economic issues. As a result vote-seeking parties will be motivated to focus more on the interest dimension at the end of the campaign when the emotional tension is elevated. My argument here does not differentiate whether the inequality is high or it is the rise of the latter that contributes to the cognitive availability of the issues related to the interest dimension. Both should have similar consequences for individual attitudes and party strategy.

These considerations lead to formulation of hypothesis H3:

H3: In times of elevated or rising income inequality parties are expected to shift their appeals towards greater focus on interests at the end of the campaign.

Summing up, the campaign commences with parties presenting their propositions both in regard to interests and values dimension. As the campaign proceeds and the emotional tension rises and voters are more dependent on cognitive accessibility of issues and heuristics, parties switch their focus towards the issues that are more accessible and can be easily associated with emotions. I expect a general tendency to move towards their greater prevalence at the end of the campaign (H1). This tendency ought to be particularly pronounced when cultural divides are

present in the society (H2). However, when the country experiences high or rising levels of inequality, parties will shift towards more emphasis put on economic issues as the election day draws closer (H3).

Data and Methods

The data used to conduct the empirical analysis was gathered as a part of the ‘Where Is My Party? Determinants of Voter Agreement about the Ideological Positions of Political Parties’ project funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). The original data on party behaviour during electoral campaigns was appended with information about competing parties, countries and elections ([Comparative Campaign Dynamics Project](#); [Debus et al. 2016](#)). The CCDP data was collected basing on a comprehensive coding of the content of press articles released in the last month before the elections in 10 European countries: Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In each of the countries data on two elections was gathered, except for the UK, where three elections were included. In each country one right-leaning and one left-leaning daily newspaper was selected. The information on elections and newspaper titles is gathered in Table 1.

Table 1. Daily newspapers and election years included in the study

Country	Daily newspapers		Election years		
Czech Republic	Mladá fronta Dnes	Právo	2010	2013	
Denmark	Jyllands-Posten	Politiken	2007	2011	
Germany	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung	Süddeutsche Zeitung	2009	2013	
Hungary	Magyar Nemzet	Népszabadság	2006	2010	
The Netherlands	De Telegraaf	de Volkskrant	2010	2012	
Poland	Gazeta Wyborcza	Rzeczpospolita	2007	2011	
Portugal	Jornal de Notícias	Público	2009	2011	
Spain	El Mundo	El País	2008	2011	
Sweden	Aftonbladet	Dagens Nyheter	2010	2014	
United Kingdom	The Guardian	The Daily Telegraph	2005	2010	2015

Source: Baumann and Gross (2016: 7).

For each newspaper during every included electoral campaign at least 60 articles were coded, which makes at least 240 articles included in the study in each of the countries. All first page articles related to the campaign were coded along with a random sample of articles from further pages. The press articles were coded in regard to their policy-related and valence content in party campaign messages. Coding rules and original data structure have been described by Baumann and Gross (2016).

Main Dependent and Independent Variables

In order to perform the presented analysis of issue dynamics the data on all of the campaign content were aggregated into country-election-party-day units. For each unit I calculated the indicators of salience of interests and values by counting the number of references to issues included in those dimensions. See Table 2 for details.

Table 2. Issue domains included in analysed issue dimensions

Interest dimension	Values dimension
Taxes	Environment
Social Policy/Public Services	Immigration, Asylum
Inflation	Justice System
Unemployment	Law and Order, Security, Terrorism
Other Economic Performance	National Way of Life
Agriculture/Rural Affairs	Traditional Morality, Family Values, Religion

Based on Tavits and Letki (2014) and Baumann and Gross (2016: 7).

Then for each of the units I calculated the percentage of value-related messages in relation to the sum of all interest and value-related messages on that day produced by a given party (expressed as a fraction on a scale from 0 to 1). The aggregation was done separately for self-references and discussions of other parties’ positions. Created datasets were combined, with a total N = 2422. The main dependent variable is therefore the *proportion of value-related messages versus interest-related messages on a given campaign day, separately for self-references and references to others*. These observations are clustered by party making the references and country*election year. The main dependent variable should be interpreted as the total relative emphasis parties give to issues included in the values dimension.

The absolute number of references to all issues was also included in the analysis to control the overall intensity of competition based on emphasising interests and values in the course of the campaign as well as the number of references to valence party characteristics such as party competence, integrity, unity and leader charisma (Clark 2009: 113).

The main explanatory variable captures the *additive inverse (negation) of the number of days until the election*. It varies from -30 to 0 and is labelled as ‘Time’. It should be interpreted as ‘counting down’ the days until the election.

In order to measure the social heterogeneity in the investigated countries I utilise the index of ethnic fractionalisation. It has been found useful in studies of issue competition (Tavits & Letki 2014; Tavits & Potter 2015: 748) as well as in research on the consequences of electoral

laws to represent cultural cleavages (see Amorim Neto & Cox 1997). The data were taken from Quality of Government dataset (Teorell et al. 2017) and were gathered by Alesina et al. (2003).¹

The post-tax Gini index values in the year preceding each election were retrieved from SWIID 5.1 (Solt 2016). In order to grasp the change in the level of inequality I calculated the difference between the level of inequality in the year preceding the election and 5 years before the election. The 4-year span represents the most common length of a parliamentary cadence – a period taken into consideration when making voting decisions. I also follow Finseraas (2009: 96, 101) and utilize the post-tax values of the Gini indicator as they are better to reflect the economic situation of the society than the gross values used in the study by Tavits and Potter (2015: 749). The argument build in the theoretical section of the article does not differentiate between the consequences of the inequality and its growth for party campaigning strategies, therefore I use both indicators.

Controls

First, to ensure that the detected statistical effects are not due to differences in the intensity of the campaign I control for the *total number of references to interests and values* and the *number of valence mentions* made on a given election day (in a given country during a given election). I control for these two factors as they may be related to the rise of emotional tension and voters' propensity to rely on heuristics when making their voting decisions. At this level I also introduce the 'Self' variable which is a dummy denoting if the reference was made to the party making it (code '1') or another political actor (code '0').

At the level of political actors I take into account if the party belongs to the right side of the ideological spectrum. Studies by Spoon and Klüver (2014) and Tavits and Potter (2015) demonstrated that programmatic strategies of rightist parties in regard to interests and values dimension are distinct from others as they are both more responsive to shifts and public opinion and tend to draw away public attention from the economic issues which they are disadvantaged on in times of high inequality (see also Adams et al. 2009). *Rightist parties* were coded as '1' basing on the assignment to liberal, Christian Democratic, conservative or nationalist party

¹ Other indicators of cultural divisions such as religiosity and percentage of foreign-born population (see Tavits & Potter 2015: 748) cannot be used for the studied set of countries, because their distributions includes significant outliers such as the case of Poland with very high religiosity (52.7% attending religious services at least once a week according to EVS 1981-2008 dataset) and very low-foreign born population (1.75%; OECD 2017) in comparison to other countries in the sample.

families in Comparative Manifesto Project and all other parties – as ‘0’ (Tavits & Potter 2015: 749; Volkens et al. 2017).

Moving to party system level controls it is important to note a widely held expectation derived from the works of Downs (1957) and Sartori (1976) that parties in two-party systems are expected to focus on a single economic dimension and multiparty constellations allow for more issues to emerge. Thus I included an indicator of *party system fragmentation* (the **Effective Number of Electoral Parties**; Laakso & Taagepera 1979) in the analysis. The ENEP data were taken from the Comparative Political Data Set (Armingeon et al. 2016) and supplemented with my own calculations. Also when testing hypotheses associated to the indicators of inequality I control for the *level of development* represented by logged GDP per capita (World Bank 2016).

All models have been estimated with a three-level random intercept linear regression with subject*days (N1=2422) nested within parties (N2=147) nested within country*elections (N3=21), using xtmixed command in Stata 12.

Results

Models 1 and 2 (Table 3) were estimated to test the hypothesis H1 expecting a general tendency for parties to focus on values more as the election day approaches. Model 1 includes only level-1 and level-2 controls and Model 2 is expanded by adding covariates representing social heterogeneity as well as the level of inequality and logged GDP per capita.

Both models lead to same conclusion regardless of the inclusion of level-3 controls. Hypothesis H1 is rejected and the data exhibit a weak tendency for the parties to emphasise issues related to economy more as the election day approaches (significant at $p < 0.1$). However this tendency is dependent exclusively on the inclusion of Poland in the studied sample. If Poland is excluded from the analysis, the detected dependency is no longer statistically significant.

Table 3. Salience of value-related issues in party campaigning

Dependent variable: Relative salience of values	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Time	-0.00183* (0.000952)	-0.00179* (0.000951)	-0.00278* (0.00163)
Ethnic fractionalisation (scale 0-1)		0.535** (0.215)	0.610** (0.237)
Time*Ethnic fractionalisation (scale 0-1)			0.00611 (0.00817)
Gini (scale 0-100)		-0.0139 (0.00956)	-0.0137 (0.00958)
Logged GDP per capita		0.205** (0.0868)	0.205** (0.0870)
Self	0.0163 (0.0174)	0.0171 (0.0174)	0.0172 (0.0174)
Total salience of issues	-0.0119*** (0.00359)	0.0121*** (0.00359)	0.0122*** (0.00359)
Salience of palence	-0.00142 (0.00284)	-0.00108 (0.00285)	-0.00110 (0.00285)
Rightist party	0.0631** (0.0284)	0.0570** (0.0284)	0.0574** (0.0284)
ENEP	-0.0203 (0.0204)	0.0679*** (0.0262)	0.0678*** (0.0262)
Constant	0.405*** (0.102)	-1.182 (0.895)	-1.200 (0.897)
lns1_1_1	-2.144*** (0.200)	-2.446*** (0.240)	-2.444*** (0.240)
lns2_1_1	-2.130*** (0.124)	-2.136*** (0.123)	-2.133*** (0.123)
lnsig_e	-1.015*** (0.0149)	-1.014*** (0.0149)	-1.015*** (0.0149)
Observations	2,422	2,422	2,422
Number of parties	147	147	147
Number of groups	21	21	21

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 Standard errors in parentheses

Source: own elaboration.

After rejecting H1, H2 is reformulated to expect parties to shift towards greater emphasis of values as the election day approaches in socially heterogeneous countries. Model 3 (Table 3) does not allow to confirm this. The conditional effects of Time depending on the levels of ethnic fractionalisation are insignificant throughout the whole empirical range of the moderating variable except for those between 0.07 and 0.15 that indicate a very slight shift towards a greater salience of interest when ethnic fractionalisation is low (significant at p<0.05). These margins however fail to remain significant after performing robustness tests such as reducing the sample size by deleting some level-3 cases. Thus H2 ought to be rejected.

I proceed to testing the hypothesis H3 expecting a rise of salience of economic issues during a campaign in countries with high or augmenting inequality. Model 4 tests this expectation in regard to the level of post-tax Gini while Model 5 utilises the 4-year change of the latter while controlling for the level of inequality (Table 4).

Table 4. Salience of value-related issues in party campaigning – moderating effects of inequality

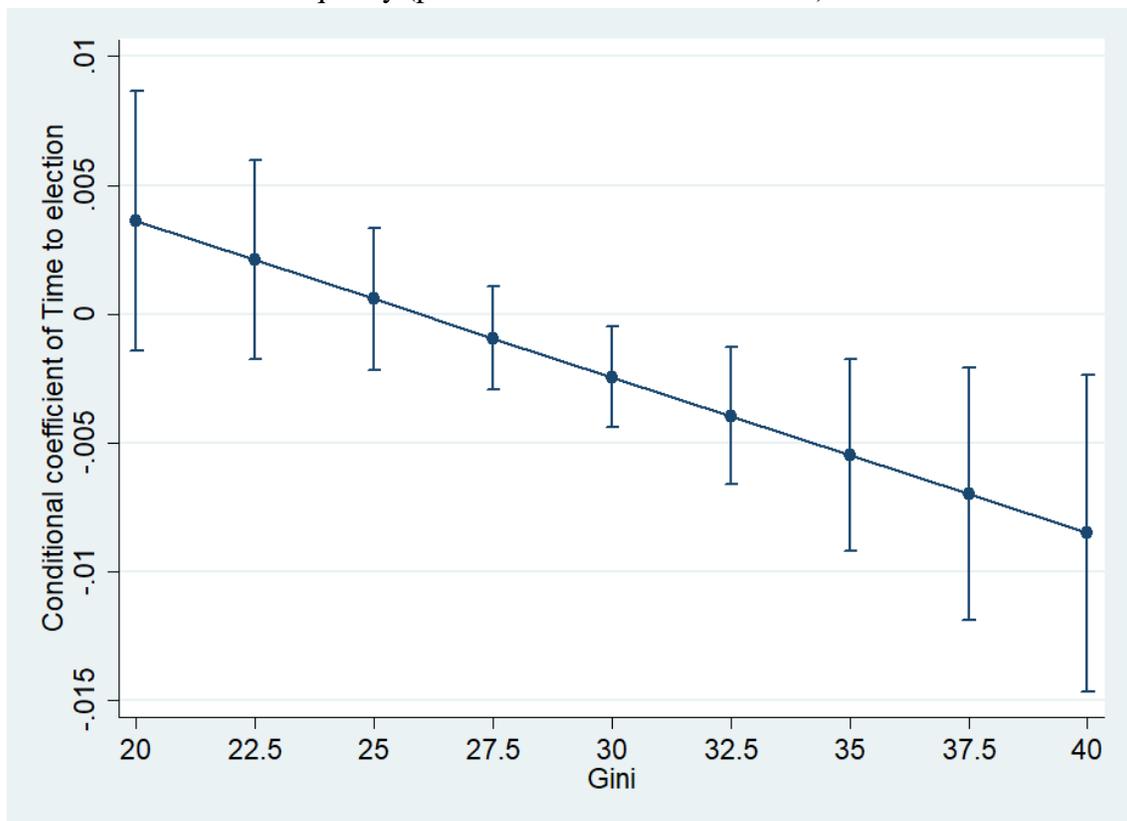
Dependent variable: Relative salience of values	Model 4	Model 5
Time	0.0157** (0.00785)	-0.00154 (0.000948)
Gini (scale 0-100)	-0.0213** (0.00997)	-0.0108 (0.00938)
Time*Gini (scale 0-100)	-0.000606** (0.000270)	
Change of Gini		-0.00244 (0.0167)
Time*Change of Gini		-0.00311*** (0.000699)
Ethnicfractionalisation (scale 0-1)	0.512** (0.212)	0.512** (0.202)
GDP growth		
Logged GDP per capita	0.200** (0.0857)	0.230*** (0.0812)
Self	0.0195 (0.0174)	0.0181 (0.0173)
Total salience of issues	-0.0124*** (0.00359)	-0.0116*** (0.00357)
Salience of palence	-0.000754 (0.00285)	-0.000202 (0.00284)
Rightist party	0.0564** (0.0282)	0.0530* (0.0282)
ENEP	-0.0671*** (0.0258)	-0.0579** (0.0251)
Constant	-0.917 (0.891)	-1.579* (0.844)
lns1_1_1	-2.465*** (0.243)	-2.552*** (0.254)
lns2_1_1	-2.143*** (0.124)	-2.145*** (0.123)
lnsig_e	-1.015*** (0.0149)	-1.019*** (0.0149)
Observations	2,422	2,422
Number of parties	147	147
Number of groups	21	21

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 Standard errors in parentheses

Source: own elaboration.

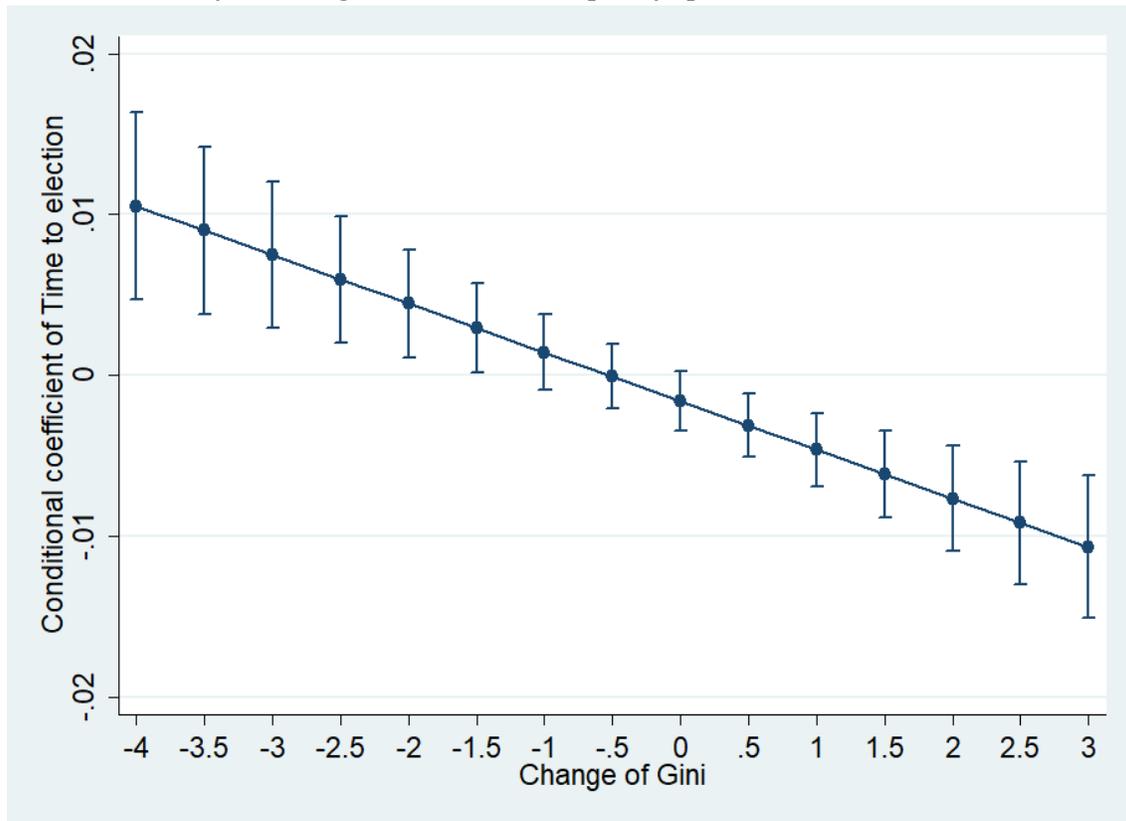
Both models indicate the existence of a strong moderating effect of inequality. The interaction term Time*Gini in Model 4 is significant at $p < 0.05$ and Time*Change of Gini in Model 5 at $p < 0.001$ indicating that in each case a unit change of Gini index (Model 4) or Gini Change (Model 5) results in a respective statistically significant change of the conditional effect of Time (Figures 1 and 2). A shift towards greater salience of economic issues during the campaign occurs when Gini is at least 30 on scale 0-100 (coefficient for Time negative and significant at $p < 0.05$). The change of inequality exerts an even more pronounced effect. A rise of the Gini index of at least 0.5 enables a shift towards greater salience of interests during the campaign (marginal effect of Time at this value is negative and significant at $p < 0.005$). Moreover, when inequality decreases by at least -1.5, parties tend to shift towards more emphasis put on the values dimension instead of interests as the election day draws closer – the relevant effect is negative and significant at $p < 0.05$. These results confirm hypothesis H3. The detected statistical relationships are robust to inclusion of different sets of control variables and are invariant of deletion of level-3 observations. The exhibited dynamics described in hypothesis H3 does not differ significantly between rightist and other parties.

Figure 1. Effect of time to election day on relative salience of value references to interests, conditional on economic inequality (post-tax Gini index scale 0-100).



Source: own elaboration.

Figure 2. Effect of time to election day on relative salience of value references to interests, conditional on the 4-year change of economic inequality (post-tax Gini index scale 0-100).



Source: own elaboration.

Further Exploration of the Conditionality of the Dynamics

What might be found puzzling about the results presented so far is the lack of dynamics towards a greater prominence of value-related appeals even in heterogeneous societies despite the strong theoretical arguments behind it. On the other hand it has been found that decreasing inequality enables parties to move their focus away from interests and towards greater prominence of value-related issues at the end of the campaign. This leads to a question whether the rise of salience of value-related appeals at the end of the campaign can be found in heterogeneous societies after the moderating effect of inequality is accounted for, i.e. when the inequalities are not an important problem? I consider this expectation as an supplementary hypothesis H4:

H4: Parties tend to shift towards greater salience of values as the election draws closer in countries with high social heterogeneity only when inequality is low or decreasing.

Table 5. Salience of value-related issues in party campaigning – further exploration

Dependent variable: Relative salience of values	Model 6	Model 7
Time	-0.0206 (0.0132)	-0.00276* (0.00163)
Gini (scale 0-100)	-0.0225* (0.0120)	-0.00544 (0.0103)
Time*Gini (scale 0-100)	0.000570 (0.000455)	
Change of Gini		0.0509* (0.0267)
Time*Change of Gini		0.000393 (0.00115)
Ethnicfractionalisation (scale 0-1)	-1.530 (2.496)	0.498** (0.224)
Time*Ethnicfractionalisation (scale 0-1)	0.261*** (0.0722)	0.00713 (0.00816)
Change of Gini*Ethnic fractionalisation (scale 0-1)		-0.332** (0.135)
Time*Change of Gini*Ethnic fractionalisation (scale 0-1)		-0.0185*** (0.00476)
Gini (scale 0-100)*Ethnic fractionalisation (scale 0-1)	0.0713 (0.0828)	
Time*Gini (scale 0-100)*Ethnic fractionalisation (scale 0-1)	0.00834*** (0.00240)	
Logged GDP per capita	0.0508 (0.104)	0.211*** (0.0790)
Self	0.0208 (0.0173)	0.0186 (0.0173)
Total salience of issues	-0.0125*** (0.00358)	-0.0115*** (0.00357)
Salience of palence	-0.000482 (0.00284)	4.73e-05 (0.00284)
Rightist party	0.0567** (0.0281)	0.0483* (0.0279)
ENEP	-0.0194 (0.0325)	-0.0514** (0.0250)
Constant	0.442 (1.155)	-1.554* (0.835)
lns1_1_1	-2.596*** (0.264)	-2.594*** (0.260)
lns2_1_1	-2.150*** (0.124)	-2.162*** (0.125)
lnsig_e		-1.021*** (0.0149)
Observations	2,422	2,422
Number of parties	147	147
Number of groups	21	21

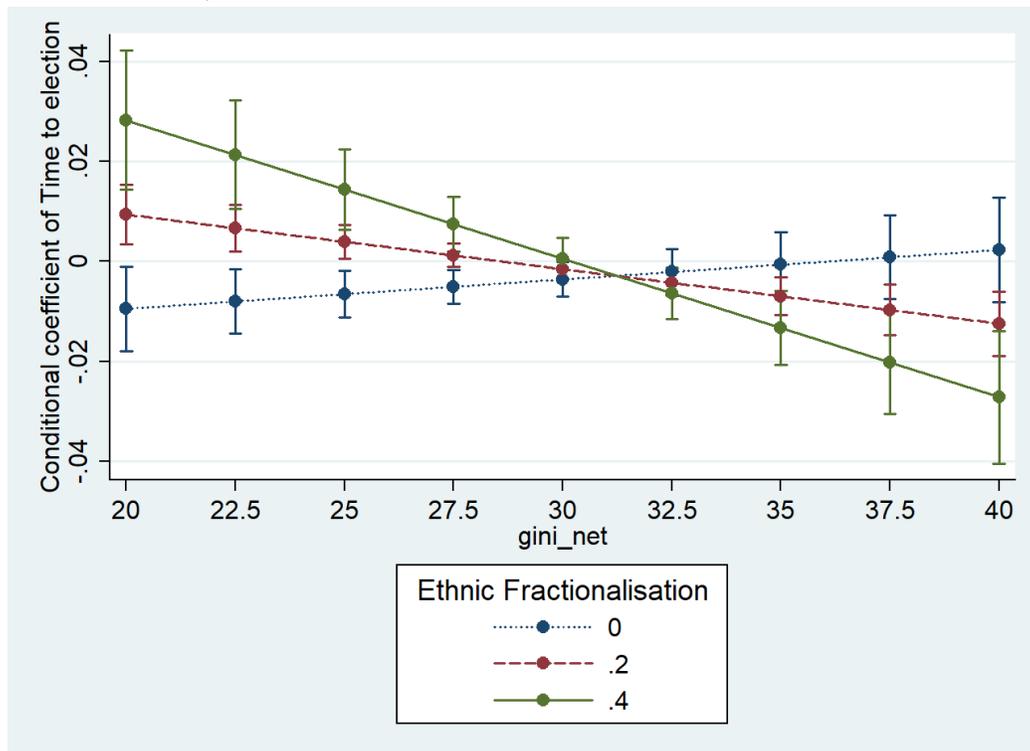
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 Standard errors in parentheses

Source: own elaboration.

Accounting for moderating effects of inequality requires using a three-way interaction and exploring the marginal effects of Time depending on both inequality and ethnic fractionalisation. Thus I estimate Models 6 and 7 to test H4 (Table 5) using the two indicators of inequality: the post-tax Gini index and Gini 4-year change respectively.

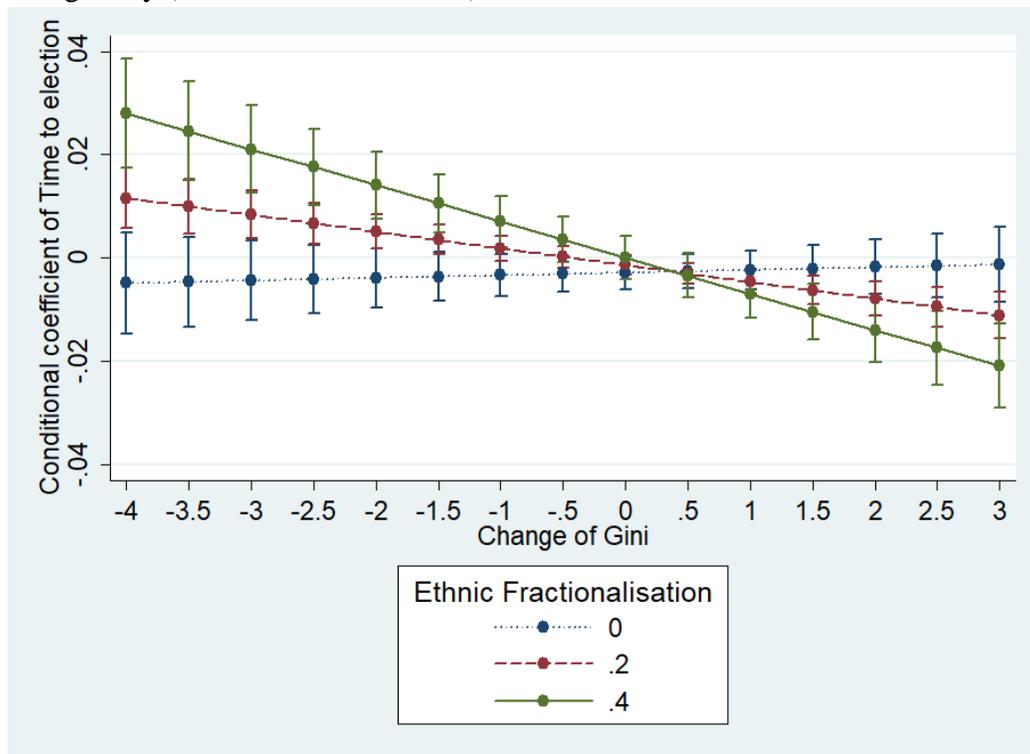
Because interpretation of the coefficients of a three-way interaction is anything but straightforward, I proceed to Figures 3 and 4 exhibiting the calculated marginal effects of Time depending on ethnic fractionalisation and Gini index levels and Gini change respectively. Figure 3 shows that when the inequality represented by Gini is below 25 (scale 0-100) and ethnic fractionalisation index equals at least 0.2 (scale 0-1), the conditional effect of Time is positive and the confidence intervals exclude zero which indicates a shift towards greater salience of values as the campaigns proceeds (Model 6). Similarly when Gini decreases by at least -2.5 (scale 0-100) and ethnic fractionalisation is at least 0.2, the predicted margins are positive, confidence intervals exclude 0 and are disjunctive from the ones estimated for a perfectly homogenous society inequality (Model 7 and Figure 4). These results provide some evidence supporting the claim expressed in H4.

Figure 3. Effect of time to election day on relative salience of value references to interests, conditional on economic inequality (post-tax Gini index scale 0-100) and social heterogeneity (ethnic fractionalisation).



Source: own elaboration.

Figure 4. Effect of time to election day on relative salience of value references to interests, conditional on the 4-year change of economic inequality (post-tax Gini index scale 0-100) and social heterogeneity (ethnic fractionalisation).



Source: own elaboration.

Conclusion and Discussion

The article explores the relationship between social and economic context and programmatic dynamics of electoral campaigns in regard to economic issues versus those related to social values. Theoretical argument is built on an assumption of rising emotional tension as the election day approaches and leads the citizens to rely to a greater extent on emotional cues and heuristics in making their voting decisions. Thus parties are expected to adjust their strategies of issue emphasis to take advantage of this tendency by putting greater emphasising on cognitively accessible issues or the ones that can be easily linked to emotions. I argue that while in general these prerequisites are better met by the issues related to the values dimensions due to their non-negotiability and principled character, the decision which issues should be emphasised more at the end of the campaign depends on the context of the campaign, namely social heterogeneity and economic inequality.

The study shows that while there is no general tendency for parties to shift towards a greater prominence of value-related issues, changes of proportion between values and interests depend on inequality. In countries when the latter are high or rising parties tend to focus more on the economy at the end of the campaign than they do further away from the election day. There is no direct effect of social heterogeneity on the dynamics. However a careful scrutiny suggests that after taking into account the moderating effects of both inequality and ethnic fractionalisation a shift towards a greater relative salience of the values dimension occurs if economic inequality is low or decreasing and ethnic fractionalisation relatively high. This last result has to be taken with caution as it was obtained using data from only 21 elections in 10 European countries, so the sample is fairly limited for such a complex set of covariates and interactions.

The results exhibit the importance of economic inequality in determining party strategies. This should not be that surprising given the fact that the period when data were collected (2005-2015) encompasses the greatest economic crisis Europe experienced since the 1930s. It also suggest that while the obtained results exhibit tendencies valid in the recent European context and contribute to a better understanding of factors influencing short-term change of party competition strategies in contemporary democracies, they need to be taken with caution when generalising to other contexts. However uncovering these factors that have been already identified as influencing greatly party strategies in a long-term perspective have an impact on what's happening within a short pre-electoral period is not a surprising result, yet it provides an interesting insight to some patterns of political competition.

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