

Accountability in a Multi-level Governance Setting

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Preamble

- This is an on-going project, unfortunately less advanced than expected in last autumn.
- My apologies then for not circulating a paper.
- But comments and suggestions are more than welcome.

Introduction

- This project is about governmental accountability and economic voting.
- The main question we raise is about how to understand this in a context of “hollowing out” of the state, especially in Europe.
- The context of the “great economic crisis” and its implication in terms of European governance makes this questioning all the more relevant.

Economic voting

- Economic voting has led to the production of a very substantial literature.
- The main question it asks is whether governments are punished (or credited) for their country's economic performance under their ruling.
- The overall conclusion is that economic performance matters for chances of reelection, although the literature has been rather divided on:
 - Aggregate vs. individual levels perspectives;
 - Sociotropic vs. egotropic perspectives;
 - Backward looking or forward looking perspectives.

New debates in economic voting theory

- Currently, three new lines of research can be emphasized:
 - ① The problem of endogeneity
 - ② Economic voting vs. performance voting (retrospective voting)
 - ③ Clarity of responsibility, the main focus of this presentation.

Clarity of responsibility

- Clarity of responsibility is a concept proposed by Powell and Whitten (1993) so as to show that economic voting is conditioned by context.
- It has been widely discussed (see especially Whitten and Palmer 1999, Anderson 2000) and can in fact be divided into three subcategories (Hobolt et al. 2014, Hellwig 2014):
 - Institutional clarity: the extent to which power is concentrated in the executive's hands;
 - Governmental clarity: the extent to which the executive is cohesive;
 - Jurisdictional clarity (globalization for Hellwig): the extent to which states are challenged by other actors in shaping policies and outcomes.

Performance voting in non-sovereign states

- Results so far are mixed regarding the impact of globalization (Hellwig et al. 2007, 2008, 2014).
 - At the aggregate level, interaction between state of the economy and trade openness is significant (but interaction with capital flows is not).
 - At the individual level, results are mixed:
 - The interaction between economic situation and globalization is not significant in a pan-European comparative study based on EES 2009 (but interaction with clarity is);
 - The interaction between economic situation and “room for manoeuvre” is significant in France (1997) and Britain (2001);
 - Globalization significantly interacts with healthcare evaluations and immigration evaluation.
- The general interpretation proposed is that globalization generally decreases the role of the economy in retrospective evaluations and then shifts the focus on what remains more in control of national governments.

Aims

- We share the same interest of those paper to understand the impact of “globalization” on electoral accountability.
- Results so far have from our point of view several limits:
 - The argument about shifting salience across policy domains may be true but, if it were so, the interaction between globalization and economic performance should be significant in the 2009 EES study.
 - Estimation procedures are quite different from one study to the other, with sometimes contradictory results. Hobolt and al. 2013 and Hellwig 2014, with the same data, found very different results in terms of significance of clarity.
 - Europe and European integration is often considered as the main constrain on national government but is seldom considered in empirical studies of electoral accountability (see however Tilley and Hobolt 2014 for how EU institutions can themselves be made accountable).

Jurisdictional clarity in EES 2014: Data and methods

- To perform a first series of analyses, we use data from the voter study of the European Election Study 2014.
- It provides a dataset of 28 national samples of about 1000 respondents in each country of the European Union.
- We start with similar specifications as in Hellwig 2014 and Hobolt et al. 2014, modelling the conditional impact of perceived economic performance with mixed effects multilevel modelling.

Main variables

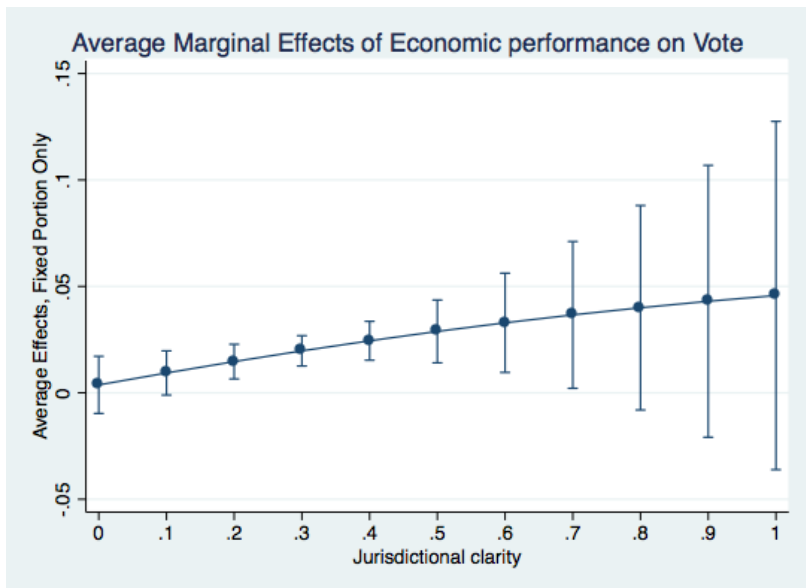
- Dependent variable: vote intention for one of the parties in government (or for PM party);
- Variables of interest:
 - At the individual level: evaluation of economic dynamics over the past 12 months (5 points scale)
 - At the aggregate level:
 - Governmental clarity, as in Hobolt (2014) (average of 4 indicators: coalition government; grand coalition; divided government; share of PM party in cabinet);
 - Globalization: KOF indicator;
 - Jurisdictional clarity (average of 4 indicators: member to EMU; trade openness; vote share in EU Council; public debt on GDP).
- Control variables, at the individual level, include sex, age, interest in politics, level of education, left right position and its squared form.

Results

Table : Multilevel logistic regression of incumbent vote

Individual level estimates						
	Retrospective economic evaluation	0,10 (0,01)***	,10 (.03)***	,02 (.02)	,02 (.03)	-,07 (.17)
Contextual level estimates						
	Institutional clarity		-,62 (1,57)			
	Governmental clarity			-,40 (1,33)		
	Jurisdictional clarity				,67 (2,53)	
	Globalization					,09 (.06)
Cross level interactions						
	Institutional clarity * econ eval.		,01 (.05)			
	Governmental clarity * econ eval.			,20 (.05)***		
	Jurisdictional clarity * econ eval.				,27 (.09)***	
	Globalization * econ eval.					,002 (.002)
	Constant	1,77(0,41)***				
	Var (Const)	3,67 (1,09)	3,67 (1,09)	3,61 (1,07)	3,66 (1,09)	3,36 (1,01)
Log likelihood		-8737,5	-8737,5	-8729,6	-8733,3	-8735,9
Wald chi2		618,7	618,7	628,7	623,7	622,1
N (individuals)		17027	17027	17027	17027	17027
N (groups)		29	29	29	29	29
Sources : EES 2014						
Control variables not shown.						

Marginal effects



Interpretation and limits

- Jurisdictional clarity, as governmental clarity is conditioning economic voting.
- The statistical power remains however (very) limited.
- This result is robust to various specifications in terms of control variables, but not to changes in the dependant variable, for instance if vote the the party of the incumbent PM is substituted to vote for the gouvernement.

Jurisdictional clarity between EU and national level

- The not so robust results from EES data may be due:
 - Too crude aggregate levels indicators;
 - The presence of only the economy as indicator of performance
- This is why we turn now to a second study consisting of Internet based samples in 7 EU countries (Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, see Sauger 2015).
- This study include needed indicators on perception of the economy, immigration, and climate change (11 point scales) and balance of power between national government and EU in these domains.

Variables

- Dependent variable: vote in the EU 2014 election;
- Variables of interest:
 - Assessment of change in unemployment, immigration, climate change (worse or better over the past 12 months)
 - Assessment of responsibility of decisions in these domains (national government fully responsible, EU fully responsible)
- Control variables include sex, age, age squared, marital status, household size, household income, education, occupation.

Results without interaction

Table: Multinomial logit estimates of vote choice in the EU2014 election

	Vote for opposition party						Vote for PM party					
	1a		2a		3a		1b		2b		3b	
Ideological distance	0,01	0,01	0,01	0,01	0,01	0,01	-0,08	0,13	-0,06	0,14	-0,07	0,14
Ideological distance ²	0,02	0,003 ***	0,02	0,002 ***	0,02	0,002 ***	-0,05	0,02 ***	-0,05	0,02 **	-0,05	0,02
Unemployment	-0,02	0,005 ***					0,14	0,03 ***				
Immigration			-0,01	0,006 **					0,09	0,02 ***		
Climate change					-0,02	0,01 **					0,08	0,02 ***
France (réf.)												
Germany	-0,53	0,07 ***	-0,57	0,07 ***	-0,56	0,07 ***	-0,29	0,14 **	-0,02	0,17	-0,05	0,18
Italy	0,08	0,03 **	0,07	0,03 **	0,1	0,04 ***	1,11	0,08 ***	1,16	0,08 ***	1,13	0,08 ***
Spain	-0,15	0,07 **	-0,18	0,07 ***	-0,16	0,07 **	-0,15	0,37	0,01	0,42	0,01	0,43
Austria	-0,33	0,02 ***	-0,34	0,03 ***	-0,34	0,03 ***	-0,56	0,06 ***	-0,57	0,07 ***	-0,56	0,07 ***
Greece	0,27	0,13 **	0,28	0,12 **	0,27	0,12 **	-0,16	0,42	-0,13	0,42	-0,19	0,44
Portugal	-0,89	0,05 ***	-0,92	0,05 ***	-0,94	0,05 ***	-0,31	0,27	-0,17	0,31	-0,23	0,33
N	14044		1407		14265							
R ²	8,8		8,4		8,1							

Reference : abstention or vote for party in government (not PM).

Control variables not shown.

E.S. corrected for cluster effects

* p < 0,1

** p < 0,05

*** p < 0,01

Results with interaction

Table: Multinomial logit estimates of vote choice in the EU2014 election

	Vote for opposition party		Vote for PM party			
	1b	2b	1b	2b		
Unemployment	-0,02	0,01	0,21	0,04	***	
National or EU responsibility	-0,01	0,01	0,04	0,02	***	
Unempl * Resp.	0	0,002	-0,01	0,002	***	
Immigration						0,13
National or EU responsibility		-0,01	0,02			0,04
Immigration * Resp.		-0,005	0,005			0,01
		0	0			-0,007
						0,002
N	13727	13894				
R ²	9	8,4				

Reference : abstention or vote for party in government (not PM).

Control variables not shown.

E.S. corrected for cluster effects

* p < 0,1

** p < 0,05

*** p < 0,01

Conclusion

- These are really provisional conclusions as this is still on-going research.
- Conclusions are mixed as we have shown that multilevel governance has an impact on the dynamics of electoral accountability.
- Yet, the impact is weak and not very robust to various specifications.
- The substantive interpretation of these results remains difficult beyond the observation of a dissociation between awareness of the complexification of public policies and the traditional way of blaming the government.