

REGIONAL UNEVENNESS, NATIONAL ELECTORAL SYSTEMS, AND THE "SURPRISING" ANTI-GLOBALIST SUCCESSES OF ANGLO-AMERICAN POPULISM



JASON SIMPSON SPICER, PHD CANDIDATE
MIT, DEPARTMENT OF URBAN STUDIES AND PLANNING (DUSP)
HOUSING, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP (HCED)

Populism's Return in Rich Democracies



Most Significant Wins: “Shocking” Successes in US, UK – Why Only Here?

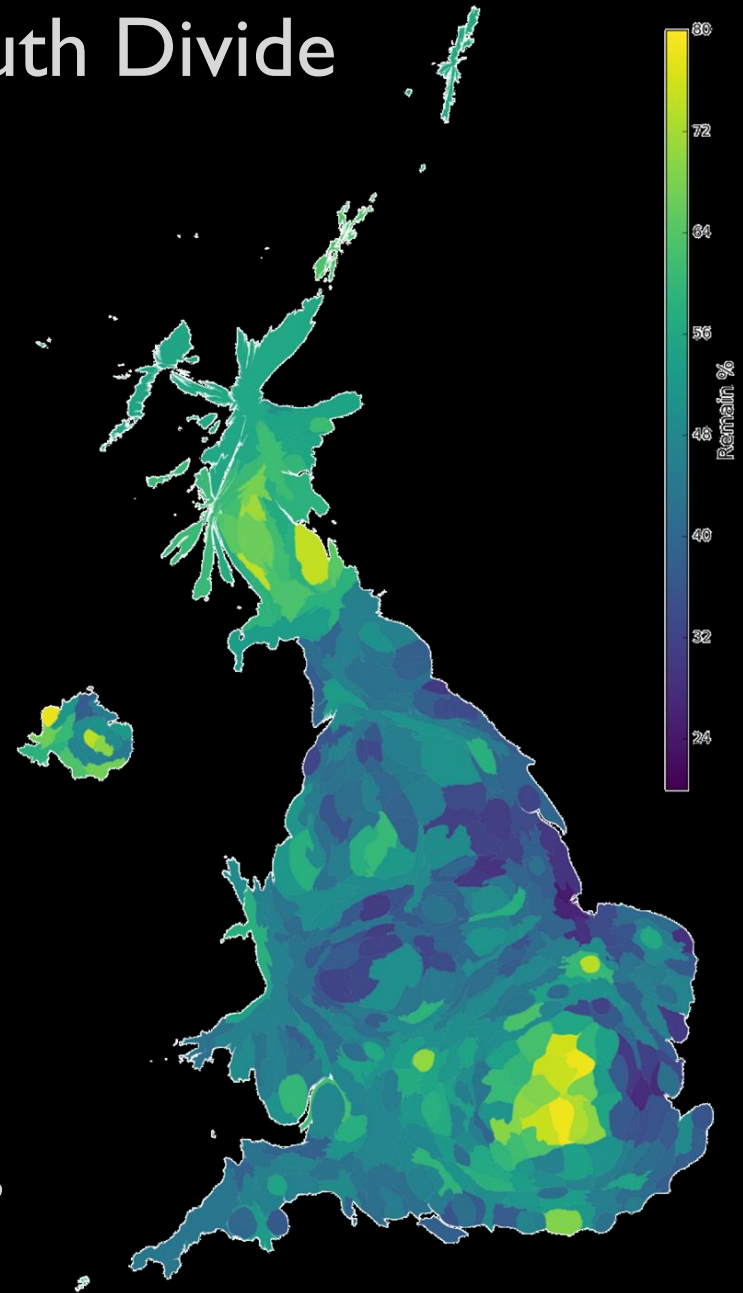


Popular Take on US/UK Popular Backlash – Regional?

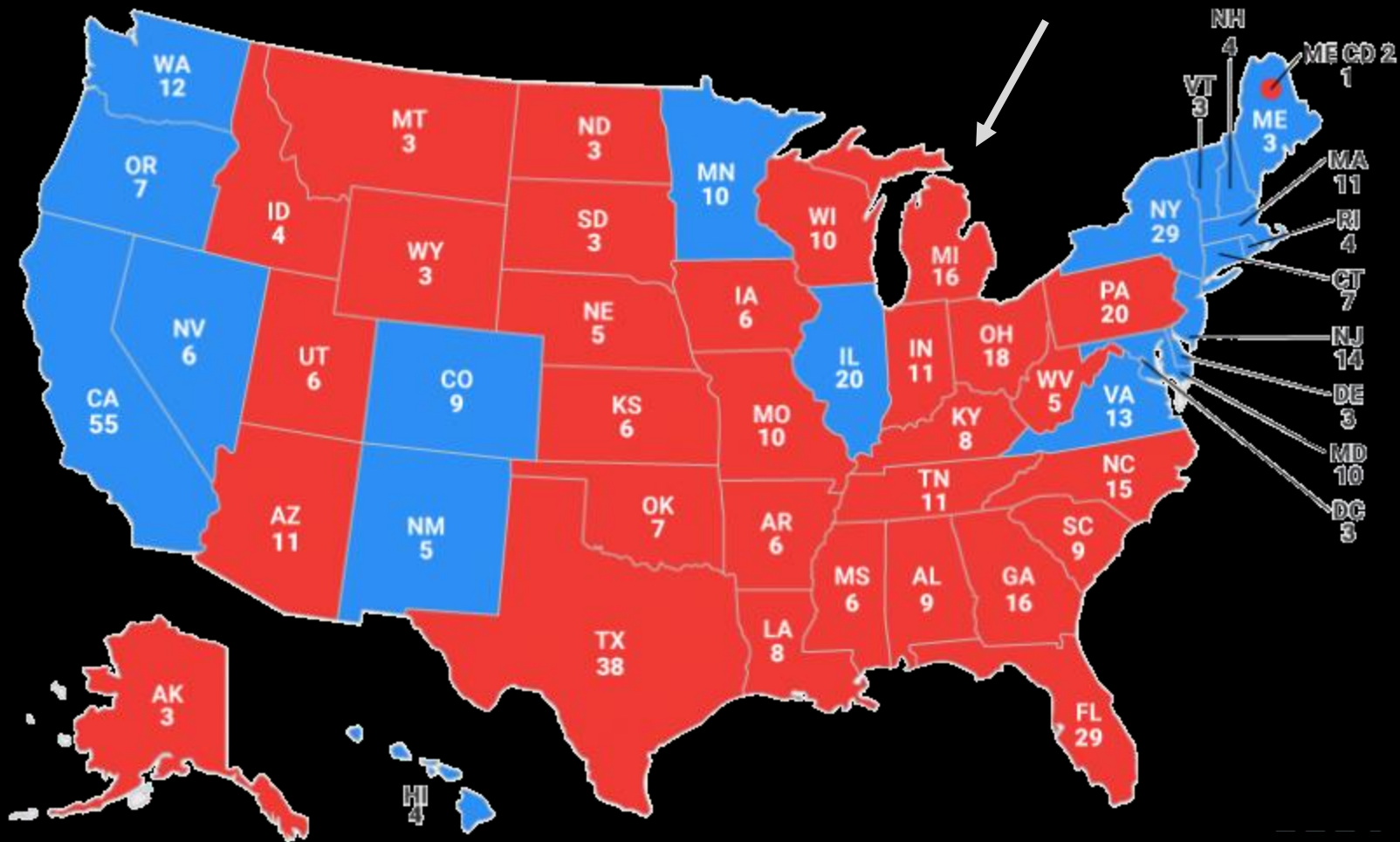
- Many, complex factors at work, no singular “smoking gun”.
- Popular, intuitive narrative: those in excluded regions “voted with middle finger” to elites to protest global integration.
- Some argue Brexit/Trump not about regions or electoral shift, but about age and education (Manley et al., 2017; Johnston et al., 2017).
- Endogeneity problem: the predictive voter characteristics nonetheless concentrated in certain regions, not random spatial distribution.

Brexit and the North-South Divide

- The North-South Divide (Martin, 1988, 2004).
- “Brexit is the consequence of the economic bargain struck in the early 1980s, whereby we waved goodbye to the security and certainties of the postwar settlement, and were given instead an economic model that has just about served the most populous parts of the country, while leaving too much of the rest to anxiously decline.” – John Harris, *The Guardian*, June 2016



Superstar* and Creative Class* Regions vs. “Midwest Math, or the Rust Belt Brexit” - Michael Moore, July 2016

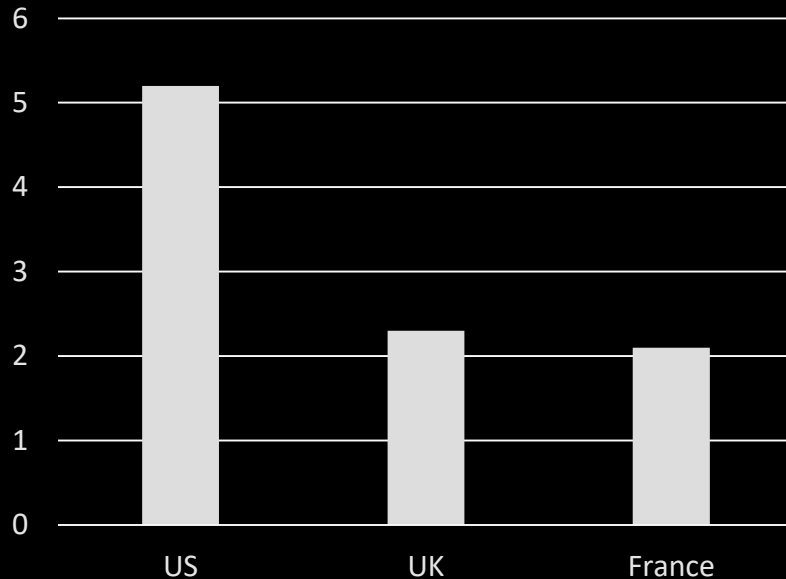


*Gyourko et al. 2006, Florida, 2003, Glaeser, 2010

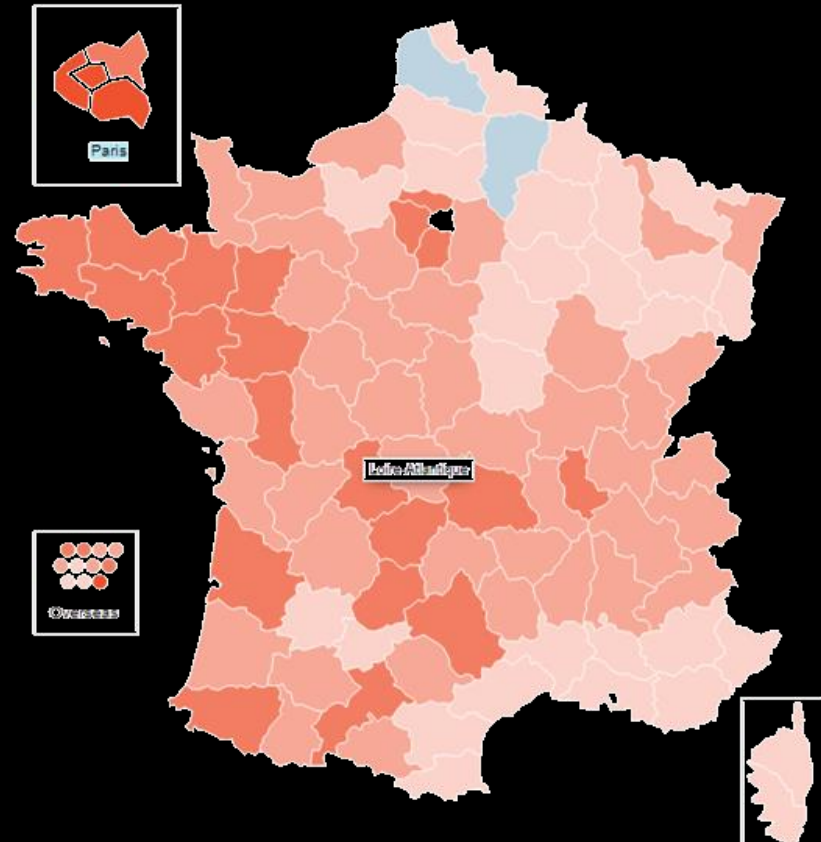
Also a Regional Backlash in France?

- Mme. Le Pen's support was strongest in the French "Rust Belt" near border.
- Similar regional variance pattern as US, UK, but insufficient to carry her to victory.

Regional Disparities - Ratio of
GDP per Capita, Richest/Poorest
Regions
(OECD TL2 - Piacentini, 2014)



Votes share by department



RESEARCH QUESTION

If populist parties are a *national electoral* backlash to globalisation, partly fueled by voters in excluded regions...

- Why greatest and surprising successes in US, UK national elections?
- Can regional theory and/or comparative political theory explain it?

“WORKING PRIOR”

- Need urban/regional + comparative politics framework
- Rarely considered together for technical and social reasons
 - Difficult to do empirically (small N, multi-level models)
 - Institutional silos
- Reflects reality of “traditional binary subfields aimed at the cross-national and urban scales” (Glasmeier, Martin et al., 2008)

Regional Theory: Divergence, “Different Worlds”

- “The Great Divergence” (Moretti, 2012)
- Regional specialisation under globalisation --> inter-regional income inequality (Storper et al., 2015; Kemeny and Storper, 2015).
- Policy prescriptions reflect various causal schools: Place (EG), People (RSUE), Institutions (ES)?
 - Divergence may be exacerbated by “space-neutral” policies, spatial rebalancing? (Martin et al., 2015, 2016). Place-aware/based policies?
 - Migration (Moretti, 2012; Glaeser, 2010; RSUE various). Labour is mobile. People-based policies? Mobility vouchers?
 - Build better-networked local institutions (Safford, 2009; Storper et al. 2015)?

- Place: Absent strong rebalancing, what do those in lower-income/middling regions dislocated by globalisation do? Move?
- People: What if they don't want to move (social and financial costs), or can't move?
- Institutions: What role can they play in rebuilding local institutions?

What other options do they have?

What's missing?

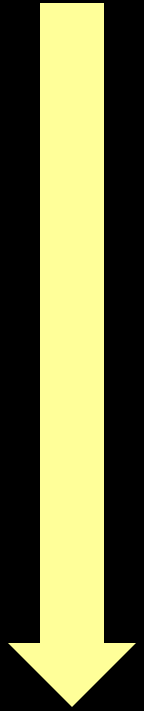
They can VOTE

How? Institutional Design of Electoral Systems
Matters for Expressing Regional Resentment



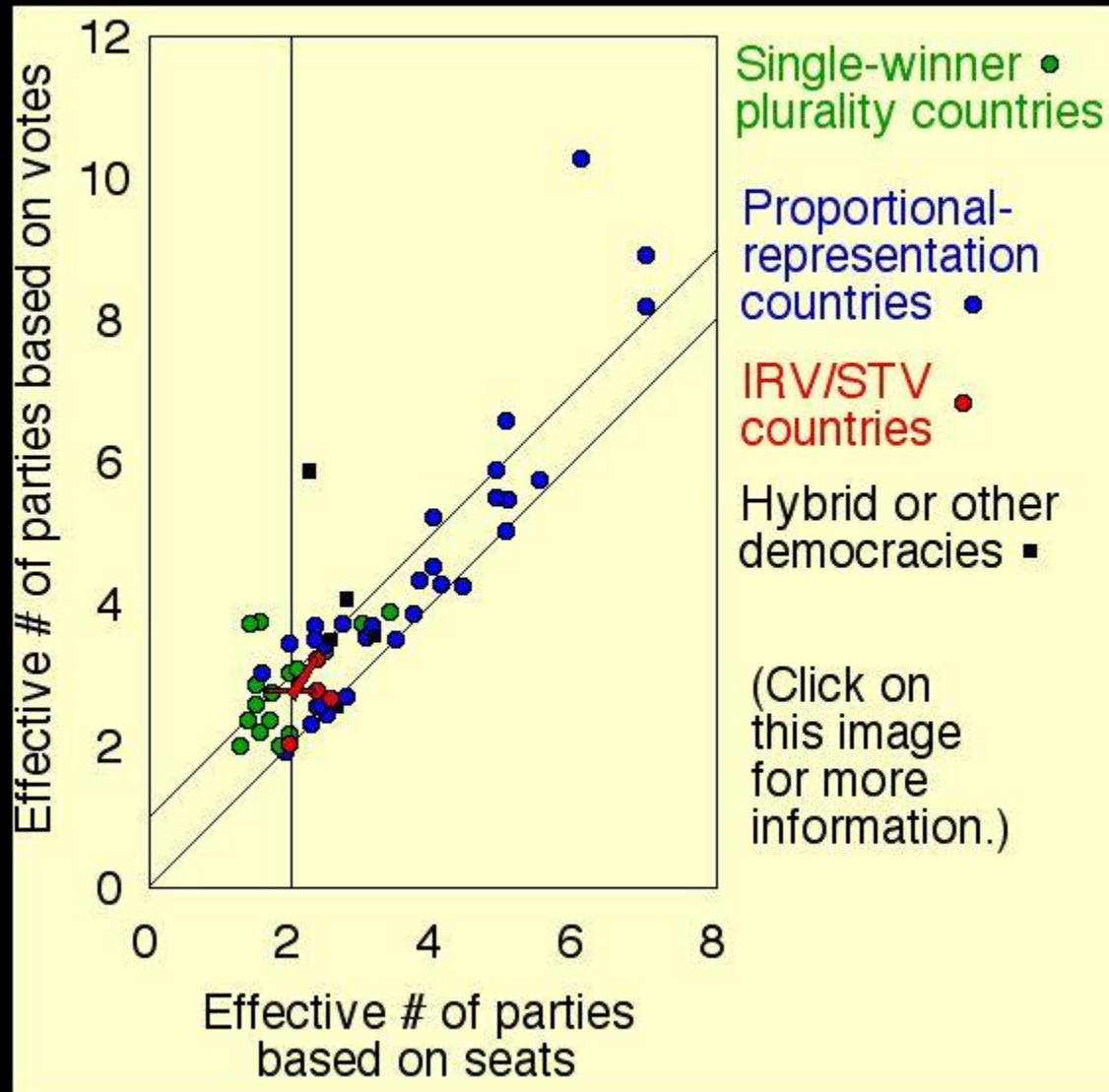
Spectrum of National Representation: Majoritarian (Winner Take All) to Proportional

- Single-Member Districts + First-Past-the-Post (US, UK, CA*)
- Single-Member + Two Rounds (FR)
- Multi-Member, Majoritarian....(CA*)
- Multi-Member, Ranked Choice (AUS), STV (IRL)
- Mixed Member Majoritarian (JAPAN)
- Mixed Member Proportional (NZ, GER)
- National Proportional Representation (Nordics, Benelux)



THE STYLIZED FACTS OF DUVERGER'S LAW

- Double-ballot, multi-member and proportional systems tend to favor multipartism (Duverger, 1972; T&S, 1989).
- Single-member, single-round, first-past-the-post (fptp) favor development of two-party system.
- Not an absolute/hard rule: fptp dynamics serve to slow a new political force, accelerate weakening one.
- Generally requires crisis for vote rules to change (viz. Continental Europe early 20th c. - Rodden, 2008).
- Two different worlds: Virtuous circle/vicious cycle?



**Winner-Take-All
rules**

**Existing
parties
make rules
to perpetuate
their power**

**Only one
winner
(loser gets
nothing)**

**How the
two-party
system
perpetuates
itself**

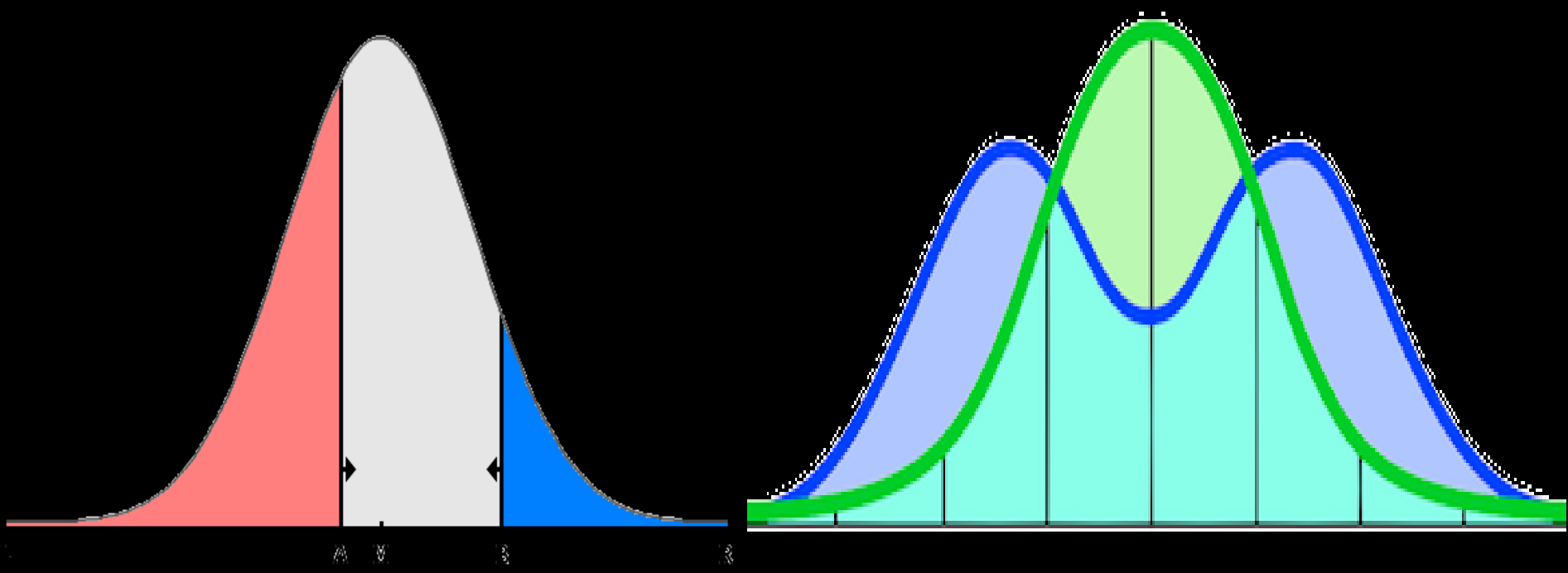
**Fewer parties
flourish**

**Strategic
voting and
the "wasted
vote" theory**

**Lack of voter
support discourages
formation
of minor
parties**

**Voters choose
not to support
parties that they
do not view
as viable**

MAJORITARIAN MEDIAN VOTERS AND POLARISATION FEEDBACK EFFECT



Duverger's Law: Consequences?

Different Worlds of Voting

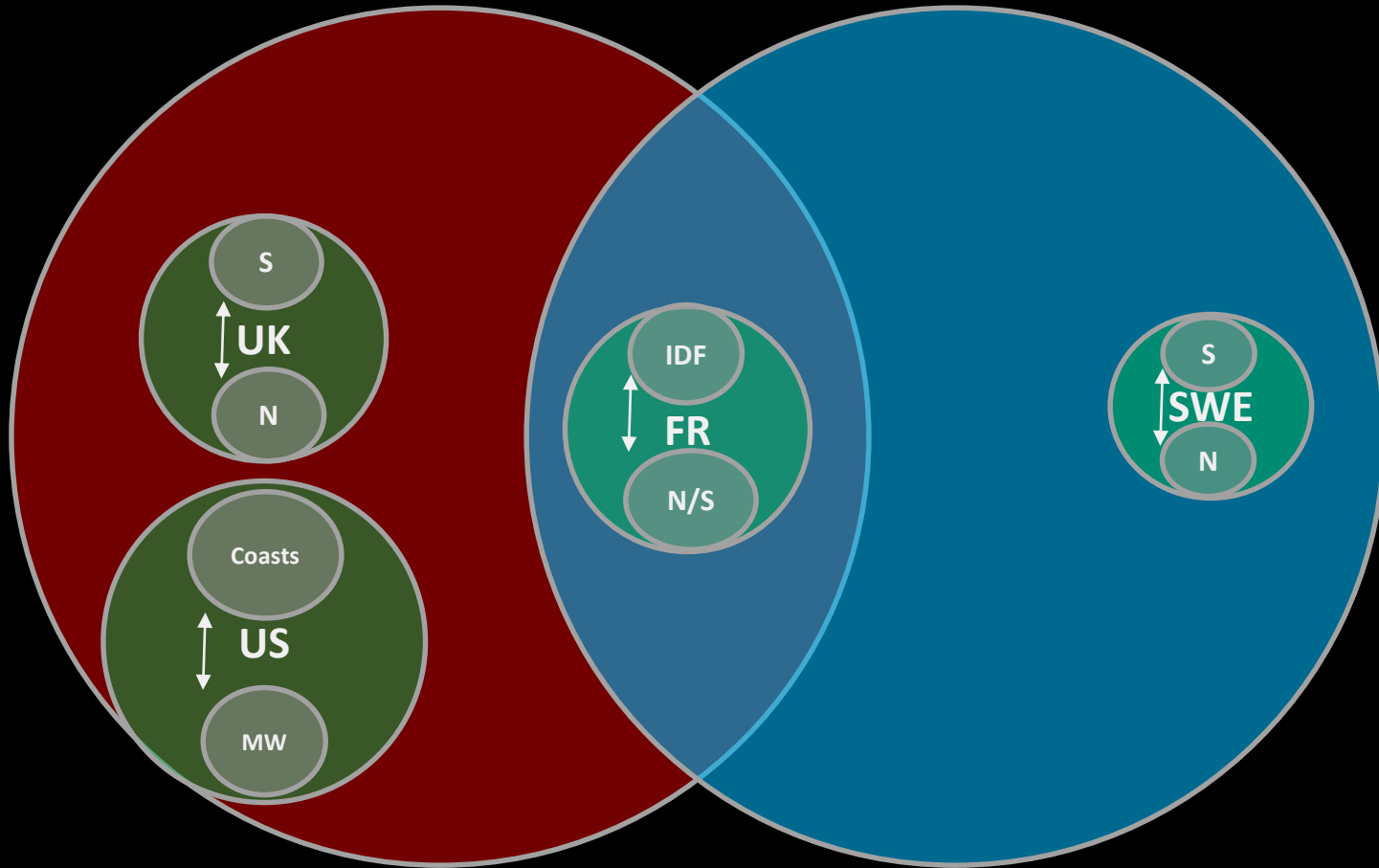
- Majoritarian systems tend to move towards two parties, which will fail to well-represent minority view points or unbundled interests, produce a polarised electorate, reduce turnout. (Duverger, 1972; Riker, 1982; Iversen and Soskice, 2006, Matakos et al., 2014)
- Proportional systems (PR) spend more on redistribution and transfers, due to different “median voter” and class coalition internal dynamics (Iversen and Soskice, 2006; Cusack, Iversen and Soskice, 2008).
- PR: Median voter can more readily realign to right, if leftist coalition moves too far in “soaking the rich” (ibid).
- City-Regional Economies? Space?

Central Argument – Synthesis

The dynamics of majoritarian systems exacerbate the national politics of regional resentment.

Schematic

Majoritarian → Hybrid → Proportional



Central Argument – In Detail

- A “by product” of globalization’s regional specialisation and integration has been greater inter-regional income inequality and economic divergence.
- Local “seat-specific” issues will be treated as “minority” unbundled interests, and be crowded out for lengthy periods of times in national parties under fptp. Paradox: under PR, such issues can achieve representation through spatially-diffuse voting for minor parties.
- Two-party system dynamics produced by majoritarian electoral systems thus seem less-responsive: impede the ability of voters to effectively express their voice and dissatisfaction with globalisation-associated regional inequality/dislocation.
- Majoritarian systems may, over time, thus cumulatively allow consequences of regional unevenness to remain under-voiced in, and less effectively addressed by, national politics. This may result in weak social or industrial policy responses to regional economies dislocated by globalization.
- Unaddressed and combined with other factors, such spatial imbalances may eventually build to levels sufficient to raise the probability of electoral shock and crisis.
- Underconsidered process which connects US/UK spatial imbalances to Trump, Brexit.

Theory Applied & Critique

- Process Tracing of Majoritarian Dynamics Through Case Analysis of Three Elections – US, UK, France.

Devil's Advocate:

- US Majoritarian? Mrs. Clinton Won The Majority! But Lost!
- UK Majority Voted for Brexit in Yes-No Vote. How could PR Have Changed That or Mattered?
- France not very Proportional – fptp in National Elections.

US

- Presidential election is Majoritarian By State.
- States with Metro Regions Ravaged by Globalization and Integration Shifted to Trump.
 - Former Center-Left/Organised Labour/Democratic strongholds.
 - NAFTA: Upper Midwest – viz. Detroit MI, Cleveland OH, Milwaukee WI.
 - Global Clean Energy: Rural Appalachia - WV, KY.
- On NAFTA, energy, trade, Clinton could not pivot to “median voter” in these states, for whom social and economic interests, tenuously married under Democrats’ neoliberal party platform, had begun to unbundle and shift to reflect local concerns.

US UNDER PR?

WHAT IIF THE UNITED STATES HAD A PARLIAMENT?

PREDICTED PARLIAMENT*

TOTAL SEATS 435



113

LEFT

"Social Democratic Party"

BERNIE SANDERS
26% of vote



124

CENTRE-LEFT

"Liberal Party"

HILLARY CLINTON
28%



37

CENTRE-RIGHT

"Conservative Party"

JOHN KASICH
8%



49

RIGHT

"Christian Coalition"

TED CRUZ
11%



112

POPULIST

"People's Party"

DONALD TRUMP
26%

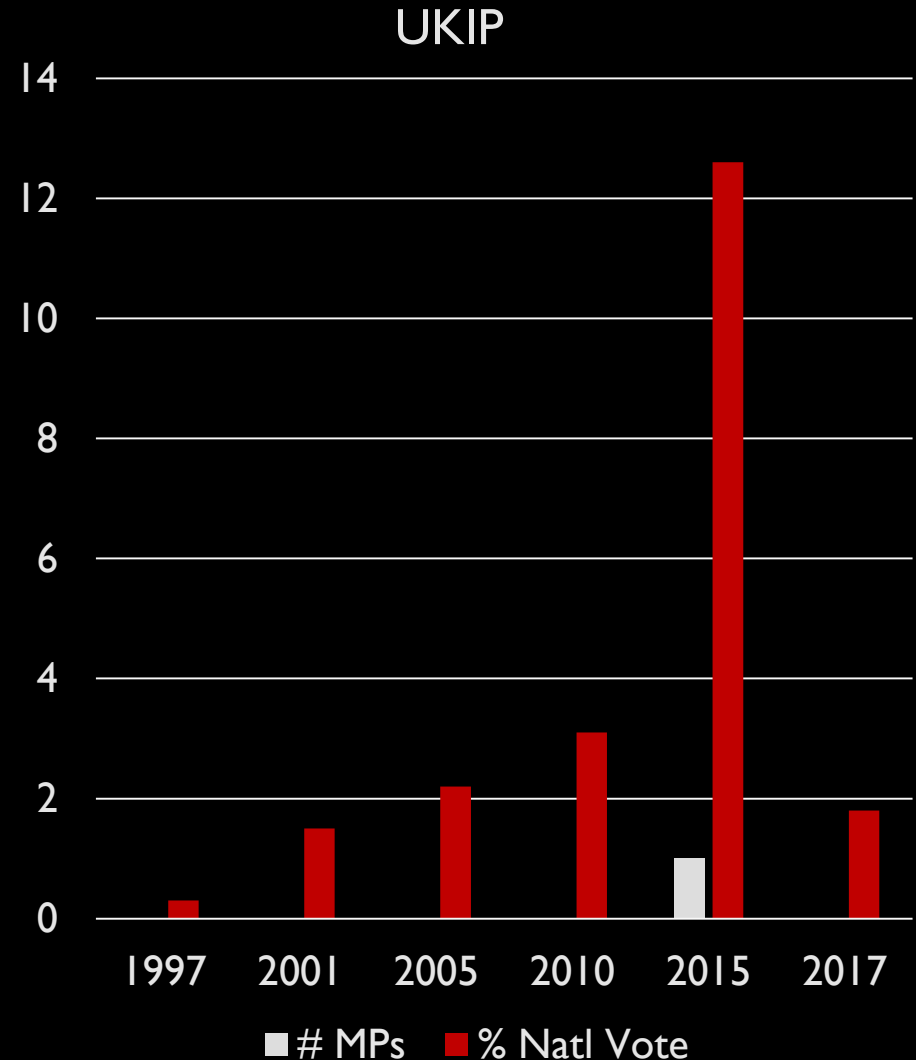
Sources: YouGov; CPS; *The Economist*
Pic credits: AP; AFP; Getty Images; Reuters

*based on April 22-26th 2016 polling; seats allocated proportionally by census region (North, Midwest, South, West)

The Economist

UK: NO REFERENDUM WITH PR?

- UKIP's rise didn't translate to national seats.
- One reason Cameron offered Brexit ref? Keep UKIP "at bay" (Macshane, 2016), margin threat.
- Dynamic direct reflection of majoritarian dynamics: fear under winner-take-all losses in excluded areas.
- Various possible PR Coalitions would not have yielded a referendum, perhaps other concessions.



France

- Two-Round Voting.
- History of electoral rules and changes, supports third parties.
 - Moved to winner take all, one member in 60s, temporarily back to PR in the 80s.
 - Multimember PR local, regional, supranational elections.
- Election: protest vote in first round – Melenchon, others.
- Second round: “This is deadly serious now”, “Vote With Heart in First Round, Head in Second”.

Limitations

- Only a contributing factor, not a monocausal argument.
- Argument identifies endogeneous, self-reinforcing institutional rules.
- Conceptual, theoretical, not empirical.
- Difficult to test:
 - small n problem, lack of historical regional data;
 - endogenous.
 - hierarchical linear model/multi-level modelling, multinomial logistic on voter system?
 - significant within/between country variation in national vs. local, regional, supranational election methods.
 - between vs. within region income inequality.

Have We Seen This Crisis Before? Yes. (N=2?)

- Last period of heightened global integration/trade was in late 19th/early 20th c. (Combes, Mayer and Thisse, 2008)
- Dovetailed with rising inequality (Piketty, 2014), populism (Polanyi, 1944).
- Levels of inequality and integration declined after WW2, not surpassed until end of 20th c. (ibid)
- Less proportional systems of national political representation late 19th/early 20th c. (Rodden, 2008). Contributing factor to crisis, war?
- Subsequent electoral reform towards PR (ibid, Katzenstein, 1985).

Conclusions, Questions, Future Research?

- Cross-Regional and Cross-National Lenses: Need Both for Trump/Brexit.
- Schumpeter Revisited: Can Globalisation, Democracy and National Sovereignty Co-Exist? (Stein, 2016)
- The Great Instability = “Rigged” Majoritarian Democracy Less Consonant with a “Strong and Stable” Globalization?
- Inhibit Minority Representation (+ Regions)? May Impede Spatial Rebalancing, other People/Place/Institutional-oriented Policy Fixes?
- Electoral Reform Efforts vs. Further Populist Crises (Real PR Proposals in UK? US State, Local Reforms?)

--Thank You--

Q&A