**Paper Abstracts**

Christopher Anderson (Cornell University) and Jason Hecht (Cornell University): 
*Crises in the Public Mind: The Dynamics of Economic Opinions During the Great Recession*

Public opinion is an essential component of the demand side of politics. But what, exactly, are democratic governments supposed to react to in times of sudden and unforeseen crisis? That is, what are publics telling them about their own and the nation’s economic wellbeing in times of great economic stress? What is more, aside from interpreting the content of public opinion about the economy, how volatile and possibly unpredictable are the public’s collective sentiments when crises occur and what shapes them? To date, we know very little to provide solid answers to this questions.

In this paper, we therefore propose to examine public opinion dynamics before and since the 2008 crisis – also dubbed the “Great Recession” – to see how people's opinions about the economy (generally, unemployment, and their own economic situation) changed before and after the crisis, but also importantly whether the content and trajectory of opinions varied significantly and systematically across countries. We expect the crisis to produce a sudden and deep, but cross-nationally variable, drop in economic opinion. As well, we expect opinion to recover, but at an unequal pace across countries. Aside from actual economic conditions, we hypothesize that the steepness of the drop and the speed of recovery is shaped by macro-level political and economic factors, including the size and nature of welfare states as well as countries’ exposure to global markets and the size of the financial sector.

Relying on monthly and quarterly opinion data among general publics from across Europe, we first describe the dynamics of opinion; we then move to examine whether there are common underlying factors that form the core of these opinions; finally, we will examine whether the dynamics and determinants of opinions about the economy are shaped by countries’ macro-structural characteristics, including social protection regimes and the role of the global financial economy.

Taking a step back, we (optimistically) hope to compare the 2008 crisis to the 1992 crisis (or potential other, smaller crises).

Larry Bartels (Princeton University) 
*Ideology and Retrospection in Electoral Responses to the Great Recession.*
Do voters in the midst of an economic crisis tend to shift their support to parties of the left--or of the right? Do they reward their political leaders for pursuing policies consistent with the public’s policy predispositions? Or do they simply punish incumbents when times are bad, regardless of what policies those incumbents have pursued and what policies opposition parties promise to pursue? I survey the outcomes of elections in a variety of rich democracies since the advent of the Great Recession; my aim is to assess the relative importance of these various mechanisms of political accountability in determining the electoral fate of incumbent governments and the subsequent course of public policy.

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Mark Beissinger (Princeton University) and Gwendolyn Sasse (Oxford University): 
*An End to Societal Patience? The Economic Crisis and Political Protest in Eastern Europe*

This paper explores the dynamics of political protest across Eastern Europe in the context of the economic crisis. It is generally assumed that post-communist Eastern Europe has been a region of ‘patience’ rather than of ‘protest’, with the exception of mass mobilization in a series of events known as the ‘coloured revolutions’ in the region’s semi-authoritarian regimes. The paper examines the impact of the economic crisis on societies that find themselves at different stages of transition. Some aspects of transition may make the effects of an economic crisis more immediate, while others may provide a certain buffer. Arguably, the economic crisis provided the first cross-regional impetus for protest, and we need to understand the patterns and variation underlying the dynamics of societal mobilization in response to the crisis. Countries as disparate as Latvia, Hungary, Romania, Albania and Russia have seen sizeable protests, thereby escaping simple explanations based on regime type, transition model, party systems, societal cohesion or international linkages. The analysis is based on a combination of protest event data from Eastern Europe covering the period 2007-2010 and in-depth case-specific data.

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Pepper Culpepper (European Institute University) 
*Public Outrage, Public Policy, and the Press: How popular response conditions executive pay regulation in France and the US*

Some scholars and most pundits of the left argue that the largest corporations and the richest Americans disproportionately win in American political battles, especially those affecting the very rich. Using comparative evidence from the United States and France, this chapter argues that such a claim is not borne out in one of the areas of great interest to the very rich and to the heads of large corporations: the regulation of executive pay. The policy response of governments in the US, as in other industrialized countries, instead depends on the extent to which the public evinces concern in executive pay. When pay is not a subject of public interest, private actors are indeed likely to dominate the process. But, when the public demonstrates sustained interest and concern in a new policy area like executive remuneration – a concern that increased markedly in financial crises in France and the US – the advantages bought with corporate money are counterbalanced by the potential
political returns to politicians of opposing corporations. In other words, how the public translates the experience of a financial crisis into political terms determines the way in which politics will be conducted. Those policy areas that do not manage to sustain public attention will rapidly revert to interest group politics, in many of which corporations and their representatives are indeed likely to exercise disproportionate influence. Such power dissipates, however, under the continued spotlight of public attention. This chapter uses evidence from the trends in the extent and tenor of press coverage in executive pay in these two countries to consider these claims empirically.

*Rafaela Dancygier (Princeton University) and Michael Donnelly (Princeton University)

Attitudes towards Immigration in Changing Economic Times: The Role of Immigrant Employment and Industry Growth

Economic theory suggests that skill-based or industry-based sources of labor market competition determine individual preferences over immigration. Existing research has investigated to what extent the skills of natives and the skills of immigrants determine views about immigration, but it has paid less attention to the role of industries. Using cross-national data from the European Social Survey, this paper examines whether exposure to immigrants at the industry level impacts natives’ immigration opinions. To clarify whether immigrant exposure or industry growth drives views about immigration we compare views before and during the economic crisis and include measures of employment growth across sectors. In addition to testing skill-based and industry-based arguments, we investigate whether natives’ exposure to the potential fiscal costs of immigration as well as the state of the economy shape their preferences over immigration. By putting a wide range of economic theories to the test, this paper contributes to our understanding of the economic foundations of preferences over immigration in changing economic times.

*Ray Duch (Oxford University)


Major election campaigns occurred in the U.S., Germany and France during the global financial crisis of 2008-2010. This essay explores the impact of the crisis on the evolution of public opinion over the course of each of these campaigns. The analysis is based on three panel studies that were conducted during this period in each of the three countries: the CCAP project in the U.S.; the British CCAP project and the German CCAP project. The essay provides a unique comparative perspective on the electoral consequences of the global financial crisis.

*Sara Binzer Hobolt (Oxford University)

Economic Insecurity and Public Support for the Euro

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In light of the recent economic crisis, this paper examines how economic conditions shape public attitudes toward the European Union’s single currency, the euro. We argue that attitudes towards the euro are shaped by both utilitarian and symbolic concerns, but that economic insecurity is a key factor explaining support for the euro both inside and outside the eurozone. The effect of economic insecurity on aggregate euro support is mediated by eurozone membership status as well as economic structure, notably whether the economy is more dependent on manufacturing or services. The findings from a time-series cross-section analysis of euro support from 1999-2010 in 28 countries as well as a multilevel analysis of individual attitudes corroborate these propositions.

Hanspeter Kriesi (University of Zürich)

*The political consequences of the financial and economic crisis: popular mobilization in Europe*

Political mobilization of grievances (as they occur in an economic crisis) only occurs, if there is an opportunity to mobilize, and if there are organizations that are ready to mobilize. This is the basic insight of decades of social movement studies. In European democracies, citizens have the opportunity to express their grievances as voters, i.e. the privileged arena to react to the consequences of the economic fallout of the crisis are the electoral, and, where available, the direct-democratic arena, with parties being the key mobilizing organizations. In a democracy, voters resort to the protest arena (and to other organizations) only to the extent that they are unable to express themselves in the electoral channel. Accordingly, one of the first signs of popular discontent are sharp shifts in the voting patterns. Citizens only have recourse to more radical forms, when their vote has no impact.

In a first step, I look at shifts in voting patterns between the last elections before the crash of Lehman brothers in September 2008, and the first elections after this crash, based on data I have assembled myself in rough and ready fashion (if there were no new national elections so far, I took the first local/regional/ European elections after the crash). To analyse these patterns, I take my cues from the literature on economic voting, and analyze to what extent incumbents have been punished (heavily, but in widely different ways in the West and in the East), and which type of parties have benefited (in Western European countries without clear responsibility: the new populist right, but in ways that are unrelated to the crisis; in Eastern Europe: newly founded parties of the moderate right, but also in ways that are only tenuously related to the crisis).

In a second step, I add some qualitative case studies of protest politics. These case studies are intended to put the quantitative analysis into a more comprehensive perspective. They show the striking interaction between electoral politics and protest politics. The protest develops in close interaction with the austerity/liberalization measures taken by the governments, who are the main addressees of protest action, and the action repertoire of protests against the crisis makes use of the available institutional channels of access (e.g. direct-democratic channels). The organizations carrying the protests are either parties or organizations of popular groups most heavily hit by the austerity measures (unions of public employees, pensioner and student
organizations). In selecting the cases, I have chosen countries most severely hit by the crisis, because the enormous grievances in these countries have given rise to the most impressive and/or consequential protest events. To the extent that these protest events have had an impact, it has been a political impact – contributing to a change of party leaders and government composition, to the electoral punishment of incumbents, to the formation of new parties, or to a change in political institutions. Hardly at all has there been an impact on government policy. These conclusions are all very tentative, based on data readily available on the web. More specifically, I look at three types of protest: the turn to outsiders in the party system and abstentionism (illustrated by the cases of Iceland, Portugal and Greece), the use of direct-democratic procedures (illustrated by Latvia, Hungary and Iceland), and protest mobilization in the streets (illustrated by Greece, France, and Ireland).

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Nonna Mayer (Sciences Po)

*The Political Impact of the Crisis on the French Working Class: More to the Right?*

This paper is about the political impact of the 2008 recession on the French working class. Our definition of the working class includes, besides the old factory working class, the new service proletariat, taking into account the transformations of the class structure and the polarisation of jobs in post industrial societies (Oesch, Redrawing the Class Map, 2006). After a brief outline of the French economic situation and of its perceptions in the public opinion, the paper analyses the political evolution of the working class, a year before the 2012 presidential election. Can one pinpoint a specific “recession effect”, or just a continuation of previous trends, namely the erosion of “class vote” or working class support for the Left, that started at the end of the 70’s (Cautrès, Mayer, 2010)? Will the recession favour political disaffection (Oskarson, 2010) or polarisation and vote for the extremes? Will it breed support for the extreme left, as in the presidential election of 2002 (Sperber, 2010) or push the working class even more towards the extreme right, as in many European countries (Kriesi et al., 2008; Oesch, 2008)? And what are the main cleavage lines inside the working class (gender, ethnicity, precariousness, sector of activity)? To give a tentative answer to these questions the paper will draw from a diversified set of survey data (CEVIPOF French National Elections Surveys 1978-2007, annual survey for the National Commission for Human Rights on racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia (1990-2011), electoral polls for the local elections of 2011, Annual Social Barometer for the DREES).

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Stuart Soroka (McGill University)

*Anarchy in the UK: Exploring Media & Public Reactions to Economic Crisis*

This paper examines trends in public opinion on the state of the UK economy, alongside both media coverage of economic issues and actual macroeconomic trends. The paper draws on data from the early 1980s to the present, but it focuses in particular on trends over the last five years. Analysis of media coverage is based on a database of all stories on macroeconomics from the Times and the Guardian since 1980. The tone of coverage is captured using automated content analysis in Lexicoder.
Aggregate-level public opinion is drawn from a combination of EU and MORI surveys. The paper outlines some general trends over the period of study, but also looks in detail at two issues in particular: (1) asymmetries, in both media content and public opinion, in reactions to positive versus negative information about the economy, and (2) differences in reactions to economic information across income groups.

Kathy Walsh (University of Wisconsin)

*Political Understanding of Economic Crises: The Shape of Resentment toward Public Employees*

How do people make sense of economic crises? They use perspectives that are in large part a function of social identities and their categorizations of people into us and them (Walsh 2004; see also Campbell et. al. 1960; Sears and Kinder 1985). When people attach these divisions to attributions of blame, they become ripe for political mobilization (Stone 1989). Thus, these ideas of whom is to blame and what the battle lines are tell us much about the policies that become possible and the arguments that are likely to bring about the most powerful mobilization in the midst of crises. This paper examines the way people talked about economic issues leading up to the economic crisis. It uses participant observation with groups of people who meet of their own accord in settings in which they regularly gather. The fieldwork was conducted in 27 communities sampled from across the Midwestern state of Wisconsin, between May 2007 and May 2010. The purpose is not to generalize to the broader population of the United States, nor even Wisconsin. Instead, the investigation examines how people use their conceptions of us and them to make sense of economic crises, and reveals the split between public employees and private employees that erupted in protests in Madison, the state capital, in February 2011. The results underscore the centrality of hard work to conceptions of social class, reveal the logic of the perspectives through which public employees are to blame for the recession, and illuminate a geographic component of political perspectives in which nonmetro residents view the rural vs. urban map as synonymous with public employees vs. other people.