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**Policy citizenship
The impacts of neoliberalism and supranationalisation on democratic
linkages in Western democracies**

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Abstract

Across Western Europe since the 1970s, welfare states have been under considerable pressures. Over the mid-term, two main challenges surface. First, the trend toward neoliberal social policy, however varied in its shape and scope, has come to characterize most policy changes of the period. It has impacted levels of generosity, eligibility criteria, welfare providers as well as the process of benefit allocation. Second, the growing supranationalisation of welfare states, by way of budget consolidation objectives and enforcement mechanisms and monetary integration, has greatly influenced, that is, reduced, Western European governments' ability to act upon welfare states' design and reforms. This paper takes stock of these developments from an ordinary citizens' perspective. It departs from the mainstream policy elite perspective and the political economy analysis as the paper focuses on citizens' political perceptions and experiences of both trends. It intends to theoretically lay out an analysis of the political outcomes of neoliberalism and supranationalisation of European welfare states. Based on the policy feedback literature, that hypothesizes that attitudes and behaviours are outcomes of past policy, the paper suggests that both neoliberalism and supranationalisation of social policy may contribute to explaining patterns of citizens' (dis-)affection towards politics in the past decades. The paper therefore investigates policy citizenship, that is how neoliberalisation and supranationalisation of social policy shape attitudinal and behavioural democratic linkages (political trust, political support, loyalty, formal and informal participation). By doing so, it supplements existing research on individual determinants and contextual explanations of disengagement and disaffection towards politics.

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Introduction: The Erosion of Democratic Linkages in Western Democracies

In 2005, a report by the American Political Science Association stated: “*American democracy is at risk. The risk comes not from some external threat but from disturbing internal trends: an erosion of the activities and capacities of citizenship*” (Macedo & et al., 2005, p. 1). Such anxiety about the health of democracy is not specific to the US; instead it is rather a recurring, if not permanent, concern. In current political science, the observation that citizens’ relations to politics have undergone major changes has become common sense. Low turnouts, electoral volatility, soaring distrust of politicians and political institutions, and the rise of populism have been on the agenda for some time now. Recently, the unanticipated electoral victories of newcomers in politics like Donald Trump and Emmanuel Macron, as well as the struggles faced by well-established parties (see the Parti socialiste in France, the Labour Party in the United Kingdom, as well as the German SPD) have heightened the importance of paying attention to these developments. Taken together, these evolutions point to a similar direction: a growing disaffection toward politics and democracy across Western European countries. The popular dimension of democracy, seems thereby to be increasingly in trouble, so much that Peter Mair talks of the passing of citizen involvement (2013).

However, this concern has been shared by political scientists for a long time. Early in the twentieth century, analysts were concerned about the capacity of democracy to endure, especially when faced with non-democratic challenges (Lippmann, 1922; Laski 1931). In the seventies, democracy’s imminent demise was forecast by some scholars denouncing *The Crisis of Democracy* (Crozier, Huntington, & Watanuki, 1975) whereas others questioned the weakness of Western democracy in the light of a criticism of capitalism (Habermas, 1975). The past two decades have seen another wave of scholarly analyses focusing empirically on whether citizens’ relationships with the political system and the state have changed. For some analysts there has been no change (Fuchs & Klingemann, 1995, p. 429); yet others see the rise of *critical citizens* (Norris, 1999), *dissatisfied democrats* (Kumlin, 2011; Klingemann, 2014), *assertive citizens* (Dalton & Welzel, 2014), *counter-democrats* (Rosanvallon, 2006) or *indifferent citizens* (Van Ingelgom, 2012, 2014). Through their investigations of how Western democracies have become *Disaffected Democracies* (Pharr & Putnam, 2000) or of *Why We Hate Politics* (Hay, 2007), these studies share the conviction that feelings of dissatisfaction and disengagement are not insignificant political features of Western democracies, as does this paper.

Even when disagreeing on the consequences of their diagnosis, previous studies underline that both attitudinal and behavioural forms of relations between citizens and politics have become under considerable pressure during the past decades. Levels of political trust have declined in almost every Western democracy¹ and citizens have adopted a more critical outlook towards politicians and political institutions (Dalton, 2014; Hay, 2007; Norris, 1999). Party membership has increasingly diminished in favour of non-conventional forms of political action (Dalton, 2014; Whiteley, 2012) and voter turnout has significantly dropped in numerous Western democracies (Blais, 2006). This is what the paper zeros on in. Thus, we are not interested in the evolution of a single indicator, like political trust or turnout. In contrast, we adopt a broader perspective (see also Mair, 2013) where we aim to explain the evolution of democratic linkages, that is, the various ways in which citizens can be connected in a structural

¹ Note that this diagnosis is not shared by all scholars. In particular regarding political trust, at least with regard to Europe, some scholars suggest that political trust levels remain relatively stable across the continent (Zmerli & Hooghe, 2011). While there is evidence of a structural trend towards lower political trust since the 1960s in the United States, a number of studies have provided evidence that does not support the thesis of crisis in confidence. At the heart of the disagreement lie, most of the time, the definition and operationalization of ‘political trust’ (e.g. Marien, 2011).

and durable way to their political system (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). Linkage mechanisms include feelings of trust, political support, loyalty, but also participation, mobilization and electoral behaviour. The concept of democratic linkage therefore refers to the whole range of attitudes, behaviours and intermediary associations that constitute the relation between citizens and the political system (Hooghe, 2011, p. 4). Our focus is therefore voluntary large.

How then can we explain the erosion of democratic linkages in Western democracies for the past two decades? In particular when one takes into consideration the fact that the lack of democratic engagement is nothing new and echoes the situation in the early 20th century? On the analytical level, the enduring nature of democratic disenchantment and disaffection has two significant consequences. Firstly, it downplays explanations based on specific political scandals, punctual policy failures or crises like the 2008 financial crisis. Secondly, it calls for explanations about the mechanisms of its production and reproduction and the search for the forces and broader factors that are affecting Western democracies. If the phenomenon is not new, there is however something going on that is specific and common to Western democracies: policy changes toward neoliberalism and supranationalization. These elements are at the core of our argument. Though there is ample evidence that individual-level factors contribute to the explanation, we contend that they are one-sided and overlook the massive changes in the environment where citizens live in, which is made of public policies. In a context where government spending accounts for one-third to one-half of the gross domestic product in Western democracies, policy analysts have generally examined the social and economic consequences of such government programs. Yet their political effects on democratic linkages continue to be widely neglected while there are numerous unanswered questions about the connections between policy and politics. For example, is there a relationship between the shift towards what Pierson had already described in 2001 as an ‘era of permanent austerity’ (2001), and the aggregate increase in unconventional political participation observed over the same period? Is there a link between the increasing Europeanization of national policies in this age of globalisation and the aggregate decrease in conventional political participation?

This paper therefore departs from demand-side explanations of contemporary political disenchantment to focus instead on the offer-side (Hay, 2007). If participation in the democratic process certainly comes from socialisation by political parties and actors, participation also and equally importantly, comes from socialisation through state action. This paper contributes to an emerging, though disparate, strand of literature that highlights the weight of previous policy commitments, the shifting power relationships between states and markets, and the ensuing weakening of fiscal democracy to account for patterns of citizens’ disinterest in politics (Streeck, 2013; Streeck & Mertens, 2013). Research has also stressed the decline of party government and the withdrawal of political elites (Mair, 2013). In addition, these accounts stress the growing role of supranational institutions, the European Union in a first place but also globalization, as a key explanation of citizens’ distance to politics (Steiner 2010, 2016; Le Gall, 2017). This paper suggests that democratic linkages can be understood as products constructed through the interplay of public policies, in particular social policy, and these changes in public policy impact on democratic linkages. The paper is thereby dedicated to the theoretical exploration of policy citizenship defined as democratic linkages considered as constructed through the interplay of social policy. More precisely, it lays out how the turns to neoliberalisation and supranationalisation contributes to explaining patterns of citizens’ disaffection toward politics. In addition, it provides preliminary data to test policy citizenship in the European context.

The first part of this article focuses on what a policy-oriented political science means when one intends to study democratic linkages and their evolutions. The second section focuses on the ways in which policies and policy change may have impacted on democratic linkages during state-building as well as in the past 30 years. The third section offers preliminary analysis

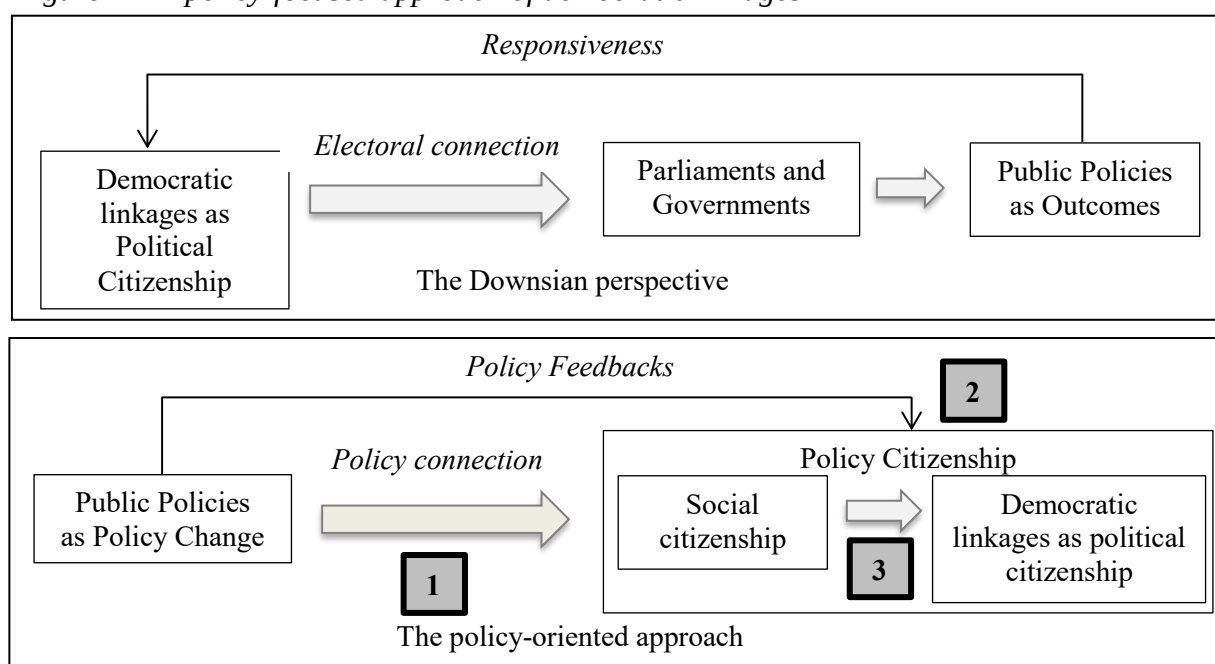
to these ideas. Finally, the conclusion presents our research agenda that goes far beyond the preliminary analysis presented in the framework of this paper.

1. Conceptualizing policy citizenship: a policy-oriented political science of democratic linkages

In their call for ‘bringing policy back in’, Hacker and Pierson stress that, over the last twenty years, a growing body of scholarship has emerged that developed what they call ‘policy-focused political science’ (2014, p. 643). According to them, this approach – far from being yet well-structured – distinguishes itself from scholars that were united in viewing politics through the theoretical map that Downs had drawn. On this map, the electoral connection takes a central position resulting in a circular relation of mutual interdependence in which politicians are generally quite responsive to voters, whereas voters in turn decide to vote on the basis of government decisions and actions (Hacker & Pierson, 2014, p. 644). In their inspiring article, Hacker and Pierson contrast this view, that they refer to as the Downsian perspective, by proposing an alternative approach, anchored in Schnattschneider’s work, the ‘policy-focused political science’, “to indicate a theoretical as well as empirical emphasis on the causes and consequences of government activity” (Hacker & Pierson, 2014, p. 644). In place of the electoral connection, the policy-focused perspective stresses the importance of the policy connection. What does it thus mean concretely to bring policy back in when trying to understand citizens’ attitudes towards politics?

This section argues that adopting this perspective has at least three theoretical consequences when analysing democratic linkages as well as understanding their evolutions. Figure 1 presents these differences that are further detailed in the next sections. In our understanding, this change takes place at three levels: (1) the direction of the public policy – public opinion nexus, (2) the mechanisms by which change takes place, namely policy feedbacks, and (3) the enlarged conception of citizenship that includes not only the political citizenship but also the social citizenship.

Figure 1 – A policy-focused approach of democratic linkages



a. *Change in the Direction of the Public Opinion – Public Policy Nexus*

On the theoretical level, the policy-focused approach starts where electoral studies trail off – with public policies. In the literature, the success and vitality of democracy are largely measured by the public's participation in the process and the responsiveness of the system to popular demands (Dalton, 2014; Van Deth, Montero, & Westholm, 2007). In systemic-inspire theories (Easton, 1965, 1975), mass preferences and political actions are cast as system “inputs” and public policies as system “outputs”. Based on Fritz Scharpf's seminal analysis (1999), legitimacy may stem from the operation of democratic procedures (democracy by the people) and from the political system's ability to solve collective problems in a way the market and the individuals cannot (democracy for the people). Put differently, the public opinion – public policy nexus which stands at the centre of the concept of legitimacy has two sides: one describes the ability of policies to be responsive to citizens' preferences (*responsiveness*), while the other side relates to the ability of policies to feedback citizens' loyalty (*policy feedback*). As illustrated in figure 1, the policy-oriented approach reverses the direction of the public opinion – public policies nexus: the consequence becomes the cause (Pierson, 1993). Policies, understood as policy changes rather than outcomes, influence citizens' preferences and more broadly democratic linkages. As Schattschneider put it already in 1935, *new policies create new politics* (1935).

Thus, the core of the argument is “*that policies, once enacted, restructure subsequent political processes*” (Skocpol, 1992, p. 58). This is an important step as, as Hay shows, almost all the existing explanations of why people hate politics are what he calls ‘*demand-side explanations, in that the principal explanatory work that they do is accounting for (or often simply documenting and mapping) changes in the receptiveness of political constituents to political appeals*’ (Hay, 2007, p. 55). This scholar calls then for an analysis of supply-side factors. Even if it is sometimes in the backdrop of previous explanations of citizens' attitudes and behaviours, one explanatory factor past works left out is the effect of policy changes. This approach thus leads to reverse the direction of the public policy-public opinion nexus which, in the Downsian perspective, relies on the concept of responsiveness (e. g. Franklin & Wlezien, 1997). Broadly speaking, a political system is said to be responsive when shifts in citizens' preferences regarding certain policy issues lead to related policy changes. Policy outcomes are then evaluated by citizens in terms of government's performance in order to express renewed preferences through the electoral connection. In the policy-focused approach public policies are not considered as outcomes but as policy change that influence citizenship, yet not in terms of evaluation of performance as the following section argues.

b. *Policy Feedbacks as Mechanisms of Change*

The policy-focused approach implies that one needs to understand how public policies have (or not) an impact on citizens' behaviours and attitudes. In order to do so, the mechanisms by which public policies influence individuals need to be unveiled. A growing research program has emerged under the label of the ‘*policy-feedback*’ literature that offers strong evidence linking policies to changes in political behaviour and attitudes. Policy feedback theories point at two types of feedback effects: ‘*new policies may transform state capacities by creating, building upon, or undercutting administrative arrangements; and they may affect the identities, political goals, and capabilities of social groups*’ (Skocpol, 1992, p. 58).

This text is interested in feedback effects on mass publics (Kumlin & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014). The basic idea of such policy feedback is that ‘*public policy can confer resources, motivate interest in government affairs by tying well-being to government action, define groups for mobilization, and even shape the content and meaning of democratic*

citizenship' (Campbell, 2003, p. 1). Such feedback effects may thereby occur through resources and incentives provided by policies that '*shape patterns of behaviour*' (Mettler & Welch, 2004, p. 500). The resource effect (Pierson, 1993) is illustrated by senior citizens in the US who benefit from Medicare and the public retirement scheme. They may be qualified as über-citizens (Campbell, 2003) as their level of political efficacy is higher than would be expected from mainstream individual-based accounts of political participation. It can be explained by the resources both programs provide them with, in terms of money and time in particular, that are conducive to higher political participation. Public policies may also have an interpretive effect. The seminal case of such an effect is provided by American veterans who benefited from the GI Bill and who became active citizens not only on the basis of the resources that education provided them with, but also due to a feeling of being considered as first class citizens, greatly supported by their community, and who wanted to give back to the community (Mettler, 2005). Thus as suggested by the policy feedback literature, public policies may shape individuals' political attitudes and behaviours through policy-related mechanisms (Campbell 2012; Kumlin 2004; Mettler and Soss 2004; Soss and Schram 2007), in particular through a resource effect (Pierson 1993), which describes "*how resources and incentives provided by policies shape patterns of behaviour*", and an interpretive effect, which refers to "*how policies convey meanings and information to citizens*" (Mettler and Welch 2004, 500).

Yet, as we argue, policy feedbacks are not necessarily positive. Public policies may lead to lower than expected political participation (Campbell, 2003; Soss, 1999, 2002), and may fuel sentiments of being considered a second class citizen, or no citizen at all, and thereby produce feelings of distance from politics (Weaver & Lerman, 2010). The policy feedback literature argues that the specific features of policy design are instrumental to account for the impact public policies may yield: the resources delivered by a policy, the mechanism of their delivery, a policy's surveillance tools and its enforcement tools, as well as the target population a policy constructs need to be considered (A. Schneider & Ingram, 1993). The study of policy feedback thereby directs our attention to critical questions such as whether policies render citizens more or less engaged in politics and how public policies shape citizens' beliefs, preferences, demands and power (Mettler & Soss, 2004, p. 60). This strand of the literature therefore lays the ground for this paper's theoretical approach.

c. *Enlarging Our Understanding of Citizenship: Policy Citizenship*

Finally, the policy-focused approach that we adopt has a final important consequence regarding the study of democratic linkages as such. This approach suggests an expanded definition of citizenship that includes what T.H. Marshall calls the social citizenship. Generalizing from the British case, Marshall argues that citizenship is a status that has evolved over time (Marshall, 1963: 71-72). He thus proposes to divide citizenship into three parts and defines these three parts, or elements, as civil, political and social. The civil element is composed of the rights necessary for individual freedom (liberty of person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice). The institutions most directly associated with civil rights are the courts of justice. To these rights, later, citizens added the political element, that is, the right to participate in the exercise of political power as a member of a political community. The corresponding institutions are parliaments and governments. Finally, Marshall defines the social element of citizenship as "*the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society. The institutions most closely connected with it are the educational system and the social services*" (Marshall, 1963: 72). Eventually, citizens thus acquired social citizenship, which is expressed through and protected by welfare state institutions.

By focusing on the electoral connection, previous studies concentrate mainly on the political element of citizenship, leaving out the picture its social dimension. Acknowledging this limit and building on the social citizenship theory, Joe Soss argues to the necessity to incorporate citizens' demands on bureaucracies as political action. In his view, one can begin "*with a conception of politics that recognizes welfare claims without suggesting that citizens' actions are political if and only if they are aimed at government*" (Soss, 2002, p. 8). By suggesting a more integrated view of formal and informal politics, this approach draws connections between demands on government – as voters or constituents – and political processes embedded in the daily contacts with the welfare state – as citizens, users, recipients or even consumers. This enlarged definition is necessary to consider the policy connection that links citizens to politics through public policies and in particular through social policies. By including the social dimension of citizenship into our conception of citizenship, social policies play a central role in our policy-focused conception of democratic linkages. Thus, if democratic linkages are not only enclosing the electoral connection but also the policy connection, then the remaining research question asked by Soss is "*how do the participation experiences citizens find in the welfare system influence what they know and believe about politics, government, and themselves?*" (Soss, 2002, p.10).

To conclude this section, and without going as far as Hacker and Pierson when they state that "*the Downsian triangle of voters, legislators, and roll-call votes is a Bermuda Triangle for critical questions about contemporary politics*" (Hacker & Pierson, 2014, p. 657), we definitively argue that in order to explain the evolution of democratic linkages, one needs to consider them as products constructed through the interplay of public policies. This is what we call 'policy citizenship'. This concept includes the idea that the direction of the public policy – public opinion nexus is reversed and that policy feedbacks are the mechanisms by which change or inertia is taking place. It differentiates itself also from the notion of social citizenship by enclosing both the social and the political dimensions of citizenship, a change in the former possibly leading to a change in the latter.

As all analytic approaches highlight some aspects of the political reality at the expense of others, the question is whether our concept of policy citizenship permits to enlighten fundamental features of political life that have been overlooked by the existing literature. The next section will elaborate further on this idea.

2. Policy citizenship in action: changing social policy, changing democratic linkages

Why is bringing public policies in important, if not crucial, to the explanation of citizens' (dis-) affection and (dis-) engagement towards politics? In other words, what is to be gained from considering that the significant 'outputs' of political activities are not only particular public policies, labelled most of the time as political outcomes or goals, but that these policies generate and shape general citizens' linkages to the political system? We will develop our argument in two steps. First, we will demonstrate that political actors in order to build their legitimacy have mobilized policies, in particular social policies, and that those policies have encountered major changes in the last decades. Second, we will argue that those policy changes should be look at from a citizen perspective in order to understand their impacts on democratic linkages.

a. Policy Making, Policy Changes and Democratic Linkages

Students of state building emphasize that states in formation used public policies to build citizens' support to the newly established political institutions and in order to trigger processes of legitimation in the eyes of their citizens (Bartolini, 2005; Flora, Kuhnle, & Urwin, 1999). Here, social policy has played a significant role (Ferrera, 2005). In fact, seminal works on the

inception of welfare states stress that social policy in Western European countries has been developed as an answer to the legitimization needs of the political elites at the time (Alber, 1981; Heclo, 1974). They have not only produced high levels of support for welfare systems (Jordan, 2013), but have also contributed to a significant preference for the national level to take care of social issues. Overall, welfare and education systems are widely acknowledged as key factors in building citizens' loyalties (Gellner, 1983; Green, 1990; Smith, 2003; Weber, 1976). In recent times, research shows that European states tend to rely on their policy making as a source of legitimacy, rather than on democratic proceedings (Hurrelmann, Krell-Laluhova', Lhotta, Nullmeier, & Schneider, 2005). Focusing on patterns of legitimization for Flemish and Walloon governments in Belgium since the federalization of the country in 1993, our previous work also shows that legitimization effects exist at the regional level (Dupuy & Van Ingelgom, 2014). Moreover, under certain circumstances, European and regional policies seem to contribute to the legitimization of both levels of government (Dupuy & Van Ingelgom, 2016, 2017).

Of course, public policies have changed in the past three decades. Neoliberalisation and supranationalisation have been high on the research agenda of most comparative public policy researchers. Briefly put, neoliberalism may be defined '*as involving a commitment to certain core principles focused on market competition and a limited state*' (Schmidt & Thatcher, 2013, p. 1); and supranationalisation refers to the growing involvement of supranational institutions and actors in domestic policy-making, as well as to the increasing interdependence of domestic institutions and actors. Scholars argue that timing, patterns of adaptation and specific policy measures have varied dramatically across countries, both in terms of neoliberalism and supranationalisation (Falkner, Treib, Hartlapp, & Leiber, 2005; Gingrich, 2011; Graziano, Jacquot, & Palier, 2011; Green Cowles, Caporaso, & Risse, 2001; Pierson, 2001; Thelen, 2014). Most endeavours have been dedicated to elucidate the amount of change, its direction, the political conditions under which it has happened, and how change has impacted existing policies (how much path dependence, where and for how long?).

b. Policy Changes from a Citizen Perspective

However, as we are interested in policy citizenship, looking at policy change or path dependence from a comparative public policy angle does not help much to trace neither its impacts on democratic linkages nor the mechanisms leading to it. We need to look at policy change not *per se*, but from a citizen perspective. This perspective would allow pinpointing the dimensions of a policy that matters for citizens. As a consequence, we need to depart from a focus on decision making and reforms process to emphasize instead the content of the policy as it is implemented, that is, as it is delivered to beneficiaries. Arguably indeed, citizens' experience with public service and social policy occurs when they apply to a program, when they hear about a program and when they use and benefit from a policy programme. A citizen perspective also implies paying attention to the instrumental motives of a policy as well as to its symbolic and interpretative dimensions (A. L. Schneider & Ingram, 1997).

From a citizen perspective, what are then the policy changes that have occurred in the past three decades? The existing policy feedbacks literature, still emerging and mostly focusing on single case studies of the United States and England, suggests that it is very unlikely that the turn to neoliberal policies and supranationalisation would not lead to impacts on the general public.

Supranationalisation

The processes of economic globalization and European integration have expanded substantially in the last three decades (Börzel, 2005; Dreher et al., 2008). This has resulted in two outcomes: first, national executives' economic margins of manoeuvre have largely decreased because of intensified pressures coming from international markets, while the European Union has gained several policy competences at the expense of national governments (Le Gall, 2017). Nowadays, the European Union controls and limits national budgets and deficits; conducts international trade deals on behalf of the member states; has exclusive competencies to legislate on Customs union, competition rules and Common Fisheries Policy; while the European Central Bank plays a major role in the monitoring of inflation. In the meantime, levels of trade; foreign direct and portfolio investments; and income payments to foreign nationals as shares of the national growth domestic products have risen by, approximatively, 20% in the EU-15 states. According to many empirical studies, this greater integration within world markets has resulted in the reduction of 1) the provision of welfare services; 2) levels of taxation of mobile capital; and 3) the degree of regulation of social and environmental policies in affluent democracies (Cai and Treisman, 2005; Plümper et al., 2009). To sum up, national governments' policy room to manoeuvres have shrunk considerably in the last three decades with the development of European integration and economic globalization.

When it comes to citizens' perceptions, the perceptions of the loss of national governments' competences should negatively affect the individual likelihood to cast a ballot in domestic elections following Steiner (2010, 2016). Indeed, by 1) decreasing polarization in the party system Steiner and Martin (2012), and by 2) decreasing the relevance of elections as mechanisms that influence policy decisions Steiner (2016), economic integration arguably provides incentives not to participate in general elections. On the individual level, Steiner (2016) also demonstrates that British citizens who believe that their national government have less influence on the economy because of globalization tend to 1) vote less in the 2001 British general elections, and 2) are less prone to consider general elections as being able to produce significant policy differences. Thus, results from recent studies indicate that citizens who believe that their national government has little economic margins of manoeuvre tend to abstain slightly more (Le Gall, 2017). Moreover, previous qualitative works on European integration has emphasized an increase in the conviction that citizens are unable to have an impact on the decisions of European leaders, and/or the belief that European as well as national leaders are powerless to resolve citizens' problems, particularly in a globalised world (Van Ingelgom, 2014).

To sum up, following the first noticeable empirical study which investigates the relationship between economic globalization and electoral turnout (Steiner, 2010), the hypothesis that integration into world markets decreases democratic linkages is tested. The more citizens believe that their national government has little economic margins of manoeuvre due to globalisation; the more citizens tend to abstain. Moreover, the supranationalization of public policies is also considered and the hypothesis that supranationalisation decreases democratic linkages is then also tested. The more a citizen believes the national government to have influence compared to the EU, the more prone she or he will be to participate in national elections.

Neoliberalization

Turning now to neoliberalization, existing research suggests that three policy changes have been significant when it comes to the evolution of democratic linkages: marketization, conditionality and targeting.

Let's start with marketization. It refers both to increasing private spending in social policy and the introduction of welfare markets and market-like policy instruments in social policy delivery (Gingrich, 2011). From a citizen perspective, three outcomes of marketization seem to prevail. One is the lessened visibility of governmental interventions. Because public actors are less visibly in charge of providing services that are important to citizens, they are less incentivized to participate politically. Marketization thereby deters political participation. Suzanne Mettler's analysis of the submerged state in the United States shows that many Americans just do not see the state, do not see what it is doing for them and therefore turn their back to politics (2011). Pushing the argument a step further, Jane Gingrich and Sara Watson argue that marketization weakens electoral accountability (2016). Based on a case study of disability pensions in the UK in the early 2000, they show a similar detrimental impact of welfare markets because when a service is privately provided, a change of government is not likely to impact upon the service quality. Last, marketization impacts negatively the perceived protection against risks, the basic function of government, which in turn depresses trust in government, in particular when combined with rising income inequalities. In their study of the influence of private health care financing on citizen trust in government, Cammett, Lynch and Bilev (2015) in a comparative analysis of European countries show that trust in government is weaker in countries where healthcare is comparatively most privately funded. They suggest that private healthcare funding, when combined with increased income inequality, is conducive to lower trust in government.

A second dimension of recent social policy changes is likely to be of relevance for the definition of policy citizenship: conditionality. Labour market policy and their turn to activation as well as social assistance are illustrative of this shift toward conditional social policy. From a citizen perspective, conditional welfare programmes are distinct from universal programmes in three respects: they are characterized by supervision, discretion of street-level bureaucrats and discipline (financial sanctions from reduction of benefits to annulation). Existing literature demonstrates an overall negative impact of conditionality on political and personal efficacy through the evaluative channel regarding the nature of government and its responsiveness toward one's needs. Joe Soss' seminal comparative study of AFDC and disability schemes in the US lends support to the idea that universal and conditional programs trigger opposite outcomes (1999). AFDC was a scheme based on conditionality where beneficiaries are subjected to strong supervision, disciplinary measures and case workers scrutiny. His explanation points to beneficiaries' relations with case workers who are understood to be government's representatives. Specifically, he emphasizes that recipients perceive their relations to state officials as being adversarial, inquisitive and partial. This generates a sense of powerlessness and triggers a depressed personal and political efficacy.

A third policy change is associated with neoliberalization of social policy and is likely to be relevant to understand policy citizenship: targeting and social construction of groups and individuals. Targeting *per se* is inherent to policy making. As shown by Ingram & Schneider, any policy includes the definition of a target population (1997). Target populations are socially constructed as being deserving or undeserving. The shift from universal policies, rights-based policies to conditional policies comes with a shifting definition of target populations, from regular citizens to citizens that need to be monitored, nudged and possibly sanctioned, that is, untrustworthy citizens. In that perspective, Watson compares social programmes in England that vary not only on the right-based/ conditional dimension, but also on the degree of stigmatization that conditional programmes incorporate (2015). She shows that conditionality increases the perception of social stigma associated to social assistance measures because the very idea of conditionality frames beneficiaries as having a low work ethics. The policy itself therefore builds beneficiaries as undeserving. Her analysis shows that stigmatization exerts significant negative effects on political efficacy in general.

Therefore, there are insights that policy changes in the past 30 years (marketization, changing authority structures and targeting of social policy) have negatively impacted democratic linkages. Empirically, social policy and democracy seem to be partly related and an active citizenship appears to be in part constructed by social policy.

c. A First Empirical Test: Retired and Unemployed Citizens

Thus far, while disaggregating social policy and the ways in which they may impact on democratic linkages, we have mentioned citizens as a very broad and largely indiscriminate category. Yet, this is mistaken as citizens have various policy experiences. Another key component of this analysis of policy citizenship is thereby to take into account the variety of citizens' experiences of social policy, and henceforth the variety of policy citizenships, that stems from socio-demographic, gender, ethnic and generational differences (Levitsky, 2014; Svallfors, 2010; Tiberj, 2017).

To offer a preliminary test of our analysis regarding the relationships between social policy change and democratic engagement, we chose to focus on two specific sub-populations: retired and unemployed citizens. Pensions and unemployment policies differ to a large extent on different levels. First, they cover different risks and are unevenly likely to affect individuals. Course-related risks, like old-age, is more evenly distributed among individuals than labour-market related risks, such as unemployment, that are a function of one's skillset, professional status and sector of activity. Research has shown that this feature impacts on the programmes' respective popularity and, henceforth, on the opportunity structures for reform (e.g. Esping Andersen, 1990; Jensen, 2012). From a policy feedback perspective, the risk covered by each of these policies also influences individuals' proximity with them: pension policy virtually benefits everyone and is associated with little generational or social conflicts, as opposed to unemployed policy.

Second, and equally significantly, pensions and unemployment policies have followed different reform trajectories in the past decades in Western Europe. Based on Allan and Scruggs replacement rates datasets, pension cutbacks were much less sizeable than cutbacks in unemployment benefits (2010). In addition to this diverging evolution of generosity levels, reforms in both policy sectors differ from the point of view of the policy structure itself. In unemployment policy, a shift in the definition of the target population can be witnessed: since the 1990s, when it has come to be considered that the unemployed needed to be activated. They have increasingly been under the suspicion of being undeserving. Therefore, tackling unemployment has required the introduction of conditional benefits in lieu of rights-based benefits. This change of framing resulted in a change of policy instruments that from this point forward stress conditions² and sanctions³ (Knotz and Nelson, 2013).

Our point here is to say that analyzing policy citizenship requires describing the policy change in citizens' eyes. That implies beyond the individual effects on a given social policy, policy citizenship results from the bundle of policies citizens experience and benefit from. To sum up, following this, the hypothesis that experiences of welfare state have an influence on democratic linkages is tested by distinguishing between two different recipients of welfare rights: the unemployed and the retired. The former are expected to have weaker democratic linkages whereas the latter are expected to have stronger democratic linkages.

² Condition indicators include occupational mobility, geographical mobility, the number of other valid reasons that can justify the refusal for a job offer, the absence or presence of a compulsory or voluntary individual action plan and the modality of control for job-search activities.

³ Indicators relating to sanctions include the number of weeks of sanctions for voluntary unemployment, for first and repeated refusals.

3. Data and descriptive statistics

To investigate the effects of globalization/neoliberalisation and supranationalisation, the effects of welfare generosity and the effects of conditionality programmes on democratic electoral – linkages, we take advantage of the 2014 Comparative Electoral Dynamics (CED). The 2014 CED is an online survey launched at the occasion of the 2014 European elections in 7 of the main EU member states: France, Germany, Austria, Portugal, Spain, Greece and Italy (for a review, see Sauger et al., 2015). The main advantage of this survey consists in the fact that, contrary to traditional national polls, it gathers, on average, 4.000 respondents per country, thus enabling to have large information on sub-populations – in our case unemployed and retired respondents. Note that only 1.000 respondents replied to the questionnaire in Greece and Portugal. Overall, 22.072 individuals responded to this questionnaire.

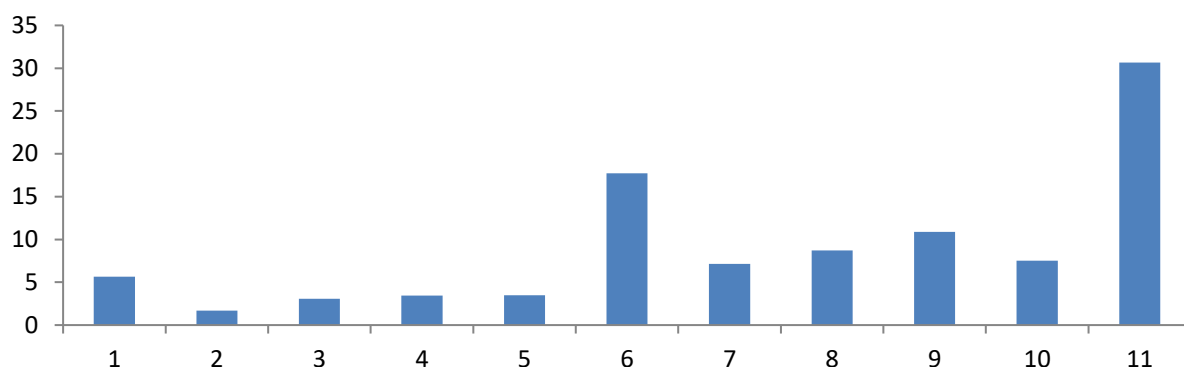
Dependent Variables: Democratic Linkages

According to our expectations, respondents who believe that elected governments are constrained by external actors in their public policies should be less likely to participate in elections and should be less prone to view electoral participation as an important individual act. Besides, we argue that those who benefit from welfare generosity, i.e. retired, should be more likely to cast a ballot &/or favour electoral participation than those who benefit from conditionality mechanisms, i.e. unemployed. Thus, we first need to find some measures that grasp democratic linkages.

To do so, we use three items that measure democratic linkages. We first use the traditional item of electoral participation asking whether respondents participated in their country's last general election. The variable is binary where 1 gathers respondents who declare that they voted in the last general elections, while 0 gathers those who declare not to have voted in the last election. This variable has to be taken with caution for multiple reasons. Most notably, declaration of electoral participation faces problems of over-reporting of voter participation. In our sample, the average reported turnout is 86.75%, while the official aggregate turnout equals 29.9%. The difference between real and reported turnouts might stem from individuals giving wrong information and from sample selection effects but also from the fact that the general elections did not take place in the same year, eventually hindering comparison across countries.

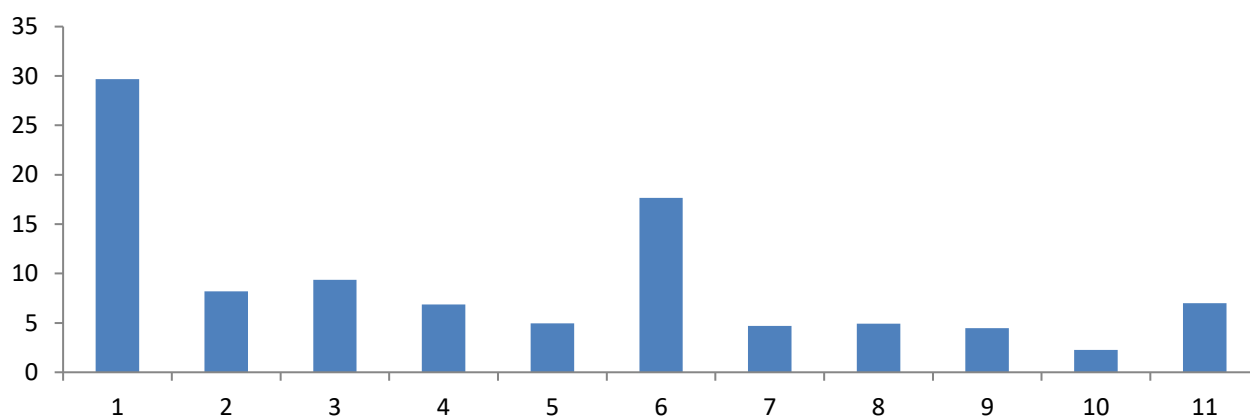
To further strengthen our empirical analysis, we thus rely on alternative items that ask respondents about their opinions on the act of (non-) voting. Specifically, we use two questions that are formulated as a statement about individual permissiveness toward the act of (non-) voting in different settings on which respondents have to take position. The first question aims to indicate the general permissiveness toward the act of (non-) voting is worded as follows “*In a democracy, people should have the right to vote, but also the right to abstain.*” Original values range from 1 (fully disagree) to 11 (fully agree). Figure 1 describes the average distribution of positions in the overall sample (EU-7).

Figure 2 – Average permissiveness toward abstention (Right to abstain)



A second related item, formulated as a statement, is made available by the 2014 CED and is worded as follows: “*It is OK to abstain in unimportant elections.*” Note that this last variable is correlated to the first item (0.28) but not very strongly, probably because it does not capture permissiveness toward the act of (non-) voting in general, but rather aims to investigate opinions toward electoral participation in taking into account the diversity of elections in terms of importance. In fact, figure 4 describes the average distribution of positions on this item in the overall sample and shows that respondents tend to have less permissive opinions in this case. That being said, we believe it is also a good measure of permissiveness since it grasps another contextual feature that is important to take into account at the individual level.

Figure 3 – Average permissiveness toward abstention if elections are considered unimportant



Overall, we make the case that using these questions allow to better grasp the democratic linkages than the mere retrospective declaration of voting. Indeed, those items are arguably less subject to desirability biases and hence can be considered as middle ground measurements between declaration and actual votes.

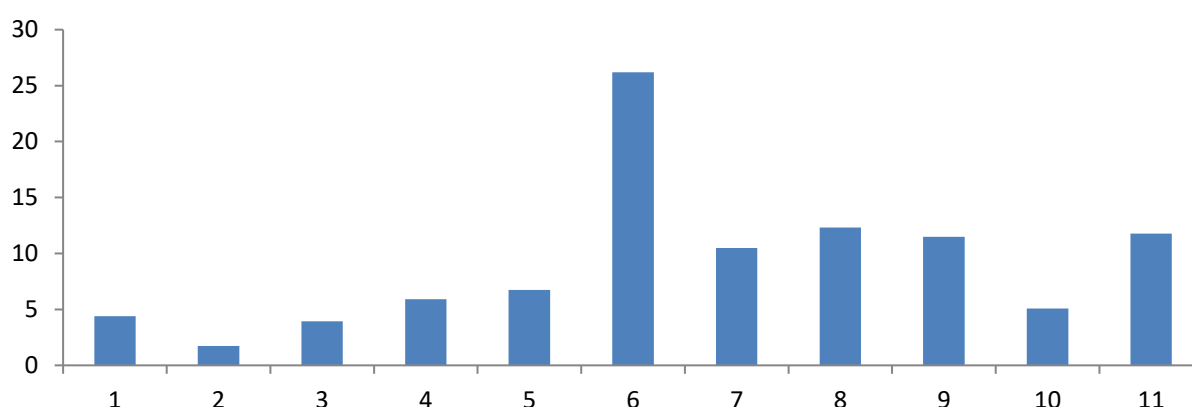
Independent Variables: Capturing Supranationalization and Neoliberalization

Our main objective is to analyse the effect of supranationalization and neoliberalism on democratic linkages. Traditionally, the literature on the impact of external constraints on domestic politics use aggregate level data such as the degree of integration within world markets to grasp constraints (for a review, see Le Gall, 2017). Instead, we rely on individual perceptions of constraints in our analysis to study the direct effect of perceptions on democratic linkages. We are able to do so in an extensive manner because the 2014 CED is one of the very

few available datasets that provide a battery of questions on this matter. In fact, this is the only dataset that enables us to study the effect of perceptions of constraints from both globalization and supranational integration on electoral linkages at the individual level.

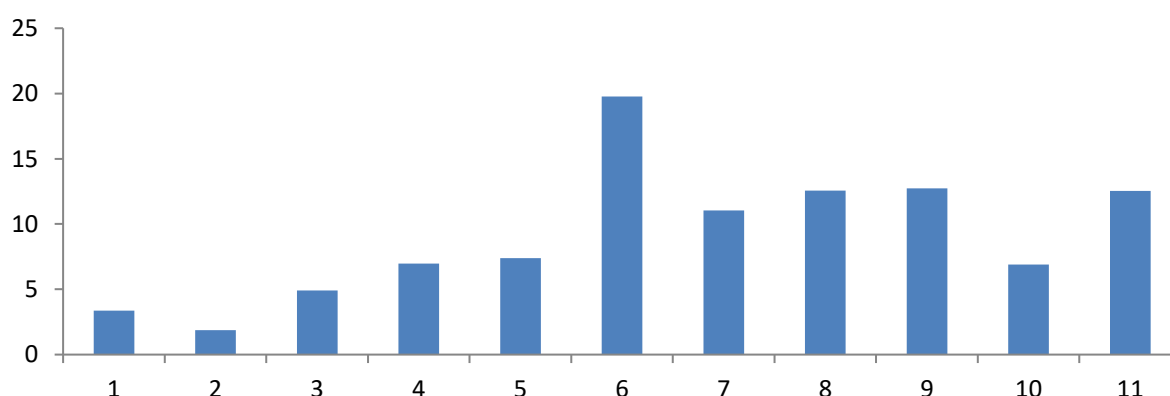
Specifically, we use three questions, which are formulated as statements, to measure external constraints. The first item aims to grasp the perceptions of constraints stemming from globalization and is worded as follows: “*globalization decreases a lot the power of national governments*” on which respondents have to take position. Original values range from 1 (fully disagree) to 11 (fully agree). Figure 4 describes the average distribution of positions on this statement in the overall sample.

Figure 4 – Average perceptions of constraints stemming from globalization



Second, we take advantage of an original question which asks respondents about their perceptions of the weight of the European Union in the domestic policymaking, which is worded as follows: “*Most of the important decisions in [country] are imposed by the European Union.*” Once again, values range from 1 (fully disagree) to 11 (fully agree). Through this question, we are able to distinguish between the independent effects of globalization and European integration. Figure 5 describes the average distribution of positions on this statement in the overall sample.

Figure 5 – Average perceptions of constraints stemming from the EU



Our second objective is to assess the effects of welfare generosity and conditionality programmes on electoral linkages. To do so, we decided to examine how two specific populations, i.e. retired and unemployed, apprehend electoral linkages. Here, we make the assumption that retired individuals benefit largely from the welfare state and should thus be

inclined to view electoral participation as an important act. On the contrary, unemployed, who supposedly have equal costs of voting as retired when it comes to time-availability, are subject to conditionality programmes. As Watson (2015) already showed, those programmes can have a negative effect on democratic linkages in general, eventually decreasing electoral linkages among populations that are submitted to such programmes. In turn, we crafted binary variables gathering, on the one hand, all the retired individuals in the sample, and, on the other hand, all the unemployed. Overall, retired individuals are 5932 in our sample, while unemployed are 2098. Note that, there is a gap between the average declared unemployed and the real unemployment average rate: again declared unemployment is lower than real unemployment.

Control variables

Our analyses include – in addition to our main predictors – the following variables which allow controlling for alternative explanations of electoral linkages on the individual level. Indeed, several political variables such as the level of interest in politics and the perceptions of the record of the government are said to positively affect electoral linkages in general, and electoral participation in particular (Dalton, 2013, for an extensive review). In addition, it has been suggested that the economic crisis is at the core of the decline of electoral turnout (Radcliff, 1992). Yet, the opposite argument has also been emphasized: citizens might be more prone to go cast a ballot in order to redress the economic situation. All in all, Blais (2006) suggests that the economic conjuncture has, most probably, a null effect. Notwithstanding, we also decided to include measures of subjective egotropic perception of the situation of the economy in the models to control for its effect. Finally, we include other traditional control variables such as education, age, gender, religious attendance and income. To put it bluntly, we expect individuals who are more included in the society to be more prone to cast a ballot in general elections.

Empirical Strategy and results

Using these individual level data, we run logistic regressions in the first model because the main dependent variable is dichotomous, while we run ordered logistic regressions when estimating the effects of constraints on permissiveness toward abstention since the dependent variables are ordered but not continuous. Also note that the structure of the data is non-random because voters are nested in countries. To control for this non-random effect, we include country fixed effects in the regressions (not displayed in Table 1).

The objective of this first exploratory analysis is to assess whether the inclination to cast a ballot in national elections and democratic linkages underlying this act are conditional upon: (1) individual perceptions of globalization as decreasing the power of national governments; (2) citizens' perceptions that most important decisions in the country are imposed by the European Union; and (3) finally on the experiences of welfare generosity and conditionality.

Table 1 - Determinants of democratic linkages in 2014, with fixed effects on countries

	Model 1 – Vote at national elections		Model 2 – Right to abstain		Model 3 – Elections unimportant	
Independent variables	Odds ratio	P> z	Odds ratio	P> z	Odds ratio	P> z
Globalization	.990	0.431	1.042***	0.000	1.049***	0.000
Supranationalization - EU	1.017	0.171	1.078***	0.000	1.040***	0.000
Retired	1.201*	0.063	.833***	0.000	.810***	0.000
Unemployed	.768**	0.005	1.217***	0.001	1.129*	0.043
Political interest	1.184***	0.000	.941***	0.000	.873***	0.000
Government record	.990	0.393	.971***	0.000	1.043***	0.001
Education	1.054**	0.016	1.014	0.208	.962***	0.001
Income	1.102***	0.000	.995	0.494	.969***	0.000
Standards of living	1.030	0.091	.994	0.560	1.058***	0.000
Male	.941	.329	1.102**	0.004	1.179***	0.000
Religiosity	.906***	0.000	.948***	0.000	1.033**	0.009
Age	1.352***	0.000	1.170***	0.000	.924***	0.000
N	11198		11899		11876	
Pseudo-R ²	0.092		0.012		0.016	

Note: Statistically significant at $p < 0.1$,*; statistically significant at $p < 0.01$,**; statistically significant at $p < 0.001$,***.

Source: 2014 Comparative Electoral Dynamics (CED)

Model 1, focusing on actual voting behavior, largely invalidates the hypothesis that voter turnout is driven by perceptions of constraints induced by globalization and supranationalization but confirms that experiences of welfare policies influence democratic behaviors. Indeed, controlling for education, income and standards of living, unemployed respondents are still more inclined to declare having not cast a vote than their retired counterparts, controlling in this case also for age. Besides, the traditional socio-demographic controls explaining voter turnout are in line with past results in the literature. First, older individuals tend to be more prone to report to have voted. Second, individuals with a higher level of education are more likely to declare to have cast a ballot in the last elections. Finally, indicator measuring social inclusion - such as attendance to religious service - is in the expected direction with the effect being statistically significant: individuals who are more socially included have a higher likelihood to participate in elections. These results are confirmed after the inclusion of political variables such as the political interest and the support of government record.

Models 3 and 4 confirm the role played by experiences of welfare policies as retired and unemployed respondents have opposite relationships to permissiveness of non-voting. Being retired strongly diminishes the likelihood that a respondent will consider that it is all right not to vote if elections are unimportant and that there is a right to abstain. Whereas, being unemployed has the exact opposite effects. In those two models on attitudes towards voting – rather than actual reported vote – globalization and supranationalisation play important roles as well. Believing that globalization decreases a lot the power of national governments increases the likelihood to consider that abstention is a right as well as that it is all right not to vote when elections are unimportant. Considering that most important decisions are imposed by the EU has a similar effect.

Conclusion: our research agenda

On the empirical level, this text was exploratory and the analysis presented here are limited. However, they demonstrate that both neoliberalisation and supranationalisation do have an impact on democratic linkages as well as the experiences of welfare benefits. On the theoretical level, this text was more ambitious. Indeed, anchoring our research in the theoretical framework presented in the first section of this paper, the main research question that our research agenda aims to answer to is: how do public policies and their changes shape democratic linkages? This lays out three research objectives:

- (1) to map the dimensions and evolutions in of democratic linkages in different national contexts and between different social categories by analysing citizens' representations and experiences of politics and policies;
- (2) to map and compare two structural transformations of policies which are usually envisaged separately namely supranationalisation and neoliberalism, in a comparative and diachronic approach;
- (3) to systematically analyse the domestic and socially differentiated effects of these policy transformations on citizens' perceptions and experiences, in addition to the existing emphasis on the individual determinants and contextual explanations of disengagement and disaffection towards politics.

On the methodological level, the question of the influence of major policy transformations on democratic linkages is certainly a challenging puzzle for social sciences. Indeed, the challenge – and certainly the main explanation of why the research has not been undertaken so far in a systematic way – is to find data to rigorously and empirically address this puzzle. Indeed, comparative longitudinal analyses rely mainly on quantitative data and those datasets fall short when it comes to analysing changes in public policies. With the important exception of the data presented in this text, data are simply missing. However, the data presented here do not permit for longitudinal analysis. Moreover, these data are not very adequate to the analysis of mechanisms by considering the effects of policy changes on individuals' perceptions, understandings and experiences.

Thus, on the methodological level, we propose to rely on diachronic and comparative qualitative data mobilized as a microscope to assess these mechanisms, to understand how they play a role and, more importantly, how they change – or not – over time, between countries and in different segments of population⁴. The analysis of these mechanisms in order to understand

⁴ This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 716208). This paper reflects only the authors' view and the Agency (ERC) is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains. Our project aims at comparing the processes under scrutiny in different national and social contexts over, potentially, the past thirty years. To balance the needs for comparison and attention to national and social differences in the middle run, the project focuses on four West European countries – Belgium, France, Germany, and the United-Kingdom – and the United States serving as a contrepont. These national cases are chosen for various theoretical and empirical reasons. On the theoretical level, national cases have been selected so that they would vary according to the three main dimensions at the core of this project. First, they offer similar but not identical situations regarding democratic linkages. Over the past six decades, to different extent, each national case has encountered decreasing levels of conventional participation and an increase in non-traditional form of participation (Dalton, 2014). Second, regarding policies' turn to neoliberalism, that is, the first contextual policy change that our project aims to analyse, the case selection allows for the variation of its timing and differentiates between the rise of neoliberalism in the late 1970s and 1980s in the Anglophone democracies, in the UK and the US, and its subsequent diffusion and consolidation in the 1990s and thereafter, in France, Germany and Belgium (Hay, 2007, p. 98; Schmidt & Thatcher, 2013). The first wave is marked by a highly politicized nature and may be referred to as normative neoliberalism, while the second wave is characterized by institutionalization, normalization and depoliticization and may be depicted as normalized neoliberalism (Hay, 2007). Third, supranationalisation in the European context has mainly taken the form of the Europeanization of public policies.

how they have led (or not) to changes in democratic linkages, especially ordinary citizens' disengagement and disaffection, calls for an ambitious research design.

On the one hand, one needs to be diachronic to capture effects that are expected to play on the medium term, as both supranationalisation and neoliberalisation are longstanding and still ongoing processes. So are the mechanisms by which they could shape democratic linkages. On the other hand, in order to understand the role of these macro transformations on democratic linkages, one wants to understand how these mechanisms play a role. Consequently, our project is based on a comparative research design. The question of 'causality' between macro and micro levels is perhaps one of the trickiest in social sciences as changes at one level could result from a complex combination of conditions at both levels - the situation being one of '*multiple conjunctural causation*' (Ragin, 1987). However, it is obvious that new diachronic and comparative qualitative data cannot be produced nowadays to cover citizens' representations of the past thirty years – no interview techniques allow for such an investigation and quantitative surveys scrutinizing public policies experiences and representations are not available. As a consequence, we will rely on the reanalysis of qualitative data. This requires rigorous comparative analyses and in-depth case studies, as well as an extensive fieldwork on data gathering regarding citizens' attitudes towards politics and policies.

Examining policy feedback among citizens in European welfare states is an important research area because it engages questions of great normative significance for democratic governance and legitimacy (Campbell, 2012). This paper focused on two major challenges for the study of contemporary democracies, namely the democratic outcomes of neoliberalisation and supranationalisation processes across Western Europe. To continue on this path, however, more empirical studies are needed. This would be a necessary condition for avoiding the pitfalls of developing a disconnected theoretical framework of analysis and for better understanding how changes of social policy across Europe impacts democratic linkages. To this regard, the policy-focused political science triggers a new research agenda by proposing new key interpretations of the erosion of democratic linkages as the product of past policies. On the theoretical level, this paper proposes mobilizing the concept of policy citizenship in order to capture this specific dimension of social legitimacy that has been overlooked in past research.

The level of Europeanization varies greatly between countries and between policy areas: some of them are highly Europeanized, while others are very little Europeanized (e.g. Brouard, Costa, König, 2012). But Europeanization is taking place in a globalised world, and because Europeanization and globalisation share similar features, it is difficult to disentangle both processes. Here, the United States will serve as a counterpoint.

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