



## **The determinants of intrafamily ideological differentiation: Western European Social Democracy between 1990 and 2019**

**Speaker:** Federico Trastulli

Date and Time: March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021, 11:00 – 12:30hrs

**Virtual Room S02** – Via Lisbona

### **Abstract**

As outlined in Mair and Mudde's (1998) seminal contribution, the frequently employed concept of party family can refer to four distinct features of political formations: their origins and sociology, transnational links, policies and ideology, and names or labels. Whilst some of these criteria seem less convincing (e.g., party names or transnational links), most authors agree that ideology is what ultimately distinguishes between party families (e.g., Seiler 1980, von Beyme 1985, Ware 1996, Mair and Mudde 1998). Hence, there seems to be a fundamental assumption of internal ideological homogeneity behind the very concept of party family.

However, this does not seem to always hold in empirical reality, as shown for instance with regard to liberal and radical right parties (e.g., Ennser 2012; Carroll and Kubo 2019). There is, instead, more controversy when analysing Western European social democracy, which some deem one of the most internally homogeneous party families from an ideological viewpoint (e.g., Camia and Caramani 2012, Freire and Tsatsanis 2015), whilst others disagree (e.g., Volkens and Klingemann 2002, Volkens 2004, Elff 2013). In fact, descriptive evidence from Manifesto Project (MARPOR) (Volkens et al. 2021) data highlights a considerable degree of what I refer to as intrafamily ideological differentiation in Western European social democracy over the last three decades along the economic left-right dimension, alongside considerable variance over time.

Hence, by analysing the economic left-right positions of the main social democratic formation in 20 Western European countries over 30 years (1990-2019) and 153 elections, this thesis asks a fundamental research question: why do parties from the same party family adopt different ideological positions? This dilemma taps the very essence of the concept of party family. At the same time, the thesis aims to provide a so-far missing multivariate explanatory analysis of the determinants of intrafamily ideological differentiation that includes both party-political and

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socio-economic predictors, going beyond existing descriptive investigations (Volgens and Klingemann 2002, 166; Camia and Caramani 2012, 50).

By adopting a funnel of causality approach in the construction of the explanatory framework (e.g., Campbell et al. 1960), the thesis identifies four blocs of potential macro-determinants of parties' economic positions and, at the aggregate level, intrafamily ideological differentiation emerging from the literature. These are, in order of causal distance: systemic electoral factors, political globalisation and Europeanisation, economic globalisation, and shorter-term economic conditions and election-specific factors. Overall, these macro-factors are operationalised by employing 13 different indicators in the analyses, whilst the measure for the dependent variable is a positional MARPOR-based index.

These variables form a time-series cross-section (TSCS) dataset, based on which ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions with panel-corrected standard errors (PCSEs) are performed (e.g., Beck and Katz 1995). The adopted approach to causal modelling, path analysis (e.g. Wright 1921, 1934; Pearl and Mackenzie 2018), allows discerning the effects of the separate blocs of determinants by presenting four corresponding regression models that only control for more causally distant factors.

As expected, preliminary results show a rather differentiated and complex picture. The most interesting findings include the extremely significant impact of national debt, previously underexplored in comparative empirical examinations, which pushes Western European social democrats further to the economic right; the contrasting effect of Europeanisation and economic globalisation, the former pushing further to the economic right as expected (e.g., Laffan 2014) and the latter going into a leftwards 'compensation thesis' direction (e.g., Hellwig 2016); and the underexplored but important role of the dominant internal factions and their ideological leaning. More information is necessary to interpret these positional results and link them to variations in regressors that result in intrafamily ideological differentiation at the aggregate level. At the same time, more work is needed to confirm the testable implications of the type-level conclusions of this work at the token-level (Rohlfing and Zuber 2021), by further analysing a handful of relevant national contexts.

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**Luiss**  
Libera Università Internazionale  
degli Studi Sociali Guido Carli

Viale Romania 32, 00197 Roma  
T +39 06 85 22 52 90-57 00-57 02  
scienzepolitiche@luiss.it

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Libera Università Internazionale  
degli Studi Sociali Guido Carli

Viale Romania 32, 00197 Roma  
T +39 06 85 22 52 90-57 00-57 02  
scienzepolitiche@luiss.it

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### **About the Speaker**

Federico Trastulli is a PhD Candidate in 'Politics' at the Department of Political Science of LUISS Guido Carli University and currently a Visiting Doctoral Researcher at the Centre de Recherches Politiques de Sciences Po (CEVIPOF), Sciences Po Paris. His research interests are in the fields of political parties, electoral competition, and voting behaviour in comparative perspective. His doctoral thesis investigates the determinants of intrafamily ideological differentiation in Western European social democracy between 1990 and 2019.

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degli Studi Sociali Guido Carli

Viale Romania 32, 00197 Roma  
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