

Consistent Citizens? Exploring and Explaining Mechanisms of Opinion Change

Åsta Dyrnes Nordø

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)
University of Bergen, Norway
2019

UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN



Consistent Citizens? Exploring and Explaining Mechanisms of Opinion Change

Åsta Dyrnes Nordø



Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)
at the University of Bergen

Date of defense: 20.12.2019

© Copyright Åsta Dyrnes Nordø

The material in this publication is covered by the provisions of the Copyright Act.

Year: 2019

Title: Consistent Citizens? Exploring and Explaining Mechanisms of Opinion Change

Name: Åsta Dyrnes Nordø

Print: Skipnes Kommunikasjon / University of Bergen

Scientific environment

Åsta Dyrnes Nordø is affiliated with the Department of comparative politics at the Faculty of social sciences, University of Bergen. Her Ph.D. project is part of the interdisciplinary research field Democracy and the Rule of Law at the University of Bergen. The project is also linked to the Digital Social Science Core Facility (DIGSSCORE) at the University of Bergen. During the work on her Ph.D. project, Nordø has been affiliated with the research group Citizens, opinion, representation (CORE) at the Department of comparative politics as well as the research units Migration, extremism and diversity and Climate and environment at the DIGSSCORE.

Acknowledgements

Close to six years ago I started working on this thesis. During these years a number of people has played an important role for the progress of my project, leaving me in a debt of gratitude.

First, a big thank you to my main supervisor, Kristin Strømsnes, for showing great confidence in me and for always being supportive of my work. Her feedback on my drafts, always thorough, critical and to the point, has been invaluable in the process of writing this dissertation. Second, I would like to thank my co-supervisor, Johannes Bergh, for many insightful and broadening talks and for his enthusiasm about my project. I have benefitted greatly from his scholarly insights, and I am thankful for his honest advice and his careful reading of my work.

Special thanks also to Elisabeth Ivarsflaten for her interest in my project and her kind and instructive advice throughout the project period, I have benefitted greatly from all our discussions. Thank you also for collaborating on one of the articles in this dissertation, I learned a lot from our work together.

I also want to express my gratitude to all good colleagues at the Department of comparative politics for providing an open, honest and friendly work environment. Talks over the coffee machine, lunch breaks and departmental parties have made the lonely life of a PhD scholar a bit less lonely. Thanks to the departmental research group Citizens, Opinion, Representation (CORE) for feedback and discussions on early drafts of my articles. Many thanks to Anne Lise Fimreite, Stefan Dahlberg and Cornelius Cappelen for valuable feedback on the dissertation at the finalizing seminar. Thank you also to the Digital Social Science Core Facility (DIGSSCORE) at the University of Bergen for your generous inclusion of many of the survey items used in this dissertation and for providing a thriving and enthusiastic scholarly environment. Many thanks to Endre Tvinnereim for his collaboration – coordinating the climate and environment research group connected to DIGSSCORE and the Norwegian Citizen Panel together with him was highly instructive.

To my PhD-colleagues, a big thank you for rewarding and insightful discussions at the Solstrand seminars at the end of each semester, and for providing the support and understanding that only people in the same situation as you can offer. Special thanks to Lise Bjånesøy – for her friendship and for being my number one discussion partner, always with thought-through and helpful comments.

I have been lucky to spend part of my time as a PhD scholar affiliated with other institutions. Thanks to Elisabeth Ivarsflaten at DIGSSCORE for inviting me to join your organization for the 2016 fall semester, it was a most constructive time. Thank you also to Professor Paul M. Sniderman for inviting me to join the Department of Political Science at Stanford University in the first half of 2017. I am deeply grateful for his feedback on my work and for his mentoring during my stay. Thank you also to the Norwegian Research Council, the Meltzer Foundation, and the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Bergen for supporting the stay at Stanford economically.

My friends and family also deserve mention. Thank you to my extended family of ‘sampolers’ – Martin, Julie, Ingvild, Erla, Kirsti, Kaja, Ingrid and Rebekka – keep on Rokkan in the free world! A big thank you to all my friends who have celebrated my achievements and listened to my frustrations during this painstaking process. Thank you also to my family, for all that you are, and for reminding me that life is much more than a dissertation.

Last, I want to express my profound gratitude to the three loves of my life. To my children, Anna and Arne, you are my biggest source of joy and inspiration. Thank you for brightening my every day! And last, Ole, my commitment to you has only grown stronger through these years. Thank you for your patience and your generosity. I could not have asked for more in a life partner.

I dedicate this dissertation to my grandad, Arne Nordø, who passed away two weeks before it was handed in. Although heartbroken, I am left with tremendous gratitude for all that you have taught me. Thank you.

Summary

This dissertation examines patterns of public opinion change and their determinants from the perspectives of both internal and external theories of opinion change. Based on new and original panel data on Norwegian citizens' opinions on a range of policy issues from 2009 to 2017, this study contributes four main insights, summarized in the concept of 'the consistent citizen'.

First, the dissertation reveals a comparatively low level of opinion change both when opinion change is studied both in the short run and the long run, and across an exhaustive range of political issues. Thus, I argue that people change their political opinions to a moderate extent, thereby challenging long-standing scholarly beliefs about the widespread volatility of mass public opinion.

Second, the dissertation demonstrates that opinion change is somewhat influenced by (a) party cues, although the effects differ depending on the party's role in the policy process and the saliency of the issue; (b) political awareness; and (c) issue importance. That said, all these conventional expectations prove more modest than what much of the previous literature has argued. Moreover, in terms of effect size, the biggest effect on opinion change is assigned to (d) external shocks, while (e) the political salience of the policy issue at hand is found to have more moderate effects on opinion volatility. Therefore, I argue that when opinion change takes place, it happens in predictable ways given the context of the policy issue at hand and individual preconditions.

Third, another main finding is that sudden extensive changes in public opinion due to external events do not necessarily cause a permanent shift in preferences. I identify an attitudinal baseline that citizens move away from in response to a sudden exogenous shock and yet revert to after a considerable amount of time has passed. Consequently, I argue that the existence of a baseline attitude serves to support the argument that citizens' attitudes are grounded in broader beliefs (such as ideologies or values).

Fourth, following citizens' policy opinions across one gradual process of policy formation and one where there is an exogenous shock to the political system, this dissertation suggests that understanding the context is important to predicting opinion change. Studying opinion developments in real-time settings, I argue that the rhetorical environment that surrounds an issue, as well as the political and societal contexts that it operates within, is likely to contribute to both the scope and timing of opinion change.

Overall, these findings suggest that on average, citizens are consistent and able to manage their role as democratic citizens by holding mainly stable baseline opinions as long as nothing happens, yet they are responsive to actual changes in the political environment. This sketch of a consistent median citizen challenges much of the existing literature and has important implications for how we evaluate citizens' democratic competence within normative democratic theory.

By studying an exhaustive range of policy issues within one polity across an extended period of time using different data sources with differing modes of conduct and time between waves, this dissertation offers one of the most comprehensive studies of opinion instability within a European multi-party polity. As the European literature on opinion instability is scattered and inconclusive, adding one more study to the European body of research is a contribution in itself. Moreover, by utilizing observational panel data, I can make more sound causal conclusions about the patterns of attitude change as they take place in the real world and take context more systematically into account. In sum, the empirical and methodological approaches undertaken in this thesis provide both substantive knowledge and improved causal evidence about the scope of opinion change and its mechanisms within a multi-party system.

List of Articles

Nordø, Åsta Dyrnes. "Opinion Instability in Representative Democracies: Making a case for the Politically Consistent Citizen." Sent to *Political Behavior* for review August 2, 2019.

Nordø, Åsta Dyrnes. "Do Voters Follow? The Effect of Party Cues on Opinion Change during a Policy Process." Currently under review at *Scandinavian Political Studies*.

Nordø, Åsta Dyrnes and Elisabeth Ivarsflaten. «The Scope Effects of the Refugee Crisis on Public Opinion towards Immigration." Sent to *European Journal of Political Research* for review August 20, 2019.

Table of Contents

Scientific environment	I
Acknowledgements	II
Summary	IV
List of Articles	VI
1 Introduction.....	- 1 -
1.1 Research questions and contributions.....	- 1 -
1.2 Public opinion: A definitorial discussion	- 6 -
2 Public opinion and democracy	- 11 -
2.1 The normative import of opinion change	- 11 -
2.2 Theories of public opinion change	- 14 -
2.3 Summary of the theoretical discussion.....	- 21 -
3 Studying public opinion change in Norway.....	- 25 -
3.1 The political system matters	- 25 -
3.2 The case of Norway: A least likely laboratory for studying opinion change?	- 28 -
4 Methodology and data.....	- 37 -
4.1 Panel data analyses on public opinion change.....	- 37 -
4.2 Estimating panel models of opinion change	- 40 -
4.3 Data on the Norwegian public: The Norwegian Citizen Panel and the Norwegian National Election Study.....	- 41 -
4.4 Challenges of inference: Panel attrition and panel conditioning bias	- 48 -
5 The structure of the thesis	- 57 -
5.1 Article 1: Opinion Instability in Representative Democracies: Making a Case for the Politically Consistent Citizen.....	- 59 -
5.2 Article 2: Do Voters Follow? The Effect of Party Cues on Opinion Change During a Policy Process.....	- 61 -
5.3 Article 3: The Scope Effects of the Refugee Crisis on Public Opinion Toward Immigration - 63 -	-
6 Conclusion and future research	- 67 -
6.1 The consistent median citizen.....	- 67 -
6.2 Theoretical implications	- 68 -
6.3 The way ahead.....	- 73 -
7 Literature list	- 75 -
8 Article 1: Opinion Instability in Representative Democracies: Making a Case for the Politically Consistent Citizen	- 85 -
9 Article 2: Do Voters Follow? The Effect of Party Cues on Public Opinion During a Process of Policy Change.....	- 147 -
10 Article 3: The Scope Effects of the Refugee Crisis on Public Opinion toward Immigration - 189 -	-

1 Introduction

1.1 Research questions and contributions

Citizens play a leading role in democracy. Through elections, voters elect the politicians that they consider to be the most able to represent them, and this is done through evaluating parties' policy positions and comparing them to their own political interests. This idea of an 'issue public' who are well informed and care about policy issues is one of the classical ideas of citizens in democratic theory. Yet citizens' ability to fulfill this role is a topic of enduring controversy in the literature on public opinion. What characterizes citizens' patterns of opinion change? Is it marked by a presence of non-attitudes reflected in random opinion change, or do citizens hold real attitudes, indicating that patterns of opinion change should follow certain regularities?

Growing out of Converse's authoritative study, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics" (1964), the dominant literature argues that citizens show levels of opinion instability that make them incapable of playing a supportive role in democracy. Through his 'black and white' model, Converse argues that public opinions on policies are generated by two groups: one small group that has stable attitudes (issue public) and one dominant group that changes its attitudes at random. This study has spawned an entire research tradition studying public opinion and has also inspired a large body of revisionist literature debating the accuracy of its conclusions. One strand of revisionist studies attributes the largest part of response lability found by Converse to measurement error (e.g., Achen, 1975; Ansolabehere et al., 2008; Erikson, 1979). Another strand of research argues that the diagnosis of mass publics is not nonattitudes but ambivalence, identified as ad hoc cognitive assessments of survey questions (e.g., Feldman, 1989; Hill and Kriesi, 2001; Zaller, 1992). And yet another strand of studies focused on the time period Converse based his findings on, arguing that this was a particularly non-ideological period in American politics and that citizens' perceptions of policy positions are considerably more accurate when the level of political conflict is higher and reflected in the debate surrounding policy alternatives (Key, 1961; Nie et al., 1979 [1976]).

Recently, the role of citizens in democracy has received renewed attention following the publication of Achen and Bartels' book '*Democracy for Realists. Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*' (2016). Their main conclusion reads that: "group and partisan loyalties, not policy preferences or ideologies, are fundamental in democratic politics" (Achen and Bartels, 2016: 18). This dissertation is partly inspired by and should be read as a contribution to this ongoing discussion.

Achen and Bartels (2016) argue that the contemporary democratic process does not function according to its ideals, both in terms of providing a basis for mass participation and in terms of facilitating an efficient representation of the public will. They base this conclusion on five empirical observations: 1) most democratic citizens are politically uninterested and poorly informed and lack either the resources or motivation to choose their parties or candidates based on policy issues; 2) even the issue public of sophisticated and engaged citizens base their political decisions on social identities and group and partisan loyalties; 3) citizens have a hard time assessing the responsibility of government accurately, leading to blind or myopic retrospective voting, thus weakening the accountability function of elections; 4) citizens' perceptions of parties' policy platforms and their own policy views are significantly influenced by their party preferences; and 5) institutions of direct democracy are mostly hijacked by interest groups and lobbyists as citizens refrain from getting engaged in political matters.

The restated dire diagnosis by Achen and Bartels (2016) of citizens in western representative democracies half a century after Converse's seminal study has sparked a new scholarly debate about its accuracy and extensiveness (e.g., Achen and Bartels, 2018; Fowler and Hall, 2018; Sniderman, 2017). This dissertation speaks to the above debate by asking two interrelated research questions: To what extent do citizens change their opinions, and which factors successfully predict opinion change?

By examining these questions through the lens of extensive data on the Norwegian citizenry, I aspire to contribute to the research on opinion change and its determinants in several ways. This thesis' main contribution is *theoretical*, as it makes a case for *the consistent citizen*. Going against the tide of much of the dominant theorizing surrounding citizens'

inability to play a meaningful and supportive role in democracy, this dissertation argues that in general, people hold real opinions – first and foremost, this applies to their temporal consistency, and it also applies in the sense that when people do change their attitudes, they do so in non-random ways related to contextual push and pull factors.

The second contribution is *empirical*, based on this dissertation's scope of analysis that gauge the presence of opinion change across an exhaustive range of policy areas. Instead of studying mass opinion change in a particular domain on a specific topic like much of the existing literature (Druckman and Leeper, 2012), this dissertation offers a more holistic approach by incorporating a wide range of policy issues with varying degrees of issue salience and proximity to ideological core issues. Due to this broad approach, the conclusions drawn in this dissertation offer a general outlook on public opinion change within a polity.

Third, I make another *empirical* contribution by expanding the US-dominant empirical focus to include a comprehensive study of opinion change and its determinants within a very different context – that of the Norwegian multi-party system. European studies of opinion change are scattered and often based on less-than-ideal data. Consequently, this study of Norwegian citizens, based on representative panel data, provides long-awaited knowledge of mechanisms of opinion change in a context that differs substantially from the US. By adding a comprehensive study to the body of literature on opinion change, and conferring the findings of the literature on European public opinion, the dissertation is well-suited to contribute to theory development by demonstrating the limited applicability and validity of the current dominant theory in the Norwegian case. Thus, this thesis aspires to use insights from the multi-party context of Norway to inform theories of opinion change and their application to Western European multi-party states.

Finally, I make a *methodological* contribution by studying opinion change as it evolves within a real-world setting. Previous research on mechanisms of opinion change relies mostly on cross-sectional studies, failing to soundly research the causal expectations laid out in the literature, or on experimental designs, failing to reconstruct the real-world environment within which citizens' attitudes are shaped. This thesis improves on the previous research by

accommodating representative panel data with research designs that are apt for studying opinion change at the individual level, thereby securing improved levels of internal validity. Specifically, I conduct two case studies of one slow-moving and one abrupt political event and their effects on public support for related policies by monitoring public opinion over an extended period of time. Taken together, the empirical approaches undertaken in this thesis provide both improved causal evidence and new substantive knowledge with respect to attitude change and its dynamics within a multi-party context.

The overall research questions are examined through three empirical articles with differing levels of analysis answering different aspects of the research agenda. The first article takes a broad approach by researching levels of opinion change on an exhaustive number of policy issues and studying the moderating effects of political awareness and issue importance, which are the main explanatory variables in the existing literature. In contrast to many studies arguing that a lack of opinion stability is a trait of citizens in modern western democracies, this study suggests that large segments of the public do hold stable opinions and that political awareness and issue importance moderate opinion change but only to a limited degree.

In the second article, I study the role of party cues on opinion change following a controversial policy proposal to criminalize street begging as it is introduced, debated, and decided upon. There is a presumption in the literature that citizens comply with their preferred party's policy opinion as they become aware of it. This in-depth study moderates the existing expectation presented in the literature by showing that party cues affect only parts of the electorate and only as the policy reform becomes salient in the public debate. Thus, this dissertation indicates that party cues affect voters differently and that the role that party cues play is likely to be affected by the broader information environment surrounding the policy change.

Finally, the third article investigates public opinion reactions to sudden exogenous shocks by taking the refugee crisis of 2015 as the empirical point of departure. Importantly, I find that the public reaction was big in terms of scope, with more exclusionary attitudes reported not only toward refugee policies but across more general immigration issues. Moreover, the

exclusionary reaction was observed across political stripes but was driven by the supporters of parties who agreed to restrict immigration in response to the crisis. Last, the reaction was enduring, but it reverted to pre-crisis levels of support close to two years after the authorities gained control of the situation.

Overall, this dissertation shows that members of the public hold real political opinions – characterized by opinion consistency, interconnectedness of related attitudes, and united and lasting (but not permanent) change in opinions – when faced with contextual change. These findings counter the elitist perspective recited by Converse (1964) and Achen and Bartels (2016) regarding low public capacities for politics based on the unreliable and unstable nature of mass opinion. Moreover, this dissertation’s studies show that when citizens change their opinions, it is only moderately explained by the factors that dominate in the literature: political sophistication, issue importance, and party attachment. Lastly, the three empirical articles indicate the importance of context – meaning both the specific policy context and the broader political context – in properly comprehending mass opinion change. Specifically, I ascribe elements of the deviation from the findings in the dominant US literature to the political context in which this study is conducted. In sum, the findings in this dissertation adds important knowledge to the ongoing debate over democratic citizenship and have implications for how scholars should view the role of public opinion in a representative democracy.

The rest of this introductory chapter is structured as follows. I continue this section with presenting the overall analytical framework of the dissertation and connect the main theoretical concepts: public opinion and opinion change. Second, I turn to what the extant research has to say about the overall research question, discussing a number of authoritative studies in the literature and presenting an outline of the theoretical expectations in each of my three studies. Third, I present the Norwegian case and through a focus on the party system, the social system, and the media system I suggest that the Norwegian context might create an environment where it is easier to hold stable attitudes. Fourth, I elaborate on the methodological choices made throughout the thesis, with a particular focus on panel data, the data sources used, and the measurement of opinions through surveys. Fifth, I present a summary of the empirical articles with a focus on the main findings and contributions of

each. In the final section, I tie the different findings together to reach an overall conclusion, highlight the theoretical implications and point toward avenues for future research.

1.2 Public opinion: A definitorial discussion

1.2.1 Defining the construct: Attitudes, opinions and public opinion.

Different definitions of attitudes have been proposed as the scholarly interest in citizens' opinions has developed. The first definitions were broad in their outreach and closely tied to behavior. Consider, for example, Allport's (1935: 784) classical account: "An attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related." As the discipline became preoccupied with measurement, new and narrower definitions focusing on evaluative predispositions toward single objects were proposed (for an overview, see Krosnick et al., 2005: 22-24). Arguably, the most widely accepted definition today was proposed by Eagly and Chaiken (1993: 1), who define an attitude as "A psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor." Two key features of this definition should be mentioned. First, an attitude is directed toward a *specific attitude object*. This object can be a person, an idea, a place, a policy, an experience, etc. Second, an attitude is *evaluative*, reflecting a feeling of positivity or negativity toward the attitude object (Holbrook, 2011: 141-142).

With this walk down the ladder of abstraction from concept to measure followed the recognition that manifestations of attitudes (as assessed through surveys) are not the same as the attitudes themselves. Indeed, measurement is imperfect, consisting of both random and systematic errors. Consequently, the term 'opinion' was introduced as the designation of respondents' latent attitudes as measured through surveys. Many scholars, especially within psychology, make strict distinctions between the concepts of attitude and opinion. While acknowledging this difference, I lean on the political science tradition using these two concepts interchangeably (Clawson and Oxley, 2008: 16). Arguably, this also better reflects the common usage of the words.

One last construct needs to be defined, which is that of public opinion. It is a key term in democratic theory as it denominates the relationship between the people and the government. Over time, people have ascribed a variety of meanings to this term, but since the emergence of extended male suffrage in the nineteenth century, public opinion has commonly been used as a synonym for mass political attitudes (Zaller and Feldman, 1992). In more recent history, the debate between the socio-psychological and the sociological conceptions of public opinion has preoccupied the field.¹ Representing the former group, Allport (1937) was among the first to conceptualize public opinion as an aggregation of individual opinions. This view was contested by sociologist Blumer (1948), who saw public opinion as an inherently collective phenomenon, emerging through the communication and clash of group interests. In a similar critique of the sidelining of public opinion with an aggregate of individuals, Bourdieu (1979) declared in the article title that “Public opinion does not exist”. In his view, the prevailing classification of public opinion is blind to power relations and group interests when assuming that all opinions are equal and thus should be equally weighed. Accordingly, public opinion could never be properly evaluated through individual survey responses.

Despite these objections, with the establishment of the polling industry, the understanding of public opinion as an aggregate of individuals’ opinions prevailed, and today, public opinion literature has come to see public opinion and opinion polls as two sides of the same coin (Converse, 1987). Modern critics are more preoccupied with limitations of measurement, contending that public opinion exists, but that polls do not do a very good job of capturing it (e.g., Bishop, 2005). Most public opinion scholars today share a confidence in the aggregation-oriented approach, not least due to advances within survey research. Page and Shapiro (1992: 30-31) nicely sum up this belief:

We see survey research as a remarkably effective research tool, particularly in recent years when practitioners have been able to take advantage of long experience. Carefully worked out sampling schemes permit confident inferences about the opinions of millions of Americans, based on interviews with a few hundreds of them.

¹ For a thorough review of different understandings of public opinion, see Noelle-Neumann (1993) and Herbst (1993).

Modern instrument design and interviewing techniques, combining art and science, elicit meaningful responses. (...) And our focus on changes over time in responses to identical questions overcomes most of the usual travails associated with imperfect question wording.

While recognizing the limitations in the definition of public opinion as aggregation, this understanding of public opinion forms the basis of my use of the concept.

1.2.2 Studying opinion change

This thesis asks whether citizens hold consistent opinions or not. In the literature on public opinion, the designation of consistency has been used to describe different aspects of citizens' opinion formation. Consistency has been used to describe attitude constraints, meaning the likelihood of a citizen's taking on a certain position on one issue given their position on another. Consistency has also been used as synonym for opinion stability, meaning the predictability of a citizen's position on an issue at one point in time given their position on the same issue at an earlier point in time. Finally, consistency has been used to describe attitude congruence, construed as the extent to which a citizen's policy opinions on specific issues are shaped by their general political orientation (Sniderman and Bullock 2004, p.337). In this dissertation, opinion stability and instability is in focus. Thus, when I discuss *consistent citizens* in this dissertation, it should be taken to designate citizens with stable opinions.

To evaluate the presence of consistent citizens a focus on volatility in opinions is necessary and thus this study is preoccupied with opinion change and not opinions per se. The process of people changing their underlying opinions has been described as projection, persuasion and rationalization. When using the term opinion change I follow Lenz (2009) who argues that this concept has the virtue of not implying any particular mechanism. Inherent in the concept of change is a temporal aspect: a shift away from previous opinions and toward new ones. Attitude change includes processes of attitude formation (a change from having no attitude toward an attitude object to having an attitude) and changes in an existing attitude (an existing attitude becoming more or less positive or even a jump from the positive to the negative side or vice versa) (Holbrook, 2011: 142). Although scholars of psychology treat the

former as a special type of attitude change (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993), I do not distinguish between the two in the empirical analyses that make up this dissertation.

Two different analytical approaches to the study of opinion change have developed, and these two approaches also tend to come to different conclusions regarding citizens' democratic competence. Studies of micro public opinion hold the individual as the unit of analysis and typically employ surveys that measure an individual's support for an issue. Studies of macro public opinion hold a given political issue or a given point in time as the unit of analysis, typically focusing on the overall percentage of individuals who support or oppose a perspective at a given point in time (Druckman and Leeper, 2012). Despite being based on the same study subjects – survey respondents – their conclusions differ radically. Whereas studies of aggregated opinions report high degrees of opinion stability (Page and Shapiro, 1992; Ansolabehere et al., 2008; Erikson et al., 2002; Soroka and Wlezien, 2010), studies of individual-level opinion change find evidence of unstable political attitudes (e.g., Achen and Bartels, 2016; Chong and Druckman, 2010; Zaller, 1992; Freeder et al., 2019).

This dissertation studies individual-level opinion change as opposed to aggregate public opinion change. As I am interested in informing the debate on whether citizens are able to contribute fruitfully to the upholding of democracy, studying change at the individual level seems the most sound. Some scholars of macro studies argue that as long as public opinion gives stable and meaningful feedback to government it does not matter if there are currents of individual-level volatility behind the aggregate stability – democracy would still be in good shape (e.g., Page and Shapiro, 1992; Erikson et al., 2002) Yet based on democratic theory, such an argument is misguided at best. If considerable proportions of citizens are characterized by random fluctuations in attitudes, the aggregate, no matter how stable, creates an illusionary rule by the people. In Achen's (1975: 1227) assessment, if individuals do not possess meaningful attitudes, let alone well-defined policy preferences, then "democracy loses its starting point." Thus, it is only through studying opinion change at the individual level that we can gain systematic insights into the cornerstone of democratic theory, namely citizens' competence in directing democratic politics.

2 Public opinion and democracy

2.1 The normative import of opinion change

Implicit in any theory of democracy is a model of the citizen: their cognitive capacities, behavioral tendencies, and motivations. Yet the theories vary considerably in their views on the capabilities of citizens to support democratic institutions through their interests and actions. In this section, I focus on two theoretical directions that offer radically divergent views on citizen capacity – the ‘classical’ theory of democracy and the elitist theory of democracy.²

In the classical model of democracy, citizens play a vital role, characterized by their active participation, high levels of attention to, and interest in politics, and their ability to decide matters in favor of the general interest. Based on this belief in the public’s capacities, Mill (2006 [1861]) advocated for a representative democracy to secure individual liberty and the development of individuality. He argued that participation in political life was vital to creating a direct interest in government and, as such, a basis for an informed and engaged citizenry (Held, 1987: 85-102). As such, the classical model of democracy argued for the superiority of democratic institutions based on the possibilities it offered for the human development of its citizenry (Walker, 1966: 288). In contemporary democratic theory, Dahl (1961; 1989) has built heavily on Mill in his theory of pluralist democracy. The main assertion for classical democracy theorists is that of popular rule — the idea that public policy results from extensive and informed discussions among an active, informed and democratically minded citizenry. Put slightly differently by Dahl (1956: 3), “Democratic theory is concerned with processes by which ordinary citizens exert a relatively high degree of control over leaders.”

The elitist theory of democracy – first introduced by Madison in *The Federalist Papers* (Hamilton et al., 1961) yet developed into a theory by Weber (1978 [1922]) and later by Schumpeter (1942) – has a radically different view on the democratic capabilities of ordinary

² The main aim of this discussion of democratic theory is to show the different views of citizens’ capacities within two main theoretical directions. In between the two strands of thought discussed here are a dozen variations. For a more thorough discussion of different directions within democratic theory and their idea of the citizenry’s capacities, see Held (1987).

citizens. This group of scholars considers the electorate to consist of two groups: 1) the elite, who possesses ideological commitments as well as manipulative expertise, and 2) the masses, who are poorly informed, have little interest in public affairs, and are largely driven by emotions and thus subject to manipulation. Furthermore, instead of justifying the superiority of democracy in terms of its possibilities of human development like Mill and Dahl, scholars of elitist democracy theory focus on democratic institutions' superiority in terms of efficient and coherent government. Based on this understanding of democracy they criticize the classical theory of democracy for being utopian and naïve, ignoring the dangers of democratic instability due to demagogic leadership, mass psychology, and group coercion connected to large-scale participation by a democratically inadequate citizenry (Walker, 1966: 286-289). As a consequence of citizens' inadequacies elitist scholars argue that democratic stability is best secured when democratic decision-making is limited to choosing between competing elites in elections (Walker, 1966). Thus, the two theories of democracy offer radically different understandings of citizens' role in a democracy. In the classical theory of democracy competent and interested citizens guard the system against tyranny and improves quality of government, whereas in the elitist account of democracy the citizenry is considered a potential threat to the system which must be curbed for democracy to ensure coherent government.

Confronting the different models of democracy with empirical evidence, the bleak picture of citizen competence painted by the first generation of public opinion scholars has received much attention and was also cited in support of the elitist account of democracy theory (Jenkins-Smith and Herron, 2005). The first proposition coming from these studies was that most citizens lack the cognitive capacity to understand the complexity of politics and they lack sufficient political knowledge to develop reasoned attitudes toward policy issues. Second, they argue that most citizens lack the underlying dispositions necessary to systematically structure and constrain their views on different policy domains. Third, they contend that individual-level opinions are unstable, subject to rapid swings, and susceptible to overreactions that are detrimental to coherent, sustained policy (Converse, 1964; Converse, 1970; Lippmann, 1925; Almond, 1956; Campbell et al., 1960). Taken together, the first comprehensive studies of public opinion identified a public incapable of providing meaningful guidance to government decision makers on policy matters.

This intimate connection between an uninformed citizenry and opinion change has made opinion instability a key concern since the lack of opinions on most political matters, in its logical conclusion, may undermine the legitimacy of modern democracies. If sufficient numbers of citizens are indifferent to even the most salient issues, it becomes difficult to maintain the representative idea of democracy that government policies are adopted based on the public will. And if public policy is not justified by popular support, the legitimizing link between the masses and the ruling elite is gone.

Thus, when connecting normative democratic theory to public opinion studies, stable opinions seem to be considered both preferable and necessary to secure sound democratic systems. Yet, as Togeby (2004: 230-231) highlights, holding stable opinions is not a sign of competent and well-qualified citizens in and of itself. If citizens' surroundings change in some way – be they political, like a change in government, or personal, like losing their job or having a sick child – it is reasonable to expect that their attitudes in connection to these issues may change. To put it differently, if reality changes, but attitudes remain stable, this should be seen as an expression of rigid and unreflected attitudes, and not of competence. Druckman (2012) and Druckman and Leeper (2012) provide content to this argument, holding that:

“Strong opinions and stability are often seen as signs of an engaged and thoughtful citizenry – coveted attributes. (...) Yet strong attitudes also lead to motivated reasoning that can cause individuals to resist consideration of relevant alternative perspectives. At the extreme, such individuals can be close-mindedly dogmatic, which might be as problematic as extremely labile preferences. In terms of opinion ‘quality,’ theorists should not presume that the quality of well-developed and thought-out opinions always trumps that of fleeting opinions” (Druckman and Leeper, 2012: 62)

I side with this line of thought and argue that stable opinions should not always be considered preferable. In fact, changing attitudes may be just as real and thought through as stable attitudes, especially in meeting with a changing reality.

2.2 Theories of public opinion change

2.2.1 The original debate: Converse's nonattitude thesis

The first theories of public opinion were inspired by the great mismatch between the democratically engaged citizen, as identified by classic conceptions of participatory democracy, and the disengaged citizen identified by the first generation of empirical studies on the mass publics. Philip Converse's (1964; 1970) dire conclusion about the democratic capability of citizens became the now-famous "nonattitude" thesis, stating that large swathes of the public do not hold any views on the major issues of the day, but when asked for their opinion, they express one anyway (either to pretend they have opinions or to satisfy the interviewer) (Saris and Sniderman, 2004: 1).

Furthermore, Converse's (1964) 'black and white' model argued that public opinions on policies are made up by two groups: one that had unchanging attitudes (issue publics) and another that changes its attitudes at random. He also introduced and discussed an imaginable third group of 'durable changers'³ that have meaningful policy attitudes yet change them over time. Still, in conclusion, he found this group to be negligible in size. Converse was clear that the model approximates public opinion better for some issues than others. Yet, both he and revisionist scholars seem to agree that in general, instability is associated with nonattitudes and not with 'durable changers' (Erikson, 1979; Hill and Kriesi, 2001; Converse, 1964).

As already mentioned, Converse's study triggered extensive scholarly revisionism. Still, all these revisionist studies of citizens' capabilities have failed to fundamentally challenge the finding that most people have limited political awareness. Page and Shapiro (1992: 11) sum up 40 years of research by stating that no available evidence indicates any increase in the public's level of political knowledge. According to Achen and Bartels (2016: 4), "voters, even the most informed voters, typically makes choices not on the basis of policy preferences of ideology, but on the basis of who they are – their social identities."

³ This term was first introduced by Hill and Kriesi (2001).

Another line of research supporting the contention that citizens' political preferences are haphazard by nature is exemplified in Achen and Bartels' (2016) work on political responses to natural events like shark attacks and droughts. They find that instead of evaluating politicians based on their ideological proximity or overall evaluation in office, citizens hold incumbent politicians responsible for the natural disasters that took place during their term of office. Based on this account, Achen and Bartels argue that voters are irrational and thus that the conventional understanding of democratic accountability in modern democracies is severely undermined. Yet, despite its central standing in the research environment, few studies have looked into and replicated the nonattitude thesis based on the same broad scope as Converse's original study, not even across countries.⁴

A characteristic of the debate on the extent to which citizens hold volatile opinions is the tendency to use a surprisingly narrow data material to draw general conclusions. The revisionist literature emerging in the wake of Converse's nonattitude thesis is almost exclusively based not only on US data but even on the same data source: the American National Election Study (ANES) (Achen, 1975; Ansolabehere et al., 2008; Converse, 1964; Converse, 1970; Converse and Markus, 1979; Erikson, 1979; Feldman, 1989; Freeder et al., 2019; Achen and Bartels, 2016; Zaller, 1992).⁵ Inevitably, one runs to the risk that specificities in the data connected to the wording of questions and scaling options play an unfavorably large role in the general conclusions drawn.

The varying levels of analyses across studies have also contributed to the lack of a common understanding of the state of public opinion formation. As mentioned earlier, one strand of research has utilized aggregate-level data when studying opinion change, using the change in distribution of respondents on an issue to measure the volatility of opinions (Page and Shapiro, 1992; Erikson et al., 2002; Soroka and Wlezien, 2010). These studies consistently report a politically stable and rational citizenry, which is quite the opposite of the studies based on individual-level data. In Page and Shapiro's (1992: 45) words: "Our data reveal a remarkable degree of stability in America's collective policy preferences." Yet newer studies have shown that aggregate-level data often fails to identify change at the individual level.

⁴ Notable exceptions are Niemi and Westholm (1984) on Sweden and Togeby (2004) on Denmark.

⁵ A notable exception is Hill and Kriesi (2001) who base their analysis on Swiss panel data.

Especially in situations where respondents move in different directions, individual-level change is balanced out at the aggregate level (Togeby, 2004; Druckman and Leeper, 2012). Despite this empirical disconnect between aggregate- and individual-level opinion dynamics, some scholars see the aggregate stability as a savior of democracy theory because no matter how irrational or random citizens may be in their preferences, the population as a whole appears rational. It may be an anchor for those who sideline opinion instability with nonattitudes, but theoretically it seems hard to align comprehensive individual-level attitude change with classic democratic thinking. Moreover, empirically, this does not seem to hold as a general premise, as the studies in this dissertation will show.

2.2.2 The explanatory power of internal mechanisms: Political sophistication and opinion strength

Ever since the classic debate of nonattitudes was introduced by Converse (1964), politically sophisticated citizens have been assigned a crucial role as an ‘issue public’ characterized by stable, ideology-driven attitudes. Political sophistication is connected to opinion change because it is closely related to opinion constraint, meaning the extent to which one’s political thoughts on similar issues are connected to each other (Luskin, 1987). First, because politically knowledgeable citizens know the political parties’ and candidates’ positions they can connect the parties and candidates with their positions on specific issues (Converse, 1964; Krosnick, 1990). Second, because they are able to connect specific issues and broader political platforms, they report more stable attitudes (Lenz, 2009; Lenz, 2012).⁶ Third, and in a different vein, the theory of motivated reasoning argues that knowledgeable individuals hold more stable opinions as they are better at seeking out information that confirms their prior attitudes, view evidence consistent with their prior opinions as stronger, and spend more time counter arguing and dismissing evidence that opposes their prior opinions, regardless of its objective accuracy (Taber and Lodge, 2006; Lodge and Taber, 2013). Thus, in encountering new information, knowledgeable citizens are expected to reject new evidence and cling to the prior opinion, exhibiting greater attitude stability than less knowledgeable citizens.

⁶ This could take place for several reasons, please refer article 1 for an overview of the theorized mechanisms.

Although the theories of political awareness as a moderator of opinion change all anticipate that citizens who are more politically aware are less likely to change their opinions, the empirical evidence for this relationship is mixed, with some studies suggesting a modest relationship between the two (Lenz, 2012; Freeder et al., 2019), while other (mainly European) studies tend to find small differences in attitude stability among politically sophisticated and unsophisticated citizens (Hill and Kriesi, 2001; Kumlin, 2001).

A second predisposition theorized to moderate attitude stability is opinion strength. This dissertation studies attitude strength through the operationalized term of issue importance. Issue importance is first and foremost associated with resistance to persuasive attempts (e.g., Krosnick, 1988; Schuman and Presser, 1981a). First, personally important attitudes should be more accessible than less important opinions because they motivate thinking about the personally important policy issues which should increase issue consistency across time (e.g., Lecheler et al., 2009; Krosnick, 1990; Zuwerink and Devine, 1996; Krosnick, 1989). Second, issue importance is expected to motivate information gathering and thus encourage citizens to acquire greater and more accurate knowledge about a political issue. Thus, when making decisions related to policy, this updated and accurate information as well as one's own attitudes are taken into account (e.g., Converse, 1964; Bolsen and Leeper, 2013; Walgrave and Lefevere, 2013). Third, the theory of motivated reasoning, as discussed above, is expected to apply also to strongly opinionated citizens (Taber & Lodge, 2006). Consequently, people with strong prior opinions are expected to reject new evidence and uphold their attitudes, thus showing greater attitude stability than citizens with weak attitudes.

Despite the repeatedly stated assumption of a strong opinion causing less volatile opinions, the empirical body of evidence is limited. While studies of persuasion effects and information processing find consistent evidence of the moderating effect of opinion strength (Jacks and Devine, 2000; Lecheler et al., 2009; Leeper and Robison, 2018; Lodge and Taber, 2013; Taber and Lodge, 2006; Plescia and Staniek, 2017), the few empirical studies investigating the link between subjective issue importance and opinion instability directly find substantively small and only partially statistically significant differences (Bassili, 1996; Krosnick, 1988; Prislun, 1996; Schuman and Presser, 1981b). The importance of political

sophistication and issue importance in explaining patterns of opinion change is a focus of the first article of this dissertation.

2.2.3 The explanatory power of external mechanisms: Party cues and issue salience

In a complex world, citizens use partisanship to filter political information. This makes parties and candidates play a vital role as providers of information. The seminal idea of party identification was introduced by Campbell et al. (1960) who considered partisanship as a 'perceptual screen' through which day to day politics were interpreted. Through his seminal work *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (1992), Zaller aligns with Campbell et al. in assuming limited abilities of citizens to maneuver critically in meeting with party cues.

Despite being consistently confirmed in studies of public opinion (e.g., Bartels, 2002; Chong and Druckman, 2007; Iyengar and Kinder, 1987), Campbell et al.'s idea of automated updating processes has been challenged by several revisionist schools. While one strand of studies argues that party cues function mainly as informational shortcuts (Chaiken, 1980; Kam, 2005; Sniderman, 2000) another strand of research points to party cues as facilitating motivated reasoning (Bullock, 2011; Lenz, 2009; Slothuus and de Vreese, 2010).

In recent years, the theory of partisan bias inspired a big bulk of experimental framing effect studies, and also here the consensus is that large sections of the general public can be moved from one side to the other on a political issue depending on how parties or candidates frame it (Chong and Druckman, 2007; Slothuus and de Vreese, 2010). Yet challenging the framing effect studies is another line of research arguing that what is typically described as a framing effect is instead a learning effect.⁷ As citizens become aware of politicians' policy judgments they tend to automatically defer to this position without requiring persuasive arguments to justify changing their views (Broockman and Butler, 2017; Lenz, 2009; Lenz, 2012). Related to the normative conception of democratic citizens as ideologically coherent and consistent, the theories of partisan bias mentioned this far

⁷ This line of research is also labelled the position adoption perspective.

undermine this ideal by assuming that citizens are easily moved by party cues related to the policy issue at hand.⁸

Challenging the unequivocal effect of party cues on citizens is a literature focusing on the failure of most studies in this field to provide citizens with the ability to evaluate the information in elite communications. This strand of empirical studies highlights that exposure to relevant information may enable citizens to arrive at a policy position independently of political elites (Bullock, 2011; Gilens, 2001). This outweighing of partisanship with substantive information has also been found in recent US studies (Boudreau and MacKenzie, 2014; Boudreau and MacKenzie, 2018).

In a different vein, another line of studies has tried to overcome the inconclusive findings regarding party cues' effects on public opinion by studying the effect of what parties *do* instead of focusing on what parties *say*. Using party manifestos, one group of studies indicate that voters fail to systematically comprehend changes in parties' policy positions (Adams et al., 2011; Adams et al., 2014; Plescia and Staniek, 2017). Yet investigating long-term links between policy change and partisan perception makes some scholars highlight that across time voters seem to comprehend policy change, yet the extent to which it affects citizens' policy opinions remains unsettled (Carsey and Layman, 2006; Wlezien, 1995; Adams et al., 2012). Another series of studies focusing on actual shifts in policy position take advantage of natural experiments to study partisans' reactions. These studies find that citizens respond to party cues, but only if they align with the political beliefs that the citizens hold (Seeberg et al., 2017; Slothuus, 2010; Leeper and Slothuus, 2016).

Moreover, broadly accessible events such as exogenous shocks or international crises have been highlighted as scenarios where party cues may not be the driving force explaining opinion change (e.g., Feldman et al., 2015; Gamson, 1992; Lawrence and Bennett, 2001). Yet

⁸ One line of revisionist research focuses on the methodological weaknesses of studies of framing effects, with the experimental setup arguably pushing opinion change through introducing respondents to one-sided information, failing to mimic a competitive information environment that reflects the real world (Sniderman and Theriault, 2004a; Kinder, 2007), not allowing participants to choose information for themselves (Druckman et al., 2012), and understating the effects due to respondents being primed by information from the real world of politics (Slothuus, 2016).

another group of studies argue the opposite, stating that in times of crisis party cues may play an important role in guiding public opinion as extraordinary uncertainties lead to a consensual elite supporting the political leadership and consequently few dissenting voices. In such situations, scholars argue that parallel opinion movements across voter segments are likely, as people who are ordinarily disposed to be critical of the government follow their parties and respond more favorably (Albertson and Gadarian, 2015; Brody and Shapiro, 1989). Importantly, however, this effect is expected to be limited in duration, returning to regular patterns of conflict as politics as usual returns (Brody and Shapiro, 1989). The effect of party cues in times of crisis is a focus in the third article of this dissertation.

Despite little mention this far, the importance of salience is closely connected to the study of mass opinion change through the way it affects the flow of elite communication to the public. This mechanism is described by both Zaller (1992) and Togeby (2004) who argues that as an issue becomes salient in the public debate party endorsements are more efficiently communicated, thus reaching broader parts of the electorate. Depending on whether they are already in alignment with their party, their feeling of attachment to the party, and their political predispositions citizens are expected to respond differently to a more efficient information environment.

Empirically, salience is confirmed to be an important facilitator for opinion change. Togeby (2004: 225-231) finds that policy issues receiving little public attention show comparatively high levels of individual stability. Still, due to a lack of dynamic data there are almost no studies looking into the moderating effects of party cues on opinion change as a policy issue changes from being low-salient to high-salient. This, however, is the analytical setup for the second article of this dissertation.

2.2.4 The explanatory power of temporal mechanisms: external events

In their review of the micro-macro disconnect in studies of public opinion, Druckman and Leeper (2012) contend that one factor contributing to opinion instability is the presence of a stimulus. In this dissertation, the effect of stimulus is studied through a focus on external events. Specifically, I study the effect of stimulus by investigating patterns of attitude change across two very different types of events: 1) the introduction and treatment of a controversial policy proposal, and 2) the external shock of a refugee crisis. There is little

theorizing on the effect of events on public opinion in general, possibly due to the scarce access to data related to a change in context. Yet a literature specializing on effects of international crises and terrorist attacks may be instructive for the study of public responses to the refugee crisis. Studies by Brody and Shapiro (1989) and Sniderman et al. (2019) highlight the consensual response by the public to sudden external crises. They argue that crises that require immediate response by the authorities create a situation where the opposition remains silent, and the media reports of cross-party consensus, leading government supporters and critics alike to become more supportive of government policy. This behavior among the political elite, however, is self-limiting. Once the sense of crisis fades politics-as-usual resumes, and arguably this should make party supporters return to their pre-crisis standpoints (Sniderman et al., 2019: 254-255). A plausible competing account is that such a critical event lead to a permanent shift in mass public opinions. Hutter and Kriesi (2019) argue that exogenous shocks such as the Euro crisis and the refugee crisis have this transformative potential. Still, whether this is actually the case remains an empirical question to be researched in the third article of this dissertation.

The other external event that I study is assumed to have a very different dynamic on public opinion. Being an event taking place within the Norwegian political system, the process of implementing new policy is expected to be politically divisive, at least if the policy issue becomes salient in the public debate. In other words, the policy process produces public conflict within the political elite along familiar cleavage structures (Mueller, 1973: 209). The policy proposal to ban street begging was controversial and became highly salient in the political debate. Thus, the expectation is opinion change in direction of increased polarization due to more efficient communication of party cues as the policy proposal becomes salient. Moreover, the fact that one party shifted their policy position during the policy process provides a unique opportunity to also examine the impact of party shift on party supporters' policy perceptions. This is the policy context within which I study the effect of party cues and issue salience in the second article of this dissertation.

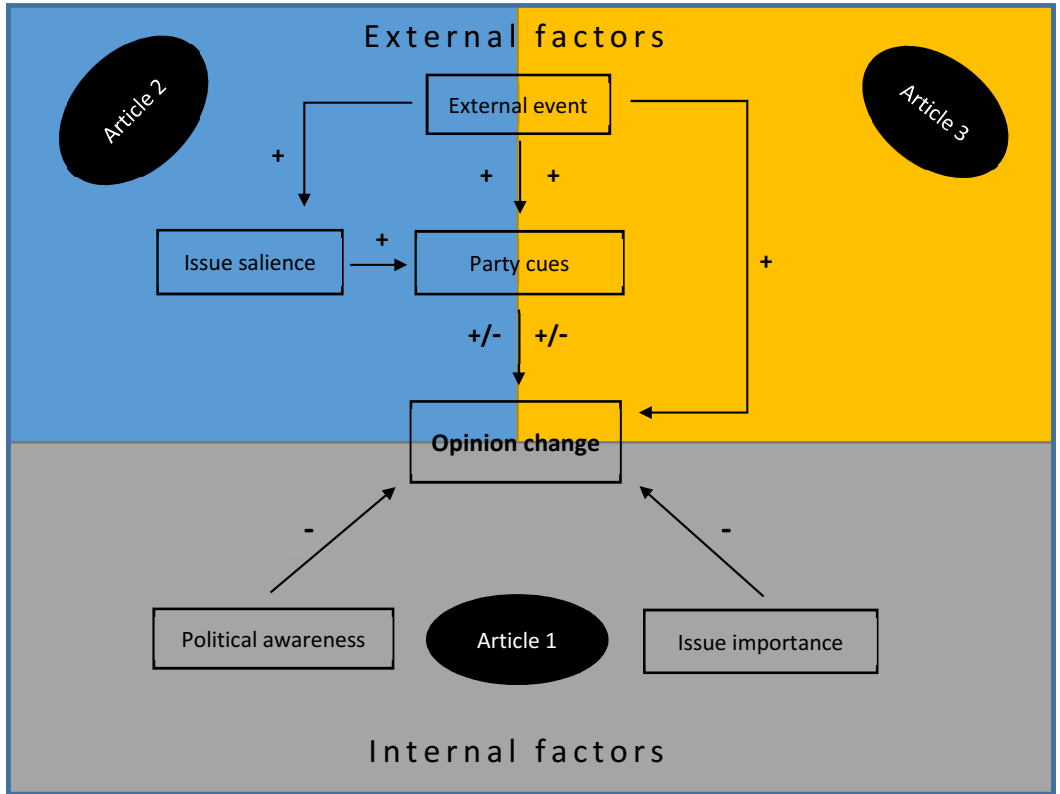
2.3 Summary of the theoretical discussion

This dissertation takes a broad look at opinion change by studying both the magnitude of opinion change as well as the main mechanisms expected to affect citizens' opinion stability.

Focusing on the mechanisms of change, the theoretical discussion has highlighted a number of traits that might affect citizens' likelihood of changing their attitudes within a representative democratic system. This dissertation builds on two different lines of public opinion research: the internal studies focusing on individual traits that shape the way citizens perceive of politics, such as political awareness and issue importance, and the external studies focusing on the effects of policy endorsements and policy information as conveyed through party cues, issue salience, and the occurrence of events external to the individual.

Based on the previous discussion, Figure 1 below graphically describes the two main explanatory frameworks of internal and external factors predicting opinion instability as well as their assumed connections with policy opinion change as studied in this dissertations' three empirical articles. While the figure focuses strictly on *mechanisms of attitude change*, it is crucial to note that all three studies start of by investigating the direct effect of time on policy opinion. In the first study internal factors are tested, focusing on the moderating effects of political awareness and opinions strength on opinion instability. These effects are illustrated in the bottom of Figure 1, both expecting a negative causal relationship. The second study covers the external theoretical perspective by analyzing the relationship between party cues and opinion change, conditioned by the policy issue's salience in the public debate, as illustrated in the upper left part of the figure. Finally, the last study examines the public response to a sudden external shock by utilizing the 2015 refugee crisis as a testable case. As it is conceivable that party support may moderate this relationship, an interaction effect is studied also here, as illustrated in the upper right part of Figure 1. In sum, Figure 1 summarizes the theoretical expectations tested empirically in this thesis.

Figure 1. Causal model of the mechanisms of opinion change studied through the three empirical articles in this dissertation



3 Studying public opinion change in Norway

3.1 The political system matters

While public opinion studies originated in the US, the American literature on public opinion and the European literature on public opinion have developed in parallel. According to Saris and Sniderman (2004: 2):

European researchers who have done work on [nonattitudes and political sophistication] have followed the work of their North American colleagues; North American researchers have not followed the work of their European colleagues as assiduously, to put it generously.

Due to this lack of integration, points of difference and commonality remain largely underdeveloped.

The development of theories attempting to detect and explain the volatility in people's opinions was a solely American business to begin with. As a result, the literature on changes in public opinion has been dominated by US scholars. This is unsurprising given that this is where studies in public opinion originated in connection to the survey infrastructure of the American National Election Study (ANES) established at the University of Michigan in 1948 (Burns, 2006). The US literature has relied heavily on data from the ANES and has thus been rather narrow in its empirical focus. Despite this, the studies' conclusions have often had a universal outlook (e.g., Achen and Bartels, 2016; Converse, 1964). Thus, many of the dystopic conclusions about voters' lack of real attitudes formed the natural starting point for European scholars who had started to grapple with similar research questions.⁹ The scattered studies of opinion change within the European context – many of them indicating more stable political attitudes among citizens – have failed to lead to further theory development. Nonetheless, an obvious contrast between the US and Europe is the political system, and I concur with other scholars who argue that the system is consequential for the

⁹ There is a large body of European literature focusing on Converse's theories of mass opinion. Still, it seems to me that it is not the nonattitude thesis that has attracted most interest among European scholars. Rather, the theory of attitude constraint, meaning the coherence between opinions on different policy issues within the same issue field, has been in focus. The concept of constraint is more closely related to issues like political ideology and political values, which have been a prominent focus among European public opinion scholars.

conclusions one arrives at in answering questions on opinion dynamics (e.g., Campbell and Valen, 1961; Granberg and Holmberg, 1988; Niemi and Westholm, 1984).

Similar to the governments of most European countries, Norway is a multi-party system. According to Lipset and Rokkan (1967), a crucial aspect of a multi-party system is the multidimensional nature of core issues, also called cleavages. Breaking with the two-party US system where all issues are interpreted as fitting into a left—right policy space, the European multi-party states see core issues that cut across party lines and thus more complex patterns of friends and foes develop. This makes the context within which citizens form their attitudes very different and makes a valid case for why one might expect to find differing patterns of opinion formation across party systems.

Based on the above description of the party landscape and the conflict structures, Norway reads like a case where it should be hard for citizens to hold stable opinions. Yet in their early comparative study of the Norwegian and American political systems, Campbell and Valen (1961: 508) conclude that:

(1) differences between parties in stands on issues are both greater and clearer in Norway than in the Unites States; (2) Norwegian parties are more specific than American parties in appealing to various groups and sections of the electorate; (3) differences in policies between the parties are more effectively brought to the attention of the public in Norway than in the Unites States.

Needless to say, both political systems have witnessed important changes since Campbell and Valen's study. The number of parties in Norway's parliament has grown from six to nine, increasing fragmentation and possibly making it harder for citizens to orient themselves politically (Knutsen, 2017a),¹⁰ while the party polarization seen in the US in the last two decades has arguably made citizens hold stronger and more rigid opinions (e.g., Hetherington and Rudolph, 2015). Given these developments, one might argue that quite

¹⁰ Yet these new parties all have a clear profile, the Progress Party being an anti-immigrant party, the Green party being an environmentalist party and the Socialist Left Party having a clear 'new politics' profile, supporting a liberal immigration policy and being environment-oriented (Knutsen, 2017a).

possibly, the systemic differences framing the political environment in which citizens' form their opinions have narrowed. Despite these developments, a recent study by Freeder et al. (2019) still finds support for Converse's (1964; 1970) conclusion that great segments of the American population lack opinions on political matters, and Berglund's (2004) and Aardal and Bergh's (2015: 63-65) analyses of the stability of party identification and issue dimensions in Norway indicate no increase in instability in the period where the new parties gained influence through elections.

Further qualifying Campbell and Valen's (1961) observations, Valen and Narud (2007) propose the conditional party mandate model, emphasizing that parties compete for voters in a multidimensional policy space and that the relative importance of the various dimensions determines the parties' positions in this space. Within this system, parties focus on issues where their policies are well-known and supported by their voters, thereby sending clear cues to their citizens¹¹.

Two thorough replications of the Converse study in a multi-party context were conducted by Niemi and Westholm (1984) and Granberg and Holmberg (1988), with each comparing Swedish and US election data. They find that the stability on public policy issues over time is higher in the Swedish mass electorate than what Converse observed in the US, and they find that as opposed to the findings in the US, people in Sweden have opinions that are more constrained and more closely linked to their voting behavior. Both studies assign this difference to a structural factor – the party system – concluding along the same lines as Campbell and Valen (1961) that “parties in Sweden give clearer, more consistent cues about where to stand on issues” (Niemi and Westholm, 1984: 65). More recently, similar conclusions have been drawn based on a comprehensive study of Danish voters (Togebly, 2004).¹²

¹¹ Other scholars have labeled this ‘issue ownership’ (e.g., Narud and Valen, 2001; Petrocik, 1996).

¹² The accumulation of European studies of opinion change conducted in Scandinavia is striking and arguably connected to the strong standing of political behavior research in the Nordic context, with close collaborations being formed between high-profile scholars in the Nordic countries and those in the US in the early days of public opinion research (for a review, see von Schoultz, 2015).

Compared to the comprehensive studies of public opinion formation in Sweden and Denmark, the Norwegian situation is understudied. The few studies considering opinion change in Norway have mainly focused on aggregated attitude dimensions and party identification, features in which the international literature has identified the most stable types of attitudes. Unsurprisingly then, they confirm the patterns of opinion stability found in Norway's neighboring countries (Aardal, 1999; Berglund, 2004). Yet this lack of a proper understanding of Norwegian citizens' opinion instability on policy issues underscores the novel empirical contribution that this dissertation makes to the research on mass opinion change.

3.2 The case of Norway: A least likely laboratory for studying opinion change? As has been laid out in previous sections, the history of public opinion change studies is one of clear theoretical expectations from the dominant American literature and scattered empirical findings and scant theory building on the state of citizens' attitudinal volatility in the European literature. Thus, studies of European countries are high in demand. This dissertation meets this demand with an in-depth study of political opinion change in Norway. This section provides an introduction to the Norwegian political system and related characteristics that are important to understanding the context within which the citizens studied in this dissertation form their political attitudes.

3.2.1 A consensual multi-party system

Norway, like the other Nordic countries, is historically characterized by a five-party system model wherein the major party families are included: conservative, liberal, agrarian, social democrat, and communist/left socialist¹³. The two biggest parties alternating power have been the Conservative Party and the Labor Party. Yet the Norwegian party system has seen increased fragmentation in terms of effective numbers of parties and it is the Nordic country that has experienced the greatest polarization from the 1950s to the 2000s (Knutsen, 2017a: 74). The new parties emerging are the radical right Progress Party, the environmentalist Green Party, and the traditionalist Christian People's Party, although the latter was originally established in Norway already in 1933. Important for understanding the Norwegian case is the effect that the dominant position of the Labor Party in the decades after the Second

¹³ The Norwegian left socialist party was not a successor of communist parties, but was established as a splinter party from the Labor Party in 1961 (Knutsen, 2017a: 51).

World War has had on the development of the universal welfare state with its income-maintenance schemes and social services, incorporations of various interests through corporative arrangements, and the development of a consensual democracy (Knutsen, 2017b).

Norway and the other Nordic countries are denoted as consensual democracies in the comparative literature (Lijphart, 2012). This concept relates to the fairly proportional organization of party votes into parliamentary seats and lays the groundwork for the multi-party system just described. Moreover, the Scandinavian parliamentary governments have two distinct features. The first is the high prevalence of minority governments. Counting all governments from 1884, Norway has been led by a minority government 62% of the time. The second is the frequent occurrence of (stable) one-party governments. A one-party minority government is the most frequent government composition in Norwegian parliamentary history, present 46% of the time. Yet, in spite of minority rule being the norm, stability and good performance characterize the Norwegian governing system (Heidar and Rasch, 2017). In the literature, minority governments are often connected with party polarization. In the Norwegian (and greater Scandinavian) context, the presence of a relatively centrist social democratic party with great support in general elections in the post-war period accounts for most of the one-party minority governments. Nonetheless, the last five elections have resulted in coalition governments.

Connecting these structural traits to the issue of citizen opinion formation, the Norwegian Power and Democracy Project argues that the minority parliamentary system of government – leading to coalition government and the development of multilevel governance at the European, state, and local level – makes it harder for citizens to assign responsibility for changes in policy and reforms to the right actor. This challenges the ability of citizens to hold political actors responsible for their actions through elections (Østerud and Selle, 2006). That said, the parliamentary processes around many policy issues, like legislation and developments of plans and strategies, are marked by a high degree of openness toward stakeholders and the general public, thus setting the stage for an enlightened political discussion that may enable citizens to hold the politicians accountable (Heidar and Rasch, 2017).

Social cleavage structures are important for understanding which central political conflicts between groups are important in society. A defining cleavage in the Norwegian political system is a center – periphery cleavage, which manifests in an agrarian party, a Christian party and a liberal party. Norway is a vast country consisting of many sparsely populated regions, which separates linguistic and religious groups along territorial lines (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). Regional differences in voting behavior have been attributed to three countercultures that are mainly located in the western and southern regions of Norway: the rural language (nynorsk) movement, the temperance and prohibition movement, and the dominance of Lutheran orthodoxy and pietism. This has led to the Christian People’s Party and the Liberal Party receiving strong support in these regions, whereas class voting is less prevalent. Out of these regional differences also comes a religious cleavage, with the strongest support for Christian People’s Party found within the Lutheran Church. Today, however, these countercultures are clearly weakened (Knutsen, 2017b: 80-81).

For Norway, the left—right economic cleavage has been important historically. Comparative analyses of class voting have documented that traditional class voting was, and still is, more prevalent in the Scandinavian countries than in other democracies, despite a marked decline from 1960 onwards in connection to the great changes in class structure (Knutsen, 2017b: 83-90). Moreover, the urban—rural conflict between peasants and the urban population related to the commodity market created distinct agrarian parties in the Nordic countries. These parties articulate the economic interests of farmers and find their base of support in rural areas. In Norway, recent centralization reforms of the police and hospitals, as well as municipal and regional mergers, has been connected to a lasting national surge in support for the agrarian Center Party, which resists these structural changes (Holdal et al., 2019).

Relating the structural cleavages to value orientations, the moral value dimension most important to the Christian People’s Party and the economic left—right value dimension (as well as the urban—rural conflict) are often referred to as ‘old politics’ as they capture the essence of the traditional lines of conflict. Yet a number of post-industrial conflicts denoted ‘new politics’ also shape the contemporary political system of Norway. Here, the value conflicts between environmental and economic growth values and immigration orientation

have been especially important. The environmental issue in Norway has provoked the creation of the Green Party. Yet compared to other European Green parties, the Norwegian Green Party was established late and lacks electoral success (Knutsen, 2017a: 68).¹⁴ And although the rightist Progress Party was originally established as an anti-tax and anti-bureaucracy party, they reoriented their political focus to become first and foremost an anti-immigration party in the 1980s. Empirical analyses find that the Progress Party voters reflect the most restrictive orientations toward immigration policies, whereas the Green Party and the Socialist Left Party have the voters with the most environmentalist orientations (Knutsen, 2017b: 100). To account for the multidimensional character of the political system, this dissertation covers all the cleavages presented here in the empirical analyses of political opinion change. As such, this study offers a comprehensive analysis of opinion change across all social cleavages in the Norwegian political system.

3.2.2 A rich, universal welfare state

Citizens' political outlooks are not only shaped by their country's political system; a country's welfare regime type also reveals characteristics that are relevant to understanding what shapes citizens' attitudes. The Nordic model is characterized by early social policy schemes from the late 19th century, preparing the groundwork for the development of respect for individual liberty and traditions of collectivism and community within an ethnically homogeneous population. In the post-war period, the Nordic model has told the story of a society that has been successful in uniting economic growth and competitiveness through a strong public sector while promoting broad public participation in the economic and social spheres of society. Relevant to the research on democratic participation is that the Nordic model, through substantial levels of taxation and extensive redistribution of wealth and resources, offers a social safety net, free public education, and universal health services. By ensuring that all citizens have a minimum of living conditions and education, the welfare system has been argued to facilitate high levels of civic participation, both in the economic and social spheres of society (Syvertsen et al., 2014; West Pedersen and Kuhnle, 2017).

¹⁴ One important reason why the Green Party has been a rather marginal force in Norwegian politics is the fact that the Socialist Left Party has been successful on coopting this conflict dimension through supporting environmentalist issues.

In Esping-Andersen's (1990) typology of welfare states, he defines the Nordic welfare model as 'social democratic,' highlighting its high degree of egalitarianism and universalism. The welfare system has had a transformative agenda focused on combatting differences in class and status through offering the same welfare state provisions to all. This encourages the participation and inclusion of citizens in the political and cultural public spheres (Syvertsen et al., 2014). That said, the golden age of the social democratic welfare state ended in the 1980s, followed by far-reaching challenges such as the dominance of a neo-liberal ideology, globalization, changing demographics, economic crises, and the question of upholding the welfare system in light of these changes. Yet the model has proven dynamic, adapting to new context. Of great importance for the upholding of the welfare state is the broad support for its guiding principles across parties of all political stripes in Norway. In fact, in some of the most expansive periods of the welfare state, a conservative government has been in charge (Knutson, 2017a; West Pedersen and Kuhnle, 2017).

One area in which the Norwegian welfare state stands out is its economy. Norwegian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita is by far the biggest among the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, and the reason for this gap is the asset revenues created by the oil industry. This gives Norwegian authorities significant financial latitude and it is also an important contributor to the fact that in 2013, Norway was the only OECD country to see a 20 percentage point surplus of revenue after public expenditure was extracted¹⁵ (Hansen, 2016). This exceptional economic situation is accompanied by a large public sector. In 2013, 30 % of Norway's workforce was employed in the public sector. Moreover, in terms of public expenses, half of them are being allocated to different welfare schemes, signifying Norway's position as an extensive welfare state. And if we include state transfers to the municipalities, which are also mainly used to fund welfare services, close to two-thirds of the state's budget is reserved for public social policy (Hansen, 2016: 74-79).

Another characteristic of Norwegian society is its low level of income inequality. Estimating the Gini index of inequality before and after tax, comparative studies find that the size of the

¹⁵ Based on 2013 numbers from the OECD Economic Outlook database.

public sector in a country is inversely related to the level of social inequality (OECD, 2015). As such, the Nordic universal welfare states have been rather successful in securing an equal distribution of economic well-being. Nonetheless, OECD (2015) warns that since the mid-1980s, income inequality has been growing across all member countries, including Norway.

3.2.3 A media welfare state?

Although not a part of the traditional description of the Nordic model, the media system also warrants some attention given that it constitutes an important institution in modern society and has a great influence on citizens' knowledge and the information they receive about political matters. In their authoritative study on classifying media systems, Hallin and Mancini (2004) situate Norway (and the other Nordic countries) within the democratic corporatist model, which is characterized by news media reaching large segments of the population, relatively high degrees of independence between the political elite and the media, strong professionalization, and strong state intervention in the form of strong public service broadcasters and subsidies for the press. Studying the Nordic media system exclusively, Syvertsen and colleagues (2014) argue that it rests on four pillars: universal and egalitarian services, editorial freedom, a cultural policy that extends to the media, and a preference for policy solutions that are consensual and durable and involve cooperation between both public and private stakeholders.

Both the party press and the public broadcasting institutions were perceived as crucial vehicles by the social democratic movement to achieve the welfare state. Crucial infrastructure to disperse information, such as the postal systems and the telecommunication networks, were organized as public services from early on, and radio and television were institutionalized as public service monopolies between 1920 and 1960. This political control over communications infrastructure led to a homogeneity of culture and perspectives as citizens watched and listened to the same content on very few state-owned or strongly subsidized channels. That said, the Norwegian media system is also characterized by having one of the most well developed systems for (a heavily subsidized) private local press, as well as systematic subsidizing of second-largest newspapers in areas where there are several newspapers covering the same area (Syvertsen et al., 2014: , ch. 3). This arguably

secures diversity of political opinions as well as geographical diversity, and thus a more pluralistic stream of communication.

Moreover, communication is crucial to a democracy because it is vital for legitimacy. Norms and values are debated and negotiated through the media system, and it is the means by which the political elite can interact with the broader public. In this regard, a publicly regulated media system like the Norwegian can keep undemocratic forces in check and is to a large degree held accountable by society. The communication system also plays an important role as an agent of cohesion and social bonding through framing the narrative of the nation, defining in-groups and out-groups, and nurturing feelings of inclusion and exclusion. These studies of communication systems have focused on traditional media. Yet even newer studies focusing on digital media point to the unifying characteristics of the Nordic countries. Maier-Rabler (2008: 58) singles out a sociodemocratic information culture, identifying its key value to be that “information is a precondition for the political emancipation of the individual.”

Comparative studies of different broadcasters tend to find that public broadcasters, like NRK in Norway, creates a more informed citizenry. The scope of prime time news programming is largest in countries with a public broadcaster (Aalberg et al., 2010). Aalberg and Curran (2012) find that citizens who are not preoccupied with following domestic news and who are not interested in politics still hold a good level of knowledge of domestic affairs within countries with public broadcasting systems. Comparatively, in countries where commercial media controls the market (like the US) citizens who are politically uninterested are largely uninformed about current affairs. Soroka et al. (2013) show in a comparative study of six countries that those exposed to public television news learn more about hard news than those exposed to private television news for the same amount of time. This effect is even stronger in countries like Norway, where the share of public funding of broadcasters is high and where their de jure independence from the government is secured. Taken together, the characteristics of the Norwegian communication and media system, both in terms of securing equal access to information as well as educating citizens through a public broadcaster, lay the foundations for an enlightened citizenry that receives political information and is informed about day-to-day politics.

Overall, Norway is a consensual and multi-party representative democracy that ensures a close connection between the will of the people and the party portfolio. Moreover, it is an extensive welfare state, securing equality and similar opportunities for Norwegian citizens irrespective of their background. Similarly, the media system fosters equal access to information and news through a public, yet independent, broadcaster. And fueled by revenues from the oil industry, the country's economic situation is exceptionally good. I argue that within this stable system, citizens should have ample opportunities to develop stable and politically coherent attitudes, making Norway a least likely case for the study of opinion change. Yet the extent to which it is actually so remains an empirical question for this dissertation to find out.

4 Methodology and data

This dissertation employs quantitative large-N research designs to examine the scope and determinants of political opinion change across a range of policy issues in Norway. This section starts with introducing the characteristics of the data, underlining its prerogative by contrasting it with the conventional data used in public opinion research. Then I move toward the specifics of the data and methodological matters related to this dissertation. In all three articles, the unit of analysis is individuals from a random sample of Norway's population. In the following, I present the main quantitative technique utilized and discuss its main contributions and challenges. Moreover, I present and discuss the sources of data utilized and introduce the type of survey questions used to analyze opinion change in the three empirical studies.

Two kinds of questions form the core of every study on change. For this dissertation, the first question asks: How do opinions change over time? This is a *descriptive* question and asks us to characterize each person's pattern of change over time. The second question is *relational*, asking whether we can predict differences in the observed individual-level changes in opinion. Applied to this project, a relevant question is whether different types of people experience different patterns of change. In terms of the analytical framework, I follow Singer and Willett (2003) and consider these research questions to be of a hierarchical nature. First, within-individual change over time is situated at level one, where each individual is clustered within survey waves. Second, the study of between-individual differences in change is situated at level two, relating predictors to an inter-individual difference in change.

4.1 Panel data analyses on public opinion change

As this thesis is preoccupied with understanding opinion change, it is crucial to be able to incorporate time into the design. Thus, all the empirical articles in this thesis are based on longitudinal data – specifically, panel data from Norway. Panel data is characterized by containing “measures of the same variables from numerous units observed repeatedly through time” (Finkel, 1995: 1). The panel survey design was developed within the political behavior tradition in the US in the 1930s. It was mainly based on election study surveys with a two-wave pre—post design where parts of the electorate were contacted again in the

following election. Yet due to the principal mode of data collection at that time – knocking on doors and later on calling people — such endeavors were costly, and thus the supply of panel data was limited. With the digitalization of modern society, the possibility of conducting surveys through web-based solutions has revolutionized the survey industry, making panel data more affordable and easier to collect and thereby offering great improvements to the study of public opinion.¹⁶

Due to the historical costs of panel data, many studies of opinion change have been based on cross-sectional data. Panel data have two main advantages over cross-sectional data when it comes to internal validity: 1) the ability to model the direction of causal relationships; and 2) the ability to control for potential time-invariant confounders. This is done through explicitly building in the time dimension of the causal process, allowing for stronger causal inferences to be made. The fixed effects model has been the preferred panel model within public opinion research as it successfully holds time-invariant factors constant, thus controlling for all possible observed and unobserved time-invariant confounders. Moreover, fixed effects models allow us to relax the assumption that all respondents have the same starting point. Still, they omit all time-invariant factors, thus failing to allow respondents to change their opinions at a different pace (Bell and Jones, 2015). A newer branch of panel modelling denoted growth modelling offers a more flexible way of modeling change that is more successful in taking omitted variable bias into account. I take advantage of this new analytical model in the three empirical articles of this dissertation.

A large body of literature on opinion change is based on experimental data that are mainly collected through surveys. Despite the superior features of experimental designs in terms of their internal validity, controlling for confounding effects, panel data surpass most experimental studies in terms of external validity by being situated in the real world. A trait of the survey experiments that have typically been looking at communication effects is that they offer respondents one-sided presentations to evoke either support for a policy or opposition to it, but not both, thereby failing to represent a realistic information

¹⁶ Of course, other developments within the survey industry have not been equally positive. Low response rates and problems related to self-selection of respondents are two issues that threaten the generalizability of surveys and need to be treated with care (Berinsky, 2017)

environment in which opposing parties compete to put across their point of view (Sniderman and Theriault, 2004). Also, by offering all respondents equal information, such experiments fall short in reflecting the fact that today, citizens self-select their exposure to political matters and are thus not equally exposed to party cues or policy information (Druckman et al., 2012; Bennett and Iyengar, 2008). One problematic aspect of this is that one risks exaggerating the effect of these manipulations on opinion change. Thus, a great feature of observational panel data is that they measure citizens' opinions in 'the real world' as they interact with this complex information environment.

Another great opportunity that panel data offer is the possibility for natural experiments in the sense that events may occur during the data collection that shape public opinion. A great opportunity, which I take advantage of in two of the empirical articles in this dissertation, is to be able to say something about change before and after such a real-life stimulus takes place. With reference to abrupt and dramatic incidents, such as terrorist attacks or natural disasters, scholars argue that events may create big shifts in the public mood overnight (Albertson and Gadarian, 2015b; Stimson, 2004; Finseraas and Listhaug, 2013; Sniderman et al., 2014; Vasilopoulos et al., 2015). This contrasts more slow-moving developments, like the implementation of reforms, which can also lead to opinion change, but where the change is likely to happen across a longer period of time. I study both types of events and their effects on public opinion formation, by first analyzing the development of public opinion throughout an entire process of policy formation and then, by investigating the public reaction to the 2015 refugee crisis in Norway.

Despite the great advantages of repeated observational data, they too present an incomplete picture of what is happening in reality. While change happens continuously, the respondents are only observed at discrete points in time. Relatedly, as respondents enter the panel, processes of interest may already be happening, and as such, the baseline attitude may be anything but a neutral standpoint (Andreß et al., 2013). This makes it clear that time may also be biased, highlighting the need to be critical of start and end points in panel data series.

4.2 Estimating panel models of opinion change

As mentioned briefly above, one of the great advantages of using panel data is the ability to control for unobserved heterogeneity even if it is correlated with the variables in the model. Unobserved heterogeneity is one part of the error term in a panel model, reflecting all the unknown factors that are not controlled for by the independent variables in the model, but which in fact influence Y . The repeated observations of the same respondents allow me to control for all — both observed and unobserved — characteristics of the respondents that are constant across time. Put differently, each respondent serves as its own control. Under the assumption of no unobserved heterogeneity, pairs of individuals who share predictor profiles should have identical outcomes (Singer and Willett, 2003: 461). With my data, where I consider unobserved heterogeneity due to omitted variables and measurement error to be a potential problem for estimating sound models, this is good news. It can incorporate heterogeneity into the model through allowing each respondent to have different starting points (intercepts) (like fixed effects and random effects models), but at the same time allowing respondents to change opinions at a different pace over time while taking into account that repeated observations within individuals are not independent from each other (Singer and Willett 2003). This flexibility in incorporating heterogeneity at the individual level of the model is another great advantage of panel modelling. As my interest is in studying the scope of opinion change and differences across groups, my research questions necessitate heterogeneity in the effect of time, allowing each respondent to change at a different pace.

As I touched upon in the literature section, measurement error has played a central part in the debate on opinion change. Applicable to all survey research, measurement error is a concern related to unreliable measures and the interview situation. In panel data, the error terms tend to correlate over time as we observe the same respondents repeatedly. Moreover, panel data also risks measurement errors related to heteroscedastic error terms, meaning that the variance of the error term is not constant across time, as assumed. To deal with this, I apply robust standard errors, clustered for each respondent. Cluster-robust standard errors assume that observations are independent across clusters (i.e., respondents) but not necessarily within clusters. Thus, we control out any form of serial dependence

within clusters. That said, post hoc corrections are always second best. Having data free of measurement error is always the preferred option, no matter how unattainable in reality.

As for the data used in this dissertation, panel attrition is a possible challenge, as will be elaborated upon below. Given this, a great advantage of some panel models is that they can handle unbalanced panels (meaning data where units attrite over time) as long as the dropout is not systematically connected to the given characteristics of the respondents (missing at random: MAR). Through specifying maximum likelihood estimation, both complete cases and incomplete cases are used to calculate log likelihood, and this should result in unbiased parameter estimates (Enders, 2010; Graham, 2009). As mentioned above I mainly utilize a type of panel model called growth model which allows for a flexible handling of unbalanced data. The specific model choices for each article are treated in the article review below.

4.3 Data on the Norwegian public: The Norwegian Citizen Panel and the Norwegian National Election Study

In order to test hypotheses about variations in opinion stability over time, robust sources of data are required. First, the individual-level dataset must involve the measurement of political opinions. Second, the data must be an individual-level panel, as opposed to some kind of repeated cross-sectional survey. Third, any dataset must ask the same respondents the same questions two or more times. Although most major survey data collection efforts fail to satisfy these data requirements, Norway offers two publicly available datasets that both hold population-representative samples of the Norwegian population: the Norwegian Citizen Panel (NCP) and the Norwegian National Election Study (NNES). Both surveys offer the great advantage of monitoring political opinions on a wide array of policy issues across time (28 items in the Norwegian Election Study and 12 items in the Norwegian Citizen Panel), allowing me to study the mechanisms of opinion stability on an exhaustive set of political issues that are more and less salient in the public debate. These two data sources allow me to conduct a comprehensive study of policy opinion change and its determinants in Norway.¹⁷ Taken together, panel data from Norway offer rare opportunities to properly

¹⁷ As mentioned earlier, Berglund (2004) and Aardal (1999) have studied opinion change in the Norwegian electorate. However, their focus has been on the stability of party identification and opinion change on ideological dimensions and not on attitudes toward specific policy items per se.

study research questions concerning changes over time and draw inferences with stronger internal validity than cross-sectional data allow for and stronger external validity than survey experimental data allow for.

All three articles in this dissertation are based solely or partly on new and original panel survey data from the NCP. The data offer the most comprehensive panel data collection of political opinions in Norway. NCP is a new web-based panel maintained and administered by the Digital Social Science Core Facility (DIGSSCORE) at the University of Bergen that was established in 2013 for research purposes. NCP is a representative opt-out panel where the participants have been recruited through random sampling of 25 000 individuals from the official National Population Registry and are representative of both the online and offline population older than 18 years in Norway¹⁸ (Skjervheim and Høgestøl, 2013). Panel members were recruited by mail in two steps. New recruitment rounds relevant to this dissertation were carried out prior to the third wave and prior to the eighth wave (Skjervheim and Høgestøl, 2014; Skjervheim and Høgestøl, 2017).

The type of questions one asks and the level of specificity one chooses for measuring public opinion is important for the answers that one will get (Saris and Sniderman, 2004). As pointed out by Berinsky (2017: 311), there is often a mismatch between the level of specificity in the attitudes that we would like people to have and the attitudes they actually possess. Berinsky argues for a mezzo level of specificity; not so general as to be devoid of content, and not so specific that the survey items risk creating opinions where none exists. Yet there exists no agreement among public opinion scholars on what is the preferable level of measurement. While some focus on issue dimensions, typically aggregating single issue into multi-item measures, others focus on political values, yet the bulk of studies of opinion change bases itself on people's ratings of different policy items. In this dissertation I follow the majority of studies and make use of policy items that vary in their degree of specificity.

¹⁸ The Norwegian Population Registry includes everyone born in Norway as well as its former and current inhabitants. The extracted data from the registry were a) last name; b) first name; c) address; d) gender; and e) age.

In the initial stages of this dissertation, I was able to develop 12 original policy opinion items within three designated political issue fields — welfare, immigration and environmental issues — to be included in the NCP from wave 1. In this process, I had three overarching considerations. First, to ensure continuity with previous studies in this domain and the possibility of direct comparison, one part of the questions was borrowed from the Norwegian National Election Study (NNES) and a panel study conducted as part of the Danish Democracy and Power study (Magtudredningen). Second, the other questions were developed with the aim of monitoring citizens' opinions on political matters that had the potential to become salient and that represent the political times in which we live. Third, to minimize measurement error, I framed attitudinal questions with the goal of securing equal validity of the measurement across time. This was done by formulating items that would be valid irrespective of the actual policy change on any given topic. The 12 policy items were included into the Norwegian Citizen Panel for six waves (and some were asked across additional waves). All 12 policy opinion items are utilized in this dissertation, together with one additional opinion item that is also asked repeatedly.

For the three studies making up this dissertation, the first 10 waves of NCP are utilized in different constellations, dependent on the question under scrutiny. The number of waves used in the article varies between four and seven. And although in the world of surveys having seven waves of panel data is exceptional, it is not excessively much in the world of modelling. Due to the limited number of data waves utilized, as well as the change-measures used, most models are estimated based on the assumption that the individual movement in opinions is linear across time. In other words, I hold that the rate in which opinions change is identical over time. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the three studies of opinion change do not distinguish between processes of opinion formation, indicating a change from no attitude to having an attitude, and changes in an existing attitude in their empirical analyses.

The NNES data are used together with the NCP data in Article 1 to map the scope of opinion change. The NNES has been collecting data on Norwegian public opinion every four years since the 1957 general election and it is maintained and administered by the Institute for Social Research in Oslo. Like the NCP, the NNES is a representative panel with random sampling recruitment based on the electoral register of each election. As opposed to the

NCP, the NNES collects data through face-to-face interviews and phone interviews, conducted by Statistics Norway¹⁹ (Statistics Norway, 2015). In this dissertation, I make use of two-wave panel data collected in connection with the 2009 and 2013 general elections to Norway.

4.3.1 Measuring opinions

Within political science research, scholars have typically used three types of measures to assess attitudes. The most commonly used measure asks people to report whether they like or dislike (favor or oppose) an attitude object. This measure is direct in terms of registering citizens' opinions, yet it relies on respondents being willing to respond to the policy questions asked and risk social desirability responses. A second set of survey items asks respondents about their preferences toward policies or political candidates. It reads very similar to the first type of measure. Yet, a crucial difference is the fact that citizens' attitudes are assessed indirectly through a comparative evaluation where respondents choose from among a list of options or rank order these same options. Given its setup, it is assumed to be better at avoiding social desirability bias and acquiescence bias. However, one drawback is that by researchers offering the respondents a fixed set of policy considerations, they force the respondents to choose the alternative that most closely matches their (real) preference. As such, preference measures may risk being less precise than more direct measures of attitudes (given that the scales are exhaustive). A third type of attitudinal measure uses attitude-expressive behaviors as indicators of attitudes, typically measured through self-reports about financially supporting an organization or a political candidate. In using this type of measure, one must assume that respondents can accurately predict their own behavior and are willing to do so. However, this may be inaccurate — especially retrospective reports of past behavior. Such measures indirectly assess attitudes and have the drawback of being influenced by other factors as well (Holbrook, 2011: 142-144).

This dissertation bases itself exclusively on the first type of attitudinal measures when modelling mass opinion change and I follow the public opinion research tradition developed

¹⁹ From the 2017 general election, half of the respondents are surveyed through web-based solutions while the other half is still interviewed. However, the two waves used in this dissertation are from 2009 and 2013, so the old survey mode applies to this data material.

by the American National Election Study (ANES) and focus on policy opinions. The survey items are formulated as directional statements, like: 'The state should contribute to reducing income inequalities in society' or 'We should not allow oil and gas extraction in the Lofoten, Vesterålen, and Senja areas,' followed either by a seven-point (NCP items) or a five-point (NNES items) bipolar Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree.' Although there are critiques of the use of directional statements related especially to acquiescence bias (e.g., Saris et al., 2010), we ensure comparability with previous studies as almost every study of the subject of opinion instability has been based on such ANES-style items. In terms of the level of generality, the policy statements asked through the two surveys range from concerns about specific policy issues related to special groups (e.g., granting social rights to refugees), to the division of labor between different organizations in society (e.g., transferring state workplaces to the districts), to general issues without any reference to a specific group or person (e.g., consumption reduction to lower emissions). Thus, the scope of policy issues utilized in this dissertation is comprehensive in terms of the actual items, political issue fields, and the level of specificity.

The range of policy items vary in important ways that may affect the nature of opinion instability measured. First, the policy items vary in terms of their proximity to core ideological matters, regulating the ability of citizens to connect the items with party politics. Second, they differ in terms of their implementation status in the period studied, arguably affecting opinions. Third, they vary in their linguistic clarity as survey items, arguably affecting the presence of measurement error. Although expectations of opinion stability often are guided by the policy issues under study, this study is preoccupied with general patterns of opinion stability within a polity, and thus pay very limited attention to differences across political issue fields.

In this dissertation I use single items instead of multi-item measures. A common objection against the use of single items is that such measures may contain large error components due to measurement error that leads to biased results and a loss of reliability. This has compelled scholars to recommend the use of indexes instead, combining related single items to largely cancel out measurement error. There are three main reasons why I do not resort to multi-item measures. First, as my substantial interest is in studying processes of opinion

change, lumping opinion items into indexes removes the focus from the object of interest. For the two articles studying the effects of a change of context especially, indexes risks blurring the effects. Second, the success of indexes in canceling out error depends on this error being random. Yet, as will be discussed later, there are indications that the biases in the data have elements of structure. In those instances, lumping single items together may exacerbate rather than minimize the problem of measurement error. Third, as the number of items within each policy field varies, some indexes would be based on a minimum amount of information. By choosing to focus on single items, just like the seminal studies of Converse (1964) and Zaller (1992), I am prone to finding opinion instability, either because of 'errors in the items' or 'errors in the people', to borrow Freeder et al.'s (2019) apt wording.

By using specific public policy statements as opinion items, I base my dissertation on what Sears and Levy (2003) label the 'nonattitudinal side' of the dimension of affective strength, spanning nonattitudes to 'symbolic predispositions.' Thus, by weight of the item choice, I am biased toward identifying high levels of volatile opinions in the public (e.g., Zaller, 1992). If this postulation holds true, I should perform an easy empirical test on the expectation of high levels of opinion change. Another concern is related to the ability to properly tap public sentiment when using specific policy items. Berinsky (2017: 320) holds that more specific items demand greater expertise on the part of the respondent, and thus they fail to accurately gauge mass opinions. I recognize this concern, yet in this dissertation I am preoccupied with a broad assessment of opinion change, focusing on an extensive number of policy issues that vary in their levels of specificity. And despite this concern about the choice of measurement being prone to report opinion instability, both with the use of single items and with the choice of directional statements, this dissertation finds support for consistently moderate opinion change.

4.3.2 How representative is Norway?

The three empirical articles in this dissertation are all based on panel data that are exclusively from Norway, yet they make use of and aspire to inform broader theories of opinion change and its mechanisms. There is an obvious tension between the intent to provide general insights and the limited empirical scope of the data utilized to achieve this task. Thus, in this section, I spend some time discussing both the possibilities and the

limitations to generalize to other contexts given that the empirical material used in the thesis is based on Norway.

Following the comparative studies of Campbell and Valen (1961), Niemi and Westholm (1984), and Granberg and Holmberg (1988), the multi-party system is the systemic characteristic substantiated to explain the relatively more stable attitude formation found in Norway and Sweden when compared to the US. If this holds true, Norway should be a 'least likely case' through which to study opinion change. As already discussed, Norway's political system is characterized by stability and endurance. Besides having a stable multi-party system, Norway's overall economic situation has been very solid the last decades. Moreover, Norway did not suffer the same consequences of the 2008 economic crisis that hit Europe hard, and the anti-systemic 'threat from the right' has been less pronounced in Norway than it has been in many other European countries. Although it is a populist right-wing party, Norway's Progress Party is considered moderate. Due to low thresholds of representation, the Progress Party has long been represented in parliament, and since 2013, it holds the position of junior party in a Conservative-led coalition government. Relating this to the notion of Norway being a 'least likely case' of opinion change, one would expect that Norway's stable steering in terms of an enduring multi-party system, a prosperous economy, and successful co-optation of anti-systemic parties into the political system minimizes the chances of observing widespread political opinion change. Yet, if we do detect considerable opinion change in Norway, the implications should be more severe for less stable and less democratically efficient countries.

That said, Norway also experiences a host of contemporary trends that are common to most European countries. The development of increased immigration, followed by the dramatic increase in asylum claims during the 2015 refugee crisis, has made the policy field of immigration more contentious than ever, mirroring the developments in Europe in general. Likewise, reports of increasing inequality and a concentration of wealth among the very few is a general trend in the Western world, and in Norway it challenges support for the Norwegian welfare state and its workings (e.g., Aaberge et al., 2016). Moreover, despite the relatively seamless integration of the Progress Party into the Norwegian political system, the presence of dissatisfied democrats — meaning citizens reporting discontent with and

distrust in the performance of the political system — is found in Norway as well as in most other European countries (Linde and Dahlberg, 2016; Haugsgjerd, 2018). Thus, despite its stable political system, changes to the guiding principles in Norwegian society follow the trends seen in the rest of Western Europe. Put differently, Norway is challenged by the same social, economic, and political trends that are currently shaping European politics, and if these developments lead to changing patterns of opinion formation the results for Norwegian citizens are likely to be representative of a broader group of countries. Therefore, I argue that the findings of this dissertation are relevant for and possibly representative of other European multi-party countries.

Consequently, this comprehensive study of opinion change in Norway should be relevant for the theories that this thesis makes use of and aspires to inform. However, as the literature is still US dominated, both in terms of the amount of research produced and in its outreach, it is clear that this dissertation with data from a single country does not allow for bold generalizations based on a least likely approach. Nonetheless, the studies add to the cumulative knowledge of opinion volatility among voters within multi-party states, thereby contributing to the European tradition of public opinion research.

4.4 Challenges of inference: Panel attrition and panel conditioning bias

There are two important methodological issues associated with the use of panel surveys: panel attrition and panel conditioning. In this section, I introduce the two challenges concerning inferences related to the data used for this dissertation, run analyses aimed at evaluating the presence of both phenomena in the data that I use, and discuss the implications of the results. The analyses indicate that while systematic panel attrition is likely an issue in the data, panel conditioning effects are considered a minor problem.

4.4.1 The problem with panel attrition

Although it offers unique benefits for observational studies, survey panel data is sensitive to attrition. Panel attrition²⁰ is the rate of dropout of respondents from one wave to subsequent waves. Studies of attrition in survey panel data have identified both demographic predictors and survey experience variables to predict which respondents will

²⁰ A different designation used in the literature is ‘survey non-response.’

drop out over time (Olson and Witt, 2011; Frankel and Hillygus, 2014). Panel attrition is a potential problem because it disturbs the sampling design, reduces effective sample sizes, and, if correlated with the outcomes of interest, can bias substantive results (Frankel and Hillygus, 2014: 336). If attrition is both systematic and extensive, the conclusions that we arrive at may be fraught with error.

The NCP data used for this dissertation cover three recruitment rounds: wave 1 (November 2013), wave 3 (October 2014), and wave 8 (March 2017). In the two first recruitment waves, 25, 000 Norwegian residents that were randomly drawn from the National Population Registry were invited to respond, whereas in wave 8 22, 000 people made up the gross sample. The panel recruitment rate,²¹ counting all respondents who offered their e-mail addresses and agreed to be re-contacted as panel members out of the pool of respondents who were invited to join the survey, was 20.1% in wave 1, 23.1% in wave 3 and 19,7% in wave 8²² (Skjervheim and Høgestøl, 2013; Skjervheim and Høgestøl, 2014). This number is high compared to the international literature on panel recruitment success, which report recruitment rates from 8,6% to 14,5% depending on the number and mode of recruitment stages (Rao et al., 2010).

The issue of attrition is most relevant for the NCP where nine survey waves are used in different combinations. Thus, I calculate panel attrition rates for the wave-1 and wave-3 samples in the NCP.²³ First, I calculate the cumulative non-response rate treating the respondents of wave 1 as the total sample (100%). Second, I calculate the attrition rate for both a balanced and an unbalanced sample, since I use both types of samples in my articles.

Table 1, based on wave-1 recruits, and Table 2, based on wave-3 recruits, show the presence of panel non-response across waves. The left side of the tables includes the rate of

²¹ The following formula was used to calculate the recruitment rates:

$$\text{Recruitment rate}(W1\&W3) = \frac{\text{new members}}{\text{Sample size} - (\text{age} > 95 + \text{returned letters} + \text{opted out})}$$

²² Out of the 24 942 individuals who received invitation letters for NCP prior to wave 1, 4870 survey panel respondents were identified. In wave 3, 24 928 invitation letters were sent out, with 5613 citizens agreeing to be panel members. And in wave 8, 21, 521 received the invitation letter with 4245 respondents registering as panel members.

²³ I do not include the wave 8 panel members in this section as this group of respondents is only included of two of the waves used in this dissertation (wave 8 and wave 10).

respondents who have completed all survey waves since they were recruited, constituting a balanced panel. The right side of the tables displays the number of recruited panel members who have answered at least one of the consecutive waves, constituting an unbalanced panel. The numbers displayed are for the entire sample of wave-1 and wave-3 panel recruits. However, the number of respondents exposed to different survey questions varies. As such, all three articles discuss patterns of attrition in their Supporting Information (SI) sections.

Table 1. Panel attrition in the Norwegian Citizen Panel, waves 1-7.

	Respondents balanced panel	Cumulative non-response	Respondents unbalanced panel	Cumulative non-response
Wave 1	4870	100 %	4870	100 %
Wave 2	3344	69 %	3357	69 %
Wave 3	2578	53 %	2927	60 %
Wave 4	2149	44 %	2687	56 %
Wave 5	1801	37 %	2460	51 %
Wave 6	1752	36 %	2208	45 %
Wave 7	1651	34 %	2183	45 %

Note: The data on panel attrition are based only on the panel members recruited in wave 1. The respondent retention data from the data provider does not allow for distinguishing between sample loss due to the ineligibility or attrition of eligible cases. Thus, we cannot separate between respondents dropping out and respondents dying or falling ill.

Table 2. Panel attrition in the Norwegian Citizen Panel, waves 3-10.

	Respondents balanced panel	Cumulative non-response	Respondents unbalanced panel	Cumulative non-response
Wave 3	5613	100 %	5613	100 %
Wave 4	3534	63 %	3610	64 %
Wave 5	2549	45 %	2991	53 %
Wave 6	2084	37 %	2651	47 %
Wave 7	1820	32 %	2490	44 %
Wave 8	1331	24 %	2377	42 %
Wave 10	1216	22 %	2302	41 %

Note: The data on panel attrition are based only on the panel members recruited in wave 3. The respondent retention data from the data provider does not allow for distinguishing between sample loss due to the ineligibility or attrition of eligible cases. Thus, we cannot separate between respondents dropping out and respondents dying or falling ill.

Table 1 and Table 2 indicate that there is a considerable amount of non-response across waves in the NCP, as expected. We see that there is higher dropout rates among the panel

members recruited in wave 3²⁴. The similarity in the patterns across the two tables confirms that recruitment time does not affect attrition. Rather, it is the time from the recruitment wave that guides the attrition rates. The attrition is most severe for the balanced data, with close to 30% of the original group of respondents answering seven consecutive waves. For the unbalanced panel, the attrition rate is 10—15 percentage points higher after seven waves. Considering the temporal pattern of attrition, it follows the tendency among panel surveys to level off across waves. Most respondents who attrite do so between the first and the second or third waves that they are asked to participate in. Consequently, those who stay for the first three waves are much more likely to remain in the panel longer. The volume of attriting panel members, although in accordance with the panel survey literature, speaks to the importance of treating the issue of representativeness carefully in the empirical analyses of this dissertation.

Moving on to the second data source of this dissertation, the NNES, the mode of surveying is personal interviews, either through home visits or telephone interviews. Due to its mode of conduct as well as being a short panel of only two waves, the NNES is less prone to attrition bias compared to web-based panels like the NCP (Dillman et al., 2009). The gross sample is randomly drawn from the register of voters, securing a representative panel for the population above 18 years. For the two-wave panel data included from the NNES, the recruitment rate is 55% (from a gross sample of 3140 individuals and a net sample of 1726 respondents), while the panel attrition rate between wave 1 and wave 2 is 45%, excluding non-eligible respondents (Statistics Norway, 2015: 6). Taking the space between waves into account, the panel attrition seems to be bigger for the NCP than for the NNES; although, as mentioned, some of this is likely to be related to the survey mode and panel fatigue.

Moving on to the predictors of attrition based on the waves studied here, the NCP panel shows a systematic underrepresentation of respondents with elementary education or less (population = 25.2 %, net sample = 9.3 %) and respondents with upper secondary education (population = 41.2 %, net sample = 29.9 %), independent of gender and age. This is paired with a systematic overrepresentation of respondents with degrees from universities and

²⁴ This is a specific tendency of this recruitment group that has not been replicated in other recruitment rounds, and for which we have not found proper explanations (Skjervheim and Høgestøl, 2016b).

university colleges (population = 33.6 %, net sample = 60.8 %). Moreover, the underrepresentation is strong for young men (population = 10.4 %, net sample = 3.9 %) and for respondents from the three northernmost counties (population = 9.3 %, net sample = 7.7 %) (Skjervheim et al., 2017).²⁵ This lack of representativeness is taken into account by using probability weights based on age, gender, education and geography in all the analyses of this dissertation (Skjervheim and Høgestøl, 2013). And although using probability weights is clearly inferior to actually observing a representative group of respondents, it is markedly better than doing nothing.

In the three articles, I have dealt with the presence of attrition by either 1) conducting a complete case analysis on the subset of respondents who completed all panel waves relevant to each empirical article and assuming that non-response is missing completely at random (MCAR), meaning that it is not related to any observed or unobserved data, or (2) running analyses on the unbalanced panel data and assuming that the patterns of attrition are missing at random (MAR), meaning that the probability of non-response is only related to observed data (Singer and Willett, 2003: 156-159). Unfortunately, the assumptions of MCAR and MAR are hard to meet. Most often, these assumptions are usually unfounded in survey panel data (Frankel and Hillygus, 2014). Despite this, most of the panel analyses within the field treat the panel data as randomly missing due to the complexity of statistical techniques to account for non-random attrition (Wawro, 2002). This is also the approach used in this thesis. Still, in all the articles I am transparent about the systematic aspects of attrition and discuss their possible impact on the models. Moreover, all the conclusions drawn from the three studies are based on both balanced and unbalanced panel models, to substantiate that the patterns of randomness in the data do not bias the empirical findings.

4.4.2 The problem of panel conditioning

The question of panel conditioning²⁶ is one of learning effects. That is, whether participation in one wave of a survey has an effect on respondents' answers to the questions in subsequent waves. If this happens in a systematic manner, the concern is that this kind of

²⁵ The reports of under- and overrepresentation across different strata are based on wave 10 of November 2017, the last panel wave included in this dissertation.

²⁶ Another designation is 'time in sample bias'.

measurement error will be confounded with real attitude change. Panel conditioning is not a new topic within survey research. Already in 1940, Lazarsfeld (1940: 128) noted that: “the big problem yet unsolved is whether repeated interviews are likely, in themselves, to influence a respondent’s opinions.” The literature identifies three mechanisms that may provoke panel conditioning. The first argument is that as a respondent is repeatedly subjected to the same question, their answers become more stable over time. A second argument is that over time, the motivation to answer the same question drops, leading to satisficing behavior. Third, survey panelists become specialists over time, leading them to give more accurate responses as they become familiar with the survey questions.

Empirically, studies tend to find panel conditioning effects on knowledge and behavioral questions but remain less consistent in their conclusions on panel conditioning effects on social and political opinions (Cantor, 2008; Binswanger et al., 2013; Halpern-Manners et al., 2014; Struminskaya, 2016). The modest strand of research focusing on the effects on opinions are inconclusive as to whether this is a problem in panel analyses or not. Panel surveys differ by design, and the data sources used in this project are characterized by being low-intensity surveys with (relatively) long time intervals between each wave. Moreover, the data is collected through web surveys, meaning there is no direct interaction between an interviewer and an interview object. Several assumptions about panel conditioning are based on the effect of being interviewed repeatedly by the same person (Kreuter et al., 2008). Thus, both of these features should decrease the concerns surrounding panel conditioning

One problem with studies of panel conditioning is that the conventional approaches are ill-suited to distinguish the effects of panel conditioning from the effects of panel attrition. Moreover, those that try to separate the two effects — typically through post stratification weights — have to make strong assumptions about the randomness of attrition, which we know is problematic in most panel survey data (e.g., Das et al., 2011; Warren and Halpern-Manners, 2012).

Related to the data used in this dissertation, there is reason to believe that they are less affected by panel conditioning than other kinds of panel data. First, as already mentioned,

data on attitudes seem to be less marked by panel conditioning than for instance knowledge questions (Binswanger et al., 2013; Toepoel et al., 2009). Second, previous studies have shown that the low-intensity modes of the survey panels used here, six months between waves for the NCP and four years for the NNES, make them less susceptible to conditioning bias (Halpern-Manners et al., 2014).

To empirically investigate panel conditioning in my data, I take advantage of an approach introduced by Halpern-Manners et al. (2017) that allows us to draw sound conclusions about the presence of panel conditioning without the possible contamination of panel attrition. This is done by selecting respondents with the same underlying propensity to persist in the sample. Here I focus only on the NCP items as they fulfill the criteria of enough waves and a refreshment sample necessary to properly test for panel conditioning.²⁷ I take advantage of two groups of respondents, those who were recruited to the NCP from wave 1 (cohort A) and those who were recruited to the first refreshment sample of wave 3 (cohort B). By systematically selecting individuals from both cohorts who participated in the first three survey waves after they were recruited and then comparing both cohorts' responses at wave 3 I can identify the effects of panel conditioning in that survey wave. With this structure, both cohorts experienced the same social and economic context at the time of their survey responses, and both exhibited the same propensity to persist in the NCP panel (because both groups participated in the same number of waves).²⁸ Put differently, both cohorts have been equated on both observable and unobserved characteristics. Thus, if the responses vary systematically across recruitment cohorts, we can ascribe these differences to panel conditioning (Halpern-Manners et al., 2017: 108-109).

As the items in the NCP are asked to subsamples, the number of respondents who fulfill the criteria of answering the first three waves after recruitment vary from 1445 to 3449.

Between 928 and 947 respondents entered the sample in the first wave (cohort A), while

²⁷ Preferably, an analysis of panel conditioning effects should also be run on the NNES data, but as two-wave data cannot separate panel conditioning effects from panel attrition effects such studies are not possible for this data source.

²⁸ Three of the items included in this analysis were first asked in wave 2 of the NCP. For these three variables, cohort 1 consists of respondents who answered the item in both wave 2 and wave 3, and cohort 2 consists of all respondents recruited in w3 who answered the items in wave 3 and wave 4.

between 517 and 2514 respondents entered the sample in the third wave (cohort B). Since the NCP employs a split-ballot design, three of the survey items were not consistently asked to the same subgroup of panelists. Moreover, one of the items was not asked in wave 2, making it impossible to create two cohorts based on the criteria above. Hence, we have excluded these variables from the analyses. Of the 13 policy items from the NCP used in this dissertation, panel conditioning is checked for the remaining nine variables. To analyze panel conditioning effects, I carry out hypothesis tests comparing the response patterns in wave 3 across cohorts, considering the seven-point Likert scales as continuous and using t-tests to compare group means.²⁹ The results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Differences between cohorts in wave 3. Test statistics and sample sizes for nine NCP items.

Variables	Sample sizes (N)		Diff between cohorts	
			t	p
Norway should reduce its consumption level to address climate change	947	525	0.045	0.964
We should stop extracting oil and gas in the Lofoten (LoVeSe) area	943	2506	0.312	0.755
Technological innovations will resolve climate change	936	522	-0.481	0.631
Norway will lose its identity if more Muslims come to live here	928	517	-0.101	0.920
Begging should be prohibited in Norway	928	516	1.179	0.239
Refugees and Norwegians should have equal social security rights	933	2490	2.870	0.004
Public activities would be better and cheaper if operated by the private sector	929	2514	-0.148	0.883
Private schools should be permitted	932	2498	-0.593	0.553
Tax rates should be lowered even if it results in cutbacks on welfare	930	2511	0.112	0.911

The results comply with most of the panel conditioning studies on attitudinal questions, finding that this is not a big problem. Out of the nine panel items included in the analysis, only one item indicates a panel conditioning effect, with the t-test being significant at a .01 level (marked in bold font in Table 3). This applies to the attitudinal item on equal social service rights for refugees and Norwegians, independent of their citizenship status. The difference displayed in Table 3 indicates that members of the wave-1 cohort were 3% (or 0.2 points on a 1–7 scale) less likely to support equal social security rights for refugees and Norwegians. The effect size is small compared to past research on panel conditioning effects (for an extensive review, see Cantor, 2008). Based on this account, I conclude that there exist no systematic differences between the two panel cohorts.

²⁹ Due to Likert scales being treated both as continuous and categorical in the literature, we also ran chi-square tests for categorical measures. The results are practically the same, although they identify panel conditioning to be present in the Tax-item as well. Thus, in the chi-square tests, two out of nine items indicate panel conditioning effects.

It is a drawback that I am not able to check for panel conditioning in the data source with the most policy items used in this dissertation, the NNES. Still, the analyses run on the NCP, combined with the conventional conclusion of analyses of panel conditioning on attitude data, reveal a lack of effect, which strengthens my confidence in the data being unaffected by panel conditioning.

5 The structure of the thesis

The articles comprising this dissertation examine the scope of opinion change and its determinants in light of the theoretical and methodological foundations discussed in the previous sections of this introductory chapter. The first article takes a broad approach, analyzing the magnitude of opinion change among Norwegian citizens on a broad range of 40 different policy issues across two different panel datasets with varying time between waves. The two following articles are case studies of single-policy issues, allowing me to delve into the mechanisms of opinion change. Common to both articles is that I follow the public's opinions on specific policies before, during, and after these policy areas go through real-world changes. The second article investigates mechanisms of opinion change by studying a controversial policy proposal to make street begging illegal as it was introduced, discussed, and decided upon within the parliamentary system. Last, the third article studies the scope and determinants of attitude change during an exogenous shock — that of the refugee crisis and a sudden influx of refugees. Taken together, the three articles make up a thorough assessment of the presence of citizen opinion change and its determinants within the context of a Norwegian multi-party system.

In this section, I present the three articles in more detail, placing a particular focus on accounting for each article's connection to the overall research question of the thesis, laying out each article's empirical groundwork, and drawing lines to the theoretical framework upon which this thesis is based with the intention of further theory development. In the following, I briefly present the articles' contributions to the foundations of opinion change within a multi-party context. Table 4 presents an overview of the three articles and the research questions, methods and data, and the main results.

Table 4. The level of opinion instability and its determinants: Overview of the articles.

Article	Research question	Method and data	Main findings
<i>Opinion Instability in Representative Democracies: Making a Case for the Politically Consistent Citizen</i>	What is the scope of opinion change in a multi-party polity, and is opinion change best attributed to political awareness or issue importance?	Ordinary Least Squares and seven-wave panel data analyses of individual-level opinion change on 40 policy issues from 2009 to 2017. The data are retrieved from the Norwegian Citizen Panel and the Norwegian National Election Study.	The overall level of opinion change is modest, and both political preconditions largely fail to consistently explain patterns of opinion change.
<i>Do Voters Follow? The Effect of Party Cues on Opinion Change During a Policy Process</i>	Do party cues influence voters' propensity to support a policy issue, and is this effect contingent on the salience of the policy process and actual change in party policy?	Four-wave panel data analyses of individual-level opinion change on the policy process to criminalize street begging with data from 2013 to 2015. The data are retrieved from the Norwegian Citizen Panel.	Change in support for the policy proposal is driven by party cues only for parts of the electorate and only as the policy process becomes salient in the public debate. Voters respond to their party's actual policy change, and policy information seems to play a role in explaining the lack of party cue effects found among the remaining electorate.
<i>The Scope Effects of the Refugee Crisis on Public Opinion toward Immigration</i>	Did the 2015 refugee crisis lead to a change in support for immigration policy, and how long-lasting was the change in public mood? Did party support play a role in explaining the patterns of volatility?	Seven-wave panel data analyses of individual-level opinion change on two immigration-related policies before, during, and after the 2015 European refugee crisis, with data from 2014 to 2017. The data are retrieved from the Norwegian Citizen Panel.	The refugee crisis led to more restrictive attitudes toward both refugee and immigration policies. This opinion change was visible across political stripes. Yet members of the public revert to their baseline positions close to two years after the crisis is under control.

5.1 Article 1: Opinion Instability in Representative Democracies: Making a Case for the Politically Consistent Citizen

Article 1 is a comprehensive study of the extent to which citizens consistently hold stable attitudes. The article takes Converse's (1964; 1970) nonattitude thesis, which states that "large portions of an electorate do not have meaningful beliefs" (Converse, 1964: 245), as its theoretical point of departure. This article speaks directly to the US literature dominating the field, concluding that citizens largely fail to defend the ideal of a democratic citizen that is set out in normative democratic theory (Achen and Bartels, 2016; Campbell et al., 1960; Converse, 1964; Converse, 1970; Freeder et al., 2019; Hill and Kriesi, 2001). According to this body of literature, there are only two groups of citizens who fulfill the ideal of a democratic citizen: 1) the politically sophisticated; and 2) those who mobilize on the issue. Yet Converse (1964) determines that these groups of citizens make up a small segment of the population. Despite this being a mantra for behavioral research, the empirical base for this claim is narrow and yet has been subject to little critical scrutiny. Yet as behavioral theories have been applied to multi-party systems in more recent years, these assumptions have been questioned (Granberg and Holmberg, 1988; Granberg and Holmberg, 1996; Niemi and Westholm, 1984; Togeby, 2004). Thus, the first article is devoted to study patterns of opinion change within a new context: the Norwegian. Specifically, the following two research questions are pursued: 1) to what extent do citizens vary in their political attitudes across time? and 2) is the level of opinion instability moderated by political predispositions like political awareness and issue importance?

I assess the level of opinion change using individual-level data across 40 unique policy issues comprising an exhaustive range of political issues that are important to the Norwegian political elite and the general public. The policy areas covered are public—private, welfare, center—periphery, immigration, environmental issues, Christian—secular, and global—national. Data are collected in the period 2009—2016 through the NCP and the NNES. Different setups of the two panel studies allow me to study and compare long-term (four-year intervals) and short-term (six-month intervals) opinion changes.

Modelling change through a measure of absolute opinion change, we find small effects of time on policy opinion change across both data sources, indicating that the level of opinion

change among Norwegian citizens is modest. Analyses of the conditional effects of political sophistication and issue importance on opinion instability indicate smaller and more inconsistent effects compared to much of the dominant literature. In terms of political sophistication level only 9/40 models found statistically different patterns of change, yet they were all in the expected direction, with the more knowledgeable citizens having less volatile policy opinions than the less knowledgeable citizens. Turning to the conditional effect of issue importance, only 11/40 models were statistically significant, and all models except one confirm the hypothesized expectation that the more important a citizen finds the policy issue at hand, the more stable the citizen's opinion.

The article demonstrates that citizens generally hold stable attitudes to the extent that it can be argued that citizens are politically consistent and tend to hold real attitudes that are neither naïve nor innocent of ideology. Moreover, the study finds that this opinion stability is not mainly driven by the politically sophisticated and the strongly opinionated, as much of the previous literature has argued. Rather, having a stable opinion is a trait of the general public. These conclusions stand in direct opposition to the elite-driven approaches to this topic. Second, the article offers suggestive evidence that when considerable shifts in opinions do happen, contextual factors may help explain the volatility. In one deviant case of considerable opinion change identified in this data material, we find that the movement is ascribed to the 2015 refugee crisis, which led to a collective shift in opinions in a more restrictive direction in the period after the crisis.

As discussed in the theoretical section, in an ideal representative democracy, citizens hold their politicians accountable for their policies through elections, and as such, politicians' main task is to implement the public will through policy-making. The findings in this article suggest that, as opposed to Converse's dire conclusion, the general public in Norway holds real attitudes by which the politicians rule. In addition, this article also finds that context is likely to influence the propensity for citizens to change their opinions. Yet to gain a more thorough understanding of which factors influence citizens' political attitudes, a more detailed analysis of specific policy issues and their broader contexts is needed.

5.2 Article 2: Do Voters Follow? The Effect of Party Cues on Opinion Change During a Policy Process

Article 2 examines the relationship between party cues, issue salience and opinion change related to the controversial policy proposal to criminalize street begging. The main expectation investigated in this study is that party cues should affect people's support for policy. I study this party cue theory through an in-depth examination focusing on a policy proposal to ban street begging from its introduction to its parliamentary treatment.

Studies of party cue effects assume that partisans will follow cues from their preferred party and reject cues from other parties because of an affective bond to the party (e.g., Bartels, 2002; Campbell et al., 1960; Zaller, 1992), due to parties serving as information shortcuts (e.g., Chaiken, 1980; Sniderman, 2000), due to motivated reasoning (e.g., Bullock, 2011; Slothuus and de Vreese, 2010; Taber and Lodge, 2006), or due to learning effects (e.g., Lenz, 2009; Broockman and Butler, 2017). Coupled with issue salience theory the expectation is that party cues are more efficiently communicated to the population as a policy issue becomes salient (Togeby, 2004; Zaller, 1992). Empirically, this should be observed as a polarization of opinions as citizens become aware of their party's standpoint on an issue. In a more sober account of party cue effects, the literature on party manifestos argues that voters fail to notice policy changes, at least in the short run (e.g., Adams et al., 2011; Adams et al., 2012). If this is the case, we should find no effect of one party's policy change among its voters.

To test for the influence of party cues on opinion change, I study a proposal to criminalize street begging that was initiated by the Norwegian Conservative-led government in 2014. I ask the following research question: to which extent do party cues succeed in explaining patterns of opinion movement among voters? I test two features of party cues: first, I study whether party cue effects increase with the salience of the issue. Second, as the Center Party changes their policy position during the process, I test whether an actual party policy shift makes voters update their attitudes to ensure alignment with their party.

The case of street begging has some characteristics that requires attention. The issue attracted little attention before it was introduced after the general elections of 2013, when a

rightist minority coalition government consisting of the Conservative Party and the Progress Party gained power. Yet within one year, two proposals to ban street begging — first a voluntary municipal ban and then a national ban — were announced, discussed, and decided upon. Both proposals had majority support in parliament with help from the agrarian Center Party. In this one-year period, the policy issue became highly salient in the public debate. And while the first proposal for a voluntary municipal ban received majority support in parliament and was implemented in the summer of 2014, the proposal for a national ban on street begging failed to be heard in February 2015 after the Center Party withdrew its support following weeks of massive public debate concerning a proposed expansion of the ban to also criminalize the facilitation of street begging. Consequently, the proposition to ban street begging never reached parliament and was withdrawn by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security.

Taking advantage of four-wave panel data monitoring respondents' support for street begging before, during, and after the policy reform is presented, I can study the effect of party cues as the reform is discussed and decided upon in a real-world setting. I run growth models directly estimating the effect of party cues and a change in issue salience on policy support through interaction effects. Thus, both the empirical and methodological specificities of this analysis arguably makes me well-situated to expand our knowledge on the effects of party cues and salience on opinion change.

The descriptive analysis finds large opinion shifts in the general public across supporters of parties both favoring and opposing the proposal. Going against the expected party cue effect is the finding that the two voter groups move in parallel, both becoming substantively less supportive of a ban on begging over time. The growth models further confirms that parties face some constraints in successfully swaying the public with their endorsements. First, I find that party cues only play a role for the opponent parties' supporters and this effect materializes only as the policy issue becomes salient in the public debate. Second, the study indicates that actual policy shifts, studied through the Center Party turnabout, successfully instruct voters to update their policy position accordingly. Yet blurring this finding is the observation that supporters of all political stripes become less supportive of a ban in this period. Related to this non-finding, I suggest that there are different processes affecting the

two groups causing them to move in the same direction. For the Center Party supporters, I argue that the highly salient shift in policy support explains their movement, which is consistent with the party cue assumption. For the rest of the electorate, I argue that the public debate following the publication of the national ban proposal, focusing on the punishment of benevolent Norwegians as well as the human rights aspects related to criminalizing people in need, leads citizens to ignore party cues.

The findings suggest that party cues are not an omnipotent regulator of opinion change. Rather, their influence seems to depend on the policy issue being salient, along with the party's role in the policy process. Moreover, I find suggestive evidence that citizens may disregard party cues if the information environment disfavors the position held by their preferred party. Connected to the theoretical debate about the democratic citizen, this study supports the idea that citizens are affected by their party's policy endorsements but that the effect is modest and affected by whether this is a salient issue for both the party and the public debate. Thus, I find limited support for the idea that citizens are easily manipulated by elite cues. Instead, I argue that voters seem to evaluate the party cues against the broader information environment and their own predispositions, shown empirically through the differential effects found across voter groups.

5.3 Article 3: The Scope Effects of the Refugee Crisis on Public Opinion Toward Immigration

Like Article 2, Article 3 (co-authored with Elisabeth Ivarsflaten) is also an in-depth study of one political event. However, unlike Article 2 this article addresses the boundary conditions of opinion change in a very different setting: that of systemic change due to external events. The article takes the 2015 refugee crisis in Europe as the empirical point of departure, investigating the scope of the public reaction to the crisis. In doing so, we pursue three research questions: 1) Did the refugee crisis lead to changing opinions not only toward refugees, but also toward immigrants more broadly? 2) Does the initial exclusionary reaction endure, and if so for how long? and 3) Was the exclusionary reaction moderated by party stripes or did it extend to the entire electorate?

The first studies based on the refugee crisis have been indecisive, with some public opinion researchers referring to the absence of attitudinal effects of the refugee crisis (Esaïasson et al., 2016; Hellevik and Hellevik, 2017), and other researchers of electoral competition mainly concluding that the influx of asylum seekers shifted electoral support to the right (Dustmann et al., 2018; Mader and Schoen, 2019; Dinas et al., 2019).

Despite the inconclusive empirical field, the theoretical expectation is clear. The dominant group threat theory postulates that out-groups are likely to generate a sense of threat for in-group members, leading them to express exclusionary attitudes (Albertson and Gadarian, 2015a; Forbes, 1997). In terms of scope, we review three different literatures. In regard to substantive reach, one line of research argues for a limited exclusionary reaction related to questions only about refugees (e.g., Bansak et al., 2016; Naumann et al., 2018), while another strand of research predicts substantively more far-reaching reactions (Aarøe et al., 2017; Mudde, 2007). Related to the duration of the exclusionary reaction scholars studying reactions of international crisis and terrorist attacks expect limited duration (Brody and Shapiro, 1989; Sniderman et al., 2019), while others suggest that crises like the refugee crisis might have transformative potential leading to permanent shifts in public opinion (Hutter and Kriesi, 2019). Last, connecting the move in restrictive direction to political divisions, one strand of literature postulates that opinion change should be limited to the far right, who mobilize on immigration politics (de Lange, 2007; Ivarsflaten, 2008). Yet other scholars theorize that given a consensual response by the political elite, as was seen in the Norwegian case, opinion change encompassing the broader electorate should be expected (Brody and Shapiro, 1989).

The refugee crisis in Norway was concentrated in time. In terms of the number of asylum claims, we can identify the beginning of the crisis as occurring in August 2015 and ending in December of the same year. Still, in terms of refugees per capita, Norway was one of the highest receiving European countries (Bansak et al., 2016). The sudden influx of refugees led to an immediate need for housing, which in turn led to the establishment of 257 new asylum centers across the country during the fall of 2015 and the winter of 2016. Politically, the response was a broadly negotiated asylum agreement signed by six out of eight parties in parliament in late November 2015. The agreement marked the drawing of a stricter line in

the politics directed at refugees and included numerous retrenchment policies (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2015). Although the political response was quick, the sense of crisis as portrayed in the media lasted long after the number of asylum claims had returned to normal.

To investigate the effect that the refugee crisis had on the Norwegian public's attitudes toward the same group, we utilize seven-wave panel data from the Norwegian Citizen Panel, ranging from November 2014 to November 2017. This allows us to measure people's opinions on two policy issues related to asylum seekers and immigrants before, during, and after the refugee crisis — one aimed directly at refugees and their right to social services and the other aimed at support for immigration to Norway in general.

The descriptive analysis confirms a clear movement in the opinion toward more restrictive attitudes, both toward refugees in particular (-7.3%) as well as toward immigrants in general (-12,8%). The panel models identify that the population remains negative toward refugee rights and immigrants over a considerable amount of time and long after the authorities have taken the necessary measures to gain control of the situation. Still, between 16 months and two years after the situation is placed under control, the opinion reverts to the pre-crisis level, indicating that no permanent shift in opinion is seen. Last, panel analyses of the conditional effect of party support for opinion change find that the movement in restrictive direction was unidimensional. Supporters of the two parties opposing the asylum agreement move just as much as supporters of the asylum deal parties both in terms of the refugee social rights item and the general immigration item.

This study confirms the expected exclusionary reaction to external shocks by using unique panel data securing baseline data prior to the crisis. Yet the most notable contribution of this article is theoretical and concerns the question of the scope of the exclusionary reaction. It finds that the restrictive reaction comprised both asylum-seeker and immigrant policies, it was visible among voters of all political stripes, and it endured long (but not forever) after the situation had been brought under control. We argue that the latter finding, identifying a perturbation effect, is the most consequential finding as it suggests that citizens might change their attitudes temporary in meeting with a sudden change in context, but that there

exists a baseline attitude that people fall back at after a period of time, indicating that citizens' attitudes are grounded in broader beliefs.

This study shows how an external shock can (temporarily) reorient public opinion. In such exceptional times, we find indications that all voters seem to notice the sudden influx of refugees and interpret events in the same direction, which is reflected in a united shift in a restrictive direction. Yet we also see a politicization of the immigration field, as seen in the broadly supported asylum agreement ratified in the midst of crisis, introducing more restrictions of asylum seekers' rights and benefits. Although we cannot separate the effects of the actual influx from what happens at the political stage, the pattern of opinion movement aligns with the context and citizens' information environment. Importantly, the fact that the restrictive attitudes stick for almost two years before they revert back to pre-crisis levels indicates that this change in opinions was real and not random. Had the public been characterized by nonattitudes (the Converse argument), there should have been no pattern at all, and if attitudes are ad hoc cognitive assessments of survey questions (the Zaller argument), one would expect opinions to return to baseline as soon as the media pressure declines. Thus, the durability of restrictive attitudes indicates that people hold consistent attitudes, supporting the main argument in this thesis regarding democratically capable citizens.

Connected to the broader theoretical framework of this dissertation, this study highlights that there are instances where considerable shifts in opinion do occur. Yet this should not automatically be cited to support the argument that ordinary people lack the capacity to know what they want and need. Quite the opposite, the finding of a perturbation effect should be interpreted in support of the idea that when context changes, people revisit and temporarily update their attitudes yet fall back on their baseline attitude after some time, which is in line with the classical understanding of citizens in democratic theory as informed and responsive in a meaningful (rather than a random) way.

6 Conclusion and future research

'To speak with precision about public opinion is a task not unlike coming to grips with the Holy Ghost' (Key, 1961: 8).

As Key rightly points at, making predictions about public opinion is a demanding endeavor. This study has aspired to the field by focusing on a small, yet vital part of the immense field of public opinion research: opinion instability. The field of opinion change is characterized by absence of a common understanding of the most vital questions. As has been pointed out repeatedly in this chapter, there exists no agreement on whether the diagnose of the democratic citizen is a good one or a bad one. Aggregate level studies argues that democracy is doing well as long as the electorate moves in stable and meaningful ways in relation to politics, independent of individual-level volatility behind the aggregate stability (Erikson et al., 2002; Page and Shapiro, 1992). Adding leverage to this conviction is the argument that it is the aggregate opinion as presented through polls that informs the public debate and receives politicians' attention, thus shaping public policy. Nonetheless, if the theoretical point of departure is democratic theory, as is the case for this thesis, the presence of considerable proportions of citizens characterized by random fluctuations implies that democracy is empty at its core. This insight provided the motivation for this dissertation, researching patterns of public opinion change and their determinants.

6.1 The consistent median citizen

What kind of citizen has this dissertation revealed? My empirical articles have sketched the outline of a median citizen who most of the time holds stable opinions on a range of political matters as different as oil and gas drilling in Northern-Norway, private schools, international agreements, and social service rights for refugees. This citizen's opinions are somewhat more stable on political issues with which she is preoccupied, and her median level of political sophistication seems to make her a bit less volatile, although these findings are on the margins. Moreover, she may change her attitudes into accordance with her preferred political party and party representatives. Still, this is by no means an automated reaction, and it seems to coincide with the party's focus on the policy issue under scrutiny as well as whether our citizen is already mobilized on the issue of interest. Moreover, when sudden dramatic political events occur, our median citizen is aware of and responsive to such crises

as they play out in real life. The new information communicated through intensive media coverage and a consensual elite makes her revisit her standpoints and pushes her to increase her support for protective policies, even if her initial reaction would be to reject government politics. Yet this shift in opinion is temporary and eventually reverts to a baseline position, although this reversal is slow-moving and lasts long after the crisis is declared to be over by the authorities.

Our median citizen's opinions are relatively stable, but not to the point of being rigid. She responds in predictable ways when she changes her opinions, based on predispositions, party endorsements and changes to her local environment and her 'imagined community' of Norwegians. As such, our median citizen seems neither characterized by non-attitudes nor ideological naïveté. Rather, she is a consistent citizen who maneuvers her political convictions in response to the politics of the day. Importantly, she embodies the characteristics of a citizen capable of fulfilling her most important task according to democratic theory, which is that of holding the political elite accountable for their policies through the ballot box.

The elitist theory of democracy ascribes a minimal role to citizens in democracy due to their lack of clear and consistent policy preferences and low levels of political knowledge. This dissertation has provided apt evidence that the former assertion holds no universal bearing. This does not mean that we have found support for the classical theory of democracy. For that, this dissertation is too narrow in scope. Yet the overall low levels of opinion change and the structured movement of opinions due to external events do challenge a central part of the empirical groundwork for the elitist theory of democracy.

6.2 Theoretical implications

Taken together, and based on thorough analyses of the Norwegian public, the main implication of the studies presented in this dissertation is that there is little evidence to suggest that citizens lack the ability to participate intelligently in politics, at least when the volatility of opinions is considered. This conclusion counters the dominant American line of thought in which citizens are commonly viewed as politically inconsistent and thus easily manipulated. In Sniderman's (2017: 1) elevated words:

There is a large literature of democratic lament. The most familiar of the lamentations is that the public is woefully uninformed about politics and public affairs. The verse that follows, as all students of public opinion know, is that ordinary citizens fall short of the coherence of thought that a democratic politics requires.

The findings of this dissertation contrast with this presumption of an elite-driven democratic theory that the average citizen demonstrates inadequate understanding of public policy and unstable policy judgments, challenging their ability to execute democratic citizenship (Converse, 1964; Converse, 1970; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Freeder et al., 2019; Kinder, 2006; Achen and Bartels, 2016). Instead, this thesis argues that the overall level of opinion change is low, and the patterns of conditioning indicate that the usual suspects in the literature — political sophistication, issue importance and party cues — are less influential than postulated by the dominant theory.

To answer the research questions set out in this project, I have studied policy attitudes, which in the survey literature is assumed to be on the weaker side of a continuum from strongly held to weakly held attitudes, and thus prone to report opinion instability. In this regard, the findings of high levels of stability that this thesis demonstrates is reassuring. If we can expect stable opinions across a range of specific policy issues then we should expect stable opinions on other more ideologically oriented or value-based issues as well. Adding strength to this argument, Sniderman and Bullock (2004) contend that stability and constraint are ‘causally parasitic’ on congruence. More specifically, they hold that policy positions that are stable over time and constrained across issues tend to be congruent with citizens’ basic political orientations (Sniderman and Bullock, 2004: 337). This further strengthens the proposition that the median citizen is characterized by consistency.

Still, an important issue remains unsettled. Are the findings of mostly stable citizens and small differences across political sophistication, importance, and partisanship enough to conclude that public opinion is enlightened? Arguably not. In the panoramic study of belief systems, Converse (1964) conducted studies on both opinion stability and opinion constraint. And although I find indications of high degrees of constraint along different issue

dimensions, I do not study constraint systematically. More important, the structures that opinions are organized into in this thesis may be something other than the standard ideological orientation that many public opinion scholars assume. Even though people's opinions are real and organized in systematic and knowable ways, they may, in Kinder's (2002: 40) words, be "democratically disheartening". Studies of attitudes toward immigrants and immigrant policies both in the US and Europe find racism and ethnocentrism to be the principal determinants of opinion (Gilens, 1999; Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Kessler and Freeman, 2005). If such forces are at play across issue fields, real opinions do not guarantee enlightened politics.

Another main take-away from this dissertation is that scholars should loosen the tight link established in the literature between opinion change and nonattitudes. Where Converse (1964) identified a negligible group of durable changers in his 'black and white' model, this dissertation found the third group of non-random changers to be a more powerful force than what has previously been acknowledged. The patterns of opinion change found in all three articles indicate that this volatility can be informed and meaningful, rather than naïve and random. Taken together, this dissertation serves to support a more positive picture of public opinion as consisting of politically consistent citizens with the ability to hold the political elite accountable for their policies.

Another point substantiated by the empirical studies of this dissertation is the diversification of opinion instability across policy issues. There is a tendency in the literature to talk about citizens as either politically stable or unstable on a general basis, yet recent studies highlight the role of core issues in organizing people's political interest and attention. Based on the three studies, it seems we should reorient this general description of opinion change to focus on citizens' stability and instability across different policy domains. For example, we would expect an issue related to income inequality to invite more stable opinions than a technical environmental policy issue because of the former issue's close connection to the traditional left—right cleavage and the continued focus of this matter in the political debate. This argument aligns with the pluralist account of democratic decision-making, contending that: "The public is a complex blending of 'active' and 'passive' segments, or 'engaged' citizens and mere 'spectators'. The size and representative composition of these segments,

which surely changes across issues and over time, indexes in many ways the health of a democracy” (Price, 2008: 21).

Moreover, this thesis should be read as a plea to be less sanguine about the generalizability of individual-level political capabilities across political contexts. Pushing this point to the extreme, a generation of research on European public opinion has been misled by taking generalized conclusions on citizens’ lacking competencies based on (mainly one data source on) US citizens only as the starting point. To be clear, this should not be read as passing a verdict on US citizens’ capabilities, but rather as a request to take systemic differences more seriously into account. In the early days of public opinion research, American polling data were amongst the only survey data there were, and so we can be sympathetic to the general outlook of the conclusions drawn from them. However, a lack of a peripheral vision seems to characterize much of the American literature on public opinion dynamics today as well. A recent example is found in Achen and Bartels (2016: 13):

Our empirical facts are drawn predominantly from the democratic system we know best, that of the United States. However, we refer frequently to other democratic systems as well, and we believe that our findings are likely to be of considerable relevance even in countries that differ from the United States – and from each other – in many important historical, institutional, and cultural respects. While history, institutions and culture surely shape specific democratic practices in important ways, they do not, as best we can tell, lead to fundamentally different conclusions about the central issues we raise (...).

Based on the findings of this dissertation, I respectfully disagree with Achen and Bartels outlook. The insights gained through working with this dissertation has convinced me that to fully understand the capabilities of a citizenry, one must be sensitive to the system that surrounds and shapes the conditions for opinion formation. Based on the three studies making up this dissertation, I attribute parts of the reason for the patterns of stable attitudes in Norway to the multi-party system and the media system that shape and provide content for political competition and public debate. Moreover, a universal educational system has created a well-educated public which is assumed to make citizens better equipped both to

evaluate competing information and make autonomous decisions. That said, as this study is not a comparative study across countries, I can provide only suggestive evidence for these connections. To further our understanding of boundary conditions of opinion change, the time is ripe for more comparative efforts to be made, especially between multi-party systems, facilitated by the steadily increasing number of high-quality panels across European countries.

Some questions are not possible to answer precisely through the studies conducted here. An important question that this dissertation fails to provide a definite answer to is the extent to which the patterns of opinion volatility found in Norway can be attributed to the multi-party system. I argue in this chapter that in multi-party systems, parties are guided by core issues that they focus on, and that this creates a lucid political environment for citizens despite the many parties and the multidimensional nature of party competition. If this is the systemic characteristic shaping low levels of opinion change then the findings in this study arguably extend to other European multi-party systems as well. Yet until we have a convincing group of studies on opinion change finding similar patterns across multi-party systems in Europe, we cannot rule out other and more particular factors playing a role here. For instance, it may be the generally high level of education in the Norwegian population that allows for less volatile attitudes by enabling citizens to think about policy matters in an organized manner. And it may be the media system, by securing equal and free access of political information through public broadcasters, that facilitates comparatively high knowledge of day-to-day politics among the public despite many citizens not being particularly politically interested. Thus, an important future contribution would be to systematically pin down the systemic mechanisms facilitating low public opinion volatility through comparative studies. That said, the similarity of systemic aspects across the Scandinavian countries and the overlap of findings from this study with similar studies conducted in Sweden (Granberg and Holmberg, 1996) and Denmark (Togeby, 2004) bolsters my confidence that the findings apply to the Scandinavian publics as a whole, and possibly also generalize to the broader group of European multi-party systems.

Finally, situating the studies within a real-world setting, the dissertation demonstrates that the policy-specific context and the broader information environment provide important

insights into the dynamics of opinion change. This observation is not an original finding in the public opinion literature. However, I believe that these findings have important implications for the comparative study of opinion change. As we develop theories and models aimed at understanding general factors underlying public opinion, it is important to make clear the conditions under which we expect citizens to behave in the manner that we assume.

6.3 The way ahead

Given that several studies, including this dissertation, assign a significant role to the political system, an important next step is to look closer at what exactly it is about the multi-party system that biases it toward politically consistent citizens. Specifically, does it only apply to consensual multi-party systems, or is it rather related to the multidimensional cleavage structure of multi-party systems, which sorts attitudes in a systematic way across the different policy dimensions? Or maybe it is all about a symbiosis between the party system and the media system shaping the information environment? Alternatively, is the answer to be found in the universal education system that mediates opinion instability? Such studies would considerably deepen our understanding of the macro mechanisms shaping the political learning environment, and this should arguably pave the way for much-needed theory development within the field of European public opinion studies.

A second avenue for future research is to study more thoroughly how the information society affects opinion change, for example, to better understand when it trumps party cues and when it does not. In situations where the party cue and the information environment go in the same direction, it is hard to disentangle the effects. Yet by using situations in which these considerations are conflicting, we might develop illuminating insights into the push and pull mechanisms for opinion change during periods of uncertainty. Although this has been done experimentally (e.g., Boudreau and MacKenzie, 2014; Boudreau and MacKenzie, 2018; Bullock, 2011), observational data have some superior features to understand how situations of conflicting information affect citizens' opinions in a complex world. Such an approach would no doubt extend beyond the limitations of this study.

Moreover, this dissertation studies the volatility of opinions across an exhaustive set of policy issues. This is an improvement on previous studies that focus on a few selected issues that are typically high on the public agenda. Yet this study does not systematically categorize and compare opinion change effects across levels of issue saliency. Thus, a question for future research is to what extent opinion changes on policy issues are mitigated by the likelihood that citizens are preoccupied with the political issue in advance.

Finally, future studies should make an effort to use a broader range of policy opinion measures. As the debate surrounding opinion change has been so focused on measurement error and the wording of questions, it is surprising that there has not been a stronger focus on how policy items are phrased. Indeed, a finding in the survey research is that ranking data are more reliable than the corresponding rating data (Visser et al., 2000: 238-239). With the recent shift of survey mode from telephone to web-based interviewing, the prior administrative and resource-based objections to the use of rankings no longer have merit. Thus, varying the policy opinion measure should expand the findings of this study that merely bases itself on ratings of policy statements.

7 Literature list

- Aaberge, R., Atkinson, A. B., & Modalsli, J. (2016). *On the measurement of long-run income inequality: Empirical evidence from Norway, 1875-2013*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ssb.no/en/forskning/discussion-papers/on-the-measurement-of-long-run-income-inequality-empirical-evidence-from-norway-1875-2013>
- Aalberg, T., & Curran, J. (2012). *How media inform democracy: A comparative approach* (Vol. 1): Routledge.
- Aalberg, T., Van Aelst, P., & Curran, J. (2010). Media systems and the political information environment: A cross-national comparison. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 15(3), 255-271.
- Aardal, B. (1999). *Velgere i 1990-årene*. Oslo, Norway: NKS-forlaget.
- Aardal, B., & Bergh, J. (2015). *Valg og velgere : en studie av stortingsvalget 2013*. Oslo: Cappelen Damm akademisk.
- Aarøe, L., Petersen, M. B., & Arceneaux, K. (2017). The behavioral immune system shapes political intuitions: Why and how individual differences in disgust sensitivity underlie opposition to immigration. *American Political Science Review*, 111(2), 277-294.
- Achen, C. H. (1975). Mass political attitudes and the survey response. *American Political Science Review*, 69(04), 1218-1231.
- Achen, C. H., & Bartels, L. M. (2016). *Democracy for realists: Why elections do not produce responsive government*: Princeton University Press.
- Achen, C. H., & Bartels, L. M. (2018). Statistics as If Politics Mattered: A Reply to Fowler and Hall. *The Journal of Politics*, 80(4), 1438-1453. Retrieved from <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/699245>. doi:10.1086/699245
- Adams, J., Ezrow, L., & Somer-Topcu, Z. (2011). Is anybody listening? Evidence that voters do not respond to European parties' policy statements during elections. *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(2), 370-382.
- Adams, J., Green, J., & Milazzo, C. (2012). Has the British public depolarized along with political elites? An American perspective on British public opinion. *Comparative Political Studies*, 45(4), 507-530.
- Albertson, B., & Gadarian, S. K. (2015a). *Anxious politics: Democratic citizenship in a threatening world*: Cambridge University Press.
- Albertson, B., & Gadarian, S. K. (2015b). The Politics of Anxiety: Anxiety's Role in Public Opinion. In *Anxious Politics: Democratic Citizenship in a Threatening World* (pp. 100-137). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Allport, F. H. (1937). Toward a science of public opinion. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1(1), 7-23.
- Allport, G. W. (1935). Attitudes. In C. Murchison (Ed.), *Handbook of Social Psychology* (pp. 798-844). Worcester, MA: Clark University Press.
- Almond, G. A. (1956). Public opinion and national security policy. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 20(2), 371-378.
- Andrefß, H.-J., Golsch, K., & Schmidt, A. W. (2013). *Applied panel data analysis for economic and social surveys*: Springer Science & Business Media.
- Ansola-behere, S., Rodden, J., & Snyder, J. M. (2008). The strength of issues: Using multiple measures to gauge preference stability, ideological constraint, and issue voting. *American Political Science Review*, 102(2), 215-232.
- Bansak, K., Hainmueller, J., & Hangartner, D. (2016). How economic, humanitarian, and religious concerns shape European attitudes toward asylum seekers. *Science*, 354(6309), 217-222.

- Bartels, L. M. (2002). Beyond the running tally: Partisan bias in political perceptions. *Political Behavior*, 24(2), 117-150. Retrieved from <Go to ISI>://WOS:000179389500003. doi:10.1023/a:1021226224601
- Bassili, J. N. (1996). Meta-judgmental versus operative indexes of psychological attributes: The case of measures of attitude strength. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(4), 637.
- Bell, A., & Jones, K. (2015). Explaining fixed effects: Random effects modeling of time-series cross-sectional and panel data. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 3(1), 133-153.
- Bennett, W. L., & Iyengar, S. (2008). A new era of minimal effects? The changing foundations of political communication. *Journal of Communication*, 58(4), 707-731.
- Berelson, B. (1952). Democratic theory and public opinion. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 313-330.
- Berglund, F. (2004). *Partiidentifikasjon og politisk endring : en studie av langsiktige partitilknytninger blant norske velgere 1965-1997*. Oslo: Unipax Institutt for samfunnsforskning.
- Berinsky, A. J. (2017). Measuring public opinion with surveys. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20, 309-329.
- Binswanger, J., Schunk, D., & Toepoel, V. (2013). Panel conditioning in difficult attitudinal questions. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 77(3), 783-797.
- Blumer, H. (1948). Public opinion and public opinion polling. *American Sociological Review*, 13(5), 542-549.
- Bolsen, T., & Leeper, T. J. (2013). Self-interest and attention to news among issue publics. *Political Communication*, 30(3), 329-348.
- Boudreau, C., & MacKenzie, S. (2014). Informing the electorate? How party cues and policy information affect public opinion about initiatives. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(1), 48-62.
- Boudreau, C., & MacKenzie, S. A. (2018). Wanting what is fair: How party cues and information about income inequality affect public support for taxes. *The Journal of Politics*, 80(2), 367-381.
- Bourdieu, P. (1979). Public Opinion does not Exist. In A. Mattelart & S. Siegelau (Eds.), *Communication and Class Struggle* (pp. 124-130). New York: Macmillan.
- Brody, R. A., & Shapiro, C. R. (1989). A reconsideration of the rally phenomenon in public opinion. In S. Long (Ed.), *Political Behavior Annual* (Vol. 2). Denver: Westview Press.
- Broockman, D. E., & Butler, D. M. (2017). The Causal Effects of Elite Position-Taking on Voter Attitudes: Field Experiments with Elite Communication. *American Journal of Political Science*, 61(1), 208-221.
- Bullock, J. G. (2011). Elite influence on public opinion in an informed electorate. *American Political Science Review*, 105(03), 496-515.
- Burns, N. (2006). *The Michigan, then National, then American National Election Studies*. Retrieved from American National Election Studies:
- Campbell, A., Converse, P. E., Miller, W. E., & Stokes, D. E. (1960). *The American Voter*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Campbell, A., & Valen, H. (1961). Party identification in Norway and the United States. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 25(4), 505-525.
- Cantor, D. (2008). A review and summary of studies on panel conditioning. *Handbook of longitudinal research: Design, measurement, and analysis*, 123-138.

- Chaiken, S. (1980). Heuristic versus systematic information processing and the use of source versus message cues in persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 39(5), 752.
- Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007). Framing public opinion in competitive democracies. *American Political Science Review*, 101(04), 637-655.
- Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2010). Dynamic Public Opinion: Communication Effects over Time. *American Political Science Review*, 104(4), 663-680. doi:10.1017/S0003055410000493
- Clawson, R. A., & Oxley, Z. M. (2008). *Public opinion : democratic ideals, democratic practice*. Washington, D.C: CQ Press.
- Converse, P. E. (1964). The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics. In D. E. Apter (Ed.), *Ideology and Discontent* (pp. 206-261). New York: Free Press.
- Converse, P. E. (1970). Attitudes and non-attitudes: Continuation of a dialogue. In E. R. Tuftes (Ed.), *The quantitative analysis of social problems* (pp. 189). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Converse, P. E. (1987). Changing Conceptions of Public Opinion in the Political Process. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 51, S12-S24. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2749185>.
- Converse, P. E., & Markus, G. B. (1979). Plus ca change...: The new CPS election study panel. *American Political Science Review*, 73(1), 32-49.
- Dahl, R. A. (1956). *A preface to democratic theory* (Vol. 115): University of Chicago Press.
- Das, M., Toepoel, V., & van Soest, A. (2011). Nonparametric Tests of Panel Conditioning and Attrition Bias in Panel Surveys. *Sociological Methods and Research*, 40(1), 32-56. doi:10.1177/0049124110390765
- de Lange, S. L. (2007). A new winning formula? The programmatic appeal of the radical right. *Party Politics*, 13(4), 411-435.
- Delli Carpini, M. X., & Keeter, S. (1996). *What Americans know about politics and why it matters*: Yale University Press.
- Dillman, D. A., Phelps, G., Tortora, R., Swift, K., Kohrell, J., Berck, J., & Messer, B. L. (2009). Response rate and measurement differences in mixed-mode surveys using mail, telephone, interactive voice response (IVR) and the Internet. *Social Science Research*, 38(1), 1-18. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0049089X08000306>. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2008.03.007>
- Dinas, E., Matakos, K., Xefteris, D., & Hangartner, D. (2019). Waking Up the Golden Dawn: Does Exposure to the Refugee Crisis Increase Support for Extreme-Right Parties? *Political Analysis*, 27(2), 244-254. Retrieved from <https://www.cambridge.org/core/article/waking-up-the-golden-dawn-does-exposure-to-the-refugee-crisis-increase-support-for-extremerright-parties/C50A127CC517968F2D0FA42A2A23FF85>. doi:10.1017/pan.2018.48
- Druckman, J. N. (2012). The politics of motivation. *Critical Review*, 24(2), 199-216.
- Druckman, J. N., Fein, J., & Leeper, T. J. (2012). A source of bias in public opinion stability. *American Political Science Review*, 106(2), 430-454.
- Druckman, J. N., & Leeper, T. J. (2012). Is Public Opinion Stable? Resolving the Micro/Macro Disconnect in Studies of Public Opinion. *Daedalus*, 141(4), 50-68. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41721980>.

- Dustmann, C., Vasiljeva, K., & Pii Damm, A. (2018). Refugee Migration and Electoral Outcomes. *The Review of Economic Studies*, rdy047-rdy047. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdy047>. doi:10.1093/restud/rdy047
- Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. (1993). *The psychology of attitudes*: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.
- Enders, C. K. (2010). *Applied missing data analysis*: Guilford Press.
- Erikson, R. S. (1979). The SRC panel data and mass political attitudes. *British Journal of Political Science*, 9(1), 89-114.
- Erikson, R. S., MacKuen, M. B., & Stimson, J. A. (2002). *The Macro Polity*: Cambridge University Press.
- Esaiasson, P., Martinson, J., & Sohlberg, J. (2016). *Flyktningkrisen och medborgarnas förtroende för samhällets institutioner - en forskarrapport*. Retrieved from Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap:
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*: John Wiley & Sons.
- Feldman, S. (1989). Measuring Issue Preferences: The Problem of Response Instability. *Political Analysis*, 1, 25-60. doi:10.1093/pan/1.1.25
- Feldman, S., Huddy, L., & Marcus, G. E. (2015). *Going to War in Iraq: When Citizens and the Press Matter*: University of Chicago Press.
- Finkel, S. E. (1995). *Causal Analysis with Panel Data*: Sage.
- Finseraas, H., & Listhaug, O. (2013). It can happen here: the impact of the Mumbai terror attacks on public opinion in Western Europe. *Public Choice*, 156(1-2), 213-228.
- Forbes, H. D. (1997). *Ethnic conflict: Commerce, culture, and the contact hypothesis*: Yale University Press.
- Fowler, A., & Hall, A. B. (2018). Do Shark Attacks Influence Presidential Elections? Reassessing a Prominent Finding on Voter Competence. *The Journal of Politics*, 80(4), 1423-1437. Retrieved from <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/699244>. doi:10.1086/699244
- Frankel, L. L., & Hillygus, D. S. (2014). Looking beyond demographics: Panel attrition in the ANES and GSS. *Political Analysis*, 22(3), 336-353.
- Freeder, S., Lenz, G. S., & Turney, S. (2019). The Importance of Knowing "What Goes with What": Reinterpreting the Evidence on Policy Attitude Stability. *The Journal of Politics*, 81(1), 274-290.
- Gamson, W. A. (1992). *Talking politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.
- Gilens, M. (1999). *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gilens, M. (2001). Political ignorance and collective policy preferences. *American Political Science Review*, 95(2), 379-396.
- Graham, J. W. (2009). Missing data analysis: Making it work in the real world. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60, 549-576.
- Granberg, D., & Holmberg, S. (1988). *The political system matters: Social psychology and voting behavior in Sweden and the United States*: Cambridge University Press.
- Granberg, D., & Holmberg, S. (1996). Attitude constraint and stability among elite and mass in Sweden. *European Journal of Political Research*, 29(1), 59-72.
- Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems : three models of media and politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Halpern-Manners, A., Warren, J. R., & Torche, F. (2014). Panel conditioning in a longitudinal study of illicit behaviors. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 78(3), 565-590.

- Halpern-Manners, A., Warren, J. R., & Torche, F. (2017). Panel Conditioning in the General Social Survey. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 46(1), 103-124.
doi:10.1177/0049124114532445
- Hamilton, A., Madison, J., & Jay, J. (1961). *The Federalist Papers*. New York: Penguin.
- Hansen, T. (2016). *Det kollektive grunnlaget for individuell velstand : en innføring i offentlig politikk og økonomi*. Oslo: Cappelen Damm akademisk.
- Haugsgjerd, A. H. (2018). *A vicious circle? Performance Dissatisfaction, Political Distrust and the Populist Response*. (PhD), University of Oslo, Oslo.
- Heidar, K., & Rasch, B. E. (2017). Political Representation and Parliamentarism. In O. Knutsen (Ed.), *The Nordic Models in Political Science. Challenged, but Still Viable?* (pp. 105-123). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Held, D. (1987). *Models of democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hellevik, O., & Hellevik, T. (2017). Utviklingen i synet på innvandrere og innvandring i Norge. *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning*, 58(03), 250-283. Retrieved from http://www.idunn.no/tfs/2017/03/utviklingen_i_synet_paa_innvandrere_og_innvandring_i_norge.
- Herbst, S. (1993). *Numbered Voices: how opinion polling has shaped American politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hetherington, M. J., & Rudolph, T. J. (2015). *Why Washington won't work: Polarization, political trust, and the governing crisis*: University of Chicago Press.
- Hill, J. L., & Kriesi, H. (2001). An extension and test of Converse's "black-and-white" model of response stability. *American Political Science Review*, 95(2), 397-413.
- Holbrook, A. L. (2011). Attitude Change Experiments in Political Science. In J. N. Druckman, D. P. Green, J. H. Kuklinski, & A. Lupia (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Holdal, E., Søbstad, T., & Wormdal, B. (2019). Historisk oppslutning for Senterpartiet i nord. *NRK*.
- Hutter, S., & Kriesi, H. (2019). *European Party Politics in Times of Crisis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ivarsflaten, E. (2008). What unites right-wing populists in Western Europe? Re-examining grievance mobilization models in seven successful cases. *Comparative Political Studies*, 41(1), 3-23.
- Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. R. (1987). *News that matters: Television and American opinion*: University of Chicago Press.
- Jacks, J. Z., & Devine, P. G. (2000). Attitude importance, forewarning of message content, and resistance to persuasion. *Journal of Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 22(1), 19-29.
- Jenkins-Smith, H. C., & Herron, K. G. (2005). United States Public Response to Terrorism: Fault Lines or Bedrock? *Review of Policy Research*, 22(5), 599-623.
- Key, V. O. (1961). Public opinion and American democracy.
- Kinder, D. R. (2002). Belief Systems after Converse. In M. B. MacKuen & G. Rabinowitz (Eds.), *Electoral Democracy* (pp. 13-47). Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.
- Kinder, D. R. (2006). Belief systems today. *Critical Review*, 18(1-3), 197-216.
- Kinder, D. R. (2007). Curmudgeonly advice. *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 155-162.
- Kinder, D. R., & Sanders, L. M. (1996). *Divided by color: Racial politics and democratic ideals*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Knutsen, O. (2017a). Political Parties and Party Systems. In O. Knutsen (Ed.), *The Nordic Models in Political Science. Challenged, but Still Viable?* (pp. 45-75). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Knutsen, O. (2017b). Social Cleavages and Political Value Conflicts. In O. Knutsen (Ed.), *The Nordic Models in Political Science. Challenged, but Still Viable?* (pp. 77-104). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Kreuter, F., Presser, S., & Tourangeau, R. (2008). Social desirability bias in cati, ivr, and web surveys: the effects of mode and question sensitivity. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 72(5), 847-865.
- Krosnick, J. A. (1988). Attitude importance and attitude change. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 24, 240-255. doi:10.1016/0022-1031(88)90038-8
- Krosnick, J. A. (1989). Attitude Importance and Attitude Accessibility. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 15, 297-308. doi:10.1177/0146167289153002
- Krosnick, J. A. (1990). Government policy and citizen passion: A study of issue publics in contemporary America. *Political Behavior*, 12(1), 59-92.
- Krosnick, J. A., Judd, C. M., & Wittenbrink, B. (2005). The Measurement of Attitudes. In D. Albarracín, J. B. T., & M. P. Zanna (Eds.), *The Handbook of Attitudes* (pp. 21-76). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Kumlin, S. (2001). Ideology-Driven opinion formation in Europe: The case of attitudes towards the third sector in Sweden. *European Journal of Political Research*, 39(4), 487-518.
- Lawrence, R. G., & Bennett, W. L. (2001). Rethinking media politics and public opinion: Reactions to the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal. *Political Science Quarterly*, 116(3), 425-446.
- Lazarsfeld, P. F. (1940). "Panel" Studies. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 4(1), 122-128.
- Lecheler, S., de Vreese, C., & Slothuus, R. (2009). Issue importance as a moderator of framing effects. *Communication research*, 36(3), 400-425.
- Leeper, T. J., & Robison, J. (2018). More Important, but for What Exactly? The Insignificant Role of Subjective Issue Importance in Vote Decisions. *Political Behavior*, 1-21.
- Leeper, T. J., & Slothuus, R. (2016). If only citizens had a cue: The process of opinion formation over time. *Working Paper, London School of Economics / Aarhus University, London/Aarhus*.
- Lenz, G. S. (2009). Learning and opinion change, not priming: Reconsidering the priming hypothesis. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(4), 821-837.
- Lenz, G. S. (2012). *Follow the leader? : how voters respond to politicians' policies and performance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lijphart, A. (2012). *Patterns of democracy: Government forms and performance in thirty-six countries*: Yale University Press.
- Linde, J., & Dahlberg, S. (2016). Democratic discontent in times of crisis? In Y. Peters & M. Tatham (Eds.), *Democratic Transformations in Europe. Challenges and opportunities*. London: Routledge.
- Lippmann, W. (1925). *The Phantom Public*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Lipset, S. M., & Rokkan, S. (1967). *Party systems and voter alignments: Cross-national perspectives*. New York: Free press.
- Lodge, M., & Taber, C. S. (2013). *The rationalizing voter*: Cambridge University Press.
- Luskin, R. C. (1987). Measuring political sophistication. *American Journal of Political Science*, 31(4), 856-899.

- Mader, M., & Schoen, H. (2019). The European refugee crisis, party competition, and voters' responses in Germany AU. *West European Politics*, 42(1), 67-90. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2018.1490484>.
- Maier-Rabler, U. (2008). ePolicies in Europe: A human-centric and culturally biased approach. In P. Ludes (Ed.), *Convergence and Fragmentation: Media Technology and the Information Society* (pp. 47-66). Bristol: Intellect.
- Ministry of Justice and Public Security. (2015). *Tiltak for å møte flyktningkrisen*. Regjeringen.no: Ministry of Justice and Public Security Retrieved from <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumentarkiv/regjeringen-solberg/andre-dokumenter/jd/2016/avtale-om-tiltak-for-a-mote-flyktingkrisen/id2462434/>
- Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. Cambridge: University Press Cambridge.
- Mueller, J. E. (1973). *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*. Wiley: New York.
- Narud, H. M., & Valen, H. (2001). *Issue Ownership in a Multidimensional Policy Space: Voters Evaluation of Party Performance*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the APSA in San Francisco, San Francisco.
- Naumann, E., Stoetzer, L. F., & Pietrantuono, G. (2018). Attitudes towards highly skilled and low-skilled immigration in Europe: A survey experiment in 15 European countries. *European Journal of Political Research*, 57(4), 1009-1030.
- Nie, N. H., Verba, S., & Petrocik, J. R. (1979 [1976]). *The changing American voter*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Niemi, R. G., & Westholm, A. (1984). Issues, parties and attitudinal stability: A comparative study of Sweden and the United States. *Electoral Studies*, 3(1), 65-83.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. (1993). *The spiral of silence : public opinion, our social skin* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- OECD (2015). *In it together. Why less inequality benefits all*. Retrieved from Paris: <https://www.oecd.org/social/in-it-together-why-less-inequality-benefits-all-9789264235120-en.htm>
- Olson, K., & Witt, L. (2011). Are we keeping the people who used to stay? Changes in correlates of panel survey attrition over time. *Social Science Research*, 40(4), 1037-1050. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0049089X11000354>. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2011.03.001>
- Page, B. I., & Shapiro, R. Y. (1992). *The rational public: Fifty years of trends in Americans' policy preferences*: University of Chicago Press.
- Petrocik, J. R. (1996). Issue ownership in presidential elections, with a 1980 case study. *American Journal of Political Science*, 825-850.
- Plescia, C., & Staniek, M. (2017). In the eye of the beholder: voters' perceptions of party policy shifts. *West European Politics*, 40(6), 1288-1309.
- Price, V. (2008). The Public and Public Opinion in Political Theories. In W. Donsbach & M. W. Traugott (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Public Opinion Research* (pp. 11-24). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Prislin, R. (1996). Attitude stability and attitude strength: One is enough to make it stable. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 26(3), 447-477.
- Rao, K., Kaminska, O., & McCutcheon, A. L. (2010). Recruiting probability samples for a multi-mode research panel with internet and mail components. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 74(1), 68-84.

- Saris, W. E., & Sniderman, P. M. (2004). *Studies in Public Opinion: Attitudes, Nonattitudes, Measurement Error, and Change*: Princeton University Press.
- Schuman, H., & Presser, S. (1981). The attitude-action connection and the issue of gun control. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Social Science*, 455(1), 40-47.
- Schuman, H., & Presser, S. (1981). *Questions and answers in attitude surveys: Experiments on question form, wording, and context*. New York: Academic Press.
- Schumpeter, J. (1942). *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. New York: Harper and Brothers.
- Sears, D. O., & Levy, S. (2003). Childhood and adult political development. In D. O. Sears, L. Huddy, & R. L. Jervis (Eds.), *Handbook in Political Psychology* (pp. 60-109). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Seeberg, H. B., Slothuus, R., & Stubager, R. (2017). Do voters learn? Evidence that voters respond accurately to changes in political parties' policy positions. *West European Politics*, 40(2), 336-356.
- Singer, J. D., & Willett, J. B. (2003). *Applied longitudinal data analysis : modeling change and event occurrence*.
- Skjervheim, Ø., & Høgestøl, A. (2013). *Norwegian Citizen Panel Methodology Report, wave 1 (Tech.Rep.)*.
- Skjervheim, Ø., & Høgestøl, A. (2014). *Norwegian Citizen Panel Methodology Report, wave 3 (Tech.Rep.)*.
- Skjervheim, Ø., & Høgestøl, A. (2016). *Norwegian Citizen Panel Methodology Report, wave 7 (Tech.Rep.)*.
- Skjervheim, Ø., Høgestøl, A., & Bjørnebekk, O. (2017). *Norwegian Citizen Panel Methodology Report, wave 10 (Tech.Rep.)*.
- Slothuus, R. (2010). When can political parties lead public opinion? Evidence from a natural experiment. *Political Communication*, 27(2), 158-177.
- Slothuus, R. (2016). Assessing the Influence of Political Parties on Public Opinion: The Challenge from Pretreatment Effects. *Political Communication*, 33(2), 302-327.
- Slothuus, R., & de Vreese, C. H. (2010). Political Parties, Motivated Reasoning, and Issue Framing Effects. *The Journal of Politics*, 72(3), 630-645. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1017/s002238161000006x>
doi:10.1017/s002238161000006x
- Sniderman, P. M. (2000). Taking sides: A fixed choice theory of political reasoning. In A. Lupia, M. D. McCubbins, & S. L. Popkin (Eds.), *Elements of reason* (pp. 67-84). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sniderman, P. M. (2017). *The democratic faith: Essays on democratic citizenship*. Yale: Yale University Press.
- Sniderman, P. M., Bang Petersen, M., Slothuus, R., Stubager, R., & Petrov, P. (2019). Reactions to Terror Attacks: A Heuristic Model. *Political Psychology*, 40, 245-258.
- Sniderman, P. M., & Bullock, J. G. (2004). A Consistency Theory of Public Opinion and Political Choice: The Hypothesis of Menu Dependence. In W. E. Saris & P. M. Sniderman (Eds.), *Studies in Public Opinion. Attitudes, Nonattitudes, Measurement Error, and Change* (pp. 337-357). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sniderman, P. M., Petersen, M. B., Slothuus, R., & Stubager, R. (2014). *Paradoxes of liberal democracy: Islam, Western Europe, and the Danish cartoon crisis*: Princeton University Press.

- Sniderman, P. M., & Theriault, S. M. (2004). The Structure of Political Argument and the Logic of Issue Framing. In W. E. Saris & P. M. Sniderman (Eds.), *Studies in Public Opinion: Attitudes, Nonattitudes, Measurement Error and Change* (pp. 133-165). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Soroka, S., Andrew, B., Aalberg, T., Iyengar, S., Curran, J., Coen, S., . . . Tiffen, R. (2013). Auntie Knows Best? Public Broadcasters and Current Affairs Knowledge. *British Journal of Political Science*, *43*, 719-739. doi:10.1017/S0007123412000555
- Soroka, S. N., & Wlezien, C. (2010). *Degrees of democracy: Politics, public opinion, and policy*: Cambridge University Press.
- Statistics Norway. (2015). *The 2013 Election study. Documentation and table report*.
- Stimson, J. A. (2004). *Tides of consent: How public opinion shapes American politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Struminskaya, B. (2016). Respondent conditioning in online panel surveys: Results of two field experiments. *Social Science Computer Review*, *34*(1), 95-115.
- Syvertsen, T., Enli, G., Mjøs, O. J., & Moe, H. (2014). *The Media Welfare State*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Taber, C. S., & Lodge, M. (2006). Motivated skepticism in the evaluation of political beliefs. *American Journal of Political Science*, *50*(3), 755-769.
- Toepoel, V., Das, M., & van Soest, A. (2009). Relating Question Type to Panel Conditioning: Comparing Trained and Fresh Respondents. *Survey Research Methods*, *3*(2), 73-80. doi:10.18148/srm/2009.v3i2.874
- Togeby, L. (2004). *Man har et standpunkt... Om stabilitet og forandring i befolkningens holdninger*. Aarhus: Aarhus universitetsforlag.
- Valen, H., & Narud, H. (2007). The conditional party mandate: A model for the study of mass and elite opinion patterns. *European Journal of Political Research*, *46*(3), 293-318.
- Vasilopoulos, P., Marcus, G. E., & Foucault, M. (2015). Emotional Responses to the Charlie Hebdo Attacks: Between Ideology and Political Judgment. Retrieved from: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2693952
- Visser, P. S., Krosnick, J. A., & Lavrakas, P. J. (2000). Survey research. In *Handbook of research methods in social and personality psychology*. (pp. 223-252). New York, NY, US: Cambridge University Press.
- von Schoultz, Å. (2015). Nordic research on political behaviour. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, *38*(4), 342-368.
- Walgrave, S., & Lefevere, J. (2013). Ideology, Salience, and Complexity: Determinants of Policy Issue Incongruence between Voters and Parties. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties*, *23*(4), 1-28. doi:10.1080/17457289.2013.810630
- Warren, J. R., & Halpern-Manners, A. (2012). Panel Conditioning in Longitudinal Social Science Surveys. *Sociological Methods & Research*, *41*(4), 491-534. doi:10.1177/0049124112460374
- Wawro, G. (2002). Estimating dynamic panel data models in political science. *Political Analysis*, *10*(1), 25-48.
- Weber, M. (1978 [1922]). *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology* (Vol. 1). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- West Pedersen, A., & Kuhnle, S. (2017). The Nordic Welfare State Model. In O. Knutsen (Ed.), *The Nordic Models in Political Science* (pp. 219-238). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Zaller, J. (1992). *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*: Cambridge university press.

- Zaller, J., & Feldman, S. (1992). A simple theory of the survey response: Answering questions versus revealing preferences. *American Journal of Political Science*, 36(3), 579-616.
- Zuwerink, J. R., & Devine, P. G. (1996). Attitude importance and resistance to persuasion: It's not just the thought that counts. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(5), 931-944. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.70.5.931
- Østerud, Ø., & Selle, P. (2006). Power and Democracy in Norway: The Transformation of Norwegian Politics. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 29(1), 25-46. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-9477.2006.00140.x>. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9477.2006.00140.x



Graphic design: Communication Division, UIB / Print: Skjipes Kommunikasjon AS



uib.no

ISBN: 9788230851647 (print)
9788230862674 (PDF)