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Homo Suffragator

Homo What?

It is not every day that political scientists introduce categories derived from a classical language, which may put off even the most sympathetic of readers. Nevertheless, if we are talking of a *Homo Suffragator* in this book, it is because voting—conferring the ability to take democratic responsibility for influencing one's community—might constitute a turning point in the evolution of mankind. It allows for peaceful and negotiated power organization, and creates specific habits, functions, and behaviours. Indeed, we will come to argue that voting may even 'bring out the best' in human beings, not only by defining their understanding of their relationship with their society and political system and their own role as citizens and voters (conceptualized as 'electoral identity' in chapter 6), but by making them feel ownership for democratic organization and decisions, thus making them more likely to accept and comply with democratic outcomes, even when these do not match their own preferences.

We also talk about *Homo Suffragator* because our journey inside the mind of a voter is interested in understanding how elections influence and permeate our lives, how, despite their occasional nature, they might through experience, memory, ritualization, and anticipation come to define who we are, how we grow and transmit, how we fit within our societies and relate to various categories of others within them, even how we live.

At the same time, considering elections as changing the nature of mankind requires us rethink how we study them. Thus, if elections affect our lives, then we need to understand them not only as an institutional mechanism to choose representatives or leaders, but as a human experience. Conversely, if the ability to resolve conflict peacefully through elections is so critical, we must understand how and when elections deliver that sense of resolution.

This chapter will thus briefly explore the scope and historical context of the book, introducing some key new concepts (and their articulation with the existing concepts and literature of electoral behaviour) that will be developed in chapter 2 and used throughout the book. It will also highlight how we can borrow from the combination of physiological, anthropological, and psychological insights traditionally applied to understand the stages of evolution of mankind similarly to comprehend the psychology, functioning, personal/societal relationships, and behaviour of *Homo Suffragator*.

Why *Homo Suffragator*?

Homo Suffragator means literally 'person who can vote'. What this power entails, what it changes with regard to man's condition and social interaction, and what the psychological mechanisms are that determine whether or not one exercises this power are all questions central to the puzzles our study aims to resolve. Throughout the book, we explore the relationship between human nature, personality and morality variations, cognitive and emotional elements, and systemic choices and determinants which constrain and shape our electoral power.

The construct of *Homo Suffragator* also mirrors the labels of the stages of human evolution (*Homo Habilis*, *Homo Erectus*, *Homo Heidelbergensis*, *Homo Neanderthalensis*, *Homo Sapiens*). These stages of evolution have been identified not only with physiological developments, but also with the nature of the new conditions, skills, and behaviours that have characterized humans. For example, the ability to create tools was acquired by *Homo Habilis*; *Homo Erectus* learned to master fire and cook; *Homo Heidelbergensis* was the first to hunt and to bury the dead; whilst *Homo Neanderthalensis* learned to build housing and wear clothes. Finally, it is *Homo Sapiens* (the current stage of evolution of mankind) who first mastered language and transmitted knowledge.

Of course, we are not suggesting that shaping how our community is ruled through elections is similar to those fundamental skills and behav-

iours, or that man has reached a new stage of evolution through the foundation and practice of mass democratic politics. However, it is perhaps a fair intellectual exercise to enquire as to how democracy has modified the human condition.

In this sequential vision, the very nature of man is always partly defined by his/her interaction with others and with his/her environment. In our conceptualization of a *Homo Suffragator*, this takes the form of a reference to the concepts of 'empathic displacement' and 'electoral ergonomics' which we discuss in chapters 4 and 8 respectively. The idea behind the first concept is that citizens approach elections subconsciously projecting how their behaviour will fit vis-à-vis others. The second notion is even simpler: every small detail of electoral arrangements and organization will interact with voters' psychology, influencing which aspects of their personality, memory, and emotions will be triggered to influence their electoral behaviour, experience, and sense of resolution, and even lead to different interpersonal relations between citizens, thereby restricting or reinforcing the emergence of 'electoral hostility' (chapter 9).

Even more importantly, there may be value in mirroring the broadminded approach scientists have adopted when characterizing stages of human evolution. Indeed, they have habitually combined quasi-anthropological narrative and descriptive analyses of how the various stages of *homines* lived and acted, quasi-biological assessments of their nature, activities, and reactions, and attempts to decipher the foundations of their psychology, preferences, emotions, and motivations. There could be worse inspirations for a book aiming to understand both how political beings experience elections, and also how elections come to interact or interfere with their lives, psychological functioning, and habituation.

Finally, from the point of view of macro-history, stages of human evolution are never straightforward or clear-cut. Not only are there multiple controversies within the scientific community regarding some stages of human transformation, but evolution is also, by its nature, progressive and fluid. It is thus only in retrospect—often centuries after a crucial articulation in the history of the species, that scientists have been able to conclude that a new stage had been achieved. From that perspective, the resolution of societal regulation and coexistence through electoral democracy is a startlingly recent event, especially if we focus on universal suffrage, which in many countries only dates back to the mid-twentieth century for men and women, in some cases even later. To figure out what exactly this new societal *modus operandi* will have changed in terms of our modes of interaction—the social,

moral, and economic outputs of mankind—and how durably they will have been shaped by it, may thus take centuries or millennia.

All this makes the *Homo Suffragator* metaphor inspiring, and we hope that it will intrigue readers rather than put them off, stimulate rather than confuse them, give them a flavour of why we argue that, to an extent, we need to deconstruct some of the basic premises of electoral research and turn its usual perspectives upside-down. We realize that this is an unusual approach, but we believe that it can make our attempted journey inside the mind of a voter stand out and excite for the right reasons, and we hope that the reader can find some worth in our thought-provoking 'evolutionary' parallel. We apologize to those who, by contrast, suspect that this is merely a pedantic (or worse, megalomaniac) choice by two scholars predictably and admittedly over-excited by the object of their research, and only hope that by the end of the book, such readers might at least partially have changed their minds.

What Is a *Homo Suffragator*?

If, as according to Aristotle, 'man is, by nature, a political animal', then perhaps we should consider the democratic citizen to be, whether by nature or institutional construction, a voting person, or at the very least, a person who can vote—literally, a *Homo Suffragator*.

From the very beginning of Athenian democracy, the possibility to vote has emerged as the central entitlement of democratic citizens. In fact, arguably, the entitlement to vote may be the sole characteristic shared by ancient and modern democracies, and is thus the foundation of our understanding of what democracy is.

With voting playing such a critical role in the definition of the democratic citizen, there arises a need to understand how the act of voting shapes our thinking, our habits and even some of our physiological reactions. On the face of it, elections are merely 'snapshot' moments, occurring relatively infrequently, and as such are unlikely candidates to define our nature. However, we know from psychological research that rare events can, in the right circumstances, structurally irradiate our existence. Elections can affect the life of nations well beyond their temporal limitations; maybe the same is true of their effects on voters' personal lives. Elections can also weave into a thread of sequential but nearly continuous history, where the hopes, regrets, joys, or disappointments stemming from a given election will frame the context of the next. At the collective but also at the individual level,

elections have a potential for ritualization and sequential continuity, such as to weave a thread that will sustain a life fabric. Collective and individual memories, meanwhile, be they happy or traumatic, can punch above their weight: the once-a-year childhood holiday may be remembered with more vividness than the two hundred days of school that separated it from the next.

The claim that voting makes us *Homo Suffragator* also rests on the idea that voting alters our perception of our own function, role, and responsibility in a civic context, and conversely that a democratically shaped civic context imposes itself upon us regardless of our preferences.

Thus, political science has long noted the existence of 'honeymoon periods' welcoming most newly elected leaders, but the way in which the mechanics of these seems to clash with the known logic of electoral behaviour deserves our attention. Indeed, the existence of honeymoon periods suggests that democratic victors effectively benefit, mere days after an election, from the support of people who did not vote for them. The electoral process itself seems to lead to democratic legitimation of the winner by citizens whose electoral choice was initially contrary.

In this book, we claim that this shows that our nature as *Homo Suffragator* goes beyond our preferences as a voter, and that citizens do not approach an election as a mere opportunity to weigh in with their pure preference but rather as a context in which they inhabit a specific function. This invested voter role may vary across times, systems, individuals and even, for a given individual, across elections. *Homo Suffragator* is thus defined not only by his/her nature—let alone preferences—but also by his/her 'electoral identity', which is at the heart of our model (chapter 6), which he/she embraces, whether consciously or sub-consciously, and which radically differs from partisanship, relied upon by much of the political behaviour literature since the publication of *The American Voter* (Campbell et al., 1960).

Homo et Homines

In the various evolutionary stages of mankind, the *Homo* is defined in relation to his/her environment, but also systematically by the relationship between the individual and his/her fellow *homines*. The interaction between the individual and his/her society is a complex emotional, intellectual, and physical web which is also shaped by evolution as the species' needs, means, tools, and regulation of interaction and communication transform (Maslow, 1943). As mentioned earlier, ritualized interactions, such as the burial of the

dead, and language are seen as defining moments of evolution in their own right by evolution scientists.

Along the same lines, we are interested in understanding what the act of voting changes in terms of the relationship between the individual *Homo Suffragator* and others. This pertains to direct interaction (e.g., discussing or arguing about elections—see Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1987; McPherson et al., 2001), but also to the definition of his/her role as a voter in egocentric and sociotropic terms. It even involves projecting his/her electoral behaviour onto that of other citizens, to redefine efficacy, strategic behaviour, feelings of inclusion or marginality, and sense of positive or negative affect towards fellow voters, including developing electoral hostility in reaction to actual or perceived differences in electoral preferences and behaviour (chapter 9).

It is crucial to remember what democratic elections are: a specific mechanism intended to arbitrate between conflicting preferences of individuals and resolve conflict between them. There is thus an intrinsic rationale to the notion of *Homo Suffragator* being a 'true' stage of evolution when it comes to regulating societal conflict. That ability to bring about a sense of resolution also becomes a key criterion of the effectiveness of elections in making citizens happy. Furthermore, elections have the potential profoundly to change the fabric of intra-social interaction, creating a framework for collaboration and coalition, or designing democratic 'waiting times', all of which differentiates them from the mechanisms of other forms of power structure. They also create a unique logic of representation—and thus of sociotropism and empathy—which adds another dimension to political power. Finally, elections open the door to different dynamics of human evaluation, projection, and accountability, not only towards those competing for citizens' votes, but between voters themselves. These mirror effects between individual, group, and society lead to specific patterns, some well delineated in the literature (representation, coalition, partisanship, etc.), but others deserving of the new conceptual attention at the heart of our book.

A first concept is *empathic displacement*. This refers to individual citizens considering how the rest of the electorate concurrently behaves—with has important implications in terms of strategic voting, which requires assumptions about others' electoral behaviour. Empathic displacement thus also pertains to how individual voters may feel that they engage in a collective event. It may be shaped by whether or not they vote, the manner in which

they vote (e.g., attending a polling station surrounded by many other voters, or remotely), their electoral choice, and their direct human environment. Conversely, empathic displacement may itself shape a voter's sense of inclusion or alienation.

One derived aspect of this sense of inclusion is the concept of *projected efficacy*. Whilst external efficacy relates to an individual's perceived ability to influence the political direction of his/her community, it is often confronted by the rational reality that in practice, individual behaviour is extremely unlikely to affect electoral outcomes. By contrast, however, individuals have a capacity for projection in relation to their behaviour, which leads them to consider the effect of their actions if others were to behave similarly (see, e.g., Krueger and Acevedo, 2005). This is a key mechanism of civic behaviour (if 'everyone' threw their litter on the street, or played music loud on public transport, or jumped the queue, life would become miserable for all, so you do not do these things); we suggest, however, that such projection may powerfully redefine efficacy, and that when deciding whether to vote, and for whom, projected efficacy means many voters will consider what may happen if people like them emulate their behaviour.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, alienation may lead to *electoral hostility*, which we define as negative feelings towards others because of their actual or perceived vote. There is an abundant literature on polarization (e.g., Baldassarri and Gelman, 2008; Fiorina et al., 2008), but it largely relies on the concept of partisanship, and sees polarization as an extension of increasingly drifting competing partisan identification, such as that between US Democrats and Republicans. The concept of electoral hostility differs analytically from this in assuming instead that hostility represents further deterioration of citizens' already negative attitudes towards their political personnel and institutions. Thus, citizens who develop negative feelings towards politicians and later towards institutions will, in a third phase, englobe opposing voters in that same negativity. Consequently, unlike polarization, hostility need not, firstly, mirror partisan rifts, but may instead follow non-partisan divisions and even split parties; and, secondly, will affect not the most partisan people, but potentially those who do not feel close to any party and may even not be politically interested or involved. We develop the concept of electoral hostility in chapter 9, and show how it becomes a feature of *Homo Suffragator* when elections fail to bring a sense of resolution and citizens lose faith in the ability of electoral democracy to deliver closure.

Finally, we aim systematically to analyze better-known aspects of the relationship between *Homo Suffragator* and fellow *homines*—notably sociotropism (towards both group and society as a whole) and egocentrism, horizontal and vertical socialization, and political discussion.

A Russian Doll of Long and Short Cycles

How would *Homo Suffragator* as a stage of evolution, a cycle within the history of mankind, combine with the (sometimes much) shorter cycles within electoral history? Political science is awash with models of electoral change (Inglehart, 1971; Franklin et al., 1992; Dalton, 1996, etc.) which look at how the bases of electoral behaviour have undergone durable changes throughout the history of electoral democracy, using models such as realignment and dealignment. They add to a significant literature on the nature of electoral cycles, which usually follow an 'institutional' logic; whilst this book, by contrast, aims to understand how election cycles may reflect a *voter's* perspective.

Some models, such as that of second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980 implicitly acknowledge that election cycles have an impact on political behaviour, notably in terms of lowering support for ruling parties after a first-order election, before their fortune turns shortly before the next first-order vote. How far backwards and forwards will an election irradiate, however, and how is this affected by its ability to bring closure? If we think in terms of relative weights of (one or multiple) previous elections and (one or multiple) forthcoming votes in a voter's or country's mind, until the weight of the previous votes subsides, the next election will struggle to impress its mark on the electoral cycle, lengthening the transition between two fluid and interdependent conflicting cycles. Would the resulting balance and turning point depend on the country, electoral system, electoral term, or the political nature of elections and the sense of closure that they convey?

Here, we introduce the concept of *electoral atmosphere*. We propose that voters associate a certain atmosphere with an election, which evolves over the election cycle but is remembered holistically. In chapters 3 and 9, we show that 'atmosphere' is a feature voters frequently discuss in relation to an election. We aim to understand how they pick it up, and how it affects them, as systematically as possible. The intuition of many is that atmosphere is a hopelessly impressionistic and fluid concept; but many scientific and technical fields, including architecture, design, lighting, and marketing have

learned to capture it in rigorous frameworks, and these can be adapted to the analysis of electoral atmosphere. We will explore how voters describe this atmosphere, and relate those observations to key attributes of electoral organization, campaign, and political contexts.

This can then illuminate micro-dynamics of electoral atmosphere: when do voters start being 'in the mood' of the election? What are the crystallizing moments when electoral atmosphere 'sets'? We expect the breaking down of electoral atmosphere into its components and phases to shed light upon elections' capacity to radiate beyond the instant of their occurrence, and upon their nature as defining events in a person's civic life.

The Obscure but Fascinating Nature of the Psychology of Voters

At a time when many citizens shun the vote, either occasionally or permanently, the question of what voting means to citizens, what emotions it triggers and what goes through citizens' minds at the very moment when they exercise their voting right feels more crucial than ever. *Homo Suffragator* is a democratic citizen with a right to vote, and this book is entirely dedicated to trying to put ourselves inside that citizen's mind to understand his/her psychology, emotions, experiences, and personality, and the progressive emergence of his/her identity as a political creature. We are interested both in the single act of voting, that unique moment of civic communion between a citizen and his/her political system, and in the long-term development of a voter's psychology and identity: the way it acquires its consistency and logic throughout a citizen's life, from childhood to death.

The study of voting behaviour is rich in exciting contributions. However, while political scientists have long perceived the essential need to understand the psychological mechanisms behind voters' attitudes (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Campbell et al., 1960), recent developments in political science have dedicated proportionally more attention to political sociology and political economy approaches, and to electoral context, than to psychological analyses of the vote. In the 1950s, Lane (1955) thought that the influence of individual personality on the vote was somewhat overlooked, and he would likely reach similar conclusions today. Furthermore, our understanding of psychological models of the vote differs from sociological and economic alternatives. In sociological and economic terms, we recognize 'dominant' models, whilst having to account for exceptions. In electoral psychology, by contrast, we often study exceptions, but lack dominant models delineating

the psychological leitmotiv behind citizens' electoral behaviour. The cognitive and emotional processes underlying the vote have often been oddly neglected, compared to social and demographic determinism or rational electoral preferences. Perhaps the frontal opposition between cleavage-based and rational-choice theories has left little space for distinct psychological models to develop.

Whilst psychological approaches to elections do not undermine the usefulness of sociological and economic approaches to the vote, they introduce crucial elements—personality, cognition (for instance memory), emotion, and identity in models of political behaviour—and dramatically filter, condition, and modify the impact of sociological or rational predictors.

Shifting the Dependent Variable?

Despite the combined efforts of electoral research in the past sixty years, there is no doubt that a certain 'unknown side' of the vote remains a frustratingly hard nut to crack; and the limits to our collective understanding are worth spelling out. We have just evoked (and will explore in detail in chapter 2) some types of independent variable used in electoral research in the past sixty years, but this is only a small part of how our field has developed its own habits and approaches. Perhaps the biggest paradox we face is that, ultimately, the core dependent variables of electoral behaviour research—Will people vote or not? Who will they vote for?—or variations thereof at both the individual and aggregate levels—Who will win elections? What will turnout be?)—are in fact intrinsically institution-centric in the way that they are framed. It is almost as though we were not interested in people as people, but rather in what people do to institutions; in how people will answer the question that is put to them by the system. Crucially, almost all the relevant academic literature is written from the premise that what one ultimately tries to explain by any electoral model is the actual outcome of the election, or an individual's contribution to it. Does this really go without saying?

Inside the Mind of a Voter boldly questions that perspective, and claims that whilst we have come intuitively to accept electoral choice as the 'be all and end all' of electoral research, this applies a paradoxically institutional logic to behaviour (in which an election is an obvious end point), which may become wholly counter-productive if we assume instead a truly behavioural logic, with the citizens at its heart. In such a context, electoral attitudes, behaviour, and experience all compete for dependency, becoming endog-
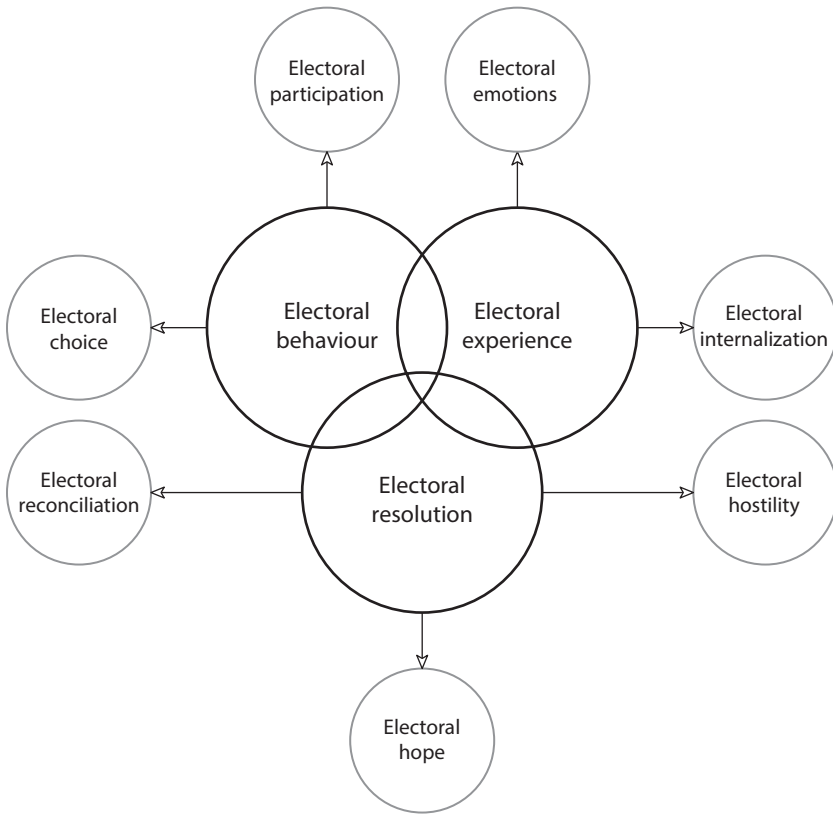
FIGURE 1.1: Dependent variable

enous in dynamic cycles that are not monolithic. What is more, these factors also interact with the capacity of elections to serve as peaceful resolution mechanisms—to bring closure—to determine the starting 'baggage' of the next cycle.

In fact, it is even possible that the existing literature has failed fully to understand electoral choice precisely because it focuses on it as an ineluctable end in itself, largely ignoring what is actually a far more meaningful contribution of elections to voters. This in turn may have led to looking at the logic of voters' choice from the wrong perspective, seeing this choice as in itself the endgame of voters' behaviour, whilst in truth it may just be a route to an end, a by-product of something much bigger. Thus, we propose that to truly understand the nature of the psychology of voters, we must consider a triple interrelated dependent variable: electoral behaviour, electoral experience, and electoral resolution, illustrated in figure 1.1. These

aspects of the voter's engagement are intrinsically interrelated, both statically and dynamically.

In turn, the three interrelated dependent variables are themselves complex. As discussed, when considering electoral behaviour, we focus on both electoral choice and participation. Conversely, with regard to electoral experience, we explore the emotions triggered by elections as a critical measure of that experience. That is, we ask ourselves if (and under what circumstances) elections make citizens happy, worried, emotional, or excited. Additionally, we question how elections shape and affect citizens' daily lives: what we label *electoral internalization*. These are not very traditional ways for political scientists to look at why elections matter, but across social science there would be no hesitation in considering that understanding what makes people happy (or for that matter worried) is more critical than understanding their choice in any given short-term decisional situation.

Indeed, intuitively, from a human-centric (rather than institution-centric) perspective, is it not more important to understand when elections make people happy than when they will vote for a left- or right-wing candidate? Even for representative democracy and its legitimation, is it not more crucial that elections should help citizens to feel fulfilled, rather than that they lead them to choose candidates of whatever persuasion? Finally, when it comes to the electoral resolution, should it not be bigger news for electoral democracy to find out under what circumstances elections will fail to lead to reconciliation and feed hostility, damaging societal peace and harmony, than to know when they might produce left- or right-wing victors?

Beyond the normative question of what matters, there is a chicken-and-egg question involved in our triple dependent variable. As we discuss in chapter 9, in many cases, it may make more sense to think of people's behaviour in a given election as a predictor of their future electoral attitudes than to think of the electoral experience as a mere predictor of electoral choice. Thus, because of the dynamic nature of voters' electoral life, we suggest that if voters have a positive and fulfilling electoral experience in election 1, they will be far more likely to participate in election 2. What makes our research question and model complex, therefore, is that we relax possibly the most universal assumption of electoral causality in the literature (that it all ends with electoral choice): an assumption which seems unreasonable from an electoral-psychological perspective.

Reintegrating the question of what elections mean to citizens and their lives explicitly seeks a voter-centric change of paradigm. It comes with its

own need for new concepts, labels, lenses; but also methods and tools aimed at visualizing how people experience elections—rather than how they express electoral preferences.

Balancing Rooting and Innovation—Navigating Charted and Uncharted Territories

This optical shift indeed requires us to pioneer methods that focus on the specific electoral 'mirror' we are interested in, approaches that betray a focus on the voter per se as opposed to his/her completed ballot paper, and to move from self-reporting to seeking to capture the subconscious process of electoral engagement. This involves both crafting new ad hoc methodological approaches and adapting some from other disciplines.

Given our geographical and historical scope, we could have embraced either of two different approaches. Traditionally, a simple research design would be applied consistently throughout the six countries investigated. However, given the organizational, financial and practical limitations of (even large) research projects, this would have minimized our methodological breadth. Thus we maintain instead a limited core research design spanning all six countries, including a panel study survey, in-depth interviews, and Election Day spot interviews, and add an array of innovative components, each conducted in one country or only certain countries. This methodological choice has a cost in terms of data homogeneity, with some research only tested in sub-parts of the book's universe, and the truly fully specified model only tested in the US; but we gain an ability to zoom in on an unusual range of important questions and puzzles and retain cross-validation.

Thus, we offer insights into young people's pre-voting age electoral experience, election officials' perceptions of voters' demeanour and behaviour in their polling station, vertical and horizontal family transmission, in-depth election diaries, and captures of the facial and body language of voters inside the polling booth. Had we restricted ourselves to methodologies feasible across our six countries, the research would have excluded most of the above.

Challenges and Puzzles

Our conceptual and methodological endeavour to rethink what matters about and explains the nature of a citizen's electoral experience also raises

new challenges and puzzles involving both the specification of our model and comparability across citizens, elections, and countries.

First, not all elections are created equal. There is an abundant literature on the difference between first- and second-order elections (e.g., Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Marsh, 1998; Carrubba and Timpone, 2005), suggesting that voters typically see one type of election as primarily about choosing who will govern them, whilst the rest only take on meaning in reference to that cycle of first-order votes. These differences will likely affect citizens' electoral experience, memory, and emotions. Furthermore, we consider the possibility that electoral experience will differ fundamentally between candidate-centric elections, party-centric ones, and referenda.

By extension, considering differences in electoral traditions, the scope of voting may differ across systems. In France, the UK, South Africa, and Georgia, voters typically cast one vote in a given election, but in Germany, they cast two, and in the US, elections are typically an opportunity for voters to cast dozens of different votes on a single electoral occasion and in a single ballot. Beyond our case studies, preferential voting in Australia or Ireland, or compulsory voting in Australia or Belgium, could similarly affect voters' experience. As an illustrative consequence, we study the time voters spend casting their vote, but the definition of that decision—and by extension that moment—will largely depend on what the vote is about and what it comprises, and the impact of different types of ballot design is likely to be substantially different in a single vote election in the UK from in multi-vote elections in California. Furthermore, the length and complexity of a typical US ballot may trigger different psychological mechanisms from simpler votes elsewhere, require higher levels of information and sophistication, and even change the incentive structure of choosing between in-person and remote voting. In fact, as we shall show, the whole notion of electoral ergonomics involves a reference to the function of elections, which is itself affected by those differences.

Effects may similarly differ between countries with fixed term and open term elections. Campaign timings and dynamics will change, the notion of closure may subtly differ and, ultimately, the sense of control and democratic ownership by voters and the emotions these entail (tension, excitement, solemnity, etc.) may be affected by the ability of voters to prepare for an election and their perception of the degree to which elites control the process.

Similarly, in chapter 3, we explore when people vote and with whom, but this will be heavily affected by whether elections are organized on a

work day (US, UK), on a Sunday (France, Germany), or on a weekday specifically deemed a national holiday (Israel). On a work day, voters will likely time their presence in the polling station around work commitments, whilst for Sunday or national holiday voting, this will be more likely to follow family and leisure commitments. Opening hours and seasonality will also matter. Weekday voting also means voters would likely bring their children along to vote by design, whilst with Sunday or national holiday voting, a family electoral experience may well be a default solution in the absence of easy childcare options. All these systemic differences will compound into differences of practice and, beyond that, of atmosphere and experiential routine.

A third challenge is path dependency between the choices that citizens make and their electoral experience. Let us consider the decision as to whether to vote in a polling station or remotely, an increasingly available option across political systems. While much existing literature on remote voting focuses on whether 'convenience voting' brings additional voters, we claim, in chapter 8, that the experience itself will vary significantly and may thus affect a voter's electoral experience, choice, and long-term turnout. However, path dependency kicks in when, in a polling station, the 'moment of the vote' (a major focus of our research) is clearly defined as the time the voter is in the polling booth, whilst for geographically remote voting, at home, that moment of the vote may be much more diffuse. The home voter controls his/her ballot for a long time, and may fill it in over multiple moments, contexts, and circumstances. The actual moment of voting is thus harder to identify, both absolutely and in the minds of the voters themselves. 'Election Day' itself may become extended, and last days or weeks as opposed to the single day it is for others.

Furthermore, under temporally remote voting, citizens may not just vote at different times from others in abstract terms, but effectively in the light of different information (key campaign events or debates may follow their vote), and in a different atmosphere. (As we show, 20–30% of traditional voters make up or change their minds during the week of the vote, about half of these on Election Day itself—see, e.g., Lord Ashcroft Polls, 2016. Temporally remote voters' vote is typically cast well before that crucial final week or day). How do we assess the consequences of such fundamental differences?

Ultimately, Election Day may mean very different things for different citizens. For traditional voters, this is the day when both they and their country vote, creating an overlap in agenda, a presumption of communion

between the focus of the individual and that of the collective. However, temporally remote voters will reach Election Day having already cast their ballot, and be waiting for others to catch up. They may be engaged, but diachronically and perhaps passively. As for non-voters, Election Day may highlight the divergence between their own agenda and situation and those of the society in which they live, likely focused on an event they are excluded from, be it by choice or accident.

That differentiation is critical well beyond the question of Election Day. To understand how elections affect citizens, intrude on their lives, emphasize integration or alienation, we must raise the question of differentiated penetration for those who are technically part of the process, and those who abstain from and are out of a substantive part of it. Indeed, much literature has largely ignored non-voters, who are seemingly irrelevant to election results except as 'lost potential', but our redefined object of study requires us to fully consider the paradoxical nature of the electoral experience (and perceptions of resolution) of non-voters, because if being part of an electoral process may affect our feelings, attitudes, and behaviours, then conversely, being excluded from this event will likely also have implications.

This leads to perhaps the most crucial challenge that we face: the notion that most political experience and behaviour obey largely subconscious mechanisms. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) underline the immense preponderance (over 90%) of subconscious effects in political communication, and beyond, in human behaviour. Consequently, even perfectly honest respondents cannot accurately tell us how they feel when they vote, why they vote as they do, or what dominates their electoral experience, because they are bound by the limits of their own knowledge and beliefs, unaware of their preponderantly subconscious logic. The difficulty of tapping into the subconscious part of the human iceberg is a quasi-universal problem in the social sciences, if often ignored in practice, but it is perhaps an abnormally critical factor in our endeavour. We need to distinguish the influence of and interaction between various electoral and non-electoral thoughts, events, and experiences which defy consciousness. Moreover, we need to differentiate between 'elections' and 'politics', which are inextricably linked in citizens' conscious minds, despite negativity towards politics being potentially compatible with a positive contribution from elections, if only because elections offer an opportunity (whether notional or real) for citizens to change the course of politics.

Altogether, our investigations will need to develop methods and approaches that encroach upon this subconscious territory and reach beyond

conscious accounts. In chapter 2, we explain how we triangulate self-expressed methodologies with observational ones, including visual experiments and direct observation, and decouple explicit narratives from implicit measures.

Research Question and Operational Questions

The question that *Inside the Mind of a Voter* primarily addresses is this. What are the effects of voters' psychology (notably their personality, morality, electoral memory, and identity) on citizens' electoral experience (including the emotions that they trigger), electoral behaviour (including participation and choice), and sense of electoral resolution (including perceptions of closure, hope, and hostility), and how are those effects conditioned by electoral ergonomics?

We have explained how we intend to shift the traditional dependent variable in electoral behaviour research—or least question its universal primacy by replacing it with three interrelated dependent variables: electoral behaviour, experience, and resolution. As discussed above, we see these as interrelated both statically and dynamically (that is, experience at t1 impacts behaviour at t2, behaviour at t1 affects perceptions of electoral resolution later in the cycle, electoral resolution at t1 impacts electoral experience and behaviour in the subsequent cycle, etc.)

We have also explained that each of the three dependent variables is intrinsically complex. Everyone knows that participation and choice are two critical pillars of electoral behaviour, but equally, we claim that electoral experience is made up of both the way in which citizens live and internalize the election and the emotions that they consequently experience. We also suggest that to assess the ability of an election to bring resolution and closure to both individuals and societies, we must assess its effects on appeasement, hope, and hostility alike.

Relatedly, this book will address four subsets of operational questions. First, regarding the implications of electoral psychology: how do voters' personality, morality, memory, and identity affect, respectively, their electoral attitudes, behaviour, experience, and sense of electoral resolution? Second, regarding the nature of electoral experience: how do voters experience elections, Election Day and Election Night, what emotions and memories are elicited, how do electoral cycles start, gain momentum, climax, overlap, and end? Third, regarding the consequences of electoral ergonomics: how do elements such as ballot paper design and remote voting choice

affect voters' experience, emotions, and behaviour and trigger different personality traits, memories, and emotional relations? Finally, questions relating to the dynamics of electoral resolution: what conditions the atmosphere of an election and how does it develop; under what circumstances do elections generate hope or closure among given voters; when do they generate hostility; and what has changed about the psychology of voters through the 2010s?

A key specificity of the research reported in this book is that its dependent variables were conceived as moving targets. At times, we explain, very traditionally, the electoral attitudes and behaviour of voters. In other sections, we dissect electoral experience itself, and what shapes and determines it. Finally, in other investigations, we look at how elections have differing capacities to produce democratic hope, appeasement/resolution, or, on the contrary, hostility. In some cases, we look at those effects statically; at other times, we are interested in their dynamics. Sometimes, we aim to derive generalizable insights into the psychology of voters; at others, to understand what is happening in a very specific period of our history. We try to disentangle complex causalities, the interface with electoral arrangements through electoral ergonomics, and how this interface is mediated by such deceptively simple notions as electoral atmosphere. Ultimately, this book asserts a need to reinvent our understanding of the nature of electoral causality, from a citizens' point of view, redefining the logic of electoral endgames, by-products, and cycles not from the point of view of democratic institutions, but instead as a voter-centric logic with a dynamic of its own.

Model

This approach leads to a dynamic and multifaceted model, depicted in figure 1.2. The model does not shy away from complexity, in at least four different ways. First, there is our focus on not one but three interrelated dependent variables: electoral behaviour, electoral experience (including emotions), and electoral resolution. Second, each dependent variable and each independent variable is itself multifaceted. Third, the model does not stop at static causality, but aims to integrate a dynamic element that mirrors the logic of how election cycles are conceived and domesticated by voters. Fourth, a complex initial set of psychological independent variables is additionally conceived in interface with systemic design, to create electoral ergonomics, then further mediated by electoral atmosphere. Let us unfold the detailed logic of the model.
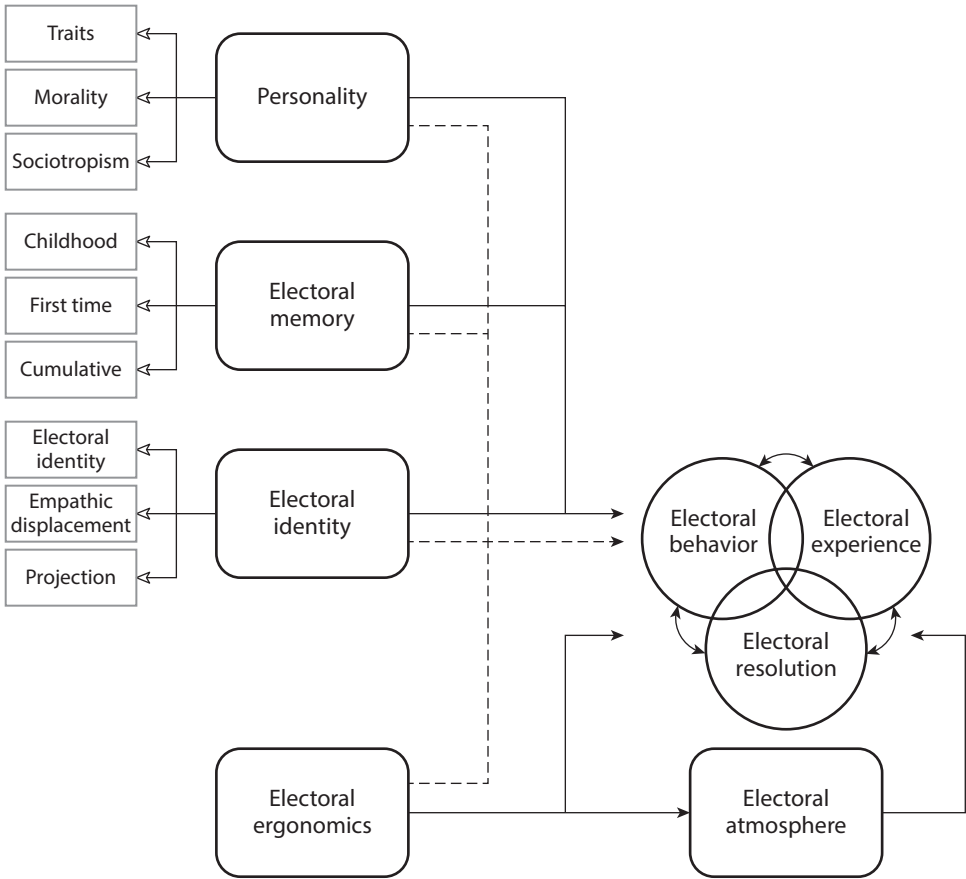
FIGURE 1.2: Model

On the independent variables side, the model includes several psychological predictors. First, personality, which encompasses traits, personality derivatives, morality, and sociotropism. Second is memory, the accumulated baggage of sensorial perceptions and experiences from our childhood and first vote to recent elections in which we did or did not participate. Third is electoral identity, our largely subconscious understanding of our role as a voter, including the referee/supporter model and empathic displacement (that is, the articulation between the individual, collective, and societal dimensions of the vote).

There is then an interface between these initial psychological variables and the infinitely nuanced aspects of electoral design and organization, to create electoral ergonomics which will trigger specific aspects of our

electoral personality, memory, and identity as we vote. A further potential mediating variable is the perceived atmosphere of the election, which is itself affected by voters' personality, electoral memory, and identity, and by electoral ergonomics. It is also affected by exogenous contextual factors such as campaigning elements.

Next, fundamental psychological determinants, ergonomics, and atmosphere all affect voters' electoral attitudes (sense of efficacy, representation, etc.), behaviour (turnout, electoral choice, etc.), and experience, including the emotions that people feel during and as a result of an election, and the capacity of those elections to bring resolution. Crucially, these dependent variables are all endogenous, and further affect one another. Thus, whether a citizen votes, and whether it is for a winning or losing side, will affect his/her experience of the election, and the emotions triggered during the election and its aftermath. Further, positive or negative electoral experience will affect a citizen's likelihood of voting again at the next opportunity.

A special note pertains to how electoral ergonomics, atmosphere, emotions and the attitudes, behaviour, and electoral experience of voters will affect the quality of the election as a resolution mechanism, leading to hope and reconciliation (including a potential honeymoon period) or, conversely, to fracture and hostility. This resolution highlights our model dynamics, as it will shape the 'starting point' of the next election cycle and colour the spirit in which voters will approach the new election and understand its function (for instance, to achieve representation, policy change, or accountability, egocentrically or sociotropically, with greater or lesser concern for the hypothetical behaviour of others, etc.). Implicit in the dynamic path dependency of our model is thus further complexity, leading us to revisit the notion of election cycle and question the assumption that institutionally defined cycles match their behavioural perceptions.

We shall explore in the book the nature, determinants, and consequences of some of these new concepts (electoral atmosphere, hostility, ergonomics, identity, etc.), dissect the experience of voters, first-time voters, and non-voters, and their thoughts and demeanour, but also test overall models of electoral behaviour (left/right vote, extremist vote, turnout), electoral experience (when does the vote make citizens happy, and when does it make them emotional?), and resolution, introducing our predictors by stage: first, personality (traits, morality, sociotropism, etc.); second, memory (including first-time voting effects and childhood and first-time memories); and third, identity (electoral identity, projection, empathic displacement, and

projected efficacy). The overall models will also account for ergonomics effects by splitting the model between in-station, advance, and absentee voters.

The Essence of the Book

Inside the Mind of a Voter invites the reader on a unique journey into electoral psychology. It shows how citizens' personality and memory affect their vote. It dissects the electoral experience and what constrains the capacity of elections to bring democratic resolution. It explores what voters think about in the polling booth, how they inhabit a role as they cast their vote, and how electoral arrangements trigger specific memories and emotions, which in turn influence electoral atmosphere and voters' democratic perceptions and behaviour. The book analyses the psychology of voters in the US, UK, Germany, France, South Africa, and Georgia between 2010 and 2017, and uses a complex combination of innovative and traditional methods, from filming the shadows of voters in the polling booth and election diaries, to five-year panel study surveys, polling station observation, and in-depth and on-the- spot interviews.

The book pursues five key ambitions. First, conceptually, it explores a new model of electoral identity, and the emotions citizens experience when they vote, but also key new concepts: electoral identity, empathic displacement, and projected efficacy (chapter 6); electoral ergonomics (chapter 8); and electoral atmosphere and hostility (chapter 9). Second, analytically, it assesses the impacts of personality, memory, identity, and the ergonomics of electoral arrangements on electoral behaviour, experience, and sense of resolution. Third, methodologically, it combines quantitative and qualitative, static and dynamic, self-reported, and externally observed methods to uncover the hidden story of electoral-psychological effects beyond conscious perceptions. Fourth, narratively, it offers unprecedented findings on how voters experience elections (unique moments of civic communion with their political systems), what they think as they vote, and how they perceive the atmosphere of elections. Fifth, historically, it looks at changes in electoral psychology through a unique period, which saw the world desert the centrist dominance of New Labour, Obama, and Mandela and move to the shock victories of Brexit, several extremist and populist parties and Trump, the 2019 UK general elections with their unprecedented levels of suspicion and acrimony, and Macron's new moderate-politics fightback.

Structurally, this results in nine consecutive chapters (summarized in greater detail previously) fulfilling those five ambitions. After this introductory chapter, chapter 2 develops our model and methodology. Chapter 3 explores (both narratively and systematically) a day in the life of a voter, and how citizens (including both voters and non-voters) experience Election Day and Election Night. Chapter 4 then analyzes the importance of the personalities of citizens, as well as their moral hierarchizations, for their electoral behaviour, experience, and sense of resolution. Chapter 5 turns our attention to the nature and impact of electoral memory. Chapter 6 focuses on a third key independent variable: electoral identity and the articulation between the individual and societal dimensions of the vote. Chapter 7 offers a study of voters' emotions, which we use as our main proxies to measure the experience of voters. Chapter 8 then introduces the concept of electoral ergonomics (the interface between electoral psychology and electoral design), analyzing a number of case studies that are symptomatic of its nature and effects. Chapter 9 is concerned with on our third key dependent variable—electoral resolutionas well as a number of concepts that are indispensable to understand it, such as electoral atmosphere, electoral hostility, and how elections can generate hope or hopelessness amongst voters and non-voters alike. Finally, chapter 10 concludes the book and assesses the full and dynamic nature of our models. In addition to our ten chapters, we include an analytical glossary of the new concepts that we develop throughout this work, as well as of some more traditional ones. The material presented in the chapters is further complemented by four online appendices, available to readers on the website of our Electoral Psychology Observatory: www.epob.org.[1] Appendix 1 presents sample questionnaires from our quantitative panel studies. Appendix 2 presents samples from our qualitative work, including in-depth interviews, polling station observation, family focus group themes, and election diaries. Appendix 3 presents supplementary tables and figures that we did not include in the main text because of its already considerable empirical density. Finally, appendix 4 (on our website) considers how the electoral history of the six countries studied in this book illustrates or validates the broader conceptual and analytical contributions it contains. In addition to these four appendices, the website supplementary material includes a full electoral psychology bibliography, complementing the list of works cited that comes at the end of the volume.

1. This information is correct at the time of publication. Whilst we intend to maintain this website for as long as possible, the material may be moved at a later date.

This is a tale of three analyses. One involves a unique insight into how citizens experience an election, a campaign, Election Day, and Election Night, and the thoughts and emotions that characterize these occasions. Another involves the use of an ambitious arsenal of quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate systematically what goes on in the minds of voters and non-voters, and test a complex model of electoral behaviour, experience, and resolution. Finally, there is the story of a unique period of electoral change, and an attempt to explain results which had been deemed 'impossible' mere days before they occurred.

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