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"A tale of two arena's: How do Regionalist Parties strategically behave when they hold power in regional and national government?"

A comparative research between multi-level political systems

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ABSTRACT

An increasing amount of regionalist parties currently participates and/or has participated in executive office at the regional and/or national policy-level. Their programmatic dimension of (regionalist) party behaviour is examined here by applying quantitative discourse analysis to the Manifesto Project Database.

From a salience point of view, regionalist parties can be regarded as a distinct party family since they develop a similar ideological pattern across time and space. While they share a common 'niche-ness' in stressing (de)centralization topics, they are internally most homogeneous on liberal-authoritarian issues. Weak empirical evidence was found for an increase in social-economic salience scores among the selected regionalist parties when they enter government, while their territorial salience scores tend to decrease at this point. This trend could point to an "inverse subsuming" party strategy.

Keywords: Regionalist Parties, Party Behaviour, Issue Emphasis, Government Participation, Party Competition.

INTRODUCTION

Regionalist parties have re-gained electoral momentum in Western multi-level democracies. An increasing amount of them currently participates and/or has participated in executive office at the regional and/or national policy-level. Nowadays, the literature considers regionalist parties as a distinct party category and as a structural actor in political party competition.

The central idea of this research is to analyse and explain the **programmatic dimension of (regionalist) party behaviour** by making use of **quantitative discourse analysis**. Since most empirical knowledge about party change is embedded within the research domain of party competition, this study heavily relies on this segment of the literature segment for its theoretical framework.

Whilst the **transition to holding power in executive office** confronts regionalist parties with the same strategic challenges as those of their "state-wide", "established" counterparts, it hypothesized here that **they might strategize and behave differently** in response to these challenges.

In alignment with previous scholars, **three ideological dimensions** of party competition are identified on which every political party manoeuvres: a social-economic one (left-right); a territorial one (decentralization-centralization) and a liberal-authoritarian one (immigration, security, fabric of society).

The "Manifesto Project Dataset" provides a well-established tool to process and compare coded party platforms collected throughout different elections at the national level. This dataset is used to **apply the salience approach on the party manifestos** of regionalist parties and their competitors. **Three subject clusters** (social-economic, territorial and liberal-authoritarian) are derived from the MARPOR [1] coding scheme, whereby each cluster represents one dimension of party competition. By measuring and comparing the relative emphasis of these subject clusters over **time** and across **space**, a better insight is obtained in regionalist party behaviour.

In this paper, the salience technique is utilized to test three hypotheses. To begin with, it is expected that regionalist parties constitute a **distinct party family**, i.e. they demonstrate a similar ideological profile when their programmatic homogeneity (or heterogeneity) is estimated across time and space. Secondly, it is hypothesized that regionalist parties are characterized by a **certain 'niche-ness'** when compared to their political opponents. "Niche-ness" is verified by calculating the ideological distance between the regionalist parties' program and the country case mean values.

A third expectation is that regionalist parties react to the strategic challenge of **crossing** the threshold of government by **adapting** their programmatic profile. Transitions to holding power in executive office at the regional and/or at the national policy-level are presumed to have a determining influence on the programmatic profile of the research object. Several scholars predict that ("would-be") regionalist parties tend to actively frame their (secondary) social-economic issues into (primary) territorial terms - a so-called "**subsuming**" party strategy. Contrary to this intuition, weak empirical evidence is found that the territorial (primary) issues become less salient among governing regionalist parties while social-economic (secondary) issues become more salient.

While the observed results partly confirm the distinct and niche character of regionalist party type, the expectations concerning government participation do not necessarily uphold. Rather, instead of "subsuming", it might be more appropriate to speak about "**inverse** subsuming" when it concerns governing regionalist parties.

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[1] The **Manifesto Project** provides the scientific community with parties' policy positions derived from a content analysis of parties' electoral manifestos. It covers over 1000 parties from 1945 until today in over 50 countries on five continents. The MARPOR project continues the work of the Manifesto Research Group (MRG) and the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP).

Since a shift in salience from territorial issues to social-economic issues can partly be observed in the results, a more correct underlying reasoning would be that regionalist parties tend to **frame** issues located on their **primary** (territorial) dimension of party competition **into** issues located on their **secondary** (social-economic) dimension. Also, in line with previous research, these results indicate that regionalist parties employ a complex **multi-dimensional** party strategy (rather than a uni-dimensional one).

From a salience point of view, it is (a bit surprisingly) found that regionalist parties are internally most homogeneous on liberal-authoritarian topics across time and space. Government participation seems to diminish their emphasis on this cluster of issues. A possible explanation might be that regionalist parties have a strong and clear opinion on the ideal outlook of the community for which they claim self-rule, but that government participation compels regionalist parties, next to moderating their stances, to also direct attention to (other) governance issues in the social-economic domain.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper constitutes the first chapter of a broader study about **how regionalist parties programmatically strategize and behave when confronted with crossing the threshold of government**. While the subsequent chapters will observe selected regionalist parties and country cases in-depth by applying qualitative research techniques, this first article aims to provide a broader historical overview by using quantitative discourse analysis.

Only recently, regionalist parties' electoral fortunes have led to an increased attention in the study of this research object. Some - but not all - of these parties have taken up government responsibility. As a starting point, in this article it is estimated to what degree the selected regionalist parties can be regarded as an own, **distinct party category**. That is, to what extent do regionalist parties share a common ideological profile, i.e. do they show mutual **programmatic homogeneity**? This can be analyzed throughout the different phases of their life cycle (time) as well as across borders (space). In order to verify their distinct (or similar) programmatic character, the conceptual duality "niche" versus "mainstream" is invoked. A rich literature exists around these concepts, and helps to estimate the **ideological distance between** our main research object and their political opponents. Next, the focus of our main research question turns to how these parties adapt their initial programmatic profile when crossing the threshold of government. In the end, it should be the modest ambition to **analyze and explain shifts (or persistence)** their programmatic party behaviour across time and space.

Defining the research object

Regionalist parties have become a permanent feature in the political landscape of various multi-layered political systems - and should be assessed accordingly. Since there exists a rich variety in appearances and gradation across countries, a "**minimal definition**" is needed. Massetti and Schakel (2016, p. 62) define "regionalist party" by the following four criteria: *"First, they are self-contained political organizations that contest elections. Secondly, they are organizationally present and/or field candidates only in a particular sub-territory (region) of the state. Thirdly, the territorial limitation of their political/electoral activity is a consequence of their explicit objective of defending only the identities and interests of 'their' region. Fourthly […] regionalist parties' core mission is to achieve/protect/enhance "some kind of [territorial] self-government" for their homeland."*. Müller-Rommel (1998) defines regionalist parties as *"political actors that refer explicitly to geographically concentrated minorities which challenge the existing democratic order by demanding recognition of their own distinct cultural identity"*. Regionalist parties articulate discontent at the constitutional status quo of "their territory", advocating anything from cultural autonomy to national independence (Mc Angus, 2015). While *all* regionalist parties share the notion of **territorial politics** as central theme in their discourse (De Winter & Tursan, 1998), their underlying

economic and cultural motivations might differ. Territory is their most important feature, but they may not be built along ethnic lines (Dandoy, 2010, p. 197; Tursan, 1998).

Regionalist parties can be distinguished from other party families by their adherence to the **centre-periphery divide** as their ideological core business (Alonso, Cabeza & Gomez, 2015), while most contemporary authors assume the existence of a distinct regionalist party family (Gomez-Reino, 2008; Hague, Harrop & McCormick, 2016; Marks, Wilson & Ray, 2002).

Having re-gained electoral popularity in Western democracies, their increased representation in Parliament has opened up new strategic **opportunities** to them (Tronconi, 2015). Several regionalist parties have taken part in regional and/or national government, with various levels of success. In sum, it is the strategic behaviour of this "population" that forms the object of this study. While an overwhelming majority of analyses within this research field focuses on their "state-wide", "established" counterpart, the research on programmatic behaviour of the regionalist party type is much more fragmented and even an *"under-explored aspect of territorial party politics"* (Massetti & Schakel, 2016, p. 59).

Parties still matter

Political parties are rooted in deep "functional" and "freezing" **cleavages** dividing our society, each reflecting different social classes and bases (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). Parties' beginnings determine their subsequent "**issue ownership**": they sustain an identity that is anchored in these cleavages and hold issues that gave rise to their birth. The "issue ownership" theory predicts that voters identify parties with issues: if they think about the issue, they think about the party. It is a matter of **reputation**: if parties are **credible** and reliable on a certain issue, they are considered as being better able than others to handle the problem at stake (Petrocik, 1989). Issue ownership is therefore stable, persisting and long-lasting.

By very slowly **emphasizing** alternative issues and **downplaying** others, there is also a dynamic aspect in claiming, maintaining and loosening issue ownership. Parties can modify their ideological profile, but have to proceed with caution. As Panebianco (1988) rightfully argues, like most organisations, political parties behave "conservative": they are reluctant to ideological change. Their strategic behaviour is therefore best described through the lens of "**bounded rationality**" whereby their rational and deliberate long-term choices are also determined by historical imperatives.

The change in the industrial structure of Western societies impacts the social and political cleavages of these societies (Bell, 1973). Dalton (1991) concludes that old divisions based upon materialist concerns have not yet disappeared, but it does mean that "**post-materialist**" issues may occupy the political arena concurrently with "materialist" issues. In their enduring capacity as the dominant political actors, parties are challenged to adapt to societal shifts in order to maintain their relevance within a competitive environment. Nevertheless, the openings in the arenas of party competition have created new opportunities for **political entrepreneurs**, e.g. regionalist parties, to exploit (Cole, 2005). Taggart (1996) describes the rise of "New Politics" parties as a political development in response to the "established" parties, who are increasingly incapable to solve major political issues.

In recent times, *"regionalist parties have proven to be particularly successful in securing political relevance"* (Elias & Tronconi, 2011, p. 346) and are acknowledged as a driving force in the **decentralisation movements** that have transformed the institutional architecture of many stable Western democracies over the past years (De Winter & Tursan, 1998). This movement caused a snowball effect, generating even more demands for further decentralization – the so-called "the paradox of federalism" (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2015). In this respect, Mazzoleni (2009) empirically demonstrated that changes in the (issue) emphasis political parties give to decentralization are subsequently related to institutional and electoral changes. Thus, institutional changes can

rather be the **result**, instead of being the **cause** of party system change and development. Regionalist parties are effective in pressurizing the institutional architecture of the political system to aspire to regionalist demands for autonomy and push centrifugal dynamics, hereby influencing the stability of the multi-level system *as such* (Fabre & Swenden, 2013). In this role, regionalist parties are key drivers of party system change and territorial reform. Territorial re-scaling is then mediated through the strategic choices that they decide upon.

The "salience" literature sees political parties as **autonomous** and **unitary actors**. They shape and alter their own environment by taking strongly identifiable and clear stances. Parties pronounce their preferences publicly in their electoral manifestos and carry out their promises once elected and in governmental charge. Salience focuses on the study of the supply-side of the electoral market: political parties **anticipate** and pro-actively push societal subjects by undertaking **deliberate** strategic actions. Indeed, being successful in politics is to anticipate and to look ahead. Parties are the **central** actors in modern democracies and the policies they pursue deeply impact policy outcomes (Meyer, 2013).

Applied to the programmatic aspect of strategic party behaviour, parties **consciously manoeuvre** within the competitive political spectrum by timely changing the emphasis in the issues they decide to put forward. The salience perspective assumes that parties themselves **exercise strong influence** on the agenda setting. In other words, the societal topics that are stressed by political parties subsequently become important in the public opinion and run through to the top of the civic priority list.

On several occasions regionalist parties have proven to be a hinge factor when forming a government majority. By playing the role of **kingmaker** they have repeatedly traded coalition support for policies (Barrio, 2013; Verge, 2013). In the process of coalition formation regionalist parties offer opportunities to "state-wide", "established" parties as potential partner since their "wish lists" are mostly not-overlapping, hereby for example exchanging social-economic policies for decentralization decisions. Spain serves as a textbook example where regionalist parties are sufficiently popular to gain seats in the national Congress, and have become important actors with considerable bargaining power when alternating centre-left and centre-right minority governments have needed coalition support, even though they never claimed portfolios in a national coalition government (Ajenjo, 2015).

Parties are not only the dominant actors on the political scene, they also structure the political process. In this respect, the "**party model of policy**" essentially states that policy outputs emerge from an orderly and predictable process initiated by parties implementing their program and carrying out their electoral premises. A functioning party democracy implies a planned policy process leading from party preferences to policy priorities (Walgrave, Varone, & Dumont, 2006). Klingemann (1994) found empirical evidence for the statement *"that political parties still matter"* as the "key actors of the policy process" and that *"party democracy works"*: parties effectively link in with their manifestos and their promises.

Parties are thus the major political actors **connecting** citizenry and governmental process. Klingemann (1994) also predicts that there is a systematic congruence between manifestos and policies, even in the case of parties that do not hold power in executive office. Indeed, governing parties may even carry out the pledges of opposition parties, since all parties' manifestos are collectively seen to outline the whole agenda of policy action.

Niche or mainstream?

Regionalist parties' ascendancy has been met with diverse hypotheses attempting to **rationalize** their role in the politics of these countries (Cole, 2005). While regionalist parties were originally often seen as "niche" players (Meguid, 2005), several of these parties have by now become a permanent feature of the political landscape. They currently hold structured positions and ideological preferences with regard to the different, non-exclusive societal cleavages (Gomez Reino, 2006). Hepburn (2009) uses the metaphor *"from niche to normal"* to describe the longitudinal development of this party category. Regionalist parties share their initial demand for self-

government (Alonso, 2012; De Winter, 1998, pp. 204-205) but have "**thickened**" their ideological profile over time. Once started up as "single issue" parties, and often focused on non-economic issues (Wagner, 2011), regionalist parties now also display programmatic characteristics of "mainstream" political actors, since they espouse broad policy platforms, position themselves firmly and clearly over the full ideological scope of the political spectrum, and co-govern at different institutional levels. Elias & Tronconi (2011) believe that this "niche" category is no longer satisfactory to understand today's ideological profile of this party type. However, a more recent and flexible interpretation of this "niche" - concept might still help us to advance in our research. In their minimal definition, Meyer and Miller (2015, p. 261) describe a niche party as *"a party that emphasizes policy areas neglected by its competitors"*. Niche parties are consequently those that cover topics relatively overlooked by others. Meyer and Wagner (2013) recently advanced a **more flexible and potentially time-variant "niche party"- definition**: they propose that party 'niche-ness' is a function of the relative salience that parties give to political issues. The latter definition will be used to compute ideological distances in this research (cf. infra).

Studying party behaviour via the dynamics of party competition

As **mature** actors on the political scenery, and even holding power in executive office in an increasing amount of country cases, the party behaviour and strategy of regionalist parties deserves more research attention. Recent evolutions across Europe underscore the societal relevance of this phenomenon. [2] When it comes to party change (and persistence), also in the case of regionalist parties most academic contributions have focused on studying the **organizational** aspects. This paper however, wishes to focus solely on **programmatic** party change. Most academic research that deals with ideological party change is grounded in the literature of **party competition** (Downs, 1957; Robertson, 1976). Previous scholars have identified dominant "**dimensions**" on which this party competition mainly takes place. This research aligns specifically with two of these preliminary works.

Firstly, Elias, Szocsik and Zuber (2015) have developed a theory of party strategies in a two-dimensional space depicted by (1) the "**economic** left-right" and (2) the "**territorial** center-periphery" dimension. [3] Elias combines these two well-known dimensions of party competition in order to determine four possible behavioural patterns. The "one-dimensional" strategy then essentially means that parties will only emphasize issues belonging to their primary dimension; the "two-dimensional" strategy states that parties will simultaneously **and** independently emphasize issues belonging to their respective primary **and** secondary dimension. "Subsuming" means that parties will re-frame issues belonging to their secondary dimension into issues belonging to their primary dimension. Parties adopting the "blurring" strategy will consider their primary dimension as primordial, and in function thereof, they will take up ambiguous, blurred and even contradictory positions on their secondary dimension (Elias, 2015).

Due to its recent character, up until now this promising theory is accompanied by only fragmented empirical evidence. This paper studies programmatic party behaviour inter alia via these two established dimensions of party competition, also with the aim to test and verify Elias' recent theory by confronting it with available empirical data.

Secondly, Wagner and Meyer (2017) have recently mapped the ideological party profile of radical right parties across Europe by measuring the salience on (1) an "economic" dimension and a (2) "**liberal-authoritarian**" dimension. Liberal-authoritarianism is a catch-all term that captures ideological views relating to the "cultural" and "identity" topics such as migration, community norms and values, security, law and order, etc. Researchers have called this the "New Politics" dimension or the "cultural" dimension (Flanagan, 1987; Hooghe et al., 2002;

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[2] One could refer to the disputed independency referendum in Catalonia in October, the absolute majority that the moderate nationalists obtained in Corsica during regional elections in December, the autonomy referendum in Lombardy and Veneto last October, etc.
[3] The latter revolves around the dispute for political control over a (peripheral) territory inside the state.

Kriesi et al., 2008). This article follows Kitschelt (1994) in using the term "liberal-authoritarianism". Programmatic party behaviour is studied here inter alia via these two dimension of party competition, but now specifically applied to the regionalist party type (instead of radical right parties).

Taken together, this paper **merges** the works from Elias et al. (2015) and Wagner et al. (2017) so that three dimensions of party competition are taken into account when studying the programmatic party behaviour of the selected regionalist parties. Thus, the ideological space in European political systems is conceived as consisting of three different dimensions: Economy, Liberal- authoritarianism and Territorial politics. And since party behaviour is also a **relational** concept, the selected regionalist parties are necessarily assessed together with the relevant political opponents within the same political system. [4]

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

1. <u>Selection of "country cases"</u>

Naturally, regionalist parties operate in a multi-layered political context (both at the regional and at the national level) since territorial reform ultimately requires constitutional decisions made at the national level (Mc Angus, 2015; Toubeau & Wagner, 2016; Tronconi, 2015). Taking into account the typical historical roots of regionalist parties, the selected country cases in this study are deliberately limited to those political systems that are characterized by a **federal or quasi-federal** (and thus: multi-level) institutional architecture. Also, for means of maximizing mutual comparability the contextual and geographical scope of the case-selection is consciously limited to exclusively Western democracies. The latter have demonstrated remarkable stability and persistence over time. Many of them are characterized by enduring linguistic, territorial and ethnic cleavages that specifically refer to the distinctiveness of the cultural and ethnic regions.

By self-selecting a set of "**most-similar** cases" in accordance with these guidelines this study aims to verify whether certain behavioural patterns can be identified and upheld across time and space. Mazzoleni states (2009) that the institutional architecture as well as constitutional reforms have a substantial impact on the competitive logics of party politics in advanced democracies. Since the aim is to observe differences and similarities in party behaviour, it is important to keep this underlying institutional factor stable.

Whereas many former studies on party change were solely devoted to the traditional policy-level of the "nation state", only recently more political research pays attention to **multi-level dynamics**. This is imperative since the institutional architecture and the political governance of modern Western democracies have gradually become more complicated over the course of the last decades. Most of these countries are (quasi-)federal political systems characterized by complex multi-layered decision-making settings and where political parties are and remain the central political actors. However, many analyses of party behaviour still focus on solely one (national) policy level, hereby disregarding the fact that, by definition, regionalist parties operate in multi-level politics in decentralized countries (Deschouwer, 2003). Until recently, only a few researchers have studied party systems as multi-level settings, let alone investigated how the displayed party behaviour interacts with developments in the multi-level party system. Therefore, scholars such as Fabre & Swenden (2013) call for the establishment of stronger links between traditional areas of party and policy research on the one hand, and multi-level party dynamics on the other.

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[4] "Relevant" in this research means that the political party has to be represented by at least one seat in the national parliament during one of the unique time frames (cf. infra).

From the present Western federalist democracies, in this study only those country cases are retained where regionalist parties have effectively participated in regional and/or national governance. Comprehensive historical overviews made by scholars such as De Winter, Gomez-Reino and Lynch (2006) serve as starting point for this case-selection. The following regionalist parties and their respective country cases are observed: Bloc Québecois (Canada); Christian Democratic Union of Bavaria (Germany); Convergència i Unió, Democratic Convergence of Catalonia, Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, Partido Nacionalista Vasco, Eusko Alkartasuna (Spain); Lega Nord, Sudtiroler Volkspartei (Italy); Plaid Cymru, Scottish National Party (United Kingdom), Volksunie (Belgium). In other words, the case selection includes twelve regionalist parties from six different countries. [5]

This limited number of selected regionalist parties is counterbalanced by introducing a longitudinal aspect in order to reach a sufficient volume of investigated quantitative data. Indeed, most comparative political research in this field lacks a sufficient **longitudinal** approach (Libbrecht, Maddens, Swenden & Fabre, 2009). By observing the selected regionalist parties throughout their whole **life cycle**, it possible to analyse and explain party behaviour before, during and after they hold power in executive office, and this at the regional as well as at the national policy-level.

2. <u>Using party manifestos to measure programmatic party behaviour</u>

This study wishes to assess solely the **programmatic aspect** of strategic party behaviour. This ideological component is **operationalized** by applying the **salience** technique on party manifestos. **Comparative manifesto research** is more objective and bias-free than expert surveys or interview-based research, and certainly more bias-free than mass media agenda research (Pogorelis, 2005). In general, manifestos are published before each election, which allows for clear longitudinal and cross-sectional comparison. Furthermore, such documents are publicly available and easily accessible, and can easily be re-analyzed. This helps to avoid common problems associated with for example elite interviews, such as respondents' inaccessibility or uncooperativeness and no possibility for repeating the analysis. This makes party platforms, in contrast with interview data, particularly well-suited for quantitative content analysis (Pogorelis, 2005) of and for comparative purposes (Mazzoleni, 2009).

When applying discourse analysis, two relevant parameters have empirically proven to be particularly good and **reliable** indicators to assess programmatic party behaviour, namely party manifestos and coalition agreements (Walgrave, 2009). When comparing different alternative indicators Walgrave (2007) empirically ascertains that manifestos are the **best predictor** of "issue ownership" – e.g. to a higher degree when compared to legislative initiatives, opinion leader questionnaires or media coverage. Issue ownership is a long-term asset that is earned via long-lasting and systematic attention for these issues. Parties, in their platforms, tend to emphasize the themes they are the owner(s) of. In comparison, alternatives such as parliamentary activities show substantially lower **correlations with issue ownership** than party manifestos. Walgrave (2007) concludes that the way parties (deliberately) communicate and the way they are perceived by the public are **closely associated**.

Party manifestos are the most frequently examined documents by the advocates of the *salience* theory (cf. infra). They have the important advantage of being a **primary** data source offering voters a summary of the leading issue priorities for political parties. They are presented to the public only after a great deal of internal debate from within the party ranks, usually at party conventions. Manifestos are **major and official statements** of parties intended to present the full picture of their stances and they are issued **by the whole party** and not by one particular faction (Libbrecht, Maddens, Swenden, & Fabre, 2009; Mazzoleni, 2009). The analysis of party

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[5] In this study, CDC is considered as a separate case. However, CDC formed an integral part within CiU between 1980 and 2015, and thus their data could also be merged.

platforms as a valid indicator makes it possible to measure the specific relevance each issue has for parties at specific moments, and therefore to highlight the relevant themes on the agenda of the party system.

Party manifestos are a content with a **hierarchy** of issues, which means that not all issues are of equal importance. They lay out policy priorities for the **entire** duration of the legislative term. Yet, manifestos are **not reactive to external pressures** and unpredictable events that occur *during* the term. These elements and events may only be taken into account in the next electoral cycle. According to "party model of policy", external pressures are not completely absent, but they are "internalized" with a certain delay. Correspondingly, there is empirical evidence that parties' preferences, as they are mapped through party platforms analyses, are remarkably **stable**, and that sudden programmatic changes occur only exceptionally (Walgrave, Varone & Dumont, 2006).

The **choice** of an appropriate method of discourse analysis always represents a **trade-off** between detailed information on party positions on the one hand, and time- and resource-efficiency on the other hand. The **"Manifesto Project Database"** then provides a rich dataset when it comes to pre- unitized and coded national party platforms. As such, it is a well-established tool to process and compare the coded party platforms collected throughout different elections at the national level.

The Manifesto Project Database codes each of the policy statements in the party programs into one of the **56 possible issue categories**. The text unit of analysis is the quasi- sentence. All the quasi-sentences of a manifesto are thus coded into one policy category (i.e. issue) according to a standardized classification scheme which covers a wide range of policy fields. Once the whole manifesto has been coded, the number of quasi- sentences that are dedicated to each category is computed and expressed **as a percentage** of the total number of quasi-sentences in the manifesto (Alonso, Cabeza & Gomez, 2015; Bouteca & Devos, 2015; Pogorelis, 2005).

The total dataset consists of 60 countries, among others the selected country cases and regionalist parties as they are included in this research. For CSU however, only aggregated manifesto data exist (together with the CDU) since they always form the "Union parties" in general German elections. [6] As a consequence, the data analysis in this case is restricted to the aggregated level of CDU/CSU.

The **standardized coding scheme** of the Manifesto Project Database also implies a couple of methodological **drawbacks**. Firstly, it is not specifically designed for capturing a nationalist or regionalist discourse. Some specific issues are thus covered imperfectly. The coding scheme and its categorization, whilst updated several times, still does **not** distinguish between **different levels** of government. Therefore, it has been recognized as insufficient for studying sub-national elections. Hence, the reason why it is assumed that the coded party manifestos are specifically prepared for national legislative elections because they define the party's national image. Nevertheless, the construction of these party manifestos can in fact be influenced by both national and regional (executive office) dynamics.

Secondly, other "Comparative Manifesto Project" issue categories are **too detailed**. It is only at a more general level that issue salience becomes relevant. Therefore, issue categories should not differ excessively in terms of generality (Pogorelis, 2005). While this last methodological problem is addressed in this article by **aggregating** several of the 56 issue categories from the coding scheme into broader and overarching **"subject clusters"**, the

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[6] The two Christian Democratic parties share a common parliamentary group in the Bundestag. According to German Federal Electoral Law, members of a parliamentary group which share the same basic political aims must not compete with one another in any federal state. The CSU contests elections only in Bavaria, while the CDU operates in the other 15 states of Germany. The CSU also reflects the particular concerns of the largely rural, Catholic south.

first methodological drawback (namely: under-exposing the issues regionalist parties primarily adhere to) is tackled by the construction of a specific "territorial" subject cluster.

3. Applying the *salience* technique to comparative manifesto research

For this paper, the "Manifesto Project Database" is used to perform a **quantitative discourse analysis**. While this database is enriched with historical figures about official party platforms, applying a research technique to solely these inputs **also compromises** the scope of the subsequent empirical conclusions: not all the possible involved party manifestos are coded yet; the scope of the coding process is limited to (only) national elections; and the data classification is limited to (only) the standardized 56 issue categories.

Discourse analysis as a research method has its limits and prospects, but offers substantial **explanatory potential**. When applying discourse analysis, this study uses the 'salience' approach, as proposed by Robertson (1976) and later fine-tuned by Budge (1983). In essence, 'salience' means that parties rather try to render their own areas of concern most prominent by **emphasizing different issues** in their campaign. Parties tend to stress the ideas they favour in their manifestos, and usually neglect rather than forcefully reject ideas they oppose. In other words, political parties emphasize topics on which they have a strongly identifiable position able to attract voters. For example, Mazzoleni (2009) found strong empirical evidence for the usefulness of applying saliency measures when studying territorial and left-right trends in multi-layered democracies; a high degree of emphasis on decentralization issues then relates to a positive discourse on decentralization reforms.

Party platforms are the main action channels in the external communication through which parties **can deliberately say that they care about** an issue (cf. supra). From this 'salience' point of view, the more a party emphasizes a topic or issue, the more likely it is to attract voters who are concerned with this topic. Klingemann (1994) predicts that, if a party does not expect a considerable benefit from an issue, it will say very little about it (by expressing a moderate or ambiguous position), attempting instead to prioritize other issues.

Issues of greater importance to a particular political party are most prominent according to the salience theory. Parties which can be said to "own" particular issues will emphasize them more. This is the rationale behind the "Manifesto Project Database", which measures the amount of quasi-sentences given a particular category or issue domain. The **percentage** of a manifesto devoted to a particular topic can then be computed and compared across political parties and across political systems. **Mean values** indicate the relative issue priorities per party and per country case. When introducing a longitudinal perspective, this methodology also allows for identifying shifts in issue emphasis **over time**.

The salience approach does not really account for the **position** that political parties take up when talking about an issue. Since salience and position are non-overlapping constructs, by limiting this study to only the former approach, valuable information about programmatic party change will remain unveiled. In defense of this choice, one might argue that political parties are ideologically more flexible in modifying the "package" (=issue emphasis) than the "content" (=issue position) (Bouteca & Devos, 2016; Harmel & Janda, 1995). Thus, the salience approach might be better suited to detect changes in programmatic party behaviour.

4. Three "subject clusters" for further data analysis

To address two methodological drawbacks some of the 56 issue categories are **aggregated** into broader "subject clusters" (cf. supra). Bakker and Hobolt (2012) already constructed a "social-economic" and a "liberal-authoritarian" cluster for their programmatic research. Their **liberal-authoritarian** policy scale is based on sixteen issue categories to indicate a party's emphasis on issues relating to immigration, fabric of society, patriotism and

law and order. [7] From a further twenty categories, an **economic** policy scale is created. [8] While these first two ideological clusters have already been used to assess the party family of radical right parties (Wagner & Meyer, 2017), in this study these clusters are now re-used to analyze regionalist parties' ideological profile. Subsequently, a third "territorial" scale is constructed to better address the specific ideological profile of the main research object – i.e. regionalist parties. This **territorial** subject cluster is comprised of merely two issue categories. [9] Note that, since these three subject cluster do not include all of the existing 56 issue categories, the sum of the relative frequencies of the three clusters does necessarily amounts to 100%.

5. <u>Data analysis</u>

Party ideology as dependent variable

To begin with, the relative frequencies for the three subject clusters for every manifesto are calculated. **Specific salience scores** are computed for every political party represented in national Parliament within the six observed country cases throughout their postwar history. This comes down to a numerical analysis of 737 party manifestos spread over 112 unique time frames, and from which 101 manifestos can be attributed to the selected regionalist parties. Secundo, **country mean values** are calculated for each time frame and for every subject cluster. Note that these country mean values are also corrected ("weighted") for the different market shares that parties represent. The calculation of salience scores and country mean values is limited to the "relevant" parties, i.e. those parties that are represented by at least one seat in the national parliament.

Tertio, the **general salience scores** of the three subject clusters for both (a) the regionalist parties and (b) the country mean values are calculated in order to get a more global overview *across* elections. To ensure a comparison among normalized values, country means are estimated for those specific time intervals during which the selected regionalist parties are represented in national Parliament (c). These general salience scores ((a), (b) and (c)) provide us with a *global* picture of the **discrepancy** in issue emphasis **between** regionalist parties and their competitors **across** time (see: Table 1). Quarto, at an even more aggregated level, the **averages** (AVG) of these general salience scores can be calculated per subject cluster *across* regionalist parties and *across* country cases. These last figures provide a very distant appraisal of the attention that the regionalist party type and the total political system devote to a cluster of issues across time and space (see: Table 2).

Temporal shifts in issue emphasis by one political party can be paralleled with a simultaneous general shift in the political debate. These broader societal shifts should not be mistaken for specific programmatic adaptations of one party. Therefore, an alternative way to verify the distinct character of the regionalist party family is executed here. In a fifth step, the **relative distances** between the regionalist party salience scores and the (b) country mean values are computed for the three subject clusters and for each unique time frame. This provides us with a **specific** image of the relative ideological distances (or: proximities). Next, in order to draw a global image, the

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[7] The issue categories are, on the **liberal end** of the scale, freedom and human rights (per201), democracy (per202), anti-growth economy: positive (per416), environmental protection: positive (per501), culture: positive (per502), national way of life: negative (per602), traditional morality: negative (per604), multiculturalism: positive (per607), underprivileged minority groups (per705), non-economic demographic groups (per706), and on the **authoritarian pole**, political authority (per305), national way of life: positive (per601), traditional morality: positive (per603), law and order (per605), multiculturalism: negative (per608) and social harmony (per606).
[8] The issue categories are, on the **economic left**, market regulation (per403), economic planning (per404), corporatism/mixed economy (per405), protectionism: positive (per406), Keynesian demand management (per409), controlled economy (per412), nationalization (per413), Marxist analysis: positive (per415), equality: positive (per503), welfare state expansion (per504), education expansion (per506), labour groups: positive (per701), and on the **economic right**, free market economy (per401), incentives (per402), protectionism: negative (per407), economic growth: positive (per410), economic orthodoxy (per414), welfare state limitation (per505), education limitation (per507) and labour groups: negative (per702).
[9] A territorial cluster is drawn that groups the issue categories 301 (de-centralization) and 302 (centralization).

general relative distances are calculated per subject cluster for (1) the regionalist party type and for (2) the selected countries altogether (see: Table 1).

Sexto, at an even more aggregated level, the **averages** (AVG) of these general relative distances can be calculated per subject cluster *across* regionalist parties and *across* country cases. [10] These last figures provide a very distant appraisal of the discrepancy in attention that the regionalist party type and the total political system devote to a cluster of issues across time and space (see: Table 3).

Thus, analogous to the "salience scores" also for the "distance intervals" both a *general* and a *specific* image can be drawn. In fact, the programmatic proximity (or: distance) between the regionalist party (type) and its competitors for every subject cluster and for each unique time frame is calculated. The obtained figures then provide an alternative view to programmatic distinctiveness (or: closeness) – and this corrected for broader societal changes.

A different issue emphasis on specific subject cluster(s), whether measured by salience scores or by relative distances indicates a certain "niche-ness". Alternatively, proximity to the country mean value rather indicates ideological "mainstreaming" (cf. infra). Since several authors stress the niche-characteristics of regionalist parties (cf. supra), one would expect these discrepancies between regionalist parties and their political opponents to re-occur in the obtained results in this study.

Septimo, in addition to estimating the relative distances between regionalist parties and the country mean values, also the relative distances **in between** the selected regionalist parties can be calculated. Octavo, at an even more aggregated level, the **averages** (AVG) of these general relative distances can be calculated per subject cluster in between the selected regionalist parties. Looking at previous empirical research [11], one could expect the **internal homogeneity** to be larger for the territorial subject cluster when compared to social-economic cluster, and the international homogeneity of the liberal-authoritarian one to be situated somewhat in between.

Government participation as independent variable

Elias (2011) and Mc Angus (2015) argue that, despite the ideological differences, once regionalist parties are in government they **face very similar pressures and trade-offs** as any other party type in multi-level environments. Until recently however, surprisingly little was known about **how** these regionalist parties actually **behave in response** to these similar strategic challenges. According to Mc Angus (2015) for example, regionalist parties can instrumentally use this opportunity in a deliberate attempt to (a) portray themselves as "mainstream" and "credible" political actors; (b) overcome historically embedded negative stereotypes the public has of these respective parties; (c) further the party's primary goal of self-rule; (d) broaden their ideological core business, etc. [12]

To get a better insight in this matter, the focus now turns to measuring the influence of government participation on the observed programmatic party behaviour of the selected regionalist parties. It is expected that crossing

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[10] These "average values" of the relative distances are calculated taking the sum of the *absolute values* of the previously obtained "specific" relative distances, and then dividing this by the number of selected regionalist parties (twelve).

[11] For example, De Winter (1998) empirically illustrated that a (broader) category of autonomist parties is internally more heterogeneous on left-right topics when compared to other party families. Moreover, this autonomist party category is internally more heterogeneous on left-right issues when compared to its party family coherence on centralization-decentralization issues. On the other hand, the autonomist party category is internally more homogeneous on territorial topics when compared to other party families (De Winter, 1998).

[12] As an illustration of this last behavioral "driver", it is for example noteworthy that regionalist parties have a particular affinity with both "territorial" and "identity" politics. It can be hypothesized that, when deprived of their possibility to communicate about decentralization topics during their legislature in the national government, regionalist parties will alternatively emphasize "identity politics" as a **substitute** primary dimension of party competition. This behavioural pattern can then for example be reflected in their claim for specific minister portfolios.

the threshold of government - regional and/or national - **will impact their ideological profile**. In other words, it is expected that government participation will change the relative salience scores of the three subject clusters of the selected regionalist parties.

Above all, inserting this independent variable requires a thorough historical timeline per selected regionalist party in order to determine when and how long they find themselves in national and/or in regional executive office. The **ParlGov database** provides information on this for the national governments - thus not for regional ones. [13] As a consequence, supplementary own research was needed to draft a fine-tuned and comprehensive scheme for the selected regionalist parties (see: Table 3). Appendix 1 provides a brief and motivated textual overview of this scheme.

Bringing it all together

The time intervals are then **merged** with the obtained salience scores. **General** salience scores per subject cluster are computed for the time period when the selected regionalist parties provided coalition support. The years of participation in national as well as in regional executive power are taken into account. To indicate whether the selected regionalist parties behave **differently** from a programmatic point of view, the two obtained general salience scores - namely (1) the one for the whole regionalist party life cycle and (2) the one for the time period in government - are subjected to a comparative analysis (see: Table 1).

In addition, the general salience scores **during** government participation can be aggregated per subject cluster so that **average** (AVG) values *across* regionalist parties are obtained. These last figures provide a very distant appraisal of the discrepancy in attention *across* time and space that the regionalist party type devoted to a cluster of issues *when* being in government (see: Table 2). These figures can also be compared to the previously obtained average values (1) for the regionalist parties' whole life cycle and (2) for the respective country cases.

RESULTS

Comparing the **general** salience scores of the three subject clusters between the selected regionalist parties and their respective country mean values leads to several empirical conclusions. To begin with, eleven of the twelve regionalist parties observed in this article show a *higher* territorial salience score when compared to their country mean value (see: Table 1). Only in the case of the CSU-CDU data, the salience score is lower. This lower salience score can be explained by the fact that the manifesto data in the case of CSU are only available at the aggregated level (cf. supra) – namely CSU together with CDU. As CDU is the main "established", "state-wide" party in Germany; theories of party competition predict a strong incentive for CDU to move towards the centrum of the political spectrum, i.e. take moderate stances, and to adhere to a party strategy whereby all (territorial) issues are subsumed into an all-encompassing left-right dimension (cf. infra). In the future however, separate manifesto data for CSU could confirm the expectation that CSU also shows a higher territorial salience score.

On the other hand, the general salience scores of the social-economic cluster paint a different image: nine of the twelve selected regionalist parties show a *lower* figure when compared to their country mean value. Only LN, SNP and CiU show a higher social-economic salience score (see: Table 1).

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[13] Also, in this paper it was opted that coalition support to minority governments is always coded as government participation.

Table 1 : General salience scores and distance intervals (country cases and regionalist parties)								
SUBJECT CLUSTER	N (number of unique time frames)	Mean (b) and (a)	Mean (c)	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Distance Country Case	Distance Party Family	Mean When in Gov.
TERR_BEL	21	3,66		1,47	0,32			
TERR_VU	18	9,16	3,87	5,27	1,24	5,29	-3,39	10,18
LIB AUTH_BEL	21	31,42		5,24	1,14			
LIB AUTH_VU	18	35,53	32,53	7,43	1,75	3,00	7,63	30,98
ECO_BEL	21	27,51		6,30	1,37			
ECO_VU	18	19,66	27,13	9,52	2,24	-7,47	-11,16	25,06
TERR_ITA	18	2,31		1,30	0,31			
TERR_LN	7	10,48	3,05	8,95	3,38	7,43	-2,07	10,12
TERR_SVP	2	5,70	1,73	3,67	2,59	3,97	-6,85	5,70
LIB AUTH_ITA	18	23,10		8,75	2,06			
LIB AUTH_ LN	7	29,37	30,73	7,26	2,74	-1,36	1,47	29,81
LIB AUTH_SVP	2	33,10	30,94	13,37	9,45	2,16	5,20	33,10
ECO_ITA	18	26,29		6,17	1,45			
ECO_LN	7	30,98	30,79	7,41	2,80	0,19	0,15	30,94
ECO_SVP	2	32,66	36,64	0,79	0,56	-3,98	1,84	32,66
TERR_SP	13	3,51		0,58	0,16			
TERR_PNV	13	15,72	3,51	3,02	0,84	12,21	3,17	15,11
TERR_ERC	13	19,57	3,51	4,99	1,38	16,06	7,02	21,82
TERR_CIU	10	13,67	3,71	2,99	0,95	9,96	1,12	13,10
TERR_CDC	1	29,58	2,92	.	.	26,66	17,03	29,58
TERR_EA	6	10,21	3,75	3,31	1,35	6,46	-2,34	10,39
LIB AUTH_SP	13	26,16		4,00	1,11			
LIB AUTH_PNV	13	29,51	26,16	9,85	2,73	3,35	1,60	28,13
LIB AUTH_ERC	13	27,32	26,16	6,09	1,69	1,16	-0,59	25,32
LIB AUTH_CIU	10	20,31	26,31	4,98	1,57	-6,01	-7,60	20,12
LIB AUTH_CDC	1	15,94	23,44	.	.	-7,50	-11,96	15,94
LIB AUTH_EA	6	32,31	28,02	4,75	1,94	4,29	4,41	32,91
ECO_SP	13	30,99		4,84	1,34			
ECO_PNV	13	25,95	30,99	7,44	2,06	-5,04	-4,87	25,60
ECO_ERC	13	26,74	30,99	6,67	1,85	-4,25	-4,08	28,02
ECO_CIU	10	32,96	30,04	4,56	1,44	2,92	2,14	32,75
ECO_CDC	1	35,50	39,61	.	.	-4,11	4,68	35,50
ECO_EA	6	24,32	28,08	3,42	1,39	-3,75	-6,50	24,14
TERR_DUI	18	1,32		1,02	0,24			
TERR_CDU CSU	18	1,06	3,32	1,29	0,30	-0,26	-11,49	1,06
LIB AUTH_DUI	18	27,63		7,46	1,76			
LIB AUTH_CDU	18	29,41	27,63	9,43	2,22	1,78	1,50	29,41
ECO_DUI	18	33,53		3,89	0,92			
ECO_CDU CSU	18	32,87	33,53	7,59	1,79	0,66	2,04	32,87
TERR_UK	19	3,01		1,84	0,42			
TERR_SNP	4	11,51	3,71	0,39	0,19	7,80	-1,04	11,44
TERR_PC	1	7,47	4,57	.	.	2,91	-5,08	NO DATA
LIB AUTH_UK	19	23,26		10,14	2,33			
LIB AUTH_SNP	4	24,12	32,56	5,50	2,75	-8,44	-3,78	16,37
LIB AUTH_PC	1	29,25	26,57	.	.	2,68	1,35	NO DATA
ECO_UK	19	31,99		5,99	1,37			
ECO_SNP	4	37,14	33,06	12,57	6,29	4,08	6,32	55,94
ECO_PC	1	45,11	45,50	.	.	-0,40	14,28	NO DATA
TERR_CAN	23	5,80		2,88	0,60			
TERR_BQ	8	16,47	5,07	5,75	2,03	11,05	3,92	14,65
LIB AUTH_CAN	23	24,86		8,02	1,67			
LIB AUTH_BQ	8	28,68	32,86	7,30	2,58	-4,18	0,78	25,10
ECO_CAN	23	36,82		4,53	0,94			
ECO_BQ	8	25,99	35,49	13,92	4,92	-9,49	-4,83	27,63

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The general salience scores of the liberal-authoritarian cluster really provide a mixed image. Here, seven of the twelve selected regionalist parties show a *higher* figure when compared to the country mean value. LN, CiU, CDC, SNP and BQ have a lower salience score. [14]

These general trends are confirmed when zooming in on the **specific** salience scores. The territorial picture becomes even more univocal if CDU-CSU is excluded from the results: only in 3 of the 83 unique time frames the specific salience scores of the selected regionalist party is *lower* than the respective country mean value. For the social-economic cluster, in 69 of the 101 unique time frames the specific salience score of the selected regionalist party is *lower* (incl. CDU-CSU). For the liberal-authoritarian cluster, in 48 of the 101 unique time frames the specific salience score of the selected regionalist party show a *lower* salience score when compared to the respective country mean value (incl. CDU-CSU) (see: Table 3).

At a more aggregated level, the **average** (AVG) territorial salience score of the selected regionalist parties (12,55%) is substantially *higher* when compared to the average territorial salience score of the country cases (3,27%), which confirms the intuition that the territorial cleavage is the regionalist parties' primary dimension of party competition. Alternatively, on average the selected regionalist parties emphasize liberal-authoritarian issues only slightly *more* (27,9% versus 26,06%) while they put only slightly *less* emphasis on social-economic issues (30,8% versus 31,18%) when compared to the respective country mean value (see: Table 3).

Table 3 : Salience Scores, Relative Distances and Average Values					
SPECIFIC SALIENCE SCORES		**When lower**	**When higher**		
No. Of Territorial cases	83 (excl. CSU)	3	80		
No. Of Lib-Auth cases	101 (incl. CSU)	48	53		
No. Of Economic cases	101 (incl. CSU)	69	32		
GENERAL SALIENCE SCORES (%)	**AVG Total Time Period**	**AVG Only When in Gov.**	**AVG Distance From Country Case**	**AVG Distance From Party Family**	**When Excl. CDU-CSU**
Territorial - regionalist parties	12,55	13,01	9,17	5,38	4,82
Territorial - country cases	3,27				
Lib-Auth - regionalist parties	27,90	26,11	3,83	3,99	4,21
Lib-Auth - country cases	26,07				
Economic - regionalist parties	30,82	31,92	3,86	5,24	5,53
Economic - country cases	31,19				

To highlight the **distinctive** ideological character of the selected regionalist parties, one can turn to the **"niche"** concept. In line with Meyer & Wagner (2013), it is consciously assumed that the niche-ness of political parties is actually a variable characteristic, and that the actions of niche parties and their mainstream competitors can change this status over time (Meyer and Miller, 2015; Meyer and Wagner, 2013) (cf. supra). This may lead to a reshaping of the nature of the party system, whereby for example regionalist parties at a certain moment no longer play a niche role.

Instead of computing salience scores, estimating the relative ideological distances provides an alternative method of comparison - hereby also correcting for possible broader societal shifts in opinion (cf. supra). In a first phase, actually the previous findings are mostly confirmed. On **average** (AVG), a relative distance of 9,17 percent points is found between the selected regionalist party and its respective country mean value when it comes to stressing territorial topics. Analogously, an average distance of 3,86 percent points is found when it concerns the salience of social- economic issues and 3,83 percent points for the liberal-authoritarian issues.

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[14] Since CDC is a political successor of CiU, both can actually be seen altogether as one political actor, whereby CDC is the continuation of CiU post-2015. In this study, both parties are however considered as two different political parties.

When looking at the relative distances **in between** the selected regionalist parties, in a first phase, our intuition is **not** empirically met (see: Table 3). For example, the relative distance in salience scores among the selected regionalist parties for the territorial subject cluster is even slightly *higher* (5,38 percent points) than for the social-economic cluster (5,24 percent points) and for the liberal-authoritarian cluster (3,99 percent points). Again, this result is heavily influenced by the very low territorial salience score of CDU-CSU. If this outlier is **excluded** from the sample, the internal territorial heterogeneity immediately *decreases* to only 4,82 percent points, while the internal heterogeneity for social-economic issues (5,53 percent points) and liberal-authoritarian issues (4,21 percent points) further *increases*. Based on these last results (and excluding CDU-CSU), the selected regionalist parties seem internally more heterogeneous on economic matters when compared to territorial matters. Yet, they seem to be even more congruent on liberal-authoritarian issues.

While substantially different, these salience scores and relative distances are **not** statistically significant at the 95% level, since they are less than two standard deviations from the mean values of the country cases (see: Table 1). The relatively high SD's are due to the relative low number of N per observed political party. Another important note is that the observed differences in salience scores do **not** resemble differences in positions among parties but are merely equal to differences in downplaying or emphasizing issues.

In a next phase, the obtained salience scores are **merged** with the time periods of government participation. Four of the twelve selected regionalist parties (CDU-CSU, CDC, SVP, PC) do not provide sufficient comparable data to fully distinguish between time periods when being in and out of government. Namely, CDU-CSU and SVP have *always* been in (regional) government. Currently, the Manifesto Project Database does not provide separate data of the time period when PC was part of the Welsh government. And for CDC only one unique time frame is available.

Table 2: Government Participation Scheme (Selected Regionalist Parties)		
PARTY NAME	**REGIONAL GOV PARTICIPATION**	**NATIONAL GOV PARTICIPATION**
VU	1981-1985 and 1988- 2001	1977-1979 and 1988-1991
BQ	1993-2008	2006 and 2008
CDU+CSU	1946-2017	1949-1969 and 1980-1998 and 2005-2017
PNV	1980-2009 and 2012-2017	1982-1986 and 1993-2000 and 2015-2016 and 2016-2017
EA	1990-2009	Only in Opposition
CIU	1980-2003 and 2010-2015	1980-1981 and 1993-2004
CDC	1980-2003 and 2010-2017	1980-1981 and 1993-1996 and 2015-2016
ERC	1984-1988 and 2003-2010 and 2015-2017	2004-2008 and 2015-2016
PC	2007-2011	Only in Opposition
SNP	2007-2017	Only in Opposition
LN	1994-2017	1994-1996 and 2001-2006 and 2008-2013
SVP	1948-2017	1968-1972 and 1994-1996 and 2008-2011 and 2013-2017

Based on the available data, in a first phase it is found that for six of the eight remaining selected regionalist parties the territorial cluster becomes *less* salient during their participation in national or regional government. On the other hand, for the economic cluster five of the eight remaining regionalist parties show an *increased* salience score. For the liberal-authoritarian cluster the salience score *decreases* in seven of the eight remaining cases.

At a more aggregated level, these shifts in relative emphasis among regionalist parties are only partially translated into numerical changes of the **average** (AVG) values across time and space (see: Table 3). Overall, the general salience score of the territorial cluster even slightly *increases* when being in government (from 12,55% to 13,01%), while the social-economic cluster *increases* (from 30,82% to 31,91%) and the liberal-authoritarian cluster *decreases* (from 27,9% to 26,11%). However, these last figures only provide a very distant appraisal of the

attention that the regionalist party type devotes to a cluster of issues across time and space. Also, the observed changes here are all really subtle and small.

Last but not least, these average values of the selected regionalist parties can also be compared to the previously obtained average country case values across *all* unique time frames. Government participation then *increases* the average social-economic salience score of a regionalist party in a way that it *surpasses* the average country case value for this subject cluster. For the territorial cluster, in both situations the average salience score for a regionalist party remains clearly *higher* when compared to the average country case value. In the case of the liberal-authoritarian cluster, the average salience score of a regionalist party *decreases* and remains (just) above the average country case value.

DISCUSSION

Shortfalls

When trying to interpret the aforementioned results, it is important to first highlight several shortfalls this research is confronted with.

First, since there is no final consensus in the literature about the exact "population" of regionalist parties, the selected **sample** of regionalist parties in this research is also **imprecise**. The selection was deliberately limited to only those regionalist parties that have effectively crossed the threshold of government. Possible other cases such as Bloque Nacionalista Galego (BNG) and Valdotanian Union (UV) were not inserted here but could actually be incorporated as well.

Secondly, this study was rather "conservative" in merging manifesto data of one party with those of its political **successors**, while this could be added in future works. For example, the more recent manifesto data of N-VA could be merged with those of its predecessor VU, hereby broadening the VU's observed time period. The same (merging) logic could be applied for CiU and CDC.

Thirdly, it was assumed that both regional and national coalition support influences the national programmatic profile of regionalist parties. However it might be that different policy **levels** imply **different** programmatic dynamics, this study does **not** distinguish between both possible effects. **Both** regional and national government participation are **equally** taken into account. This was a conscious decision since it is acknowledged that regionalist typically operate in a multi-level setting but, on the other hand, the Manifesto Project Database is limited to merely national manifesto data.

Fourth, numerous other (contextual) variables have **not** been taken into account when assessing the possible influence of government participation on party ideology. Other important elements could be party age, party size, number of competitors, party system, etc. The impact of many of these elements on party change have already been thoroughly examined by previous scholars, but not necessarily in relation to government participation.

Another methodological impediment is that, despite the broad longitudinal and geographical scope used in this research, as the calculations were processed the **volume** of remaining comparable manifesto **data** gradually **decreased**. Indeed, in spite of being electorally successful, the number of regionalist parties holding power in executive office is still relatively small – which compromises the relevance of the obtained results. As time goes on, the number of cases (N) will most likely increase, hereby downsizing this methodological impediment.

Fifth, as mentioned before, applying the salience approach does **not** capture policy **positions**. Since position and salience are non-overlapping concepts, valuable information about programmatic party change remains unveiled. On the other hand, the most recent version of the MARPOR (salience) coding scheme, which lays at the basis of the Manifesto Database Project, now also includes several positional codes. In fact, the codes that currently constitute the three "subject clusters" in this paper could be split into two positional categories (left versus right; decentralization versus centralization; liberal versus authoritarian) and thus converting our clusters in actual bipolar axes. This would entail only a light modification of the presented calculations and could reveal additional information about the programmatic behaviour of the selected regionalist parties – since they would probably move alongside these three axes throughout their life cycle.

A last shortfall to address are the self-coded years of government participation. To a certain degree this is an arbitrary process: a regionalist party can constitute an integral part of the government, but can alternatively limit itself to only providing coalition support to a majority, minority or caretaker government. These nuances might generate a diverse effect on a party's programmatic behaviour. In this study, only a binary option is considered ("in" or "out" of government), and (mere) coalition support is also coded as government participation.

Interpretation

Now turning to the results itself, we have to proceed with **caution** when trying to formulate conclusions. Surely, previous scholars have classified political parties according to their ideological convictions and belief systems. Do regionalist parties **differ** substantially from their political opponents in the respective country case? In any way, the selected regionalist parties devote *more* attention to territorial issues, confirming the expectation that the centralization-decentralization dimension of party competition constitutes the core business of this party family. The selected regionalist parties devote *less* attention to social-economic topics in comparison to many of their political opponents. Relating to liberal-authoritarian issues the image is *mixed*.

The fact that the observed territorial homogeneity among the selected regionalist parties is actually *lower* than one could expect can be attributed to the great variation from secessionist and separatist to moderate and even ambiguous regionalist parties across the Western democracies. On the other hand, regionalist parties generally do have a clear-cut idea about the ideal outlook of the (own) community for which they advocate greater self-government. This might help to explain the observed liberal-authoritarian homogeneity.

The **opportunity** of government participation implies negotiation talks and making compromises. This is a strategic challenge every political party is confronted with, also the selected regionalist ones. Whether this opportunity comes at a cost is an open question, and most likely depends on **how** the party in question deals with this challenge. Authors (Elias & Tronconi, 2011) expect that regionalist parties would need to **give in** to their original (territorial) core business when entering government. However, this expectation is only **partly** reflected in the results of this study. But it does seem that government participation requires the selected regionalist parties to pay more attention to social-economic issues. Once more it is noteworthy to mention that the salience figures do **not** implicate a direct trade-off between the different subject clusters.

In line with previous scholars (e.g. Alonso, Cabeza & Gomez, 2015; Field & Hamann, 2015), it is probably safer to accept that regionalist parties employ a complex, multi-dimensional party strategy. "Multi-dimensional" actually means that parties strategize on **two** dimensions of party competition **simultaneously** *and* that moves on both dimensions are initiated **independently** from each other. In other words, rather than continuing to act as a "single issue" party or as a "niche" actor, regionalist parties **broaden** their initial ideological package by (in a next phase of their life cycle) also taking stances in policy areas located on the other dimensions of party competition. In terms of salience, "broadening" the ideological profile does not necessarily mean "watering down" policy opinions on specific issues. It might well be that incumbent regionalist parties start talking more about economics

whilst this does not imply that they are now thinking less territorially. Adjusted a well-known adage to the logic of regionalist parties, one could say that in fact *"all politics is territorial"*.

Thus, contrary to intuition, regionalist parties who take up government responsibility may **not** become more **moderate** in their territorial thinking but simply decide to temporarily speak less frequently about it. Also, the obtained results in this study contrast the prediction of Massetti & Schakel (2015) that regionalist parties (once in government) would tend to "subsume" their *second* into their *first* dimension. [15] Instead, more correct would rather be to speak about "**inverse subsuming**": regionalist parties frame territorial topics through a socio-economics lens; i.e. they frame issues located on their *primary* dimension into issues located on their *secondary* dimension (once in government). This trend is partly reflected in the obtained results.

In contrast, "established", "state-wide" parties in multi-level political systems are most likely to adopt a "**one**-dimensional" party strategy (Libbrecht, Maddens & Swenden, 2008; Verge, 2013), whereby all issues, both old and new, are subsumed into an all-encompassing left-right dimension. Their strategies are limited to movements on this dimension, while the other dimensions are used instrumentally to accommodate, dismiss or evade regionalist party behaviour.

A **third** subject cluster and dimension of party competition was deliberately **included** in this research. The liberal-authoritarian dilemma mainly deals with the normative outlook of the community, including issues such as migration, identity and security. It was expected that this cluster would hold a **middle-position** between the territorial and social-economic one. Earlier on, it was already a bit surprising to observe that among the selected regionalist parties the internal homogeneity of this liberal-authoritarian dimension was found to be *higher* than the that of the territorial one. Here, the fact that regionalist parties generally do have a strong idea about the ideal outlook of their own region could serve as a possible explanation.

Indeed, when entering government regionalist parties might have to partly and temporarily **set aside** their more radical aspirations on the centre-periphery divide and on their ideal normative image of their own community. In exchange they (are forced to speak out and) spend more time on other governance issues located within the social and economic policy sphere. This might help to explain the *decreasing* average liberal-authoritarian value for the selected regionalist parties once they participate in government.

Regionalist parties might articulate their territorial demands through a social-economic lens ("inverse subsuming") when entering government (cf. supra). This could be logical since it can be regarded as an attempt to render the regionalist party platform **more acceptable** to a broader electorate. Also, to increase their odds of participation in public office, regionalist parties have to **create** ideological **convergence** with the political actors who are situated at the heart of the spectrum. However, originated as "niche" parties (cf. supra), regionalist parties are likely to be ideologically more persistent (Field & Hamann, 2015; Meyer & Miller, 2015), and thus less willing to shift on their primary (territorial) dimension when compared to "established", "state-wide" parties. Indeed, regionalist parties hold a historical issue ownership on their territorial core business that they do not want to endanger. Alternatively, they create ideological proximity by broadening their initial ideological package through taking up policy positions on the left-right scale.

The **more** time regionalist parties spend in executive office, the more they have to **adapt** to a different political **environment**. Staying in government probably requires a **different** party strategy when compared to trying to conquer executive office. When deprived of their capability to strive for more self-rule for a prolonged time period, one could speculate that regionalist parties will tend to **substitute** their attention devoted to issues

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[15] Namely, this would require the salience scores of the territorial cluster to increase in equivalence with the decrease of the social-economic cluster.

located on the territorial dimension for issues located on the liberal-authoritarian dimension. Such a trend could be logical, since the literature on "sub state nationalism" (Freeden, 1998) and "identity politics" (Smith, 1996) repeatedly emphasizes the **tight** ideological **connectedness** between both dimensions, and this especially in the case of the regionalist party type. Several of the selected regionalist parties in this study show such a pattern. [16] More specifically, they might temporarily exchange salience on their territorial dimension for the liberal-authoritarian one - while holding the social-economic one more or less constant (?). Indeed, if an incumbent regionalist party cannot speak freely about self-rule and has already "camouflaged" its territorial demands in (broader) social-economics terms, an appealing additional tactic might be to try to impose their ideal outlook of their own region on the whole of the country.

The proposed "inverse subsuming" and "substitution" party strategy are hardly more than just speculations at this point. This study solely serves as a starting point. Further empirical evidence would need to be collected to verify and corroborate these hypotheses.

CONCLUSION

From a salience point of view, regionalist parties can be regarded as a distinct party family since they develop a similar ideological pattern across time and space. While they share a common priority in stressing (de)centralization topics, they are internally most homogeneous on liberal-authoritarian issues.

One can expect that government participation has an influence on the programmatic profile of regionalist parties, as it has an impact on every political party who crosses "the threshold of government". Given that this research aims to estimate ideological change across time and across several "most similar" country cases (=space), the existing Manifesto Project database is particularly well-suited for usage here.

Since the CMP-data do not distinguish between the regional and national policy-level, it is assumed that either participation in regional or national executive office impacts the ideological package that a regionalist party has to offer. Weak empirical evidence was found for an increase in social-economic salience scores among the selected regionalist parties when entering government, while territorial salience scores tend to decrease at this point. This trend could point to an "inverse subsuming" party strategy.

While substantially different, these salience scores and relative distances are not statistically significant at the 95% level, since they are less than two standard deviations from the mean values of the country cases (see: Table 1). The relatively high SD's are due to the relative low number of N. Another important note is that the observed differences in salience scores do not resemble differences in policy positions among parties but are merely equal to differences in downplaying or emphasizing issues.

Several paths for further research can be identified. Primo, the number of cases could be further expanded to other regionalist parties such as UVP (Aosta Valley) and BNG (Galicia). Secundo, this study was rather "conservative" in merging manifesto data of one party with those of its political successors, while this could be additionally done in future works. Tertio, the current three subject clusters could also be converted into bipolar axes so that valuable information about the policy positions of parties is additionally revealed. Quarto, speculations about "inverse subsuming" and "substation" could be explored more in-depth. Namely, the more time regionalist parties spend in executive office the more they have to adapt to a different political environment. In that respect, a party's life cycle could be marked by consecutive "waves" of programmatic "maturation".

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[16] LN 1994-2006 ; BQ 1993-2008; CiU 1993-2004

Quinto, future research on this topic could also rely on qualitative data collection and analysis, a research approach which is complementary to the initial quantitative phase. Last but not least, future research can also draw on regional manifesto data – although this is a coding process which is still in progress. [17]

APPENDIX 1

Underneath, for reasons of clarity and uniformity, a brief and motivated overview is provided. The relevant time intervals (that are self-coded as government participation) are summed up.

VU: Participation in national government from 1977 till 1979 and from 1988 till 1991. Part of the regional government of Flanders from 1981 till 1985 and from 1988 till 2001.

BQ: Held an absolute majority in the regional parliament of Québec from 1993 till 2008. The years 2006 and 2008 are coded as moments of support for the national minority conservative government Harper I and II since, de facto they traded support as a coalition partner during that period. Most notably with the 2006 motion that recognized the people of Quebec as a nation "within a united Canada."

CDU+CSU: Have been in national government since 1949, except from 1969 till 1980 and from 1998 till 2005. Permanent part of the Bavarian regional government since 1946 onwards.

PNV: Part of the Basque regional government from 1980 till 2017, except from 2009 till 2012. On the national level, PNV supported the minority government between 1982-1986, 1993-2000, 2015-2016 and 2016-2017.

EA: Part of the Basque regional government from 1990 till 2009. Have only been in opposition in national parliament. Formed an alliance with PNV from 2001-2005.

CIU: Part of the regional government of Catalonia from 1980 till 2003, and then from 2010 till 2015. Provided coalition support to the national government between 1980-1981 and between 1993-2004. After 2015, CDC can be seen as the successor party.

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[17] Volkens (2009) adapted the original CMP- methodology to the study of party manifestos at the sub-state level and added two positional codes: one on identity claims and the other on authority. This "Regional Manifestos Project" (RMP) gathers datasets that content-analyses party manifestos for regional elections, hereby combining the economic and territorial dimensions in multi-level politics. RMP refines the MPD coding scheme consisting of 56 categories (divided into seven "issue domains") by adding another 20 classification options. Taken together, this allows for a more fine-tuned measurement of the preferences of parties with regard to both the economic and the territorial dimension in multi-level polities (Alonso, 2013). Using RMP then offers the advantage of having a standardized process enhancing the comparativeness between political systems at the regional level. In their pioneering studies, Maddens (2009) and Libbrecht (2009) already measured identity and authority claims across a range of Spanish and UK national and regional election manifestos, and coded them on 'salience' and on 'position'. The RMP and MPD datasets are "living" and "moving" resources, being further completed with data from other political systems, rendering it possible to expand such research to other contexts and settings in the near future.

In sum, whereas MPD was designed to analyze national manifestos, RMP has adapted MPD's methodology to multi-level polities. The main difference between MPD and RMP is that the latter adapts the former's national-level classification scheme to sub-national elections by: (a) introducing an additional two-digit code that captures territorial preferences; and (b) creating sub-categories to capture some issues that are particular of political competition in sub-national elections. The two-digit territorial codes, applied in each quasi- sentence, identify the level of government – local, regional, national, European or international – and the preferences of parties regarding the distribution of powers willing to devote more or less authority to the addressed level of government in a given policy issue.

ERC: Part of the regional government of Catalonia from 1984 till 1988, between 2003-2010 and from 2015 till now. Provided coalition support to the national minority government from 2004 till 2008 and between 2015-2016.

CDC: Part of the regional government of Catalonia from 1980-2003 and from 2010 till 2017. Provided coalition support to the national government between 1980-1981, 1993-1996 and 2015-2016. Before 2015, CDC can be as part of CiU. Continued as Junts pel Sí after 2016.

PC: Member of the Welsh regional government from 2007 till 2011. Have only been in opposition in the National Parliament.

SNP: Have only been in opposition in the National Parliament. Part of the Scottish regional government from 2007 till 2017.

LN: Part of the national government between 1994-1996, 2001-2006, and 2008-2013. Member of the regional government in Veneto as well as in Lombardy from 1994 till 2017. From 1995 till 2000, they acted under the auspices of the Forza Italia Alliance.

SVP: Have been in regional government of Sudtirol from 1948 till 2017.Provided coalition support to the national government between 1968-1972, 1994-1996, 2008-2011 and 2013-2017. In regional government from 1948 till now.

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