Party Competition in Context

How Communication Platforms and Electoral Arenas Affect Party Behaviour

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Abstract

Taking advantage of methodological innovations in the quantitative analysis of text documents, this thesis explores the role of two previously largely neglected context factors in research on party competition – communication platforms and electoral arenas. Drawing on original data sets which combine information from various platforms and from different electoral arenas, the study derives and tests expectations on how patterns of party behaviour play out depending on the specific context in which they operate.

It is argued that the incentive structure for parties and the degree to which parties can act in accordance with their preferred campaign strategies vary depending on the situational context. Against this background, the expectation is formulated that party behaviour is contingent upon the specific circumstances in which election campaigning takes place. More precisely, it is claimed that parties' campaign strategies and the constraints they face to act in line with these strategic considerations lead to variation in party behaviour across different contexts.

This thesis comprises four independent studies. Overall, these studies provide strong evidence for this theoretical claim. The presented findings have at least two important implications. *First*, since patterns of party competition in public campaign debates, on social media, and in party manifestos diverge, party competition can only be understood properly based on a diverse set of communication channels. *Second*, the context sensitivity of party behaviour regarding electoral arenas implies that generalisations derived from a specific type of election (e.g., national elections) might lead to wrong conclusions for elections at other territorial levels. This implies that policy recommendations to foster political competition in second-order elections derived from insights from first-order national elections should be made with great caution. At least, variation in the incentive structure of political parties should be considered.

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Preface

This thesis developed during my work as a research fellow at the Chair of Comparative Politics of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. This position allowed me not only to write a dissertation but also to teach students in politics, to be part of vibrant research projects and to present my research at international conferences. For all these opportunities as well as for supervising and guiding this thesis, I want to thank Prof. Dr. Edgar Grande. I am also very grateful to Prof. Dr. Berthold Rittberger for helpful advice and for serving as the second supervisor of this thesis.

Along the way to this dissertation, I profited a lot from the support of all of my colleagues and co-authors. First, I want to thank Swen Hutter for introducing me to hands-on political science research by hiring me as a student assistant. Special thanks also go to Daniela Braun for doing a great job as one of my project leaders and for inspiring talks about topics ranging from research on political parties to parenting. Furthermore, I am very grateful for all the support from Alena Kerscher and Matthias Fatke. When writing a dissertation, setbacks are common, and successes are rare. Having colleagues who unfailingly helped to cope with the former and who know how to celebrate the latter contributed significantly to the completion of this thesis.

I also owe a special debt of thanks to all my friends and my family. Talking about my research to friends from other scientific disciplines and from outside of academia helped a lot to put my thoughts in perspective. Moreover, I am indebted to my family for their support and the interest in my work.

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Deutschsprachige Zusammenfassung

Parteienwettbewerb ist ein zentraler Baustein repräsentativer Demokratie (Schumpeter 1950). In der politikwissenschaftlichen Beschäftigung mit dieser Thematik hat sich eine Reihe theoretischer Ansätze etabliert, um das Verhalten von Parteien in Wahlkämpfen besser verstehen und erklären zu können (u.a., Budge and Farlie 1983a; Downs 1957; Robertson 1976; Stokes 1963). Eine wichtige Erkenntnis im Zuge dieser Forschung ist, dass Parteiverhalten einer *konditionalen Logik* folgt. Demnach hängt die Relevanz unterschiedlicher Erklärungsfaktoren des Parteiverhaltens sowohl vom Kontext in dem Parteien interagieren als auch von individuellen Merkmalen einer Partei selbst ab (Strom 1990; Wagner and Meyer 2014). Auf diese Weise kann erklärt werden, weshalb die Logik des Parteienwettbewerbs insgesamt je nach Zusammensetzung des Parteiensystems sowie der institutionellen Rahmenbedingungen ganz unterschiedliche Ausprägungen annehmen kann (Sartori 1976).

Die vorliegende Dissertation thematisiert einen blinden Fleck in dieser Literatur. Die Konditionalität von Parteiverhalten mit Blick auf institutionelle Aspekte (z.B. Regierungssysteme) und insbesondere mit Bezug auf parteispezifische Faktoren (z.B. ideologische Position) war Gegenstand zahlreicher Untersuchungen. Dasselbe ist jedoch nicht für den *Handlungskontext* des Parteienwettbewerbs der Fall. Dies gilt insbesondere für Varianz im Parteiverhalten über unterschiedliche *Kommunikationsplattformen* hinweg sowie mit Bezug auf verschiedene *elektorale Arenen*.

Mit Blick auf *Kommunikationsplattformen* basiert die politikwissenschaftliche Forschung stark auf den Inhalten von Wahlprogrammen (Dolezal et al. 2018). Inwiefern die Einsichten, die auf der Grundlage dieser Datenquelle gewonnen wurden, auch für andere Plattformen relevant sind, ist daher eine in weiten Teilen offene Frage. Vor dem Hintergrund, dass die Wähler*innen Informationen zu Parteien während des Wahlkampfs vorrangig nicht aus Parteiprogrammen, sondern insbesondere aus Massenmedien oder in jüngerer Zeit auch verstärkt aus sozialen Medien beziehen, stellt dies ein zentrales Forschungsproblem für die Parteienforschung dar.

Hinsichtlich unterschiedlicher *elektoraler Arenen*, zeigt sich ein ähnliches Bild. Hier ist die Forschung stark dominiert durch Studien basierend auf nationalen Wahlen. Inwiefern Parteiverhalten in Wahlkämpfen auf der subnationalen oder der europäischen Ebene sich systematisch von dem unterscheidet, was in nationalen Wahlen beobachtet werden kann, ist ebenso noch wenig erforscht (vgl. Golder et al. 2017). Vor dem Hintergrund anhaltender Debatten über die geringe Relevanz und die niedrige Wahlbeteiligung bei Europawahlen (hierzu u.a., Follesdal and Hix 2006), ist jedoch auch dieser Aspekt nicht minder relevant.

Die Arbeit leistet daher einen wichtigen Beitrag zum Verständnis der Kontextabhängigkeit von Parteiverhalten, indem sie diese relevanten, aber bisher unterbeleuchtete Faktoren in den Blick nimmt. Durch die Nutzung neuer Möglichkeiten der quantitativen Textanalyse (Grimmer and Stewart 2013) werden verschiedene Datenquellen erschlossen, ausgewertet und in Relation gesetzt. Insbesondere werden Datensätze erstellt, die auf Informationen aus den Seiten politischer Parteien in sozialen Medien, Zeitungsberichten und Wahlprogrammen basieren. Auf diese Weise kann die Arbeit Parteiverhalten über verschiedene Kommunikationskanäle und elektorale Arenen hinweg systematisch vergleichen und relevante Unterschiede im Parteienwettbewerb identifizieren.

Das zentrale theoretische Argument der Arbeit ist, dass die Anreizstruktur für Parteien und das Ausmaß, indem Parteien in Einklang mit ihren präferierten Strategien agieren können, vom Handlungskontext abhängen. Es wird also angenommen, dass die Kampagnenstrategien selbst wie auch die Hindernisse, diese Strategien umzusetzen, über Handlungskontexte hinweg variieren. Je nachdem, unter welchen Umständen Wahlkampf stattfindet, können Parteien andere Strategien als zur Zielerreichung am besten geeignet ansehen (Spoon and Klüver 2014). Genauso kann jedoch das Ausmaß, in dem es Parteien über unterschiedliche Handlungskontexte hinweg möglich ist, diese Strategien erfolgreich umzusetzen, zu Varianz im Parteienverhalten führen (Steenbergen and Scott 2004). Dementsprechend wird die Erwartung formuliert, dass Parteiverhalten von den spezifischen Umständen unter denen Wahlkampf stattfindet, abhängt.

Inwiefern ist Parteiverhalten tatsächlich abhängig vom Handlungskontext? Die vorliegende kumulative Dissertation präsentiert zur Beantwortung dieser Frage vier eigenständige Forschungsarbeiten. Jede dieser Arbeiten basiert dabei auf den obigen theoretischen Überlegungen und bearbeitet davon ausgehend einen spezifischen Aspekt dieser breit angelegten Ausgangsfragestellung.

Die *erste Studie (Chapter 6)* untersucht die Treiber der Politisierung des Einwanderungsthemas in öffentlichen Wahlkampfdebatten (Grande et al. 2018). Durch die Nutzung von Wahlprogrammen zur Analyse von Parteistrategien und Mediendaten zur Betrachtung öffentlicher Wahlkampfdebatten kann gezeigt werden, dass die Mobilisierung des Themas durch rechtspopulistische Parteien maßgeblich zu dessen Politisierung beiträgt. Für sozioökonomische Faktoren sowie die Mobilisierungsstrategien moderater Mainstreamparteien können dagegen keine direkten Effekte auf das Politisierungsniveau beobachtet werden. Ebenso machen die Analysen deutlich, dass öffentliche Debatten dennoch oftmals auch von Mainstreamparteien der politischen Mitte dominiert werden. Damit leistet die Arbeit allen voran einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Debatte um den Zusammenhang zwischen parteipolitischen Strategien und der Politisierung von Themen in Wahlkampfdebatten (Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2017; Kriesi et al. 2008; Van der Brug et al. 2015).

Die *zweite Studie (Chapter 7)* untersucht, inwiefern Einsichten aus der Analyse direkter Parteikommunikation in Wahlprogrammen auch im Kontext öffentlicher Debatten in Massenmedien von Relevanz sind (Schwarzbözl et al. 2018). Dabei rückt die Arbeit zwei zentrale Erklärungsfaktoren in der Themenschwerpunktsetzung von Parteien in den Fokus. Einerseits wird auf die Erwartung Bezug genommen, dass die generelle Assoziation von Parteien mit bestimmten Themen, das sogenannte „issue ownership" (Budge 2015), hier eine wichtige Rolle einnimmt. Andererseits beschäftigt sich die Studie mit dem Argument, Parteien würden sich auf die Themen fokussieren, die aktuell die Agenda des Parteienwettbewerbs insgesamt bestimmen (Steenbergen and Scott 2004). Basierend auf Überlegungen zum Neuigkeitswert unterschiedlicher Partei-Themen-Verknüpfungen wird davon ausgegangen, dass beide Erklärungen im massenmedialen Kontext sogar von noch größerer Bedeutung sind. Trotz beträchtli-

cher Ähnlichkeiten zwischen beiden Kommunikationsplattformen stützt ein direkter Vergleich beider Datenquellen diese Erwartung. Dabei wird insbesondere deutlich, dass gerade kleinere Parteien in den Medien hauptsächlich zu Themen zu Wort kommen, mit denen sie ohnehin assoziiert werden, während die Ansichten großer Parteien umso mehr thematisiert werden, je präsenter ein Thema insgesamt auf der Agenda ist. Damit ermöglicht die Studie ein besseres Verständnis der (Un-)Sichtbarkeit verschiedener Parteien in Wahlkampfdebatten.

Die *dritte Studie (Chapter 8)* basiert auf der Annahme, dass die technologischen Möglichkeiten von sozialen Medien Parteien neue strategische Handlungsmöglichkeiten eröffnen (Schwarzbözl 2018). Insbesondere können Parteien sich dort ganz besonders aus strategischen Gründen auf bestimmte Themen konzentrieren und andere bewusst ausblenden (De Sio et al. 2018). Es wird erwartet, dass sich dies negativ auf die Diversität angesprochener Themen auswirkt. Abgeleitet aus der Salienztheorie des Parteienwettbewerbs (Budge 2015; Budge and Farlie 1983a; Dolezal et al. 2014) wird insbesondere angenommen, dass Parteien hier allen voran auf Themen setzen, bei denen sie von den Wählern als kompetent eingestuft werden. In der Folge wird davon ausgegangen, dass Parteien verstärkt über unterschiedliche Themen sprechen, anstatt sich auf die gleichen Sachfragen zu konzentrieren. Um diese Erwartungen in vergleichender Perspektive überprüfen zu können, stützt sich die Arbeit auf eigens erhobene Daten zum Wahlkampfverhalten auf Twitter bei britischen Unterhauswahlen und kombiniert diese mit Informationen aus den nationalen Wahlprogrammen der Parteien. Während die beobachteten Unterschiede zwischen der Kommunikation auf Twitter und in Parteiprogrammen hinsichtlich der Themenschwerpunktsetzung keiner vollständig unterschiedlichen Logik folgen, lassen sich die formulierten Erwartungen dennoch größtenteils bestätigen. Damit verdeutlicht die Studie, dass Kommunikationsplattformen und die Möglichkeiten, die sie Parteien liefern, maßgeblich deren Strategiewahl und damit die Ausgestaltung des Parteienwettbewerbs beeinflusst.

In der *vierten Studie (Chapter 9)* wird untersucht, inwiefern Personalisierungsstrategien, die in nationalen Wahlen eine wichtige Rolle einnehmen, auch bei Wahlen zum Europäischen Parlament (EP) beobachtbar sind (Braun and Schwarzbözl 2019). Im

Gegensatz zu nationalen Wahlen, bei denen die Spitzenkandidaten der Parteien eine herausragende Rolle spielen (Kriesi 2012), kann gezeigt werden, dass die europäischen Spitzenkandidaten durch die nationalen Parteien kaum in den Fokus gerückt wurden. Basierend auf eigenen Daten zur Wahlkampfkommunikation nationaler Parteien auf Facebook im Vorfeld der EP-Wahl 2014 macht die Studie deutlich, dass diese systematische Nichtbeachtung der Spitzenkandidaten auf strategische Überlegungen der Parteien zurückgeführt werden kann. Während die Fokussierung auf Spitzenkandidaten bei nationalen Wahlen für viele Parteien eine offensichtlich reizvolle Strategie zur Stimmenmaximierung darstellt, ist dies bei EP-Wahlen für den Großteil der Parteien nicht der Fall. Eine stark ausgeprägte Konzentration auf die Spitzenkandidaten konnte nur bei den wenigen Parteien beobachtet werden, denen einer der Kandidaten konkret angehörte. Damit kann die Arbeit am Beispiel der Personalisierung von Wahlkampagnen zeigen, dass Parteiverhalten auch zwischen elektoralen Arenen aufgrund unterschiedlicher Anreizmuster deutlich variiert. Dieses Ergebnis ist vor allem für die anhaltenden Diskussionen zur Reform des Spitzenkandidatensystems bei Europawahlen von großer Relevanz (hierzu Corbett 2014; Hobolt 2014).

Insgesamt bestätigt die Arbeit damit die Ausgangserwartung. Der konkrete Handlungskontext hat starken Einfluss auf Parteiverhalten in Wahlkämpfen. Aus diesem Ergebnis leiten sich allen voran zwei Implikationen ab. *Erstens* variiert Parteiverhalten in öffentlichen Debatten, in sozialen Netzwerken und Parteiprogrammen mitunter erheblich. Um Parteienwettbewerb gerade in Zeiten einer zunehmenden Ausdifferenzierung von Kommunikationskanälen verstehen zu können, ist es notwendig, Parteiverhalten in Zukunft noch stärker auf unterschiedlichen Kommunikationsplattformen zu erforschen (siehe z.B., Meyer et al. 2017). *Zweitens* zeigt die Analyse von Parteiverhalten in EP-Wahlen große Differenzen zu nationalen Wahlen. Gerade Empfehlungen, die darauf abzielen, Institutionen, die im nationalen Rahmen funktionieren, auf andere Ebenen elektoralen Wettbewerbs zu übertragen, um deren demokratische Qualität zu verbessern (siehe Follesdal and Hix 2006; Hix 2008), sollten daher mit großer Vorsicht getätigt werden. Insbesondere gilt es, die strategischen Überlegungen von Parteien in solche Überlegungen miteinzubeziehen.

Part A

1. Introduction

Party competition during elections is at the heart of democracy. This becomes most obvious in the work of Schumpeter (1950: 428), who puts parties' fight for the people's vote at the centre of his definition of the democratic method. Following this notion of representative democracy, "one must first understand the political parties that are the foundations of the electoral process" in order to understand democratic elections and the role they can play to link elites and voters (Dalton 2008: 123).

Given this relevance of party competition, it is hardly surprising that competing theoretical explanations of the goals parties pursue and the strategies they employ to achieve them were developed (see Müller and Strom 1999). This holds for various aspects of party behaviour in election campaigns, such as the emphasis parties put on different issues (Budge 2015; Budge and Farlie 1983a), the positions they take on these topics (Adams et al. 2005; Downs 1957), or the degree to which they personalise their campaigns (Kriesi 2012; Poguntke and Webb 2005).

A central insight developed on the grounds of this literature is that party behaviour follows a *conditional logic*. That is, the relevance of general explanations of party behaviour is found to be dependent on the specific context in which a party operates and can play out differently depending on the characteristics of the party itself (Strom 1990; Wagner and Meyer 2014). In this concern, studies on party behaviour provide evidence that broadly defined general hypotheses must be modified and put in context, thus allowing more nuanced insights (e.g., Adams et al. 2006; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015).

This doctoral thesis addresses a blind spot in this literature. The conditional effects of institutional aspects (e.g., regime type) and even more regarding party-specific factors (e.g., party ideology) have been intensely studied in existing research. However, this is not the case for the *situational context* in which parties operate. This holds in particular for the different communication platforms on which parties compete and for the variation across electoral arenas. Regarding *communication platforms*, existing knowledge is strongly based on manifesto research (see Dolezal et al. 2018). This

begs the question of how insights gained from the study of these documents can be used to draw conclusions about party behaviour on other platforms. This shortcoming is even amplified by an increase in the diversity of communication channels driven by the rise of campaigning via social media for instance (Jungherr 2016; Kreiss 2016a). Turning to *electoral arenas*, research is dominated by studies on national election campaigns. Whether party behaviour follows a similar logic in subnational and European elections is widely unexplored as well (see Golder et al. 2017). However, given the deficits in the electoral connection between parties and voters, especially at the European level (Follesdal and Hix 2006), this aspect is also highly relevant.

It is argued that a main reason for this bias is a lack of suitable data. As demonstrated by Budge (2015), data availability and theoretical progress in research on party competition have co-evolved. Existing theoretical accounts guide large-scale projects of data generation. This makes a specific type of data available which, in turn, guides further theoretical developments. The literature on party behaviour is strongly influenced by salience theory (e.g., Budge and Farlie 1983a), which inspired issue emphasis-based codings of party manifestos at national elections, especially in the Manifesto Project (MARPOR) (Budge 2015; Lehmann et al. 2017). As a result, studies on party behaviour are often based on election manifestos at the national level and on party-specific moderating factors available within this data, while variation regarding situational context factors has received much less systematic attention.

Against this background, this thesis contributes to shifting the boundaries in the knowledge of the context sensitivity of party behaviour. Taking advantage of methodological innovations in the quantitative analysis of text documents (Grimmer and Stewart 2013), the thesis systematically explores variation in party behaviour across communication platforms and electoral arenas. Drawing on original data sets which combine information from different sources like parties' social media accounts, party manifestos, and newspaper reports at the time of elections in different arenas, the study derives and tests expectations on how well-known patterns of party behaviour play out differently, depending on the context in which parties operate.

The thesis argues that the incentive structure for parties and the degree to which parties can act in accordance to their preferred campaign strategies both vary depending on the situational context in which they operate. Against this background, the expectation is formulated that party behaviour is contingent upon the specific circumstances in which election campaigning takes place. More precisely, it is claimed that parties' campaign strategies and the constraints they face to act in line with these strategic considerations lead to variation in party behaviour across contexts. Depending on the specific circumstances of election campaigning, parties might consider different strategies to fit best with their goals and alter their behaviour accordingly (Spoon and Klüver 2014). Similarly, the degree to which parties can act in line with their strategic considerations is also expected to lead to variation in observable campaigning behaviour (Steenbergen and Scott 2004).

To what degree does party behaviour depend on situational context factors? The thesis presents four independent studies, each related to the general theoretical argument outlined above, and each approaching this broadly stated research question from a different angle. Focussing on immigration issues, the *first study* (*Chapter 6*) shows that conflict surrounding this topic follows a political logic and cannot be attributed to objective pressures such as unemployment rates in a country (Grande et al. 2018). The study innovates from existing research in this field by combining different data sources. Specifically, it builds on an original approach to measure parties' issue entrepreneurial strategies on immigration issues in election manifestos and links this data directly to the level of politicisation on the topic in public campaign debates as covered by the mass media. On the one hand, it shows that the issue entrepreneurship of radical right populist parties plays a crucial role in explaining variation in the politicisation of immigration in campaign debates. On the other hand, it reveals that such debates are nevertheless frequently dominated by mainstream parties. This allows for disentangling existing findings on parties' strategic efforts and the dynamics of political conflict in the context of public campaign debates (see Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2017; Kriesi et al. 2008; Van der Brug et al. 2015). This contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between the two.

The *second study* (*Chapter 7*) examines how two important drivers of issue salience in direct party communication – issue ownership and systemic salience – play out in public campaign debates (Schwarzbözl et al. 2018). Based on considerations about the news value of specific party-issue associations, both relationships are expected to be particularly important in mediated campaign debates. Despite substantial similarities in party-issue linkages across platforms, a comparison of manifesto and newspaper content reveals evidence for this claim. In particular, smaller parties are found to be hardly covered in the news on issues they do not own, while larger parties are especially present on salient topics. Since research on party behaviour has largely focused on the drivers of issue salience in direct party communication, these findings enhance our understanding of party-issue linkages in mediated environments, from which most voters get their information about parties and their issue positions.

The *third study* (*Chapter 8*) is based on the assumption that the technological opportunities social media websites offer parties allow them to strongly focus on issues for strategic reasons (Schwarzbözl 2018). It is expected that this leads to a lower diversity in the issues addressed by a given party. Specifically, parties are expected to focus on issues they own. Consequently, the degree to which parties talk about the same issues is assumed to be rather low on these platforms. In order to test these expectations from a comparative perspective, the study relies on original data of party communication on Twitter in combination with information from party manifestos. Overall, the analysis provides support for these theoretical expectations. These findings suggest that the technological opportunities of social media enable political parties to strategically interact with competitors, the media and potential voters. This makes such platforms especially relevant for small parties with fewer resources and less agenda setting power in public campaign debates.

The *fourth study* (*Chapter 9*) explores personalisation strategies in elections to the European Parliament (EP) (Braun and Schwarzbözl 2019). Unlike in national elections, it is argued that EP elections do not provide incentives for strategically acting political parties to centre their campaigns on lead candidates. Here, data on campaigning for EP elections is collected and analysed to put these findings in compari-

son with research which shows significant personalisation efforts in national campaigns (see Kriesi 2012). The analysis reveals that party strategies vary strongly depending on electoral arenas because personalisation centred on lead candidates – a strongly employed campaign strategy in national election campaigns – is largely absent in party communication at EP elections. This finding is important because it demonstrates that institutions such as the Spitzenkandidaten, which work at one territorial level of party competition, do not automatically function in a similar way on another level.

In sum, this research confirms that party behaviour depends on the situational context in which parties operate. This finding has at least two important implications. *First*, party competition can only be understood properly on the basis of a diverse set of communication channels. Party manifestos are an invaluable source for studying party competition across countries and over large time periods. Nevertheless, results gained from this data source have their limitations. Patterns of party competition in public campaign debates are found to deviate from what is observed in manifesto content, especially because the mass media constrains strategic party behaviour. By contrast, party communication on social media follows a different logic because it expands the strategic opportunities of parties. In this regard, the rise of such websites particularly strengthens smaller and newer political parties, which often struggle to gain visibility in mediated campaign debates dominated by established mainstream parties. Such developments can only be captured by exploiting a variety of data sources and relating them to each other.

Second, the context sensitivity of party behaviour regarding electoral arenas implies that generalisations derived from a specific type of election (e.g., national elections) might lead to wrong conclusions for elections at other territorial levels. The findings presented in this thesis indicate that the major shortcomings in introducing lead candidates in EP elections are due to a lack of incentives for parties to push these candidates in such elections and make them visible to voters. Unlike national elections, EP elections hardly provide incentives for strategically acting parties to do so. This implies that policy recommendations to foster political competition and turnout at sec-

ond-order elections at the subnational or European level derived from insights from first-order national elections should be made with great caution. These differences invite future research which combines and compares party behaviour across electoral arenas.

The remainder of the thesis is structured as follows. *Part A* continues with a systematic review of the literature on the conditionality of explanations of party behaviour, which outlines the research gap addressed above in more detail (*Chapter 2*). Based on these insights, general theoretical and methodological considerations to tackle these gaps are presented. In *Chapter 3*, a theoretical argument for the context sensitivity of party behaviour is developed. *Chapter 4* then discusses the methodological implications to test this argument. In a next step, the four independent studies and their specific contributions as well as an outlook for future research are laid out (*Chapter 5*). In *Part B* of the thesis, these four studies are presented.

2. State of Research

Much research is devoted to understanding party competition and the behaviour of parties, especially at the time of elections. The following review of this literature serves two goals: On the one hand, it illustrates that research has developed influential theoretical explanations on various aspects of party behaviour; on the other hand, it highlights factors, which affect the degree to which many of these explanations apply to. Concerning the latter point, it stresses that some aspects of the conditionality of party behaviour received much attention, while others, especially the role of communication platforms and electoral arenas, were hardly addressed systematically so far. In this regard, the discussion uncovers important unanswered questions about how parties compete under varying circumstances.

Initially, three clarifications about the focus of this review are necessary. *First*, it must be emphasised that party behaviour is a multi-facetted phenomenon. Approaches on the subject therefore focus on a broad range of different aspects. Within this field, attempts to conceptualise and explain the *positions* parties take and the *salience* they attribute to different policy-related issues, are most prominent. However, there is also a strong trend to go "beyond positions and saliencies" in research on party competition (Dolezal et al. 2018: 242), which is accompanied by a growing body of literature covering additional aspects of party behaviour like *personalisation* (Dolezal et al. 2018; Kriesi 2012), *negative campaigning* (Lau and Pomper 2004), the employment of *emotions* (Soroka 2014; Westen 2008), the use of *populist rhetoric* (Engesser et al. 2017; Kriesi 2014) or the *framing* of issues and positions (Diez Medrano 2003) in election campaigns. In the following, only three aspects of party behaviour are systematically discussed: *issue salience, position taking and personalisation*.

All three aspects are of particular relevance, because they are inherently related to intense debates about the quality of the electoral connection in representative democracies. Democratic representation requires political parties to provide competing positions on relevant issues (Schattschneider 1975 [1960]). This makes salience and position as well as the interaction between the two so important (Hutter et al. 2016; Kriesi

et al. 2008; Meguid 2005). If the positions offered by parties do not match with voters' preferences, one can hardly speak of a functioning electoral connection (Carrubba 2001). Likewise, if parties simply ignore relevant issues, voters do not know to which party their own position fits best and cannot vote accordingly (Follesdal and Hix 2006). Personalisation is crucial in this respect, too. Scholars argue that issue-centred debates are increasingly replaced by personalised campaign communication. Almost 20 years ago, Farrell and Webb (2002: 132) already claimed that the professionalisation of parties has led to thematic changes in their campaign focus in the sense that "image and style [are] increasingly pushing policies and substance aside". Since recent technological innovations in campaign communication, such as the use of social media as platforms of party communication, are expected to even amplified this trend (see Enli and Skogerbø 2013), this aspect of party behaviour is examined in this review as well.

Second, the review is solely concerned with party competition in *election campaigns*. Campaigns in general can be understood as "the period right before citizens make a real political choice" (Brady et al. 2006: 2). Consequently, aspects of party competition between consecutive election campaigns are left aside (see Benoit and Laver 2006: 37). Moreover, the review concentrates exclusively on party behaviour in electoral arenas and does not explicitly deal with party behaviour in other arenas like public debates (Grande and Hutter 2016), the arena of protest politics (Hutter 2014) or the parliamentary arena (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010; Rauh 2015).

Third, this review is only concerned with the horizontal dimension of party competition. Aspects, which comprise to the vertical dimension of party competition like parties' relationship vis à vis the state and the society (see Mair 1994) as well as questions of their internal organisational structure (see Beyme 1984) are not explored as dependent variables.

The review starts with a discussion of crucial assumptions about the goals of political parties in election campaigns and how their behaviour is affected by strategic choices on the one hand and the constraints imposed on parties' strategic manoeuvrability on

the other hand. Against this background, specific explanations for different aspects of party behaviour are subsequently reported. These discussions are particularly concerned with questions on the conditionality of explanations of party behaviour within the existing literature. Based on these considerations, the role of situational context conditions is presented as an important research gap the thesis aims to tackle.

2.1. Core Assumptions: Goals, Strategies and Constraints

There are three crucial assumptions in the literature on party behaviour which serve as a point of departure for most theoretical explanations of party behaviour (Strom and Müller 1999). *First*, parties are expected to have clear and distinguishable goals (Strom 1990). *Second*, they are assumed to take strategic actions designed to reach their desired goals (Downs 1957). *Third*, the degree to which parties are able to act in line with their initial strategies is supposed to be constrained by internal and external factors (Steenbergen and Scott 2004).

2.1.1. *Parties as Goal-Oriented Actors*

The assumption that parties are purposeful actors is already present in Max Weber's classical definition of political parties. As highlighted by Weber Weber (1922), parties serve the goal to create objective and ideational advantages for its leaders and members. This notion of parties serving their leaders, members and activists to reach certain goals is broadly shared among the contemporary literature on party behaviour (for a detailed discussion, see Strom and Müller 1999). Concerning the specific goals that parties aim for, different and partly competing goals have been identified, however. In their systematic review of party goals, Strom and Müller (1999: 5-9) find three distinct goals: *vote-seeking, office-seeking, policy-seeking*. A fourth goal - *cohesion-seeking* - is identified by Steenbergen and Scott (2004).

First, following Downs (1957), parties can be assumed to be primarily *vote-seeking*. Downs (1957) defines parties as teams of individuals who want to win as many votes

as they can at electoral contests (see also Adams et al. 2005). This does not imply that other goals do not exist, but they are clearly seen as subordinate.

Second, a contrasting view is formulated by Riker (1962), who claims that parties are primarily *office-seeking*, which means that they are less interested in maximising their vote share but in simply winning an election. The difference between the assumption of parties primarily seeking for office instead of seeking for votes is particularly relevant in multiparty contexts with coalition bargains in the aftermath of an election (Strom 1990). In party systems where governments regularly develop out of coalition bargains between parties, winning most votes in an election does not automatically imply that a party will be part of the government and hold political offices (see Steenbergen and Scott 2004: 168). Confrontations with potential coalition partners during the election campaign can create unbridgeable differences and therefore diminish a parties coalition potential (Green-Pedersen 2012). Parties assuming such risks are therefore likely to behave differently than parties which solely try to maximise their vote share.

Third, parties are assumed to be *policy-seeking*. Following this view, which is particularly present in coalition theories, parties are expected to maximise their influence on the shape of public policy rather than being interested in maximizing votes or gaining office (see Strom 1990: 567). However, it must be noted that policy-seeking parties must also strive for government, as "elective office is taken to be a precondition for policy influence" (Strom 1990: 567).

Fourth, Steenbergen and Scott (2004) argue that *cohesion-seeking* is a further goal of political parties. This assumption takes issue with the notion of parties as unitary actors. It points out that parties run a risk of internal divisions, when issues are debated on which their members hold highly contrasting positions. As Steenbergen and Scott (2004: 169) put it: "Electoral success and office-holding have little meaning if a party is about to fall apart".

This outline of party goals shows that theories of party behaviour can take different starting points regarding the specific goal parties are assumed to pursue. Moreover, it

demonstrates that there exist contrasting views on the relevance of each of these goals. Therefore, an important question concerns potential trade-offs between reaching certain goals and how parties balance them (Strom 1990; Strom and Müller 1999). This is why parties are often seen as "seekers of multiple goals" (Steenbergen and Scott 2004: 167). Nevertheless, the assumption of vote-seeking parties is by far to most prominent point of departure in explanations of party behaviour (see Benoit and Laver 2006: 38).

Especially when it comes to the conditionality of existing explanations of party behaviour, particular attention must be given to the underlying motivations of political parties. On the one hand, different types of parties might handle potential trade-offs between these goals differently. As argued by Ferland (2018: 2) for instance, mainstream parties are more likely to follow a vote-seeking perspective, while policy-seeking motivations are more pronounced for niche-parties. On the other hand, the relevance of individual party goals might vary depending context conditions. As argued by Spoon and Klüver (2014: 50), office-seeking motivations are less important at these contests in EP elections as compared to national elections, because "EP elections continue to only decide the composition of the Parliament without being connected to the distribution of executive office positions". Thus, both arguments have consequences regarding the relevance of general explanations of party behaviour depending on the specific circumstances under which parties operate. Consequently, considerations about the assumed goals of parties in different theoretical accounts of party behaviour are emphasised in subsequent discussions.

2.1.2. Parties as Strategic but Constrained Actors

The idea that parties take *strategic action* to achieve their goals is another baseline assumption of most theoretical explanations of party behaviour. In terms of election campaigning, party strategy can be defined as a plan that "sets out party objectives, identifies target voters, establishes the battleground issues, and generally lays the framework within which campaign communications are constructed" (Norris et al.

1999: 54).[1] This implies that parties are assumed to have clear visions on how they intend to act throughout an election campaign already at the beginning of such a phase. It does not imply that a party is also able to act in accordance to this plan, however. By contrast, the assumption that the space for parties to act strategically is restricted and that parties are *constrained in their strategic manoeuvrability* by various factors, figures equally prominent in the literature.

Both premises were already put forward by Anthony Downs in his theory of economic voting. Following Downs (1957: 28), political parties are strategic actors in the sense that "parties formulate policies in order to win elections, rather than win elections to formulate policies". That is, parties formulate policies which allow them to position themselves in a way that maximises their vote share. However, this premise does not allow concluding that parties are likely to radically switch their position on single policies or change their overall ideology within short time periods. In order to win votes, parties also need to be reliable and responsible in the sense that the claims and pledges they make in the past must be in line with their subsequent actions (see Downs 1957: 107). Thus, there exists a potential trade-off between strategic repositioning and ideological coherence.

Theoretical accounts of party competition have different expectations about the relevance that each of these two factors play for party behaviour, however. As shown above, Downs explicitly gives preference to strategy over constraints like ideology or a party's historical legacy. While he acknowledges that the degree to which a party can act strategically and adapt its policy positions in order to appeal to voters at the time of an election, he conceives ideology only as a "means to gaining office" as it provides voters a shortcut to parties' policy positions (Downs 1957: 111). Thus, despite a potential trade-off between ideological coherence on the one hand and strate-

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[1] Whether the strategies employed by political parties are expected to be optimal choices must be distinguished from the question what strategies parties choose, because it strongly depends on assumptions about their knowledge and their rationality (Benoit and Laver 2006). As this study is not concerned with the question whether or not a strategy actually was successful in the sense that it maximises a party's goal attainment (see Norris et al. 1999), but only with the question of how parties behave, different points of view about the knowledge and the assumed rationality of parties are not discussed in this section.

gic efforts to maximise votes on the other hand, this perspective on party behaviour suggests a substantial strategic leverage. Vote-seeking parties are expected to strategically re-position themselves to appeal to the median voter. Factors that might constrain the degree to which parties can take such action are present as well in the work of Downs (1957), but only play a subordinate role.

The idea of parties acting strategically is widely accepted by scholars of party competition. Yet, the size of the space that parties possess to maneuver strategically is often assumed to be considerably smaller than suggested by the Downsian model of party competition for at least two different reasons. On the one hand, this is because strategically acting parties are expected to behave rather differently. Downs (1957) maintains that parties have almost perfect information about the positions of voters. Consequently, he claims that strategically acting parties will quickly adapt their own positions according to perceived attitudinal changes among the electorate. Scholars who assume the information of parties about the positions of voters to be severely limited, come to a different expectation about how strategically acting parties behave. Under such circumstances, parties are expected to only incrementally change their position. Due to incomplete information about how the electorates' position has shifted, they fear to loose voters who supported them in previous elections by moving into the wrong direction (Benoit and Laver 2006). On the other hand, irrespective of the information parties are assumed to posit, scholars highlight that the constraints under which political parties try to act strategically to reach their goals are much more powerful than assumed by Downs (1957). In addition to explanations of parties' initial campaign strategies, the literature has identified a number of factors that impose severe constraints on the degree to which parties can act strategically. This includes the actions of other political parties (Steenbergen and Scott 2004), the role of the media (Merz 2017), a party's historical legacy (Marks and Wilson 2000; Marks et al. 2002; Tavits 2007) or its internal organisational structure (Meyer and Wagner 2016).

These contrasting assumptions about the relevance of strategic considerations on the one hand and factors constraining the degree to which parties can take strategic actions on the other hand, allow concluding that a systematic investigation of party be-

haviour needs to take both aspects into account. Moreover, it is likely that both factors are not equally relevant for all types of parties and under all circumstances. Therefore, the notion of parties as strategic actors which try to reach their desired goals as well as the insight that their manoeuvrability might be constrained will be discussed in detail for various aspects of party behaviour in the subsequent sections.

2.2. Explaining Party Behaviour – Salience, Positions and Personalisation

To systematically discuss theoretical accounts and central empirical findings, each of the following sections deals with a specific aspect of party behaviour, important explanations in each domain and the role of conditionality in this regard. That is, studies on party behaviour are discussed separately, depending on the specific dependent variable they focus on.

This procedure is justified against the background of findings from research which explicitly deal with different aspects of party behaviour (De Vries and Hobolt 2012; Harmel et al. 2018; Hobolt and de Vries 2015; Hutter and Grande 2014; Hutter et al. 2016; Kriesi et al. 2012; Kriesi et al. 2008; Meguid 2005, 2008; Meijers 2017). This literature shows that different aspects of party competition are often only weakly related to each other and can follow distinct logics (see Hutter et al. 2016). Salience and position for instance follow different patterns as shown by Dolezal and Hellström (2016) for European integration issues. In addition, the role of strategic considerations is likely to vary, depending on the aspect of party behaviour under consideration. For instance, Harmel et al. (2018: 284), assume that parties are much more likely to change the emphasis on an issue than the position they take on it.

A separate discussion of different aspects of party competition acknowledges the idiosyncrasies of different aspects of party behaviour. Moreover, such a strategy allows

discussing the different logics they follow, and the specific theoretical explanations designed to explain them.[2]

2.2.1. Issue Salience

In democratic theory, it is commonly assumed that voters have preferences on policies and vote accordingly (Achen and Bartels 2016: 1). For this linkage between the electorate and their representatives to work, political parties must provide competing positions on relevant issues. Only if voters are offered a choice between parties with different sets of positions on policies that figure prominently on their minds, they can decide who represents their own stances best (Kaplan et al. 2006; Sides 2006; Sigelman and Buell 2004).

Consequently, the decisions of political parties, as the most important political actors in contemporary democracies to promote or downplay specific issues are crucial, because they actively define the policy-related issues over which political competition takes place (Green-Pedersen 2007a; Hooghe and Marks 2018; Hutter et al. 2016; Kriesi et al. 2012; Kriesi et al. 2008; Spoon et al. 2014). This aspect of party competition is commonly referred to as *issue salience*. Theoretical considerations about its drivers are particularly important, because they come to strongly diverging expectations about the shape and the dynamic of issue agendas in election campaigns. In the following, four types of explanations are discussed: *Salience theory and issue ownership, agenda setting dynamics, internal dissent and public opinion*.

Salience theory and issue ownership

Studying the decisions of individual political parties on what to talk about in election campaigns, one of the central assumptions is that "parties emphasise certain issues to

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[2] This separate discussion of different aspects of party behaviour does not contradict the idea that some theoretical accounts allow formulating expectations on more than one of these phenomena. In the reminder of this chapter theories of party behaviour are not exclusively discussed within one domain of party behaviour. If a theory derives expectations about more than one domain of party behaviour, it is discussed at several points in the following discussion.

gain an electoral advantage" (Spoon et al. 2014: 365). This point of view is most explicitly stated in salience theory of party competition (Budge 2015; Budge and Farlie 1983a, 1983b; Budge et al. 2001; Robertson 1976). On the one hand, this idea is derived from a radical conception of the role of policy issues in party competition. In Stokes (1963) valence model, it is assumed that there are not only positional issues, but also valence issues. These are defined as relevant but uncontroversial topics. While Stokes (1963: 373) states that it is an empirical question what character an issue has that cannot be answered a priori be at a theoretical basis, salience theory assumes that parties hardly hold different positions on political issues (see Dolezal et al. 2014: 62). Consequently, "[v]arying emphases on issues are by and large the only way that parties express their policy differences" (Budge et al. 2001: 82). On the other hand, it is based on an understanding of voting behaviour that puts great weight on the perceived competence of parties as an explanation for individual vote choice (Bélanger and Meguid 2008). This makes highlighting issues where a party is perceived as more competent than its competitors an electorally viable strategy (Thesen et al. 2017).

Based on these considerations, salience theory makes two important predictions about the behaviour of individual parties and the structure of issue competition.[3] *First*, the theory expects that parties will strategically highlight issues they own (Budge 2015; Budge and Farlie 1983a; Dolezal et al. 2014). Issue ownership can be understood as a long-term reputation in dealing with policy-related issues (Petrocik 1996; Petrocik et al. 2003). If voters chose a party on the grounds of their perceived competence on issues discussed in political debates or the degree to which a party is generally associated with that issue (Walgrave et al. 2012), emphasizing such owned issues is likely to enhance a party's vote share (Green and Hobolt 2008: 462). Therefore, salience theory expects that parties strategically highlight topics they own to seek an electoral advantage over their competitors. As the ownership of an issue, especially in the associative dimension of the concept, is assumed to be rather stable over time, the sali-

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[3] As shown by Dolezal (2014), additional expectations can be derived from salience theory. However, as these implications of the theory are not primarily concerned with explaining issue salience, they are not discussed here.

ence different parties put on an issue is also expected to be characterised by temporal stability (Budge 2015; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015). This is particularly the case because salience theory does not expect parties' salience strategies to be strongly affected by the actions of their competitors and what issues they emphasise (Robertson 1976). It is therefore concluded that parties, which are associated with an issue, like green parties with the environment (Wagner and Meyer 2014) or populist right-wing parties with law and order issues (Smith 2010), constantly highlight such topics over consecutive election campaigns.

Second, resulting from of this behaviour, party competition is expected to be characterised by an absence of confrontational debates about substantive issues. Rather, parties are assumed to largely talk past each other instead of engaging in meaningful dialogue (see Sigelman and Buell 2004: 651). If parties selectively address primarily issues on which they have a comparative advantage, issue convergence, defined as the degree to which parties talk about the same set of topics, is expected to be extremely low (Sigelman and Buell 2004: 651). Of course, this expectation about party behaviour stands in sharp contrast to the idea outlined in normative models of democratic representation that parties need to provide competing positions on substantial political issues in order to give voters the chance to choose between real alternatives at an election (see Kaplan et al. 2006: 724).

Both implications of the theory have been studied extensively in empirical research. Findings show that the expectation about parties largely talking past each other must be strongly qualified. Scholars focusing on the degree to which parties address the same issues in election campaigns find notably high levels of convergence. This holds for presidential elections (Damore 2004; Dolezal et al. 2014; Kaplan et al. 2006; Sigelman and Buell 2004) as well as for elections in a multi-party context (Dolezal et al. 2014; Meyer and Wagner 2016). Hence, completely in contrast to the expectation derived from salience theory, parties tend to a large degree to address issues that their competitors talk about as well.

Nevertheless, at the level of individual parties, there is strong evidence for the issue ownership hypothesis. This holds true for the "competence-based" and the "associative" dimension of the concept (Walgrave et al. 2012). While, Klüver and Sagarzazu (2016) cannot confirm the issue ownership hypothesis in their analysis of press releases in Germany, Dolezal et al. (2014) find a positive association between the salience of an issue for political parties in Austria and the degree to which they are perceived as most competent in dealing with the problem by voters. Similarly, Wagner and Meyer (2014: 1028) show for a much broader set of parties and elections that parties focus much more on issues on which they are generally associated with in their party manifestos. In addition, also on line with the issue ownership hypothesis, Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2015) find that parties have long-term relationships with specific issues in the sense that they tend to emphasise issues disproportionally high over consecutive elections.

Despite these positive findings, another important qualification concerning the issue ownership hypothesis must be considered. Specifically, scholars have presented arguments, why issue ownership effects are likely to be less relevant for the most important actors: large mainstream parties. Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2015: 751) argue that mainstream parties "need to be closely aligned with the broader party system agenda to maintain their pivotal role and support in the electorate". Consequently, mainstream parties cannot simply rely on their owned issues and constantly address them during election campaigns when voters, parties or the media bring other topics to the fore. Wagner and Meyer (2014) propose an additional mechanism which fosters such differences between large mainstream parties and other actors in the party system. According to their argument, it is only resource rich parties which have the possibility to address a broad range of issues. While "it makes electoral sense to address the issues that are currently of concern to voters […], only parties with enough resources may in fact be able to do so without sacrificing emphasis on their 'core' issues" (Wagner and Meyer 2014: 1022). In this understanding, smaller parties with fewer resources are bound to their "owned" issues, while large mainstream parties can cover the full range of topics discussed in an election campaign.

Even if the causal mechanisms behind the two arguments differ, they both lead to the same conclusion: Issue ownership should play only a limited role for large mainstream parties. Given that these parties are by far the most visible actors in campaign debates, this would strongly limit the relevance of the issue ownership hypothesis.

While Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2015) provide no direct empirical test for this expectation, Wagner and Meyer (2014) report that the effect of issue ownership on issue salience is in fact conditional upon party characteristics. Both, a party's manpower and a party's vote share are found to have a negative moderating effect on the relationship between issue ownership and issue salience. In their model, a vote share half the standard deviation below the mean vote share (6 percent of the votes) is accompanied by an increase in issue salience by 93 percent, while this effect for parties half the standard deviation above the mean vote share (35 percent of the votes) only leads to an increase of 35 percent (see Wagner and Meyer 2014: 1032).

Agenda setting dynamics

Notwithstanding that parties strategically and selectively focus on advantageous issues, as expected by salience theory and the issue ownership hypothesis, the agenda-setting literature (see Baumgartner and Jones 1993; McCombs 2004; Norris et al. 1999) allows proposing an alternative explanation for issue salience at the party level. This literature conceives party behaviour as a game of strategic interaction (see Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010: 261). Following this understanding, issue competition, understood as "party competition on which issues should dominate the party political agenda", is put centre stage (Green-Pedersen 2007b: 607). On the one hand, parties are expected to actively trying to shape the "party system agenda"; on the other hand, they also have to take the current agenda as given (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010). Accordingly, despite potential negative electoral consequences, parties may be forced to take part in publicly debating an issue due to systemic pressures resulting from the dynamic nature of party competition in election campaigns.

This approach qualifies the argument of salience theory and the issue ownership hypothesis by adding that parties are not always equally successful at strategically emphasizing their preferred issues (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015, 2010; Steenbergen and Scott 2004). Parties face a decision between simply ignoring unpleasant issues and responding to them, whilst simultaneously trying to shape the agenda according to their own preferences. When the latter is not feasible, parties are likely to address issues that other parties put forward or that figure prominently in the media (Green-Pedersen and Stubager 2010). Hence, parties cannot always choose freely which issues to highlight or downplay. Rather, the agenda-setting approach highlights that "a party's issue strategies are constrained and influenced by the activities of other political parties" (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015: 748).

Empirical studies on individual party behaviour provide strong evidence for the idea of parties addressing issues that their competitors put on the agenda (e.g., Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015; Hoeglinger 2015; Meyer and Wagner 2016; Spoon 2012; Steenbergen and Scott 2004; Tresch et al. 2018). Together with the observation of high levels of issue convergence at the party system level (Damore 2004; Dolezal et al. 2014; Kaplan et al. 2006; Sides 2006; Sigelman and Buell 2004), there exists a large consensus that parties' strategic choices of issue (de-)emphasis are constrained by the behaviour of their competitors.

However, research also provides evidence that such systemic pressures are not equally relevant for all parties. In this regard, Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2015: 751) argue that mainstream parties "need to be closely aligned with the broader party system agenda to maintain their pivotal role and support in the electorate". It is therefore expected that these parties are more sensitive to the party system agenda than other parties, especially niche parties. In a similar vein, Meyer and Wagner (2016) claim that resource strong parties are especially likely to engage in campaign dialogue. Here, the argument is that these parties are able to maintain a broad issue portfolio since they can rely on experts on various domains, whereas small parties with scarce resources my struggle to do so (see Meyer and Wagner 2016: 559). Focussing on variation in the responsiveness between different types of mainstream parties, Van de

Wardt (2015) additionally formulates the expectation that it is mainstream parties in opposition take more risks and therefore are more likely to respond to the issues addressed by niche parties than mainstream parties in government.

For the case of parties in Denmark, Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2015) confirm the expectation that large mainstream parties are more responsive to issues that figure prominently on the party system agenda in their manifestos than other parties. Similarly, focusing on the content of party press releases in Austria, Meyer and Wagner (2016) demonstrate that resource strong parties are in fact far more likely to rely on issue engagement in their campaign communications. Moreover, Van de Wardt (2015) finds evidence that mainstream parties in government are especially responsive to the topics brought up by their niche party competitors.

These findings are important because they indicate that not all observed behaviour of political parties during an election campaign should be attributed to their initial strategic considerations designed to reach a pre-defined goal. Especially when it comes to the salience of an issue, systemic pressures to address a topic, which are beyond the control of individual parties, should not be underestimated (Steenbergen and Scott 2004). Thus, the agenda-setting approach is well-suited to explain significant changes in parties' issue attention over time especially when such a step cannot be meaningfully attributed to a strategy aimed at achieving a certain party goal like vote-maximisation. Moreover, this research shows that not all parties are equally sensitive to the actions of their competitors when it comes to the salience they attribute to an issue. In particular, evidence is provided that it is mainstream parties that are responsive.

Internal conflicts

Departing from the general assumption formulated by salience theory that parties strategically highlight preferred issues and downplay others (Budge and Farlie 1983a), the degree of disagreement on an issue within a party is expected to affect the salience attributed to an issue as well. As argued by Steenbergen and Scott (2004),

parties are not only vote-seeking, but also cohesion-seeking actors. This notion implies that parties fear debates on topics where they struggle to find a clear position. On the one hand, internal disagreement makes it difficult to provide a coherent and convincing positions to voters, which makes them less electorally attractive (see Edwards 2008: 60). On the other hand, debating such issues might even lead to the breakup of the party if internal conflicts get out of control. Hence, downplaying such topics is also rational from a "perspective of party maintenance" (Steenbergen and Scott 2004: 171). Therefore, it is often argued that the degree to which a party can arrive at a common position is likely to affect the emphasis it wants to devote to an issue (Van de Wardt 2014). From this perspective, parties are particularly likely to downplay issues on which they face internal disagreement (Edwards 2008; Green-Pedersen 2012; Hellström and Blomgren 2015; Spoon 2012; Steenbergen and Scott 2004).

In general, this argument applies to all parties and issues. If parties face internal dissent about a topic, they shy away from debates about it and focus on other issues, especially at the time of elections, where disunity can have negative electoral consequences. Nevertheless, it is expected to be particularly relevant as an explanation of the behaviour of established parties on issues that cross-cut traditional lines of political conflicts on which these parties emerged (Hooghe et al. 2002; Kriesi et al. 2008). On such instances, internal divisions can be assumed to have structural causes leading not only to occasional disagreement, but to stable internal conflicts within a party (Hobolt and de Vries 2015). Since European integration is as an issue that does not align into existing lines of conflict in Western European party systems (see Hooghe et al. 2002; Kriesi et al. 2008), internal divisions are claimed to be a particularly relevant explanation for variation in issue salience in this regard (Braun et al. 2016). Due to internal conflicts especially within mainstream parties in these countries, the politicisation of the issue and therefore the choices presented to voters over the future course of European integration is expected to be low (Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). Since European policy issues do to some degree fit into the left-right line of

political conflict (see Hix et al. 2007), this argument should especially hold for constitutive European issues (Braun et al. 2016).

Research finds that internal dissent has a negative effect on the salience that parties attach to European integration (Edwards 2008; Spoon 2012; Steenbergen and Scott 2004). However, it must be noted that Braun et al. (2016) cannot replicate this negative effect of intra-party conflict on issue salience in Euromanifestos for both, EU-policy and constitutive issues for the parties covered by their analysis.

Public opinion

Much attention is also devoted to factors located on the demand side of politics. Variables based on the composition of the electorate, the relevance voters attribute to an issue and the positions they take on them are at the core of many studies on the salience strategies of political parties. In this regard, two aspects are discussed in detail: *First*, considerations that parties adapt the salience devoted to an issue in response to the policy positions of voters are explored. *Second*, the review deals with the question how parties react to the issue priorities of the electorate.

Starting with voters issue positions, Steenbergen and Scott (2004) claim that parties are expected to strategically focus more on an issue, the better its own position fits with the position of the median voter and with the median party voter. Against the background of vote-seeking parties, such behaviour is particularly plausible, because emphasising issues on which a party agrees with most voters gives it a favourable image. The theory of issue yielding as developed by De Sio and Weber (2014) elaborates this point systematically (see also De Sio et al. 2018). It argues that strategically acting and vote-seeking parties will particularly highlight issues which allow them to win new voters while keeping old ones. This is the case if a policy is supported by a large proportion of party voters as well as by voters from the overall electorate. If policies are characterised by "larger support than from the existing party base and are also positively associated with the party", they speak of "bridge policies" (De Sio and Weber 2014: 875). These issues are particularly attractive for vote-seeking parties.

Turning to voters' issue priorities, it is argued that parties "ride the wave" in the sense that they highlight issues that also figure prominently on the agenda of the electorate (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994: 337). Parties are expected to take cues from the issue priorities of the electorate in an effort to "signal responsiveness to their voters" (Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016: 384). Thus, in order to avoid the risk of appearing "out of touch" with voters (Sides 2007: 467), parties might focus an issue because it figures high on the voters' agenda. Therefore, is it often argued that the salience parties devote to an issue is higher, the more important voters find it (Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016; Spoon et al. 2014; Spoon and Klüver 2014; Wagner and Meyer 2014).

In addition, it is claimed that the responsiveness of political parties to the concerns of voters is dependent upon party characteristics. For instance, the participation in coalition governments is expected to decrease parties' responsiveness (Klüver and Spoon 2017). Coalition parties, defined as "parties that govern in a multiparty government with at least one other party" (Klüver and Spoon 2017: 794), cannot independently choose their policy positions but must take into account the viewpoints of other parties in the cabinet. This is especially the case if these parties are assumed to be office-seeking (Green-Pedersen 2012; Klüver and Spoon 2017). If an issue is controversial within the cabinet, coalition parties will ignore it as a consequence of their office-seeking motivation (see Klüver and Spoon 2017: 796).

Empirical research finds evidence for the effect of voters' position on issue salience. Steenbergen and Scott (2004: 180) show that parties emphasise an issue more, the closer their own position is to the mean voter and the mean party voter. Thus, parties focus more on issues when the position they offer appeals to (their) voters. Moreover, in line with the theory of issue yielding, empirical analyses reveal strong support for the idea of parties strategically highlighting "bridge policies" (De Sio et al. 2018; De Sio and Weber 2014). Against this background, it can be concluded that parties have a strong preference on issues on which their own position already is close to voters' attitudes. This is very much in line with the idea that adapting the salience of an issue is easier for a party than changing its position in case it does not fit with the electorates stance on a topic (see Klingemann et al. 1994: 24).

Regarding the issue priorities of voters, parties are also responsive. Spoon et al. (2014) for instance report that the more voters find environmental issues important, the more parties highlight them in their manifestos. This is confirmed by Spoon and Klüver (2014) on broader set of topics at national elections. In addition, Klüver and Sagarzazu (2016) find this relationship not only during elections but also between consecutive campaigns. Moreover, it is shown that parties are particularly responsive to voters' issue priorities on highly polarised issues. Under such a situation parties devote even more attention to an issue in order to communicate their position in detail (Spoon and Klüver 2015). Moreover, the negative moderating effect of governing in coalition parties on this relationship is found to be rather small (Klüver and Spoon 2017). Given these findings, Klüver and Sagarzazu (2016: 394), conclude that "party issue attention can best be explained by the riding the wave theory as parties respond to voters' issue priorities both during normal times of political debate but also during election campaigns".[4]

2.2.2. Position Taking

Salience theory assumes that party competition is mostly defined by issue competition in the sense that parties hold similar positions on issues and therefore try to highlight topics on which voters see them as more sincere or competent (Budge 2015; Budge and Farlie 1983a). Spatial approaches of party competition sharply differ from this perspective. Here, the *positioning* of parties in the party system is put centre stage. Rather than the emphasis parties put on an issue, the positions they take on a given set of topics are found to be crucial to understand party behaviour, vote choice and the quality of political representation (Adams et al. 2005; Benoit and Laver 2006; Downs 1957).

Spatial models commonly assume that voters have preferences on policies and vote accordingly (Achen and Bartels 2016: 23). During election campaigns, parties are

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[4] However, it must also be that this finding is not in line with research from Wagner and Meyer (2014) who report no systematic relationship between voters' issue priorities and parties' issue attention in their analysis of party manifestos.

then expected to provide policy positions so that citizens are able to choose which view fits best with their own stance (Manin et al. 1999). In a political space, which only consists of one ideological dimension, as assumed by Downs (1957), this leads to voters choosing the party which is closest to their ideal point on that single dimension. Moreover, parties are commonly assumed to be vote-maximising and therefore take positions which make them the best choice for as many voters as possible. In a party system with two parties, this leads to the expectation that both parties provide the same position, namely the position which represents the median voter (Downs 1957).

According to this – normatively very appealing – view on democratic elections, the role of political parties is crucial, because parties determine the set of positions that voters can choose from. If parties provide positions that fit with voters' ideal points as suggested by the classical spatial approach, they are also able to successfully provide a link between citizens and the government (Adams et al. 2005; Dalton 1985). Following the model of "responsive party-government", democratic elections can be expected to establish such a congruence between the policy positions of voters' and political parties (Dalton 2008: 226). Ultimately, this should lead to government policies which fit best the preferences of most voters (see Dahl 1956: 37).

Even for established democracies, it is debated whether parties are able to provide such a functioning link in election campaigns. Achen and Bartels (2016: 51) summarise various critical objections in this regard and conclude that the understanding of democratic elections as outlined above, which they call the "folk theory of democracy", "suffers from grave logical and practical problems". They claim that the idea of voters minimizing the distance between their own position and the party they intend to vote for, as suggested by the spatial model of party competition, is logically only possible under the over simplistic assumption of a unidimensional political space (Achen and Bartels 2016: 23-27). In addition, they argue that the effect of issue-voting on individual vote choice is extremely low. That is, voters hardly make use of information on the proximity between their own positions and the positions of the parties running for election when casting a ballot (Achen and Bartels 2016: 41-45).

These objections put the idea that parties strategically position themselves in the party system according to the positions of voters in question. If issue-voting only plays a limited role, why should rational and strategically acting parties put effort in adapting and reformulating their positions according to changes in voters' attitudes? These points of criticism towards the general logic of spatial models of party competition and democratic theory are well justified. However, neither the logical imperfections of spatial models of party competition nor the limited evidence of issue-based voting behaviour contradict the expectation that parties try to strategically position themselves. This is the case, because it is sufficient to assume that parties think that it might have positive effects on their performance at the polls when they appear as responsive.

Against this background, analysing the drivers of party positions on policy issues is highly relevant. In the following, three sets of determinants of party positions that figure prominently in the literature on party positioning are distinguished. *First*, focusing on parties' considerations to maximise votes and to win elections, their strategic positioning as a response to the positions of voters is discussed. *Second*, approaches based on considerations of parties' re-positioning in response to party system change and the emergence of new competitors is examined. *Third*, the role of a party's ideological legacy as a constraint of strategic re-positioning is explored.

The positions of voters

As argued above, a fundamental assumption in spatial theories of party competition is that voters have preferences on a given set of policies at the time of an election and choose parties which match their preferences best. Consequently, parties take positions on policies which are closest to the position of as many citizens as possible (see Benoit and Laver 2006: 38). This point of view corresponds with a "bottom-up" perspective on the elite-mass-linkage (Steenbergen et al. 2007: 14). Rather than parties cueing voters in the sense that the former shape the preferences of the latter (see Druckman et al. 2013; Zaller 1992), it is suggested that parties take up voters' prefer-

ences and take positions accordingly. If parties listen to the policy preferences of the electorate on a given issue and adapt their own position in response and not vice versa, one can speak of an "electoral connection" between voters and parties (Carrubba 2001: 142).

In this regard, it is objected that considerations on parties' responsiveness are strongly centred on their reactions to the mean or median voter (Adams et al. 2004). An important additional question is whether parties are responsive to attitudinal changes in the electorate as a whole or only to specific sub-groups. One expectation is that parties change their positions only when their own voters change their attitude. Ezrow et al. (2010: 276) therefore propose a "partisan constituency model" of party positioning which focuses on the mean party voter as opposed to a "general electorate model" which is concerned with the mean position of the overall electorate to capture both variants of positional responsiveness (see also Lehrer 2012).

Which model applies to a party is expected to be highly dependent on characteristics of the party itself. On the one hand, it is hypothesised that the "general electorate model" primarily applies to mainstream parties, while the "partisan constituency model" explains positional shifts for niche parties. Mainstream parties are found to be particularly "vote-maximising" and "centre-oriented" (Ezrow et al. 2010: 278). These parties are assumed to strongly rely on information from polls, which makes them particularly responsive to the mean voter (see Ezrow et al. 2010: 278). By contrast, niche-parties are assumed to mainly react to shifts among their supporters. While shifting position generally comes with the risk of losing credibility (Tavits 2007), it is especially risky for niche parties. If these parties adapt their position to the mean voter, they might appear less sincere in representing the frequently more extreme viewpoints of their supporters. Therefore, niche-parties are expected to hesitate in their reactions to changes in the position of the general electorate and only adjust their positions in response to attitudinal shifts of their supporters (see Ezrow et al. 2010: 279). More specifically, this leads to niche-parties not only ignoring shifts in the general electorate when the electorate moves away from the party's position (Adams et

al. 2006), but even to take more extreme positions when the median voter moves towards them (Ferland 2018: 2).

On the other hand, party organisation is expected to moderate the responsiveness of parties to voters' attitudes (Lehrer 2012; Schumacher et al. 2013). Following Schumacher et al. (2013: 464), parties' responsiveness "is contingent upon the degree to which leaders or activists dominate intraparty decision making". Similar to the argument on the moderating effect of party type outlined above, the mechanism supposed to be responsible for these differences is that party goals vary with regard to their organisational structure (see Lehrer 2012: 1297). With party leaders being more office-seeking than activists, parties dominated by the former are more responsive to the general electorate, because this maximises the short-term likelihood of achieving this goal. Consequently, "leadership-dominated parties", where power is strongly centralised on party leaders, are expected to respond to the mean voter, while "activist-dominated" parties with powers decentralised and shared by many activists are sensitive to the position of the party supporters (Schumacher et al. 2013: 466-467).

In addition to characteristics at the party level, electoral rules are expected to "indirectly influence ideological congruence by affecting elite responsiveness" (Golder and Ferland 2017: 230). Two competing arguments are put forward in this regard. On the one hand, scholars argued that proportional systems favour positional responsiveness to voters' attitudes more than majoritarian systems (Lijphart 1999; Powell 2000). Since proportionality favours multi-party systems, it allows for more different and diverse viewpoints on the supply side of politics and thereby promotes elite-voter congruence. On the other hand, it is claimed that such systems have severe negative consequences. As they favour the establishment of parties with extreme positions, they are assumed to reduces elite-voter congruence (see Blais and Bodet 2006: 1246).

Overall, empirical research on the nexus of public opinion and party positions provides support for the idea that parties are responsive to the electorate (Adams et al. 2004; Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; Ezrow et al. 2010; Ferland 2018; Lehrer 2012; Schumacher et al. 2013). Moreover, it is found that differences between the electoral

systems concerning elite-voter responsiveness are modest (Ferland 2016; Golder and Stramski 2010). Nevertheless, this general insight must be strongly qualified, because the relationship is strongly contingent upon individual party characteristics. *First*, research find strong evidence that mainstream parties listen closely to the mean voter (Ezrow et al. 2010). Hence, the behaviour of these parties can be described best by the "general electorate model". In contrast, the behaviour of niche-parties is found to be driven by shifts of their own supporters and follows the logic of the "partisan constituency model" (Ezrow et al. 2010). These differences are substantial. Niche parties are not only found to be less responsive to the mean voter than mainstream parties; as pointed out by Ferland (2018: 8), these parties are even "resistant to shifts in public opinion. *Second*, there exist also striking differences in the behaviour of parties depending on party organisation. "Leader-dominated" or "exclusive" parties are in fact more responsive to the general electorate, while "activist-dominated" parties shift their positions in response to changes in the attitudes of their own supporters (Lehrer 2012; Schumacher et al. 2013). It is therefore concluded that the stronger the role of party activists and the policy-orientation of the party, the more it is only sensitive to attitudinal shifts among its supporters. In contrast, the stronger the role of party leaders the more parties react to shifts of the mean voter.

Mutual responsivity

Voters' attitudes are not the only driver of party positioning. In addition, research claims that parties react to their competitors as well. More precisely, parties are expected to respond to electoral gains of their competitors on the one hand and to the repositioning of other relevant parties in the party system on the other hand (e.g., Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; Meijers 2017).

First, following the idea that vote-seeking parties tend to converge in the positions they take, it is assumed that parties move in the same direction. That is, "if one party unilaterally shifts its position, the other party can be expected to shift its policies in the same direction in order to re-establish convergence" (Adams and Somer-Topcu

2009: 827-828). It is expected that this effect is particularly strong for parties with similar positions. One reason for this expectation is that parties' electoral success most strongly depends on the positions of their most proximate competitor. Vote-seeking parties will therefore have an explicit focus on the action of rivals which position close to themselves in the party system. Specifically, this means "that left-wing parties are particularly responsive to the policy shifts of other left-wing parties, while right-wing parties respond disproportionately to other right-wing parties"(Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009: 828).

Second, the idea of parties being responsive to past election results is especially used as an explanation of mainstream party behaviour. It is claimed that large mainstream parties react to the actions of challenger parties and adjust their positions. Challenger parties are defined as parties which put a strong emphasis on issues that were previously rather neglected by existing parties on the one hand and the radical position they take on these issues on the other hand (De Vries and Hobolt 2012; Hobolt and de Vries 2015). It is assumed that the electoral success of such challengers strongly depends on the actions of other parties in the party system, especially on the actions of mainstream parties (Meguid 2005). Mainstream parties which decide not to ignore them and remain silent about the issues addressed by these "issue entrepreneurs" (Hobolt and de Vries 2015), they can still choose between two different options. As suggested by Meguid (2005), mainstream parties can then either employ an accommodative (policy convergence) or an adversarial (policy divergence). The former strategy is intended to signal voters that the new "challenging the exclusivity of the niche party's policy stance" (Meguid 2005: 349). The latter strategy, by contrast, leads to an open contest between the position of the new challenger and the mainstream party on the issue emphasised by the newcomer.

Both expectations are corroborated by empirical research. Studying more than 300 elections, Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009) find that parties significantly adjust their position in the direction to which their competitors shifted in the preceding election. Thus, parties are found to react on each other and that these reactions show a clear trend of positional convergence. Moreover, it is reported that the effect of positional

changes is larger for parties from the same party family (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009). Parties are especially sensitive to positional shifts from competitors which hold similar positions.

Furthermore, studies on the reactions of established parties in response to new challengers located at the fringes of the party system reveals that mainstream parties mostly prefer an accommodative strategy. For the issue of immigration, Van Spanje (2010) shows that party systems become more negative in their stance on the issue in response to challengers from the radical right and that this is particularly the case for mainstream parties. Similarly, Abou-Chadi (2016) finds evidence that mainstream parties develop more negative views in immigration in response the electoral gains of radical right parties. Moreover, Meijers (2017) finds evidence that mainstream parties respond to electoral gains of Eurosceptic challenger parties by taking more negative EU-related positions, especially when these challengers emphasise European issues.

Taken together, this research clearly shows that parties react on each other when deciding on their position on an issue. Again, however, there is much evidence that these general effects are the result of very sensitive mainstream parties which are likely to adapt their positions in response to rival parties' policy shifts and electoral gains of challenger parties.

Historical legacies and party ideology

Arguments about positional shifts of political parties in response to changes in their environment at least implicitly assume that parties can and do strategically adapt their position to achieve their goals. These considerations start from the observation that "at almost every election, political parties change their policy position" (Schumacher et al. 2013: 464). However, there are good reasons to argue that parties' are particularly constrained when it comes to changing their issue positions (see Harmel et al. 2018: 284). An explicit counter-argument to the idea of parties' positing great space for strategic re-positioning and the role of contagion effects in this regard is provided

on the grounds of cleavage theory (see Hooghe and Marks 2018; Marks and Wilson 2000; Marks et al. 2002).

As argued by Marks et al. (2002: 586), cleavage theory, as formulated by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), assumes that party positions "reflect divisions in the social structure and the ideologies that provoke and express those group divisions". From this point of view, parties are not simply collective goal-oriented actors aiming to enhance their electoral fortunes to bring benefits to its members. Rather, parties have a historical legacy and are based on ideological grounds; and these ideologies "filter the response of parties to new issues that arise on the agenda" (Marks et al. 2002: 586). Put differently, "a political party has its own 'bounded rationality', that shapes the way in which it comes to terms with new challenges and uncertainties. (Marks and Wilson 2000: 434)".

From this perspective, the constraints under which political parties can act strategically in order to reach goals like vote-maximisation via positional adjustments appear much more powerful than assumed by Downs (1957). The reason is that parties are embedded in a specific cleavage structure in which they emerged and developed as the agents of social groups. Rather than being subject to rapid changes resulting from strategic interaction, party positions are expected to be highly stable over time, because this legacy strongly shapes their positions and puts a constraint on strategic position shifting (Hooghe and Marks 2018).

Based on this argument, the belonging to a certain party family is assumed to be a long-term predictor of party positions (Marks and Wilson 2000; Marks et al. 2002). Hooghe and Marks (2018) claim that changes in European party systems against the background of rising concerns of voters on European integration and immigration support this idea. In this sense, changes in national party systems are the result of the rise of new challengers and not due to strategic re-positioning of existing parties. As the positions of established parties show little variation over time, they assume that „the positional flexibility of political parties is heavily constrained" (Hooghe and Marks 2018: 126).

It is important to note that it is difficult to bring this result in line with research showing that parties are highly sensitive to shifts in public opinion for instance. This is even more the case since Hooghe and Marks (2018) claim that it is established mainstream parties which do not adjust their positions. Exactly this group is found to be particularly responsive to the preferences of the mean voter in other research (Ezrow et al. 2010). One explanation could be that studies on party responsiveness strongly focus on economic issues and parties' general orientation on a left-right line of political contestation, while Hooghe and Marks (2018) explore the transnational cleavage by focusing on immigration and European integration. Against this background, these contradicting insights could be attributed to the different issues these studies focus on. But why should mainstream parties have difficulties to shift their position especially on these issues? Following Kerscher (2018) such an issue specific argument would even lead to the conclusion that the space for strategic re-positioning of established mainstream parties is especially large when it comes to immigration and European integration. Since these topics are not integrated in the left-right line of political conflict along these parties emerged (Kriesi et al. 2008), their ideological legacy provides less guidance and constraints for "new issues". Consequently, it is difficult to resolve these contradictory findings based on theoretical considerations about differences in party behaviour depending on peculiarities of individual issues.

An "extended and dynamic" model of cleavage formation allows to bridge this gap between structuralist and strategic models of party positioning (Kriesi et al. 2012; Kriesi et al. 2008). From this perspective, the fact that parties are organisations which represent divisions in the social structure via their ideology does not imply that parties have no space to maneuver strategically (see Grande and Kriesi 2012: 11). Rather, such a perspective on cleavage formation acknowledges the role of parties' historical legacies as they are embedded in existing cleavage structures, but also gives "particular weight to the strategies of political elites, their framing of issues, and their strategic reactions to new challengers" strategically (Grande and Kriesi 2012: 11). This makes the degree to which parties are able to adapt their position on an issue strategically in a competitive space an empirical question that depends on the specific

characteristics of parties and party families (Kerscher 2018). More specifically it allows explaining why established parties are found to change their positions especially on new political issues like European integration or immigration (Kerscher 2018; Meijers 2017; Van Spanje 2010).

2.2.3. Personalisation

Personalisation is another crucial aspect of party behaviour. In the context of election campaigning, it can be understood as "a stronger focus on candidates/politicians instead of parties, institutions, or issues" (Kriesi 2012: 826). Following this definition, the degree to which a party personalises its election campaign, is higher, the more the attention rests on persons instead of other potential topics (see Brettschneider 2008) or on the political party as a collective actor (Karvonen 2009). In addition, the literature on personalisation is also concerned with the distribution of attention over specific actors. In this regard, it is particularly interested in the degree to which the communication that addresses individual politicians is concentrated on a limited number of very visible actors or is dispersed on a large number of different politicians (see Kriesi 2012: 828). Thus, two different facets of personalisation must be distinguished. On the one hand, we can differentiate between campaigns with high and low levels of personalisation. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that campaign communication can also vary with regard to the focus on specific politicians. It can either be characterised by the presence of a broad range of different actors or be dominated by a very limited number of highly visible politicians. In their review of different understandings of personalisation, Van Aelst et al. (2011: 207) suggest to speak of the "general visibility" of politicians to describe the former dimension of the concept and to label the latter as "concentrated visibility". They claim that both dimensions are part of an "individualisation" of politics,[5] which can be understood as a trend towards centring campaigns on politicians.

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[5] "Concentrated visibility" is also often labelled as presidentialisation (see Poguntke and Webb 2005).

Both sub-dimensions - the degree to which persons in general are present in a campaign (general visibility) and the degree to which specific politicians dominate this process (concentrated visibility) - are crucial to understand contemporary election campaigns. This is particularly the case for two reasons: *First*, many scholars expect a strong increase in personalisation over time (Farrell and Webb 2002; Holtz-Bacha et al. 2014; Kriesi 2012; McAllister 2007; Van Aelst et al. 2011). While Kitschelt (2000) assumes that the reliance on personal charisma of party leaders has ever since constituted an alternative strategy to communicating policies, it is frequently claimed that "image and style [are] increasingly pushing policies and substance aside" (Farrell and Webb 2002: 132). *Second*, especially for parliamentary democracies, the personalisation of election campaigns is often claimed to be a rather problematic phenomenon. In these systems "traditionally the party, not the candidate, stood at the center of the political process" (Van Aelst et al. 2011: 206). As pointed out by Kaase (1994: 213), parliamentary systems give preference to parties instead of individual politicians: "[I]t is the parties who put up candidates for political office, and it is the parties which vote a government and its leader into power, or out of power". Thus, increasing levels of personalisation can be assumed to create tensions between the role that parties as collective actors should play according to the constitution on the one hand and the politics of personalised and leader-centred election campaigning on the other hand (Kaase 1994). Or, as Balmas et al. (2012: 47) put it, "[c]hanging the balance between groups and individuals may affect the mechanisms that limit and constrain the power of leadership".

Televised campaign debates in parliamentary systems, are a striking example in this regard. The core feature of a parliamentary system is that the head of government is not only elected by the members of parliament, but also depends on support from the parliament during the legislative period (Steffani 1979). However, televised debates between the "lead candidates" suggest voters that they must decide between two competing individual politicians, which is only the case in presidential systems. Accordingly, the introduction of "American-style televised debates" (Reinemann and Wilke 2007: 92) in countries with parliamentary systems like Germany for instance

might be misleading for voters as the set-up of such debates does not reflect the logic of the electoral system in the country.

From a perspective of party behaviour, these consideration lead to the question how parties contribute to a personalisation of electoral politics and what drives their decisions to rely on personalised campaign communication (Balmas et al. 2012). The same holds for the effect of these strategies on parties' appearance in the mass media and how voters perceive them (see Van Aelst et al. 2011). Similar to the literature on issue salience and position taking, research on personalisation assumes that parties are strategic actors (Enli and Skogerbø 2013; Kriesi 2012). Hence, parties are expected to carefully choose the degree to which they personalise their campaigns and what candidates and personal attributes they emphasise (Eder et al. 2015; Enli and Skogerbø 2013; Kriesi 2012; Van Aelst et al. 2011). However, unlike the literature on issue salience and position taking, studies on personalisation focus much more on the description of trends in personalisation than on explaining variation between parties. Taking this peculiarity into account, the following sections deal with explanations of the extent of personalisation and with variation in parties' personalisation strategies on the one hand and the degree to which these explanations are context sensitive on the other hand. Initially, factors contributing to high levels of personalisation and developments which even amplify such behaviour are debated. Subsequently, differences in these regards and the moderating role of institutional aspects are discussed.

Has personalisation increased over time?

The relation between issue-related and personalised statements in an election campaign can be understood as a trade-off. The idea that the reliance on personal charisma of party leaders constitutes an alternative strategy to communicating policies as formulated by Kitschelt (2000) reflects this point. In the literature on personalisation, it is generally assumed that campaigns are highly personalised and that the overall visibility of politicians in election campaigns as well as the concentration on a limited number of extremely visible individuals has even increased over the last decades.

There are several reasons for parties to generally rely on personalisation (see McAllister 2015: 337). *First*, it is easier for parties to get their message out if voters can directly relate it to an individual politician representing the parties' positions. *Second*, party leaders themselves are sympathetic to personalised campaigning, because this form of communication creates stronger ties between them and the electorate and therefore strengthens their personal power in the party. Consequently, vote-seeking and office-seeking parties are likely to rely on strategies of personalisation. Parties which try to enhance their electoral fortunes personalise their campaigns and link their issue positions to individual politicians; and individual politicians within these parties will not hesitate to take the chance of being put centre stage in an election campaign by their parties.

In addition, there are also a number of arguments supporting the idea of an increase in personalisation over time in democratic political systems. *First*, a greater volatility in the voter market due to processes of de-alignment are claimed to contribute to such a trend (Holtz-Bacha et al. 2014; Norris 2000). Following this argument, the decrease of cleavage-based voting and the rise of the "'unreliable' voter" (Holtz-Bacha et al. 2014: 154), is expected to lead parties to substitute issue-based messages by communication about individual politicians and their personal virtues. Thus, due to the decline of the role of "traditional party loyalties" for voting behaviour, it is often hypothesised that the role of individual politicians and their personal attributes are increasingly present in election campaigns (Kriesi 2012: 826). *Second*, it is argued that processes of denationalisation and Europeanisation reduce the degree to which parties at national elections can credibly state to tackle important problems, because many issues cannot be addressed effectively at the national level anymore. Consequently, parties are assumed to shift their attention away from suggesting solutions to political problems and focus more strongly on personalised communication (Holtz-Bacha et al. 2014). *Third*, technological innovations are expected to contribute to an increase in personalisation strategies of political parties as well. Not only televised campaign coverage but also more recent developments like campaign communication on social media create a strong tendency to produce and present visual materials. Since indi-

viduals are "visually more appealing for the viewer" (McAllister 2015: 337), these trends could result in more personalised campaigns. *Finally*, the professionalisation of parties in contemporary democracies is also said to contribute to changes in their campaign focus. According to Farrell and Webb (2000), parties have become more centralised when it comes to campaigning, which results in increased powers of party leaders. Because of this "power-shift", party leaders themselves also become more visible in the parties' campaigns (Farrell and Webb 2002: 132).

However, rather than engaging in the question which of these explanations is responsible for trends of increasing personalisation, the existing literature has devoted much attention on detecting whether such a trend actually exists. In this regard, some scholars argue that personalisation has indeed increased rapidly within the last decades. McAllister (2015: 337) for instance finds that "[t]here is little doubt that national election campaigns in the established democracies have become more personalized". However, in their systematic review of the literature on personalisation, Van Aelst et al. (2011) come to a more nuanced conclusion. On the one hand, they report findings of an increase in personalisation in Austria, France, the Netherlands Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the USA. On the other hand, for Belgium and especially for Germany, such a trend cannot be observed (Wilke and Reinemann 2001). Moreover, covering six West European countries (Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) over a period of more than 30 years, Kriesi (2012) finds evidence for an increase in personalisation in the sense of higher general visibility of politicians as well as with regard to a stronger concentration on party leaders only in one country, namely the Netherlands.

Most important, this mixed evidence for increasing personalisation does not conflict with the idea that contemporary election campaigns are strongly centred on individual politicians. Rather, the reason why some studies fail to provide evidence for a positive trend over time is due to already high levels of personalisation in early election campaigns (Van Aelst et al. 2011: 210). As shown by Wilke and Reinemann (2001), personalisation in Germany did not increase between 1949 and 1998. Rather all elections were characterised by a strong focus on individual politicians.

Explaining the level of personalisation

As shown above, personalisation is a crucial aspect in election campaigns. In many political systems, it became an even more present feature of election campaigns over the last decades. Therefore, the question is how these insights vary across political systems. In this regard, institutional factors are expected to explain variation in the degree of campaign personalisation across countries. In presidential systems, candidates running for election are usually put centre stage by the party they belong to and even have campaign teams independent from the party itself. U.S. presidential election campaigns are a striking example in this regard (Kreiss 2016b). These campaigns are not only strongly candidate-centred, but also extremely "capital-intensive" (Norris 2000: 178). Moreover, in contrast to parliamentary systems with electoral systems strongly based on the principle proportional representation, candidates from parties with a realistic chance of winning the election are particularly likely to heavily dominate an election campaign. This "implies both a greater amount of personalisation of politics in general, and a greater concentration of the attention on top leaders than in parliamentary systems" (Kriesi 2012: 827). Thus, presidential systems are expected to lead to a higher general visibility of candidates and to a more pronounced concentration on a very limited number of promising candidates.

Focussing on personalisation in in Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, Kriesi (2012) finds strong evidence for this argument. In line with the idea of such systems favouring the visibility of individual politicians in relation to communication from parties as collective actors, campaigns in France, the only country with presidential elections under scrutiny, are characterised by much higher levels of personalisation (Kriesi 2012: 831). This finding not only holds for the general visibility of persons in relation to parties, but also for the concentration of attention on specific politicians. In France, more than 90 percent of personalised communication is centred on the top ten of the most visible politicians and more than 40 percent of communication stems from in the top two candidates. Summing up, "all the campaigns in parliamentary systems are not only much less person-

alized, but they also concentrate attention much less on a limited number of candidates" (Kriesi 2012: 832-833).

2.3. Research Gap: Communication Platforms and Electoral Arenas

This literature review on three crucial aspects of party behaviour – *issue salience, position taking and personalisation* – points out that there exists a large body of literature on explanations party behaviour. A striking finding in this regard concerns the role of conditionality. Crucial relationships in all three domains of party competition under study are found to be highly contingent upon party-specific factors (e.g., party type) or institutional factors (e.g., regime type). In the remainder, it is argued that, our understanding of the conditionality of explanations of party behaviour is nevertheless incomplete. Specifically, it is shown that *situational context factors*, in particular the role of *electoral arenas* and *communication platforms,* were widely neglected in existing research. Given that research highlights the importance of moderating factors of party behaviour, this creates an important research gap. The following examples illustrate this point.

Starting with *communication platforms*, existing knowledge is strongly based on manifesto research (see Dolezal et al. 2018). While personalisation has been studied on various platforms (Dolezal et al. 2018; Enli and Skogerbø 2013; Kriesi 2012), this holds particularly for issue salience (e.g., De Sio and Weber 2014; Dolezal et al. 2014; Wagner and Meyer 2014) and position taking (e.g., Adams et al. 2004; Ezrow et al. 2010). This begs the question how insights gained from the study of these documents can be used to draw conclusions about how parties behave on other platforms like the mass media, in their press releases, in public campaign speeches, televised campaign advertisements or on their social media accounts. Since such communication platforms are used much more by voters to get information about political parties and their positions, this creates a particularly pressing research problem.

Considerations about issue salience are a good starting point in this regard. Do the drivers of issue emphasis discussed above vary regarding the platform on which par-

ties compete? Salience theory assumes that parties highlight owned issues in these documents strategically in order to appeal to voters (Budge 2015; Thesen et al. 2017). In a very similar fashion, approaches focusing in public opinion like issue yield theory (De Sio and Weber 2014) and the riding the wave theory (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994; Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016) assume that parties emphasise issues in order to appeal to voters. On the one hand, in public campaign debates, parties compete over attention with other parties and have to circumvent the gate-keepers like journalists (Merz 2017). This might put constraints on their ability to communicate over preferred issues and consequently weaken the relevance of these theories as explanations of party behaviour beyond direct campaign communication. On the other hand, manifestos also serve the purpose of giving a full account of a party's policy positions and therefore have a very broad issue scope (Dolezal et al. 2014). Consequently, salience strategies could be even more relevant for party communication on social media for instance (see De Sio et al. 2018). Focussing on the role of agenda dynamics brings similar questions to the fore. Since research on this factor is also strongly centred on manifesto content (e.g., Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015), it is difficult to say how strong the role of such systemic pressures is in more competitive communication environments like public campaign debates. The *second study* (Chapter 6) of the thesis tackles this research gap and explores how issue ownership and systemic issue salience play out in newspaper reports during election campaigns (Schwarzbözl et al. 2018). Moreover, the *third study* (Chapter 7) examines whether issue competition on social media systematically differs from patterns well-known from manifesto research (Schwarzbözl 2018).

The described research problem is also relevant in research on party competition beyond the exclusive domain of issue salience. While existing research points out that not all issue-related party messages are equally likely to gain media attention (see Haselmayer, Meyer, et al. 2017; Haselmayer, Wagner, et al. 2017; Meyer et al. 2017), there is an ongoing controversy with regard to how individual party strategies translate into visible conflicts in mediated campaign debates. In particular, the role of populist radical right parties as issue entrepreneurs is debated in this literature on issue

politicisation (Dolezal and Hellström 2016; Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2017; Kriesi et al. 2008; Van der Brug et al. 2015). Since this strand of research is strongly based on the analysis of a single source of data, it could benefit from exploring different platforms comparatively. This allows disentangling most clearly the strategic efforts of parties and the politicisation of an issue in public debates. The *first study* of this thesis (Chapter 6) on the politicisation of immigration issues explores exactly this relationship by combining data from various platforms (Grande et al. 2018).

Turning to *electoral arenas*, it must be noted that research on party behaviour is dominated by studies on national election campaigns (e.g., Kriesi 2012; Wagner and Meyer 2014). In particular, comparative research across electoral arenas is scarce. Whether party behaviour follows a similar logic in subnational and European elections is widely unexplored (see Golder et al. 2017). Especially at the European level, where the introduction of direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979 created a number of "unintended consequences" (see Van der Brug and De Vreese 2016), analyses on the drivers of party behaviour in comparison to the national level are important to better understand deficits in the electoral connection at this level of governance. Recent research by Braun and Schmitt (2018) shows that patterns of party positioning are rather stable across arenas, while issue salience varies considerably between national elections and elections to the EP (see also Dolezal 2012). Moreover, public opinion as an important driver of issue salience is found to play out differently. In their analysis of national party manifestos and parties' Euromanifestos, Spoon and Klüver (2014) find that the positive effect of voters' issue priorities, which usually plays an important role (see Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016), cannot be observed in EP elections. In contrast to national elections, parties seem to "ignore the issue priorities of citizens in elections to the European Parliament" (Spoon and Klüver 2014: 55).

These findings are instructive, because they illustrate that insights on party behaviour gained from studies focusing in national election campaigns do not necessarily hold in another context. Nevertheless, they also leave at least two important questions unanswered. *First*, given that party behaviour deviates in some respects between the national and the European level, the structure of political conflict in EP elections

might also deviate from patterns well-known from the study national elections. However, due to a strong focus of existing research in this regard on the national electoral arena (Hutter and Grande 2014; Hutter et al. 2016; Kriesi et al. 2012; Kriesi et al. 2008), the degree to which conflict structures diverge across arenas and how this affects political representation are widely unexplored.[6]

Second, other aspects of party behaviour than salience and position taking have been largely neglected in research of party behaviour across electoral arenas. Focussing on personalisation, it is found that presidential systems as compared to parliamentary systems are characterised by a stronger focus on politicians instead of issues in quality newspaper, tabloids and in televised campaign debates (Kriesi 2012). Hence, there is strong evidence that regime type affects the degree to which campaigns are personalised. By contrast, there is no research on the effect of electoral arenas. Research on personalisation also strongly focuses on national election campaigns. This begs the question whether personalisation is an equally present feature of election campaigns in second-order elections at the sub-national or at the European level. At the European level, this question gained relevance with the introduction of the Spitzenkandidaten system in the 2014 EP elections. Similar to national elections in parliamentary systems, this step was intended to link a vote for a specific party to a lead candidate that aims to become head of the European Commission (Hobolt 2014). While it was expected that this would intensify and personalise parties' election campaigns as it is the case in national elections (Corbett 2014; Follesdal and Hix 2006; Hobolt 2014; Priestley et al. 2015), the actual positive effects of this institutional innovation were modest at best (Hobolt 2014). As argued by Braun and Popa (2018), addressing the institutional innovation of the Spitzenkandidaten itself as a campaign strategy conflicts with the incentives of strategically acting parties. Against this background, it is crucial to explore whether parties' reluctance to address the Spitzenkandidaten in person in EP elections can also be attributed to such considerations. The *fourth study* of this thesis (Chapter 9) therefore explores parties' emphasis on the Spitzenkandi-

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[6] An ongoing research project led by Daniela Braun and Edgar Grande, which is based at the LMU Munich and funded by the German Research Council, deals with exactly this topic.

daten in the 2014 EP elections and the rationales behind their decision to put them in the spotlight or to ignore them (Braun and Schwarzbözl 2019).

To sum up: Many aspects regarding the role that situational context factors play for party behaviour are largely unexplored. On the one hand, insights are mostly gained from manifesto research. On the other hand, research is strongly dominated by studies on national election campaigns. This makes it difficult to tell whether other platforms of direct party communication parties' social media accounts or mass-mediated party communication follow different logics. Likewise, it is hard to say whether party behaviour follows a different logic in subnational or European elections.

3. Theoretical Considerations

Before the presentation of the empirical studies, this section discusses the broader theoretical argument of the research project. Specifically, the idea that party behaviour is contingent not only upon party type but also regarding the specific circumstances in which election campaigning takes place is discussed. It is claimed that variation in two factors is key to understanding why context matters for party behaviour - party strategy and the constraints parties face to act in line with their strategic considerations. *First*, it is assumed that parties have specific goals which they try to reach via strategic action. Following behavioural theories, parties are expected to have multiple identifiable goals. More precisely, parties seek for maximizing votes, office, or policies (Strom 1990) and try to avoid party disunity (Steenbergen and Scott 2004). *Second*, it is equally important to note that the space for strategic action can vary since parties' manoeuvrability can be constrained by various internal and external factors. Thus, parties are also expected to face constraints regarding the degree to which they can take strategic action in order to reach their desired goals (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015).

Both drivers are crucial to understand why party behaviour can vary depending on the specific context of election campaigning. As demonstrated in the literature review, an assumption, which is largely shared within research on party behaviour, is that different parties are also likely to behave differently. Parties can be distinguished on several characteristics like size (Meguid 2005), "nicheness" (Bischof 2017), government participation (Van de Wardt 2015) or internal organisational structures (Wagner and Meyer 2014). It is convincingly argued that these features of a party influence its behaviour in election campaigns, because they affect the strategic goals that parties pursue and the degree to which they can act in accordance to reaching these goals (Ezrow et al. 2010).

A related, albeit different argument is that party behaviour not only varies between different parties but also differs depending on the context conditions under which they campaign. That is, the notion of parties as strategic actors implies that they are

also context sensitive in the sense that they adapt their behaviour in accordance to the specific circumstances they face in an election campaign.

With a focus on political institutions, this idea is systematically discussed by Strom (1990), who argues that political institutions, like a country's electoral system, influence the relevance which parties attribute to different goals and therefore affect parties' campaign strategies. According to this argument, "regardless of their organizational characteristics, [parties] face different incentives in different institutional settings" (Strom 1990: 579) and these different incentives lead to variation in party behaviour. For instance, vote-seeking behaviour is especially expected in elections with majority voting-systems. Under such circumstances, usually two parties compete for the majority in an electoral district. Consequently, "voting power leads virtually directly to policy influence and office benefits" for political parties competing in these systems and this leads to parties strongly focusing on the concerns of the mean voter (Strom 1990: 592).

This argument also applies to variation in party behaviour across electoral arenas within the same countries. The reason for this expectation is that elections at different levels of governance provide different opportunity structures for political parties, which are likely to affect their campaign strategies. A crucial characteristic of many multi-level political systems is that "electoral systems vary across electoral arenas" (Golder et al. 2017: 8). Moreover, what is at stake for a party in an election and what mobilises voters also differs across levels of governance. In this regard, the special position of national elections in relation to regional or local elections on the one hand and elections at the European level on the other hand is reflected by the differentiation between first order and second order elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980). Thus, even if it is usually the same national parties which compete in elections at different levels of governance (e.g., Hix and Lord 1997), it is likely that elections held in a given country follow different electoral rules depending on the level of governance. Assuming that parties strategically decide how to design their campaigns in response to the specific circumstances in which an election takes place, the same parties are expected to behave differently in different electoral arenas, because the goals they

pursue and the strategies they think to make them reach these goals vary (Golder et al. 2017). Consequently, elections at different levels of governance can create different incentives for strategically acting political parties and result in distinct logics of political competition.

Similarly, the idea of party strategies being context sensitive also applies to variation in campaigning activities across platforms of campaign communication. If the opportunities of different channels of direct party communication vary, it is likely that parties strategically use them for different purposes in an election campaign. Especially at the time of elections, professionalised parties use various channels to get their messages out. Advertising in the news media and on television have a long-lasting tradition in Western democracies in this regard (see Norris et al. 1999: 54). Parties and candidates spend much money to reach voters via advertisements in print media or through TV spots (Kaplan et al. 2006). In addition, parties put up posters in public, circulate campaign ads via mail, engage in door-to-door canvassing (Broockman and Kalla 2016) and try to engage with potential voters through speeches at public events. More recently, parties also spend much money on advertisements on the internet, especially on social media. For instance, spending on Facebook ads in the UK increased from £1.3 million in the general elections in 2015 to £3.2 million in the 2017 elections[7]. Moreover, parties strongly rely on other, less cost-intensive forms of direct campaign communication like the publication of party manifestos (Dolezal et al. 2018), the publication press releases (e.g., Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016) or spread information via their own social media accounts (e.g., Jungherr 2016; Nulty et al. 2016; Stier et al. 2018).

The (technological) opportunities these platforms offer vary greatly. Social media communication and party press releases for instance allow to instantly react on ongoing events during the campaign or on the behaviour of other parties (De Sio et al. 2018). The opposite holds for party manifestos. Since these documents are usually published in advance of the crucial phase of the campaign and require much planning

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[7] https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/mar/23/facebook-digital-politics-tories-labour-online-advertising-marketing, last: 03.09.2018.

and internal agreement, they do not allow reacting on short-term changes in the campaign agenda. In addition to variation in reactivity, some platforms also favour much more the use of personalisation as a campaign strategy. Even though Dolezal et al. (2018: 240) demonstrate that personalisation is far from absent in Austrian party manifestos, one might argue that such a campaign strategy is even more strongly employed on platforms which particularly facilitate the use of visual materials like pictures and videos. This is of course the case in televised campaign ads as well as on parties' social media accounts. Thus, if a party aims to strongly personalise its campaign, such behaviour is particularly likely to be observed on these platforms (e.g., Enli and Skogerbø 2013). Moreover, it is likely that the scope of information also varies regarding the platform of party communication. Unlike party manifestos, channels like campaign posters or flyers, but also in individual messages on social media, parties are not expected to provide a complete account on the policy positions it takes and wants to emphasise is limited. This allows them to choose more freely on the content they want to present to voters and makes such communication platforms even more likely to be used for strategically targeted messages than manifestos (see De Sio et al. 2018: 1217). Due to this variation in the opportunities offered by different platforms of direct party communication, it is likely that voters following the campaigns via different channels do not receive the same messages. Rather, different channels of direct campaign communication are expected to create different incentives for strategically acting parties regarding the content they present to the electorate.

Another argument on the conditionality of party behaviour is concerned with the constraints that parties face in election campaigns. In this regard, it is important to note that parties' space for strategic action is not only restricted by internal factors in the sense that a parties historical legacy restricts its positional manoeuvrability (Hooghe and Marks 2018; Marks and Wilson 2000; Marks et al. 2002). Similarly, strategic actions of parties can be constrained or counteracted by external factors. Consequently, the degree to which parties can take strategic action in order to reach their desired goals varies. This is particularly expected for campaign debates as covered by the

mass media. More specifically, parties may be forced into unpleasant debates on issues they initially wanted to avoid during the election campaign when their competitors successfully put them on the agenda (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015; Steenbergen and Scott 2004). Furthermore, in public campaign debates, parties' messages must pass gatekeeping journalists (Haselmayer, Meyer, et al. 2017; Haselmayer, Wagner, et al. 2017; Merz 2017; Meyer et al. 2017). This can also impose tough constraints on the degree to which a party can act in line with its initial strategy. In particular, parties cannot be sure that the topics they want to emphasise for strategic reasons are also the ones covered by the media (Norris et al. 1999). Issue competition in mediated environments is therefore expected to be strongly affected by agenda-setting dynamics and the fight for attention. Explanations of strategic party behaviour on platforms directly controlled by a party might therefore be of limited relevance under mediated circumstances, where parties must fight the "conflict over conflicts" with their competitors on the one hand (see Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010: 261) and bypass gatekeeping journalists who strongly rely on aspects of newsworthiness as a selection criterion of party messages on the other hand (Meyer et al. 2017). Consequently, party behaviour and the relevance of different explanations in this regard is expected to vary also between directly controlled communication platforms and mediated communication platforms.

Summing up, these considerations allow deriving the general expectation that party behaviour is conditional upon situational context. Thus, the main theoretical argument of this thesis is that party behaviour depends on the specific circumstances in which election campaigning takes place. On the one hand, this idea is rooted in the assumption that the circumstances under which parties compete, affect their own strategic considerations and that they adapt their behaviour depending on their environment. On the other hand, it is based on the idea that the degree to which parties can act in line with their initial strategy is also context dependent.

This argument about the context sensitivity of party behaviour is very general. However, as demonstrated in the subsequent empirical chapters, it allows deriving specific explanations that help to understand pressing research problems in the literature on

party behaviour and party competition like variation in party behaviour in national and European elections or potential gaps between what information parties try to communicate and what of this information is presented in the news media to the electorate. In the next chapter considerations about suitable research designs which enable to test such specific hypotheses and to take advantage of the context sensitivity of party behaviour to arrive at new insights in research on party behaviour are presented.

4. Methodological Remarks

Studying how party behaviour varies across electoral contexts and communication platforms is a challenging task. In the following section, it is discussed what research designs allow testing such differences. In this regard, two arguments are presented. *First*, it is claimed that exploring the context sensitivity of party behaviour often requires innovating from existing research designs in the field of party behaviour by combining and integrating different data sources. *Second*, it is argued that if the assumption that different data sources on party behaviour reveal complementary information, it enables researchers to gain new insights by exploiting these differences. More specifically, in addition to comparing data sources for the purpose of cross-validation, a focus on structural differences between sources of information on party behaviour can inspire new research designs which explicitly take advantage of such differences.

In order to test empirically, to what degree party behaviour is context sensitive, or to take advantage of the fact that data on party behaviour from different sources reveals complementary information, makes it necessary to compare party behaviour across electoral arenas and communication platforms. Consequently, gaining new insights on this aspect of party behaviour is particularly demanding, because it requires the creation of new datasets. To understand how party behaviour varies across electoral levels for instance, information on campaign behaviour from elections other than the national level must be explored and put in comparison to it (e.g., Spoon and Klüver 2014). Similarly, to explore how party behaviour varies over communication platforms, data for the same parties on different platforms must be gathered and analysed comparatively (e.g., Merz 2017).

Existing large-scale integrated datasets in the field do not provide such information. Focusing on manifesto data for instance, the Manifesto Research Project (Marpor) provides information about the emphasis parties devote to different policy issues and the positions parties take on these issues in their *national* election manifestos (Budge 2015; Lehmann et al. 2017). By contrast, the Euromanifesto project only reveals in-

formation about the salience and the positions of political parties in manifestos written for elections to the *European* parliament (Schmitt et al. 2018). In addition, new data on manifesto content from the Local Manifesto Project (LMP) focuses exclusively on elections at the *local* level (Gross and Jankowski 2018). In order to understand, how the content that parties publish during election campaigns varies across different levels of governance, such information must first be combined (see e.g., Braun and Schmitt 2018). Such steps are also necessary, to study how party communication differs across communication platforms.

Consequently, exploring the conditionality of party behaviour concerning variation across electoral contexts and communication platforms is much more demanding than exploring how party behaviour differs between different types of parties. Regarding the latter, it is possible to use existing large-scale datasets like the Marpor data or data from the Euromanifesto project. These datasets not only provide information on issue salience and policy positions but also on characteristics at the party level such as vote shares. This allows exploring potential differences in party behaviour based on large numbers of observations without the constructing new datasets. More specifically, it is possible to test how such party characteristics moderate the relevance of general hypotheses on party behaviour by running regression models with interaction effects between these characteristics on the one hand and variables bearing information about general drivers of party behaviour.

The idea to combine and compare information from different data sources to gain additional insights in research on party behaviour is not entirely new (Norris et al. 1999). However, for many aspects of election campaigning, researchers only recently began to create datasets which allow exploring variation in party behaviour depending on electoral context and communication platforms. Dolezal (2012) for instance provides first insights on differences in party behaviour and the structure of political conflict in campaign debates across electoral contexts by replicating analyses from national election campaigns for elections to the European Parliament. Similarly, Spoon and Klüver (2014), combines data from national and European election manifestos, to explore variation in parties' responsiveness to voters across electoral con-

texts. Moreover, Meyer et al. (2017) merges information from press releases and newspaper content for Austrian parties to explore what attributes of a message enhance its likelihood to appear in newspaper articles. In subsequent publications, this data is also used to explore differences between news outlets with varying partisanship (Haselmayer, Wagner, et al. 2017) and the effectiveness of negative campaign messages (Haselmayer, Meyer, et al. 2017). In addition, Merz (2017) merges data from campaign debates with manifesto data to explore how parties campaign strategies play out in mediated environments.

These efforts go beyond the idea of comparing indicators on crucial aspects of party behaviour with the purpose of cross-validation (e.g., Helbling and Tresch 2011). Rather, they assume that comparing similar indicators based on different data sources reveals additional insights about how parties behave in varying circumstances. The research designs presented in this thesis follow exactly this logic. Based on original data collected from different communication platforms and electoral arenas, they allow shifting the boundaries in our knowledge on party competition.

5. Contribution of the Thesis and Outlook

To test the idea that party behaviour varies across electoral arenas and communication platforms, the thesis presents four individual studies. Each study tackles an important aspect of the research gap outlined above. Specifically, this research reveals that there exist notable differences in party behaviour depending on the platform on which party competition is observed. Especially for the case of issue salience, it is demonstrated that parties' strategies and the degree to which they can act in accordance with these considerations, vary across communication platforms. Furthermore, it is shown that electoral arenas also affect parties' strategic considerations, which suggests significant deviations in party competition between elections at the national and the European level.

Focussing on immigration issues, the *first study (Chapter 6)* demonstrates how the strategic efforts of political parties are related to issue politicisation in the dynamic context of public campaign debates (Grande et al. 2018). The *second study (Chapter 7)* shows that two important explanations of issue salience in direct party communication – issue ownership and systemic salience – play out differently in campaign debates as covered by the mass media (Schwarzbözl et al. 2018). The *third study (Chapter 8)* argues that party communication on social media websites is particularly driven by strategic considerations, which leads to deviations in patterns of issue competition well-known from the study of established platforms (Schwarzbözl 2018). The *fourth study (Chapter 9)* explores personalisation strategies in elections to the EP and demonstrates that party strategies vary strongly depending on electoral arena. While personalisation centred on lead candidates plays a crucial role in national election campaigns, it is largely absent in direct party communication at EP elections (Braun and Schwarzbözl 2019).

First, these studies demonstrate that party competition must be studied on different communication platforms to arrive at an encompassing understanding of democratic elections. Patterns of party competition in public campaign debates are found to vary across communication channels. Thus, information extracted from party manifestos

for instance is not congruent with party competition as observed on social media or in mediated campaign debates. *Second*, the context sensitivity of party behaviour regarding electoral arenas implies that generalisations derived from a specific type of election do not necessarily hold for elections at other territorial levels. In particular, patterns of party competition observed at national elections might play out differently at the subnational or the European level.

These results have important implications. The dynamics found in party competition as observed in public campaign debates are not congruent with parties' initial campaign strategies and these differences vary depending on the size of a party (Schwarzbözl et al. 2018). This finding points out that the critical role played by small challenger parties for the restructuration of European party competition cannot be understood solely on the grounds of direct party communication (Grande et al. 2018). The dynamics of public campaign debates are a crucial factor in this process as well. Moreover, the presented findings are particularly relevant given the rise of new platforms of campaign communication. They indicate that social media websites particularly strengthen the strategic opportunities of smaller and new political parties. These actors struggle to gain visibility in mediated campaign debates which are dominated by established mainstream parties. New platforms, where parties can engage with potential voters without the need to circumvent strong gatekeepers and powerful competitors, play a crucial role in contemporary election campaigns as parties use them strategically for campaigning (Schwarzbözl 2018). Furthermore, with party behaviour varying across territorial levels of electoral competition, the external validity of insights gained from the study of national elections campaigns is highly limited. This implies that policy recommendations to facilitate turnout at second-order elections at the subnational or European level derived from the study of first-order national elections should be made with great caution (Braun and Schwarzbözl 2019).

These insights invite future research on the context sensitivity of party competition. The presented findings show for selected aspects of party competition that situational context factors strongly shape party behaviour. This suggests that such variation also plays an important role for aspects of party competition and drivers of party behav-

iour not explicitly addressed in one of the four presented studies. For instance, the findings are instructive for research on the relationship of intra-party conflict as a driver of issue salience. It has been shown that such a connection exists for salience strategies in direct party communication (Spoon 2012) and based on information on issue salience from expert surveys (Edwards 2008; Steenbergen and Scott 2004). Against the background of the findings presented in this thesis on issue salience and its driving forces, it is an open empirical question whether results on this relationship obtained from direct party communication also hold in a more competitive environment such as campaign debates as covered by the media. Another example departs from the observation that party strategies vary depending on the electoral arena in which parties compete. Consequently, patterns of political conflict uncovered in national elections might play out differently at European elections. Therefore, comparative analyses of party competition in national and European elections are needed to better understand the peculiarities of EP elections and the problems of political representation at the European level. By combining different data sources, such research allows gaining new insights on party competition well beyond the scope of this thesis.

Part B

6. Politicizing Immigration in Western Europe[8]

Abstract

Immigration has become a hot topic in West European politics. The factors responsible for the intensification of political conflict on this issue are a matter of considerable controversy. This holds in particular for the role of socio-economic factors and of radical right populist parties. This article explores the politicization of immigration issues and its driving forces in the electoral arena. It is based on a comparative study using both media and manifesto data covering six West European countries (Austria, France, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, and the UK) for a period from the early 1990s until 2017. We find no association between socio-economic factors and levels of politicization. Political conflict over immigration follows a political logic and must be attributed to parties and party competition rather than to "objective pressures". More specifically, we provide evidence that the issue entrepreneurship of radical right populist parties plays a crucial role in explaining variation in the politicization of immigration.

6.1 Introduction

In the last decade, European countries have witnessed a new wave of immigration which has been nurtured from diverse sources, among them labour market-driven migration within the EU after Eastern enlargement and refugees and asylum seekers from politically unstable and economically less developed regions in Africa and Asia. Likewise, public attention of immigration issues has increased in Western Europe and political conflict has intensified both at the domestic and the European level (Messina 2007; van der Brug et al. 2015). At the European level, existing legal obligations and commitments, for example in the field of asylum policy, have caused controversies among member states and met with domestic resistance. Within EU member states, immigration has become a "hot topic" (Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2017). Conflicts over immigration have become salient in national elections; they played a major role in some national referenda (most consequentially in the 'Brexit' campaign); and they have had a significant impact on the political agendas of governments.

Conventional explanations of the politicisation of immigration in Western Europe hold that it is the combined result of two factors: a significant increase of immigration in recent years, which is overstraining the capacities of national states to control their borders and to accommodate and integrate new migrants, on the one hand; and the successful exploitation of these challenges by radical right populist parties, on the other hand. The decisive role of these parties in the emergence of new political conflicts on issues such as immigration and European integration has been emphasised by several strands of research, among them (neo-)cleavage theory (Hooghe and Marks 2018; Kriesi et al. 2012; Kriesi et al. 2008), post-functionalist integration theory (Hooghe and Marks 2009) and the theory of issue entrepreneurship (Hobolt and de Vries 2015). These theories argue that the new issues are most successfully mobilised by "populist, non-governing parties" (Hooghe and Marks 2009: 21), radical right populist parties using nationalist-identitarian frames in particular.

Such arguments find only limited support in the literature on the politicisation of immigration, however. While there is conclusive evidence of an increasing salience of immigration issues since the 1990s (Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2017; Van der Brug et

al. 2015), we find remarkable disagreement on the driving forces of politicisation. The most comprehensive study on this topic by van der Brug et al. (2015) attributes increasing salience of immigration issues neither to socio-economic factors nor to the mobilising force of radical right challenger parties. They conclude that "politicization is very much a top-down process, in which government parties play an especially important role" (van der Brug et al. 2015, 195). This is in line with work by Bale (2008), Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup (2008) and Meyer and Rosenberger (2015) who argue that mainstream centre-right parties are the main drivers of the politicization of immigration issues in Europe.

Evidently, despite a rapidly expanding literature on the politics of immigration, our understanding of the main factors responsible for politicising immigration issues in Western Europe is still unsatisfactory. This is partly due to a narrow focus of previous research on specific aspects of politicisation, either on the positioning of parties on immigration issues or on their salience. Moreover, most studies rely on a single data source (media data or manifesto data) to analyse partisan conflicts over immigration assuming that each of these data sources provides a full picture of the most relevant activities of political parties.

This article contributes to this research in two related ways. First, by using a multi-dimensional concept of politicisation which combines salience and polarisation as suggested in the recent literature on politicization (De Wilde 2011; Hoeglinger 2016; Hutter and Grande 2014; Hutter et al. 2016; Kriesi 2016), we provide a comprehensive analysis of the development of political conflict over immigration issues in national elections in the period from the early 1990s until 2017. Our comparative analysis includes six West European countries, namely Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK. Second, by combining media data and manifesto data for the analysis of political conflict over immigration in the electoral arena, we provide a more nuanced picture of the driving forces of the politicization of immigration issues by political parties. Most importantly, our approach allows distinguishing between strategic drivers of politicization on the one hand, and the visibility of political parties in election debates, on the other hand.

Which factors are actually responsible for the politicization of immigration issues in national election campaigns? Three findings of our analysis deserve mention. First, politicization of immigration is not correlated with socio-economic factors such as the annual change in the number of immigrants entering a country or the level of unemployment. Political parties enjoy substantial strategic leeway in responding to immigration challenges in election campaigns. Second, our analysis of manifesto data confirms that radical right populist parties are issue entrepreneurs which strategically drive the politicization of immigration issues. This is not to say that the strategic efforts of challenger parties to emphasise the immigration issue in their manifestos necessarily results in high visibility of these parties in public election campaigns. Our analysis of campaign debates suggests that both radical challenger parties and mainstream parties can dominate these debates.

6.2 Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

The politics of immigration include a broad range of topics including public attention to immigration issues, the positioning of political parties towards these issues and political protest and violence, to mention only some of the most important ones. The dependent variable of our analysis is the *level of politicization* of immigration issues in national election campaigns. Our conceptualisation of politicization emphasises political conflict, the "scope of conflict" more specifically (Schattschneider 1975 [1960]: 16). Our analysis investigates situations of intense political conflict on immigration issues among political parties in the *electoral arena*. In line with the scholarly literature, we focus on "party political attention" (Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2017: 2) to immigration as previous research shows that other political actors such as civil society groups and social movements are of secondary importance with regard to the politicization of immigration in Western Europe (Kriesi et al. 2012). Key questions then are: What drives the politicization of immigration issues? How relevant are political forces as compared to other factors, such as socio-economic variables?

In the literature on migration, *socio-economic variables* figure prominently. These variables include national migration patterns, the composition of the migrant population, models of integration and economic conditions such as the level of unemployment or the annual rate of economic growth. The relationship between these factors and various political aspects related to immigration (e.g., popular attitudes towards immigrants, the strength and electoral success of anti-immigration groups and parties, the politicization of immigration issues in public debates and elections) have been a recurring topic in the scholarly literature (Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2017; Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Van der Brug et al. 2015). Arguments focusing on immigration patterns assume that politicization is a response to an increase in the migrant population and of its composition. In this context, Green-Pedersen and Otjes (2017) show that party political attention to immigration is positively correlated to increases in the number of foreign born in the population. Sociological theories of realistic group conflict and the theory of ethnic competition suggest that ethnic conflict intensifies if different ethnic groups find themselves competing for key resources such as jobs and housing (Olzak 1994; Rydgren and Ruth 2011). Political parties may respond to such conflicts by emphasising these issues in electoral competition. Therefore, we expect that a significant increase in the migrant population and economic grievances resulting from rising unemployment and major economic crises will intensify political conflict on immigration issues in electoral politics. We formulate this expectation in our first hypothesis.

H1: *Immigration issues in the electoral arena are highly politicised, if immigration or unemployment rates are high.*

The explanatory power of socio-economic variables has been contested in the scholarly literature, however. In their review of research on public attitudes towards immigration, Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014) find little evidence that immigration attitudes are strongly related with personal economic circumstances. The negative consequences of economic globalisation and immigration are certainly distributed unequally within societies, but the resulting threats are filtered by many factors, as shown

by Ferrera and Pellegata (2018). The comparative study of van der Brug et al. (2015) on the politicization of immigration issues in public debates also finds no effect of the proportion of migrants on politicization but a significant negative effect of unemployment on the salience of migration issues. In sum, the contribution of socio-economic factors such as the share of immigrants, the composition of the migrant population and economic grievances to the explanation of the level of politicization in European countries remains a matter of controversy.

Against the background of these findings, a significant leeway for political parties to mobilise or downplay the issue in election campaigns can be assumed. In the following, we therefore discuss approaches, which – referring to saliency theory of party competition (Budge and Farlie 1983b; Robertson 1976) – each emphasise the importance of *issue competition* in elections, but arrive at different conclusions with regard to the partisan actors who dominate this competition.

The *theory of issue entrepreneurship* has made a specific type of party, namely challenger parties, a focus of attention (Hobolt and de Vries 2015). Issue entrepreneurs are defined as parties actively promoting a previously ignored issue and adopting a position which is different from the mean position in the party system (Hobolt and de Vries 2015: 1161). With regard to immigration issues, it is mostly radical right populist parties which are assumed to act as issue entrepreneurs and which are expected to be responsible for the politicization of such topics in the existing literature (Hooghe and Marks 2009; Kitschelt 1995; Kriesi et al. 2008; Mudde 2007). This expectation has been confirmed by Green-Pedersen and Otjes (2017) on the basis of manifesto data. To test this expectation, we formulate a 'challenger party hypothesis'.

H2: *Immigration issues in the electoral arena are highly politicised, if radical right populist parties employ issue entrepreneurial strategies in their party manifestos.*

Nevertheless, it is important to note that mainstream parties were also found to contribute to the politicization of immigration (see van der Brug et al. 2015).[9] Meyer and Rosenberger (2015) argue on the basis of media data that radical right parties only play a subordinate role in the politicization of immigration and that the contribution of mainstream parties to raising issue salience has been underestimated. This holds for moderate right parties in particular, as shown by Bale (2008) and Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup (2008). For this reason, we also formulate a 'moderate right party hypothesis'.

H3: *Immigration issues in the electoral arena are highly politicised, if moderate right parties employ issue entrepreneurial strategies in their party manifestos.*

The literature on the politicization of immigration suggests that the two hypotheses on the role of radical right populist and mainstream parties are mutually exclusive. However, the controversies on the question which parties are responsible for politicising immigration issues in national election campaigns may at least partly result from the fact that they reflect different aspects of electoral competition. A party which drives the politicization of immigration issues by issue entrepreneurship in its manifesto must not necessarily be the most visible one in the subsequent public debate. In order to explore this aspect, we analyse the structure of public election debates in more detail. This allows distinguishing between strategic drivers of an issue in party competition on the one hand and the visibility of a party in a public election debate, on the other hand.

Two competing expectations about actors dominating public election debates on immigration issues can be derived from the literature. On the one hand, available research suggests that parties, which strongly emphasise an issue in their manifestos, will also play an important role in campaign debates as covered by the mass media. Research shows that despite the gate keeping role of the media, the issue emphasis

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[9] It is also argued that mainstream parties in opposition are especially likely to emphasise new issues (Van de Wardt 2015). We only find modest evidence for this expectation in our data, which is presented in the appendix.

strategies as found in party manifestos are translated into the news coverage of political parties (Merz 2017). Against this background, we expect that radical right populist parties employing issue entrepreneurial strategies in their manifestos are particularly visible in the media, provided that the issue is politicised.

H4: *Radical right populist parties are the most visible actors in highly politicised public election debates on immigration issues.*

On the other hand, the scholarly literature provides several arguments why mainstream parties of the moderate left and moderate right can be expected to dominate politicised debates on immigration even if they do not employ an issue entrepreneurial strategy. Mainstream parties may decide for strategic reasons to respond to an issue emphasised by a challenger parties either by accommodating to its position or by taking an adversarial stance (Meguid 2005). These parties are found to be particularly sensitive to the actions of their competitors and pick up issues that figure prominently on the party system agenda (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015). Moreover, there is evidence that mainstream parties may be forced into a debate by "systemic pressures" (Steenbergen and Scott 2004). This may result in "contagious effects" as identified by van Spanje (2010) for anti-immigration parties. As a result, moderate right and moderate left parties may become the most visible actors on an issue in an election debate, even if they do not emphasise it in their manifestos, as shown by Dolezal and Hellström (2016) for European integration issues.

Hypothesis 5: Mainstream parties are the most visible actors in highly politicised election debates on immigration issues.

6.3 Research Design and Methods

To analyse the politicization of immigration in Western Europe in national elections, we present a comparative study of 44 national election campaigns in six countries (Austria, France, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). Our

focus is on 38 elections between the early 1990s until 2017, including elections after the "refugee crisis". Our data includes every parliamentary election since the early 1990s. In addition, we include one election from the mid-1970s, which serves as a point of reference from a period when politicization of immigration is commonly assumed as being low. [10] An overview of the elections covered in our analysis is provided in Table 7 in the appendix.

This data provides a broad empirical testing ground for the hypotheses laid out above. Our sample includes those four liberal states which have been the focus of empirical research on the policies and politics of immigration in Europe, namely Germany, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. In addition, we include two West European countries in which radical populist right parties have been particularly successful in the last two decades, namely Austria and Switzerland. As emphasised by Kriesi (2016), the six West European countries covered by our study are distinct from East and South European countries with regard to the structuring of political conflict and the importance of the new 'demarcation-integration' cleavage. For this reason, we are cautious with generalisations of our findings.

To study the politicization of immigration, we opt for data on political contestation during election campaigns based on two different data sources that provide different windows of observation of party behaviour in an election campaign. We use party manifesto data to study the strategic efforts of parties to emphasise immigration issues in an election; and we rely on quantitative data collected from mass media to analyse party behaviour in public election debates.

Data on public election debates is taken from projects led by Hanspeter Kriesi and Edgar Grande (Kriesi 2016; Kriesi et al. 2012; Kriesi et al. 2008). It is based on a quantitative content analysis of newspaper articles. For each country, a quality news-

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[10] In the French case, we considered the first round of the presidential elections, because these elections are considered as being the most important national elections. Data on the election for the 1970s is only available for the parliamentary election in 1978. The election in 1988 is the first presidential election included in our sample. In the Austrian case, the snap election of 1995 is not included.

paper and a tabloid newspaper were chosen.[11] Articles referring to politics were selected and subsequently coded using the core sentence approach, a method developed by Kleinnijenhuis and Pennings (2001). It treats 'core sentences', which consist of a relation between a subject (party actors) and an object (issues) as the unit of analysis. The approach allows building an issue category on immigration which comprises of all statements of party actors on immigration and integration policies.

In line with the scholarly literature (De Wilde 2011; Hutter and Grande 2014), we conceptualise politicization as a multi-faceted process which includes both the public visibility of conflict (i.e., its salience) and the polarisation of actors on a contentious issue. Following Hutter and Grande (2014), Hutter et al. (2016) and Hoeglinger (2016), we measure politicization of the immigration issue in election campaigns by multiplying the *salience* of the issue with its degree of *polarisation*.[12] Regarding the issue of European integration, this literature shows that these two dimensions of politicization are independent and that multiplying them provides meaningful results. This is confirmed by our own data, in which both dimensions of politicization are uncorrelated ($r = -0.03$, $t = -0.16$), i.e., they measure different aspects of politicization.[13] Both variables are measured at the *systemic level* (i.e. at the level of the overall party system) and are then multiplied to arrive at an overall indicator of politicization. *Salience* in this context refers to the visibility of the immigration issue in relation to other issues in an election campaign. Accordingly, the indicator is operationalised as the percentage share of core sentences on immigration compared to the number of all observations during an election. *Polarisation* is measured as the positional variance between parties about the immigration issue. We also calculate the mean of these variables over all issues covered by our data set to arrive at benchmarks that allow distinguishing between elections with comparatively high or low levels of politicization.

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[11] Newspapers included are: *Die Presse & Kronenzeitung* (Austria); *Le Monde & Le Parisien* (France); *Süddeutsche Zeitung & Bild* (Germany); *NRC Handelsblad & Algemen Dagblad* (Netherlands); *The Times & The Sun* (UK); *Neue Zürcher Zeitung & Blick* (Switzerland).

[12] We do not include 'actor expansion', a third dimension of politicisation (see Hutter and Grande (2014), in our analysis because it is inherently associated with our main explanatory variable, namely issue entrepreneurship of challenger parties.

[13] The empirical analysis of van der Brug et al. (2015, 192) also shows for immigration issues that salience and polarisation are not correlated.

To measure the visibility of party families in election campaigns, we calculate the percentage share of core sentences for a party family on immigration in relation to all coded observations on the issue at a given election. Details on the operationalization of the dimensions of politicization are provided in the appendix.

Data on the strategic behaviour of parties is taken from party manifestos collected by the Manifesto Project (MARPOR). We adopt the concept of *issue entrepreneurial strategies* as developed by Hobolt and de Vries (2015) to analyse which parties try to politicise immigration issues strategically. An issue entrepreneur is a party that promotes an issue and adopts a position that deviates from the mean position in the party system (Hobolt and de Vries 2015: 1168).

As the issue categories of the Manifesto Project do not include an issue category for immigration (see Lehmann and Zobel 2018: 2), we provide novel indicators for the issue attention of parties and their positions on this topic in party manifestos to measure the concept. For this purpose, we use the manifestoR corpus which enables applying text mining approaches to the manifestos covered by the MARPOR project (Lehmann et al. 2017; Volkens et al. 2017). In a first step, we use country-specific keyword lists to identify sentences addressing immigration issues. Based on this information, we calculate parties' issue attention as the percentage share of sentences on immigration in relation to all sentences in a manifesto. In a subsequent step, we draw a sample of 20 sentences on immigration from each manifesto to manually code a party's position. Here, we differentiate between supportive, neutral and sceptical positions and use the mean value from these codings to arrive at a position score for each party. Positional deviance is then calculated as the distance of a party's position from the mean position of the party system at the time of the election. Following Hobolt and de Vries (2015: 1169), both variables are then multiplied to get an overall measure of a party's entrepreneurial strategy.

To validate this method, we use data on parties' issue attention and positions on immigration also measured in party manifestos using a crowd-sourced coding approach (Lehmann and Zobel 2018). As many manifestos are covered in both studies, it is possible to use this study to validate our indicators. Due to very high correlations be-

tween the indicators derived in the two studies, we conclude that our coding approach produces valid results. A detailed description of this approach and the validation procedure is provided in the appendix.

Given the theoretical arguments presented above, we distinguish between two types of parties: mainstream and challenger parties. *Challenger parties* are characterised by the fact that they have not previously held political office and occupy positions which are distinct from the mean position in the party system (Hobolt and de Vries 2015: 251). This definition encompasses all kinds of parties from radical left and radical right party families, as well as green, regionalist, and single-issue parties, but it excludes minor moderate parties. Since we are particularly interested in the role of radical right challenger parties, we only include parties belonging to this party family in our analysis of challenger parties. These are: the Swiss Peoples Party (SVP) (Switzerland), the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) (Austria), Alternative for Germany (AfD) (Germany), UK Independence Party (UKIP) (UK), Front National (FN) (France) and Pim Fortuyn List (LPF) and Party for Freedom (PVV) (Netherlands). The SVP and FPÖ are included in the category of challenger parties although these parties have been in government, thus violating the first criterion of a challenger party. However, both parties are consistently considered as main representatives of the family of new radical right populist parties (Kitschelt 1995; Kriesi et al. 2008; Mudde 2007) and certainly meet the second criterion.

Mainstream parties are defined as the electorally dominant parties from the moderate part of the political spectrum (Meguid 2005: 348). Hence, mainstream parties typically comprise moderate-left and moderate-right parties that compete for government (De Vries and Hobolt 2012: 250). In line with the coding by Meguid (2005) and others, we code in our sample the SPÖ (Austria), Labour (UK), PS (France), SPD (Germany), PVdA (Netherlands), and SP (Switzerland) as belonging to the moderate left, whereas ÖVP (Austria), Conservatives (UK), UDF and RPR/UMP (both France), CDU/CSU (Germany), CDA and VVD (both Netherlands), and CVP (Switzerland) are coded as part of the moderate right. Smaller liberal parties (e.g., the German FDP and the British Liberal Democrats) are not considered here. In line with Meguid

(2005), we do also not include the Swiss Liberal Party (FDP) in the category of moderate right parties. For an overview of our coding of parties see Table 8 in the appendix.

Finally, to explore the effect of socio-economic factors on politicization, several indicators are available. Regarding immigration, we use the annual share of incoming migrants in relation to the overall population of a country from the OECD's International Migration Database as an independent variable.[14] To study the role of grievance effects, we show the results for the most conventional one, namely the annual unemployment rate in percent, as provided by the Comparative Political Data Set (CPDS) (Armingeon et al. 2016). We cross-checked the validity of these indicators by calculating the relationship between politicization and other socio-economic indicators, and we also explored the impact of time-lags within this relationship. These additional tests corroborate the findings presented in the empirical section below and are shown in the appendix.

6.4 Empirical Findings

In the following, we present our empirical findings in four steps. First, we show descriptive data on the dependent variable, namely politicization of immigration in national elections. Second, we investigate the relationship between politicization and socio-economic variables. Third, we analyse the impact of the strategies of challenger parties on politicization. Fourth, we explore the visibility of party families in campaign debates on immigration issues.

National patterns of politicization

How strong is the politicization of immigration in the national electoral arena? How much variation is there over time and across countries? As shown in Figure 1, immigration has become a highly politicised issue in national elections since the 1990s.

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[14] http://stats.oecd.org/viewhtml.aspx?datasetcode=MIG&lang=en# (accessed 20.06.2018). No reliable information on the number of incoming migrants for France and for Germany in 2017 is available. Hence, these elections are excluded from analyses on the role of socio-economic factors.

We find several elections in which immigration has been a highly politicised issue in every country, except for the UK. This becomes apparent in comparison to the 1970s, when immigration issues were almost invisible in the electoral arena. As shown by Kriesi et al. (2008), immigration has become the main driver for the transformation of political conflict in this period. Average values for the entire period are rather moderate, however, and values for individual dimensions indicate that politicization of immigration has been mainly driven by polarisation.[15]

Figure 1 also reveals remarkable fluctuation between elections in each country. Except for the UK, we observe striking ups and downs in the development of politicization. This pattern is most pronounced in France where highly politicised elections in 1988, 2002 and 2012 were followed by moderate levels of politicization in subsequent elections in 1995, 2007 and 2017. Moreover, there is considerable variation across countries. Among the six countries included in our sample, the UK is a clear outlier. Immigration has been a low key issue in national elections for most of the time, but politicization has been increasing to a moderate level since the mid-2000s not the least due to the Conservative Party's efforts to acquire issue ownership while in opposition (Dennison and Goodwin 2015). The other countries witnessed pronounced peaks of politicization in the 1990s, although with significant differences in timing. Elections after 2010 are often characterised by a sharp increase in the politicization of immigration. The Dutch election in 2012 and the German election in 2017, where we measure the highest values in our sample, clearly stand out.

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[15] Details on the level of politicisation as well as additional information on the two sub-dimensions of the concept of politicisation are provided in the appendix.

Figure 1: The politicization of immigration in national elections per country
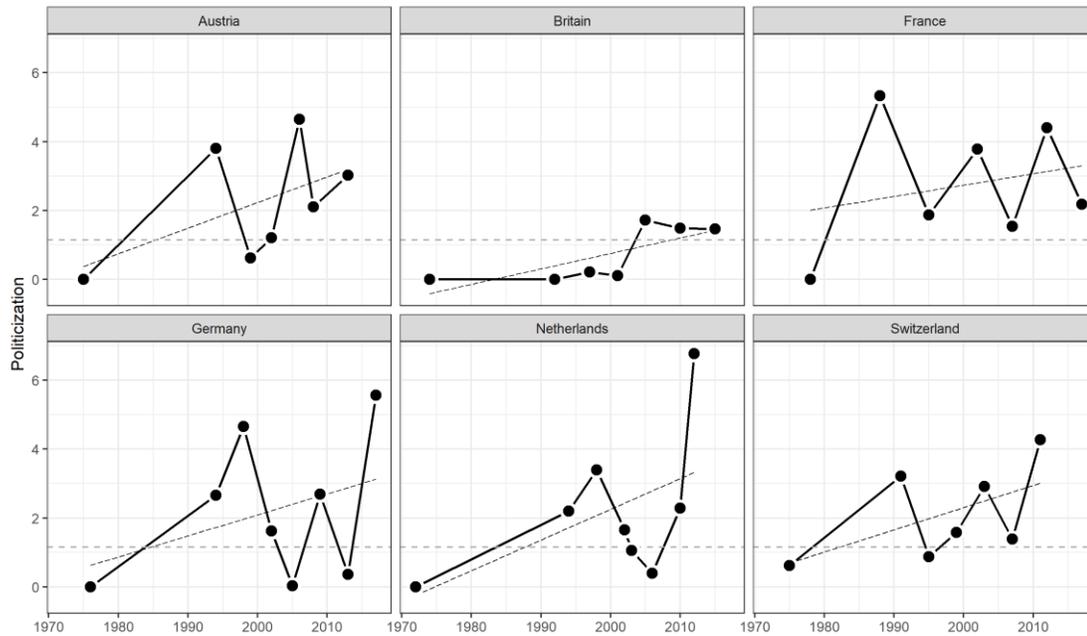
Note: Graph shows the level of politicization of the immigration issue in national elections for each country over time in national election campaigns as covered by the media. The black dashed lines indicate the linear trend. The horizontal, grey dashed lines show the mean politicization calculated over all issues in our data and serves as a benchmark to distinguish between high and low levels of politicization.

Socio-economic factors and grievances

Is the politicization of immigration issues in national elections due to 'objective' factors such as the number of incoming migrants and economic grievances? In the left panel of Figure 2, we take the annual change in the number of immigrants entering a country as an indicator for the size of the 'objective pressure' exercised by immigration and relate it to the level of politicization of immigration issues in national elections. Evidently, the two variables are hardly correlated ($r = 0.10$; $t = 0.58$). These results are in line with the conclusions of van der Brug et al. (2015, 192) that no systematic relationship exists between politicization of immigration and immigration-related variables such as the number of immigrants living in a country, the number of immigrants entering the country, or the composition of the immigrant population. Neither is politicization driven by economic grievances. As we can see in the right

panel of Figure 2, no positive correlation exists between the politicization of immigration and unemployment (r = 0.05; t = -0.29). This also holds for other economic variables on which data is available in Armingeon et al. (2016). The results of these analyses are shown in the appendix.

Taken together, these analyses contradict the hypothesis on the importance of socioeconomic factors (H1). Politicization is neither correlated with 'objective' properties of immigration nor with economic grievances of the native population. These findings add to the insights of studies which emphasise the importance of political factors, and particularly political parties, for politicising immigration issues (see, e.g. Kitschelt 1995; Messina 2007; Van der Brug et al. 2015).

Figure 2: Relationship between politicization and socio-economic factors
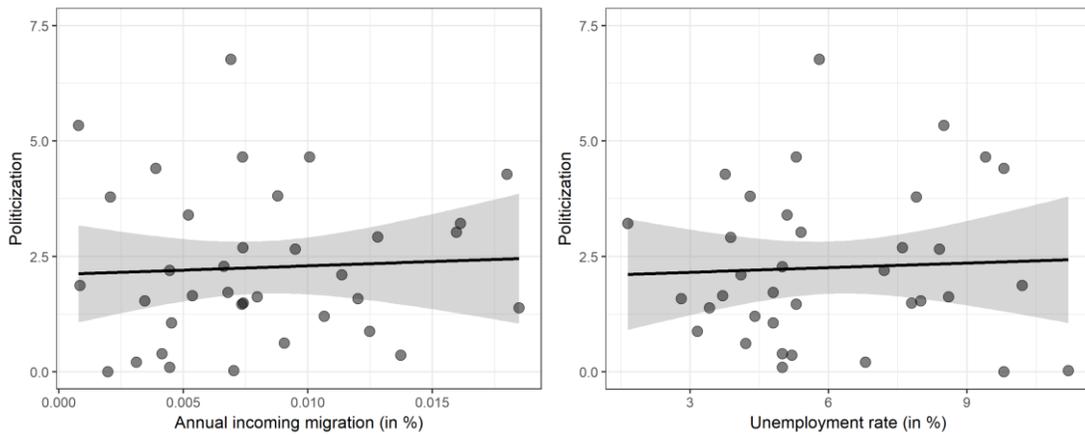
Note: The left panel shows the level of politicization of immigration in relation to the annual share of incoming migrants as a percentage of the total population of a country. The right panel shows the relationship between the politicization of immigration and the unemployment rate in the country. Black lines show the linear fit, grey areas show the standard error.

The role of issue entrepreneurship of radical right challenger parties

The increase in immigration in Western Europe has been accompanied with the surge of anti-immigration groups, in particular radical right populist parties (Messina 2007: 54-96). The organisation of this 'nativist backlash' and its political relevance varies considerable among the six countries of our sample. France and the Netherlands are characterised by the emergence of electorally successful new radical right populist parties; in Austria and Switzerland, two established moderate right parties radically changed their programmatic profiles and adopted restrictive positions on immigration issues in the 1990s; whereas in Germany and the UK, efforts to establish a radical right populist party at the national level have not been successful in most of the period covered by our study. Hence, radical right populist parties have not been relevant in all the countries included in our sample. Are there differences in the strategic emphasis of immigration issues between party families in their election manifestos? And how are these strategies related to the politicization of immigration issues in public election debates?

Figure 3 shows the efforts of party families (moderate right, moderate left and radical populist right parties) to emphasise immigration issues in their manifestos. Comparing issue entrepreneurship between these three groups reveals significant differences. On average, radical right populist parties put considerably more effort in politicising immigration issues than other parties (mean = 5.01; sd = 3.17). In contrast, parties of the moderate right (mean = 1.17; sd = 1.13) and parties of the moderate left (mean = 0.72; sd = 0.99) show much lower average levels of issue entrepreneurship. The high average value of radical populist right parties is due to higher scores on both components of issue entrepreneurship: Radical right populist parties put more emphasis on the issue on average (mean = 6.03) than parties of the moderate right (mean = 3.10) and moderate left (mean = 2.08). Moreover, they also deviate more strongly from the mean position in the party system (mean = 0.79) than parties of the moderate right (mean = 0.36) and moderate left (mean = 0.32). These findings provide no evidence that moderate right parties play a prominent role as strategic drivers of immigration

issues in the electoral arena as suggested by parts of the scholarly literature (e.g. Bale 2008; Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008).

Figure 3: Issue entrepreneurship on immigration issues by party family
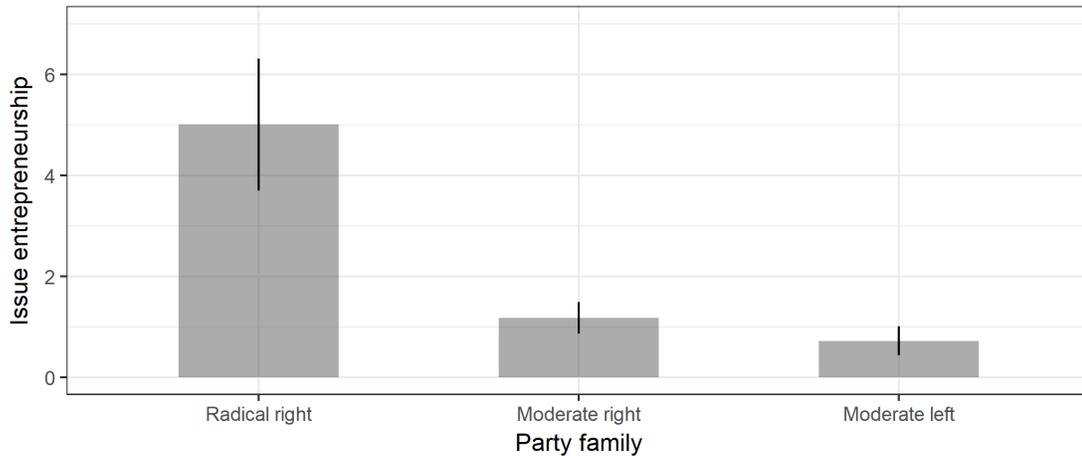
Note: Issue entrepreneurship is measured as the product of the salience a party puts on immigration issues and its positional deviance from the mean position in the party system based on party manifesto content. Bars indicate the mean values for each party family. Spikes represent the 95% confidence interval.

These results indicate that immigration issues are of greater strategic importance for radical right populist parties in election campaigns compared to other party families. However, this does not imply that these efforts necessarily lead to the politicization of immigration issues in public election debates. To explore the role of radical challenger parties and mainstream parties of the moderate left and moderate right in this regard, Table 1 shows the results of regression analyses which treat the level of politicization as the dependent variable and issue entrepreneurship of party families as the main independent variables. Model 1 shows that issue entrepreneurship of radical right populist parties is positively and statistically significantly related to the level of politicization in election campaigns, while this is not the case for mainstream parties. In the former case the increase in politicization levels is, in fact, quite sizeable. Politicization ranges from a below-average value of 1.8 when issue entrepreneurship of radical right populist parties is at the lower quartile to an above-average value of 3.0

when it is at the upper quartile. This difference corresponds to 12% of the range of politicization values. Thus, we do find evidence for our 'challenger party hypothesis' (H2), but not for the 'moderate right party hypothesis' (H3). Politicization of immigration issues is driven by issue entrepreneurial strategies of radical right populist parties rather than by efforts of other party families.[16]

To explore this finding in more detail, we additionally check whether the association remains significant when controlling for the vote share of radical populist right parties. That is indeed the case as Model 2 shows. The fact that the coefficient for the vote share of these parties is close to zero and fails to reach statistical significance, provides further evidence that it is not simply the presence of radical right populist parties that fuels the politicization of immigration, but their strategic focus on immigration issues.

Table 1: Linear regression models of politicization of immigration issues

| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | |
	Estimate	std. Error	Estimate	std. Error
Intercept	1.79***	0.47	1.80***	0.50
Radical populist right	0.20*	0.07	0.21*	0.10
Moderate right	0.09	0.23	0.08	0.23
Moderate left	-0.18	0.13	-0.16	0.15
Vote share (RRPs)			-0.01	0.03
R^2	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18

Note: White's robust standard errors clustered for countries are computed; * p<.05 ** p<.01; N=38.

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[16] The finding of a strong and significant coefficient for issue entrepreneurship of radical right populist parties remains the same, when we estimate, as a robustness test, robust standard errors or log-transform the skewed dependent variable. When including other party families in the analysis like green parties or liberals, we also find no significant associations for these actors, while the coefficient for radical right populist parties is still significant. Moreover, we find no evidence that the coefficient of issue entrepreneurship of one of our party families is conditional on the behaviour of others as all interaction effects between issue entrepreneurship of different party families fail to reach statistical significance.

The visibility of different party families in debates on immigration

The strategic impact of radical challenger parties on politicization must not be equated with their visibility in public election debates. In the last step of our analysis, we explore the actor composition in mass mediated election debates with above average levels of politicization on immigration. This allows us to uncover the relative importance of party families in public election debates. Figure 4 shows the results for the 29 elections with high levels of politicization. Our analysis reveals that moderate mainstream parties are the most visible actors in more than half of these elections. Taken together mainstream parties from the moderate left and moderate right account for more than 50 percent of all coded core sentences on the issue in these elections. This even holds true for elections in which mainstream parties were confronted with a strong challenger party from the radical right as it was the case in the 2017 German election, where more than 70 percent of all coded statements can be attributed to the moderate left (SPD) or the moderate right (CDU/CSU). Moreover, the visibility of mainstream parties is not positively related to the mobilising efforts of these parties as measured in their manifestos. We observe no significant correlation between issue entrepreneurship and visibility for parties from the moderate right ($r = 0.22$, $t = 1.16$) and the moderate left ($r = -0.19$, $t = 1.01$). Thus, in line with Hypothesis 5, and similar to the findings reported by van der Brug et al. (2015), we find that mainstream parties are very visible actors in politicised election debates on immigration, irrespective of the campaign strategy they pursue in their manifestos.

This is not to say that challenger parties are always marginalised by mainstream parties in these debates. In line with Hypothesis 4, Figure 4 also shows elections in which radical right populist parties are highly visible. Most evidently, this holds for Switzerland where the SVP is by far the most visible party on immigration issues in a number of elections. The Swiss SVP is a special case, however. As it has been in government in the entire period it is not a typical example of a challenger party. More instructive are the French election in 2002 and the Dutch election in 2012, which show that new non-governing challenger parties can also dominate election debates on immigration. Moreover, in contrast to the findings for moderate mainstream par-

ties, we find a positive and significant relationship between issue entrepreneurship and visibility for radical right populist parties (r = 0.58, t = 3.71). In sum, these results provide mixed support for both hypotheses on the visibility of party families in politicised election debates on immigration issues.

Figure 4: Visibility of party families in politicised election debates on immigration
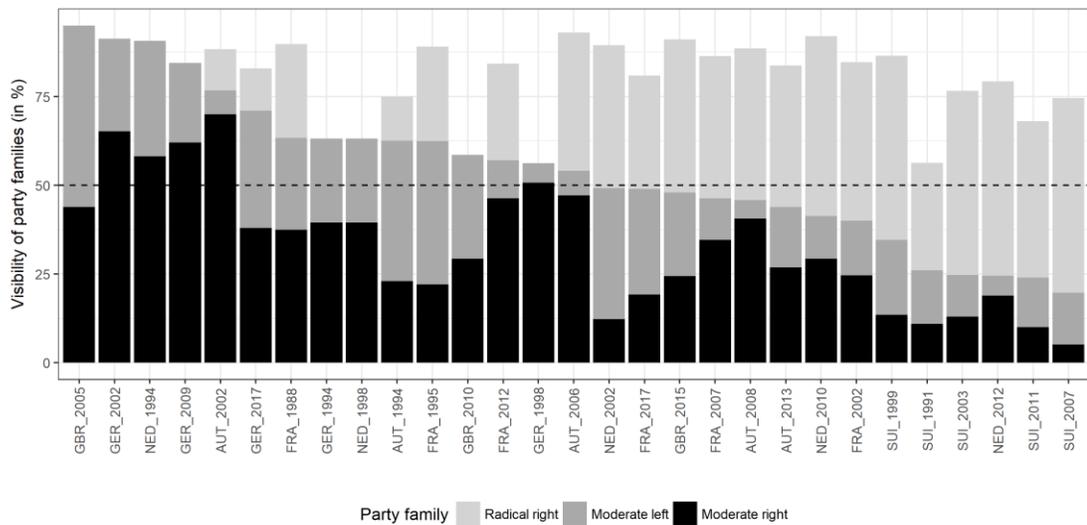
Note: Stacked bars represent the relative visibility of a party family in relation to other party families in a campaign debates on immigration issues as covered by the media. The dashed horizontal line allows identifying elections where moderate mainstream parties account for more than half of all coded observations. Only debates where the politicization of immigration is above our benchmark are reported. Bars are sorted by the joint visibility of mainstream parties.

6.5 Conclusion

Our empirical analysis provides mixed support for the arguments advanced in the scholarly literature on the politicization of immigration in Europe. Three conclusions stand out. First, our analysis confirms earlier findings which observe a significant increase in politicization of immigration issues since the 1990s in Western Europe for the electoral arena (Kriesi et al. 2012; Messina 2007; Van der Brug et al. 2015). Immigration has become a highly controversial issue in national election contests. We found evidence for strong politicization in every country we analysed, but we also

found remarkable variation over time and across countries. The extreme fluctuation in the intensity of political conflict over immigration within countries is one of the most puzzling features of politicization of this issue. The marked peaks in politicization and the consistently high polarisation values suggest that the potential for politicization has been huge in the entire period, but this potential has not been fully exploited in every election thus far.

Second, politicization is not correlated with socio-economic factors such as the share of immigrants in a country or the level of unemployment. Therefore, our first hypothesis (H1) must be rejected. It is certainly true that the existence of some immigration has been a necessary precondition for political mobilisation, but there is no direct relationship between the intensity of political conflict and socio-economic grievances. This is not to say that socio-economic factors are entirely irrelevant in our context; but they do not translate directly into manifest political conflict among political parties in the electoral arena.

Third, previous findings on the political actors responsible for the politicization of immigration in the electoral arena must be qualified. Our results support arguments which claim that the issue entrepreneurship of radical right populist challenger parties leads to higher levels of politicization. Contrary to some scholarly expectations, we found no similar effect for moderate mainstream parties. This is not to say that the strategic efforts of challenger parties to emphasize the immigration issue in their manifestos necessarily results in high visibility in public election campaigns. Our analysis of campaign debates suggests that both radical challenger parties and mainstream parties can dominate these debates.

Summing up, political conflict over immigration follows a 'political logic' (Messina 2007) and must be attributed to parties and party competition rather than to 'objective pressures' in Western Europe. The fact that political parties have significant room for strategic manoeuvring regarding immigration issues makes it even more important to understand what they make of these opportunities.

7. Comparing Channels of Communication[17]

How party-issue linkages vary between election manifestos and media content

Abstract

So far, research on party behaviour has largely focused on the drivers of issue salience in direct party communication. However, less is known about party-issue linkages in election campaigns as covered by the mass media, from where most voters get their information about parties and their issue positions. Against this background, we explore how two important drivers of issue salience in direct party communication – issue ownership and systemic salience – play out in the media. Based on considerations about the news value of specific party-issue associations, we expect both relationships to be particularly important there. Despite substantial similarities in party-issue linkages across platforms, a comparison of manifesto and newspaper content reveals evidence for this claim. In particular, smaller parties are found to be hardly covered in the news on issues they do not own, while large parties are especially covered on salient topics. These findings contribute to our understanding of issue competition in mediated environments.

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[17] This chapter is identical to a manuscript co-authored with Matthias Fatke and Swen Hutter. After a decision to revise & resubmit the manuscript, it is again under review at *West European Politics* as Schwarzbözl et al. (2018).

7.1 Introduction

Representative democracy depends on political parties providing visible statements about substantive issues (Schattschneider 1975 [1960]). This makes agenda setting in election campaigns by political parties highly relevant, and unsurprisingly issue salience has become a major topic in research on party competition. However, most insights on the driving forces of parties' issue attention are based on the analysis of direct party communication like election manifestos. This is unfortunate, as party-issue linkages presented in the mass media seem particularly relevant for voters' perception of electoral contests in present-day democracies (Hopmann et al. 2012; Meyer et al. 2017). Moreover, research shows that issue salience in direct party communication is related to the coverage of parties' issue statements in the media (Merz 2017), but it also points out that not all issue-related party messages are equally likely to gain media attention (Haselmayer, Meyer, et al. 2017; Haselmayer, Wagner, et al. 2017; Meyer et al. 2017). This begs the question to what degree issue salience, as observed by voters in the media, deviates from patterns found in direct party communication.

Against this background, this paper explores how two key explanations of issue salience – issue ownership and systemic salience – play out in mass media as compared to direct party communication in election manifestos. According to issue ownership on the one hand, parties are expected to address particularly those issues that they 'own', in the sense that they should focus on topics they are associated with or seen as competent in dealing with (e.g., Egan 2013; Green-Pedersen and Stubager 2010; Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016; Petrocik 1996; Petrocik et al. 2003; Rauh 2015; Thesen et al. 2017; Wagner and Meyer 2014). On the other hand, the agenda-setting literature, in particular, has suggested that parties adapt to the prevailing issue attention of other parties (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010; Green-Pedersen et al. 2015).

When applied to the context of mass media, we expect that the two theoretical explanations play a more important role as compared to party manifestos. First, the positions of issue owners are expected to be particularly newsworthy. Second, the me-

dia's tendency to strongly focus on a very limited set of issues, which are broadly debated, should amplify the role of systemic effects. In addition, the size of a given party is arguably a crucial conditional factor in this regard. More precisely, we expect the 'issue ownership' argument to apply mostly to smaller parties: In the media, small issue owners are particularly covered on issues they own. The 'systemic salience' expectation, in contrast, should especially hold for large parties: Irrespective of owning an issue or not, large parties receive disproportionately high attention, when an issue is broadly covered in the news. This effectively leads to a stronger relationship between systemic salience and issue attention in mass media.

To test our arguments, we draw on two different datasets on party-issue associations in text documents. The first dataset is an updated version of data collected by the Project 'National Political Change in a Globalizing World' (Hutter and Kriesi 2019; Kriesi et al. 2012; Kriesi et al. 2008) and contains partisan statements as reported in two national newspapers during the two months before national elections. The second dataset is the party manifesto data collected by the Comparative Manifesto Project (MARPOR) (Volkens et al. 2015). The empirical analysis in this paper covers 34 national election campaigns in six West European countries in the period from 1988 to 2013. The specific countries under scrutiny are Austria, Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.

The results show that party-issue linkages in both data sources resemble. Issue ownership and systemic salience are positively related to a party's linkage with an issue in both party manifestos and the news. However, the relationship with issue ownership is even more pronounced in the mass media than in manifesto, whereas the effects of systemic salience are not significantly different across the two communication channels. Moreover, we do find that both effects are conditional on party size. That is, the differences of the issue ownership effects across the two datasets are particularly large for small parties, while systemic salience plays a greater role in the news media only for large parties.

These findings contribute to a better understanding of issue competition in election campaigns. They show that systematic deviations do exist between party-issue link-

ages in the media as compared to direct campaign communication, but these deviations should not be exaggerated. Despite the importance of the media as a gatekeeper of information during election campaigns, general patterns of party-issue linkages found in direct campaign communication like party manifestos are also present in campaign debates covered by the mass media in newspaper articles. Nevertheless, systematic differences exist between small parties that are hardly covered by the media on issues with which they are not associated, and large parties whose positions are particularly likely to be reported when a topic is broadly discussed in the news. Put differently, especially the visibility of smaller parties in the media depends on the specific issues which dominate a campaign. These results have implications not only for political fairness and the content and polarization of public debates in mediated campaign communication, but also for the choice of data in research on party competition. Data from direct and mediated party-issue linkages conveys similar but not identical information. This indicates that findings on party competition are context sensitive. Hence, generalisations based on results on direct party communication for mediated environments and vice versa should be made with caution. By contrast, researchers should exploit the combination of different data sources to fully understand the dynamics of political conflict in contemporary democracies.

7.2 Exploring Party-Issue Linkages Across Communication Channels

In order to assess the degree to which parties highlight or downplay an issue or are associated with certain topics, the concept of issue salience proved to be particularly relevant. It is commonly defined as a party's communication share on a specific issue in relation to its overall topic-related communication during a given period of time. Relying on this measure, we explore the role of its driving forces with a special focus on their relevance for party-issue linkages on different communication channels.

Concerning direct party communication in election campaigns, a central argument is that "parties emphasise certain issues to gain an electoral advantage" (Spoon et al. 2014: 365). Based on this assumption, the literature derived various explanations for

variation in issue emphasis of political parties. On the one hand, parties are expected to strategically highlight issues with which they are generally associated, or if voters view them as most competent in tackling a given issue (Budge 2015). On the other hand, they are assumed to react to the party system agenda by adapting their salience strategies in accordance to issues debated by their competitors (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015) and in response to voters' issue priorities (Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016). Moreover, they are expected to ignore issues on which they are internally divided (Steenbergen and Scott 2004).

These considerations are particularly relevant for direct party communication. However, when it comes to party-issue linkages reported in the news, not only salience strategies of parties, but especially the gate-keeping role of the media plays a crucial role (Haselmayer, Meyer, et al. 2017; Haselmayer, Wagner, et al. 2017; Helfer and Aelst 2016; Hopmann et al. 2012; Merz 2017; Meyer et al. 2017). Due to space restrictions in media outlets in combination with considerations about the newsworthiness of political messages, the likelihood of party-issue linkages is expected to vary, because journalists and editors use their position to select messages with high news value (Staab 1990). For instance, statements of more powerful politicians and political parties are found to have greater news value (Tresch 2009; Van Aelst and Walgrave 2016). The same holds for messages which transport negative content (Soroka 2014). Surprising messages, where parties make unexpected statements, are also assumed to create a greater news value than predictable ones, but continuity is just as important since the media aims to keep existing stories going (Helfer and Aelst 2016). Finally, relevance increases the chances of a message being covered in news reports about political issues, which makes generally salient topics more likely to be covered (Haselmayer, Wagner, et al. 2017). To sum up, the selection of party-issue linkages in media reports is assumed to be highly dependent on their news value (Haselmayer, Wagner, et al. 2017; Helfer and Aelst 2016; Merz 2017; Van Aelst and Walgrave 2016).

Given these differences between direct and mediated campaign communication the question is, to what degree party-issue linkages differ across platforms. Against this

background, we provide a systematic comparison and explore how drivers of party-issue linkages which play an important role in existing research on direct party communication play out in a mass-mediated environment. Specifically, we first discuss the impact of issue ownership and the argument that its effect is particularly strong in newspaper articles compared to direct party communication in party manifestos. Second, we develop an argument, as to why systemic issue salience should also play an even more important role in the media. Third, we elaborate why these arguments are expected to depend on the size of a party. Overall, this allows evaluating, in what ways party-issue linkages in the media diverge from what we know from the study of party manifestos.

Media reporting as an amplifier of issue ownership

The concept of issue ownership is based on the idea that parties acquire a long-term reputation in handling different policy issues (Budge and Farlie 1983a; Petrocik 1996; Petrocik et al. 2003). Voters do not perceive parties as equally competent in dealing with issue specific problems. Rather, as Petrocik (1996: 826) puts it, "a history of attention, initiative and innovation toward these problems […] leads voters to believe that one of the parties (and its candidates) is more sincere and committed to doing something about them." In such a situation, a party owns an issue in the sense that it is perceived as having a copyright on the best solutions concerning problems in this issue area.

This definition of issue ownership focuses on the associative dimension of the concept rather than its competence-based part (Banda 2016; Walgrave et al. 2012). In this understanding, issue ownership is defined as "an established link between a party and an issue" in the sense that voters frequently have a party in mind, when they are confronted with a certain issue (Walgrave et al. 2012: 773). Moreover, the definition does not restrict the number of parties owning an issue, as various parties can be associated and perceived as competent in tackling it. For example, radical left-wing

parties and social democrats may be equally associated with welfare related policies (Wagner and Meyer 2014: 1021).

As is well known, the main expectation of issue ownership on the behaviour of political parties is that they highlight issues they own (Bélanger and Meguid 2008; Thesen et al. 2017). Parties are assumed to selectively promote a topic, when voters see them as competent in tackling it or perceive them as associated with the issue. Acting this way allows parties to appear more credible to voters. This, in turn, should enhance the likelihood of people casting their ballot for these parties. Observing such behaviour is therefore particularly likely during election campaigns, where parties try to gather votes by acting as competent and trustworthy agents. Efforts of populist right-wing parties that own law and order issues highlighting the topic to gain electoral grounds may serve as a striking example in this regard (Smith 2010).

Although most parties cover a broad range of topics in their manifestos, existing empirical studies based on manifesto data provide evidence for the issue ownership hypothesis in direct party communication (Dolezal et al. 2014; Wagner and Meyer 2014). How does this relationship play out in a mediated environment, where considerations about the relevance of a party's stance and the availability of its positions to journalists are crucial (see Haselmayer, Wagner, et al. 2017; Hayes 2008; Hopmann et al. 2012)? One expectation is that it exerts a negative effect on the coverage of issue-related party statements. Based on the idea that rare and unexpected events have a particularly high news value, Helfer and Aelst (2016: 63) argue that messages about issues, which parties are not associated with and which they seldom address, bear a "surprise element" making them more appealing to journalists who try to attract their readers' attention, than statements on issues where a parties stance is already well-known. Following this argument, issue ownership can be expected to reduce the likelihood of party-issue statements to be reported (Helfer and Aelst 2016). Accordingly, the positive relationship between issue ownership and issue salience found in manifesto research is assumed to be much weaker in news coverage or even works in the opposite direction on such platforms.

However, it can also be argued that the positive relationship between issue ownership and issue salience is likely to play a particularly important role in the media coverage of parties. This argument starts from the assumption that a party, which is generally associated with a certain issue area, usually has clear positions on the discussed topic that are also well-known and therefore easily available to political journalists (Van Camp 2018). What is more, due to the long-term reputation of parties in connection with the topic at hand, the positions of issue owners are particularly newsworthy. Reporting on such parties' positions allows journalists to contrast and contextualise positions of other actors. Thus, even if the initial reason for covering an issue is due to the (unexpected) activity of other parties, the positions of issue owners are especially likely to be reported as well. To test this expectation, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H1: *The difference in a party's issue attention due to issue ownership is larger in news coverage than in party manifestos.*

Media reporting as an amplifier of systemic salience

Notwithstanding that parties' strategies of selective issue emphasis are driven by issue ownership, an alternative explanation is suggested by the agenda-setting literature. As highlighted by the notion of party competition as a "conflict over conflicts", this literature conceives the process as a game of strategic interaction (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010: 261). In that sense, parties adjust their behaviour according to the actions of their competitors. The agenda-setting approach, therefore, qualifies the argument of salience theory by adding that parties are not always equally successful at emphasising their preferred issues, but also react to the currently existing issue agenda (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015). They face a decision between simply ignoring unpleasant issues and responding to them, whilst simultaneously trying to shape the agenda according to their own preferences. When the latter is not feasible, parties are likely to address issues other parties put forward in the interest of maintaining public visibility.

At the level of party systems, the degree of issue convergence of political parties is notably high (Damore 2004; Dolezal et al. 2014; Green-Pedersen 2007b; Kaplan et al. 2006; Sides 2006; Sigelman and Buell 2004). In consequence, following the convergence approach to issue emphasis, parties frequently address the same issues (Sigelman and Buell 2004). Although studies on individual party behaviour often treat systemic issue salience merely as a control variable, they, too, generally provide empirical evidence of parties addressing issues that their competitors put on the agenda (e.g., Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015; Hoeglinger 2015; Meyer and Wagner 2016; Spoon 2012; Steenbergen and Scott 2004; Tresch et al. 2018).

Again, we expect the positive relationship between systemic salience and a party's issue attention to matter more for parties' issue competition if reported by the media than in direct party communication as observed through their manifestos. Media coverage can be characterised by 'cascading', referring to "the fact that actors imitate other actors such that an exponentially increasing number of imitators lead to explosive adjustments to the system" (Walgrave and Vliegenthart (2010: 1148). Most of the news programme is therefore devoted to the few issues dominating the agenda. This expectation is very much in line with the idea of continuity and relevance as factors boosting a story's news value (Haselmayer, Wagner, et al. 2017; Helfer and Aelst 2016). In sum, this leads to the expectation that intensely discussed topics are more likely to feature a broad range of positions from various parties. From the perspective of parties, chances of being mentioned are low on topics that are granted little space in the news. By contrast, it is expected to be especially high on salient issues. This is a crucial difference to party manifestos as a channel of direct communication, where parties – despite disproportionate emphasis on preferred issues – aim to offer a broad overview of the policy positions they stand for (see De Sio et al. 2018: 1217). Thus, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H2: *The difference in a party's issue attention due to systemic issue salience is larger in news coverage than in party manifestos.*

The role of party size in explaining issue salience on different communication platforms

The two hypotheses offer two different expectations for issue salience in the media, in comparison to direct communication platforms. The first hypothesis assumes that ownership matters more in the media; the second hypothesis claims that parties receive more attention on issues that figure prominently on the overall agenda in a mediated environment. These two expectations are logically not incompatible. Nevertheless, we expect them not to apply to all parties in the same way. More specifically, we elaborate why it is likely that they both depend on the size of a given party – a critical factor distinguishing the competitors in a party system

Existing research on party behaviour highlights the importance of party size. Smaller parties, on the one hand, are found to rely on their owned issues, because they lack the money and the personnel to address a variety of topics (Wagner and Meyer 2014). Larger parties, on the other hand, are more sensitive to the party system agenda. For the case of the Austrian election in 2008, Meyer and Wagner (2016) show that especially resource strong parties are likely to engage in debates with each other. Similarly, Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2015) find for the case of the Danish party system that large mainstream parties are more responsive to issues on the party system agenda than other parties.

We argue that the considerations about the news value of a party's issue-associations mentioned above are likely to be contingent upon party size as well, which allows further qualifications of the hypotheses derived above. When a party is rather small, its position in the coverage of an issue is likely to be reported only if it is the issue owner. Under such circumstances, reporting a parties' position, which is generally associated with the topic, provides an important anchor for readers to interpret other actor's positions. An illustrative example is a news report on an environmental policy proposal of the government which emphasises not only the view of the mainstream opposition but also the one of the green party as the respective issue owner. However, when small parties are not issue owners (such as the radical right and the environmental issue), their positions are unlikely to elicit the interest of news outlets or con-

sumers. Accordingly, issue ownership is expected to matter more to the issue atten-
tion of small parties in news coverage, than in party manifestos, where these re-
strictions are absent.

In contrast, for large parties, it is expected that news outlets report about their posi-
tions, regardless of them owning an issue or not. Election campaigns, even in parlia-
mentary systems, are characterised by a strong focus of attention on lead candidates
and their parties (Kriesi 2012). Reports on important political issues during election
campaigns that do not cover all large parties with good chances to govern after the
election are extremely unlikely. This is particularly the case, when other parties are
often mentioned on the issue. In such a case, news outlets will report in great detail
on the position of a large party on the issue, regardless of the party being comfortable
with the issue or not. Therefore, systemic issue salience is expected to be more im-
portant for issue attention in news coverage than in party manifestos, especially for
large parties. This leads us to hypothesise:

H3: *Issue ownership matters more for issue attention of small parties in news cover-
age than in party manifestos.*

H4: *Systemic salience matters more for issue attention of large parties in news cov-
erage than in party manifestos*.

7.3 Design and Data

To test these hypotheses, we rely on newspaper data and party manifesto content. The
study covers party behaviour during national election campaigns in Austria, Great
Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland between 1988 and 2013.[18]
For the study of newspaper content, articles, that report on party politics, were identi-
fied and collected within a period of two months before an election in two national
newspapers in each country. For each country, a leading quality newspaper and a tab-

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[18] The data used in this article originated from the research projects "National political change in a
globalizing world (NPW)" (Kriesi et al. 2008; 2012). The data can be obtained from the authors of the
research project.

loid newspaper were chosen: Austria: *Die Presse & Kronenzeitung*; France: *Le Monde & Le Parisien*; Germany: *Süddeutsche Zeitung & Bild*; Netherlands: *NRC Handelsblad & Algemen Dagblad*; UK: *The Times & The Sun;* Switzerland: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung & Blick.*

A representative sample of articles for each election was then coded according to the core-sentence approach (Dolezal 2008; Dolezal et al. 2016; Hutter et al. 2016; Kleinnijenhuis and Pennings 2001). A core sentence can be defined as the smallest syntactical unit of a sentence containing a relational statement between a subject actor and an object actor. For the analysis performed here, only party actors (subjects) positioning towards issues (object) are considered. To allow for a systematic comparison with party manifestos, we selected exactly the same elections and parties as included in the analysis of newspaper articles from the MARPOR database (Volkens et al. 2015). Based on this data, we explore the salience of the following issues: *welfare, economic liberalism, cultural liberalism, Europe, immigration and environment*. In order to run comparable analyses for newspaper data and manifestos content, we recode the issues used in MARPOR accordingly. As these issues cover a large proportion of party statements in manifestos and in the media, this allows a comprehensive analysis of our hypotheses on a broad range of topics and elections (see Table 10 in the appendix for a description of these categories and an overview of the recoding procedure).[19]

The structure of the two datasets is very similar since they both comprise of party-issue associations extracted from text documents. To additionally foster the comparability between them, salience in media and manifesto data is measured according to the same logic. To calculate the salience of an issue in newspaper data, we use the percentage share of a party's core sentences on an issue in relation to all its statements during the election campaign. This indicator has two advantages. First, it is not affected by the overall visibility of a party in the media, which allows comparing par-

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[19] Overall, these six issue categories account for 69% of the issues reported in the media and 61% in party manifestos.

ties of different size.[20] Second, it reflects the degree to which a party emphasises an issue in relation to other topics. The systemic salience of an issue is then measured by the number of core sentences about an issue in relation to all sentences coded during a campaign, excluding always the sentences of the party for which we calculate the systemic salience to avoid problems of endogeneity (see also Hoeglinger 2015). For party manifestos, salience scores are taken from the MARPOR database indicating the percentage share of coded quasi-sentences on a given issue in relation to all coded statements in a party's manifesto. The systemic salience is calculated by the mean percentage share of statements on an issue in the party system. Again, a party's own salience scores are excluded from the calculation (see also Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015: 752). For both data sources, the calculation is based on all parties included in the analysis at a given election.

There are various understandings and approaches to measure issue ownership (Lefevere et al. 2017; Walgrave et al. 2012). One way is to use survey data asking voters which party is most competent in tackling those issues they find important (e.g., Dolezal et al. 2014; Minozzi 2014). On the one hand, this competence-based dimension of issue ownership is difficult to measure (Stubager 2018) and suitable data for cross-country research over longer periods of time is not available. On the other hand, the argument provided in H1 is related rather to the associative dimension than the competence-based variant. In short, it claims that when a party is generally associated with an issue area, their positions have a higher news value and are therefore especially attractive for journalists and editors, regardless of these parties being

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[20] The study includes all parties that are also coded in the Comparative Manifesto project that fulfil two additional requirements. First, parties need to achieve more than 5 percent of the votes at the election under study. This criterion guarantees that the overall results are not affected by very small parties, which are largely irrelevant for the logic of party competition. Second, a party is only included, when it is to some degree visible in the public debate. Therefore, the mass-media dataset must contain at least a total of twenty core sentences for a party related any kind of political issues. This threshold is necessary to secure the accuracy of the salience measure; extremely low overall numbers of core sentences do not allow inferring a party's emphasis on a specific issue. It is important to note that on most instances, parties either fail on both or none of these requirements.

perceived as competent in tackling a certain issue. Therefore, we follow the approach proposed by Wagner and Meyer (2014: 1025) that taps into this associative dimension of issue ownership. Specifically, we assign issue ownership dichotomously by relying on information from single country studies and taking cues from party family and the categorisation by Wagner and Meyer (2014) (See Table 11 in the appendix for an overview).

To explore the role of party size as a moderator of issue ownership and systemic issue salience effects in different communication platforms, we use a party's vote share at the election under study from the MARPOR database (Volkens et al. 2015). Additional indicators and control variables at the party level such as parties' left-right positions are also taken from this data source. An overview of all the variables, their operationalisation, data sources, and descriptive statistics is provided in Table 12 in the appendix.

The final data set includes information about parties' issue salience in newspapers and party manifesto data, on the issues mentioned before (see Table 13 in the appendix for more information on the elections and parties covered). Since the issue salience corresponds to the share of a party's statements, we estimate fractional logit regression models in order to account for the dependent variable being bound between 0 and 1. Models include fixed effects for country-years (34 elections) and for issues domains (6 issues). Standard errors are computed using bootstrapping to avoid inefficient estimation due to the skewness of the dependent variable and potential heteroskedasticity. Testing the robustness of our results, we consider several alternative model specifications. First, we specify Poisson, negative binomial, and zero-inflated negative binomial regression models accounting for potential overdispersion in our data due to issues not being mentioned by some parties. Second, we compute Huber-White and clustered robust standard errors for parties. Third, we use a lagged variable of systemic issue salience based on the previous election campaign. Fourth, instead of vote share we apply an indicator for a party's nicheness as proposed by Bischof (2017), who suggests to measure to concept as the differences in parties' emphasis on a group of pre-defined niche segments and how narrow their offer on these

segments is based on party manifesto content. None of the alternative specifications substantially alter our findings or consistently turn out to be more conservative. In the following, we present results based on fractional logit regression models, which show the overall best fit. However, we will report the alternative specifications as robustness checks at the end of the presentation of our results.

The following analysis consists of three steps. First, we provide a brief descriptive overview of the distribution of issue salience in party manifestos and in the news and show how both variables relate to each other. In a second step, we test whether coefficients of issue ownership and systemic salience differ between the two channels of communication by estimating interaction effects. Finally, we explore if these differences between data sources are conditional on the size of a given party. To that end, we include three-way interaction terms between party size according to vote share, communication channel, and issue ownership or systemic salience, respectively.

7.4 Empirical Results

To begin with, we explore the distribution of our two dependent variables – issue salience in party manifestos and in the media. The left panel of Figure 5 shows the distribution of both variables. Issue salience in manifestos, as well as in the news, is highly skewed as most issues only receiving little to no attention by political parties. Only rarely, parties devote much of their attention towards a single topic. Given the skewed distribution and potentially inefficient estimation due to heteroscedasticity, we therefore use bootstrapping to estimate standard errors.

Exploring the similarity of both distributions in more detail, the right panel of Figure 5 shows a scatterplot of both variables. In line with existing research (Merz 2017), the correlation between the two salience scores is notably high ($r = 0.53$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, issue salience in party manifestos and in newspapers show similar patterns. However, despite these similarities, deviations in salience scores are sufficiently large to ask whether the driving forces of parties' issue attention play out differently as hypothesised above.

Figure 5: Issue salience in manifestos and newspapers
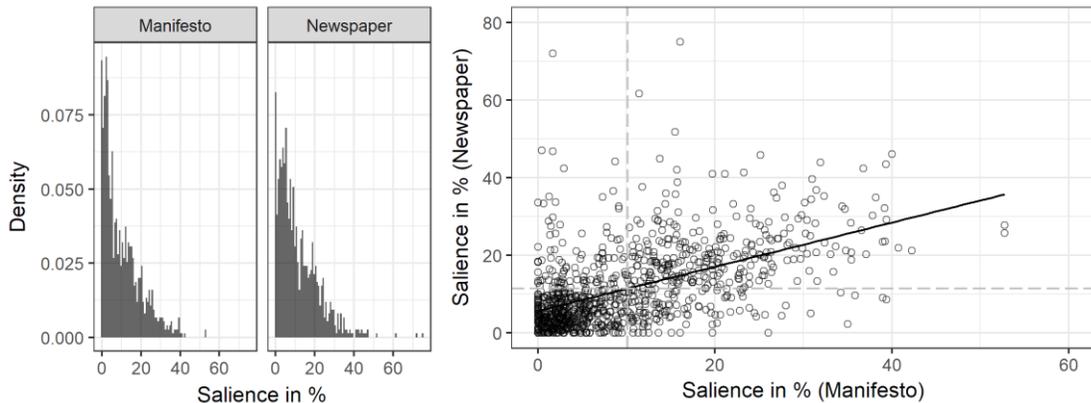
Note: The left panel shows the distribution of issue salience in manifestos and newspapers. The right panel shows a scatterplot of issue salience in manifestos and newspapers. Each circle represents the salience on an issue for a party in its manifesto and in the media (N = 990). The grey dashed lines mark the mean value for both variables; the black line shows the linear fit.

In the next step, we investigate if differences in issue attention due to issue ownership (H1) and systemic salience (H2) are larger in news coverage than in party manifestos. First, we run two identical models using issue salience in party manifestos and newspapers as the dependent variable. Results in Table 2 show that parties highlight issues significantly more often, when they own them as well as when other parties pay attention to an issue. This is the case for issue salience both in manifesto data (Model 1) and in newspaper data (Model 2) when estimated separately for each data source. The results not only corroborate existing findings on issue ownership and systemic salience in party manifestos (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015; Meyer and Wagner 2016; Wagner and Meyer 2014). They also mirror these findings for newspaper data, speaking to the fact that both sources are, in principle, comparable.

Regarding the control variables, all models include fixed-effects dummy variables for (34) elections and (six) issues. Therefore, the coefficients can be interpreted as average differences across all country-years and issues. Since not all issues addressed in manifestos and newspaper articles are covered by our study, variables for a party's left-right position and its government status are included to control for systematic differences in attention on other topics. For instance, the negative coefficient of left-

right position in the first model implies that parties further to the left devote, on average, more salience to the issues covered by the analysis in their manifestos holding all other variables constant. Most important, these control variables do not reach statistical significance in the other models, and none of the results are sensitive to the inclusion or exclusion of any control variable.

Table 2: Fractional logit regression models of issue salience

	(1) Manifesto only	(2) Media only	(3) Interaction w/ ownership	(4) Interaction w/ sys. salience
Systemic salience (std.)	0.25**	0.46**	0.43**	0.46**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Issue ownership	0.49**	0.84**	0.56**	0.68**
	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Source (Media=1)			0.20**	0.33**
			(0.04)	(0.04)
Issue ownership*Source			0.25**	
			(0.08)	
Systemic salience*Source				-0.10**
				(0.03)
Vote share	-0.04+	0.05	0.00	-0.01
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Left-right position	-0.00**	0.00	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	-0.04	0.04	0.00	-0.00
	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Constant	-1.76**	-1.98**	-2.10**	-2.17**
	(0.14)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.12)
Observations	990	990	1980	1980
Pseudo R^2	0.10	0.06	0.08	0.08
AIC	673	749	1346	1346
BIC	888	965	1603	1604
Log pseudo likelihood	-292	-331	-627	-627

Note: Bootstrapped standard errors in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (6); $^+ p < 0.1,$ $^* p < 0.05,$ $^{**} p < 0.01$

Second, we include interaction terms to test whether the effect of issue ownership (Model 3) and systemic salience (Model 4) are larger in media data. These analyses are based on an appended data set with a dummy variable differentiating between

newspaper and manifestos content. In line with H1, the coefficient of the interaction term between source and issue ownership in Model 3 is positive and highly significant, but, contrary to the expectation formulated in H2, the interaction term in Model 4 is negative. However, because of the non-linear model specification, we are cautious to interpret these coefficients directly (Shang et al. 2018) and rather compare the differences using marginal effects plots.[21]

Figure 6 illustrates how the increase in issue salience due to ownership (left panel) and systemic salience (right panel) differs in manifesto and media data. With regard to ownership, we find that a party devotes more attention to an issue when it is the issue owner. This difference is significantly larger in media data (0.11) than in manifestos (0.06), providing clear support for H1. This result is not necessarily at odds with the observation of Helfer and Aelst (2016) who find in an experiment with journalists that messages about issues not owned by a party are more likely to be selected. Rather, our findings suggest that even if such an unexpected message is the initial reason for a newspaper article covering an issue, the article is most likely to also report on the position of the issue owner.

Turning to systemic salience, reveals a different picture. While a party's issue attention is higher when other parties address the issue, this increase does not differ between media (0.02) and manifesto data (0.02).[22] This result refutes H2. Apparently, the systemic salience of an issue has a positive effect also in newspaper data. However, contrary to H2, this effect is not stronger than in party manifestos. We therefore find no evidence that systemic features are generally more important for party-issue linkages in the media as compared to manifesto content.

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[21] In fact, the significance of the interaction term in Model 4 does not hold up when we dichotomise the variable.

[22] Marginal differences for systemic salience are lower in size than those for ownership because the variable, when standardised, ranges from -1.33 to 3.99. Rescaling the variable to the range of the ownership variable from 0 to 1 results in estimates for the marginal differences (0.12) similar in size to those for ownership.

Figure 6: Marginal effects of issue ownership and systemic salience
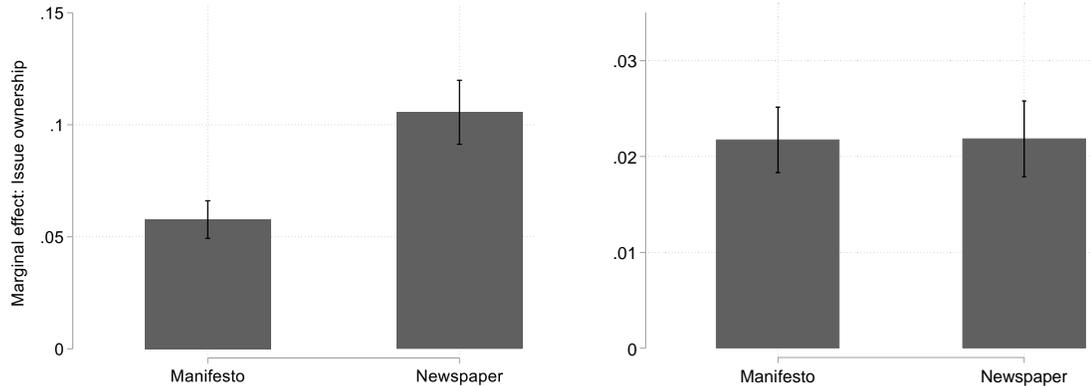
Note: The left panel is based on Model 3 reported in Table 1, the right panel on Model 4. Linear pre-dictions of issue salience (bars) and 83% confidence intervals (spikes) with control variables held constant (left-right and vote share at their means, non-government party, welfare issue, 2013 German election).

To explore how the different expectations on the role of issue ownership and systemic salience in the media can be reconciled through the conditional role of party size, Table 3 shows estimation results including a three-way interaction term between vote share, communication channel, and issue ownership (Model 1) or systemic salience (Model 2). Table 14 in the appendix also includes model estimations separately for the two data sources which support the presented findings. Since interpretation of these coefficients is not as straight-forward, we resort to a graphical presentation. Figure 7 plots marginal effects of ownership (left panel) and systemic salience (right panel) as a function of a party's vote share (on the x-axis), which ranges from 3% to 43%.

In both panels, slopes for manifesto (solid lines) and media (dashed lines) data diverge significantly, indicating that party size indeed moderates the relationships. However, most importantly, the results suggest that it does so differently depending on the data sources. In manifesto data, marginal effects both for issue ownership and systemic salience only decrease slightly (from 0.07 to 0.04 and from 0.04 to 0.03, respectively). Thus, parties, irrespective of their size, always emphasise an issue in their manifesto more, when they own it and when other parties emphasise it in their

manifestos. In media data, on the other hand, marginal effects for issue ownership and systemic salience manifest differently. For small parties, ownership of an issue matters more when considering media data (0.16). Here, small issue owners enjoy an advantage providing empirical support for H3. For larger parties, in contrast, the marginal ownership effect decreases markedly (0.02). In fact, differences in marginal effects between data sources are not significant anymore (as indicated by overlapping confidence intervals). When a large party is the issue owner, it does not get to emphasise the issue much more in the news – at least not much more than it emphasises it in its own manifesto. Indicated by an increasing slope, party size moderates the marginal effects of systemic salience in news data in the opposite direction. Thus, small parties get to put actually less attention to an issue highlighted by others in the newspaper (0.03) than what is emphasised in their own manifesto (0.04). For larger parties, the contrary is true. Not only does their issue attention follow the saliency of the agenda more strongly, it also does so significantly more in news reporting (0.07) than in their manifestos (0.03). This conditional and more nuanced relationship is in line with H4. Moreover, it serves as explanation why the average marginal differences due to systemic salience in Figure 6 were virtually indistinguishable.

Table 3: Fractional logit regression models of issue salience with three-way interactions

	(1) Interaction w/ ownership	(2) Interaction w/ systemic salience
Systemic salience (std.)	0.43**	0.48**
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Issue ownership	0.57**	0.68**
	(0.05)	(0.05)
Source (Media=1)	0.21**	0.34**
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Issue ownership*Source	0.23**	
	(0.08)	
Systemic salience*Source		-0.07*
		(0.03)
Vote share	-0.04	-0.06*
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Issue ownership*Vote share	-0.04	
	(0.04)	
Systemic salience*Vote share		-0.00
		(0.02)
Source*Vote share	0.20**	0.10*
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Issue ownership*Source*Vote share	**-0.25****	
	(0.07)	
Systemic salience*Source*Vote share		**0.11****
		(0.04)
Left-right position	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Constant	-2.09**	-2.19**
	(0.11)	(0.11)
Observations	1,980	1,980
Pseudo R^2	0.08	0.08
AIC	1,350	1,351
BIC	1,624	1,625
Log pseudo likelihood	-626	-627

*Note: Bootstrapped standard errors in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (6); + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$*

Figure 7: Party size as a moderator of ownership and systemic salience
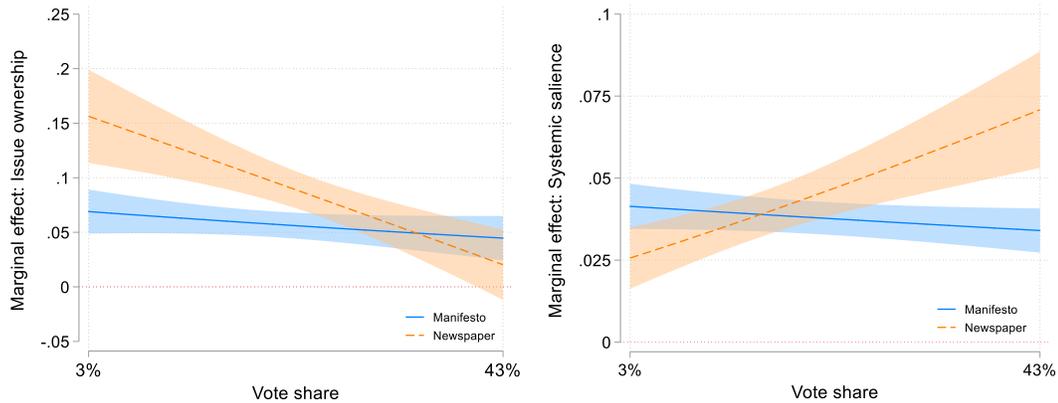
Note: The left panel is based on Model 1 reported in Table 3, the right panel on Model 2. Linear pre-dictions of issue salience and 95% confidence intervals with control variables held constant (left-right at its mean, non-government party, welfare issue, 2013 German election).

Due to the conditional and non-linear nature of the relationship, these marginal effects are difficult to interpret in terms of size. Thus, we estimate predicted values of issue salience for minimum and maximum values of the interacting variables. Corresponding to the solid lines in Figure 7, issue owners are predicted to devote between 13% (small parties) and 17% (large parties) of their attention to a given issue in their manifestos. These numbers are only marginally (10% and 8%, respectively) lower for parties that are not issue owners. While they are also comparable to differences due to low systemic (5% for small and 4% for large parties), small (40%) and large (34%) parties are predicted to exhibit markedly more issue attention when issues are system-ically salient. Corresponding to the dashed lines in Figure 7, differences in issue sali-ence are greater in media data, where issue owners are predicted to devote between 26% (small parties) and 17% (large parties) of their attention to a given issue, com-pared to 9% and 15% of non-owners. When systemic salience is at its maximum, small and large parties are predicted to exhibit an even higher issue salience of 26% and 64%, respectively. In sum, these effects are quite sizeable, considering that the empirical scale of issue salience ranges from 0 to 75% (with a mean of 11%) in our data.

Finally, we review the robustness of our results. Table 15 to Table 19 in the appendix include tables with regression results of alternative estimations in order to ensure that they do not merely arise from a certain model specification. As mentioned above, the distribution of the dependent variable suggests overdispersion (variances of 104 and 89 for media and manifesto data, respectively, exceeding means of 11 and 10 considerably), but a non-excessive number of zeros (6% and 5% in media and manifesto data, respectively). Hence, we test modelling techniques for count data. Estimating Poisson, negative binomial, or zero-inflated negative binomial regression, however, yields exactly the same findings. Similarly, computing Huber-White or clustered robust standard errors for parties does not change our results either. In some models, standard errors appear to be somewhat larger, but do not affect the significance of any of the coefficients. We also consider alternative operationalisations of systemic salience and party size. Instead of the current election campaign, we use a lagged version of systemic salience in the previous one. Intuitively, we would assume that a party rather reacts to the issue addressed by its competitors in the past than during the same campaign. Instead of vote share, we use an indicator for a party's nicheness as suggested by Bischof (2017) to test whether ownership and systemic salience also have different effects depending on parties' general focus on niche issue segments in their party systems. Interestingly, both changes produce results that are very similar to the findings presented above as the coefficients barely deviate from models based on our initial operationalisation.

Next, we assess the robustness of the dichotomous operationalisation of issue ownership. To that end, we re-estimate all models six times, each time excluding one issue category. The additional results of the 36 fractional logit regression models can be found in Table 20 to Table 25 in the appendix (each table referring to the re-estimated model and each table column referring to the excluded issue). In general, the results prove robust to the exclusion of issue categories as the coefficients of interest remain largely unchanged and significant. Only two models stand out: The effect of systemic salience does not differ significantly anymore between media and manifesto content when immigration issues are excluded, as does the interaction between systemic sali-

ence and vote share when welfare issues are excluded. While this might point to the pivotal role of mainstream parties (owning welfare issue) and right-wing challenger parties (owning immigration issues) in these two specific instances, the consistency in the majority of models overall validates the dichotomous operationalisation.

Finally, we explore the robustness of our results for different types of newspapers. For this task, we re-estimate all models presented above based on observations from quality newspapers and tabloids separately. The results of these additional analyses are presented in Table 26 to Table 28 in the appendix. Most important, we find no systematic deviations between the two types of newspapers. By contrast, all results directly relating to our hypotheses also hold in these separate analyses. We therefore find no evidence that the logic of party-issue linkages differs systematically between different types of newspapers.

7.5 Conclusion

A central argument in research on direct campaign communication is that parties emphasise advantageous issues and downplay others to gain electoral grounds (e.g., Budge 2015). However, when it comes to party-issue linkages reported in the news, the media as a gate-keeper plays an important role (e.g., Merz 2017). Given that large numbers of voters get their information about political parties and the positions they stand for on relevant issues from such platforms, it begs the question to what degree patterns of issue salience identified in the literature on party-issue linkages in direct campaign communication can also be found in media reports during election campaigns.

Against this background, we studied in this paper how drivers of issue salience play out in direct and mediated channels of campaign communication. We argued that two theoretical explanations of issue salience – issue ownership and systemic issue salience –, which were found to be crucial for direct party communication, should be even more relevant in the media. Additionally, we claimed that focusing on the conditioning role of party size in this regard is important. On the one hand, our findings

reveal important similarities across communication platforms. Focussing on party-issue linkages in party manifestos and newspaper articles, we find that issue salience at the party level across these data sources is highly correlated. Moreover, issue ownership and systemic salience are relevant predictors for party-issue linkages in newspaper and manifesto content. On the other hand, the analysis also reveals crucial differences between direct and mass-mediated party communication. Most importantly, the results show that issue ownership plays a particularly important role for small parties in the media, while systemic salience is most pronounced for large parties in this data source.

What implications do these findings entail? First, the findings contribute to a better understanding of issue competition in election campaigns. Despite substantial similarities across data sources, they show that there also exist systematic differences between party-issue linkages in the media and in direct campaign communication. On the one hand, general patterns of party-issue linkages found in direct campaign communication like party manifestos are also present in campaign debates as covered by the mass media in newspaper articles. On the other hand, especially small parties are found to be hardly covered in the media when it comes to issues with which they are not associated, whereas large parties' positions are particularly likely to be covered when a topic is broadly discussed in the news. This finding is highly relevant with regard to political fairness in mediated campaign communication. Also, it points to an additional source of the further restructuration of European party competition and the role played by small challenger parties in this process. Second, our study has methodological implications for research on party competition. Data from direct and mediated party-issue linkages convey similar but not identical information, indicating that generalisations based on results on direct party communication for mediated environments and vice versa should be made with caution. Most importantly, our findings highlight that mass-mediated party communication presents the key conflicts of the day under a magnifying glass, while at the same time underestimating the 'normalisation' of small niche parties.

Consequently, future research interested in systemic and dynamic features of party competition might therefore have a lot to gain from contrasting and combining data from mass mediated campaign debates with data from direct party communication like press releases (e.g., Meyer et al. 2017). With the increasing importance of election campaigning on social media, it will also be crucial to explore differences in the content voters encounter on such platforms (De Sio et al. 2018). At the same time, the results invite comparative research regarding other drivers of party-issue linkages like the role of public opinion (see e.g., Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016).

8. Issue Competition on Social Media[23]

How parties use new platforms of campaign communication to spread policy-related content

Abstract

Social media websites are now crucial platforms for party competition. How do parties use them for campaign communication? Focussing on issue salience, this study argues that social media websites enable parties to highlight issues even more strategically than in party manifestos. This is expected to result in a lower diversity of issues addressed by a party. Moreover, issue ownership is assumed to play a more important role as a driver of salience strategy on such platforms. Consequently, a lower degree of issue convergence at the party system level is predicted. In order to test these expectations, the study relies on original data of campaign communication on Twitter and manifesto content. Most important, the analysis reveals that the issue diversity at the party level and issue convergence at the party system level are in fact lower on Twitter than in party manifestos. This finding has important implications for our understanding of the role social media plays for political parties.

8.1 Introduction

Social media outlets constitute important communication platforms in election campaigns (Aldrich et al. 2016; De Sio et al. 2018; Gibson 2015; Jungherr 2015; Kreiss 2016a; Nulty et al. 2016; Stier et al. 2018). Parties and candidates heavily rely on sites like Facebook and Twitter to get their message out and voters strongly use this content as a source of political information or even actively participate in the debates (Bekafigo and McBride 2013; Bode and Dalrymple 2016; Evans et al. 2014; Gibson 2015). Thus, party communication via social media constitutes an essential part of electoral contests in contemporary democracies.

For research on party competition, this begs the question how parties use these platforms. Does party behaviour on social media resemble well-known patterns found in the study of other platforms of campaign communication like party manifestos (Dolezal et al. 2014; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015; Wagner and Meyer 2014) or party press releases (Haselmayer, Meyer, et al. 2017; Haselmayer, Wagner, et al. 2017; Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016; Meyer et al. 2017). Or is there a linkage from "technological innovations to changes in political communication strategies" (Rodriguez and Madariaga 2016: 305), which would imply that party behaviour on such websites follows a distinct logic?

Focussing on issue competition and the salience strategies of political parties, this study explores how parties make use of social media to communicate policy-related content during election campaigns. It departs from the assumption that patterns of party behaviour are contingent upon the platform on which parties compete, because the constraints and opportunities for strategic campaign communication vary across such communication channels (De Sio et al. 2018). Consequently, it is argued that established insights derived from research on other sources of campaign communication, must be reconsidered in the light of the specific technological opportunities these platforms offer to political parties.

Against this background, the main argument of the study is that the technical opportunities of social media websites enable parties to highlight issues even more strategi-

cally than in party manifestos. Four specific expectations about issue competition on social media are derived from this assumption. *First*, it is argued that social media websites are well-suited for strategic issue emphasis and therefore strongly used by parties for issue competition. *Second*, it is claimed that this feature also leads parties to focus only on a limited set of well-selected issues (De Sio et al. 2018: 1218). *Third*, in line with salience theory (Budge 2015; Budge and Farlie 1983b; Dolezal et al. 2014), it is expected that parties' issue emphasis is particularly driven by issue ownership. *Fourth*, focusing on the party system level, this is assumed to lead to lower levels of issue convergence than observed in the study of manifesto content.

To test these expectations empirically, the study innovates by directly comparing parties' social media communication to a well-studied platform of direct campaign communication, namely party manifestos. It relies on an original data set of parties' issue emphasis during the election campaign for the British House of Commons in 2015 on Twitter and the manifestos of these parties. The results show that parties use Twitter for issue competition. Moreover, while issue salience on Twitter and party manifestos are highly correlated, there exist striking differences. Salience on Twitter is more unevenly distributed than in manifestos and the diversity of addressed topics is consistently lower for all parties on this platform than in party manifestos. While issue ownership plays an important role as an explanation for parties' salience strategies on Twitter, the relationship is not significantly stronger than for party manifesto content, however. Nevertheless, issue convergence is considerably lower on social media than in party manifestos.

In sum, these findings confirm the expectation that parties use social media very strategically for issue competition. This makes the platform a valuable data source to study parties' salience strategies (see also De Sio et al. 2018: 1218). In more general terms, the results suggest that the technological opportunities of social media enable political parties to strategically interact with competitors, the media and potential voters. This contributes to a better understanding of the role social media plays in election campaigns.

8.2 Issue Competition on Social Media in a Comparative Perspective

It has long been argued that parties strategically highlight issues to gain electoral advantages (e.g., Budge 2015; Budge and Farlie 1983a; Dolezal et al. 2014; Petrocik 1996). This makes issue competition, defined as "party competition on which issues should dominate the party political agenda" (Green-Pedersen 2007b: 607) a crucial concept in the study of political parties and election campaigns. Given that social media websites now constitute important platforms of party competition in election campaigns, the question is how parties use these websites for issue competition.

This study is based on the assumption that patterns of party behaviour are not only contingent upon the type of party or the electoral arena (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015; Spoon and Klüver 2014; Wagner and Meyer 2014), but might also vary regarding the platform on which parties compete (see also Merz 2017). Answering this question therefore requires exploring the opportunities social media websites offer political parties as a tool for campaign communication. Based on these considerations, insights derived from research on other communication channels can be discussed in the light of the specific opportunities these platforms offer to political parties.

Most important in this regard, parties have full control over the content appearing on their accounts. *First*, parties can decide which topics to address. They can either remain silent about a topic or make a statement if they wish to do so since no gatekeepers must be circumvented (Engesser et al. 2017). *Second*, the timing of a specific message can be targeted precisely. For example, it is possible to instantly comment on attacks from political opponents during televised debates, or to launch a campaign at a certain time. *Third*, social media accounts allow parties to determine the quantity of communication about an issue. There are no restrictions to post identical or similar content repeatedly on a single day or over a longer period. This creates the opportunity to highlight or downplay a certain topic by regulating the number of messages addressing it.

Overall, these features make parties' social media accounts well-suited to "capture their strategic political communication" (De Sio et al. 2018: 1218). Interviews with

online campaigners, who claim to use social media to "create a 'climate of opinion' favourable to their candidate" (Kreiss 2016b: 1476), provide evidence for such behaviour. It is assumed that parties take advantage of this opportunity to affect the issue agenda by strategically addressing policy-related content on platforms like Facebook and Twitter. This expectation is summarised in the following hypothesis.

H1: *Parties strongly use social media for issue competition during election campaigns.*

This freedom of communicating through social media yields another expectation. Regarding the specific issues parties address in their policy-related communication, it is assumed that the issues addressed are purposefully chosen. The general idea that parties selectively highlight issues for strategic reasons as argued by salience theory (Budge 2015; Budge and Farlie 1983a) or the issue yield model (De Sio and Weber 2014) was most systematically tested on the grounds of party manifestos (e.g., De Sio and Weber 2014; Dolezal et al. 2014; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015; Wagner and Meyer 2014). This choice of data is based on the assumption that issue emphasis is a "rather flexible part of the packaging of manifestos" (Harmel et al. 2018: 280). If parties want to downplay or highlight a topic in their campaign communication, it is expected that this strategic decision is reflected in the amount of space devoted to the issue in a party's election manifesto.

For issue emphasis on social media, this assumption is even more warranted. On both communication platforms, parties can freely choose the topics they want to address and control the amount of communication about a specific topic. However, party manifestos also serve various functions (Eder et al. 2017). Specifically, a look at the table of contents of a contemporary manifesto reveals that they provide a comprehensive overview of a party's positions. Therefore, thy cover a wide range of different issue areas, not only a parties favorite topics (see De Sio et al. 2018: 1217). This does not contradict the idea that the share of communication concerning an issue in party manifestos serves as a valid indicator to explore parties' issue priorities. Nevertheless,

the degree to which strategic considerations drive issue emphasis is expected to be higher for social media, where such constraints are absent. Consequently, issue emphasis at the party level is expected to be particularly concentrated on a limited number of selected topics on social media. This leads to the following hypothesis.

H2: *Parties' issue attention is more concentrated on social media than in party manifestos.*

What drives issue emphasis on social media? Parties are often assumed to highlight issues they own (Budge 2015; Budge and Farlie 1983a; Petrocik 1996). They are expected to focus on an issue either when voters see them as competent in dealing with it (Dolezal et al. 2014; Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016) or when they are generally associated with that issue (Wagner and Meyer 2014). Empirical research based on party manifestos confirms this expectation. Dolezal et al. (2014) show that parties in Austria focus more on issues on which they are perceived as competent by voters in their manifestos. In addition, Wagner and Meyer (2014: 1028) find such a relationship for the associative dimension of issue ownership. Given that strategic considerations are assumed to be particularly relevant for issue emphasis on social media, issue ownership is expected to not only drive issue attention also on such platforms (Meeks 2015) but that the relationship is even stronger than for the case of party manifestos. For instance, like the manifesto of any party, it is assumed that a Green party's manifesto covers a broad range of issues. Nevertheless, given its strong association with environmental issues, more attention is devoted to such topics. By contrast, concerning issue emphasis on social media, it is expected that many issues discussed in the party's manifesto are hardly mentioned at all on these platforms. Rather, a large proportion of policy-related messages is likely to address environmental issues. This argumentation is summarised in the following hypotheses.

H3a: *Parties highlight especially issues they own in their campaign communication on social media.*

H3b: *The difference in a party's issue attention due to issue ownership is larger on social media coverage than in party manifestos.*

The preceding considerations relate to the behaviour of individual parties. However, if party behaviour on social media deviates from what is observed in party manifestos, issue competition in general is likely to differ as well. Focussing on the party system level, one expectation derived from the idea that parties use their social media accounts particularly to strategically highlight advantageous topics is that issue competition on such platforms is characterised by a low degree of issue overlap. According to a very strict understanding of salience theory and the issue ownership hypothesis, it follows that parties talk completely past each other in their campaign communication (see Kaplan et al. 2006; Sigelman and Buell 2004). If each party exclusively addresses issues it owns, issue convergence, defined the degree of overlap in the "attention profile" of a given pair of parties (Sigelman and Buell 2004: 635), is extremely small. Empirical research shows that this is not the case since issue agendas between parties largely overlap (Dolezal et al. 2014; Sigelman and Buell 2004). Nevertheless, if the focus on well-selected issues and the role of issue ownership is stronger on social media than in manifestos, this should be reflected in a lower degree of issue convergence on the former platforms. This expectation is summarised in the following hypothesis.

H4: *Issue convergence is lower on social media than in party manifestos.*

8.3 Data and Methods

To test the derived expectations empirically, party communication on Twitter for the election campaign for the British House of Commons in 2015 and the manifestos of these parties are analysed. Twitter is well suited to study campaign behaviour on social media since research shows it is especially used for campaign communication over political issues (see Stier et al. 2018: 51). It is a micro blogging service that enables registered users to post messages (*Tweets*) about any topic in a maximum of only

140 characters that allows spreading the content of others via the retweet function or to directly reply to them.[24] The content of each user appears on its own user timeline and in the feed of people following the account with no reciprocal follower relationship required. In politics, the platform has become an important source of information with large numbers of users following individual politicians or party organisations especially during election campaigns (Jungherr 2015; Nulty et al. 2016). All parties under scrutiny were highly active on their Twitter accounts during the time of the election campaign. Moreover, they all published party manifestos ahead of the election. This makes it possible to test the derived hypotheses in detail.

Measuring issue attention on social media and in party manifestos

Concerning Twitter data, all messages from the official and verified accounts of the following six largest political parties were retrieved (account name in parenthesis): Conservatives (@Conservatives), Labour (@UKLabour), Scottish National Party (@theSNP), Liberal Democrats (@LibDems), United Kingdom Independence Party (@UKIP) and the Green Party (@TheGreenParty).[25] The data was accessed and downloaded during the campaign and once more immediately after the election day using the Twitter Rest API via the *TwitteR* package for R (Gentry 2015). The period under study starts at 7th of March 2015 and ends at the day of election on 7th of May 2015. In total, the merged data set contains 22,091 individual messages.

To explore issue salience in this data, a slightly adapted set of issue categories from Kriesi et al. (2008) is used with 14 different issues which cover virtually all policies discussed in contemporary politics and one additional category for messages with no issue related content. Table 29 in the appendix provides an overview and a detailed description of these categories. Based on this coding scheme, Tweets that contain a

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[24] The change in Twitter's rule regarding the maximum length of a Tweet to 280 characters took place after the sampling period.

[25] Among other variables, the downloaded data set contains the Tweet itself, the respective account name, time-stamps as well as information whether an observation is an original tweet by the user, a retweeted message from another user or a reply. As all types of Tweets can equally carry information about the issue priorities of political parties, no observations were excluded from the analysis on this basis.

statement addressing a specific issue are classified accordingly without any additional requirements. This procedure assumes that each observation only addresses a single issue. Due to the maximum number of 140 characters for each Tweet, this is a realistic expectation as the possibility of addressing several issues in such short messages is rather low (see also De Sio et al. 2018). To classify the large number of individual observations, a machine learning approach to document classification using support vector machine is applied. In the appendix, a detailed description of this procedure and a test of its validity are provided (see Figure 19 and Figure 20). Based on this classification, issue salience is measured as the percentage share of posts on a given issue in relation to all issue related statements of a party.

The structure of party manifestos features significant differences to data from Twitter. Specifically, it is nested in large and complexly structured text documents. This requires careful unitizing before such texts can be used to measure issue salience (Merz 2017). One well-established approach for this task is the core sentence method (see Hutter et al. 2016; Kleinnijenhuis and Pennings 2001; Kriesi et al. 2012; Kriesi et al. 2008).[26] Dolezal et al. (2016) have demonstrated that the approach works well to study issue salience in party manifestos (see also Dolezal et al. 2014). Using this method, a random sample of 25 percent of the grammatical sentences in each manifesto was randomly chosen and coded. The manifesto of UKIP was coded completely to test the validity of this sampling strategy. Comparing the salience scores based on the sampled data set and the completely coded data set reveals very similar measures. It is therefore concluded that this sampling strategy produces valid estimates (see Figure 21 in the appendix for further details). To maximise the comparability with Twitter data, the same coding scheme is applied. Moreover, the operationalisation of issue salience is identical. For manifesto content, the variable is measured as the percentage share of core sentences coded for a party on a given issue in relation to observations on any issue for that party.

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[26] A very close fit between the coding of Twitter data and manifesto content is assumed to be crucial for this research. As this is difficult to achieve by using existing codings of party manifestos based on different coding schemes as provided by the Marpor project (Volkens et al. 2017), an original coding of manifestos is used.

Independent and control variables

Starting with issue ownership, it is important to distinguish between the competence based and the associative dimension of the concept (Lefevere et al. 2017; Walgrave et al. 2012). In this paper, the focus rests on the competence-based dimension. Thus, issue ownership is understood as the attribution of issue specific competences towards political parties by voters. In this sense, parties own an issue, when voters see them as most capable of solving problems related to an issue (Dolezal et al. 2014).

A common problem for the measurement of this variable is that most surveys do not include questions about the perceived competence of all relevant parties on a sufficiently large number of different issues. One way to overcome this difficulty is to combine information from surveys asking respondents what they perceive as the currently most important issue and what party they think is most competent in dealing with it (Dolezal et al. 2014; Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016). As the attributed issue competence is of course strongly affected by a respondent's party preference, voters are extremely likely to report that the party they vote for is most competent, which makes larger parties more likely to be stated as issue owners regardless of the specific topic. To control for this bias, relative issue ownership is calculated by subtracting a party's vote share in the survey from the percentage share of people stating it is most competent in dealing with an issue (see Dolezal et al. 2014: 70).

Following this approach, an indicator for issue ownership was constructed using data from the 2015 British Election Study Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al. 2015). It contains questions concerning the most important issue and the party they think is most competent in addressing the issue they claimed to be most important. As the study distinguishes more than 30 different issue categories for this question, the labels were recoded to fit the 14 categories used to classify the issue priorities of political parties. Table 29 in the Appendix provides a detailed overview of this procedure.

Two important control variables are included in the study. *First*, while trying to push favourable issues, it is assumed that parties must nevertheless take the currently existing issue agenda as given (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015). Consequently, par-

ties are also expected to focus on issues that currently figure prominent on the party system agenda. To account for this relationship, systemic issue salience is calculated as the mean issue attention on the Twitter accounts of all six parties under study and in their party manifestos respectively. Following Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2015), a party's own salience score is not included in this calculation to avoid problems of endogeneity (see also Hoeglinger 2015). Second, the emphasis a party puts on an issue can also be driven by the issue priorities of voters. As argued by Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1994) parties "ride the wave" in the sense that they adapt the attention to an issue according to the priorities of voters. Accounting for this, an indicator for voters' issue priorities is constructed from the question concerning the most important issue (see e.g., Spoon and Klüver 2014). Specifically, the percentage share of answers on one issue category in relation to all answers is calculated to measure issue importance.

8.4 Results

Initially, results for the degree to which parties address policy-related topics are presented. In Table 4, the percentage shares and the absolute numbers of messages which contain references to policies are reported for each party. Most important, parties strongly make use of Twitter to publish policy-related content during the election campaign. On average, 45.45 percent of all messages fall in this category. This leads to more than 10,000 messages during the campaign touching upon policy-related content. Even though the analysis also reveals considerable variation in the degree to which parties focus on issues in their campaign communication, it can be concluded that this type of campaign communication plays an important role on Twitter. This finding is very much in line with H1. Moreover, it confirms existing research which also finds that parties talk to a considerable degree about issues on this platform (De Sio et al. 2018; Jungherr 2015).

Table 4: The role of policy-related party communication on Twitter

Party	Percentage share	Total number
Conservatives	58.04	2,180
Greens	40.67	656
Labour	52.24	1,689
LibDems	41.95	3,444
SNP	40.03	1,022
UKIP	38.47	1,049
All parties	45.45	10,040

Note: Table entries show the percentage share of policy-related messages on Twitter in relation to all downloaded messages containing text and the total number of issue related messages for each party.

How do parties use Twitter when they address policy-related issues? A comparison of issue salience on Twitter and in the manifestos of the parties under study reveals striking similarities. Both indicators are highly correlated (r = 0.73; t = 9.69). As shown in the left panel of Figure 8, issues that take a lot of space in a party's manifesto do also figure prominently in its Twitter communication. Nevertheless, there are several issues that gain some relevance in the manifesto of a party, but do not play any role on in their online communication as indicated by dots located on the x-axis or only slightly above. In contrast, there are almost no observations for which the opposite holds. When an issue plays a crucial role in a party's Twitter communication, it is also present in the manifesto of the party.

To explore these differences in the distribution of issues in more detail, issue salience scores are used to explore the diversity of the issue agenda of each party in the two data sources under study. Following Boydstun et al. (2014), issue diversity is calculated using normalised Shannon's H. It is a measure of homogeneity which can take values between zero and one. A value of zero is reached when a party's attention completely rests on one issue, whereas a value of one indicates a uniform distribution of attention across all issues.[27] Thus, higher values indicate that parties have more diversity in their issue related communication on a given platform.

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[27] The indicator measures how strongly a party's attention is dispersed over a set of given issues. For this task, the negative sum of proportions of attention $p(x_i)$ for each issue x_i is multiplied with the

The panel in the middle of Figure 8 shows issue diversity scores for both data sources. It stands out that issue diversity is consistently smaller in Twitter data as compared to party manifesto. In line with H2, the mean value for issue diversity, which is indicated by the dashed vertical lines, for Twitter data is 0.72 and 0.90 for the case of party manifestos. These averages in issue diversity differ significantly between the two sources under study (t = 3.53; p = 0.01). Nevertheless, it is important to note that there are striking differences between parties. While issue communication on Twitter is consistently more concentrated for all parties, the differences vary greatly. Concerning the Labour Party, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and the SNP, differences in issue diversity are sizeable. However, this is not the case for the Greens and UKIP.

The right panel of Figure 8, which shows the distribution of issue attention for both platforms, substantiates this finding. Issue attention on Twitter and in party manifestos is heavily skewed. While most issues receive only little or even no attention at all, some topics are addressed in detail. However, this feature is even more present in Twitter data. This is also reflected by the difference in the medians of issue salience. For Twitter data, it takes a value of only 2.15 percent, while it is 5.28 percent in party manifestos. In sum, these results corroborate H2. Parties focus more strongly on a smaller set of issues on Twitter as compared to party manifestos. This results in lower issue diversity scores.

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natural logarithm of these proportions. To facilitate interpretations, the indicator is normalized by dividing it by the total number of issues (N). It is based on the following formula: $Shannons'H = \frac{-\sum_{i=1}^{n}(p(x_i))*\ln p(x_i)}{\ln(N)}$.

Figure 8: Comparing issue salience on Twitter and in party manifestos
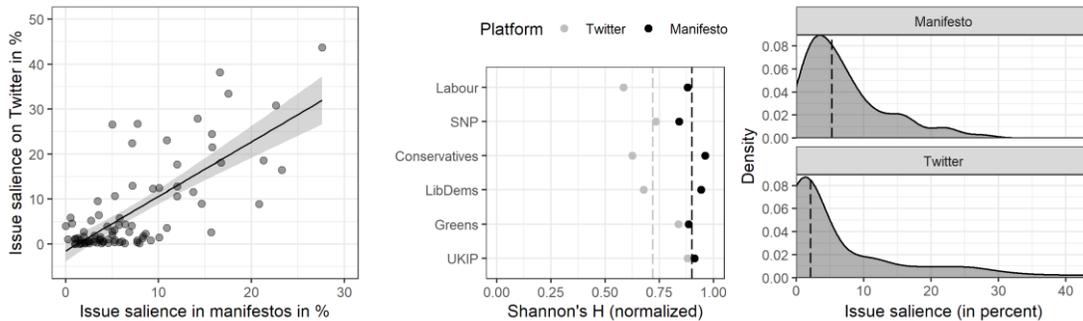
Note: The left panel shows a comparison of issue salience on Twitter and party manifestos for all parties and issues under study. The line shows the linear prediction; the shaded area represents the standard error (N=84). The panel in the middle shows the diversity of issues addressed by parties which is measured using normalised Shannon's H. Higher values indicate a stronger diversity in the addressed issues. The dashed vertical lines represent the average diversity scores for each platform. The panels on the right show the distribution of salience scores in manifestos (upper right panel) and in Twitter data (lower right panel). The dashed vertical lines represent the median value.

As suggested in H3a and H3b, these patterns of issue salience in Twitter data and party manifestos could be attributed to the role of issue ownership as a driver of party' issue emphasis on both platforms. While H3a expects that issue salience on Twitter is driven by issue ownership, H3b points out that this relationship might be even stronger on Twitter than in party manifestos. Both, the relatively high correlation between the two salience indicators and the fact that issue emphasis is more concentrated on Twitter point in this direction. To explore this aspect in more detail, Figure 9 plots issue ownership against issue salience on Twitter (left panel) and in party manifestos (right panel).[28] Following Dolezal et al. (2014: 70) the y-axis shows the deviation in issue salience from the median of issue salience on an issue in each panel. Hence, values above the dashed horizontal line indicate salience scores above the median salience in the party system. This allows exploring whether issue ownership leads some parties to focus more on a given issue than other parties.

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[28] The sum of scores for the relative issue ownership do not add up to 100 percent for each issue category. This is because respondents can claim that no particular party or another party is best in tackling the issue, they find most important.

As indicated by the positive slope of the solid line in the left panel of Figure 9, which represents the linear fit for the two variables, issue ownership is positively related to issue emphasis on Twitter. In particular, in becomes obvious that issues with a very high net-ownership are strongly addressed by political parties on this platform. Since this correlation between the two variables is also statistically significant (r = 0.53; t = 5.73), these results provide support for H3a. Issue ownership leads to stronger issue emphasis in Twitter data. However, as shown in the right panel of Figure 9, a similar correlation can be observed for issue ownership and issue emphasis in party manifestos (r = 0.44; t = 4.48). In line with the results provided by Dolezal et al. (2014: 72) for Austrian parties, ownership and issue salience as measured in party manifestos are also positively related.

Figure 9: Issue ownership and issue salience on Twitter and in manifestos
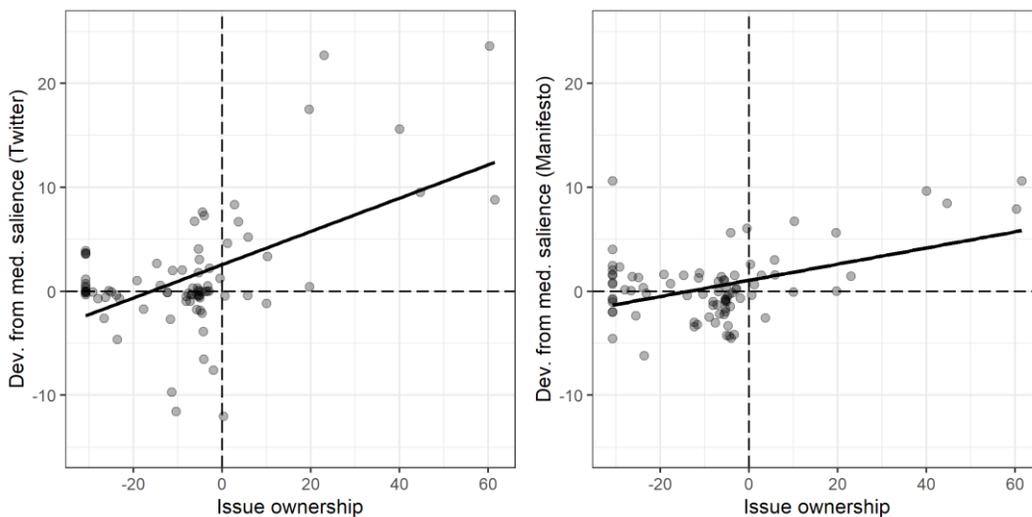
Note: Due to missing values for the ownership of the issues 'Energy' and 'Infrastructure', observations for this issue category are not included in the presented models (N=72).

At first glance, these results provide little support for the idea formulated in H3b that the role of issue ownership plays a more important role for issue emphasis on Twitter than in manifestos. To explore this expectation in more detail, several regression models are estimated. Specifically, fractional logit regressions are employed to ac-

count for the fact that the dependent variable is bound between 0 and 1. Moreover, due to the skewness of the dependent variable shown in the right panel of Figure 8 and potential heteroskedasticity, bootstrapped standard errors are estimated. *First*, separate models are presented to explore the main effect of issue ownership in both data sets. *Second*, interaction effects explore whether the relationship is in fact larger for the case of Twitter. To that end, a product term of issue ownership and a dummy variable indicating the data source is introduced. The dummy variable takes a value of one for Twitter data and a value of zero for manifesto data. Thus, a positive and significant interaction effect would support H3b.

Table 5 shows the results of these models. Model 1 and Model 2, which are based on manifesto content, reveal that ownership is positively related to the salience a party attributes to an issue both in a bivariate setting as well as when controlling for other potentially relevant factors. The same result is found for Twitter data. Issue owner-ship is positively related to the attention a party devotes to it. Again, this holds for the bivariate analysis in Model 3, but also when additional variables are included as shown in Model 4. Model 5 includes an interaction effect between a dummy variable indicating the data source and issue ownership. The interaction effect between issue ownership and the dummy variable is positive as expected in H3b. However, it fails to reach statistical significance.[29] Together with the findings presented in Figure 9, this result refutes H3b.

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[29] The results of a marginal effects plot (not shown) for the interaction effect estimated in Model 5 of Table 5 confirm this finding.

Table 5: Explaining issue salience on Twitter and in party manifestos

	Model 1 (Manifesto)	Model 2 (Manifesto)	Model 3 (Twitter)	Model 4 (Twitter)	Model 5 (Both platforms)
Issue ownership	0.01**	0.02**	0.02**	0.04**	0.02**
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Systemic salience		0.05**		0.10**	0.07**
		(0.01)		(0.01)	(0.01)
Most imp. Issue		0.01		0.01	0.01
		(0.01)		(0.01)	(0.01)
Platform (Twitter = 1)					0.03
					(0.13)
Social media # ownership					0.01+
					(0.01)
Constant	-2.43**	-3.03**	-2.39**	-3.71**	-3.34**
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.15)	(0.17)	(0.13)
Observations	72	72	72	72	144
Pseudo R^2	0.07	0.07	0.20	0.21	0.12
AIC	43	45	43	41	83
BIC	48	54	48	51	101
ll	-19.49	-18.65	-19.56	-16.72	-35.67

Note: The table shows the results of fractional logit regression models with issue salience (proportion) as the dependent variable. Bootstrapped standard errors in parentheses. Due to missing values for the ownership of the issues 'Energy' and 'Infrastructure', observations for this issue category are not included in the presented models. $^+ p < 0.1$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$.

The relationship between issue ownership and issue emphasis is not stronger on Twitter than in party manifestos. Nevertheless, issue emphasis is more concentrated on a low number of very salient issues on the former platform. Does this lead to parties talking more past each other on this platform than in party manifestos, as suggested in H4? Following Sigelman and Buell (2004: 635), issue convergence is analysed to examine this question. While the authors use it exclusively for the analysis of a two party system, Dolezal et al. (2014) have demonstrated that it can also be applied to a multi-party context. It is operationalised as follows:

$$100 - (\sum_{i=1}^{n} |P_A - P_B|)/2$$

The formula is based on the absolute difference of salience scores of two parties, denoted as P_A and P_B, for all n issues under scrutiny. Dividing this measure by two leads to outcomes ranging between 0 and 100. Subtracting these values from 100 al-

lows then to measure similarity instead of dissimilarity (see Sigelman and Buell 2004: 653).[30] Thus, higher values indicate a stronger degree of convergence.

Figure 10 shows the results obtained from this operationalisation of issue convergence for campaign communication on Twitter and in party manifestos. The upper left panel of Figure 10 reveals the degree of issue convergence for each party-pair on Twitter. With values ranging from 51.5 to 83.1, issue convergence varies considerably between the party-pairs. The mean value of issue convergence on Twitter is 63.4. Thus, the overlap in the issues addressed by two given parties on the platform is on average larger than 60 percent. To put these results in a comparative perspective, the upper right panel of Figure 10 shows the same analysis based on the manifestos of the six parties under study. Again, values range substantially from 65.7 to 83.0. Nevertheless, the mean issue convergence, which takes a value of 73.6 for party manifestos, is notably higher than the average value of issue convergence on Twitter. This difference of more than ten percentage points between the two platforms is also statistically significant (t = 3.65; p < 0.01). The results presented in the lower panel of Figure 10, which shows the difference between the convergence scores on Twitter and in manifestos for each party-pair substantiate this finding. Issue convergence is lower on Twitter in 13 out of the 15 party-pairs under scrutiny (black dots) while only two pairs (grey dots) show higher levels of issue convergence on Twitter than in manifestos.

Overall, these findings provide strong evidence for H4. Issue convergence is lower on social media than in party manifestos. However, the presented results do not lead to the conclusion that parties really talk past each other on Twitter. The obtained convergence scores for party communication on Twitter are lower than in the manifestos under study. In addition, they are also lower than values obtained through analyses based on party manifestos in Austria (see Dolezal et al. 2014) and in presidential campaign debates as covered by the media (see Sigelman and Buell 2004). Neverthe-

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[30] According to this formula, an issue convergence score of 70 indicates for instance a 70% overlap in the issues addressed by two given parties.

less, with issue convergence consistently above 50, the analysis reveals that parties' issue agendas provide significant overlap, even on Twitter.

Figure 10: Issue convergence on social media and in party manifestos
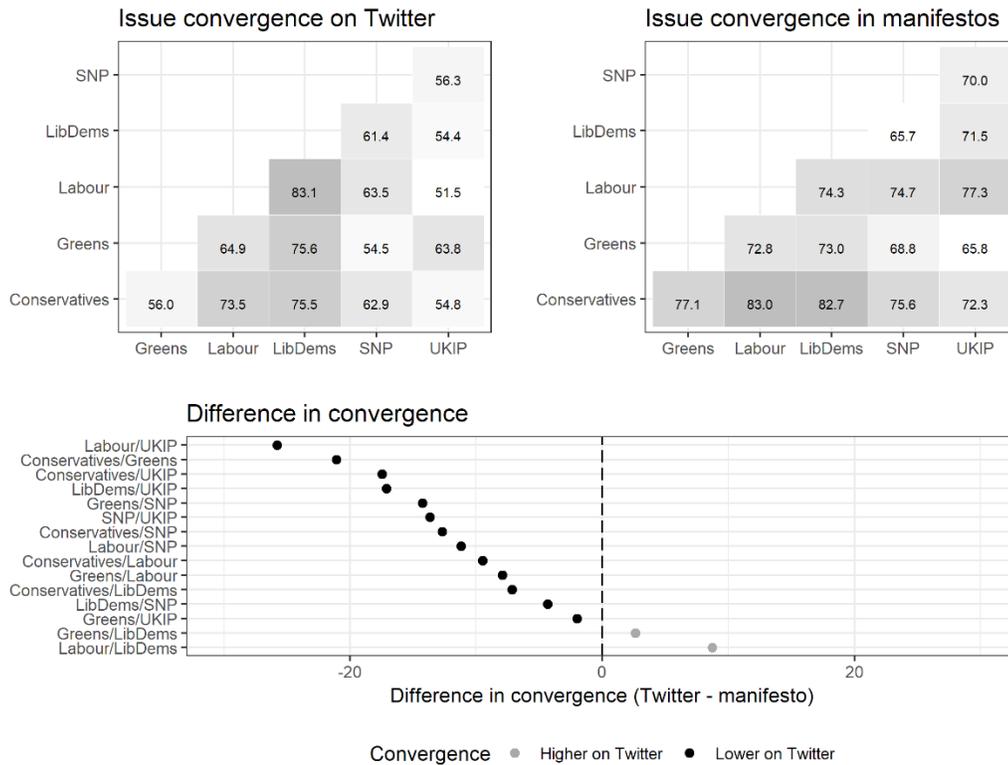
Note: The upper left panel shows issue convergence in Twitter data. The upper right panel shows issue convergence in manifesto data. Darker tiles indicate higher levels convergence. The individual values of issue convergence are shown in each tile. The lower panel shows the difference between the issue convergence scores shown in the panels above for each pair of parties under study (N=15). Since manifesto scores are subtracted from scores obtained from Twitter data, negative values indicate that issue convergence in Twitter data is lower than in manifestos, while positive values indicate that issue convergence in Twitter data is higher than in manifestos.

8.5 Conclusion

Campaigning on social media now makes an essential part of parties' activities during election campaigns (De Sio et al. 2018; Jungherr 2015; Kreiss 2016a; Nulty et al. 2016). This development triggers new questions for the study of party competition. Does party behaviour on social media resemble patterns well-known from existing

studies of other platforms of campaign communication? Or do the technological opportunities these platforms offer lead to different communication strategies?

Focussing on issue competition, this study argues that social media websites enable parties to highlight issues even more strategically than on another crucial platform of issue competition, namely party manifestos. To explore this expectation, this study provides a comparison of Twitter communication and party manifesto content. Four findings stand out. *First*, parties strongly use Twitter for issue competition. *Second*, the diversity of addressed topics is consistently lower for all parties on Twitter than in manifestos. *Third*, this difference in issue diversity cannot be solely attributed to a greater relevance of issue ownership. *Fourth*, issue convergence is considerably lower on social media than in party manifestos.

These findings show that parties use social media very strategically for issue competition. This confirms that such platforms are a valuable data source to study parties' salience strategies (see also De Sio et al. 2018: 1218). Moreover, the findings highlight that the technological opportunities of social media enable political parties to strategically interact with competitors, the media and potential voters. This might particularly strengthen smaller parties with fewer resources and less agenda setting power in public campaign debates covered by the mass media (Enli 2017). This invites future research not only on variation across different social media platforms (Stier et al. 2018) but also on how different types of parties use these websites for issue competition in election campaigns.

9. Put in the Spotlight or Largely Ignored?[31]

Emphasis on the Spitzenkandidaten by political parties in their online campaigns for European elections

Abstract

This article contributes to the debate about the introduction of the Spitzenkandidaten (lead candidates) in the 2014 European Parliament election. Focusing on parties' efforts to make the candidates visible to voters, we argue that the multi-level character of these elections creates large differences concerning individual parties' incentives to promote the Spitzenkandidaten in their campaigns. Analysing a novel dataset of campaign communication on Facebook, we find that only few parties highlighted them, while many did not. In line with our theoretical argument, this variation is systematic and can be attributed to lacking incentives for most parties. Especially nominating a candidate at the European level only has a modest positive effect on national parties' willingness to put the candidates in the spotlight. This lacking commitment to the nominated candidates should be considered in discussions about the reform of the current Spitzenkandidaten system for the 2019 EP elections.

9.1 Introduction

The election for the European Parliament (EP) in 2014 was widely predicted to differ from previous elections (Corbett 2014; Hobolt 2014; Priestley et al. 2015; Treib 2014). For the first time, the major political groups nominated lead candidates (*Spitzenkandidaten*).[32] In line with the Lisbon Treaty, the lead candidate of the winning EP party group should be elected as president of the European Commission. The aim of this institutional change was to trigger publicly visible debates on European topics, in order to better convey the relevance of these elections to voters, increase turnout and thereby tackle the democratic deficit of the European Union (EU).

While the candidate of the *European People's Party* (EPP), Jean-Claude Juncker, which gained the highest share of the vote, became indeed the Commission president, the expected positive effects attributed to this institutional innovation turned out to be modest. On the one hand, the Eurovision debate led to increased cognitive and political involvement and EU support (Maier et al. (2017), knowledge of the launch of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system amplified pro-European and Eurosceptics attitudes (Popa et al. (2016) and the recognition of the *Spitzenkandidaten* had a positive effect on citizens' decision to cast a ballot (Schmitt, Hobolt, and Popa (2015). On the other hand, research reveals low levels of actual media coverage (Schulze 2016), little interest in the televised debate among the candidates (Maier et al. 2017) and voters lacking knowledge about the *Spitzenkandidaten* (Gattermann et al. 2016; Schmitt, Hobolt, and Popa 2015).

How can this discrepancy between the high expectations put in the introduction of a *Spitzenkandidaten* system (see Follesdal and Hix 2006: 557) and the small magnitude of its actual effects in the 2014 EP election be explained? Research indicates that focusing on the role of political parties and their strategic considerations offers an answer to this puzzle (Braun and Popa 2018). In EP elections as well, national political parties are the main political actors (Hix and Lord 1997). Consequently, the expected effects of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system only play out if parties are 'motivated to di-

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[32] Scholars tend to use the German term '*Spitzenkandidaten*' for these lead candidates.

rect voters' attention to the candidates for European Commission President and to the policies that those candidates propose' (Franklin 2014: 10). The crucial question thus is whether the *Spitzenkandidaten* system offers incentives for enough national political parties to make the nominated lead candidates visible to their voters. Braun and Popa (2018) show that the *Spitzenkandidaten* system as an institutional innovation received only little attention in parties' Euromanifestos, mainly because parties saw little strategic reason to emphasize the topic. However, parties' emphasis on the lead candidates as a specific form of campaign personalisation has not been examined so far.

Tackling this research gap, we argue that due to the multiple levels of the electoral system in which EP elections take place, insights gained from national elections, where parties strongly focus on lead candidates, must be reconsidered for EP elections. For this task, we rely on social media, which is not only a crucial place for campaigning, but also among the most likely platforms to observe strategies of personalisation (Enli and Skogerbø 2013). Therefore, a novel dataset of parties' campaign communication on Facebook in 13 EU member countries ahead of the 2014 EP elections is presented to test our expectations empirically.

The analysis reveals systematic variations in parties' emphasis on the *Spitzenkandidaten*. Few parties put the candidates in the spotlight, while others largely ignored them. Most importantly, taking part in the nomination of a candidate has a small positive effect on parties' likelihood to focus on the lead candidates. Only the national party affiliation of a candidate provides a strong incentive to highlight them. These findings indicate that lacking incentives for strategically acting national parties to put the candidates in the spotlight are a major shortcoming of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system that need to be addressed in ongoing reform discussions.

9.2 Why should Political Parties Emphasize the Spitzenkandidaten?

EP elections are characterised by their second order character from the outset up to most recent elections (Reif 1984; Reif and Schmitt 1980; Schmitt and Toygür 2016). With regard to the behaviour of political parties, the second order model implies that the election campaigns have a relatively low salience compared to first order national elections and that parties mainly compete over issues not located at the European but at the national level (see Hix and Marsh 2011: 5). These features of EP elections are closely linked to the debate about the democratic deficit of the EU. Because of the low intensity of electoral competition and the dominance of national issues, voters lack the opportunity of choosing between competing parties with varying positions about the future course of the EU (Follesdal and Hix 2006: 552). The idea behind the introduction of the *Spitzenkandidaten* was to change these aspects of EP elections. Like national elections in parliamentary systems, the vote for a specific party ought to be linked to a lead candidate that aims to become head of the European Commission (Hobolt 2014). It was expected that this would intensify and personalise national parties' election campaigns and thereby strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the EU (Corbett 2014; Follesdal and Hix 2006; Gattermann et al. 2016; Hobolt 2014; Priestley et al. 2015; Treib 2014).

Accordingly, the success of the introduction of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system depends on national parties' decisions to make the candidates visible to voters (see Hobolt 2014: 1535). Focussing on these actors, we argue that parties' decisions to personalize their campaign around the candidates are driven by strategic considerations (Braun and Popa 2018), which are strongly shaped by the interaction of national and EU related factors (Golder et al. 2017; Van der Eijk and Schmitt 2008). Parties seek to enhance their electoral fortunes not only when it comes to policy issues (e.g., De Sio and Weber 2014; Hobolt and de Vries 2015; Wagner and Meyer 2014), but also with regard to efforts of personalisation (Enli and Skogerbø 2013; Kriesi 2012; Van Aelst et al. 2011). However, due to the peculiarities of the multi-level electoral system in which EP elections take place, focussing on the *Spitzenkandidaten* is not assumed to be an equally attractive strategy for all parties. Rather, the analogical argu-

ment that EP elections after the introduction of *Spitzenkandidaten* will generally be characterised by a strong personalisation around the lead candidates – as found in national elections – must be reconsidered. Therefore, specific hypotheses to explain variation in party behaviour towards the *Spitzenkandidaten* are derived in the following sections.

Candidate Nomination

Many national parties participated in the nomination of a candidate to become the Commission president via their EP party groups. Similar to parties in national parliamentary campaigns, the party groups publicly announced the candidate for the Commission presidency in case of their party group winning the largest vote share (Corbett 2014; Hobolt 2014). For instance, the parties in the *European People's Party* (EPP) chose Jean-Claude Juncker at their transnational congress in Dublin, whereas those in the *Party of European Socialists* (PES) opted for Martin Schulz. Similar to national election campaigns, where lead candidates receive a remarkable share of attention (Kriesi 2012; Poguntke and Webb 2005), it is expected that the parties taking part in the nomination of the candidate focus more on the *Spitzenkandidaten* in their campaign communications for EP elections. Such parties can mobilise voters by arguing that casting a ballot is not only a vote to influence the composition of the EP but also on who should become the next president of the European Commission (see also Hobolt 2014: 1529). Therefore, they can claim that the slogan '[t]his time it's different'[33] particularly holds when voting for them.

Due to the generally low turnout of second-order elections, the mobilization of supporters is particularly important. Thus, such parties are likely to take advantage of the introduction of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system. However, this strategy of voter-mobilization only works if the parties' potential voters are aware of the nominated *Spitzenkandidaten* (see also Schmitt, Hobolt, and Popa 2015). We therefore expect parties that took part in the nomination procedure to make the candidate visible to

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[33] Slogan used in November 2013 on the EP homepage (http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/top-stories/20130902TST18451/this-time-it's-different, last 19.09.2017).

their voters in their campaign communications and consequently to contribute more to drawing attention to the *Spitzenkandidaten* in the EP elections than others.

H1: *Parties that nominated a candidate put more emphasis on the Spitzenkandidaten than other parties (Nomination hypothesis).*

Voters' EU positions and parties' ideological congruence with their candidates

Moreover, we expect that the positive effect of nominating a candidate is moderated by the position of a party's supporters on European integration. As recent research supports the assumption of a link between parties and voters also at the EU level (Adams et al. 2014), the described strategy of voter-mobilization is particularly promising for a party when it can be sure that its voters are mostly pro-European. In this case, the parties are likely to approve measures to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the EU, such as the introduction of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system. Emphasizing one's own candidate is then a credible signal of one's commitment to this goal. Therefore, such behaviour is more likely to be observed, the more pro-European the voters of parties, which participated in nominating a candidate, are.

H2: *The positive effect of nominating a candidate on the party's emphasis on the Spitzenkandidaten is stronger the more pro-European their voters are (Voter position hypothesis).*

For parties that nominated a candidate, ideological congruence is expected to be crucial as well, as not all parties within a party group are equally close to that candidate. For instance, while the German *Christian Democrats* (CDU) and the Hungarian *Fidesz* both belong to the EPP, the CDU is much closer to Jean-Claude Juncker, the party group's candidate, when it comes to European integration. Parties with a close fit between their own position and their candidate's stance have fewer difficulties to introduce her or him to its voters as a representative of the party's own positions at the European level. A larger ideological congruence is therefore expected to result in more attention towards the *Spitzenkandidaten*. Although EU issues have gained rele-

vance (Hutter et al. 2016), the left-right dimension is still a crucial conflict line as well (e.g., Dalton et al. 2011). We therefore examine this effect in terms of both dimensions.

H3: *The closer the link between the candidate and the national party on the EU and the left-right dimension, the more emphasis parties put on the Spitzenkandidaten (Congruence hypothesis).*

National party affiliation of the candidates

Although many parties have participated in nominating a candidate, their individual relationships with her or him vary. Above all, each candidate was affiliated to only one of the national parties (e.g. the PES candidate, Martin Schulz, was affiliated to the German *Social Democratic Party* (SPD) and the EPP candidate, Jean-Claude Juncker, to the *Christian Social People's Party* (CSV) from Luxembourg). This pattern creates a stronger incentive for these parties to use the candidate as a campaign tool than for others. Parties directly affiliated with the *Spitzenkandidaten* can mobilise voters with the argument that a candidate from their national party (and not merely the EP group they belong to) could become president of the European Commission. Accordingly, these parties have a strong incentive to communicate this argument to mobilise their supporters and, ultimately, maximise their electoral fortunes. We therefore expect the national parties affiliated with a candidate to provide a higher share of attention to the *Spitzenkandidaten*.

H4: *National parties to which a candidate belongs to put more emphasis on the Spitzenkandidaten than other parties (National party affiliation hypothesis).*

Candidates' country of origin

The literature on party behaviour shows that parties are very sensitive to the actions of their competitors. Concerning issue competition, parties strongly focus on the party system agenda, when deciding, which topics to emphasise or downplay during

electoral contests (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015, 2010; Meyer and Wagner 2016). As a result, the degree to which they converge on the same issues is a striking feature of party competition (Dolezal et al. 2014; Sigelman and Buell 2004). Such patterns are also found in studies that particularly focus on the issue of European integration (Hoeglinger 2015; Steenbergen and Scott 2004).

This is an important insight regarding parties' emphasis on the *Spitzenkandidaten*, as it indicates that parties can mutually influence each other's behaviour and make them address topics they would not have chosen to talk about otherwise. Accordingly, parties in national party systems that are confronted with a competitor, who strongly emphasises one of the *Spitzenkandidaten,* might react on this move. On the one hand, this can be done by addressing the same candidate. If one party in the national party system strongly highlights the skills or policy positions of its own candidate, others might react by attacking this candidate. In this case, one party's emphasis on a lead candidate would cause other parties to pay attention to that candidate as well by engaging in negative campaigning (Walter and Vliegenthart 2010). On the other hand, one party's *Spitzenkandidaten* campaign can also lead to other parties emphasizing a candidate from their own party group to introduce an alternative lead candidate to the voters. Both reactions result in more attention towards the *Spitzenkandidaten.* If a candidate's national party affiliation exerts a strong positive effect on another party's motivation to put its candidate in the spotlight as argued in H4, a contagious effect of party communication about the *Spitzenkandidaten* is most likely to be observed in the home countries of at least one of the candidates.

> H5: *Parties in the home countries of the candidates put more emphasis on the Spitzenkandidaten than parties in other countries (Home country hypothesis).*

9.3 Design of the Study

We focus on party behaviour on social media during the campaign for the 2014 EP election in 13 EU member states to test the outlined hypotheses. In the following, the choice of data source, the selection of countries and parties and the operationalization of the variables used in the study are discussed.

Using social media data to study parties' emphasis on the Spitzenkandidaten
The decision to use social media data is driven by three considerations. First, online campaigning via social media has become a crucial aspect during electoral contests (Gibson 2015; Jungherr 2016; Oelsner and Heimrich 2015). EP elections are no exception in this regard. Although online tools were used modestly during the 2009 EP elections (Lilleker et al. 2011; Vergeer et al. 2011), parties and politicians strongly rely on these websites to get their message out only five years later in the 2014 EP elections (Nulty et al. 2016; Rodriguez and Madariaga 2016). Second, social media allows studying direct party communication, which is not mediated by gatekeepers (Engesser et al. 2017). Third, while election manifestos are mainly characterised by their policy-oriented nature (Dolezal et al. 2014), social media is more open with regard to the messages that parties communicate. Moreover, research shows that it is actively used for strategies of personalization (Enli and Skogerbø 2013). Thus, if parties aimed at addressing the *Spitzenkandidaten*, it is most likely to be observed in their election campaign on social media.

We therefore rely on data from the social media platform Facebook. The website is used by almost all parties in the EU, especially during electoral contests. This allows a study of the campaigning strategies across countries and political parties. We retrieve all Facebook posts on parties' official accounts for a two-month period ahead of the election using the *Rfacebook* package for R (Barberá et al. 2017).

Selection of Countries and Parties

The countries included in the study are *Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom*. This sample consists of countries from different regions and covers most of the founding members of the European Community, as well as countries that joined the EU in the subsequent enlargement rounds. Moreover, the parties within this sample show significant variations regarding their relationship to the *Spitzenkandidaten* and the voters they represent. The sample consequently provides a broad testing ground for our hypotheses. We focus on all national parties included in the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) (Polk et al. 2017) that gained at least five percent of the national vote in the 2014 EP election. The appendix provides an overview of the parties and social media accounts included in the study (Table 30).

Operationalization

The dependent variable in our analysis is a measurement of the emphasis that parties put on the *Spitzenkandidaten* in their social media communication in the run-up for the 2014 EP elections. For this purpose, individual text messages downloaded from the Facebook accounts of the parties covered in the study serve as the unit of analysis. For each message, we differentiate between observations mentioning one or more of the *Spitzenkandidaten* (1) and those that do not (0). On the one hand, we use this coding to calculate percentage shares of messages, showing the degree to which parties refer to the *Spitzenkandidaten* in a descriptive analysis. On the other hand, the indicator itself serves as the dependent variable in the multivariate part of the analysis. Further information on the coding procedure is provided in the appendix.

To test the hypothesis that parties put more emphasis on the *Spitzenkandidaten* when they took part in nominating an individual candidate (H1), we construct a dummy variable indicating whether the party belonged to an EP party group that nominated a candidate (1) or not (0). In order to test whether this relationship is moderated by voters' position on European integration (H2), data from the European Election Study

(EES) (see Schmitt, Hobolt, Popa, et al. 2015) is used to calculate the mean position on European integration for the voters of each party. The congruence between a party and the candidate it nominated (H3) on the topic of European integration and the left-right dimension is measured as the absolute value of the difference between its own position and the stance of the candidate's party based on data from the CHES 2014 data set (Polk et al. 2017). Hence, higher values indicate lower congruence. To explore variation in the emphasis on the *Spitzenkandidaten* driven by the national party affiliation of the candidates (H4), we construct a dummy variable that differentiates between national parties to which one of the *Spitzenkandidaten* belongs (1) and other parties (0). For instance, this variable is zero for all German parties except for the SPD and the Greens, as Martin Schulz (SPD) and Ska Keller (Greens) were lead candidates and affiliated with these national parties. Moreover, a dummy variable differentiates between the home countries of at least one of the *Spitzenkandidaten* (1) and the other countries included in the study (0) to test H5.

In addition, we include several control variables in our analysis. We add an ascending variable for the campaign day on which a message was published and control for the fact that individual messages vary in their length, which could have an impact on the probability of mentioning a lead candidate, by including the log-transformed number of characters a message contains. Moreover, we account for the fact that a higher attention on the *Spitzenkandidaten* might be driven by parties' greater focus on European issues using EU salience scores from the CHES 2014 data set (see Polk et al. 2017). From this data source, we also include a variable capturing a party's general left-right orientation, a dummy variable indicating a party's participation in the national government during the time of the election campaign, and a variable for a party's vote share. Further details about the variables used in the analysis and descriptive statistics are provided in Table 31 in the appendix.

9.4 Results

We present our main findings in two steps. First, we provide a descriptive analysis of party behaviour on Facebook during the campaign for the 2014 EP elections with a special focus on the level and the distribution of our dependent variable – parties' emphasis on the *Spitzenkandidaten*. Second, we test our hypotheses to explain variation in the attention on the candidates in their campaign communications.

To begin with, it is important to note that the parties of all countries under study strongly relied on Facebook during the campaign (Figure 11, upper left panel). On average, parties posted 198 messages in the two months before the election (see Table 30 in the appendix for details). Moreover, the platform was indeed used to address issues related to the EP election in this period with an average share of 32.8 percent Figure 11 (lower left panel). Despite considerable variation between countries, the possibility that a lack of emphasis on the *Spitzenkandidaten* is simply the consequence of a low engagement in campaigning in general can therefore largely be ruled out.

To explore the prominence of the *Spitzenkandidaten* in parties' campaign communications, Figure 11 (right panel) shows the percentage shares of attention that individual parties devoted to them on Facebook in the two months before the election. Two important aspects stand out. On the one hand, the mean level of attention on the candidates is very low, as indicated by the vertical dashed line. On average, only 2.9 percent of parties' Facebook posts mention at least one of the *Spitzenkandidaten*. On the other hand, the distribution of attention is highly uneven. Most parties devoted little or no attention to the *Spitzenkandidaten*, whereas a few parties – like the German social democrats or the French communist party – strongly focused on them. Taken together, these findings provide strong evidence that the introduction of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system did not automatically lead parties to highlight them to a similar degree. In contrast, few parties emphasised them strongly, while many others did not.

Figure 11: Attention on EP elections and Spitzenkandidaten
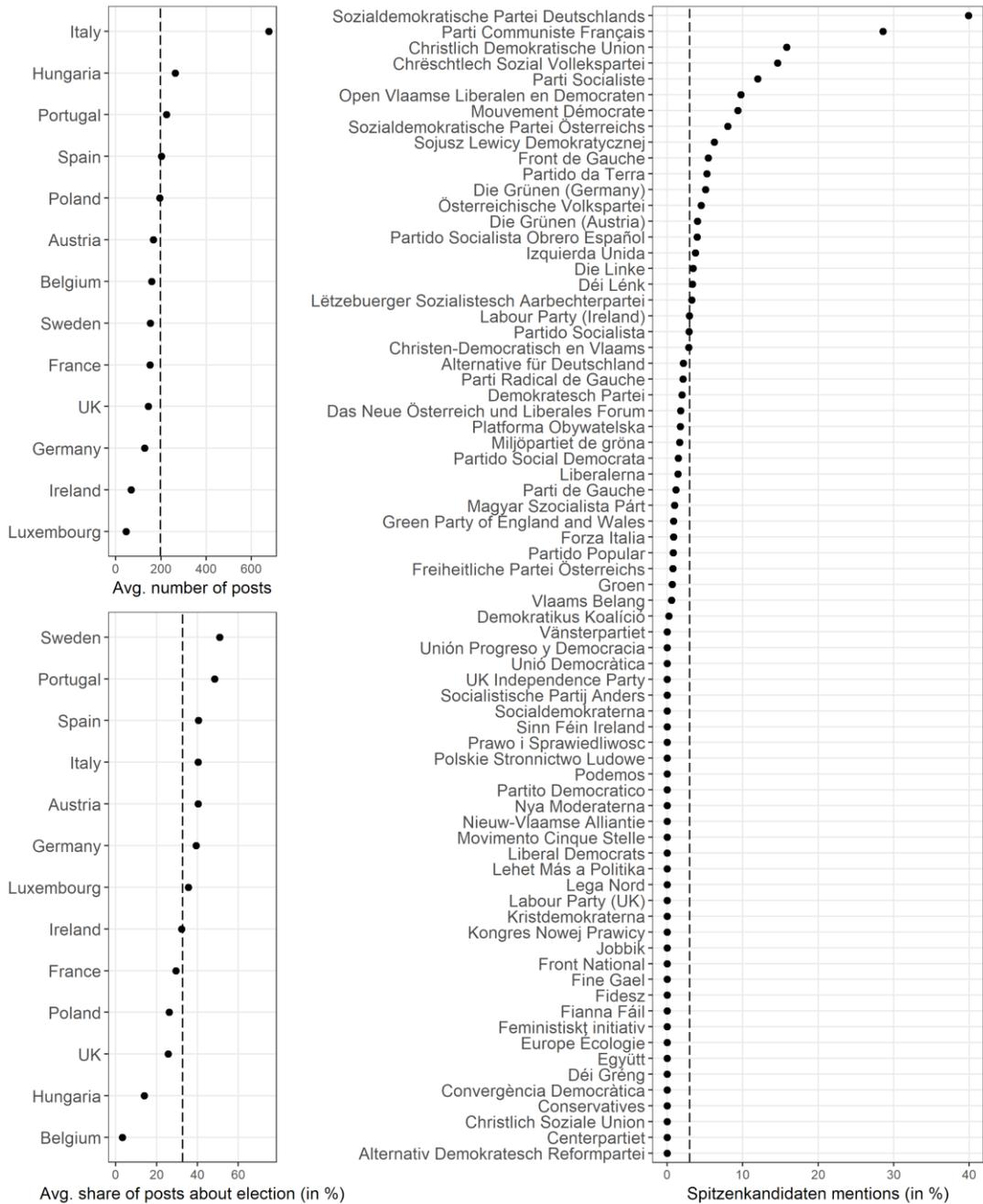
Note: The upper left-hand panel shows the mean number of observations over parties in a given country; the lower left-hand panel shows the mean share of observations on the EP election for all parties in a country. The dashed lines represent the mean values calculated over countries (N=13). In the right-hand panel, the dots show the share of Facebook posts that mention one of the *Spitzenkandidaten*. The vertical dashed line represents the mean share of attention over all parties (N=73).

In the next step, we explore whether the observed differences in parties' emphasis on the *Spitzenkandidaten* feature systematic variations that can be attributed to the strategic considerations formulated in our hypotheses. For this task, we estimate logistic regression models treating mentions of the candidates and the overall institutional innovation in individual messages on the parties' Facebook accounts as the dependent variable.[34]

The results of this analysis are reported in Table 6. First, as shown in Model 1, nominating a candidate is positively related to the attention parties devoted to the *Spitzenkandidaten* in their campaign communications. This initial support for the nomination hypothesis (H1) also holds true when controlling for other relevant factors as shown in Model 8. Second, in line with H2, the analysis reveals a positive and significant interaction effect between nominating a candidate and the position of a party's voters as shown in Model 2. This suggests that the positive effect of nominating a candidate is stronger the more pro-European a party's voters are. Third, the negative coefficients for the congruence between a party and the candidate it nominated on European integration and the left-right dimension reported in Model 3 to Model 5, which are based on all messages from parties that took part in the nomination of a candidate, are in line with H3. However, it must be noted that this effect is only statistically significant for the left-right dimension. Fourth, we find a positive effect for the party affiliation hypothesis (H4). In the bivariate setting of Model 6 and in the fully-specified regression in Model 8, national parties to which a candidate belonged, put more emphasis on the *Spitzenkandidaten*. Moreover, the analysis provides only limited support for the home country hypothesis (H5). In the bivariate setting of Model 7, we find a positive and significant association between the candidates' countries of origin and the attention paid to the *Spitzenkandidaten*, but when we control for the influence of other variables in Model 8, this effect disappears.[35]

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[34] We also estimated models with alternative specifications. Using multi-level models with observations nested in countries and parties leads to the same conclusions as presented in the paper (see Table 32 in the appendix).

[35] All our hypotheses make claims about the overall attention parties devote to the *Spitzenkandidaten*. However, one might argue that the mechanisms behind the derived hypotheses lead to the expectation

Table 6: Examining variation in parties' emphasis on the Spitzenkandidaten

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Nominated	2.29***	-1.36						1.91***
	(0.41)	(1.66)						(0.52)
Nominated #		0.57*						
Position (voters)		(0.27)						
Congruence (EU)			-1.22		-0.12			
			(0.91)		(0.24)			
Congruence (LR)				-1.25*	-0.88**			
				(0.58)	(0.28)			
National Party		1.91***			1.49**	3.06***		1.90***
affiliation		(0.49)			(0.54)	(0.41)		(0.48)
Home country		0.87			1.05		1.81**	0.87
		(0.57)			(0.74)		(0.63)	(0.59)
Position (voters)		-0.35			0.36**			0.10
		(0.32)			(0.13)			(0.20)
EU salience		0.29			0.21			0.32*
		(0.16)			(0.20)			(0.16)
Left-right		-0.30***			-0.37***			-0.27***
		(0.07)			(0.08)			(0.07)
Gov. party		0.67*			0.33			0.52*
		(0.29)			(0.24)			(0.27)
Vote share		-0.71			-0.04			-1.17
		(2.09)			(2.30)			(2.04)
Length of		0.32***			0.29***			0.31***
message		(0.05)			(0.06)			(0.05)
Campaign day		0.02***			0.02**			0.02**
		(0.01)			(0.01)			(0.01)
Constant	-5.35***	-7.26***	-2.55***	-2.41***	-7.97***	-4.12***	-4.42***	-10.00***
	(0.43)	(2.51)	(0.61)	(0.58)	(2.09)	(0.32)	(0.37)	(2.19)
N	11,747	11,747	6,685	6,685	6,685	11,747	11,747	11,747
Pseudo R^2	0.07	0.07	0.04	0.05	0.24	0.17	0.08	0.23

Note*:* Results show coefficients of logistic regression models with *Spitzenkandidaten* mentions as the dependent variable. Standard errors clustered by country in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

These findings provide initial support for four of our five hypotheses. However, given the large variation in party attention to the *Spitzenkandidaten* shown in Figure 11, the relevance of the presented findings strongly depends on the size of the estimated ef-

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that a party only or particularly emphasises a specific candidate. Running the same analyses with dependent variables which are sensitive to attention towards specific candidates, corroborates that the mechanisms suggested in our hypotheses are responsible for the effects presented in our main findings (see Table 33 in the appendix).

fects. Figure 12 provides a more detailed analysis. Calculating predicted probabilities of mentioning the *Spitzenkandidaten* for parties that nominated a candidate and others that did not (H1) reveals that the former group is more likely to emphasize them in their campaign communications as shown in panel A of Figure 12. However, while this difference is statistically significant, it must be noted that the difference in the predicted probability of mentioning a candidate for a party that nominated one and a party that did not is extremely small (0.9 percentage points). Moreover, the predicted probability of mentioning a candidate is only 1.1 per cent, even when the party nominated a candidate. Therefore, nominating a lead candidate exerts a positive and statistically significant effect on mentioning the *Spitzenkandidaten* that is, however, very small.

Turning to the interaction effect between the nomination of a candidate and voters' position on European integration (H2), panel B of Figure 12 shows whether candidate nomination causes parties to emphasise the *Spitzenkandidaten* more, depending on their voters' position towards Europe. With higher scores on the x-axis indicating more pro-European positions, the analysis reveals that nominating a candidate makes no significant difference for parties' attention on the *Spitzenkandidaten* when their voters show low levels of EU support. In contrast, in the case of parties with more pro-European electorates, there is a positive effect. It is concluded that especially parties with a pro-European electorate that nominated a candidate emphasise the *Spitzenkandidaten*. Nevertheless, also this effect should not be overstated.

The predicted probability of mentioning a *Spitzenkandidaten* depending on the congruence between a party and the candidate it nominated (H3) on the EU and the left-right dimension are shown in panel C and panel D of Figure 12. Regarding the EU dimension, no difference in the probability of mentioning a candidate can be found, while parties with very similar positions as the candidates they nominated on the left-right dimension have a higher probability of mentioning a candidate. Thus, we find modest support for H3 when looking at the left-right dimension, but not for the case of the EU dimension.

Figure 12: Driving forces of mentioning the Spitzenkandidaten
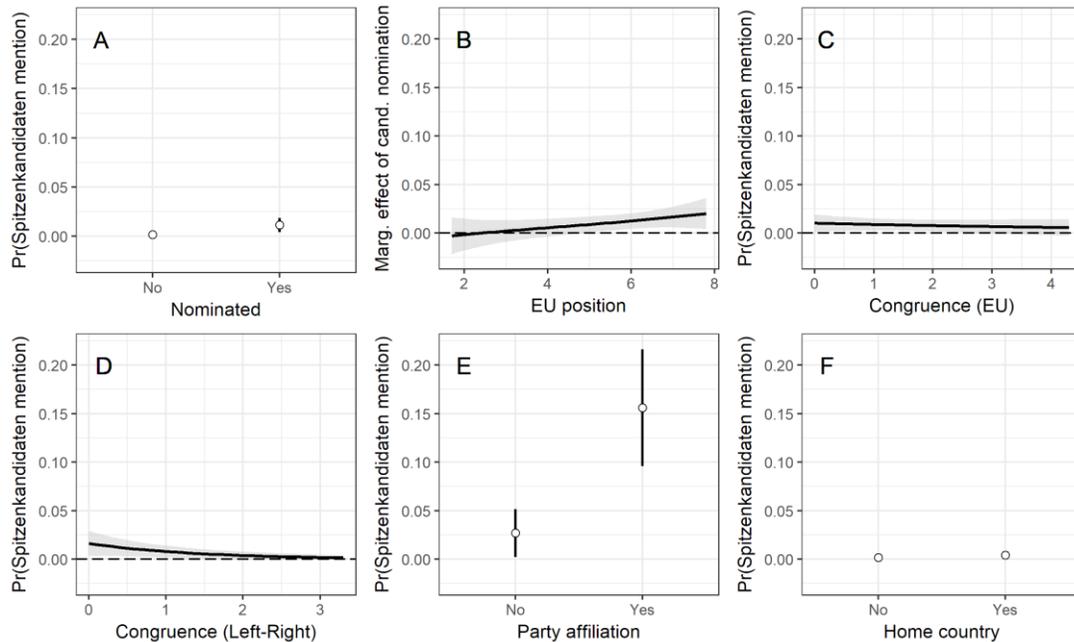
Note*:* Panels A, E and F show the predicted probabilities of mentioning a candidate in a given message based on Model 8 in Table 6. Panel B shows the marginal effect of candidate nomination based on Model 2 in Table 6. Panel C and D show predicted probabilities of mentioning a candidate based on Model 5. Bars and shaded areas in all panels represent the confidence intervals at the 95 percent level.

Focussing on the predicted probabilities for parties to which one of the *Spitzenkandidaten* belongs and parties for which this is not the case (H4), reveals statistically significant and substantial differences. As reported in panel E of Figure 12, when holding all continuous variables at their means and all other dummy variables except the home country variable at 0, the predicted probability of mentioning a candidate in an individual message is 2.7 percent. However, this variable takes a value of 15.6 percent when a candidate is affiliated to the national party. This remarkable difference in attention towards the *Spitzenkandidaten* provides evidence that national party affiliation has a strong effect on a party's incentive to put the spotlight on the *Spitzenkandidaten*.

In contrast, there is no evidence for an influencing effect of the strong emphasis of parties to which a lead candidate belongs on other parties in the national party system (H5). The predicted probabilities of mentioning a candidate for a party from the home

country of one of the candidates and other parties for which this is not the case are both extremely low as shown in panel F of Figure 12. Moreover, the estimates do not differ significantly from each other. Hence, there is no evidence that parties in general made the *Spitzenkandidaten* more visible to their voters in countries where at least one of the candidates comes from.

9.5 Conclusion

The introduction of *Spitzenkandidaten* was expected to ease the second order character of EP elections (Follesdal and Hix 2006: 557). However, research shows that the actual effects of this institutional arrangement introduced in the 2014 EP elections turned out to be modest. Based on the assumption that these expected positive effects depend on national parties' efforts to promote not only the institutional change itself (see Braun and Popa 2018), but in particular to make the candidates visible to voters, this article explores their willingness to emphasise them in their online election campaign via Facebook.

Our findings clearly show that the overall attention that parties devoted to the *Spitzenkandidaten* by national parties was very low on average with few remarkable exceptions. Although parties were strongly engaged in campaigning, many remained silent on the lead candidates. This result fits with other research on the introduction of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system. The low average attention on the candidates, even on a platform where parties usually strongly rely on personalization strategies, is very much in line with other scholars' impression that most parties made little efforts to put the *Spitzenkandidaten* in the spotlight of their campaigns (Corbett 2014; Hobolt 2014) and with the results reported by Braun and Popa (2018) who show that the institutional innovation of the *Spitzenkandidaten system* was reluctantly addressed in parties' Euromanifestos.

Another crucial insight from this study is that the interplay between strategically acting parties on the one hand and the constraints of the multi-level character of EP elections on the other is a key factor for explaining why the *Spitzenkandidaten* were not

able to make a difference in the 2014 EP elections. The presented results illustrate that only the national party affiliation of a candidate leads to a strong emphasis on the Spitzenkandidaten. Other factors have a positive effect as well, as for example the participation in the nomination of a candidate or a party's ideological congruence with its candidate. Nevertheless, the scope of these factors is limited. It must therefore be concluded that the idea behind the introduction of *Spitzenkandidaten* to strengthen the relevance of these elections collides with most parties' strategic considerations to make the candidates visible to voters.

These findings have two important implications. First, concerning future EP elections, it is indicated that if the institutional setting of *Spitzenkandidaten* is to be maintained, not only the role of the media (see Gattermann et al. 2016; Maier et al. 2017), but also the role of the national political parties needs to be reconsidered. Especially the nomination procedure of the lead candidates via the EP party groups is far from being a strong and credible commitment of the parties to promote them.

Second, in more general terms, the study provides evidence on the context sensitivity of party competition. Insights gained from party competition at the national level do not necessarily apply to the EU level (see also Spoon and Klüver 2014). The introduction of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system seeks to make 'European elections similar to parliamentary elections in national democracies' (Hobolt 2014: 1529). But our findings illustrate that the EU multi-level system 'is not simply a national political system writ large' (Ladrech 2015: 586). Unlike national elections, where parties personalise their campaigns by putting the lead candidates on the centre stage (Kriesi 2012; Poguntke and Webb 2005), this was not the case in the 2014 EP elections. Thus, the introduction of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system shows that transferring insights from the national to the EU level is risky. Research on electoral politics in the EU therefore benefit from a multi-level perspective (see Laffan 2016) which takes the complex interactions and repercussions between the national and the European level into account.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Politicising Immigration in Western Europe

In this appendix, we provide additional information about the elections included in our analysis and on the classification of parties, namely challenger parties, moderate right parties and moderate left parties and the operationalization of the variables used in the study. Moreover, additional empirical analyses are presented.

Overview of national elections covered by our dataset

Table 7 gives an overview of the national elections covered by our dataset in each country. Our focus is on national parliamentary elections in all countries except for France, where we considered the first round of the presidential elections.

Table 7: Elections covered in the analysis

Country	Benchmark election	Elections included
Austria*	1975	1994, 1999, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2013
UK	1974	1992, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010, 2015
France**	1978	1988, 1995, 2002, 2007, 2012, 2017
Germany	1976	1994, 1998, 2002, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2017
Netherlands	1972	1994, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2010, 2012
Switzerland	1975	1991, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011

* In the Austrian case, the snap election of 1995 is not included.

** In the French case, data on the parliamentary election in 1978 was collected for the 1970s. The election in 1988 is the first presidential election included in our sample.

*** Most recent elections in Austria (2017), the Netherlands (2017), Switzerland (2015) and the United Kingdom (2017) are not included in the analysis since no manifesto data is available yet for these elections.

Coding of parties into party types and party families

Table 8 summarizes our categorisation of challenger parties, moderate right parties and moderate left parties. While the classification of moderate left parties creates no problems in the countries covered by our study, the classification of four parties deserves further explanation: the Swiss Radical Party (*Freisinn-Demokratische Partei*; FDP), the Dutch Liberal Party (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie,* VVD), the Swiss People's Party (*Schweizerische Volkspartei*; SVP) and the Austrian Freedom Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*; FPÖ). The Swiss FDP is the most delicate case. Being in government since the late 19th century and holding moderate policy positions, good reasons exist for including it in the category of mainstream parties. We follow conventional classifications in the literature and exclude it (see, e.g., Meguid 2005; Wagner 2012). We checked the consequences of this classification with our data and found that including this party would make no difference. The Dutch VVD is another critical case. Being a liberal party on economic and cultural issues in the post-war decades, it has accommodated to a restrictive position on immigration in the last two decades. Since it has done so less consistently and in an opportunistic rather than ideological way, we include this party in the category of moderate right mainstream parties. This is again in line with previous classifications (Meguid 2005; Wagner 2012). The Swiss SVP and the Austrian FPÖ also raise some classification problems. These parties have been in government for longer periods, thus violating the first criterion of a challenger party.[36] However, both parties represent mainstream parties which have radically transformed their ideological profiles on issues such as immigration and European integration in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Because of their ideological stance and the role they have played in domestic politics in the last two decades, they can both be considered radical right challenger parties. For this reason, they are consistently included in the family of new radical populist right parties in the scholarly literature (Kitschelt 1995; Kriesi et al. 2008; Mudde 2007). They certainly meet the second criterion of a challenger party and we therefore include them in the category of challenger parties as well.

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[36] The Swiss SVP has held political office in the entire period of this study. The Austrian FPÖ was in government from 1983 until 1986 and from 2000 until 2006.

Table 8: Coding of parties per country

	Challenger parties	*Mainstream parties*	
	Radical right	Moderate left	Moderate right
Austria	FPÖ, BZÖ	SPÖ	ÖVP
UK	UKIP	Labour	Conservatives
France	FN	PS	UDF, RPR/UMP
Germany	AfD	SPD	CDU/CSU
Netherlands	LPF, PVV	PVDA	CDA, VVD
Switzerland	SVP	SP	CVP

Operationalisation of salience, polarisation and politicization

To study the politicization of immigration, we opt for data on political contestation during election campaigns collected from the mass media to analyse party behaviour in public election debates. This data on public election debates is taken from projects led by Hanspeter Kriesi and Edgar Grande (Kriesi 2016; Kriesi et al. 2012; Kriesi et al. 2008). It is based on quantitative content analysis of newspaper articles. For each country, a quality newspaper and a tabloid newspaper were chosen. The newspapers included are: *Die Presse & Kronenzeitung* (Austria); *Le Monde & Le Parisien* (France); *Süddeutsche Zeitung & Bild* (Germany); *NRC Handelsblad & Algemen Dagblad* (Netherlands); *The Times & The Sun* (UK); *Neue Zürcher Zeitung & Blick* (Switzerland). Articles referring to politics were selected and subsequently coded using the core sentence approach, a method developed by Kleinnijenhuis and Pennings (2001). It treats 'core sentences', which consist of a relation between a sub-ject (party actors) and an object (issues) as the unit of analysis. The approach allows building an issue category on immigration which comprises of all statements of party actors on immigration and integration policies.

In line with the scholarly literature (De Wilde 2011; Hutter and Grande 2014), we conceptualise politicization as a multi-faceted process which includes both the public

visibility of conflict (i.e., its salience) and the polarisation of actors on a contentious issue. Following Hutter and Grande (2014), Hutter et al. (2016) and Hoeglinger (2016), we measure politicization of the immigration issue in election campaigns by multiplying the *salience* of the issue with its degree of *polarisation*.[37] This literature shows for European integration issues that these two dimensions of politicization are independent and that multiplying them provides meaningful results. This is confirmed by our own data, in which both dimensions of politicization are uncorrelated (r = -0.03, t = -0.16), i.e., they measure different aspects of politicization. Both variables are measured at the *systemic level* (i.e. at the level of the overall party system) and are then multiplied to arrive at an overall indicator of politicization.

Salience in this context refers to the visibility of the immigration issue in relation to other issues in an election campaign. Accordingly, the indicator is operationalised as the percentage share of core sentences on immigration compared to the number of all observations during an election.

Polarisation is measured as the positional variance between parties about the immigration issue. To ensure that the position of relevant parties has a greater influence on the indicator than that of small and less relevant parties, we weight this variable by the visibility of individual parties (Hutter and Grande 2014: 1008). The coded positions range from -1 to 1 (with three intermediate categories), which means that the polarisation between parties can take values between 0 and 1 with the latter indicating a maximum of polarisation.

Overview of politicization scores by country

Table 9 gives detailed information about the mean values of our politicization indicator and its individual components (salience and polarization) by country for the period from 1990 until 2017. To facilitate interpretation, we include additional information such as mean values for the entire period.

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[37] We do not include 'actor expansion', a third dimension of politicisation (see Hutter and Grande (2014), in our analysis because it is inherently associated with our main explanatory variable, namely issue entrepreneurship of challenger parties.

Table 9: Politicization of immigration in national elections

Country	Politicization	Salience	Polarisation
Austria	2.57	6.81	0.36
UK	0.83	5.03	0.19
Germany	3.18	8.15	0.42
Netherlands	2.51	6.70	0.38
Switzerland	2.37	6.81	0.36
France	3.46	11.78	0.2
maximum	6.77	19.70	0.76
minimum	0.00	0.84	0.00
mean	2.34	7.51	0.32

Additional analyses on the dimensions of politicization (salience and polarization)

The focus of the article rests on the politicization of immigration. Our main dependent variable is the national level of politicization of immigration issues. Our conceptualisation of politicization emphasizes political conflict, the "scope of conflict" more specifically, and refers to the "dynamics of the expansion of the scope of political conflict" (Schattschneider 1975 [1960]: 16). It assumes that politicization is a multifaceted process and focuses on the public visibility of conflict (i.e., its salience) and the polarisation of actors on an issue. Here, we provide additional insights on these two components of politicization (i.e., salience and polarization) and the issue entrepreneurship of the party types and families under scrutiny.

Figure 13 and Figure 14 show the results of our analysis for individual dimensions of politicization, namely salience and polarization. These analyses provide additional insights into the development and the national patterns of politicization. A comparison of both figures reveals that politicization has been clearly driven by polarization. Polarisation has been above average in every country in most of the elections. We observe marked peaks in Germany in the 1990s, in France in 2002 and in the Netherlands in 2012. The trend line in the case of polarisation is less clear. Polarisation has been increasing in most countries compared to the 1970s with two remarkable exceptions, namely France and Switzerland, where polarisation was strong in the 1970s already. Figure 13 also shows an increasing salience of immigration issues. In contrast, we find less elections in which salience is clearly above average, and these elections are distributed across the entire period of our study.

In sum, immigration has been a low salient but highly polarising issue in comparison to other issues in national elections. Because of its strong polarising force, the immigration issue seems to be ideally suited for politicization.

Figure 13: The salience of immigration in national elections per country
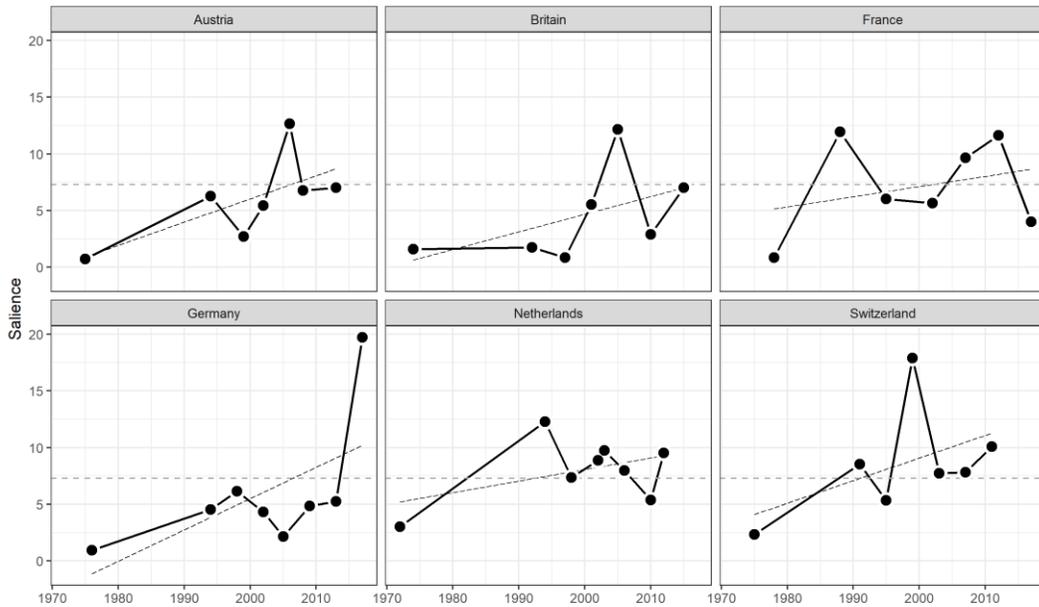
Figure 14: The polarisation of immigration in national elections per country
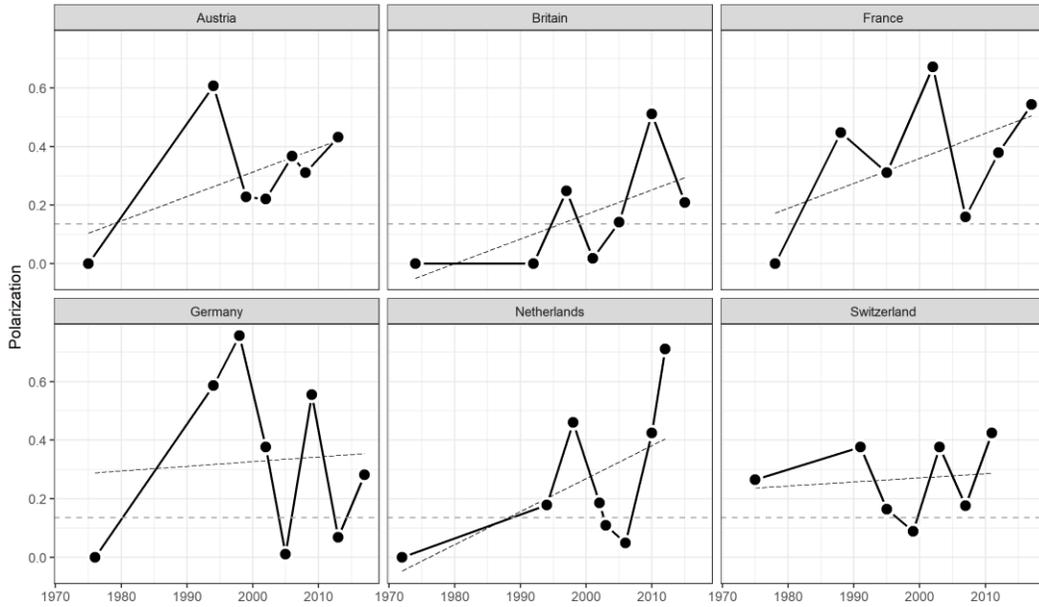
Additional analyses on the relationship between socio-economic factors and the politicization of immigration

In the main article, we use two indicators to analyse the relationship between socio-economic factors and the politicization of immigration in election campaigns, namely the share of incoming migrants to a country in relation to the country's population and the unemployment rate. On unemployment and other economic indicators we use the data provided by the Comparative Political Data Set (CPDS) (Armingeon et al. 2016). Data on immigration is provided by the International Migration Database of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Data are available online on the website:

http://stats.oecd.org/viewhtml.aspx?datasetcode=MIG&lang=en#.

It includes officially registered immigration only.

To ensure the validity of our results, we carried out several additional analyses. We calculated (a) the relationship between our politicization indicator and the two independent variables used in the main article (unemployment and immigration) with a one year time lag; (b) an alternative measurement of immigration (i.e., the inflow of asylum seekers as the percentage share of the total population[38]) in the year of the election and with a one year time lag; (c) an alternative measure of economic grievances (i.e., the annual growth of the real and nominal GDP in the year of the election) and with a one year time lag of the independent variable; and (d) the relationship between the components of our politicization index (salience and polarisation) and socio-economic factors (unemployment and immigration). The results are shown in Figure 15. They corroborate the findings presented in the main article as we find no strong positive relationship between politicization or its components and different socio-economic variables.

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[38] Numbers of asylum seekers are again provided by the International Migration Database of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):
http://stats.oecd.org/viewhtml.aspx?datasetcode=MIG&lang=en#.

Figure 15: The Relationship between politicization and socio-economic factors
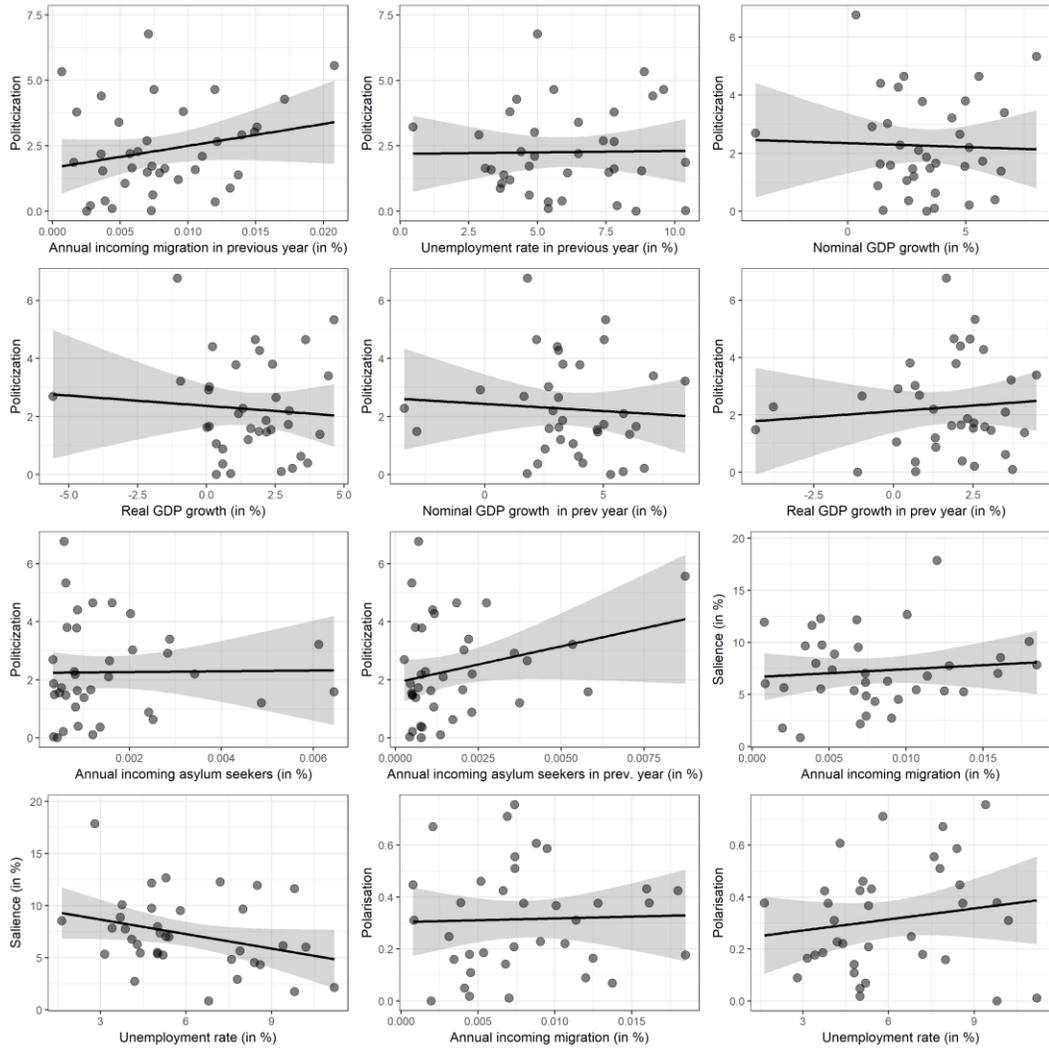
Additional information on the measurement of salience and position in manifestos and the validation of this approach

A crucial step in the analysis presented in the main article is to measure the issue entrepreneurial strategies of different party families regarding immigration issues. Following Hobolt and de Vries (2015), we understand issue entrepreneurs as parties that promote an issue and adopt a position that deviates from the mean position in the in the party system (Hobolt and de Vries 2015: 1168).

To measure this concept in a way that is independent from our measurement of the politicization of immigration issues in mass mediated debates, we opt for data from party manifestos. We explore how much attention a party puts on immigration issues relative to other topics in its manifesto and the position it takes on this issue.

The main difficulty in this respect is that the issue categories of the Manifesto Project do not include immigration (see Lehmann and Zobel 2018: 2). For this reason, we provide novel indicators for parties' issue attention and their positions on the topic in party manifestos. We use the manifestoR corpus which allows applying text mining approaches to the manifestos covered by the Marpor project (Lehmann et al. 2017; Volkens et al. 2017). Our approach follows two steps. In a first step, we use country-specific keyword lists to identify sentences addressing immigration issues. Based on this information, we calculate parties' issue attention as the percentage share of sentences on immigration in relation to all sentences in a manifesto. In a subsequent step, we draw a sample of 20 sentences on immigration from each manifesto to manually code a party's position. Here, we differentiate between supportive (+1), neutral (0) and skeptical positions (-1) and use the mean value from these codings to arrive at a position score for each party. This coding was performed by the researchers in collaboration with student assistants with very good language skills.

Since the positional deviance from the mean position of the party system is a crucial component of issue entrepreneurship that can only be calculated on the basis of information on all relevant parties in that party system, we not only coded the manifestos of the party families on which our main theoretical focus lies in the paper, but for

all parties which gained more than five percent of the votes in the respective election under study. Positional deviance is then calculated as the distance of a party's position from the mean position of the party system at the time of the election. Following Hobolt and de Vries (2015: 1169), both variables are then multiplied to get an overall measure of a party's issue entrepreneurial strategy.

Keyword based approaches, like all methods of quantitative text analysis, require careful validation (Grimmer and Stewart 2013). To assess the validity of our coding approach, we first explore the face validity of the results. Figure 16 shows boxplots and the individual scores of all coded parties on the salience of and position on immigration issues by party family. These results provide initial evidence for the validity of our findings. In line with the literature on issue entrepreneurial strategies, we find that parties of the radical right put weight on the issue. Moreover, the analysis reveals that these parties have by far the most negative stance on immigration, while green parties show the most positive positions, which is both very much in line with expectations from the existing literature.

In addition to this first inspection of the results obtained from our coding approach, we take advantage of the fact that a recent study conducted by (Lehmann and Zobel 2018) also provides measure on the salience and position of parties on immigration based on a crowd-sourced coding approach of party manifestos that are also part of our analysis. This allows systematically comparing our results on issue salience and position on immigration based on the coding approach described above with the method of Lehmann and Zobel (2018) to test the validity of our findings.

Manifestos from Austria, Germany, Netherlands and Switzerland are covered in both analyses and are used for this validation. The results of these comparisons show that both indicators for salience are highly correlated (r = 0.94, t = 20.31). The same holds true for the position on immigration issues (r = 0.82, t = 10.72). The scatter plots presented in Figure 17, which show separately for salience and position for each of these four countries, provide additional evidence in this regard.

Based on these results, we conclude that our coding approach provides a valid measure of issue salience and issue positions on immigration in party manifestos. This in turn allows measuring issue entrepreneurship for parties and party families at a given election in a way that is independent from our measurement of the politicization of the issue in mass mediated campaign debates.

Figure 16: Salience and position as measured in party manifestos
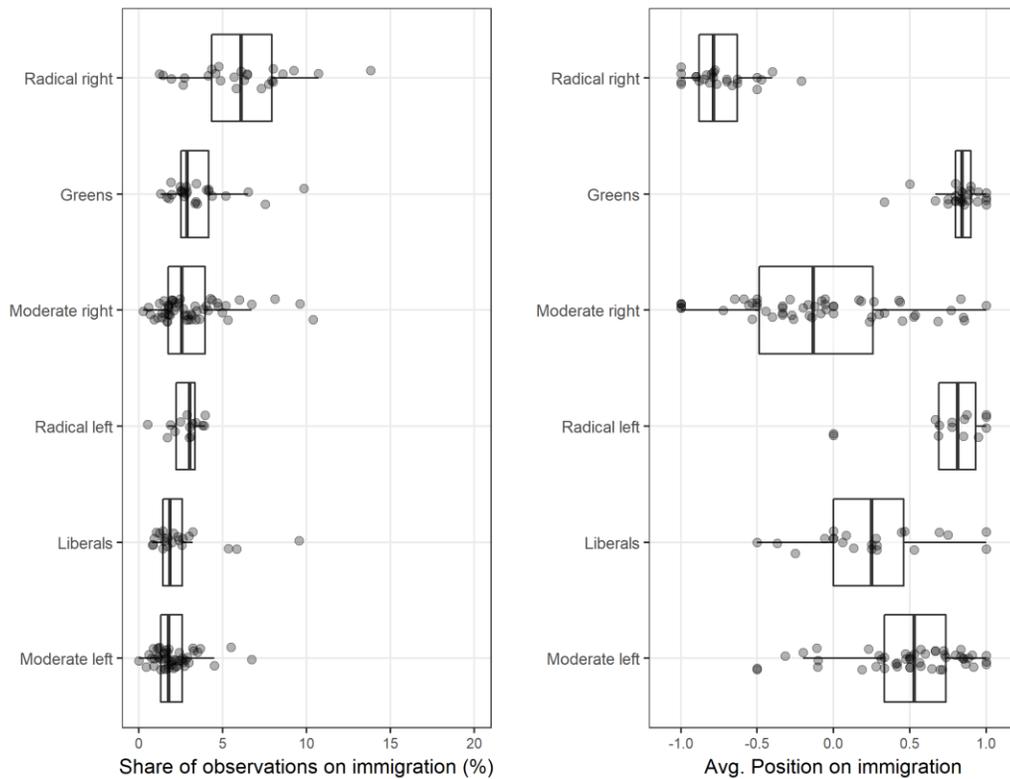
Figure 17: Validation of salience and position
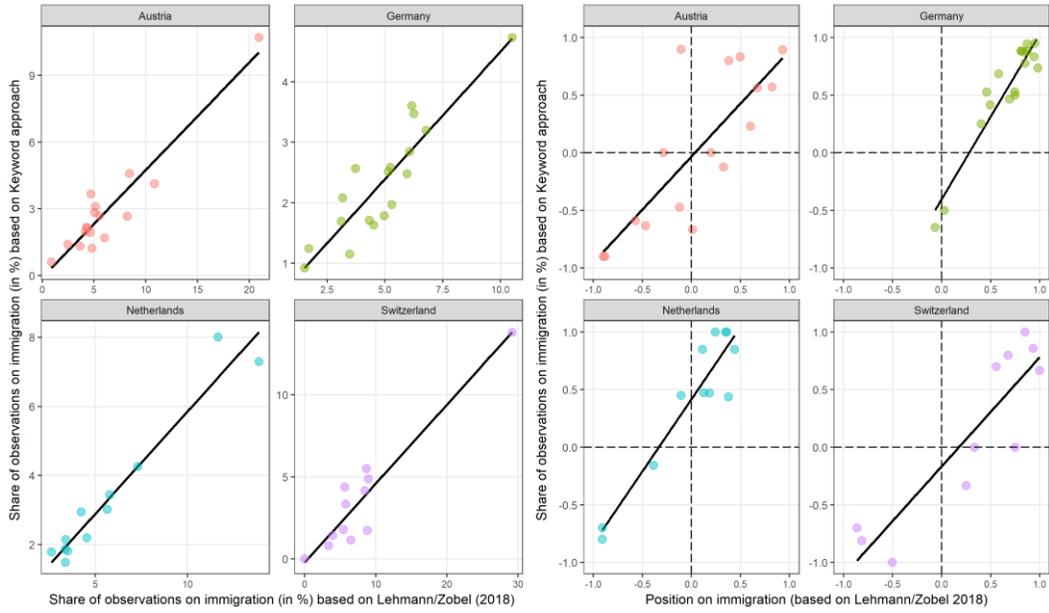
Additional analyses on differences between mainstream parties in government and opposition

In the main article, we distinguish between mainstream parties of the moderate left and the moderate right and explore the role of issue entrepreneurship of these parties and how it relates to the politicization of immigration. In addition, one might argue that the behaviour of mainstream parties is influenced by its status in the political system rather than by its ideological orientation. Accordingly, especially mainstream parties in opposition are likely to emphasise new issues (Van de Wardt 2015). To explore this argument in more detail on the basis of our data, we coded two dummy variables which indicate for moderate left and moderate right parties whether they have been in government (1) or not (0) during the election campaigns covered by our dataset. We then calculated the mean issue entrepreneurship score for moderate left and moderate right parties depending on the composition of the government as provided by Armingeon et al. (2016).

Figure 18 shows the results of this analysis. For moderate left parties (right panel), we find a difference in issue entrepreneurship depending on whether such parties are in opposition or not. This is in line with the expectation that parties in opposition have higher values of issue entrepreneurship. Issue entrepreneurship of moderate left mainstream parties is more pronounced when they are not in government. Parties of the moderate right (left panel), also seem to mobilise the issue more when they are in opposition, although to a much lesser extent. However, both findings are not statistically significant. Moreover, it must be pointed out that the argument is difficult to apply for all the countries in our sample. For the case of Switzerland, we do not have moderate left or moderate right parties in opposition for the period covered by our analysis. Taken together, we find no clear evidence for the argument that mainstream parties in opposition put more emphasis more on the issue (Van de Wardt (2015). For this reason, we do not present them in the main text.

Figure 18: Issue entrepreneurship by status and party family
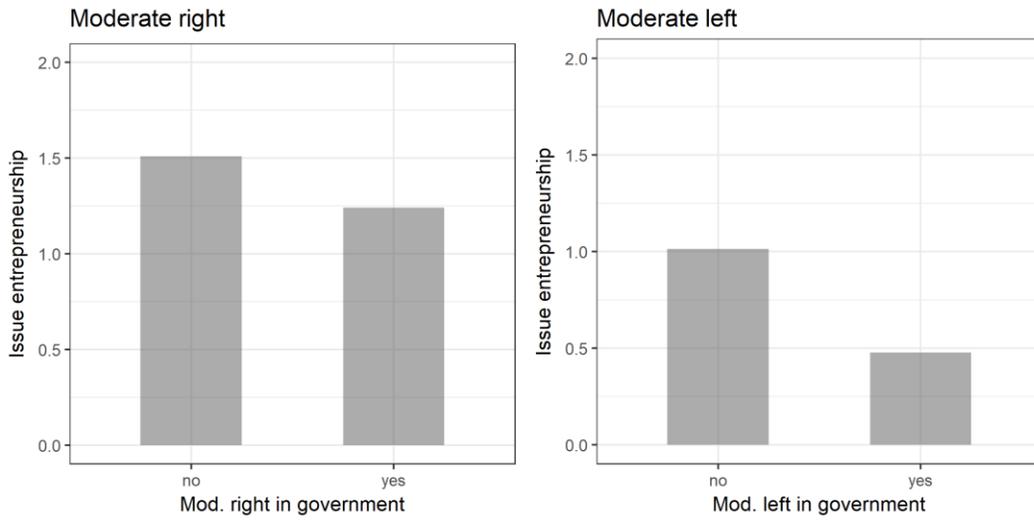
Appendix 2: Comparing Channels of Communication

Table 10: Description of issues in media data and respective MARPOR categories

Issue	Description and examples	MARPOR categories and codes
Welfare	Welfare related policies such as health care, disability care, family, retirement, measures against unemployment, fighting poverty, consumer rights, social housing and other redistributive measures to achieve equality.	Equality: Positive (*per503*), Welfare State Expansion (*per504*), Welfare State Limitation (*per505*), Labour Groups: Positive (*per701*), Labour Groups: Negative (*per702*), Middle Class and Professional Groups (*per704*), Underprivileged Minority Groups (*per705*), Non-economic Demographic Groups (*per706*)
Economic liberalism	Economic policies relating to labour market regulations, free trade, agriculture, finance, economic competition, deregulation, privatisation, Keynesian policies, promotion of specific sectors and statements on neoliberalism or Marxism.	Free Market Economy (*per401*), Incentives: Positive (*per402*), Market Regulation (*per403*), Economic Planning (per404), Corporatism/ Mixed Economy (*per405*), Protectionism: Positive (*per406*), Protectionism: Negative (*per407*), Economic Goals (*per408*), Keynesian Demand Management (*per409*), Economic Growth: Positive (*per410*), Controlled Economy (*per412*), Nationalisation (*per413*), Economic Orthodoxy (*per414*), Marxist Analysis (*per415*), Anti-Growth Economy: Positive (*per416*), Agriculture and Farmers: Positive (*per703*)
Cultural liberalism	Policies related to international solidarity, the promotion of peace, human rights, democratisation, tolerance, traditions, patriotism, LGBT, gender, abortion.	Freedom and Human Rights (*per201*), Democracy (*per202*), National Way of Life: Positive (*per601*), National Way of Life: Negative (*per602*), Civic Mindedness: Positive (*per606*)
Europe	European related topics such as the deepening or enlargement, EU-related policies and general statements on the EU.	European Community/Union: Positive (*per108*), European Community/ Union: Negative (*per110*)
Immigration	All policies related to immigration and integration including the role of Islam and xenophobia.	Multiculturalism: Positive (*per607*), Multiculturalism: Negative (*per608*)
Environment	Environmental policies such as pollution, genetic engineering and climate change.	Environmental Protection (*per501*)

Note: The left column shows the issue categories from the Kriesi et al. (2008; 2012) media date, which we use in the analysis. The middle column describes these categories in more detail. The right column then gives an overview how we recoded the Marpor data to fit with the media data. Overall, these six issue categories account for 69% of the issues reported in the media and 61% in party manifestos.

Table 11: Assignment of issue ownership

Issue	Germany	Austria	United Kingdom
Welfare	Social democratic Party of Germany (SPD); Party of democratic Socialism (PDS); The Left	Social democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ)	Labour
Economy	Union (CDU/CSU); Free democratic Party (FDP)	Liberal Forum (LIF); Austrian People's Party (ÖVP)	Liberal Democrats; Conservatives
Cultural liberalism	Alliance '90/The Greens; Free democratic Party (FDP)	Liberal Forum (LIF), The Greens	Liberal Democrats
Europe	Union (CDU/CSU); Alternative for Germany (AFD)	Austrian People's Party (ÖVP)	-
Immigration	Alternative for Germany (AFD)	Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ); Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ)	Conservatives
Environment	Alliance '90/The Greens	The Greens	-

Continues on next page

Assignment of issue ownership (*continued*)

Issue	France	Switzerland	Netherlands
Welfare	Left Front; French Communist Party (PCF); Socialist Party (PS)	Social Democratic Party of Switzerland (SPS); Independents' Alliance	Socialist Party; Labour Party; People's Party for Freedom and Democracy
Economy	Union of Democrats for the Republic (UDR); Rally for the Republic (RPR); Union for a Popular Movement (UMP)	Radical Democratic Party;	Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA)
Cultural liberalism	The Greens	Green Party of Switzerland (GPS); Green Liberal Party	D66; Green Left
Europe	Democratic Movement (MoDem)	Swiss People's Party (SVP)	-
Immigration	National Front (FN)	National Action for People and Fatherland; Swiss People's Party (SVP); Freedom Party of Switzerland	List Pim Fortuyn (LPF): Party of Freedom (PVV); Livable Netherlands
Environment	The Greens	Green Party of Switzerland (GPS); Green Liberal Party; Independents' Alliance	Green Left

Note: Parties are only treated as issue owners, when they actually participated at an election.

Table 12: Operationalisation, source and descriptive statistics

Variable	Operationalisation	Source	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Dep. Variables						
Issue salience (newspaper)	Percentage share of a party's core sentences about an issue in relation to all statements coded at an election campaign for that party (Calculated separately for each issue).	NPW/Polcon	11.47	10.18	0	75
Issue salience (manifestos)	Percentage share of a party's quasi sentences about an issue in relation to all coded statements for that party in its manifesto.	MARPOR	10.15	9.44	0	52.73
Ind. Variables						
Issue ownership	Dichotomous variable indicating whether a party owns an issue (1) or not (0)	Own calc.	0.22	0.41	0	1
Systemic issue salience (newspaper)	Share of core sentences on an issue minus a party's own statements in relation to all observations during an election campaign.	NPW/Polcon	9.04	6.30	0	38.40
Systemic issue salience (manifestos)	Mean issue salience in the party system calculated for each party without a party's own salience scores.	MARPOR	10.19	7.98	0	34.50
Vote share	Vote share of a party at a given election in percent (pervote)	MARPOR	18.31	11.06	3.15	43.21
Government party	Dummy variable indicating whether a party is in government (1) or not (0) during the election campaign.	Own calc.	0.44	0.49	0	1
Rile	Placement of a party on a left-right scale based on its manifesto content.	MARPOR	-0.20	21.36	-63.38	47.79
Media	Dummy variable indicating whether an observation contains information on issue salience from newspaper data (1) or manifestos (0).	Own calc.	0.50	0.50	0	1

Note: Both, the manifesto and the newspaper data set, contain N=990 complete observations. The unit of observation is a party's attention on a given issue at a given election in each data set. Thus, the appended data set has N=1,980 observations.

Table 13: Countries, elections, parties and issues covered by the analysis

Country (N=6)	Year of election (N=34)	Number of parties	Number of issues
Austria	1994	5	6
	1999	4	6
	2002	4	6
	2006	5	6
	2008	5	6
France	1988	5	6
	1995	6	6
	2002	6	6
	2007	6	6
	2012	5	6
Germany	1994	5	6
	1998	5	6
	2002	5	6
	2005	5	6
	2009	5	6
	2013	6	6
Netherlands	1994	5	6
	1998	6	6
	2002	7	6
	2003	7	6
	2006	6	6
	2010	8	6
	2012	7	6
Switzerland	1991	8	6
	1995	7	6
	1999	5	6
	2003	5	6
	2007	5	6
	2011	7	6
United Kingdom	1992	3	6
	1997	3	6
	2001	3	6
	2005	3	6
	2010	3	6

Note: As manifesto data and newspaper data follow an identical data structure, this summary applies to both data sets.

Separate models for manifestos and media data with interaction effects

Table 14: Fractional logit regression models of issue salience separately for manifesto and media data

	(1) Manifesto only	(2) Media only	(3) Manifesto only	(4) Media only
Systemic salience (std.)	0.24**	0.44**	0.24**	0.48**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Issue ownership	0.49**	0.83**	0.48**	0.81**
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)
Vote share	-0.03	0.15**	-0.05*	0.03
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Issue ownership*Vote share	**-0.03**	**-0.30****		
	(0.04)	**(0.06)**		
Systemic salience*Vote share			**0.02**	**0.10****
			(0.02)	**(0.03)**
Left-right position	-0.00**	0.00	-0.00**	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	-0.04	0.03	-0.03	0.04
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.06)
Constant	-1.75**	-1.91**	-1.75**	-1.97**
	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.13)
Observations	990	990	990	990
Pseudo R^2	0.10	0.06	0.10	0.06
AIC	675	750	675	751
BIC	895	970	895	971
Log pseudo likelihood	-292	-330	-292	-330

Note: Bootstrapped standard errors in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (6); [+] $p < 0.1$, [*] $p < 0.05$, [**] $p < 0.01$

Alternative model specifications

Table 15: Poisson and zero-inflated negative binomial (ZINB) models of issue salience with two-way interactions

	(1) Poisson	(2) Poisson	(3) ZINB	(4) ZINB
Systemic salience	0.05**	0.05**	0.06**	0.07**
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Issue ownership	0.47**	0.57**	0.53**	0.63**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)
Source (Media=1)	0.17**	0.42**	0.28**	0.53**
	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.06)
Issue ownership*Source	0.20**		0.22**	
	(0.06)		(0.08)	
Systemic sali-ence*Source		-0.01**		-0.02**
		(0.00)		(0.00)
Vote share	-0.00	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Left-right position	-0.00	-0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	0.00	-0.00	-0.01	-0.02
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Constant	1.92**	1.81**	1.69**	1.61**
	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Logit equation				
Government party (in-flate)			-435.37	-32.90**
			(.)	(3.56)
Constant			-3.34**	-3.25**
			(0.24)	(0.22)
Observations	1980	1980	1980	1980
AIC	15346	15340	12160	12156
BIC	15604	15597	12429	12430
Log pseudo likelihood	-7627	-7624	-6032	-6029

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (6); overdispersion coefficient α in ZINB models significantly ($p<0.01$) larger than 0; ZINB model (3) does not converge after 100 iterations; $^+ p < 0.1$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$

Table 16: Poisson and zero-inflated negative binomial models of issue salience with three-way interactions

	(1) Poisson	(2) Poisson	(3) ZINB	(4) ZINB
Systemic salience	0.05**	0.06**	0.06**	0.07**
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Issue ownership	0.48**	0.57**	0.53**	0.62**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)
Source (Media=1)	0.19**	0.41**	0.28**	0.51**
	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.07)
Issue ownership*Source	0.18**		0.22**	
	(0.06)		(0.08)	
Systemic salience*Source		-0.01**		-0.01**
		(0.00)		(0.00)
Vote share	-0.04+	-0.06	-0.04+	-0.07+
	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.04)
Issue ownership*Vote share	-0.03		-0.07+	
	(0.03)		(0.04)	
Systemic salience*Vote share		-0.00		0.00
		(0.00)		(0.00)
Source*Vote share	0.18**	-0.03	0.13**	-0.07
	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.03)	(0.06)
Issue ownership*Source*Vote share	-0.21**		-0.17**	
	(0.06)		(0.07)	
Systemic salience*Source*Vote share		0.01**		0.02**
		(0.00)		(0.00)
Left-right position	-0.00	-0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.02
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Constant	1.92**	1.77**	1.70**	1.63**
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Logit equation				
Government party (inflate)			-4.71	-97.33
			(9.38)	(.)
Constant			-3.43**	-3.19**
			(0.26)	(0.21)
Observations	1980	1980	1980	1980
AIC	15162	15243	12131	12134
BIC	15436	15517	12422	12420
Log pseudo likelihood	-7532	-7573	-6014	-6016

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (6); overdispersion coefficient α in ZINB models significantly ($p<0.01$) larger than 0; ZINB model (4) does not converge after 100 iterations; $^+ p < 0.1$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$

Table 17: Negative binomial regression models of issue salience

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Systemic salience	0.06**	0.07**	0.06**	0.07**
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Issue ownership	0.53**	0.66**	0.53**	0.65**
	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Source (Media=1)	0.26**	0.50**	0.26**	0.48**
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.06)
Issue ownership*Source	0.25*		0.25*	
	(0.12)		(0.11)	
Systemic salience*Source		-0.02**		-0.01**
		(0.01)		(0.00)
Vote share	-0.01	-0.01	-0.04+	-0.06
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.05)
Issue ownership*Vote share			-0.08	
			(0.05)	
Systemic salience*Vote share				-0.00
				(0.00)
Source*Vote share			0.16**	-0.04
			(0.03)	(0.06)
Issue ownership*Source*Vote share			-0.19*	
			(0.09)	
Systemic salience*Source*Vote share				0.02**
				(0.00)
Left-right position	-0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.02
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Constant	1.62**	1.54**	1.63**	1.48**
	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.13)
Observations	1980	1980	1980	1980
AIC	12187	12187	12143	12161
BIC	12411	12410	12367	12384
Log pseudo likelihood	-6054	-6053	-6032	-6040

Note: Cluster robust standard errors (for parties) in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (6); overdispersion coefficient α significantly (p<0.01) larger than 0; $^+ p < 0.1$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$

Table 18: Negative binomial regression models of issue salience with lagged systemic salience

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Systemic salience (Lag)	0.03**	0.04**	0.03**	0.04**
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Issue ownership	0.50**	0.61**	0.50**	0.60**
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Source (Media=1)	0.24**	0.61**	0.23**	0.60**
	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.07)
Issue ownership*Source	0.22*		0.22*	
	(0.09)		(0.09)	
Systemic salience (Lag)*Source		-0.03**		-0.03**
		(0.01)		(0.01)
Vote share	-0.03	-0.04[+]	-0.04	-0.08[+]
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Issue ownership*Vote share			-0.10*	
			(0.05)	
Systemic salience (Lag)*Vote share				0.00
				(0.00)
Source *Vote share			0.14**	-0.01
			(0.04)	(0.07)
Issue ownership*Source*Vote share			-0.21*	
			(0.08)	
Systemic salience (Lag)*Source*Vote share				0.01[+]
				(0.00)
Left-right position	-0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.00
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Constant	2.22**	2.09**	2.23**	2.06**
	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.15)
Observations	1488	1488	1488	1488
AIC	9222	9193	9194	9192
BIC	9440	9411	9427	9426
Log pseudo likelihood	-4570	-4556	-4553	-4552

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (6); overdispersion coefficient α significantly (p<0.01) larger than 0; $^+ p < 0.1$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$

Table 19: Negative binomial regression models of issue salience with nicheness indicator

	(1)	(2)
Systemic salience	0.06**	0.07**
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Issue ownership	0.51**	0.62**
	(0.05)	(0.04)
Source (Media=1)	0.26**	0.48**
	(0.04)	(0.06)
Issue ownership*Source	0.24**	
	(0.07)	
Systemic salience*Source		-0.01**
		(0.00)
Nicheness	0.03	0.14**
	(0.03)	(0.05)
Issue ownership*Nicheness	0.11+	
	(0.06)	
Systemic salience*Nicheness		-0.01*
		(0.00)
Source*Nicheness	-0.11**	0.04
	(0.04)	(0.08)
Issue ownership*Source*Nicheness	0.20*	
	(0.09)	
Systemic salience*Source*Nicheness		-0.01+
		(0.01)
Left-right position	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	0.04	0.03
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Constant	1.65**	1.52**
	(0.12)	(0.12)
Observations	1980	1980
AIC	12154	12172
BIC	12433	12452
Log pseudo likelihood	-6027	-6036

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (6); overdispersion coefficient α significantly (p<0.01) larger than 0; + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Re-estimations of all models shown in the main text by excluding each issue once

In this part of the Appendix, we assess the robustness of the dichotomous operational-isation of issue ownership by re-estimating all models six times, each time excluding one issue category. In the following, each table refers to one re-estimated model of the main text and each table column refers to the excluded issue.

Table 20: Re-estimations of Model (1) in Table 2 excluding each issue

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
excluding	Welfare	eco-lib/ budget	cult-lib	Europe	Immi-gration	envi-ronment
Systemic salience (std.)	0.27**	0.16**	0.28**	0.24**	0.23**	0.21**
	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Issue ownership	0.38**	0.53**	0.60**	0.48**	0.46**	0.39**
	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Vote share	-0.04	-0.06*	-0.06*	-0.04+	-0.04+	-0.02
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Left-right position	0.00	-0.01**	-0.01**	-0.00**	-0.00**	-0.00*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	-0.08	0.01	-0.04	-0.05	-0.04	-0.00
	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)
Constant	-1.83**	-1.65**	-1.97**	-1.70**	-1.71**	-1.70**
	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.16)
Observations	825	825	825	825	825	825
Pseudo R2	0.09	0.11	0.12	0.09	0.07	0.10
AIC	502	518	560	620	642	596
BIC	704	721	763	823	844	799
Log pseudo likeli-hood	-208	-216	-237	-267	-278	-255

Note: Bootstrapped standard errors in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (5); $^+ p < 0.1$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$

Table 21: Re-estimations of Model (2) in Table 2excluding each issue

excluding	(1) Welfare	(2) eco-lib/ budget	(3) cult-lib	(4) Europe	(5) Immi- gration	(6) envi- ronment
Systemic salience (std.)	0.49**	0.49**	0.44**	0.43**	0.45**	0.41**
	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Issue ownership	0.94**	0.96**	0.94**	0.85**	0.69**	0.70**
	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Vote share	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.05$^+$	0.08**	0.07*
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Left-right position	0.00	0.00$^+$	0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.00*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	0.01	0.07	0.01	0.02	0.09	0.03
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Constant	-2.04**	-2.03**	-2.04**	-1.99**	-1.94**	-1.93**
	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.15)
Observations	825	825	825	825	825	825
Pseudo R2	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.06
AIC	587	594	653	673	652	660
BIC	790	797	856	876	855	863
Log pseudo likeli- hood	-250	-254	-283	-294	-283	-287

Note: Bootstrapped standard errors in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (5); $^+ p < 0.1$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$

Table 22: Re-estimations of Model (3) in Table 2 excluding each issue

excluding	(1) Welfare	(2) eco-lib/ budget	(3) cult-lib	(4) Europe	(5) Immi- gration	(6) envi- ronment
Systemic salience (std.)	0.52**	0.47**	0.43**	0.40**	0.36**	0.40**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Issue ownership	0.46**	0.69**	0.66**	0.55**	0.50**	0.46**
	0.52**	0.47**	0.43**	0.40**	0.36**	0.40**
Source (Media=1)	0.19**	0.27**	0.24**	0.17**	0.11**	0.19**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Issue owner- ship*Source	0.44**	0.19*	0.27**	0.26**	0.14+	0.23**
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.08)
Vote share	-0.00	-0.02	-0.01	0.00	0.01	0.03
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Left-right position	0.00	-0.00	-0.00**	-0.00	-0.00**	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	-0.03	0.04	-0.01	-0.02	0.02	0.01
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Constant	-2.23**	-2.21**	-2.23**	-2.06**	-1.93**	-2.06**
	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Observations	1650	1650	1650	1650	1650	1650
Pseudo R2	0.07	0.08	0.09	0.07	0.06	0.07
AIC	1013	1039	1138	1219	1215	1183
BIC	1256	1282	1381	1462	1458	1426
Log pseudo likeli- hood	-461	-474	-524	-564	-562	-546

Note: Bootstrapped standard errors in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (5); $^+ p < 0.1$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$

Table 23: Re-estimations of Model (4) in Table 2 excluding each issue

excluding	(1) Welfare	(2) eco-lib/ budget	(3) cult-lib	(4) Europe	(5) Immi- gration	(6) envi- ronment
Systemic salience (std.)	0.57**	0.50**	0.49**	0.45**	0.35**	0.44**
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Issue ownership	0.70**	0.79**	0.80**	0.68**	0.57**	0.57**
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Source (Media=1)	0.35**	0.35**	0.42**	0.32**	0.15**	0.34**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Systemic sali- ence*Source	-0.13**	-0.10*	-0.16**	-0.11**	0.01	-0.13**
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Vote share	-0.01	-0.03	-0.03	-0.00	0.01	0.02
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Left-right position	0.00	-0.00	-0.00**	-0.00	-0.00**	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	-0.04	0.04	-0.02	-0.02	0.02	0.01
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Constant	-2.30**	-2.24**	-2.31**	-2.14**	-1.95**	-2.14**
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Observations	1650	1650	1650	1650	1650	1650
Pseudo R2	0.07	0.08	0.09	0.07	0.06	0.07
AIC	1014	1039	1137	1219	1215	1182
BIC	1257	1282	1381	1462	1458	1426
Log pseudo likelihood	-462	-474	-524	-564	-562	-546

Note: Bootstrapped standard errors in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (5); $^+ p < 0.1$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$

Table 24: Re-estimations of Model (1) in Table 3 excluding each issue

excluding	(1) Welfare	(2) eco-lib/ budget	(3) cult-lib	(4) Europe	(5) Immi-gration	(6) envi-ronment
Systemic salience (std.)	0.52**	0.48**	0.43**	0.41**	0.37**	0.41**
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Issue ownership	0.44**	0.69**	0.69**	0.56**	0.52**	0.47**
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Source (Media=1)	0.20**	0.28**	0.27**	0.18**	0.13**	0.21**
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Issue owner-ship*Source	0.41**	0.18+	0.24**	0.24**	0.12+	0.21*
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.08)
Vote share	-0.01	-0.07*	-0.04	-0.05	-0.05+	-0.04
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Issue ownership* Vote share	-0.10+	-0.05	-0.08	-0.03	-0.03	0.02
	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Source*Vote share	0.17**	0.18**	0.23**	0.22**	0.21**	0.21**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Issue owner-ship*Source* Vote share	-0.25**	-0.18*	-0.34**	-0.28**	-0.19**	-0.24**
	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.08)
Left-right position	0.00+	-0.00	-0.00**	-0.00	-0.00**	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	-0.03	0.04	-0.02	-0.02	0.02	0.01
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Constant	-2.18**	-2.20**	-2.20**	-2.04**	-1.94**	-2.07**
	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Observations	1650	1650	1650	1650	1650	1650
Pseudo R2	0.07	0.08	0.09	0.07	0.07	0.07
AIC	1017	1044	1140	1223	1219	1187
BIC	1277	1303	1400	1482	1478	1447
Log pseudo likelihood	-460	-474	-522	-563	-561	-546

Note: Bootstrapped standard errors in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (5); $^+ p < 0.1$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$

Table 25: Re-estimations of Model (2) in Table 3 excluding each issue

excluding	(1) Welfare	(2) eco-lib/ budget	(3) cult-lib	(4) Europe	(5) Immi- gration	(6) envi- ron- ment
Systemic salience (std.)	0.58**	0.52**	0.50**	0.46**	0.37**	0.46**
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Issue ownership	0.68**	0.78**	0.79**	0.66**	0.57**	0.57**
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Source (Media=1)	0.37**	0.38**	0.44**	0.33**	0.17**	0.35**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Systemic sali- ence*Source	-0.11*	-0.06	-0.13**	-0.08*	0.04	-0.10**
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Vote share	-0.04	-0.08*	-0.08**	-0.06*	-0.07*	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Systemic salience* Vote share	0.02	-0.01	-0.00	0.00	0.01	-0.01
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Source*Vote share	0.07+	0.11**	0.09*	0.09*	0.14**	0.09*
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Systemic salience* Source*Vote share	0.07	0.15**	0.11**	0.11**	0.07+	0.10**
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Left-right position	0.00	-0.00	-0.00**	-0.00	-0.00**	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	-0.04	0.04	-0.02	-0.02	0.02	0.01
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Constant	-2.31**	-2.27**	-2.34**	-2.16**	-1.98**	-2.17**
	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.12)
Observations	1650	1650	1650	1650	1650	1650
Pseudo R2	0.07	0.08	0.09	0.07	0.07	0.07
AIC	1019	1043	1142	1224	1220	1187
BIC	1279	1303	1402	1483	1479	1447
Log pseudo likelihood	-462	-474	-523	-564	-562	-546

Note: Bootstrapped standard errors in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (5); $^+ p < 0.1$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$

Re-estimations of regression models separately for different newspaper types

Table 26: Fractional logit regression models of issue salience as in Table 3 (Model 2) of the main document but separately for different newspaper types

	(1) Media only Quality	(2) Media only Tabloid
Systemic salience (std.)	**0.38****	**0.49****
	(0.05)	(0.04)
Issue ownership	**0.80****	**0.79****
	(0.06)	(0.08)
Vote share	0.03	0.06
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Left-right	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	0.02	-0.02
	(0.06)	(0.09)
Constant	-1.82**	-1.93**
	(0.17)	(0.18)
Observations	924	870
AIC	702	673
BIC	914	882
ll	-306.88	-292.28

Note: Bootstrapped standard errors in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (6); $^{+}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$. Deviations in the number of observations between models are due to too few observations (<20) in either quality or tabloid newspapers.

Table 27: Fractional logit regression models of issue salience as in Table 3 (Model 3 and 4) of the main document but separately for different newspaper types

	(1) Interaction w/ ownership Quality	(2) Interaction w/ ownership Tabloid	(2) Interaction w/ sys. salience Quality	(4) Interaction w/ sys. salience Tabloid
Systemic salience (std.)	0.38**	0.45**	0.43**	0.48**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Issue ownership	0.55**	0.52**	0.66**	0.66**
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Vote share	-0.00	0.01	-0.01	0.00
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Left-right	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00[+]
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	-0.00	-0.03	-0.01	-0.03
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)
Newspaper	0.19**	0.52**	0.32**	0.35**
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Issue ownership*Source	**0.23****	**0.25****		
	(0.08)	**(0.05)**		
Systemic salience*Source			**-0.13****	**-0.05**
			(0.04)	**(0.04)**
Constant	-2.01**	-2.13**	-2.07**	-0.05
	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.04)
Observations	1,848	1,740	1,848	1,740
AIC	1,258	1,192	1,258	1,192
BIC	1,512	1,443	1,512	1,444
ll	-583.13	-550.00	-582.99	-550.22

Note: Bootstrapped standard errors in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (6); [+] $p < 0.1$, [*] $p < 0.05$, [**] $p < 0.01$. Deviations in the number of observations between models are due to too few observations (<20) in either quality or tabloid newspapers.

Table 28: Fractional logit regression models of issue salience with three-way interactions

(As in Table 3 (M1, M2) of the chapter but separately for different newspaper types)

	(1) Interaction Ownership Tabloids	(2) Interaction Ownership Quality	(3) Interaction sys. sal. Tabloids	(4) Interaction w/ sys. sal. Quality
Systemic salience (std.)	0.45**	0.39**	0.49**	0.44**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Issue ownership	0.53**	0.56**	0.65**	0.65**
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Source (Media=1)	0.26**	0.21**	0.37**	0.34**
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Issue ownership*Source	0.23*	0.21**		
	(0.09)	(0.07)		
Vote share	-0.04+	-0.05	-0.06*	-0.05*
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Issue ownership*Vote share	-0.01	-0.03		
	(0.04)	(0.04)		
Source*Vote share	0.20**	0.19**	0.09*	0.08+
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Systemic salience*Source			-0.03	-0.11**
			(0.04)	(0.03)
Systemic salience*Vote share			0.01	-0.01
			(0.02)	(0.02)
Issue owner-ship*Source*Vote share	**-0.29****	**-0.23****		
	(0.07)	**(0.07)**		
Systemic sali-ence*Source*Vote share			**0.08***	**0.10***
			(0.04)	**(0.04)**
Left-right position	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00+	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government party	-0.03	-0.00	-0.02	-0.01
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Constant	-2.11**	-1.99**	-2.22**	-2.09**
	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Observations	1,740	1,848	1,740	1,848
AIC	1,196	1,263	1,197	1,263
BIC	1,464	1,533	1,465	1,534
ll	-549.01	-582.29	-549.72	-582.57

Note: Bootstrapped standard errors in parentheses; all models include fixed-effects (not reported) for elections (34) and issues (6); $^+ p < 0.1$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$. Deviations in the number of observations between models are due to too few observations (<20) in either quality or tabloid newspapers.

Appendix 3: Issue competition on social media

Table 29: Overview of issue categories used in the study

Issue category	Description/Examples	Categories from BES 2015
Welfare	Welfare (in general), Health care, Retirement, Employment, Family, Consumer, Redistribution, Disabled, Housing	poverty, living standards, social inequalities, welfare fraud, class difference, nhs, aging population, pensions, youth, housing
Economy	Economy (in general), Jobs, Labour market, Wage, Free trade, Agriculture, Finance/Banking, Enterprises, Competition, Deregulation, Privatization, Corporatism, Promotion	economy general, inflation, unemployment
Budget/Tax	Taxation, Budget, National Debt	consumer debt, taxation, services-spending
Cultural Liberism	Nationalism, Cultural/Religious tolerance, Gender, LGBT, Human rights, Abortion, Drugs, Democracy, Data privacy, Civil Society, Racism	civil liberties
Europe	European Integration, Deepening, Enlargement, Euro, Common Policies, Referendum, Inst. Reform	Europe
Education/Cul	Culture and education (in general), Primary/secondary education, University, Arts, Sports, Media, Science	Education
Immigration	Immigration (in general), Integration, Refugees, Islam	Immigration
Defence	Defence (in general), Military Infrastructure and manpower	national security
Security	Security (in general), Corruption, Police, Secret agencies, Judicial, Terrorism, Crime, Guns	Crime
Environment	Environment (in general), Pollution, Climate change	Environment
Energy	Energy politics	-
Institutional reform	Institutional reform (in general), Decentralization, Efficiency, Accountability, Separation of powers, Citizen based democracy	scot const, constitutional
Foreign relatio	International cooperation, Development Aid, Peace, Disarmament, Humanitarian interventions	international probs, Iraq war
Infrastructure	Roads, Airports, Cycling, Trains	-

Note: Issue categories from the British Election Study Internet Panel (BES 2015) are based on the original auto-coding of the most important issue variable (miilabel) (Fieldhouse et al. 2015). For Energy and Infrastructure no corresponding categories exist in the BES 2015.

Classification of Tweets

This appendix shows how the Tweets analysed in the main article were pre-processed and classified into different issue categories using a machine learning approach based on support vector machine.

First, the order of the words in the documents is discarded. Of course, this step strips information since the order of words in a sentence is crucial for its meaning. Assuming that the same information is however provided several times in different manners, the remaining "bag of words" is expected to fit the purpose of the analysis (Hopkins and King 2010: 232). Second, punctuations and numbers, which are not expected to carry any valuable information about a party's issue emphasis, were deleted. Third, all content was transformed to lowercase in order to avoid that the classification algorithm discriminates between the same words written either in lower- or uppercase. Fourth, stop words were removed. While such words are important for human readers to understand a written document, they are unlikely to carry any information about the issue category addressed in a document. Fifth, special characters indicating a word as a hash tag or a linked name were deleted. This ensures that words are treated equally by the classifier regardless of their use as a link or as plain text. Finally, stemming of the remaining words in the corpus was applied. This step removes the ends of words in a way that terms referring to the same concept are treated equally in order the reduce the complexity of the data set (Grimmer and Stewart 2013: 272).

The cleaned corpus was transformed into a document-term-matrix. This matrix consists of a vector for each observation in the corpus which counts the number of times each unique word stem occurs in the document. Sparse terms not appearing in at least one in 1.000 of the documents were excluded from the analysis. The resulting document-term-matrix consists of 22.091 documents and 1.150 unique terms. With 134,147 non-sparse entries the sparsity of the data amounts to 99.5 percent.

Machine learning in general has proven to be particularly helpful to analyze vast amounts of political text (Burscher et al. 2015; D'Orazio et al. 2014; Grimmer and Stewart 2013; Hillard et al. 2008; Minhas et al. 2015). The basic idea behind such

approaches is to manually assign issue categories to a representative sample of all observations in the data set to train a classifier that can be used to label the remaining documents.

Support vector machine is a particularly powerful classifier to explore topical affiliations that is based on a geometrical representation of the data. For a two-class classification problem, it starts with a training set of N pairs $x_i y_i$ with $x_i \in R^P$ being a p-vector for the i-th observation and $x_i \in \{-1, +1\}$ being the binary response of predictors (Hastie et al. 2004). Based on this information a decision function needs to be found that predicts y also for unknown x. This task is performed using a hyperplane. Hyperplanes are subspaces with one dimension less than the actual vector space and can be defined by x: $f(x) = x^T B + B_0 = 0$, where B is a unit vector with |B|=1. In a two-dimensional setting, a hyperplane is simply a line. The idea is then to find the line that maximizes the margin of separation between the training set points -1 and 1. The classifier to perform this task is defined as Class(x)=sign[f(x)] (see Hastie et al., 2004: 1392). The resulting decision rule can then be used to classify the remaining unlabelled documents not part of the training set on one or the other side of that hyperplane, which results in a classification of all unlabelled documents. In the case of more than two dimensions, the visualization of a hyperplane becomes difficult. However, the approach can still be used by treating these more dimensions as several two-class classification problems (James et al. 2014: 355).

To apply the derived coding scheme shown in Appendix A to this labelling approach, a representative sample of all the documents under study was drawn from the downloaded data. The selection process considers that the data consists of observations coming from different subgroups (parties). In such a case, standard machine learning methods require the observations to be randomly selected within each of these groups to avoid biased classification results (Hopkins and King 2010: 234). In total, a random sample of 500 Tweets was selected for each party. This results in a total of 3,000 manually coded observations. Again, a random selection of 2,500 of these labelled Tweets serves as a training set for the remaining unlabelled data and 500 Tweets constitute the test set to explore the performance of the classifier.

The classification was performed using the Rtexttools package for R from Jurka et al. (2013) that allows to estimate and test support vector machine models. The number of documents in the test set that are correctly classified in relation to all documents gives a first impression of the overall performance of the algorithm. For the 15 categories outlined above, a score of 0.84 is reached. Compared to other supervised learning approaches based on equally complex classification schemes (Burscher et al. 2015; Hillard et al. 2008), this result allows to conclude that the method works reasonably well.

A high degree of overall prediction accuracy does however not automatically rule out the possibility of the classifier being biased (Hopkins and King 2010: 234). This makes it necessary to check, how the algorithm performs for different issue categories. For this task, Figure 19 shows a confusion matrix that reports the sum of predicted and true classifications in the test set. The results indicate that the model performs well since most observations are true positives that are located on a diagonal from the lower left to the upper right. Moreover, it becomes obvious that extremely few observations are wrongly classified to a different issue. On the clear majority of incorrect classified observations, these are labelled "no issue". To explore, how this affects the results, Figure 20 contrasts the predicted and the manually coded salience scores for all policy issues based on the test set. The relatively small differences between these two variables show that the classification yields very satisfying results.

Figure 19: Confusion matrix

Note: The figure shows a confusion matrix which plots the predicted issue categories against the manually coded categories in the test set (n=500). All entries on a diagonal axis from the bottom left to the upper right indicate correct classifications. The overall accuracy of the prediction is 84%.

**Figure 20: Predicted and manually coded salience scores in comparison**
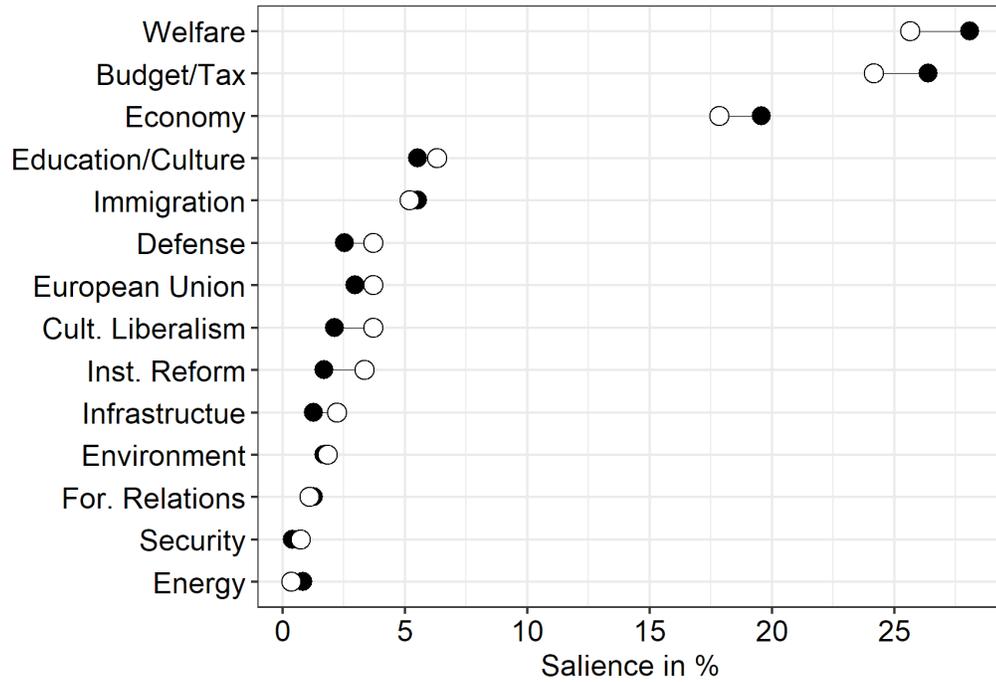
Note: The figure shows the salience scores predicted by the svm-classifier (black) and the manual coding (white) of the same 3000 Tweets for all issue categories.

Coding of party manifestos

To code the manifestos of the party under study, it is taken into account that the structure of these document features significant differences to social media data. Most importantly, text is nested in large and complexly structured documents, which requires careful unitizing before such texts can be used to measure issue salience. Here, the study relies on the core sentence approach. The method was developed by Kleinnijenhuis and Pennings (2001) and successfully adopted to study issue salience and party positions by Kriesi et al. (2008). Dolezal et al. (2016) have then demonstrated that the core sentence approach works well to study issue salience in party manifestos. Using this method, a random sample of 25 percent of the grammatical sentences in each manifesto was randomly chosen from each manifesto and manually coded. In total, 1.903 core sentences are coded (*Conservatives*: 361, *Greens*: 437, *Labour*: 239, *LibDems*: 377, *SNP*: 197, *UKIP*: 292).

To ensure that this sampling does not bias the results, one manifesto (*UKIP*) is coded completely in order to provide a test for the employed research strategy, especially the sampling and coding of 25 percent of the grammatical sentences in each manifesto. Figure 21 shows a scatterplot of the salience scores based on the sample and the fully coded manifesto. Due to the very high correlation (r = 0.98) of the sample and the fully coded manifesto, it is concluded that the sampling method does not bias the results presented in the paper.

Figure 21: Comparison of salience scores from sampled and full manifesto
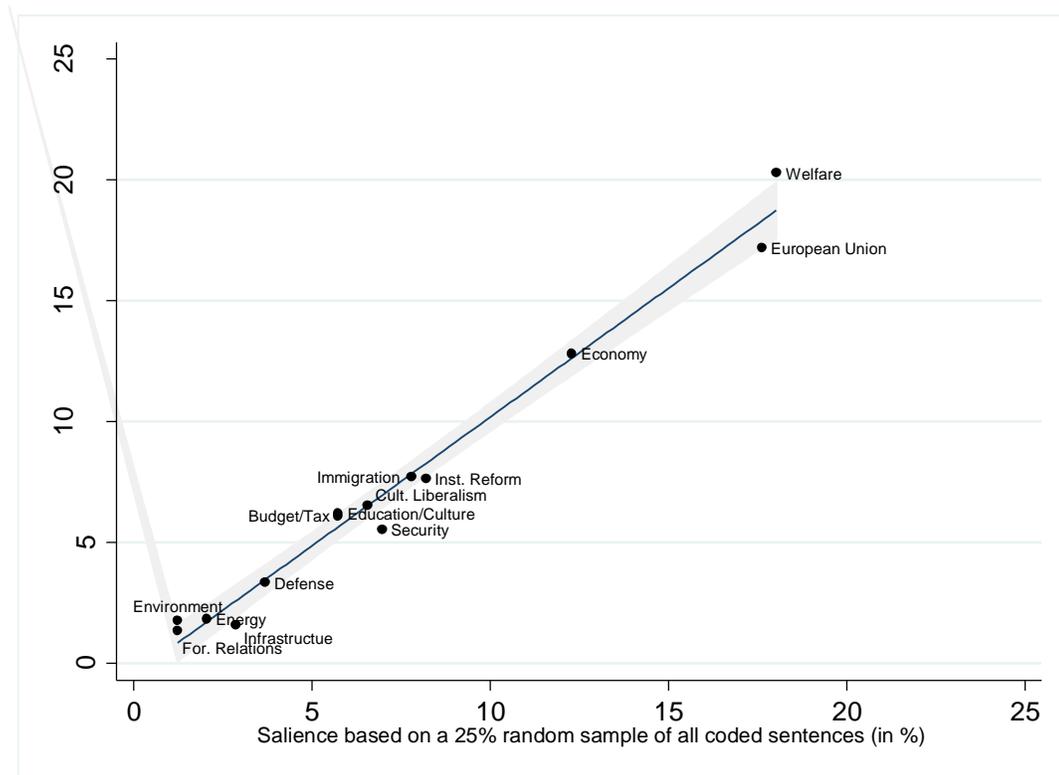
Note: The graph shows the relationship between the salience scores of the sampled manifesto of UKIP and the results from the full coding of the same manifesto.

Appendix 4: Put in the spotlight or largely ignored?

Parties and Facebook accounts covered by the study

We focus on all national parties included in the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) that gained at least five percent of the national vote in the 2014 EP election. In cases where multiple national parties formed alliances to campaign for the election, we only included them in the study, when the alliance obtained more than five percent of the national vote. This threshold excludes extremely small parties with low levels of public visibility that hardly affected the content of the election campaign. Additional information on individual parties that could not be integrated in the analysis are provided in the notes below Table 30.

The *getPage* function included in the Rfacebook package allows posts on public pages, such as the accounts of political parties on Facebook, to be downloaded. Almost all the parties included in this study run such accounts. To avoid confusion with so-called 'fake accounts', the great majority of parties have verified that the pages studied are maintained by party officials. When an account was not verified, we additionally checked that we had collected data from the official party account by visiting the party's official homepage to test whether the link to the party's Facebook page provided there matches the account we identified. Table 30 provides an overview of all parties and accounts used in the analysis as well the number of posts analysed.

Table 30: List of parties, included Facebook accounts and number of observations

Country	Party	Facebook account name	N
Austria	ÖVP	Volkspartei	67
(N=833)	SPÖ	Sozialdemokratie	125
	FPÖ	HCStrache	404
	Grüne	Diegruenen	125
	NEOS	NeosDasNeueOesterreich	112
Belgium	Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams	Cdenv	140
(N=953)	Groen	groen.be	309
	Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie	nieuwvlaamsealliantie	117
	Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten	openvld	82
	Socialistische Partij Anders	Vlaamse.socialisten	130
	Vlaams Belang	vlbelang	175
France	Front National	FN.officiel	181
(N=1,216)	Parti radical du gauche	PartiRadicaldeGauche	97
	Parti socialiste	Partisocialiste	309
	MoDem	Mouvementdemocrate	32
	Les Verts	e.ecologie	5
	Parti Communiste Français	Cnpcf	21
	Parti de gauche	partidegauche.national	533
	Ensemble	ensemble.frontdegauche	38
Germany	CDU	CDU	139
(N=769)	CSU	CSU	84
	SPD	SPD	258
	AfD	Alternativefuerde	141
	Grüne	B90DieGruenen	59
	Linke	Linkspartei	88
Hungaria	Fidesz	FideszHU	222
(N=1,574)	MSZP	Mszpfb	207
	DK	dk365	450
	Együtt	Egyuttkorszakvaltok	176
	LMP	Lehetmas	312
	JOBBIK	JobbikMagyarorszagertMozgalom	207
Ireland	Fine Gael	FineGael	60
(N=296)	Fianna Fáil Party	Fiannafail	17
	Labour Party	Thelabourparty	127
	Sinn Féin	Sinnfein	92
Italy	Partito Democratico	partitodemocratico.it	126
(N=859)	Movimento Cinque Stelle	Movimentocinquestelle	400
	Forza Italia	ForzaItaliaUfficiale	121
	Lega Nord	LegaNordUfficiale	212
Luxembourg (N=275)	Alternativ Demokratesch Reformpartei	AlternativDemokrateschReformpartei	22

	Chrëschtlech Sozial Vollekspartei	csv.lu	82
	Déi Gréng	deigreng	28
	Demokratesch Partei	demokrateschpartei	51
	Déi Lénk	lenk.lu	30
	Lëtzebuerger Sozialistesch Aar-bechterpartei	lsap.lu	62
Poland (N=973)	Platforma Obywatelska	PlatformaObywatelska	116
	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość	Pisorgpl	42
	Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej	Sojusz	547
	Kongres Nowej Prawicy	KongresNowejPrawicy	263
	Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe	nowePSL	5
Portugal (N=671)	Partido Socialista	SedeNacionalPartidoSocialista	244
	Partido Social Democrata	Ppdpsd	408
	Partido da Terra	PartidodaTerraMPT	19
Spain (N=1,409)	Partido Popular	Pp	384
	Partido Socialista Obrero Español	Psoe	152
	Izquierda Unida	izquierda.unida	187
	Podemos	Ahorapodemos	491
	UPyD	Union.Progreso.y.Democracia	157
	Convergència Democràtica de Cata-lunya	Convergenciacat	20
	Unió Democràtica de Catalunya	unio.cat	18
Sweden (N=1,222)	Socialdemokraterna	Socialdemokraterna	88
	Miljöpartiet de gröna	Miljopartiet	61
	Moderata Samlingspartiet	Moderaterna	109
	Folkpartiet liberalerna	Liberalernas	288
	Centerpartiet	Centerpartiet	149
	Vänsterpartiet	Vansterpartiet	132
	Kristdemokraterna	Kristdemokraterna	89
	Feministiskt initiative	Feministisktinitiativ	306
UK (N=698)	Conservatives	Conservatives	79
	Labour	Labourparty	103
	Libdems	Libdems	109
	Greens	Thegreenparty	120
	UKIP	UKIP	287
			N=11,747

Note: Even though some parties not included in this table also reached more than 5 percent of the vote in the 2014 EP election, they are not included in the study for two different reasons. First, the French Union pour un mouvement populaire, the Portuguese Centro Democratico and the Swedish Sverige-demokraterna had to be excluded due to missing information about their behaviour on Facebook as these parties' posts are no longer publicly available. Second, the following parties are not included, because no data is available for them in the CHES 2014: Parti del Socialistes de Catalunya (Spain), Grupa Vasco (Spain), Catalunia Verds (Spain), ANOVA-Irmandade Nacionalista (Spain), Partido Comunista Portugues (Portugal), Partido Ecologista os Verdes (Portugal), Párbeszéd Magyarországért (Hungary), Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt (Hungary), Union des démocrates et indépendants (France).

Coding of individual posts

The classification was performed by trained human coders with respective language skills. The coding is based on the following scheme. We coded four variables: the general topic of a message (1), the mention of a Spitzenkandidaten (2), the name of the Spitzenkandidaten if one or more were mentioned (3) and the tone of a Spitzenkandidaten mention (4).

- First, we code a variable (EP) that distinguishes between messages in two categories:
    - Messages related to the European Parliament elections (1).
    - Other messages (0)
- Second, we code a dichotomous variable (SPITZENKANDIDATEN) that tells us something about the use of the Spitzenkandidaten:
    - Messages with no mention of the concept of the Spitzenkandidaten or one or more of the Spitzenkandidaten themselves (*Jean-Claude Juncker, Martin Schulz, Ska Keller, José Bové, Alexis Tsipras, and Guy Verhofstadt*). (0)
    - Messages with any mention of the concept of the Spitzenkandidaten and/or one or more of the Spitzenkandidaten themselves (*Jean-Claude Juncker, Martin Schulz, Ska Keller, José Bové, Alexis Tsipras, and Guy Verhofstadt*). (1)

        Note: For the dependent variable used in the study, we only coded this variable with 1 if one of the candidates is mentioned in person.

- Third, if one or more of the Spitzenkandidaten is mentioned, we code their names in a separate string variable (NAME_1, NAME _2, etc.):
    - Messages with no mention of one or more of the Spitzenkandidaten themselves are left blank.
    - Messages with mentions of one or more of the Spitzenkandidaten: ("Name, Surname").

- Fourth, we coded a dichotomous variable to capture the tone of a candidate mention.
    - Messages with a positive or neutral mention of a candidate (0).
    - Messages with a negative mention of a candidate (1).

Note: Posts that include no plain text at all were not included in the overall analysis.

Further information on variables used in the study

Table 31: Descriptive statistics for all variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Spitzenkandidaten [1]	2.95	6.35	0	39.92
Party affiliation	0.07	0.25	0	1
Home country [2]	0.36	0.48	0	1
Nominated [3,4]	0.64	0.48	0	1
Candidate party congruence (EU dimension) [5]	0.77	0.97	0	4.29
Candidate party congruence (LR dimension) [5]	0.89	0.86	0	3.30
Left-Right	5.13	2.40	0.50	9.71
Gov. party	0.36	0.49	0	1
Vote share	0.17	0.12	0.05	0.68
EU salience	6.01	1.58	3	9.54
Length of message (log-transformed)	5.13	2.40	0.5	9.71
Campaign day	35.62	5.43	1	62

Note: The total number of observations is 11,747. Observations are clustered in 13 countries and 73 parties. Means are calculated for individual parties.

Additional remarks on the variables used in the study:

[1] It is important to note that this measure of salience is indifferent to a party's position on a candidate in a given message. Additional analyses show that 94.8% percent of messages that mention a candidate are positive or neutral in tone, while only 5.2 are decidedly negative. Including only positive and neutral mentions does not alter the results presented in the manuscript. Moreover, the concept of *Spitzenkandidaten* as such, without a mention of one of the candidates in person, played a negligible role in the campaigns of all the parties under study. Among the total of 11,748 observations in our data set, there are only 29 cases in which only the institutional innovation of the *Spitzenkandidaten,* but no candidate name is mentioned. We therefore focus exclusively on the persons nominated.

[2] The candidates were from Luxembourg (Jean-Claude Juncker), Germany (Martin Schulz and Ska Keller), Belgium (Guy Verhofstadt), France (José Bové) and Greece (Alexis Tsipras).

[3] The British Labour party was a special case in this regard. It belongs to the Party group of European Socialists, which nominated Martin Schulz as their lead candidate. However, the party abstained from this nomination. Thus, we code the party as not taking part in the nomination of a candidate.

[4] Moreover, due the high correlation of a party's position on European integration provided in the CHES 2014 data set with our variable indicating whether a party nominated a lead candidate ($r = .66$), we do not include this variable in our analysis to avoid problems of multicollinearity.

[5] For congruence between candidate and party values only exist for the 47 parties which nominated a candidate (N=6,685).

Different model specification
Table 32: Exploring emphasis on the Spitzenkandidaten (multilevel models)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Nominated	1.866***	-0.468						1.380**
	(0.458)	(2.433)						(0.493)
National Party affiliation		2.191***			2.144***	2.672***		2.101***
		(0.572)			(0.374)	(0.657)		(0.566)
Congruence (EU)			-0.600*		-0.0652			
			(0.300)		(0.232)			
Congruence (LR)				-1.012***	-0.924***			
				(0.276)	(0.211)			
Home country		1.092			0.984		1.882**	1.108
		(0.617)			(0.570)		(0.656)	(0.623)
Position (voters)		0.0363			0.381			0.191
		(0.303)			(0.256)			(0.234)
Nominated # Position (voters)		0.310						
		(0.400)						
EU salience		0.0775			0.0661			0.102
		(0.153)			(0.180)			(0.151)
Left-right (general)		-0.169			-0.330***			-0.148
		(0.096)			(0.078)			(0.093)
Government party		-0.0998			-0.0267			-0.154
		(0.392)			(0.300)			(0.390)
Vote share		1.405			0.837			1.194
		(1.716)			(2.056)			(1.707)
Campaign day		0.0248***			0.0234***			0.0248***
		(0.004)			(0.004)			(0.004)
Length of message		0.373***			0.333***			0.372***
		(0.084)			(0.087)			(0.084)
_cons	-6.089***	-9.134***	-3.785***	-3.419***	-7.871***	-4.957***	-5.520***	-10.19***
	(0.527)	(2.233)	(0.419)	(0.437)	(1.732)	(0.363)	(0.424)	(1.824)
lns1_1_1 _cons	0.156	-0.206	-0.0166	0.192	-0.260	0.0148	-0.222	-0.196
	(0.276)	(0.305)	(0.357)	(0.295)	(0.271)	(0.303)	(0.414)	(0.305)
lns2_1_1 _cons	0.135	-0.218	0.114	-0.177	-23.92	0.126	0.352*	-0.198
	(0.167)	(0.226)	(0.200)	(0.237)	(3.680e+09)	(0.169)	(0.151)	(0.222)
N	11,747	11,747	6,685	6,685	6,685	11,747	11,747	11,747

Note: Results are based on multi-level logistic regression models with Spitzenkandidaten mentions as the dependent variable and observations nested in countries and parties. Included variables are identical to the models presented in Table 6 of the main article. To foster interpretation of the coefficient for the interaction term in Model 2, a marginal effect plot is presented as well (see below). Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 01$.

Figure 22: Marginal effect plot based on Model 2 in Table 32

Average Marginal Effects of 1.Nominated with 95% CIs
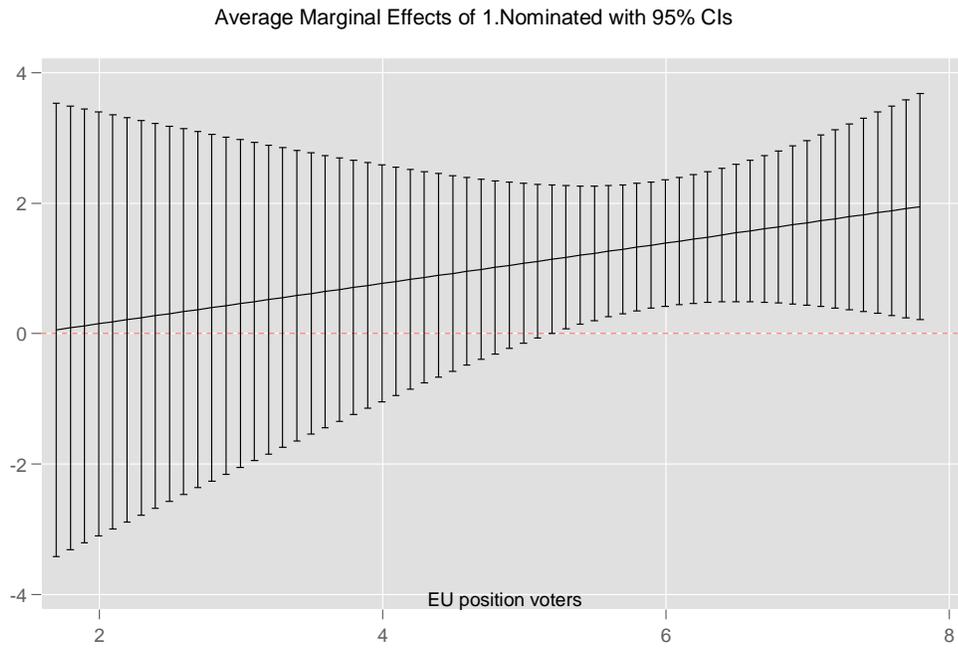
Note: Marginal effects are based on Model 2 in Table 32. The spikes represent the confidence intervals at the 95 percent level.

Mechanisms behind individual hypotheses on Spitzenkandidaten mentions

All hypotheses outlined in the article make claims about the overall attention parties devote to the *Spitzenkandidaten*. However, one might argue that the mechanisms behind the derived hypotheses lead to the expectation that a party only or particularly emphasises the same candidate it nominated (H1, H2, H3), the candidate who is from its own party (H4) and the candidates who are from its own country (H5). To explore the postulated mechanism behind greater attention on the *Spitzenkandidaten* in these hypotheses, we additionally measure our dependent variable in a way that is sensitive to attention towards specific candidates. The results presented below, corroborate that the mechanisms suggested in our hypotheses are responsible for the effects presented in our main findings.

To explore this point in more detail, we estimate logistic regression models treating *Spitzenkandidaten* mentions as the dependent variable like the analysis presented in Table 6 of the main article, but with the dependent variable measured to more neatly fit the mechanisms at work as suggested in our individual hypotheses. For this task, we take advantage of the fact that our coding scheme differentiates between mentions of the *Spitzenkandidaten* in person (see Appendix B). Based on this information, we calculate a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 only when the candidate is mentioned that a specific party nominated (H1, H2, H3, and H4). Similarly, we construct a dependent variable to explore the idea that parties put the spotlight particularly on the *Spitzenkandidaten* when one is affiliated to the party, as hypothesized in H5. This variable only takes a value of 1 when the party to which one of the candidates belongs mentioned this specific candidate in the message. Moreover, to test H6 in more detail, we only coded the dependent variable as 1 if a candidate from the same country as the respective party was mentioned. All models support our initial findings. In these specifications of the dependent variable, we find a statistically significant effect for our independent variables as well. Only the effect of the home country variable fails to reach statistical significance as it is also the case in Model 5 and Model 8 presented in Table 6. We therefore conclude that the mechanisms suggested in our hypotheses are responsible for the effects presented in our main findings.

Table 33: Mechanisms behind the hypotheses on Spitzenkandidaten mentions

	H1	H2	H3/H4	H5	H6
Nominated	**1.573*****	-2.289		2.084***	1.926***
	(0.476)	(1.871)		(0.541)	(0.521)
Nominated # Position (voters)		**0.653***			
		(0.301)			
Congruence (EU)			-0.668*		
			(0.289)		
Congruence (LR)			-0.857*		
			(0.340)		
National Party affiliation	1.916***	1.926***	1.341	**1.756****	1.852***
	(0.514)	(0.529)	(0.729)	**(0.538)**	(0.484)
Home country	0.950	0.938	1.128	0.784	**0.886**
	(0.668)	(0.653)	(0.945)	(0.611)	**(0.591)**
Position (voters)	0.234	-0.263	0.501***	0.0172	0.106
	(0.215)	(0.339)	(0.139)	(0.218)	(0.206)
EU salience	0.348	0.302	0.211	0.345*	0.324*
	(0.186)	(0.176)	(0.251)	(0.167)	(0.161)
Left-right (general)	-0.230***	-0.268***	-0.303**	-0.308***	-0.266***
	(0.064)	(0.080)	(0.107)	(0.087)	(0.057)
Government party	0.745*	0.770*	0.442	0.695	0.632*
	(0.340)	(0.391)	(0.245)	(0.360)	(0.268)
Vote share	-0.870	-0.198	0.293	-2.014	-1.167
	(2.121)	(1.972)	(2.417)	(2.606)	(2.011)
Campaign day	0.0239**	0.0241**	0.0236**	0.0216**	0.0233**
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.008)
Length of message	0.314***	0.324***	0.284***	0.357***	0.333***
	(0.076)	(0.072)	(0.058)	(0.086)	(0.064)
cons	-11.10***	-8.016**	-9.217**	-9.551***	-10.09***
	(2.729)	(3.014)	(2.804)	(2.166)	(2.215)
N	11,748	11,748	6,685	11,748	11,748
pseudo R^2	0.262	0.265	0.255	0.224	0.247

Note: Standard errors clustered by countries in parentheses. $^*\, p < 0.05$, $^{**}\, p < 0.01$, $^{***}\, p < 0.001$

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