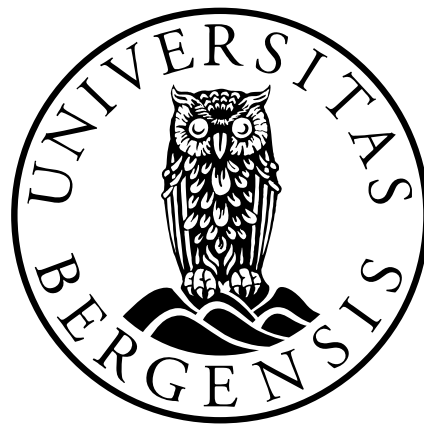


Anti-Corruption Parties in the CEE

*The Causal Effect of Anti-Corruption Party
Success on Established Parties' Salience Shifts
A Regression Discontinuity Approach*



Master's Thesis
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Spring 2020

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Year: 2020

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Abstract. This thesis addresses the dynamics of issue competition between political elites in younger multiparty systems. More specifically, the extent to which parties respond to the issue emphasis of parties competing on anti-corruption is investigated. To better understand why particular issues are introduced to the political agenda and become increasingly salient, it is useful to analyse the success of new issue entrepreneurs and not least to explore the strategic responses of established parties.

In this thesis it is argued that the response to anti-corruption mobilization depends on whether anti-corruption parties pose an electoral threat to established parties. A party is considered a substantial threat when it enters Parliament. The literature on party competition contains two diverging expectations of how established parties respond to the challenge of a new party, underpinning two hypotheses in the thesis. On the one hand, it is argued that established parties should adopt particular issues of newcomers in order to influence debate and try to win ownership of an issue that presents itself as electorally beneficial, thus increasing issue salience. On the other hand, such issue convergence might amplify the importance of the issue in question and lead voters to consider the new party the primary issue owner. Avoiding the issue and decreasing issue salience are suggested as the logic alternative because it can give voters the impression that the issue and the new party are irrelevant.

In analysing the evolution of the anti-corruption issue, this thesis exploits data from the Comparative Manifesto Project addressed during the period 1993–2017 involving 10 Central and Eastern European countries to conduct a longitudinal cross-country, quasi-experimental analysis. The research design is constructed in line with an approach of Regression Discontinuity by which surpassing an exogenous cut-off assigns treatment to individuals. The electoral threshold operates according to this rule of treatment assignment because passing it severely increases the resources of a political party.

Neither an increase nor a decrease of anti-corruption salience was established when Anti-Corruption Parties enter Parliament. Thus, both hypotheses were rejected. Nevertheless, an analysis of the descriptive data shows that established parties in fact alter their anti-corruption issue salience. More research exploring the motivations behind various shifts in issue salience is of the essence. The thesis serves to elucidate the development of party competition in multiparty systems strongly characterized by issue competition and the findings highlight the multifaceted context defining competition on the anti-corruption issue.

Acknowledgements. Firstly, I would like to show my appreciation for my supervisor Raimondas Ibenskas. Since the beginning, Ibenskas has been a vital support and I have very much enjoyed our collaboration. By asking challenging questions and showing genuine interest in questions I raised, Ibenskas activated my thought process and created an inspiring collaborative environment that promoted continuous motivation throughout the year of working with the master thesis.

Before I had a clear plan of what my thesis would look like, I was given a taste of the themes where I had expressed an interest. Discussing angles that I suggested, Ibenskas pointed me in the right direction with regards to how I could contribute to the literature of political competition within the limits of time set to complete the thesis. He continuously introduced me to additional relevant literature throughout the process, and I benefited hugely from his extensive overview and knowledge. Ibenskas has given highly constructive feedback on my various drafts, asking questions of the sort that makes one take a step back and evaluate content and the consistency of arguments. The tasks on my to-do list between meetings were always very concrete and clear, which ensured a steady progress. By regularly achieving targets, I gained confidence. It has been a great privilege to be supervised by Ibenskas, and I am truly grateful for his crucial support and encouragement.

My grandmother, May, has offered time and support by reading the thesis and giving feedback, of which I am very appreciative. I would also like to thank Reto Wueest who provided me with econometric sources through which I could familiarize myself with the research design and apply it to the statistical computing environment of R.

I am grateful to my student colleagues who always seek to get the best out of one another on both the personal level and in academic achievements. Important to mention are my friends from other faculties with whom I engage in different activities, in particular my teammates at BSI Rowing. Lastly, I want to thank my parents who have listened with great interest whenever new insights came to mind. I could never have completed five years as a student without knowing that vibrant political discussions waited over Sunday dinner after a full week of studies and practice.

Abbreviations.

ACP – Anti-corruption party

AERP – Anti-establishment reform party

CEE – Central and Eastern Europe

CHES – Chapel Hill Expert Survey

CMP – Comparative Manifesto Project

CPI – The Corruption Perception Index

DW – Durbin-Watson

EC – European Commission

EED – European Election Database

EU – European Union

LATE – Local average treatment effects

LMP – Politics Can Be Different (Hungarian political party)

MARPOR – Manifesto Research on Political Representation

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

ParlGov – Parliaments and Governments Database

PPDD – People’s Party Dan Diaconescu (Romanian political party)

RD – Regression Discontinuity

RRP – Radical right party

OECD – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

OLANO – Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (Slovakian political party)

UN – United Nations

USR – Save Romania Union (Romanian political party)

TI – Transparency International

WE – Western Europe

Contents.

- 1. INTRODUCTION..... 1
 - 1.1 Research question..... 1
 - 1.2 Relevance of the theme 3
 - 1.3 Contribution of the thesis 4
 - 1.4 Structure of the thesis 6
- 2. CORRUPTION 7
 - 2.1 Conceptualization of Corruption 7
 - 2.2 Implications of corruption 11
 - 2.3 An overview of country-level corruption..... 13
- 3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW 17
 - 3.1 Conceptualizing the political space..... 17
 - 3.2 Theories of party competition 18
 - 3.2.1 The Downsian model 19
 - 3.2.2 Valence and positional issues..... 20
 - 3.2.3 The relevance of Issue Competition perspectives 21
 - 3.2.4 Multidimensional frameworks of party dynamics 23
 - 3.3 Context of electoral competition in the CEE 25
 - 3.3.1 The Development of Party Systems and cleavages in WE and CEE 25
 - 3.3.2 Party system dynamics 29
 - 3.3.3 Corruption - a cross-cutting issue? 30
 - 3.4 Conceptualizing anti-corruption parties 31
 - 3.4.1 New parties as issue entrepreneurs..... 33
 - 3.4.2 ACP’s and “newness” 35
 - 3.4.3 Anti-Establishment Reform Parties, New/Centrist Parties and Populism..... 35
 - 3.5 What drives the electoral success of ACP’s..... 37
 - 3.6 Research on the consequences of ACP’s 39
 - 3.7 Effects of new parties on established parties’ policy 42
 - 3.8 Addressing a gap in existing literature 44
- 4.0 THEORY 47
 - 4.1 Determining the nature of the anti-corruption issue..... 48
 - 4.2 Factors driving the issue attention of established and new parties 49
 - 4.3 Building expectations 52

5.0 DATA AND RESEARCH DESIGN.....	56
5.1 Data	56
5.1.1 Parliaments and Governments data	57
5.1.2 The Comparative Manifesto Project data.....	57
5.1.3 Reliability and validity	58
5.2 Research design.....	58
5.2.1 Case selection.....	60
5.2.2 Constructing the dependent variable.....	61
5.2.3 Constructing the independent variable.....	63
5.2.4 The threshold.....	66
5.2.5 The nature of the Regression Discontinuity Design.....	67
5.2.6 Key assumptions	68
5.2.7 Pre-analysis steps	71
5.2.7.1 Transforming the forcing variable.....	71
5.2.7.2 Model specification	71
5.2.7.3 Robustness.....	72
5.2.7.4 Fixed and random effects in panel data analysis.....	73
5.3 Data issues.....	75
5.3.1 Missing data, sample size and reliability	75
5.3.2 The threshold.....	76
6.0 RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....	78
6.1 What is reported in the models.....	79
6.2 Results	79
6.3 Robustness and placebo tests	82
6.3.1 Choice of optimal bandwidth	82
6.3.2 Manipulation of Forcing Variable.....	83
6.3.3 Placebo test: Is there a jump somewhere else?	86
6.3.4 Thresholds	88
6.4 Discussion	90
6.4.1 Theoretical implications.....	91
6.4.2 The anti-corruption issue and factors of threat.....	92
6.5 Summary and literary contributions.....	94
7. CONCLUSION	96
8. LITERATURE	99

Tables.

Table 1: Different forms of corruption..... 10
Table 2: Corruption Perception Index 14
Table 3: Table of Saliency Threshold 64
Table 4: List of Elections and Thresholds..... 77
Table 5: Established Party Shift in Saliency on Anti-Corruption. 81
Table 6: Established Party Shift in Saliency on Anti-Corruption (HU and LIT excluded). 89
Table 7: Established Party Shift in Saliency on Anti-Corruption (effective thresholds). 90

Figures.

Figure 1: Country-level variation in corruption saliency, unweighted by party vote share. 15
Figure 2: The Political Space 18
Figure 3: Interaction between the Party System Agenda and political parties..... 50
Figure 4: Distribution of Established party Saliency shift on Anti-corruption. 62
Figure 5: Established party saliency shift on anti-corruption..... 80
Figure 6: The distribution in the forcing variable (ACP vote share centered around the threshold value). 84
Figure 7: Established party saliency shift on anti- corruption, arbitrary cut-off set to 2 87
Figure 8: Established party saliency shift on anti- corruption, countries with legal threshold 88
Figure 9: Established party saliency shift on anti- corruption, countries with legal and effective thresholds. 89

1. INTRODUCTION

“Zero tolerance of corruption will be the alpha and omega” (Matovic cited in Sirotnikova 2020).

This statement was made by the leader of “Olano”, Igor Matovic, after his party became the largest one, obtaining 25% of the votes, in the Slovak Parliamentary election on the 29th of February 2020. The result came as a surprise to many, but post-election analysis points out that voters are tired of how elite corruption penetrates state activities. While Olano has engaged in a political collaboration with three other conservative parties to build a constitutional majority, Matovic with his statement sought to reassure his supporters that fighting corruption will remain the party’s top priority (Sirotnikova 2020). Olano is part of a political phenomenon particular to the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) where new parties compete by campaigning mainly on the issue of fighting corruption, which is the focus of this thesis.

1.1 Research question

Within a scope including ten CEE countries observed during the period of 1993-2018, this thesis investigates the effect of anti-corruption parties on the salience of the issue of fighting corruption. Arguing that parliamentary representation grants parties with a substantial increase in resources, I seek to measure shifts in the attention given to anti-corruption among established parties following the entrance of new anti-corruption parties to parliament. Relevant to an analysis of party competition on the issue of fighting corruption is a discussion of the genuine agenda of anti-corruption parties since the issue is often linked to populist appeals and the disturbing implications of corruption to democracy. On this basis, the research question is formulated as follows:

What is the effect of parliamentary entry of new anti-corruption parties on the salience that established parties assign to the issue of fighting corruption in the CEE?

Addressing the research question, three variables arise as central and require substantive focus; anti-corruption salience of established parties, popular support of anti-corruption parties and the electoral threshold that determines anti-corruption parliamentary presence. The CEE provides the context for investigation which deals more specifically with the ten countries that

in this region are also EU member states. The analysis starts with the third democratic election after the fall of Communism.

The research question is motivated by two puzzles, a theoretical one and an empirical one. Firstly, the relationship between parties and their response to one another has been extensively studied comprising a wide range of literature. Still, disagreement remains regarding the expectations of how parties respond strategically - in terms of adoption or avoidance - to “valence issues” about which only one position of opinion is available. This is the case with the anti-corruption issue because the electorate in general will view the matter from the same angle. Such “valence issues” are especially important within theories of issue competition since persistent party interaction affects which issues are most important on the political agenda. On the one hand, it is suggested that successful parties will always put pressure on other parties to adopt the same main issues and thus *increase* the emphasis on the issue on the political agenda. On the other hand, it is assumed that successful new parties that convincingly emphasize valence issues, to other parties represent a threat to an extent that other parties preferably should avoid addressing the issue in order to *decrease* its salience. This theoretical incongruity shown in the literature is interesting to investigate further; which of the camps has best understood the mechanisms directing party-level dynamics?

Secondly, I am concerned about the negative consequences of corruption on democratic development endangering protection of human rights. One of the most highly recognized corruption non-governmental organizations (NGO) Transparency International (TI) (2019a) warns about international backlash regarding anti-corruption norms. Hence, it appears empirically intriguing to look into the democratic effects of the phenomenon of anti-corruption parties continuously emerging in the young democracies of the CEE region, a region whose contextual setting enables studies with high prospects for causal inference.

In the literature on party-level dynamics, I have found that most studies are based on standard regression analyses in which one cannot be completely certain that all relevant variables are controlled for. Consequently, one can never conclude finally on the scope and direction of effects. Estimation of party-level effects are especially vulnerable to public opinion as a confounder, hence, estimates made, and inferences drawn have largely been on a fragile basis of evidence. Not unlikely, this may also be one of the reasons why there are diverging theoretical expectations about party-level behaviour. Also, while party-level dynamics

regarding the valence issue of environment has been studied in Western Europe (WE), such investigation has never been conducted of the anti-corruption issue in the Central and Eastern parts of Europe. The combination of the given caveats has motivated the choice of theme and has assisted in specifying the research question which will direct the next chapters in this thesis.

1.2 Relevance of the theme

Anti-corruption parties, like Olano, are part of a wave of new parties emerging in all of Europe. Defining about these new parties is their narrow issue orientation emphasizing only one or a few issues. Adopting contemporary more relevant issues that directly interfere with people's lives is a successful strategy (Skirbekk 2015, 123).

Parties focusing mainly on fighting corruption are particular to the Central- and Eastern parts of Europe. Here, levels of corruption are generally higher in comparison to the average level of perceived corruption in Western Europe (Bågenholm 2013). This is of concern considering that the manifold costs of corruption are especially harmful to immature democracies. According to Transparency International (2019b) corruption affects negatively the very cornerstones of society. Corruption has a disruptive impact on democratic institutions and the protection of human rights, especially freedom of speech. Furthermore, corruption is strongly correlated with poor socioeconomic standards combined with popular discontent and discouragement (Heywood 2015; Tavits 2008b). Accordingly, the anti-corruption issue has proven itself of primary importance on the political agenda and parties presenting themselves as democratically genuine, honest and politically competent have enjoyed electoral support (Bågenholm 2013, 174).

In addition to following up on voters' concerns, consciously plotting how to make use of opponents' prioritizations in one's own communication, is vital. In this strategic approach one must establish a divide between one's own party and other parties. When traditional divides and party-voter identification are limited, as in the CEE countries, parties will have to be innovative in creating divides. One way to do this is through deliberate attack (Skirbekk 2015, 124). Inherent in a campaign focused on fighting corruption is stark critique of veteran actors that have enjoyed and exploited positions of power e.g. government and established parties. When talking about their own capacity to fight corruption, they score when simultaneously showing that established parties have been unsuccessful in handling this task. Contrasting comparison makes the party divide more evident and the message more convincing. Parties emphasizing anti-corruption have obtained seats in parliaments and some have manifested their

success even through incumbency (Bågenholm 2013, 178). Thus, an interesting question is to ask how existing parties respond to this issue and challenge.

Within political systems permeated of corruption it is not given that new and inexperienced parties emphasizing anti-corruption will have the ability to impose a sufficient pressure on established parties which have benefited from corruption to increase the salience of fighting corruption. Even keeping a transparent image becomes difficult. In fact, scholars have observed that most anti-corruption parties leave this issue behind after their first successful election (Bågenholm 2013; Deegan-Krause & Haughton 2012, 224). Concerns have also been uttered regarding the anti-corruption parties' genuineness when emphasizing the fight on corruption. It has been argued that this strategy in fact is part of a populist appeal to sway voters by scrutinizing the existing parties as being led by a crooked elite (Hanley & Sikk 2016; Mudde 2004; Van Kessel 2015).

Within representative democracies there is no certainty that new parties will manage to challenge established parties. Nevertheless, if new parties are successful to the degree that they gain seats in parliament, such representation comes with increased resources and greatly enhances the chance of political survival (Abou-Chadi and Krause 2018, Krouwel & Lucardie 2008). Therefore, one should expect ACPs that manage to pass the electoral threshold to enter parliament will pose a serious threat to existing parties in terms of political influence. It is central to the realization of anti-corruption measures that parties advocating this issue achieving electoral support are able to influence the other parties.

1.3 Contribution of the thesis

In meeting the research question, this thesis contributes to the literature on party competition. Firstly, contrasting theoretical expectations about responses to new challengers are tested in order to provide more nuanced explanations. Secondly, while the political responses to the issues of environment and immigration has been studied greatly in WE, parties campaigning on the anti-corruption issue in the CEE have not received equal and deserved attention.

With regard to corruption and party system volatility, the situation in the CEE as a region of new vulnerable democracies with a common heritage can be utilized as a laboratory for investigating dynamics and provide externally relevant knowledge to a world faced with prevalent challenges on these matters. Most countries in the world lack effective capacity to

curb corruption, which is “contributing to a crisis in democracy” (Transparency International 2018). At a time of worry about the future of democracy, it is therefore of particular interest to study parties as key actors within democratic institutions.

Thirdly, recognizing the CEE as a laboratory for comparative studies combined with the intriguing phenomena of the anti-corruption issue facilitates for utilizing an innovative research design. Building on the approach by Abou-Chadi and Krause (2018) who uses regression discontinuity (RD) as a method to establish causal inferences between the effect of radical right parties on mainstream parties positions, I investigate whether new anti-corruption presence in parliament poses a threat to established parties and as such forces shifts in the salience of the anti-corruption issue. For this purpose, I have collected longitudinal data of party manifestos provided by the Comparative Manifesto Project database on parties’ policy preferences.

The research design of this thesis employs the approach of Regression Discontinuity (RD) which utilizes situations where an exogenous cut-off point causes variation in outcomes. While units observed closely around the cut-off are assumed to be similar, only units on one side of the cut-off are assigned treatment. Electoral thresholds as a feature of electoral systems serves by this rule of treatment assignment. In party systems within which no ACP’s managed to enter parliament, established parties are not exposed to the treatment of ACP threat even though some ACP’s are very close to the threshold. Contrarily, in party systems where ACP’s managed to surpass the threshold, even by just a small margin, treatment is assigned. Comparing cases where vote shares were similar, enables inferences to be made about the effect of parties independent from public opinion. CEE countries are ideally suited for this task because they all use nationwide legal thresholds. As such, RD design provides a counterfactual comparison of the salience that established parties put on the fight of corruption with and without ACP’s. The central contribution of this design is a quasi-experimental setting in which the effect of public opinion as a disturbing confounder on party strategies can be ruled out.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

I have chosen to divide this thesis into 7 chapters. The second chapter sheds light on the term corruption and illustrates its scope in the context under investigation. The chapter also discusses the consequences of corruption on political development within new democracies and relates political campaigning on the theme of corruption to populism. Chapter three is comprised of literature relevant to the variables in the research question. This includes theory and empirical research related to party dynamics and responses to competitive issues that meet political success. Furthermore, the regional focus requires presentation of literature describing the particular characteristics of party dynamics in the CEE.

Building on elements from the literature review, the fourth chapter presents the theoretical framework within which contrasting hypotheses are constructed in order to answer the overarching research question. In order to test the hypotheses, I describe the research design of the thesis in the fifth chapter. The first part of the chapter presents and discusses the data, their reliability and validity, as well as measurement decisions regarding the dependent variable, anti-corruption salience shift, and the independent variable, anti-corruption party strength. The factor of the electoral threshold to parliament as a variable in its own is also addressed here. Second, I describe the idea behind the RD design and explain why this approach is advantageous in order to meet the research question given the political setting. While presenting the key assumptions of the research design, I am conscious also about potential data deficiencies.

Chapter six will illustrate and report the results. Furthermore, an analysis and a discussion of the findings shed light on the hypotheses. The discussion provides theoretical implications for the literature concerning party competition on political issues and has empirical implications regarding new democracies questioning whether inexperienced parties can be effective actors in driving the fight against corruption. The seventh chapter will summarize the main findings and the key arguments that serve to answer the overarching research question.

2. CORRUPTION

Why do parties in the CEE choose to compete on the particular issue of anti-corruption? This section will try to meet this question by addressing the issue of corruption and its implications, while presenting an overview of the levels of corruption in the CEE. Which parties emphasize anti-corruption and how can this issue be advantageous in electoral competition? Firstly, however, it is necessary to provide a conceptualization of corruption in order to understand the nature of the practice that anti-corruption parties actually fight against since the measurements taken by anti-corruption parties depend on an established understanding of what corruption implies.

2.1 Conceptualization of Corruption

In recent decades, corruption has been increasingly problematized while continuing to create social and political stress. This attention is in tune with a general political shift towards anti-corruption norms in the international community due to an awakening with respect to the manifold costs of corruption. Placing corruption on the political agenda along with direct policies designed to combat anti-corruption is prompted by an increasing pool of research on corruption; Corruption has several negative consequences at the sector level and for economic growth and development (OECD 2015). From a social perspective Sánchez & Goda (2018) underline the negative impact of corruption on redistribution levels. Regarding economic development Cuervo-Cazurra (2008a) explains that different types of corruption have different effects by which pervasive corruption can hinder foreign direct investment. Market competition is also in danger within countries where corruption is rationalized by executives with close ties to government officials as seen in India (Collins, Uhlenbruck & Rodriguez 2008). Anti-corruption measures therefore are central to ensure economic development (Van Vu, Quang Tran, Van Nguyen & Lim 2018). In order to have any real effect it is necessary that anti-corruption laws are implemented and enforced on an equal basis across countries (Cuervo-Cazurra 2008b).

Between 1985 and 2010 more than 6000 articles on this matter were published (Heywood 2015, 1). However, scholars struggle to approach consensus regarding the conceptual definitions of corruption. The academic contestation of conceptualization requires - in terms of validity - a clarification of how this thesis understands corruption.

A word can have a different meaning varying with time and place. This is particularly true for a term like corruption, considering its complex nature. Hence it is not surprising that scholars within the field of social sciences differ in their understandings and measurements of the manifold phenomena (Kurer 2015, 30). To counter this challenge Kolnes' (2016) has contributed to the literature on corruption theory by presenting an encompassing conceptualization of corruption which serves to absorb the different forms that corruption can inhabit.

Kolnes' (2016) conceptualization of corruption is constructed in accordance with the "ladder of abstraction" by Adcock & Collier (2001), who conceive a concept as consisting of different levels. An interpretation of concepts and levels are found in the works of several social scientists (E.g. Gerring 2012; Goertz 2006 Sartori 1970; Collier & Levitsky 1997; Munck & Verkuilen 2002). The concept must rest on a background foundation, being the basic level, i.e. the root of the concept. According to Kolnes (2016), the historical core meaning from a western perspective is that corruption represents phenomena of "decay or flaw," and as such are acts that diverge from what was the original intention. In a political context corruption is present when public officials, representing institutions, diverge from legitimate procedures. An identification of such divergence obviously depends on how we expect decision-makers to function. This is linked to given perceptions of good governance. Because such perceptions are stained with subjectivity scholars are urged to be aware of the 'glasses' or prejudices through which one observes and maybe scrutinizes the world.

On the abstraction ladder the secondary level demands greater systematization of the concept. A definition can serve such a systematic purpose. In respect to the context of CEE EU member states focused upon of this thesis, I employ the definition by the European Commission (EC) (2019) who sees corruption as "the abuse of power for private gain." The vague notion of "divergence from intention" is thereby somewhat more tangible. This is a general definition which can be applied to all forms/indicators of corruption and is almost the same as that in Kolnes (2016): "Corruption is the misuse of public office for private gain." The EC definition is most relevant here because it is the basis on which all EU policies on the issue of corruption is established, and hence provides the basis for the anti-corruption rhetoric to which CEE countries are exposed. This definition is also the one that is used by dominant actors in the international community like the World Bank, Transparency International, OECD and the

United Nations (UN), all furnish the external relevance needed to make inferences on a more general basis.

Here, due to the manifold ambiguous nature of corruption Kolnes applies the family resemblance structure by Goertz (2006). This structure has more lenient requirements regarding presence of indicators than does a conceptual structure demanding necessary and sufficient indicators. When a concept is defined by a family resemblance structure, key indicators are determined but need not all be present to identify the concept successfully.

The most palpable level on the ladder of abstraction requires operationalization through empirical observables/attributes in order to enable measurement. “Basically, secondary- and basic-level dimensions are too abstract to give guidance in actual data gathering; hence the indicator level is where the concept gets specific enough to guide the acquisition of empirical data” (Goertz 2006, 62). Corruption or abuse of power for private gain can occur in various forms like bribery or secret deals between public and private actors (European Commission 2019) differences which makes this operational stage less straightforward. With regard to the various forms of corruption addressed in the existing literature, Søreide (2014, 2) has summarized the following types of corruption acts:

Form of corruption	Description
Bribery	“The act of intentionally forcing someone to pay something extra, or being paid something extra for a service or product. This something can take the form of gifts, loans, rewards or other advantages. Bribes can be seen as both extortive and collusive.”
Embezzlement	“To use ones position to steal, misdirect or misappropriate funds or assets that one is entrusted with the control of.”
Fraud	“To intentionally deceive someone so as to get an illegitimate advantage, either economically, political or otherwise.”
Collusion	“To have two parties come to an illegitimate agreement to achieve personal benefits by use of public office or power, also including improper influence on the actions of one of the parties (such as

	top level decision-makers).”
Patronage, clientelism and nepotism	“To use ones position to gain systematic advantages by allocating resources to others or giving official positions to friends or relatives to further one’s own position or benefits.”

Table 1: *Different forms of corruption*

Note: Source Søreide (2014 paraphrased in Kolnes 2016, 20)

All attributes are considered to carry equal weight, and none are ‘necessary’ as it only requires one of the given acts to be present in order to identify corruption. An act is either transparent following legitimate procedure or is corrupt if diverging according to one of the indicators above. This is because corruption as a concept thus far has been understood as dichotomous following a Boolean logic (named after George Boole), in contrast to fuzzy logic where a concept is graded (Goertz 2006).

A “fuzzy logic” gives an alternative understanding of concepts. This perspective is very fruitful for the purpose of this thesis. Understanding corruption through the fuzzy logic addresses the grey zone of a concept being important to theorize especially in cases of unclear boundaries (Goertz 2006, 31), which arguably is the case considering the inherent illegal nature of corruption. Since corrupt acts generally take place behind closed doors, and only a few scandals are exposed, it is difficult objectively to measure act by act. It is therefore more attainable to acquire a sense of the scope of corruption through perceptions of corruption (Transparency International 2018), which taken together arguably present a more graded opinion. Also, rather than the unknown number of corrupt acts in a country, it is voter’s and party’s perceptions of corruption that politically drives the salience of the issue of corruption. Conversely, in an empirical study of corruption in Vietnam, Van Vu et al. (2018) argue that the negative effects of corruption is better measured by its intensity rather than through a dummy variable. While the intensity measures indicate a negative correlation between higher intensity of corruption and decreasing financial performance, the dummy variable did not provide any significant findings.

The fuzzy logic is also more instructive in comparing the prevalence of corruption *between* countries, because it allows one to conclude that one country struggles more extensively with corruption than another despite their both having experienced corruption. When discussing the grey zone of more or less corruption, it is necessary to identify the contrasting negative concept

of corruption. The more corruption, the less transparency. Transparency as the opposite is thus the “negative” part of the concept and therefore also can give relevant information about the issue of corruption.

Since 1995 Transparency International has created a broadly acknowledged index of transparency. 180 countries have been scored between 0 and 100 based on 13 surveys revealing the perceptions of corruption as evaluated yearly by experts and businesspeople. Following a fuzzy logic points are given on different scales. A score of 0 indicates extreme corruption in contrast to a score of 100 which indicates no corruption i.e. full transparency (Transparency International 2018). Resembling the list of corruption acts by Søreide (in Kolnes 2016) the index captures the following manifestations of corruption: bribery, diversion of public funds, prevalence of officials using public office for private gain without facing consequences, nepotistic versus meritocratic appointments in the civil service and state capture by narrow vested interests. In addition, the index measures the capacity of states to control corruption and to enhance transparency.

The Boolean conceptualization of corruption was a necessary first step to pin down what corruption is, illustrating that it can take different forms and underscoring that only the slightest divergence, meaning if only one act is present this is sufficient to characterize a situation as corrupt. For the main purpose of this thesis however, a fuzzy understanding of corruption is more useful as it describes the perceived scope of corruption in countries. This enables cross-country comparison and an analysis of the proposed link between country-level perception of corruption and levels of salience.

2.2 Implications of corruption

“Prior to the 1990’s, corruption was regarded as unavoidable and even beneficial in developing countries insofar as it facilitated and accelerated business transactions” (Blanche, Depardon & Gros 2019, 4). This disturbing perspective shifted during the late 80s as people realized that corruption thwarts legitimate economic growth and rather provides new ground for criminal activity. Uncertainty hampers production and raises costs. Corruption also obstructs regular policy goals like redistribution of income and protection of the environment. “Most importantly, corruption undermines trust in governments, public institutions and democracy in general” (European Commission 2019, 1).

On this basis, the EU has established that corruption is a particularly heinous crime which requires drastic sanctions. On the elite level the EU has become a key actor in influencing the elite-driven political agenda (Stoll 2010, 456) and has developed an anti-corruption policy with requirements imposed upon all member states. Through increased information and binding requirements, the institutional body contributes to a strengthening of anti-corruption norms (Blanche et al. 2019, 5).

Specific anti-corruption *acquis* includes the 1997 Convention on fighting corruption involving officials of the EU or officials of Member States and the 2003 Framework Decision on combating corruption in the private sector aims to criminalise both active and passive bribery (European Commission 2019).

However, the form and quality of anti-corruption measurements vary between the EU countries (European Commission 2019). The development towards transparency has not been unanimously embraced. Many member states have been fallen behind in implementing measures fully to criminalize corruption. Although the EC is entitled to pursue members who have failed to act, this is difficult due to the overarching need for consensus which allows states that benefit from corruption to support each other (Blanche et al. 2019, 11). Lack of effective enforcement is typical among international organs. Also, demands from supranational organizations and international norms in general often lose efficacy when imposed top-down with an approach distant from local cultures committed to ideals of self-determination (Blanche et al. 2019, 5).

Blanche et al. (2019, 7) conclude that EU has been unsuccessful in tackling corruption in a direct manner. To confront corruption indirectly through innovative measures has been more effective. Restrictive policies aiming to regulate finance and to hinder money laundering as well as positive work to enhance cooperation are some examples (Blanche et al. 2019, 19). To restore public trust in institutions restricting corruption is central. Here, positive and preventive approaches to promote transparency and to protect whistle-blowers are considered to be vitally important to an equal degree as that of punitive measures (Blanche et al. 2019, 19). However, “while there is an EU legislative proposal to improve protections for whistle-blowers, there is a question mark on whether it will be agreed by Member States and ever reach the statute books” (Transparency International 2019a, 1). The fact that uncertainty surrounds a legislative proposal to strengthen the freedom of journalists and citizens to report on transparency violations is most

worrying and questions the quality of government not only of member states but also of institutions within the EU. The inherent shortcomings might explain the slowness in the process of strengthening transparency in the region as a whole.

2.3 An overview of country-level corruption

How corruption unfolds depends largely on individual country-level conditions, but for the countries under investigation in this thesis, corruption-policies have been imposed by the European Union from a supranational level. The EU as a whole is acknowledged as a highly transparent region in international comparison. However, within the region there are great differences which need attention. Of special interest are countries struggling with corruption in the Central and Eastern parts. Because of the intertwined relationships between the members, the EU is harmed as one body both economically and institutionally (European Commission 2019). In countries like Slovenia, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Romania corruption is perceived as highly problematic because people often have to pay bribes to receive necessary services, like healthcare. Estonia is one of the better performers as corruption is not embedded in people's daily behaviour (Blanche et al. 2019 2-3).

Table 2 presents data from Transparency International (2018) on the development of the perception of corruption in each country. The collected data are from the period between 2012-2018 since scores from before 2012 cannot be compared due to shifts in methodology. Consequently, transparency in the 10 countries of interest is scored much lower than that of countries in WE in particular and thus fall below the EU average. Estonia is an exception. Within the group, all but Hungary and Slovenia have increased their score since 2012. Czech Republic, Estonia and Latvia have progressed well compared to the rest of the group. The subject for the analysis is whether this overall improvement to some extent can be credited to agenda-setting ACP's, which in most countries entered the political scene around the turn of the millennium.

Year	BG	CR	EST	HU	LV	LIT	PL	RO	SK	SI	EU average
2012	41	49	64	55	49	54	58	44	46	61	66
2013	41	48	68	54	53	57	60	43	47	57	
2014	43	51	69	54	55	58	61	43	50	58	66
2015	41	56	70	51	56	59	63	46	51	60	67
2016	41	55	70	48	57	59	62	48	51	61	66
2017	43	57	71	45	58	59	60	48	50	61	66
2018	42	59	73	46	58	59	60	47	50	60	65

Table 2: Corruption Perception Index

Note: Source Transparency International (2018).

Although numerous countries in the world are ranked far below CEE countries regarding the degree of transparency, the region is repeatedly compared to Western countries in the EU within which such levels on average are far better (Bågenholm and Charron 2014, Enyedi & Deegan-Krause 2017, 7). Moreover, since EU integration has prescribed rapid learning of anti-corruption norms and political implementation this demand arguably raises concern regarding the state of corruption and the urgency to counteract it. Politicising corruption has been particularly vocal in CEE countries of the EU, and since the turn of the century a trend emerged within which new niche parties emphasize the problem of corruption as their main issue (Bågenholm 2013). Measures have been taken to tackle corruption while countries in the CEE have taken part in international collaborations and have made great efforts to build democratic institutions. Political parties have contributed to this development, but enduring struggles against inherent corruption have delayed the process of genuine democratization and establishing political trust. Hence, as illustrated in Figure 1, anti-corruption continues to be highly salient on the political agenda of parties in countries of the region.

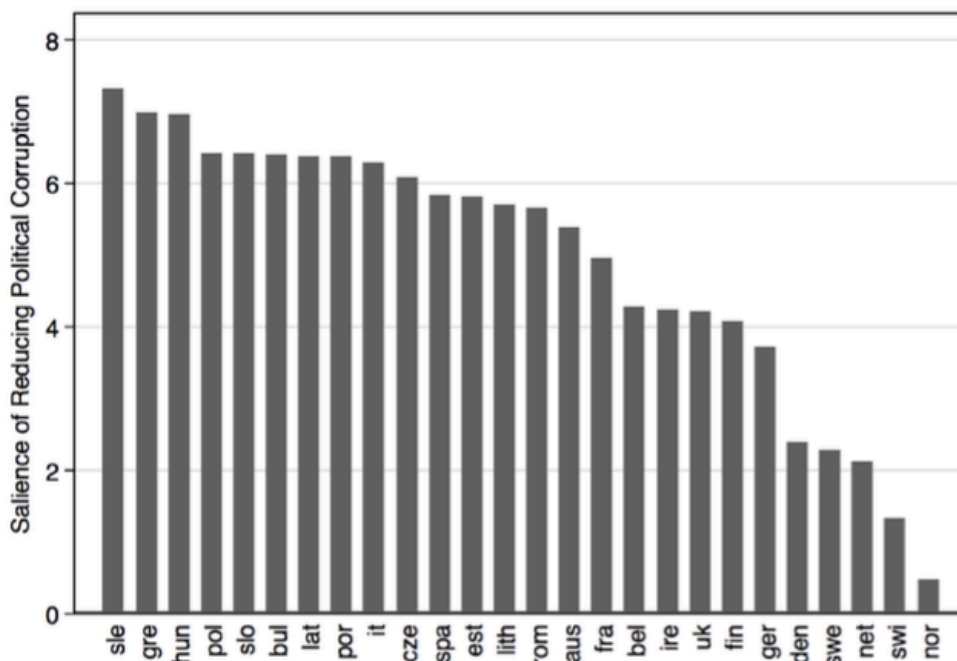


Figure 1: Country-level variation in corruption salience, unweighted by party vote share.

Note: All 10 CEE countries are among the 14 countries with higher levels of corruption salience, accompanied by Southern European countries. 0 = Not important at all; 10 = Extremely important (Source: Polk, Rovny, Bakker, Edward, Hooghe, Jolly, Koedam, Kostelka, Maks, Schumacher, Steenbergen, Vachudova & Zilovic 2017, 3).

Paradoxically, even today after two decades of politicizing anti-corruption, Transparency International (2019a) expresses great worries about the future not only of CEE countries but also of WE countries with regard to their anti-corruption commitment. According to TI (2019a) Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Poland have been characterized as recent decliners on their transparency index.

Hungary has seen the most severe decline in transparency score. After the turn of the millennium two new challenger parties emerged and contributed openly to criticise elite corruption; Jobbik and Politics Can Be Different (LMP). However, since the election of 2010, the Fidesz hegemony started by which the party increased government control over the economy and society (Hutter & Kriesi 2019, 174-177). Comparing the 2018 score with the 2012 score of 55 points Hungary lost 9. This decrease in transparency is seen together with its negative consequences on democracy in general. Oppositional activism has become more dangerous, media have been taken control over and key independent Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) have been exiled. NGOs that have managed to remain in the country can no longer freely accept support from foreign funders, and NGOs that aid immigrants have been targeted through increased taxation. These measures are clear violations of human rights. The

Judiciary of Hungarian has been transformed as courts loose independence under government supremacy through the minister of justice (Transparency International 2019a).

In Romania the elections of 2012 and 2016 saw the emergence of two successful new parties People's Party Dan Diaconescu (PPDD) (14 % vote share) and Save Romania Union (USR) (8,6 % vote share) winning electoral support through anti-corruption rhetoric (Hutter & Kriesi 2019, 221). Nevertheless, the country consequently has been scoring below 50 points. People are still protesting fiercely against corruption (Reuters 2018; Rankin 2019). An EU organ is therefore monitoring how the country complies with anti-corruption measurements which were agreed upon as part of its accession (Transparency International 2019a). The same monitoring is imposed upon Bulgaria which recently suffered a serious corruption scandal (Krasimirov & Kerry 2019). People generally lack faith in political institutions and how they are represented. A serious problem is how money flows into the political parties linked to government influence over media. Many media outlets survive due to government advertising, a problem likely to influence the quality of journalism and reduce the true media function as a government monitoring agent, freely making authorities accountable (Transparency International 2019a).

As stated, Poland is "currently under investigation by the EU over systematic violations of the rule of law." Investigation is legitimized by the way government has taken authority over parts of the judiciary, especially by appointing servile judges, and by reducing the space for free journalism. In the absence of judicial independence, genuine checks and balances crucial for democracy are no longer properly functioning (Transparency International 2019a).

Czech Republic is a "country to watch" according to TI. The last 5 years, the country has made great progress. However, just recently a number of corruption incidents indicate a negative turn in the commitment to anti-corruption while populism is thriving. "Prime Minister Andrej Babiš was found guilty of conflict of interest in relation to his media holdings," and he is also accused of misusing EU subsidies through ownership in an agricultural company (Transparency International 2019a).

Considering that the problem of corruption is increasingly frequent on the political agenda, the above examples of transparency relapse makes one question if there exist counteractive factors among political elite actors that stifles political ability to fight corruption.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introducing this chapter is a conceptualization of the political space in which ACP's compete on the anti-corruption issue. The following part discusses key theoretical models and concepts of party competition, positional and issue competition, and how scholars have combined insights from both. Include a sentence explaining why these models are relevant for your thesis. Thereafter the development of the political agenda and party system dynamics will be presented in order to provide a context of party competition in CEE countries for a conceptualization of parties that politicize anti-corruption. Succeeding, I illustrate the findings from previous research on the effect on new niche parties on established parties. Within this pool of publications, a research gap is detected with concern to anti-corruption parties.

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3.1 Conceptualizing the political space

In a discussion of electoral competition on the issue of corruption, a conceptualization of the political space in which an issue is presented and contested needs to be clarified. Stoll (2010) conceptualizes the political space of a party system as divided into the elite-level and the mass level. Voters, constructing the mass level, have political opinions and their preferences represent salient issues on the voter-defined political agenda.

At the centre of analyses of party systems are party cleavages over which parties compete (Rohrschneider & Whitefield 2009, 280). "A conflict that is salient to political parties, arguably the most important elite level actors, is one that appears on the party-defined political agenda" (Stoll 2010, 447). The content of the political agenda is shaped by political campaigns in which parties compete by various means and on different platforms, e.g. manifestos, political debates and speeches. The ideas that political parties define politics to be concerned with determines the political agenda on the elite-level, and divergence between parties mobilize voters and initiate party-voter alliance. This is the basis for policy formulation (Rohrschneider & Whitefield 2009, 280-281).

A number of studies have investigated the development of political cleavages in new democracies (Tavits 2008b). Unfortunately, the particular party-level dynamics have not been

given substantial attention (Rohrschneider & Whitefield 2009, 280-281). This is problematic because there tends to be a discrepancy between the area and level of citizens’ preferences and that of political parties. Therefore, one cannot draw inferences from one level to the other (Stoll 2010). As shown in Chapter 2, there are empirical demonstrations of voter disappointment over corruption being underscored as an important issue on the voter-defined political agenda. Figure 1 (Polk et al. 2017, 3) illustrates that party level salience of corruption is high among parties in the region. However, the space that voters devote to anti-corruption probably does not *directly* reflect issue importance on the elite level. Hence, this thesis is focused on understanding competition evolving around issue of fighting corruption on the elite-level.

Within the elite-level, the content of the political space is further divided into the “raw” and the “effective” space (Stoll 2010), see Figure 2. The latter is concerned with how issues relate to each other and how they are structured. More relevant to the research question of this thesis is the raw space which concerns the variance in number and in salience of political conflicts on the political agenda.

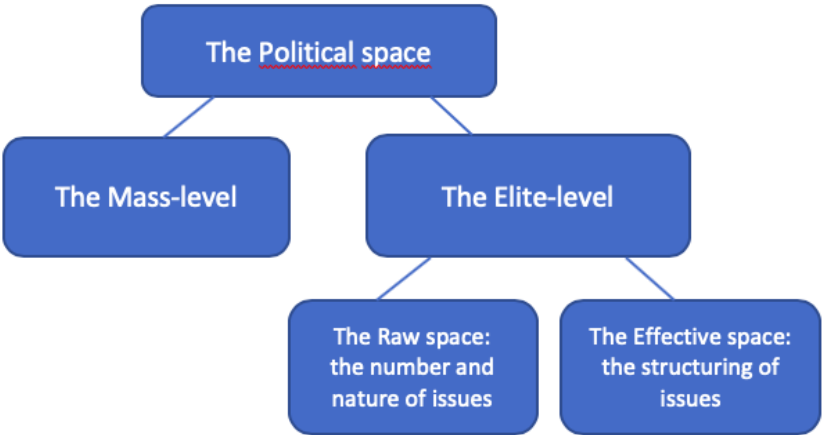


Figure 2: *The Political Space*
 Note: Figure based on the theoretical outline by Stoll (2010).

How the issue of corruption unfolds in the raw space in countries of the CEE region is the focus of this thesis. To find answers it is necessary to explore the dynamics of party competition.

3.2 Theories of party competition

Two competing schools of thought have provided explanations of political competition between parties, independent of public opinion; i.e. spatial models and the issue competition perspective. Spatial models predict parties to compete based on ideological positions, whereas the issue

competition perspective assumes that parties' main goal is to influence the political agenda through making particular issues salient. A distinction between issue position and issue salience is necessary to make in order properly to understand political cleavages in party competition (Rohrschneider & Whitefield 2009).

3.2.1 The Downsian model

Probably the most well-known spatial model of party competition is provided by Anthony Downs. In "An Economic Theory of Democracy" Downs (1957) presents a rational explanation of party behaviour within the setting of a democratic society regularly holding elections. The Spatial model is based on a left to right ideological dimension on which political parties can manoeuvre positionally. Such strategic manoeuvring depends on the points of distribution between parties and voter preferences. Parties are inclined to converge towards the middle of a competitive region but are simultaneously motivated to appeal to more extreme and peripheral groups of voters by distinguishing themselves from other parties to attract attention.

Downs distinguishes between two types of parties, those that primarily aspire to win elections and those that primarily seek to influence politics. To win elections, parties seeking mainstream support need to locate themselves the closest to a major group in the electorate, not necessarily at the centre of the political scale. Rather than a mainstream approach the goal of a new party is often to attract attention by focusing on neglected issues in order to influence the position of more established parties. Hence, new party success is assumed to trigger a strategic response from existing parties opportunistically to move in the direction of the successful party in order to "take the wind out of its sails". This will likely cause the new party to collapse. It is still important to acknowledge the accomplishment of the new party in having induced a dimensional shift towards its preferred policy position (Downs 1957, 131).

Already in 1963 Donald E. Stokes criticized the spatial model for assuming that all issues are positional depending on voter distribution of preferences, and that party competition is based only on one socioeconomic ideological dimension. The function of a model is to provide a simplification useful for understanding complex dynamics, and as such is not supposed to be a perfect reflection of reality. However, the value of a model must also consider the degree to which important aspects are left out. According to Stokes, this is the case with the spatial model to an extensive degree. The model therefore lacks in scientific value with regard to understanding electoral competition.

Downs' model does not embrace issues diverging from the socioeconomic dimension, such as religion, nationalism and foreign policy. However, these are issues that have decisively occupied the political agenda. Hence, spatial theory of policy positioning on the left-right scale is not only too narrow as it excludes important issues on the political agenda but has also proved fragile faced with societal development and the introduction of new political dimensions (Stokes 1963). Furthermore, the necessity for a polarizing dynamic may not always be the typical tendency for all politicized issues. With regard to some issues, pertaining to environment or anti-corruption, one can expect broad agreement in the electorate. For anyone to take the opposite position on those issues would be difficult to imagine.

3.2.2 Valence and positional issues

The diverse nature of issues and implications thereof are necessary to understand in order to explain electoral competition. Positional issues like those in the spatial model "are characterized by a set of alternatives on which voters have different preferences, while valence issues are those that are generally seen as positive or negative, and parties compete over competence in them" (Abou-Chadi 2014, 420). The particular nature of these issues will have different implications for party strategics. Hence, a model of valence has been presented as a rival model to the positional model (Stokes 1963). Instead of parties competing by shifting their positions, the aim is to claim credibility over a *shared* policy goal as it speaks to all voters alike.

The potentially favourable nature of valence issues is illustrated by the Republicans' campaign in the US in 1952. That year the Republicans campaigned in favour of fighting in Korea, against Corruption and Communism. Focusing mainly on these three issues proved to be a successful decision based on a strategy of exploiting new and widespread political attitudes. All three issues were to a large extent of a valence character. The implications of competition on the issue of corruption is a useful example. When the Republicans campaigned to fight corruption, it was not an option for the Democratic Party to take the opposite position on the matter. In the electorate one could not find a divide into groups in favour of or against corruption; "both parties and all voters were located at a single point - the position of virtue in government" (Stokes 1963, 372). Relevant to the competition on the issue of anti-corruption was that the Democratic party had not been fully transparent. Hence, voters would rather give the Republicans - or CEE anti-corruption parties - credibility as having capacity to control corruption. The key argument of Stokes is that many political issues are not divisive neither

among parties nor with voters. Positional models are therefore not fruitful points of departure to explain party behaviour related to issues either “positively or negatively valued by the electorate” (Stokes 1963).

So far, we have seen that positional issues create strong polarization and animate people to take different stands. In contrast, valence issues often representing overarching goals are generally perceived and judged more equally among people and parties. Previously, scholars have perceived these issues as competing explanatory models, but contemporary scholars tend to integrate both issue characteristics as being extreme variables belonging to the same spectrum (E.g. De Sio & Weber 2014; Meguid 2005; Abou-Chadi 2014).

Whether an issue is of a valence or positional character inherently depends on context. As such, the De Sio & Weber establish a criterion to consider empirical evidence on support of a given issue to decide its nature. Hence, contingent on context issues with positional potential can in fact be regarded as shared goals or the other way around (De Sio & Weber 2014, 872). This is of course crucial for the characterization of corruption in the CEE. By the international community corruption is depicted as an obstacle for transparent and fair and democratic decision making. The CEE is no exception; empirical evidence broadly agrees that voters and parties in the CEE region oppose corruption (Bågenholm 2013; Hanley & Sikk 2016; Deegan-Krause & Haughton 2012, 224). Also, it is hard to imagine a party taking the opposite position.

Necessary to underscore is that the distinction between valence and positional issues is ideal-typical, meaning that it is possible to discuss whether an issue is clearly a valence or a positional one because the issue might lie somewhere in between the two poles. Issues do not have to be either or but can converge towards the centre where their nature is more ambiguous and disputable. In contrast to Stokes characterization of corruption as valence, a case has been made that it might not be completely valence due to contextual party system conditions (Deegan-Krause & Haughton 2018, Enyedi & Deegan Krause 2017). This observation and argumentation will be addressed later in this chapter.

3.2.3 The relevance of Issue Competition perspectives

Maintaining that the issue of anti-corruption has a valence character, concepts from the positional competition perspective prove to have little relevance for building a theoretical argument. The expectations of positional models lack power of prediction when faced with issues within which there is only one possible position among parties and voters. In contrast,

the issue competition perspective highly acknowledges the benefits of valence issues in political competition, particularly if linked to issue ownership, while still allowing for predictions about positional issues.

The issue perspective has focus on 'salience' as the main determinant of political influence over the party-defined agenda (Green-Pedersen 2007). Several scholars have acknowledged issue salience as a key political concept in party competition (Robertson 1976; Budge & Farlie 1983; Carmines & Stimson 1993; Petrocik 1996). Political attention, particularly through media attention, is crucial for electoral competition because it provides relevance necessary to convince people that the issue represents a pressing problem. When an issue attracts more public attention one should expect this to affect the salience that political parties devote to the given issue.

In light of the above, some scholars (Budge & Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996, 826; Keech 2013, 77) underscore "issue ownership" as a meaningful concept in party competition. Issue ownership is achieved when conventional wisdom and popular opinion regard one party to be more capable and committed than other parties to handle a given issue. Others therefore cannot compete productively on this issue. Accordingly, political parties have great incentives to focus strategically on increasing the salience *only* of the issues on which they have top credibility and prefer to leave other issues be (Budge & Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996).

However, in more contemporary understandings of issue competition scholars have been more attentive to party interaction. This interaction has indicated that parties not only shape the agenda but also receive pressure towards having to address salient issues introduced by competitors unavoidably leading to issue overlap. Parties have electoral incentives to take on issues that figure on the political agenda due to media interest. They need to stay relevant and perhaps try to steal ownership to salient issues. Contemporary empirical research broadly agrees that political parties address many of the same issues, meaning that parties also speak about issues that would seem reasonable to avoid due to lack of issue ownership. Findings show that issue ownership is not static (e.g. Damore 2004; Holian 2004; Sigelman & Buell 2004; Green-Pedersen 2007; Green & Hobolt 2008; Walgrave, Lefevre & Nuytemans 2009; Vliegthart, Walgrave & Meppelink 2011; Tresch, Lefevre & Walgrave 2013).

3.2.4 Multidimensional frameworks of party dynamics

Abou-Chadi (2014) and Meguid (2005, 2008) building on the body of critique by Stokes, have contributed to the party-competition literature by constructing multidimensional frameworks of political cleavages. Furthermore, by combining logics from spatial models with insights from issue competition, the authors are able to incorporate into party competition the necessary differentiation between positional and valence issues.

To capture the development of the post-industrial political space multidimensionality is important and welcomes the particularities of niche parties. “Niche parties have a distinct and novel impact on patterns of political competition, since in contrast to other parties, they rarely adapt to shifts in public opinion and emphasize issues that depart from traditional socio-economic cleavages” (Abou-Chadi 2014, 417). When using the term niche party here, Abou-Chadi classifies a party that emerges by politicizing a new issue that mainstream parties have yet to have properly addressed. The author therefore speaks of them as ‘issue entrepreneurs.’ Party entrepreneurs are vital for political development insofar as they are lifting forward issues that either have remained unsolved or have emerged more recently (Abou-Chadi 2014, 417, De Vries & Hobolt 2012, 250).

Depending on which types of issues niche parties emerge on, established parties will respond differently (Meguid 2005, Abou-Chadi 2014). The theory by Meguid starts with tactical decisions in mainstream party entry. When regarding which political issues to adopt, a mainstream party might find some issues less relevant or too difficult and will not include them in their campaign. However, when a niche party is established on just such an unresolved issue and attracts voters, the mainstream parties have to respond strategically (Meguid 2005, 349).

Faced with a credible threat from a niche party, mainstream parties can respond actively or choose not to react. If a party emerges on a positional issue the mainstream party might respond to the issue by either adopting the position of the challenger party or take the opposite stand. The issue-convergence strategy on the one hand makes the new party less distinct. At the same time the mainstream party may seek to win ownership of the issue in order to keep the niche party from stealing votes. Due to the resources and capacity of the mainstream party, this strategy will often make voters turn to the mainstream party. On the other hand, when taking a divergent position on the issue, the mainstream party seeks to force voters to choose based on positions. This strategy is assumed to lead to niche party support because it “strengthens the

link in the public's mind between that issue stance and the niche party as its primary proponent” (Meguid 2005, 349-350).

Because mainstream parties neither can take the opposite position nor expect to take ownership, the risk of increasing issue salience is much higher. Therefore, the most likely alternative response is *non-reactive* in that mainstream parties avoid addressing the given issue, in an attempt to undermine the importance of the issue. “If voters are persuaded that the niche party’s issue dimension is insignificant, they will not vote for it. Thus, even though a dismissive strategy does not challenge the distinctiveness or ownership of the niche party’s issue position, its salience-reducing effect will lead to niche party vote loss” (Meguid 2005, 349).

Similar to Meguid, Abou-Chadi carefully considers the benefits and risks of different alternative responses. In cases where niche parties are successful in making salient issues on the political agenda, an established party will always experience some form of demand for it to answer to the issue. Still, in strategic terms the potential risk of bolstering niche party attention by fuelling the salience of the niche issue weighs heavily. The more parties speak about an issue, the more likely the issue becomes politically consolidated.

Abou-Chadi (2014, 418) illustrates the potential of the convergence strategy through the response of mainstream parties to radical right parties. Radical right party (RRP) success is likely to incentivise mainstream parties to adopt a stronger stand on anti-immigrant policy because the issue is positional and because RRP’s lack issue ownership. Obviously, the issue is seen as electorally beneficial in that taking a position against immigrants will attract voters. The risk of increasing issue salience is also reduced when a challenger party lacks clear issue ownership. Hence, established parties are expected to try to steal the issue by tailoring it to their own programmes.

If a new party emerges on a valence issue, however, the established party reaction cannot follow positional strategies because there is only one thinkable position. Green parties competing on the environmental issue is a good example. Mainstream parties are expected to decrease their emphasis on the environmental issue. Competition on valence issues removes the alternative of a divergent strategy. Parties cannot speak against the issue, an act that would antagonize voters. What is more, green parties have a clear issue ownership. Their ownership raises the risk of

consolidation of an issue on which competition for mainstream parties does not bear fruits (Abou-Chadi 2014, 418).

Parties will also consider strategy depending on their ideological position which has implications for available alternatives and assess their electoral performance in the past when deciding whether or not to adopt new policy profiles (Abou-Chadi 2014, 418). In particular, political losers are expected to embark on newly introduced issues (De Vries and Hobolt 2012). Seen on this background one must not forget that established mainstream parties, already empowered by resources and media attention, are central in determining the political agenda (Abou-Chadi 2014, 418).

3.3 Context of electoral competition in the CEE

Considering the various concepts of party competition and the expectations of strategic response of established parties to new parties, it is of interest to consider how this game of party positioning and issue emphasis unfolds in the CEE context. CEE democracies are fairly young, and party politics in young democracies can be quite different from that in long term established democracies. This section of the chapter therefore seeks to provide an overview of party competition in the CEE and in particular the circumstances that trigger the politicization of corruption.

3.3.1 The Development of Party Systems and cleavages in WE and CEE

According to Downs, government facilitates stability and predictability in a society, factors which promotes rational behaviour. However, government is only able to provide such stability when the political system constitutes a rational framework. “Thus, political rationality is the *sine qua non* of all forms of rational behaviour” (Downs 1957, 11) Some deviations from rationality are unproblematic regarding the pursuit of stability. Still, political problem solving does depend on a substantial amount of rationality (Downs 1957; Hirschman 1970). The literature has diverged in assessing the presence of rationality – whether political parties compete, and voters choose between parties based on their issue positions and salience – in the party systems of the CEE. Those who have argued against such presence tend to compare the region with its Western European counterpart as representing the ideal political system.

During the 20th century in Western Europe, political institutions and electoral dynamics to a large extent became settled. Scholars took these developments as indications of rational stability and framed a “Western standard model” as an ideal pattern by which to transition into new

democracies and to secure consolidation. For the composition of the party system the model prescribed moderate fragmentation built around a solid and secure base of main parties. Electoral competition ought to be in line with spatial theories based on the socio-economic dimension (Stoll 2010, 455; Rohrschneider & Whitefield 2009, 283). On this basis, creating predictability volatility would remain low due to strong identification between parties and groups in society (Enyedi & Deegan-Krause 2017, 1). Still, one should keep in mind that “some political cleavages that reflect intractable social and ideological differences can also create potentials for intense conflict that may make democracy less stable” (Rohrschneider & Whitefield 2009, 283).

Following the development of party systems and cleavages in the CEE, Rohrschneider & Whitefield (2009) have in the literature identified three explanatory models. The content of the models can be linked both to the period of time in which they were theorized as well as to the diverging theoretical perspectives presented earlier, carrying different weight in each model. Scholars more dedicated to the idea of the effective space, considering parties’ ideological positions, are likely to find overarching regional dimensions, whereas scholars more interested in the raw space of the number of issues and salience are likely to be very sensitive to country particularities. Diverging approaches thus seem to be driven by competing theories of party competition.

The perspective of the first model cannot depict any manifestation of common party cleavages in the region but is in exchange very sensitive to specific country conditions (E.g. Elster, Offe & Preuss 1998; White, Rose & McAllister 1997). During the first part of the 1990s, party politics in the CEE region was as far removed from the structures of the Western model as imaginable (Enyedi & Deegan-Krause 2017, 1). In this turmoil, although one could find some parties that were founded on the socio-economic ideological dimension similar to parties in the West, there were no natural teams of parties and voters after the one-party rule of Communism. Scholars have explained the lack of structure by the fact that the Communist regime tried to “erase” social divisions such as class and religion, which meant that post-communist electorates were not differentiated and thus provided no basis for the development of party systems.

Studies investigating the first decade of democratic transition have also stressed the disruptive state of the party system having been constantly bombarded with parties outperforming each other. Further arguments underscoring the no structure model point to the different paths of

democratic and economic development taken among the countries in the region, in addition to the complexity induced by ethnic and religious groups (Innes 2002; Lawson, Römmele & Karasimeonov 1999). However, the comprised literature that has furnished this first model is derived from single case-studies which perhaps may overemphasize country specifics, making generalization less valid (Rohrschneider & Whitefield 2009, 284).

In contrast, the second model perspective suggested that party competition approximated programmatic structure along one dimension on which parties and voters distribute themselves (Kitschelt 1992; Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Tóka & Markowski 1999; Marks, Hooghe, Nelson & Edwards 2006). This dimension ranged from liberal to authoritative, the liberal movement advocated democratic and market-oriented reform and followed their Western peers, whereas the authoritative anti-reform stand took the opposite position on these issues. Contrary to Western cleavages where leftist socioeconomic parties typically embraced a more inclusive democracy, a pro-democracy attitude would be advocated by market-oriented liberalist parties in the CEE. “Parties, in this view, merge various axes of competition into a single, overarching policy dimension” (Rohrschneider & Whitefield 2009, 284).

The second model was not allowed to stand uncontradicted for long. Following the development of party systems in the region through electoral power alternation, scholars (Sikk 2011; Pop-Elches 2010; Bågenholm 2013) observed that new parties were successful in the third-generation elections. At the same time scholars remarked that these parties avoided clear ideological positions.

In light of this, Pop-Elches (2010) scrutinized the chance and hope for party system stability and democratic consolidation incorporated in the second model literature in the late 1990s. Pop-Elches found that third generation elections “after at least two different ideological camps have governed in the post-communist era” (2010, 223) allowed power alternation to benefit ‘unorthodox’ political parties, many of which incorporated personalist and populist appeals and advocated new issues (Pop-Elches 2010, 221-222). This happened not only in the more fragile democracies like Romania (2000) and Bulgaria (2001), but also in further transitioned democracies like the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and the Baltic states. In example, while the Czech Republic represented a relatively stable party system from 1996 and through the first decade of the millennium, the 2010 election was described as a “political earthquake” due to the success of new parties, in particular TOP09 and Public Affairs (Hanley 2012, 119). Less

pessimistic, when analysing the flow of new parties emerging in the CEE region, Deegan-Krause (2010) noticed that many of these, like TOP09 and Public Affairs, have common traits like emphasizing the anti-corruption issue and being ideologically liberal. A few years later Bågenholm (2013, 174) similarly identified new parties to emphasize niche issues of good governance like uncovering corruption, and furthering competence and novelty, issues that to an increasing degree had characterized party competition.

The appeal of these new challenger parties did not seem to fit within the unidimensional model and thus required the construction of a new model. In need for an adjustment of previous explanations, a third group of scholars simultaneously observed a development of cross-country cleavages together with country specific issue conflicts (Evans & Whitefield 1993; Miller, White & Heywood 1998). Issue positions are structured, and parties respond to more country-specific challenges as manifested in issue salience. The third approach thus illustrates a party system of structured diversity. This model “attempts to identify the general trust of party competition and simultaneously to do justice to relevant country-specific detail” (Rohrschneider & Whitefield 2009, 285), and thereby amalgamate arguments from both the first and the second model.

The basis of the third model is the common historical legacy of introducing democratic state-building including institutional division of power influenced by western integration, and transition to market economy in a period of economic uncertainty. This has created comparable cross-national cleavages in which a communist-successor-party competed against parties oriented to the centre-right. Hence, economic issues and reform issues have continuously been the most salient (Rohrschneider & Whitefield 2009, 301). Scholars like Evans (2006) and Whitefield (2002) have also highlighted the point that particular conditions are found only in some of the countries in the region i.e. existing phenomena like ethnic or religious cleavages. Although issues related to economy and democracy are found to be cross-national, there also are differences in economic and democratic development resulting in varying levels of issue emphasis in each country. As such “parties respond to national conditions - not by repackaging issue positions on multiple dimensions but by altering the salience of issues” (Rohrschneider & Whitefield 2009, 303).

The difference between emergence of broader regional ideological cleavages and that of country specific issues thus underscores the necessity to distinguish between competition on

issue positions and issue salience. This approach can help better to understand where anti-corruption parties find themselves in the system, and what function/role they play in general political response to national problems of corruption.

3.3.2 Party system dynamics

With the constant emergence of new parties campaigning on untraditional issues, re-creating and increasing the complexity of the political agenda, scholars are inclined to describe the political situation as fundamentally unstable. The region thus suffers a reputation for having political chaos, but more recent analyses indicate that this may be a superficial description (Deegan-Krause & Haughton 2018, 473). A further look at the region reveals a formation of underlying patterns in party presence and disappearance. Haughton & Deegan-Krause (2015, 2018) and Enyedi & Deegan-Krause (2017) have investigated volatility, both among voters and parties in the CEE and consistently find patterns of stability within the instability.

In light of the above, party systems in the CEE have been illustrated as twofold. One part consists of a stable core system of established parties which prove robust through turmoil and thus remain relevant actors although their electoral base is swinging. The other part is described as a sub-system characterized by the constant entry of new parties. Deegan-Krause & Haughton (2018, 473-474) refer to this phenomenon as “partial and concentrated continuity”.

Following the many challenges that the CEE region has experienced it is worth noticing that some parties have prevailed and have succeeded in keeping their base of voters throughout. Parties have survived partly because they have maintained their ideological image or alternatively have based their support on ethnicity, religion or as spokesmen for rural minorities (Deegan-Krause & Haughton 2018, 473-475, Enyedi & Deegan-Krause 2017, 4). Still, the development of a party system context has also varied between countries within the CEE. Some countries, like Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia (Hanley 2012) were relatively quick in establishing a scale of programmatic alternatives, whereas other countries have continuously been more unstable as far as parties are concerned, consequently altering political programmes and what issues on the agenda are salient (Enyedi & Deegan-Krause 2017).

Parts of the electorate struggle to place themselves within an ideological dimension and are reluctant to vote for established parties, especially if these have performed poorly economically and have succumbed to corruption (Pop-Elches 2010; Hanley 2012; Enyedi & Deegan-Krause

2017, 9). The group of non-ideological voters is a key driver for the sub-system in which new parties shortly disappear when faced with newer parties since such voters tend to support constantly emerging new parties. Within the rather disruptive dynamics, explicitly driven by the corruption issue, the sub-system reveals elements of stability and rationality. A system is characterized by boundaries and patterns of recurrences, the parts being dependent on each other (Haughton & Deegan-Krause 2015, 69). Accordingly, the pattern of new party emergence in the sub-system gives a notion of predictability.

Enyedi & Deegan-Krause (2017) explain that the development of a twofold party-system in the CEE region is the effect of a process of systemic convergence with that of Western patterns. Where the CEE countries have developed more predictable patterns, Western countries have embarked on a ship sailing in more troubled waters. This means greater emphasis on valence issues, typically advocated by new challenger parties, and less party appeal to social groups (Stoll 2010). Despite a trending convergence in party system dynamics many differences still exist between the East and the West, especially regarding the specifics of the political agenda. Also, the scale of party entry and exit and of voter volatility in the Eastern Europe parts is unknown to long term established democracies.

3.3.3 Corruption - a cross-cutting issue?

Corruption is crucial for understanding party system dynamics in the region, which again makes it important to understand the nature of this issue. There are some scholars who suggest that, at least in young democracies, corruption can be considered a positional issue (Deegan-Krause & Haughton 2018; Enyedi & Deegan-Krause 2017; Pavao 2018), associated with the systemic political features of high corruption.

On valence issues parties are assessed by their trustworthiness and capacity on the matter; e.g. incorruptibility. Behavioural characteristics however tend to vary more extensively than beliefs about ideological identities and expected policy decisions. Compared to other electoral issues, voters to a much larger extent tend to expect that politicians are incompetent to handle corruption. In countries where voters believe that all politicians are equally corrupt, the probability is high that voters will prioritize other issues (Pavao 2018). Still, it is possible that valence issues can manifest themselves as being a party's core identity and accordingly attract voters who prioritize this issue. Voters who strongly disapprove of corruption will choose parties that focus on fighting corruption in the same way that nationalists will vote for a party

with strong national identity. Considering a situation where valence issues and positional issues converge, corruption can in fact be regarded as a cross-cutting positional issue in the region where voters' prioritizations are distributed (Deegan-Krause & Haughton 2018, 484, Enyedi & Deegan Krause 2017, 7).

Still, even unstained/clean and inexperienced new parties without a blemished history struggle greatly with remaining transparent (Deegan-Krause & Haughton 2018, 484). The parties become regimented in systems in which corruption orchestrate decision making. Hence, the anti-corruption issue which originally was a precondition and an asset in harvesting political success of ACP's (Sikk 2011) becomes their biggest liability in parliament. Voters who prioritize corruption therefore continuously must seek new alternatives. The anti-corruption strata of voters remain stable and their sympathy is up for grabs for a new party that strategically can place itself on this dimension (Deegan-Krause & Haughton 2018, 484-485). Consequently, parties that emphasize anti-corruption mainly are located within the sub-system from which they emerge with success but are soon to disappear. The unsolved corruption problem has consolidated itself and persisted as a politicized issue on the overall agenda, but already elected anti-corruption parties in general will not compete further on this issue.

3.4 Conceptualizing anti-corruption parties

Bearing in mind that studies show that politicizing corruption attracts voters it is interesting also to investigate the actual consequences thereof. What are the democratic contributions of new parties taking on the responsibility to fight corruption? Can newcomer parties at all have an effective impact politically on the elite-level? The following part will try to meet these questions.

Firstly, I will discuss the concept of anti-corruption parties as a niche party group. Secondly, for the purpose of conceptualization, the relation between anti-corruption parties with *new* parties is addressed and the important role that new niche parties play in political systems is emphasized. Thereafter, similar concepts of parties that emphasize anti-corruption are presented as well as the connection between anti-corruption rhetoric and populism.

Compared to the intense focus on corruption per se, parties emphasizing the problem have received relatively little scholarly attention, despite their number and electoral success since the turn of the millenium (Bågenholm 2013; Bågenholm & Charron 2014; Josefsson 2014, 4).

Scholars have observed that different types of parties will emphasize anti-corruption. Established parties in opposition, right-wing oriented parties and new parties use anti-corruption rhetoric most substantially and most effectively (Pop-Elches 2010; Hanley & Sikk 2016; Bågenholm & Charron 2014).

Seeking to conceptualize this group of parties, this thesis is anchored in the identification and description of new parties campaigning under an anti-corruption ballot characterized by Bågenholm (2013); An anti-corruption party (ACP) is one that as its *main* issue “focuses on fighting corruption in the election campaign, either by addressing the issue in general terms, i.e. that corruption is a serious problem that needs to be combated, or more specifically by accusing the opponents, i.e. the established parties of being corrupt.”

Following the particular definition of Bågenholm (2013), I choose to characterize ACP’s as “niche” parties. This implies that the party mainly addresses aspects related to one issue - outside of the traditional socio-economic divide - although the party does not necessarily exclude other issues. While differentiating themselves through a narrow appeal, niche parties may attract voters which cross-cut previous party-voter alignments and can initiate “unlikely” alliances/collaborations between parties (Meguid 2005; Meguid 2008, 4).

In this regard, Meyer & Miller (2015) have proposed a minimal definition of niche parties as parties that emphasize an issue “neglected” by other parties within the same party system. In their conceptualization three implications are presented. Firstly, the relative issue emphasis among parties in the system is decisive, as parties in addition to emphasizing their own issues have to give room to issues dominating on the political agenda (Meyer & Miller 2015, 260). This means that a party is only identified as ‘niche’ if other parties do not emphasize the issue to the same extent. If mainstream parties start to speak of a niche issue more extensively the issue becomes mainstream. The possibility for temporal variation is also true regarding niche party behaviour as such over time may adapt to the mainstream location of the party system, thus losing their identification with a given niche issue (Meyer & Miller 2015, 260). Secondly, the definition is only appropriate in multiparty systems as the interaction in two-party systems is the very mainstream and thus all issues introduced will be of mainstream character. Thirdly, the definition is constrained to political actors at the elite level because parties’ issue strategies are not always evident to voters (Meyer & Miller 2015, 261).

The implication of relative issue emphasis is key to identification of niche parties. Such a definition enables measurement by employing the fuzzy logic. Consequently, ACP's are identified through their high anti-corruption salience compared/relative to what is mainstream among other parties in each party system in the same way the perceived levels of corruption in a country are possible to compare with other countries.

3.4.1 New parties as issue entrepreneurs

Niche parties are most often spoken of interchangeably with new parties functioning as issue entrepreneurs. Not uncommonly parties that focus on only one or a few issues are referred to as single-issue parties (Abou-Chadi 2014; Meguid 2008). Of course, not all new parties are niche parties, but new parties tend to be niche parties.

In the literature several definitions to identify a new party have been proposed. Summarizing these suggestions, Krouwel & Lucardie (2008, 279) distinguish four new party designs. A new party can be the result of a transformation of an older party. It can be the result either of a party-merger or of a split, and finally the most intuitive kind; the birth of a new party with no prior ties to the political elite. This thesis coincides with the broad understanding of Krouwel & Lucardie (2008) in which all kinds are included.

The scientific value of studying new parties within and outside parliament is high because these fulfil several important tasks in the context of a genuine democracy (Krouwel & Lucardie 2008). These parties are vital for political development insofar as they are more effective in lifting forward issues that either have remained unsolved or have emerged more recently (Abou-Chadi 2014, 417). What is considered a problem depends inherently on time and place; e.g. while corruption may count as a great challenge at a given time in one country, it may be accepted as 'the way things are' at a different time and in another place (De Sio & Weber 2014).

In addition to directing focus towards a specific and perhaps original issue as a resource, new parties can benefit from deemphasizing the traditional political divide (De Sio & Weber 2014, 870). A party leaving an outdated ideology behind, rather focusing on new and particular interests is referred to by Lucardie (2000, 176) as a 'prolocutor' or spokesman. The party will speak up about an issue which has been neglected by existing parties, but nevertheless tend to disappear from politics after having influenced the political discourse. Other new parties may emerge fuelled by a strong motivation to "purify" existing ideological value concepts which

appear betrayed in the eyes of the party founders (radical right or leftist parties). Furthermore, some parties seek to create a new ideological dimension mostly on an ecological or a cultural basis.

By putting forward a new issue, or by choosing a different or more extreme angle on a policy area, new parties are “refreshing” the political debate in line with contemporary challenges, thus putting the political system up for a test (Krouwel & Lucardie 2008, 278). In this way, new parties can mobilize previously politically inactive groups which mainstream parties have failed to animate and integrate, “since men are more vehement about their minority views than about the views they share with a majority of others” (Downs 1957, 57). Still, the political appeal cannot be too narrow since political influence depends on a certain amount of electoral support.

Empirically, the entrepreneurial strategy has been found to attract voters and thus to succeed electorally (De Vries & Hobolt 2012, 246). To new parties, electoral success is manifested through parliamentary entrance. Only a few of newcomer parties manage to take this step (Lucardie 2000; Krouwel & Lucardie 2008). To attract the required percentage of voters a party must present a comprehensible and convincing project articulated and promoted on the basis of a societal problem that a number of voters care about and prioritize. No doubt “studying new parties can help us to understand the formation process and subsequent evolution of parties and their relation to society” (Krouwel & Lucardie 2008, 279).

As a result of the identification of different kinds of new parties, a 5-fold typology is structured according to the parties’ main motivations for emergence, listed as follows; the prophetic types, the challengers, the advocates, the reform and the idiosyncratic types (Krouwel & Lucardie 2008). Based on the definition of ACP’s by Bågenholm (2013), this group of parties can be categorized as “reform parties” characterized by their *modus essendi* or *modus operandi*.

Reform parties “try to change or purge the political system and political culture without an explicit ideology” (Krouwel & Lucardie 2008, 284). These parties emerge and campaign on advocating changes regarding how the political system ought to function. An example from European elections is “Transparent Europe” from the Netherlands. The party addressed corruption as an obstacle for legitimate decision-making thus seeking to promote transparency. In 2004 the party entered the European Parliament filling two seats. Parties within the reform

category may also include populism in their political strategy. An example of this is the party List Pim Fortuyn which contained an ambiguous ideology, mixing liberalism, nationalism and populism (Krouwel & Lucardie 2008, 287).

3.4.2 ACP's and "newness"

Considering the possibility for temporal variation in niche party issue emphasis, assessing a party's newness can be quite relevant for its identification. This is particularly relevant for the identification of ACP's whose niche is fighting corruption. As discussed, corruption is not like other political issues. According to Pavao (2018, 996) "corruption possesses some specificities that make it an issue that voters tend to believe politicians are particularly incompetent to deal with." Unpolluted newness is therefore a key variable for the legitimacy of ACP's that campaign on fighting corruption and proclaim to have high integrity, to be transparent and be competent (Sikk 2011). Complete newness ensures that the party has not yet been involved in previous scandals, as so often has been the case with already positioned parties (Polk et al. 2017, 2).

New parties of the reformer category have been increasing in numbers, especially in the CEE region of the Baltic states (Krouwel & Lucardie 2008, 288; Sikk 2011, 6; Enyedi & Deegan-Krause 2017, 3). To strengthen their *perceived* credibility and capability to conduct reform, parties in the Baltic have accordingly emphasized their virginal "newness" as part of their successful branding (Sikk 2011, 6). Examples of parties stressing their newness is also found in the campaign of Forza Italia (1994), New Labour in Britain, the Canadian New Democratic Party, the Greek New Democracy and the French New Centre - all significant players in their countries' politics" (Sikk 2011, 19).

Hence, in addition to addressing the niche issue of corruption to achieve differentiated attention this is a strategic move to emphasize newness as a proof of cleanliness, despite the notion of political inexperience that this causes. This is crucial also in order to burst issue ownership of their main issue because ACP's otherwise have little content to distinguish themselves with. The given examples also underscore that party strategies in CEE countries can reflect that of parties in other parts of the world.

3.4.3 Anti-Establishment Reform Parties, New/Centrist Parties and Populism

A number of scholars have complicated and problematized campaigning on the issue of anti-corruption by conceptualizing new party emphasis on anti-corruption as part of an overarching

protest movement against political elites being harmful to democracy. Parties mobilizing against established political elites are on the rise in Europe (Pop-Elches 2010; Hanley & Sikk 2016). To describe this phenomenon, Pop-Elches and also Hanley & Sikk have suggested similar concepts to ACP's, respectively 'new/centrist populists' parties and "anti-establishment reform parties".

Hanley & Sikk (2016) regard anti-corruption rhetoric as a strategy mostly used by parties as a new protest phenomenon. Key components of anti-establishment reform parties (AERPs) are: "(1) a politics of mainstream reformism (2) usually framed in terms of anti-establishment appeal to voters and (3) genuine organizational newness" (Hanley & Sikk 2016, 523). Thus, possible to locate within the reform category of new parties.

Scholars observe that new parties that combine anti-establishment and anti-corruption rhetoric tend to inhabit ambiguous mainstream or 'centrist' socio-economic policies (Hanley & Sikk 2016; Enyedi & Deegan Krause 2017, 7). Pop-Elches (2010) has characterized these parties as new/centrist and has linked their anti-corruption and -establishment rhetoric more explicitly to populism. The political scientist Claudia Alvarez argues that populist parties have managed to convince large parts of the electorate into believing that its members are alienated from the current political system and that the established political elites consist of corrupt actors (Lewis, Clarke, Barr, Holder & Kommenda 2018).

In a manner similar to that of political scholars Transparency International (2019a) worryingly interprets anti-corruption rhetoric as part of a populist agenda. Populist movements have expanded their terrain and captured key political positions. They are working more discreetly through digital platforms to influence the electorate. This strategy has been extremely effective electorally. Technological development has also facilitated an increased resilience regarding corruption, making it easier to engage surreptitiously in corrupt activities (Blanche et al. 2019, 5). Populist groups often work cross-country and one of their goals is to tear down democratic institutions from within (Transparency International 2019a). What is particularly dangerous when populists enter into powerful political positions is their advanced ability to degrade democratic norms, often most harshly affecting the independent media, restricting the freedom of speech and disrupting rule of law (Lewis et al. 2018).

Populist parties have also proven themselves to be flexible in adapting to compatible ideologies and enter into political alliances. Mudde (2004) has described populism as a thin ideology built on the idea of a conflict between ‘the good people’ versus the ‘self-interested political elite.’ Consequently, this simplistic view can be easily combined with many different kinds of ideologies, not only those of extremist positions. Populist traits have traditionally been found in parties ideologically situated close to the poles of the traditional political dimension i.e. between authoritarian socialism and unrestricted liberalism (Mudde 2004, 549). The identification of parties combining populism with a seemingly centrist ideological position is thus atypical compared to most identifications made by previous literary studies and demonstrates even more clearly the resilience of populism in the political domain.

Taking a different perspective Bågenholm (2013) and Polk et al. (2017) suggest that anti-corruption in itself is a politicized issue. Polk et al. (2017) have scrutinized the close link between anti-corruption rhetoric and anti-elite populism painted in the literature and find that the two are results of divergent logics and must not instinctively be confused as one strategy; anti-elite rhetoric is ideologically driven, especially by extremist parties both left and right, while anti-corruption parties tend to emerge in political systems suffering from higher levels of political corruption (Polk et al. 2017, 2). However, the authors do acknowledge the tension that anti-elite rhetoric tend to be combined with ideologically centrist parties in the CEE.

3.5 What drives the electoral success of ACP’s

Having illustrated the characteristics of parties emphasizing corruption, I next suggest explanations with regard to their electoral success based on research on the consequences of ACP’s. When the model of structured diversity’s sensitivity to country-specific cleavages and the description of a subsystem of continuous party emergence is seen together, it is logic that new parties will be incentivized by country-specific conditions strategically entering the political issue competition. Already in 1967, Lipset and Rokkan were attentive to national conditions when investigating party cleavages in the West. Essential to their understanding was that political cleavages will remain salient “where for whatever reason the issues have not been satisfactorily resolved” (Rohrschneider & Whitefield 2009, 286).

Having established that issue salience is the most relevant approach to explain the politicization of corruption, this issue emphasis will be considered as a consequence of country level conditions rather than of the regional context. On this basis one can expect that parties that

emphasize corruption are more likely to emerge in the countries where levels of corruption is high. This prediction receives empirical support in the literature (Bågenholm & Charron 2014, Bågenholm et al. 2014).

Firstly, studies do agree that perceptions of corruption levels are an important factor in electoral competition and that this vector affects voter turnout. Findings, however, point in different directions. In studies showing a positive correlation, explanations include voter-buying and also bottom-up mobilization by voters wanting to curb corruption. In contrast, several scholars find that corruption has the opposite effect. Corruption harms the subjective well-being of citizens (Tavits 2008b) and reduces electoral participation by a dishearteningly distorted representation of political institutions. Voter fatigue fosters disbelief in the political system (Bågenholm & Charron 2014).

Secondly, the lion's share of recent literature in this field agree that politicization of corruption will curb the initial negative effect that corruption has on voters by reducing voter apathy. Voters will become motivated to participate when parties show that in electoral campaigns, they respond to voter concerns. Lack of such politicization has significant negative effects on the electoral turnout (Bågenholm et al. 2014). Confirming with the third model, parties have great incentives to activate dissatisfied voters taking advantage of the corruption cleavage in countries where corruption is high. In contrast, in countries where corruption is less of a challenge, politicization of anti-corruption actually has a repellent effect on voters (Bågenholm & Charron 2014)

Analysing the conditions for the emergence of AERP's, Hanley & Sikk (2016) agree with Polk et al. (2017) when presenting a correlation between higher levels of corruption and support for new parties using an anti-establishment rhetoric. They underscore the conceptual link between anti-corruption and anti-establishment attitudes. This correlation is not surprising since established parties severely have failed to accommodate to democratic standards of no corruption (Bågenholm & Charron 2014; Enyedi & Deegan-Krause 2017, 7). Besides, many CEE voters are instinctively anti-incumbent (Pop-Elches 2010, 254) a disposition which creates further incentives for parties not only to pursue the corruption cleavage but also harshly to condemn elites who have conspired in corruption. "Such protest-oriented parties may pose a challenge for democracy. Despite their success, they often struggle to govern and can rapidly break up, sometimes preparing the ground for new protest parties, potentially feeding a spiral of protest and instability" (Hanley & Sikk 2016, 522-523).

Observations of a protest mobilization from above coincides with the grassroots phenomenon of “protest voting,” very much present in the political dynamics connected to new parties in the CEE (Pop-Elches 2010). Similarly, Bågenholm & Charron (2015) understand support for anti-corruption parties as a way used by voters to discipline corrupt politicians; “corruption voting, that is, the extent to which the voters punish corrupt politicians.”

Such voter behavior was theorized as rational already in 1970 by Albert Hirschman. If people are dissatisfied with status quo, they may shift from one party to a new one in the same manner that a disappointed consumer will start buying a given product from a different producer - choosing the option of ‘exit’. Contemporary scholars argue similarly that party shifting to some groups in the electorate not only is rational, but that it is a habitual pattern comparable to the habit of groups staying loyal to the same party (Haughton & Deegan-Krause 2015; Enyedi & Deegan-Krause 2017, 9). Correspondingly, Tavits (2008b, 67) agrees that there are clear patterns in CEE volatility. Party switching is in fact a rational decision when a new alternative emerges that more closely approximates voters issue preferences. A context of low loyalty makes exit more likely than the alternative option of voice. In contrast, with the presence of loyalty, a dissatisfied voter is expected to remain with the traditional party and opt for political change through the channel of voice as internal feedback (Hirschman 1970).

According to Pop-Elches (2010, 223), protest voting has had varying results; ensuring “healthy power alternation” but has also incubated more dubious political actors. To a certain extent, democratic political competition enhances the freedom to choose the exit, warning the government of its drawbacks, an option impossible or criminal under the one-party communist rule. Still, too great a loss of voters will reduce a party’s capability to correct its flaws. Hence Hirschman argues that voice tends to be a better alternative than exit in terms of boosting democratic political quality insofar as communication channels and responsiveness are positively affected (Hirschman 1970, 32).

3.6 Research on the consequences of ACP’s

Bågenholm & Charron (2015) still argue that much attention has been drawn to voter punishment, while the positive results of having anti-corruption parties in position have been left unnoticed. This seems peculiar when one looks at the degree of electoral success that these parties have had in the CEE region; surpassing parliamentary thresholds and even inserting their

politicians into positions of government and in some cases even in the chair of prime minister. Investigating such positions should enable scholars to estimate the effects of ACP's (Bågenholm & Charron 2015).

Bågenholm (2013) concludes that the more powerful the institutional positions of ACP's the better are the results related to anti-corruption measures. On the one hand, such a conclusion implies that ACP's are genuinely committed to fighting corruption and are also effective in doing so, even being new parties that lack experience. On the other hand, Bågenholm (2013) also addresses consequences of a more democratically deteriorating nature; Anti-corruption parties, post-entrance to parliament typically abandon their commitment to fight corruption and to follow the guidelines of good governance. Leaving the anti-corruption rhetoric is particularly abrupt for parties directly elected to government (Deegan-Krause & Haughton 2018, 473-475; Enyedi & Deegan-Krause 2017, 5-6).

Assessing parties' intentions, Downs warned about parties that design its campaign and policies in "whatever way it believes will gain the most votes" (Downs 1957, 28-31). Similarly, Keech write that parties might even advocate views different from their true political convictions just to win votes (Keech 2013, 85-86). Although voters are assumed to behave rationally when voting for ACP's, system irrationality might occur if politicians decide to exploit their chosen positions, e.g. when intentionally making false but convincing promises to attract voters. The rational person must seek to find clarity, and not succumb to fabricated promises. Voters must decide how to encounter dubious party behaviour and protect their personal preferences not to become duped (Downs 1957, 10-11). This is a difficult task when faced with new parties that promise to act against corruption, a rhetoric susceptible of being populist. New parties have no history from which a voter can make solid assumptions. It is only after an ACP has been given sufficient electoral support that the party may reveal its real political incentives and make clear to the voters whether it is rational for them to extend their political support or not.

New parties must operate within the institutional framework and manoeuvre within the political operational field of established parties. The resources that come with elite status in parliament and more so in government increase the probability of corruption. Voters are especially sensitive to the party which they have supported and will sooner notice divergence from commitments by this party than by that of other parties (Adams & Somer-Topcu 2014, 969). Voter abhorrence will hit and follow representatives who are caught in corrupt activity, not

necessarily because the party has behaved more corruptly than what previous government parties have done, but because anti-corruption promises have been the main voter appeal (Deegan-Krause & Haughton 2018, 485). The focus on fighting corruption is therefore found to give the best yield in the parties' maiden elections when parties still considered as political outsiders who have not yet become part of the political elite. The strategy also to some extent works when in parliamentary opposition (Bågenholm 2013; Pop-Elches 2010, 232; De Vries & Hobolt 2012). Hence, voters time and again find the established parties to be corrupt and repeatedly become disappointed with parties *positioned with power*, tending therefore to seek new political alternatives (Bågenholm 2013, 175).

In view of their betraying of the anti-corruption issue after electoral success, it is not surprising that ACP's have been accused of being populists "just trying to capitalize on the widespread distrust of the established political parties in general and on the voters dislike of corruption in particular" (Bågenholm 2013, 175). Due to institutional barriers behind which norms of anti-corruption have been poorly developed, parties with a genuine intention to fight corruption might struggle to maintain their integrity. The unwritten rules of how things work in a competitive parliament is a factor that likely lures political parties into corruption. In fact, it might well be the case that it is considered too difficult to conduct politics without some corruption becoming involved, however reluctantly.

The ideological ambiguity of ACP's and their trouble with transparency should not lead scholars to link anti-corruption parties directly to populism. It is argued that compared to most political issues, corruption is especially complicated to deal with (Rothstein 2011, 118-119, in Bågenholm 2013, 175; Pavao 2018). One cannot look past the problem that corruption is a serious challenge in the CEE. Representative democracies hinge on compromises, but if the goal is to curb corruption effectively compromise is not an option. One cannot condone corruption as acceptable. Small steps toward strengthening anti-corruption norms should not be impossible to take despite the difficulty of political collective action to combat corruption. Political parties are key players in the democratic institutions and responsible for facilitating rationality in the system. Therefore, it is interesting to investigate whether parties can increase the salience of fighting political corruption on the political agenda considering that it is a main obstacle for genuine democratic procedure.

3.7 Effects of new parties on established parties' policy

In this subsection, to understand the consequences of ACPs, I draw on the literature on the effect of new parties on established parties. This literature in itself is linked to spatial models and issue competition perspectives outlined in the beginning of the chapter. Theoretically, established parties are assumed to respond to new parties harvesting electoral success either by shifting position on an ideological dimension (e.g. when a Communist party becomes more moderate mainstream), or by changing issue positions (e.g. take a stronger anti-immigrant position) or by altering issue emphasis (e.g. dismissing the importance of environmental policy). Theoretical expectations concerning new niche parties as having an effect on established parties are met with empiri in a number of research articles (Dalton 2009; Alonso & da Fonseca 2012; Van Spanje 2010; Abou-Chadi 2014; Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018; Meguid 2008).

By analysing the findings of different scholars, one can learn about the conditions of and nuances in how these effects play out and develop expectations relevant to the effect of ACP's. In the literature concerned with the impact of niche parties on established parties most studies have been dedicated to green and RRP's in WE. The basic logic is that established parties will feel pressured to respond to issues raised on the political agenda by successful parties. Established parties should consider their alternatives and react strategically in order to benefit electorally and to control the threat of the newcomer. Because established parties and especially those of mainstream appeal have developed a substantial tool kit available for political competition, their choice of response instrument will determine the type of impact that new niche parties will have on the party system. The differences in means and response explain why some new niche parties have been successful in some political systems, whereas a twin party in a different context have failed to create political attention (Meguid 2008).

Several studies having built their research design on spatial expectations describe a contagious effect of successful radical right parties on the policy positions of other parties. Approaching the dynamic through standard cross-national regressions, Van Spanje (2010) & Abou-Chadi (2014) have concurred with each other in this view that party-systems in its entirety adopt more anti-immigration policy positions. The success of RRP's demonstrate the electoral benefits of the issue, creating incentives for issue adoption. Furthermore, the risk of adopting the issue is rather low since the position against immigrants is not 'owned' by RRP's.

Nevertheless, through correlations provided by standard regression models, one cannot be completely certain that the effect of public opinion on parties' position is excluded. The argued effect of successful radical right parties is more convincingly indicated by Abou-Chadi & Krause (2018) who utilize a quasi-experimental regression approach to render impotent the public opinion confounder. These authors also include countries from Central and Eastern Europe, thus providing this thesis with a more relevant basis for expectations regarding party competition. Abou-Chadi additionally acknowledges the logic of issue competition perspectives and finds that in contrast to radical right parties, green parties will not have an effect on established parties, because the main green issue of emphasis; environment, is valence and subject to issue ownership. The valence character in combination with the issue ownership severely raises the risk of adopting the issue (Abou-Chadi 2014, 417-418).

From the same issue perspective, Krouwel & Lucardie (2008) conducted a cross-national study of 12 WE countries on the potential effect of new parties on issue salience of mainstream parties. In their study, as parties emphasize issues to a various degree, an effect on mainstream parties ought to be illustrated through a decline in divergence of issue salience between new and mainstream parties. However, such a result was not detected. Rather, parties show high loyalty to their own issues on the political agenda. The scholars still argue that any marginal adoption of new parties' issue emphasis is linked to periods of decrease in electoral support (Krouwel & Lucardie 2008, 297).

In contrast to the findings above, Spoon, Hobolt & De Vries (2014) investigate the dynamics of issue competition in WE and conclude that successful green parties *do* in fact put effective pressure on other parties to increase issue emphasis on the environment. The rise in salience increases even more when the environment issue presents itself as electorally favourable for non-ownership parties - "when economic conditions are good... and when the issue is salient with the public" (Spoon et al. 2014, 364).

The findings in the studies presented have implications for party competition and their findings are necessary to consider when developing hypothetical expectations on the effect of new parties competing on the anti-corruption issue on established parties. Studies of RRP's show that electorally successful, parliamentary represented niche parties are capable of influencing established actors on the elite-level independent of public opinion. This is true not only in WE but also regarding the CEE. However, when new parties emphasize valence issues, much like

Green parties emphasize environment policy, the effect on established parties is more difficult to predict because the benefits of reaching the whole electorate are not necessarily outweighed by the risks of strengthening the niche party.

To minimize risks, the logical response of established parties is to dismiss the issue in order to reduce its salience. A response of avoidance will make voters question the importance of the issue and hopefully reduce their interest in and urge to vote for the new party. If the established parties are successful in avoiding the issue, to an extent that the new parties lack the sufficient votes, they also prevent it from consolidating on the political agenda. Nevertheless, in a situation of electoral uncertainty in which established parties experience weakened electoral appeal compared to new party success, issue salience convergence between established parties and new parties becomes more likely. Convergence or divergence in issue salience consequently is contingent on previous results and the potential gain that established parties believe to achieve in future elections. Existing research on the effect of new parties on established parties has examined the issues of environment and immigration. Unfortunately, equivalent research on corruption is lacking.

3.8 Addressing a gap in existing literature

The focus of this thesis is not to explain electoral success of new niche parties, but rather to investigate the responses of established parties when faced with a new issue on the political agenda. The empirical findings measuring the impact of various new niche parties on established parties is here related to a research gap on the responses to ACP's. When studying anti-corruption parties Bågenholm & Charron (2015) have detected a lack of knowledge in the literature revealing regarding the effects following after ACP success. This thesis focuses on the post-electoral achievements in terms of effective salience pressure from ACP's other than the more extensively researched question of ACP success among voters.

Firstly, this study addresses electoral competition within the party-defined political space, showing a perspective different from other studies in the literature which is dominated by survey data to make inferences from the voter-defined space (Stoll 2010, 447-448). Approaching the mass-level is appropriate when the interest pertains to the distribution of issue preferences within the population and with regard to strategic party response. However, it is likely that citizens' preferences are not spatially parallel to that of political parties and inferences therefore cannot be drawn directly from the mass-level to the level of political elites.

Better to understand electoral competition, it is necessary to study the dynamics at the elite-level separately (Stoll 2010, 448). Empirical knowledge derived from the elite-level can contribute to greater understanding of relevant concepts of party competition and give insight into the strategies by which political parties manoeuvre. Such knowledge also makes it possible to test hypotheses about the dynamics of party competition, the study of which is central in this thesis.

Secondly, in contrast to most empirical research dominated by spatial expectations thus resulting in a biased understanding of party competition as ideological party positioning, this thesis treats the dynamics of party competition by using concepts from issue competition perspectives. Considering that the development of electoral competition to an increasing degree follows the logic of issue-based competition (Green-Pedersen 2007), the issue competition perspective is particularly useful to explain dynamics in the CEE region (Tavits 2008a).

While the dynamics of issue-based competition on the environmental valence issue introduced by green parties have been investigated in WE, scholars have taken little advantage of the favourable comparative conditions in the CEE region underlying competition on the corruption issue advocated by ACPs. Similar to the green issue, the anti-corruption issue provides a fruitful testing ground considering that the specific policy challenges of corruption are shared across the CEE, yet there is a country-level variation in how salient the issue is on the political agenda. The issue is predominantly regarded as valence in that there is broad agreement that fighting corruption is an overarching goal. Furthermore, it is possible to identify anti-corruption parties as clear issue owners, thus enabling this thesis to evaluate anti-corruption mobilisation by parties that lack ownership thereof.

Thirdly, perhaps naturally due to the constraints of the communist era, few scholars have tested general hypotheses of electoral competition and party dynamics in CEE compared to the number of studies conducted in WE. This is unfortunate considering the prospects for theory building and testing that the region facilitates for. When studying party dynamics, scholars have suggested that lessons from the CEE region is of particular value. The region consists of young democracies and offers a laboratory for testing from which one can draw knowledge about party system dynamics. Bearing in mind that the region has much experience with volatility - which increasingly is becoming a feature of not only WE but of party systems across the globe - one can argue that lessons from the region is more relevant for building accurate expectations than

previous lessons from the old democracies in the Western world (Haughton & Deegan-Krause 2015, 61; Sikk 2011, 19; Enyedi & Deegan-Krause 2017, 2; Pop-Elches 2010, 256).

Evaluating younger democracies, scholars will need closely to follow the power alternations of parties over longer periods of time than just the first two elections, before drawing conclusions on the democratic transition. “Disenchantment with the mainstream ... is a rather common phenomenon among third-wave democracies, many of which have struggled with poverty, economic crises, and poor governance” (Pop-Elches 2010, 257). Not only is this dissatisfaction relevant and at work in younger democracies, but political protest movements are to an increasing degree also visible in democratically established countries. Spreading unrest is no surprise considering the consequences of the financial crisis and the rising levels of economic inequality (Piketty 2014).

With special attention given to corruption, politicization thereof also deserves a greater attention outside the CEE context. Worries have been expressed about current global trends linked to corruption. Electoral autocracies use both discrete and complex corruption related techniques like fraud, patronage and bribery to curb opposition (Norris 2008, 58). Acts of corruption obstruct and prevent countries to fully transitioning into democracies. Furthermore, less commitment of comparably transparent democracies to fight corruption has been observed (Transparency International 2019b). Rising levels of corruption will lead to an increase in issue salience. Therefore, it is of interest to investigate the extent to which political parties as key actors in representative democracies indeed are able to advocate this issue successfully on the political agenda.

4.0 THEORY

The purpose of this chapter is to seek to provide a theoretical framework within which testable hypotheses are constructed in order to meet the overarching research question. I will first determine the nature of the issue in question; anti-corruption, respecting that different issues have different implications for party competition. Next, I introduce the theoretical framework of Green-Pedersen (2007) and Green-Pedersen & Mortensen (2010, 2015) concerning the dynamics of political competition in a multiparty context. This framework is the baseline along which expectations are built while empirical studies referenced in Chapter 3 serve further to nuance the expectational argumentation finalizing this chapter.

“The usefulness of models depends absolutely on the interchange between theory-building and empirical observation. This interchange is essential to show the limits of a model’s application and guide its future development” (Stokes 1963, 377). Hence, the literature review is an acknowledgment of historically important theories of party strategies in electoral competition as well as the development of more modern and complex models resulting from testing the more basic previous assumptions. Presentation of this theoretical progress is central. Firstly, because theory-building and empirically based studies of events is a continuous reciprocal process pivotal to social science, different from natural science within which one can establish general truths through experiments in a controlled environment. Calculated manipulation is not often available to scholars of social science (Gerring 2012, xxii-xxiii). Secondly, one must take into account that some arguments from earlier works still find resonance today. It is of decisive value to acquire familiarity with the broader theoretical context before one can single out which concepts are most relevant in building assumptions related to a specific research question.

In building relevant assumptions this thesis draws largely upon the work of Green-Pedersen (2007) and Green-Pedersen & Mortensen (2010, 2015). Green-Pedersen (2007) follows the theoretical interchange of empirical observation and of theory-building thus providing a modern theoretical framework centred on party driven issue competition. He recognizes the empirical contemporary facets of electoral competition but at the same time carefully considers relevant insights from earlier theoretical frameworks. Green-Pedersen argues that party competition to an increasing degree is characterized by competition over issues in which achieving influence over the political agenda is the main goal. “Thus, where party competition used to be almost entirely about positional competition in relation to mainly socio-economic issues, it is today

characterized by a combination of positional and issue competition” (Green-Pedersen 2007, 607). Green-Pedersen & Mortensen (2010, 2015) build on Green-Pedersen (2007) and contribute with more specific assumptions about how different types of parties, niche and mainstream, and their positions, those in opposition or in government, influence each other.

4.1 Determining the nature of the anti-corruption issue

Before turning to the theoretical framework of issue competition dynamics, this thesis shows that competition on the issue of anti-corruption is determined by valence conditions. Scholars have argued that determination of issue nature - whether an issue inherently is more of a valence or of a positional character - depends on context (Stokes 1963, De Sio & Weber 2014). Empirical evidence in support of a given issue is required to decide its nature. Hence, contingent on context, an issue with positional potential at a particular time and in one place can in fact be regarded as a shared goal at a different place or at a different time. Vice versa, issues with strong valence traits in one place can create political polarization elsewhere (De Sio & Weber 2014, 872) - e.g. protection of the environment in the US.

This criterion is of course crucial for the characterization of corruption as a valence issue in the CEE. In democracies, corruption is depicted as an obstacle to transparent and fair decision making (Transparency International 2019b). CEE transition from authoritarianism to democracy has involved building and strengthening of anti-corruption norms (Blanche et al. 2019). Based on scholarly consistent descriptions of voters’ frustration with corruption as hampering well-being and overshadowing economic variables (Tavits 2008a), continuous media revelation of scandals as well as loud and widespread use of anti-corruption rhetoric among political parties and other elite actors (Bågenholm 2013; Hanley & Sikk 2016), henceforth it is arguable that corruption today is generally negatively valued in the region.

When an issue meets increased support and its character is given more valence - i.e. the fight on corruption in the CEE - De Sio & Weber expect issue competition to follow more specifically the logics of valence competition. When responding to the issue “parties should increasingly avoid different positions on the issue and instead claim superior credibility on the policy supported by most voters” (De Sio & Weber 2014, 872). However, the electoral benefits from adopting the issue is dependent on a party’s capability to address the issue persuasively.

4.2 Factors driving the issue attention of established and new parties

Changes observed in electoral behaviour in Western Europe reveal that people increasingly vote according to issue salience and issue ownership, being key concepts of issue competition. This development is present also in the competition between parties. An analysis of party manifesto data (by Budge et al. 2001 in Green-Pedersen 2007, 608) shows that the political field of competition in terms of which issues are put forward has become more complex and that political attention has become more fragmented. Attention is spread more extensively than before both on competing parties and on the different issues they advocate. The political agenda has thus increased in scope.

While new salient issues have been integrated, traditional socio-economic questions have remained relevant (Spoon et al. 2014, 365). Hence, forces of both positional and issue competition are working simultaneously, increasing political complexity (Green-Pedersen 2007, 612). The difference between focusing on issues rather than on positions in party competition, is that the issue competition perspective investigates which issues from the raw space (Stoll 2010) are given most salience and how parties contribute and respond thereto rather than focusing on the relation between ideology and parties' positions on certain issues (Green-Pedersen 2007, 612).

Although the arguments above are built upon observations of dynamics drawn from Western Europe, they seek generalization, meaning that assumptions are probable in all modern democracies (Green-Pedersen 2007, 607). Since empirical observations show convergence of party-dynamics in WE and CEE countries (Enyedi & Deegan-Krause 2017), it is highly plausible that assumptions apply to countries of both regions. Actually, the issue competition framework might even apply more strongly to the CEE region taking into account the continuous emergence of parties successfully emphasizing unorthodox issues (Tavits 2008b).

In campaigns characterized by issue competition the goal is to increase the salience of particular issues. Some parties seek to raise the urgency of protecting the environment, several parties continue to focus on economic questions, and other parties are worried about immigration. Salient issues are given increased importance and accordingly constitute the appeals to which politicians and voters are most attentive.

A party will direct its resources strategically to raise the salience of those primary issues upon which it has credibility (Green-Pedersen 2007, 609, Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2015, 749). Still, the main inference by Green-Pedersen, more recently underscored by Green-Pedersen & Mortensen, is that political parties not only emphasize selective issues but also are forced to respond to and manoeuvre about between all issues on the political agenda. Hence, two components are working together determining the extent to which parties emphasize certain issues; the party-specific component and the political agenda component (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2010, 2015). To understand the dynamic of issue engagement or avoidance between new niche parties and established parties the content of the political agenda is key.

The party-system agenda “emerges as the sum of all issues to which political parties pay attention” (Green-Pedersen 2007, 609-610) and influences how parties distribute their political focus between their own issues and those of other parties. Figure 3 illustrates the indirect influence through the political agenda between new and established parties. Parties are incentivized to address the agenda in their party system for logical reasons; Not surprisingly, it is difficult to stay out of public discussions. Journalists may force issues upon parties by directly asking questions, and other media actors, e.g. popular public figures on social media platforms might address issues which indirectly forces parties to pay attention. Issues are also institutionalized when introduced into parliamentary debates and hearings in which participating parties have to engage. Equally important is the competition to gain attention, and the opportunity to frame a salient issue in a favourable way, which is lost when avoiding the issue (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2010, 261, Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2015, 749).

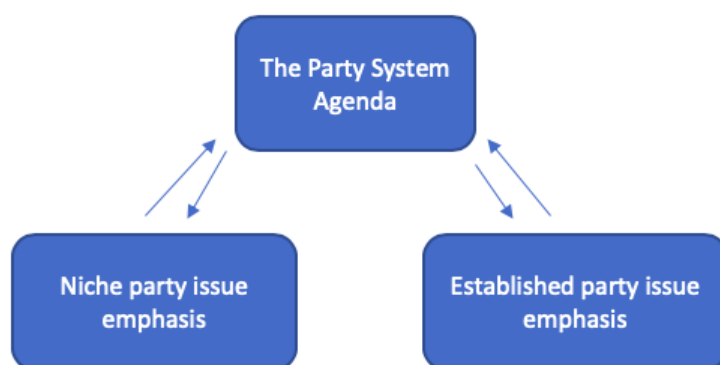


Figure 3: Interaction between the Party System Agenda and political parties.

Note: The figure illustrates how niche parties through the party system agenda can influence established party emphasis. Figure based on the theoretical outline by Green-Pedersen (2007), Green-Pedersen & Mortensen (2010) and Green-Pedersen & Mortensen (2015).

Although any party can contribute to the composition of the political agenda, parties find themselves in very different positions. The basis of the agenda is the already successfully emphasized issues by established parties e.g. mainstream socio-economic cleavages. Building upon this issue foundation one finds more recently introduced issues that may crosscut with traditional issues. Established parties tend to be relatively consistent in their focus on traditional issues while simultaneously giving room to issues that are high in hierarchy on the political agenda. Hence, new parties are somewhat restrained by the established political environment but may still have political impact (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2015).

Among established parties, mainstream parties and government parties are under higher pressure to respond to ‘unpleasant’ issues than are opposition and niche parties. The latter pair has a comparable advantage in refreshing the agenda (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2010, 2015). Niche parties are expected to commit strongly to their niche issue as having a narrow but clear voter appeal. In contrast, “catch all” mainstream parties seek to win the median voter and act accordingly when choosing the appropriate issue strategies. While under pressure to respond to salient issues, mainstream parties are particularly flexible and have the opportunity to broaden their issue appeal beyond their preferred core issues (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2015, 751).

Opposition parties tend to have more control over which issues they address and are not directly judged on their political behaviour. Thus, parties in opposition may use stronger rhetoric, and tend to focus on criticizing the government especially regarding issues favoured by the opposition party. In comparison, government parties have less control over the issues they have to address being held accountable in the executive role having the final responsibility for implementing policies. Government parties are under constant evaluation regarding broad aspects of politics and have to prove themselves competent. If avoiding salient issues, the government will quickly be accused of being unable to handle its position as the executive. Hence, issue ignorance becomes an unavailable alternative. Also, specific policy decisions are often locked to the government party. (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2010, 262-263).

Due to the issue specific focus of this thesis, interest is more narrowly directed at assumptions about responses of established parties to the agenda-setting of successful issue owners of a particular niche, valence issue - namely anti-corruption parties ‘owning’ the anti-corruption issue - and not responses to niche parties in general. Issue ownership can be constructed on the

basis of association and/or competence (Walgrave et al. 2009, 2012). Associative ownership is present if voters draw an obvious link between a party and a given issue. This form of ownership is strong among green parties over the environment issue for example (Spoon et al. 2014). In general, ACP's do not by their various names have the same direct associative ownership. Still, in accordance with Spoon et al. (2014, 366) associative ownership is also connected to the salience that a party devotes to a given issue, which in this thesis is higher for identified ACP's compared to other parties.

Nevertheless, ACP's tend to focus more on their credibility in handling the issue of corruption, often sought legitimized through emphasizing newness (Bågenholm 2013, Sikk 2011) thus building ownership on the more variable basis of competence. As argued, newness is a key variable because it ensures that a party has not yet participated in political corruption which by experience is the case for already positioned parties. In their maiden election, new ACP's can therefore be quite confident that their ownership of competence is difficult for established parties to steal during the campaign.

4.3 Building expectations

It is a challenge for new niche parties to make salient an issue that is disregarded by all other parties. Given the clientelist structures in the political institutions of the communist era, and the underdeveloped norms of anti-corruption it is not surprising that the first mainstream parties in the CEE did not politicize corruption, arguably a difficult issue. However, when a niche party is established and attracts voters on just such an unresolved issue it becomes an electoral threat and the other parties have to respond strategically. Hence, if representing an electoral threat even new and inexperienced parties can put pressure on mainstream parties (Meguid 2005, 349; Meguid 2008).

A new party initially poses a real threat to other parties when it firstly receives a "significant share of votes" (Spoon et al. 2014, 366). Parliament entrance is considered a substantial political threat to others because it comes with access to state provided financial and institutional resources as well as media attention. Also, the likelihood for political survival increases substantially. Hence, in this thesis, the term "significant share of votes" equals the percentage required to surpass the threshold to get into Parliament. The difference between the vote share directly beneath and just above the electoral limit makes a huge difference in terms of political influence (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018).

Established parties do not want to lose attention to the benefit of the new niche party and will have to review the pros and cons of adopting the issue that the new party has ownership to. Considering the theoretical and empirical contributions made by prominent scholars it is not clear how willingly mainstream parties respond to the pressure of new parties. The complexity increases when a new party is campaigning on an issue of which the electorate broadly agrees such as anti-corruption while *simultaneously* claiming issue ownership.

On the one hand, the electoral attractiveness of the issue demonstrated by the success of new ACP's being elected into Parliament and even government (Bågenholm 2013) raises an immediate expectation that these parties as de facto electoral threats to the establishment will be able to put pressure on all parties to follow the rhetoric on fighting corruption. Taking into account the documented success of radical right parties leading whole electoral systems to adopt the anti-immigrant issue (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018), it is imaginable that the same effect would appear when anti-corruption parties enter Parliament. Also, it may be impossible for other parties in the system to ignore the issue. Corruption has proved itself as a heated topic of concern in political debates, and the media generally is quite persistent in investigating the issue forcing questions about the issue upon all parties (Bågenholm 2013, Hanley & Sikk 2016).

Political parties are pressured to acknowledge the presence of successfully highlighted issues (the agenda component), regardless if a party prioritizes the issue and whether the electoral prospects are beneficial or not (the party component) (Green-Pedersen 2007, 609). Mainstream parties and government parties are expected to be the most responsive to the party system agenda. The flexible profile of mainstream parties is expected to lead to adoption of the anti-corruption issue because it can easily be combined with other political issues. In addition, because mainstream parties have a "catch-all" profile, a logical expectation is that mainstream parties are especially inclined to adopt issues which by definition captures the whole electorate in one position of opinion, like the anti-corruption issue. Government parties in particular are made accountable and have to answer to all issues that are of public interest. Being unable to answer deprives the party of all confidence in its executive competence forcing an active response (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2010).

Past electoral results also influence parties' responses to the party system agenda (Abou-Chadi 2014, Spoon et al. 2014). Although opposition parties might experience less pressure than

government parties to emphasize an issue that emerges on the party-political agenda, opposition parties as political losers are likely to try to alter their previous strategy. Hence, political losers are if not severely pressured then nevertheless prone to see the electoral benefit of adopting a salient issue (Spoon et al. 2014, De Vries & Hobolt 2012).

On the other hand, in cases when new niche parties are issue *owners* of valence issues - like in the case with ACP's - the dismissive logic proposed by Abou-Chadi (2014) and Meguid (2005; Meguid 2008) is alluring. Other parties should ignore the anti-corruption issue as much as possible because presence of ownership of a valence issue severely raises the risk of adopting the issue. Since parties lack the option of taking an opposite position on the matter of fighting corruption, the only options are either to ignore the issue or to try to persuade voters that an experienced party can better manage the issue than a newcomer. However, the latter alternative implies the following risks. Firstly, by increasingly addressing the niche issue an established party might give voters a reason to be more concerned with the issue. Issue attention is likely to strengthen the associative link in voters' minds between the issue and the niche party. Secondly, established parties have repeatedly been found guilty of committing corrupt acts. Due to this vast credibility problem, most established parties are likely unable effectively to compete with new parties on the issue of anti-corruption and cannot build competence ownership. Hence, the only imaginable response is for other parties to dismiss the issue.

Still, as argued ownership comes in different forms and competence ownership is more variable and delicate than the associative variant. Therefore, one can expect that established parties will feel less threatened by ACP competence ownership and see the opportunity if not being equipped to steal ownership of the issue, then at least to remove the competence ownership of the issue. Established parties might seek to reframe the debate over the issue in order to undermine the threat of the challenger party. Possibly, the established parties can argue that ACP's are mere populists seeking power and not genuinely interested in fighting corruption. In addition, one should consider the opportunity for established parties to campaign on new and unexpected such alliances with ACP's. Such an alliance would lead to a cross-cut voter appeal and potentially secure the position as head of state.

Considering the diverging assumptions among scholars on party competition strategies on valence issues, two alternative hypotheses serve to address the research question.

H1: Parliamentary presence of ACP will increase the salience of the anti-corruption issue in the programmes of established parties.

H2: Parliamentary presence of ACP will decrease the salience of the anti-corruption issue in the programmes of established parties.

In addition to party-level conditions, other characteristics than those investigated in this thesis can influence parties' acknowledgement of a new issue. The broader systemic political conditions, like the state of the economy as well as country specific conditions may influence the attractiveness of an issue, being the salience that the public put on anti-corruption, which is likely to influence the salience that parties assign the issue. However, more comprehensive conditions are not under investigation in this thesis. In fact, the aim of this thesis is to exclude such factors as explanatory variables in order to effectively measure the impact of dynamics particular to the party-level.

5.0 DATA AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter is divided into three main sections. In the first part of the chapter the reader will find an overview and description of the data employed to investigate the research question of this thesis. The extent to which measurements of variables are reliable and next valid between what is measured, and the theoretical phenomenon of interest will be discussed. The second part illustrates the research design I have chosen to best approach the research question. I will first go through case selection and explain why the following cases are suited to answer the research question. I then turn to describe central variables and the choice of method best appropriate to establish a causal relationship between the variables. Also, the requirements of the method and the extent to which these requirements are met. The final section addresses data issues, focusing on sample size and implications with regard to using electoral thresholds as a cut-off within a RD design.

5.1 Data

Studies of issue competition rely on party manifesto data which strives to indicate the salience – or the emphasis – that parties assign to issues (Green-Pedersen 2007, 610-611). In order to test and make inferences on how salience has changed over time, I depend on longitudinal data of the structuring of political competition on the issue of anti-corruption. For the common space that encompasses all Central- and Eastern European countries in the EU, this thesis develops empirical measures of party-level changes in salience from one election to the next. The set of data collected for the purpose of this thesis is primarily drawn from two different databases; the Manifesto Research on Political Representation Project (MARPOR) (Volkens, Krause, Lehmann, Matthieß, Merz, Regel & Weßels 2019) and ParlGov (Döring & Manow 2019), merged together in R Studio. Additional information on anti-corruption parties are collected from the European Election Database¹ (EED) (Norwegian Center for Research Data 2020), Chapel Hill Expert Survey Data (CHES 2014) (Polk et al. 2017), political handbooks and communication with scholars.

¹ "Some of the data applied in the analysis in this publication are based on material from the 'European Election Database'. The data are collected from original sources, prepared and made available by the NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). NSD are not responsible for the analyses/interpretation of the data presented here".

5.1.1 Parliaments and Governments data

The first dataset is derived from ParlGov (Döring & Manow 2019) and provides a framework of data on parties and electoral results in established democracies and functions as a template dataset. Starting in 1945 or when a country is fully democratized determined by Boix, Miller & Rosato (2013) the data covers both national parliamentary elections and elections for the European parliament of which the latter is excluded in this analysis. The dataset only includes parties with more than 1.0 % vote share. In cases where information on marginal parties and electoral results is required information is obtained from the European Election Database (EED) made available by Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). The EED database covers the period from 1990 and onwards and is constructed by original sources from national officials.

5.1.2 The Comparative Manifesto Project data

This thesis develops measures of salience change based on the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) data created by MARPOR conducting research on parties' policy preferences and political representation. The data is constructed by analysing political parties' election manifestos and as such is supposed to estimate the salience that parties put on different issues as given by the manifesto space they devote to issues. Data coders from 50 different countries are engaged, and the project group collects and organizes the information from the coders. From more than 50 countries, the data covers over 1000 political parties starting in 1945 (Volkens et al. 2019).

The data coders have analysed sentences in the programmes of political parties and connected them to a specific policy category like environment, defence or centralization. The number of sentences that parties devote to a category illustrate their priorities and hence which issues are most salient. CMP data enables the thesis to map and compare electoral changes from election to election within countries, and at the same time broader developments for the region as a whole. Scholars have in fact acknowledged that the CMP is unique in its provision of longitudinal and cross-national information on the party-defined salience of issues (Stoll 2010, 450; Adams & Somer-Topcu 2009, 829).

Compared to most expert surveys of issue salience, the CMP is not constrained to one political dimension or one period in time. Expert surveys also tend to neglect valence issues being a crucial part of the content of political competition in Europe. Considering the broadly agreed valence character of corruption, CMP data is therefore particularly valuable as the dataset

“allows for an assessment of the changing salience of valence issues” (Stoll 2010, 447). Given the large coverage of parties and issues that the dataset provides, researchers have used CMP data to estimate changes in party positions (E.g. Adams & Somer-Topcu 2009). However, scholars like Laver & Garry (2000) have criticized the use of the CMP dataset to construct indicators of parties’ positions, because it compromises validity. Arguably, to ensure high validity it is more accurate to use the data to measure salience as this in fact is what the data measures.

5.1.3 Reliability and validity

Both datasets are transparent in terms of disclosing their tools and decisions for measurement and have proven to be highly reliable as the datasets can easily be merged according to a party identification variable. Underscoring reliability, compatibility has been found between ParlGov data, EED and scholars’ observations of party entrance and electoral results (Pop-Elches 2010, Bågenholm 2013; Hanley & Sikk 2016). In addition, identification of parties in the European Election Database is compatible with the CMP data (Norwegian Center for Research Data 2020).

Furthermore, the CMP measurements tend to agree with other indicators of parties’ issue salience, e.g. expert opinions and survey data or analyses of parliamentary voting and objective word-scoring (Adams & Somer-Topcu 2009, 829-830). The CMP can be cross validated with the CHES 2014 in which 337 political scientists provide information on ideological party positioning and issue salience in 31 countries. Relevant for this thesis the CMP variable of political corruption (per304) and the CHES “salience of reducing political corruption” variable have a correlation of $r = 0,47$. This is regarded as a “relatively strong correlation” considering that a large number of parties simply do not address corruption in their manifestos (Polk et al. 2017, 3). Hence, for elections where difficulties arise with identifying an ACP, CHES data has contributed to point out which party had the highest anti-corruption salience, meeting the ACP definition requirements.

5.2 Research design

In an attempt to understand dynamics in the world scientists seek to establish generalizable inferences between a cause and an effect. Separating cause and effect is a challenge for political scientists, considering the degree of openness of systems of political actors within which many levels and variables interact. Still, sometimes within these systems external circumstances

facilitate for natural- or quasi-experiments producing “as if” random settings. Conducting research in such settings makes it possible to apply tools similar to those valid for ideal randomized controlled experiments to estimate causal effects (Hanck, Arnold, Gerber & Schmelzer 2019).

In this thesis I build on a quasi-experimental research design developed by Abou-Chadi & Krause (2018) who use regression discontinuity as an approach to establish causality of party-level interaction independent of public opinion. When building on the study of Abou-Chadi & Krause (2018) I also take advantage of their replication files. The researchers investigated whether radical right party presence in parliament is a threat to established parties, and lead these to adopt the anti-immigrant position of the radical right party. By replacing radical right parties with anti-corruption parties, Abou-Chadi & Krause’s design can be applicated to the research question of this thesis in order to make causal inferences that are generalizable. Interest is directed at anti-corruption parties and whether their representation in parliament will influence the salience that establish parties put on fighting corruption. Important to note is that the authors investigated the effect of all populist radical right parties, regardless of whether it was the first election that a party participated in or if it had already participated in campaigns. In contrast, I only examine new ACPs that participate in an election for the first time.

Hence, three factors are central for the design, the pre-determined independent variable anti-corruption party strength (X), the indicator variable for treatment status; parliamentary threshold (Z) and the outcome of interest (Y); shift in anti-corruption salience of established parties, all of which will be addressed and described further below. In the discussion that follows, the advantage of parliamentary presence is defined as the overall causal impact of being in parliament, on other parties on the votes obtained in the country’s parliamentary election.

The ideal thought experiment for measuring the parliamentary advantage would randomly distribute the parliamentary presence of new ACPs. This way, one could have compared the subsequent shifts in anti-corruption salience of established parties in a treatment group exposed to ACP parliamentary presence, with a control group that was not exposed to ACPs in parliament, while keeping all other factors constant. The corresponding shift in anti-corruption salience in the next election would represent the overall electoral pressure due to having an anti-corruption in parliament.

5.2.1 Case selection

This thesis seeks to generalize inferences about dynamics of issue competition on anti-corruption to democracies. As noted, however, in the quest for generalizable inferences researchers of the comparative school will in most cases have to rely on a case selection that is smaller than the population it is supposed to represent. Limited resources as well as implications of different contexts and conditions may shrink the case selection. Thus, a research design based on comparison typically faces a trade-off between comparability and external validity. Still, the value of representativeness should not overshadow the value of internal validity, because insights in particular cases can be just as interesting.

Because the issue of anti-corruption is observed to characterize political campaigns in the CEE, the region manifests as a natural starting point for case selection. Considering the complex nature of the corruption issue, it might be understood very differently depending on context. Similar political conditions and an equal understanding of the issue is important to ensure comparable background characteristics and minimize disturbing variables - confounders.

Hence, case selection is focused on political parties in the 10 following countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia. The reasons for reducing case selection to parties in the given countries are as follows; Firstly, the countries have a similar heritage from their communist past and secondly, in contemporary terms, they are all exposed to expectations and demands from the EU, creating a basis for a comparative approach between “most-similar” cases. The 10 countries are overall still the most successful cases of democratisation in the post-communist region (despite the backsliding in some of them, especially Hungary), as indicated by their accession to the EU. The 11th EU member state in the region, Croatia, is excluded due to its authoritarian regime until year 2000, thus making it different from the other 10 CEE EU member states. A study of cases that approximate one another in their background characteristics but that are dissimilar with respect to a given theoretical parameter makes it possible to generate hypotheses and test potential causes for a varying outcome variable (Gerring 2012, 53). In this thesis, established political parties find themselves in similar political contexts, but interestingly, the degree to which anti-corruption is a salient issue varies between parties and elections.

5.2.2 Constructing the dependent variable

Following the research question the dependent variable is *the shift in salience of corruption in the programmes of established parties* by election year. The variable is operationalized as the emphasis on which parties put on political corruption in one election compared to the prior election - thus how much salience changed.

The first step in measuring the salience of the corruption conflict is to associate CMP coding categories with it. In the CMP dataset the issue variable of **political corruption, per304**, is defined as the “need to eliminate political corruption and associated abuses of political and/or bureaucratic power” as well as the “need to abolish clientelist structures.” As such this broad definition of political corruption rhymes with the given theoretical conceptualization of corruption as it absorbs different acts of abuse of power and the political rhetoric of ACP’s to fight against these. Hence, the choice to employ this dataset is in line with the guidance of Møller & Skaaning (2011) who underscore that a dataset should not be chosen due to scholarly popularity or the benefit of few missing values. A dataset should be chosen mainly because it is created in line with the definition of what shall be measured.

Second, an identification of established parties is necessary. Immediately after the post-communist era no parties can be considered as *established* parties, even not those that were descendants from the communist party. Broadly speaking, all parties in the first democratic parliamentary elections can be regarded as new and party systems were turmoiled. In the second election, all parties were new in the previous election and can hardly be described as established after one electoral period. Therefore, I have chosen to remove the first and second democratic elections.

Considering the turmoil in the political systems in the region, it has proven difficult for parties to manifest their presence in the electoral system. However, in order to measure shift in salience I depend on parties that survive in Parliament from one election to the next. Only a few parties have kept their position in parliament for consecutive elections, qualifying for the term established parties. For the period in question, there are some cross-country variations regarding the number of established parties, typically detecting about 3 established parties. In the Czech Republic the Czech Social Democratic Party, Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia and Civic Democratic Party have remained politically stable. The situation is different in Romania where it is only the Hungarian Democratic Alliance of Romania that one can follow through consecutive elections. Important to note however, is that the Alliance is just that, a collaboration

between parties. In fact, individual parties in Romania have been relatively stable within the broader regional context, but CMP data tend to provide information on coalitions. The problem is that Romanian parties have often been shifting from one coalition to another. These shifts prevent estimation of the change of anti-corruption salience for individual parties.

Finally, the dependent variable is constructed by looking at the anti-corruption salience of the established parties, calculating the difference between two consecutive elections, starting with the shift between the third and fourth elections. Figure 4 presents a plot showing the distribution of anti-corruption salience shifts among established parties and the vote share of ACPs.

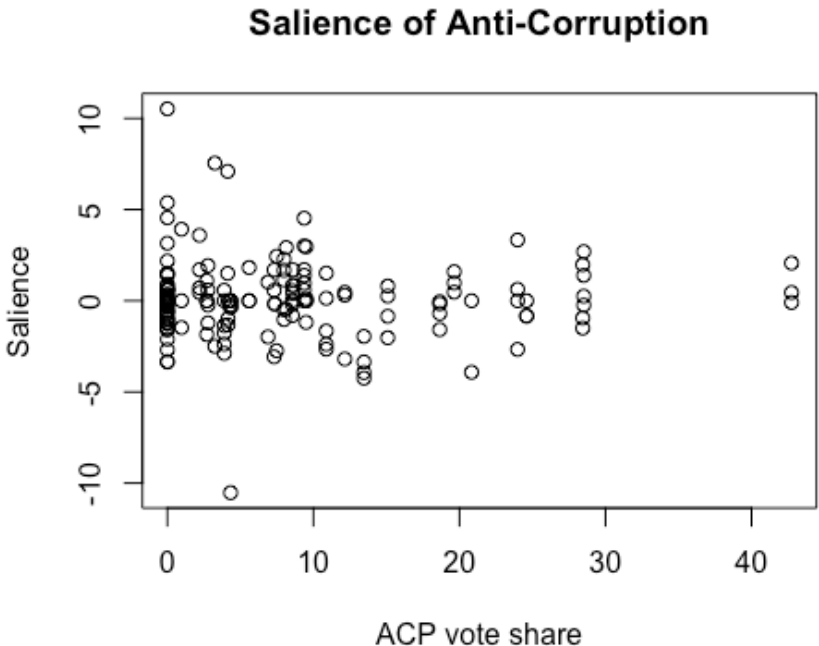


Figure 4: Distribution of Established party Salience shift on Anti-corruption.
Note: The vertical axis shows the level of anti-corruption salience among established parties. The horizontal axis shows anti-corruption party vote share. Source: Volkens et al. (2019).
R: 'car' (Fox & Weisberg 2019)

A positive score in the variable demonstrates that an established party has assigned more space in their manifesto to address anti-corruption since the previous election, and vice versa, a negative score indicates that a party has reduced its attention on the anti-corruption issue.

In some cases where it is apparent that two or more parties have later engaged in a coalition, the shift is calculated by subtracting the mean of the individual parties from the previous election from the new coalition score (e.g. 'Latvia's First Party' and 'Latvian Way' Union.). The salience shift for the National Liberal Party in Romania jumps one parliamentary election. The

score in 2000 is subtracted from the 2008 election, and again the score of 2008 is subtracted from the 2016. While the party has participated in elections since 1990, it has been in and out of Parliament, and will be included as an exception as an established party.

5.2.3 Constructing the independent variable

The independent variable in this thesis is new ACP strength based on vote share, manifested through party presence in parliament. For the identification of ACPs, three steps are necessary; establish which parties address corruption more than other parties, determine which parties are new and to identify the largest new ACP.

Firstly, I employ the conceptualization of Meyer & Miller (2015) to establish which parties in each election can be considered as ACP's. The implication of relative issue emphasis is key for identification of niche parties like ACP's. This thesis defines an ACP as a party that emphasizes corruption more than other parties following the conceptualization of Meyer & Miller (2015). Rather than dichotomous inclusion or exclusion, this conceptualization follows the idea that the measure is relative to country context. A measure constructed on this basis creates ideal types for the purpose of reference of a pure niche party in contrast to an ideal mainstream party. Such a definition works well with the MARPOR-based measure, which also focuses on relative issue emphasis.

With the prospect of capturing the degree of 'niceness' the idea is to compare a party's emphasis on corruption with what is the standard issue emphasis on corruption of that of all other parties in a given system. If a party emphasises corruption equally much as the average party it will not affect the systemic salience of an issue as its behaviour is mainstream (Steenbergen & Scott 2014 in Meyer & Miller 2015, 262). However, a party that departs from the mainstream on corruption will have impact the construction of the total issue agenda. An illustration is the effect of Green party emphasis on the environment, an issue that counterfactually speaking would have received less attention without Green parties (Spoon et al. 2014).

The CMP dataset enables one to identify ACP's through the variation in the share of manifestoes devoted to the corruption category in the party manifestos. The evaluation process involves deciding which parties have a higher score on the anti-corruption issue than what is typical for other parties within the same system. By looking at the descriptive CMP data there

is great variation in the salience that political parties put on corruption: while some parties neglect the issue, many parties do include anti-corruption as an issue in their profile. However, only a few parties distinctly emphasize corruption. Among parties in the latter group the Order, Lawfulness and Justice Party in Bulgaria devoted more than 14% of their party manifesto to anti-corruption in 2009, whereas the Czech party Public Affairs devoted 6,3% in 2010.

No doubt, corruption is an important issue in all of the political systems considered here. Still, a party cannot be understood independent from its national context. A high level of anti-corruption salience in one country might not be considered high in a neighbouring country. To determine what is a high anti-corruption emphasis according to the variation in the data, country-level thresholds will be set in order to identify ACP's. Any threshold is arbitrary, but still serves an important function for inclusion and exclusion. The threshold is constructed by taking the mean of emphasis that all parties devote to the issue of corruption and calculating the standard deviation thereof. The sum of these two numbers equals the threshold in each country for a party to be acknowledged as an ACP. The measure then evaluates all parties that deviate positively from the threshold on anti-corruption emphasis as presented in Table 3.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Bulgaria</i>	<i>Czech Republic</i>	<i>Estonia</i>	<i>Hungary</i>	<i>Latvia</i>
Saliency threshold	5,290	4,756	2,487	3,669	4,204
Average CPI score (2012-2018)	41,7	53,57	69,29	50,43	55,14

<i>Country</i>	<i>Lithuania</i>	<i>Poland</i>	<i>Romania</i>	<i>Slovakia</i>	<i>Slovenia</i>
Saliency threshold	3,997	5,200	2,525	3,699	2,531
Average CPI score (2012-2018)	57,86	60,57	45,57	49,29	59,71

Table 3: Table of Saliency Threshold

Note: Saliency thresholds represent the sum of the average saliency of anti-corruption and one standard deviation thereof. Source: Saliency thresholds calculated based on Volkens et al. (2019). Average CPI score based on Table 2 (Transparency International 2018).

The CMP data only give information on parties that have entered Parliament, but this thesis relies equally on observations below the threshold. Finding anti-corruption parties that did not enter parliament therefore required supplementary sources. Through political handbooks and scholars, I have been able to identify not only non-parliamentary ACPs but also parties for several elections where the CMP based measure would not detect any ACP. The main source for identification of ACP's outside MARPOR data is a list of parties provided by Bågenholm (2013, 181). The definition by Meyer & Miller (2015) is somewhat different from Bågenholm's, but differences are minor enough to allow for Bågenholm's measure of ACP's. I have also communicated with experts from Transparency International offices in the CEE who have indicated ACP's according to the definition criteria in Chapter 3. Parties termed as anti-corruption parties in political handbooks, or that explicitly have been described as parties that address corruption have been included. Due to the strong correlation between CMP and CHES (2014) data, the latter has also been exploited in order to identify ACP's.

Drawing information from secondary sources have some inconsistency implications. Although it has been argued that the CMP data generally match other sources for party salience, I have experienced that CMP data only to some extent is able to identify anti-corruption parties as have been defined by scholars as such, or reciprocal. Some parties in the CMP data that did not surpass the salience threshold are in fact considered as ACP's by other sources. Interestingly, some parties that have *not* been identified as ACP's by any of the supplementary sources do in fact devote a significant amount of space to anti-corruption according to CMP. Due to lack of congruence in ACP identification through the CMP based measure and other sources I will conduct two analyses; one based on solely on CMP data and a second analysis where ACP's identified through external sources are included.

Secondly, keeping in mind the impact of newness for parties that emphasize anti-corruption, I will determine whether the ACP's identified were new parties or not. If a party had previously competed in the national election it will be excluded from the data. Thirdly, if there are more than one new ACP competing in an election, only the largest ACP in terms of vote share will enter the dataset. The higher the vote share the more political influence a party is expected to have constructing the strongest signal for competing parties. Still, in some elections the largest new ACP might be quite weak in terms of a low vote share.

5.2.4 The threshold

In political systems, electoral thresholds like that for parliamentary entrance can function as a fine dividing line between parties on the inside and parties on the outside. Being elected into parliament is a function of public opinion as manufactured in votes, as well as the appeal and strength of party leaders and organizational capacities. Nevertheless, the parliamentary threshold is exogenous to party behaviour and hinges on the electoral system of a country. The exogenous feature makes it possible to interpret variation in representation caused by the threshold to identify its effect (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018, 6).

Why is getting seats in parliament important? For new parties, overcoming the parliamentary threshold can mean the difference between life or death, the latter being very common among new parties (Krouwel & Lucardie 2008). Participation in parliament comes with direct access to financial, organisational and symbolic resources as well as media attention (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018, 5). Being in the media loop is crucial in order to reach the broader electorate and spread a political message. Hence, to attract the votes necessary to gain only one parliamentary seat actually makes a substantial difference in party impact. While parliamentary resources not only are crucial for a party that gains new seats this strength also constitute a great threat for other parties.

The threat to other parties' manifests through parliamentary entrance as the likelihood for sustained political presence and influence in the political system severely increases. Considering the issue of anti-corruption, pre-representation of anti-corruption parties in parliament established parties may consider its politicization as too risky and hope for small anti-corruption parties to crumble. However, once anti-corruption parties can secure their political presence and prove themselves as political contenders, an expectation arises that established parties must respond to the issue put forward by their challengers. Parliamentary entrance of new parties also implies a restructuring of the political system. The intrusion from the newcomer can alter the prioritization of issues on the political agenda and opens doors for original collaborations (Meguid 2008). In sum, one can look at the effect of parliamentary entrance or not, on various outcomes. In this thesis, the question remains if receiving seats in parliament affect the pressure that ACP's put on established parties to address the issue of anti-corruption.

Information about the parliamentary thresholds for each election is mainly drawn from the Abou-Chadi & Krause (2018) dataset. As their data did not cover all elections of which I am interested, I have supplemented with information from the website “Electoral System Change in Europe since 1945.” The collection of data is linked to a project led by Pilet and Renwick, contributing with information on changes in electoral laws starting from the first democratic lower chamber election. A list of the relevant elections will be provided in the Appendix. For the elections in question, there are differences between countries in terms of ACP frequency. In Lithuania a new ACP have successfully participated in all parliamentary elections. Only in the Bulgarian election of 2013, the ACP “Bulgaria for Citizens Movement” did not surpass the parliamentary threshold. In contrast, “Res Publica” in 2003 stands out as the only new Estonian ACP.

5.2.5 The nature of the Regression Discontinuity Design

The three variables above are the key elements of the regression discontinuity research design employed in this thesis. The regression discontinuity design exploit settings where a unit’s treatment is determined by whether another observed variable of theirs, a “forcing variable”, is above or below a cut-off point (Lo 2015, 2). This way of treating data was initially introduced by Donald L. Thistlethwaite and Donald T. Campbell in 1960 who sought to understand the effect of on students who did receive social recognition for outstanding academic performance on various outcomes, like receiving scholarship or future career plans, compared with students that did not receive such recognition. Their design build on logics from experiments to estimate causality and has proven its popularity in economic studies (Lee & Lemieux 2010, 281-282).

The basic idea is that units *just* above the cut-off are assigned treatment whereas units *just* below do not get treated. Yet, except from treatment status, the units close to the cut-off point are basically very similar, meaning there is no systematic difference between them. The logic is comparative since these “most similar units” are equal in all respects except one factor (the truth variable) which is the treatment (Gerring 2012). It is basically the placement around the cut-off point that distinguishes the units. Thus, the setting approximates a randomized experiment. The fine line dividing units can be used as a quasi-experiment where, assuming no systematic difference, the researcher is allowed to compare the average outcomes in the units of the right-hand side of the cut-off with units on the left-hand side of the cut-off.

The advantage with the RD design is the deterministic and discontinuous feature/character of the treatment given the status of the covariate X_i . When the cut-off point is set at z_0 , the treatment variable D_i is assigned = 1 if the covariate variable X_i is greater or equal to z_0 , but if X_i is below z_0 , D_i is assigned = 0. This means that when the value of X_i is known, the value of D_i is known deterministically (Lo 2015, 4).

The basis equation of a regression discontinuity model is usually:

$$Y = \rho D_i + f(X) + \varepsilon$$

This focus of this thesis is on whether parliamentary representation has an effect on anti-corruption salience. Parliamentary representation D_i can be regarded as a dichotomous variable, either parties get seats, $D = 1$, or they do not $D = 0$. Still, the size of a party, in terms of vote share X_i , should also determine the salience of fighting corruption. Thus, the RD regression incorporates both factors into the function and calculates the importance of D when being either 0 or 1 for anti-corruption salience considering the effect of vote share.

An example when applying the function to this thesis is that a positive shift in anti-corruption salience, Y , would depend on an ACP winning at least one seat in Parliament, thus D_i being assigned 1, which again is determined by the vote share of the ACP, the forcing variable X_i exceeding z_0 . Still, if parliamentary presence has an independent effect on such a positive shift in salience, a positive coefficient appears sharply and immediately at the status of $D = 1$, even for cases when the confounding variable of vote share is at the lowest point required to get into Parliament.

5.2.6 Key assumptions

Four assumptions are necessary to ensure the validity of Regression Discontinuity designs;

1. The first assumption requires that the confounders vary evenly and continuous with Z , independent from the threshold. There should be no leaps at the cut-off point (Lo 2015, 6). Utilizing an *exogenous* cut-off point that gives exclusive treatment to units while not affecting the confounders is thus the clue of the regression discontinuity approach.

Confounders that can affect anti-corruption salience are assumed to vary continuously regardless of the threshold because the latter is institutionally determined. Factors like party

characteristics and vote shares, or the level of corruption in a given country should preferably not be impacted by the value of the threshold. Parties' vote shares can be related to electoral thresholds because voters may be less likely to vote for smaller parties when thresholds are high. Also, parties' policy positions may be linked to thresholds to an extent that they are adjusted in order to reach a sufficient number of voters. On the other hand, demand-side factors like economic conditions and corruption are unlikely to be related to the threshold values, meaning that violation of this assumption is implausible.

2. It is assumed that the probability of individuals being treated is discontinuous at the threshold (Lo 2015, 6). When a covariate has reached or exceeded the threshold, the likelihood of treatment assignment is high regardless if the threshold is met with a small or large margin. Confounders below the threshold will not initiate treatment, even in cases where a confounder lie relatively close. Hence, even the smallest differences between confounders above or below the cut-off have large implications for the dependent variable. When comparing outcomes, one should expect to see that there is a jump, a discontinuity in the regression line that manifests the treatment effect.

The main essence of the treatment identification idea takes advantage of the many ACP's who participate in the parliamentary elections in the CEE region. Of those parties, some manage to get enough votes to get into Parliament, while other ACP's do not. ACP's just above and below the threshold are essentially the same. Their placement around the threshold is just the result of something random and not because of any systematic difference. For instance, if an election had been held on a different date, maybe an ACP given a vote share of 4,9 that fell just below a given threshold of 5 would have climbed just above the threshold with a vote share of 5,1.

Since one can compare the parties that just got a vote share at about 4,9 with parties that got a vote share of 5,1, any difference between outcomes is solely attributed to the fact that parties on the upper side of the threshold got into Parliament, and those on the lower side did not. It should not really matter for established parties whether a newcomer ACP receives 4,9 per cent or 5,1 per cent. If the institutional threshold is set to 5 per cent however, the small difference in vote share will matter in that only the latter result is a substantial threat for established parties. This threat pressures established parties to raise their anti-corruption salience and a plot should illustrate a jump for this outcome variable.

3. “The existence of a treatment being a discontinuous function of an assignment variable is not sufficient to justify the validity of an RD design” (Lee & Lemieux 2010, 283). The design is only valid when individuals cannot *precisely* manipulate the assignment variable (Lee 2008, 681). Incentives for manipulation may occur in cases where receiving treatment is either destructive or beneficial. Thus, it is necessary to consider the probability of manipulative behaviour among the individuals.

The political threat that parliamentary presence of ACP’s represent may incentivise established parties with legislative power to manipulate the electoral rules to avoid this threat, e.g. raising the parliamentary threshold or conduct in electoral fraud. Still, since the design compares units close to the threshold, most obstructive for design validity is *precise* control. Think about a case where established parties’ senses that an ACP campaign is well received by the public. A tempting and legal option would be to raise the parliamentary threshold prior to the election to make it more difficult for the newcomer to obtain the necessary vote share. Despite predictions from opinion polls, the establishment should never be able to exactly predict the vote share of the ACP and therefore not know exactly where to set the threshold. This uncertainty ensures treatment randomization, because the chance of ending just above or just below the threshold is the same.

4. The RD design requires that covariates X lie *close* around the cut-off because the approach identifies local average treatment effects (LATE). Sufficient observations close in locality to the cut-off is therefore necessary for a valid counterfactual estimation. When modelling with most similar units, the uncertainty of leaving out relevant variables is reduced. Such bias of omitted variables would become a problem because skewed data assigns to included variables the effect of the missing variables (Lo 2015, 2). The counterfactual setting is key because there are no observations where a given value for x can give $Y = 0$ or $Y = 1$. However, this assumption also means that, unlike matching strategies, there is no way to test empirically what would have happened to an observation in the opposite scenario (Angrist & Pischke 2009, 268, Lee 2008).

Since the design relies on LATEs, the causality identified through RD in this thesis hinges on those elections where an ACP landed close to the parliamentary threshold. Outcomes caused by covariates further away from the threshold are different from those close to the threshold

and will be affected by confounding variables such as vote share - a driving force in determining political threat. E.g. very high vote shares may even result in incumbency.

This means that one cannot simply compare the average of all ACP's below the threshold with the average of all ACP's above the threshold and make generalizing inferences on the causal impact of parliamentary presence to the population as a whole. Interpretive weight should be devoted to parties close to the cut-off point since only those elections where vote shares were similar show the effect of parties independent from public opinion.

In sum, RD design allows for estimation of a causal effect of ACP presence in Parliament on the salience that established parties put on the fight on corruption in a quasi-experimental setting. Assuming that parliamentary presence is crucial, the threshold constructs a counterfactual setting for comparison and legitimates arguments that APC presence in Parliament has an independent effect on other parties. If little variation around the threshold still has major consequences one can subscribe the outcome as an effect of placement relative to the threshold. The design as such enables one to single out the impact of one factor, in this case parliamentary presence, and exclude the effect of confounders, in this case public opinion being the main concern. This is a great advantage compared to other regression designs where one has to assume that one has included all possible confounders.

5.2.7 Pre-analysis steps

5.2.7.1 Transforming the forcing variable

To conduct the analysis, I transform the forcing variable by subtracting the cut-off value for each threshold from the ACP vote share so that covariates X_i are centred at z_0 . The modified ACP vote share will be equal to 0 where it was originally at the threshold (Trochim 2020). This is a standard normalization method for RD (Lo 2015), because it “ensures that the treatment effect at $X_i = z_0$ is the coefficient on Y_i in a regression model with interaction terms” (Angrist & Pischke 2009, 271). Centring covariates around z_0 - centring the vote share of ACPs around the corresponding national threshold – also ensures cross country comparability when measuring the effect of entering the Parliament (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018, 9).

5.2.7.2 Model specification

Since one must rely on extrapolation across covariate values at z_0 , the functional form of the regression is important (Lo 2015, Trochim 2020). The literature presents two alternative RD set-ups of conditional expectations: (1) non-parametric, local linear regressions and (2) parametric linear models. Option one restricts the sample to a certain range h from the cut-off

point; $z_i - h \leq x_i \leq z_i + h$. This provides a linear function with local estimation. The second design option is to address all observations in sample in combination with third and fourth polynomial functions $(x_i - z_i)$ (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018). According to Lee & Lemieux (2010), both modelling options may lead to legitimate inferences. Choosing the first or the second should be led by the characteristics of the dataset one is equipped with.

Considering data characteristics, a particular challenge with RD analyses is “The Curvilinearity Problem” caused by model misspecification. Misspecifications of statistical models will lead to skewed estimates of the treatment effect. One way this can happen is if curvilinear pre-post data are specified as a straight-line model. The curvilinear relationship does not lead to a jump at the cut-off, but a straight-line model depending on curvilinear data might present such a false jump and indicate discontinuity in treatment at the cut-off while in reality there is no effect (Trochim 2020).

In order to avoid model misspecification, I conduct analyses with both low and high order polynomials. Polynomials allow for RD with different trend functions and help to avoid model misspecification because one can test with different degrees of polynomials to find the best fitted model. As a second stability check I employ different bandwidths, comparing models with observations close around the threshold and models that consider full global observations. The models including global observations are specified to assign more weight to observations close to the threshold in line with Angrist & Pischke (2009, 272).

5.2.7.3 Robustness

Working with panel data invites challenges with heteroscedasticity due to the cross-sectional feature and with autocorrelation due to time dependency. Time series observations at one point in time are often based on earlier observations which means that the two observations and also the error terms will be correlated, also known as autocorrelation (Kellstedt & Whitten 2013, 192, 258). Autocorrelation disturbs estimator efficiency in that they become directionally biased and standard errors and T scores become unreliable (Gujarati and Porter 2010, 316). In the case of this thesis, the data only include new ACPs meaning that the independent variable ACP vote share does not suffer from autocorrelation. However, anti-corruption salience may suffer from such time dependency because salience may be correlated to previous levels of salience considering the time it takes to write manifestos. In order to check for autocorrelation, I conduct a Durbin-Watson (DW) test, which conducts an autoregressive for 1 lag scheme (see Appendix

Table A2). The test shows that just 15 percent of the salience score in year t can be explained by the salience in year $t-1$ given the DW score of 1.67, which is not very concerning.

One tactic to circumvent spurious results due to the presence of autocorrelation is by “differencing” the dependent variable as is conducted for the dependent variable in question. A differenced dependent variable is constructed by subtracting the value from the last period from the value of the current period (Kellstedt & Whitten 2013, 262). Hence, I operate with *shifts* in salience of anti-corruption salience which is a *change* variable. To statistically check that autocorrelation is no longer an issue, conduct a second test. The DW test of 1 lag now has a value of 1,8 which means that the dependent variable is not substantially affected by last year’s shift in salience (see Appendix Table A3). Lack of correlation underscores the argued importance of the effect and ACP newness. It can mean that ACPs only have an impact on anti-corruption salience the first years after the entrance to Parliament, which again supports the observations of ACPs abandoning their main issue and adapting to systemic norms, or simply failing to keep their position in Parliament. Furthermore, the differenced dependent variable does not produce a visual pattern of salience either increasing or decreasing. As a second autocorrelation control standard errors are clustered at the party- and election level in the main models. To check for robustness, I also conduct analyses with simple RD models that include country fixed effects in order to evaluate heterogeneity.

5.2.7.4 Fixed and random effects in panel data analysis

Within the cases, I operate with panel data including parties and elections over time. A typical issue with panel data is that different units, e.g. elections and parties, belong to specific groups, e.g. countries, and therefore are subject to various unobservable conditions which can lead to biased results. The 10 countries in the thesis each represent an individual group unit. Respecting that countries have different conditions under which causality operate, I first attempted to estimate models with so called “fixed effects” following the example of Abou-Chadi & Krause (2018).

Operating with fixed effects is a control tool in order to capture unobserved variation particular to groups which might affect the dependent and independent variables. In the event that such variables are involved, they will be accounted for in the error term. Thus, fixed effect modelling has become a “gold standard” within economics and political science (Schurer and Yong 2012, 1 paraphrased in Bell & Jones 2015, 133). When particular group specific intercepts are controlled for, the resulting estimator is one of “within effects” excluding constant effects while

including effects that change over time. This is important to remove bias of heterogeneity between country specific “between effects” and the independent variables (Wooldridge 2002, 133, 251).

Unfortunately, when estimating with the model constructed by Abou-Chadi & Krause (2018) I was unable to obtain results with functions that control for country specific unobservables, probably due to an insufficient number of observations. Almost without exceptions there will be presence of unobserved heterogeneity biases from group specific, time invariant variables that are not assigned to the model and independent variables. Therefore, not controlling for omitted country specific time invariant variables is a possible drawback in the thesis.

In 1971, while throwing light on the advantages of comparison (when used by the “conscious thinker”) Lijphart argued that the comparative method could not aspire to be equivalent to the laboratory setting created in natural scientific studies. In fact, more recently it has been argued that the CEE region represents a “laboratory” for both comparative studies of party system stability (Enyedi & Deegan-Krause 2017, 2) and more specific research on parties that emphasize anti-corruption; In some countries, parties that seek to fight corruption have rapidly gained extensive political power, whereas in other countries success has been more moderate or even absent (Hanley & Sikk 2016, 523). The CEE countries not only share a common communist past in which conformity was cultivated, they have also experienced simultaneously the stress linked to the process of regime transition towards democracy and market economy, not least being subjects for rapid integration into the EU. Having variation in ACP electoral success and political strength among countries belonging to a broader and fellow regional context create a beneficial framework for comparative analysis.

As such, the strikingly similar historical context reduces the problem that most substantially worried Lijphart with comparative studies; handling many variables that vary over time and space while only still operating with a small number of cases (Lijphart 1971, 685). I therefore suggest that the country related heterogeneity issue may be less obstructive for the results estimated in this thesis than in comparative studies where samples include countries with more different characteristics and historical backgrounds. Concerns regarding autocorrelation are also offset as the main model includes election and party level clustering of standard errors.

5.3 Data issues

Regarding the dataset there are some factors to be aware of. Panel data on parties and parliamentary elections from 1997 to 2017 are used in the analysis. In order to use all pairs of consecutive elections for the analysis, the dependent variable is effectively dated from 1997 to 2017, and the independent score variable runs from 1993 to 2014.

5.3.1 Missing data, sample size and reliability

The MARPOR data do not provide information about the corruption salience for all parliamentary elections or parties in the dataset, thus somewhat reducing observations of the dependent variable. Still, missing information about the corruption variable is likely to be random. When missing data are random it is suggested to only analyse available data (Higgins and Green 2011). The dataset is therefore restricted to elections in which established parties participated in consecutive elections and for which information about corruption salience was available. Anyhow, lack of information on the corruption variable is mostly a problem in the first parliamentary elections, which are not included in the analysis to avoid the turmoil in the direct aftermath of regime transition and to legitimately refer to established parties.

The lack of information about the corruption salience variable also have an impact on the independent variable. Missing observations of the independent variable is not necessarily a problem if it is not systematic. Since ACP's have been identified through various sources, it is possible that there exist some biases in the independent variable regarding the number of observations and the elections for which an ACP was missing. Some parties might have been included on a poor evidence basis, creating a bias in favour of more elections with supposed treatment than was in fact the case. Also, I may have overlooked sources that identified ACP's that in fact should have been included. Hence, concern remains that the effect on the dependent variable is somewhat disturbed. Because of the research design in this thesis, missing data in the independent variable only equal to no treatment and are given in the dataset by subtracting the threshold from zero due to vote share centring around threshold.

Linked to the part on missing observations is a challenge of operating with a small sample size. A small sample remains an issue of concern because it poses a risk that the estimation of the coefficients and therefore the causal effect is not as precise. Moreover, this may have affected confidence intervals and given incorrect inferences of hypothesis tests. Since the party systems in the region have been under great turmoil it has been difficult for parties to manifest their

presence in the electoral system as established parties. Therefore, there are many elections where only one or two parties have managed to participate in Parliament for two consecutive elections. In addition, lack of information on the corruption variable also means that the number of established parties is smaller than the actual number of established parties participating.

The dataset constructed for the analysis of this thesis also includes few observations of ACP's *closely* around the parliamentary threshold. A small sample size then, is not only a problem because the estimates may be based on a small evidence basis, but also especially because it might violate the RD LATE counterfactual setting which rely on a sufficient number of observations that closely revolve around the cut-off point (Lo 2015).

5.3.2 The threshold

The requirement that the cut-off point induces discontinuous treatment assignment makes the method somewhat more complicated when faced with different electoral systems. Not all electoral systems operate solely with a nationwide threshold. Many countries, such as Germany, have additional rules to allow for the entry of small parties to gain seats in Parliament who would otherwise fall beneath the threshold (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018, 7). In the sample of the 10 countries, all have a nationwide threshold. Nationwide thresholds imply that I can operate with a 'sharp RD design'; if a party does not meet the threshold it will not get into Parliament. Important to note is that two countries, Hungary and Lithuania, operate with mixed systems combining PR with SMD to ensure proper representation of different groups within the political unit. The mixed-member system in Lithuania has increased the number of political parties in the Parliament because it enables popular local actors in a single-member district to gain representation (Nakai 2009). Small parties also seem to benefit from the mixed system in Hungary since the registration barriers in a single district are lower than the barriers of establishing national candidacies (Benoit 1999, 3). In Table 4, I follow Abou-Chadi & Krause (2018, 9) who meet this problem by calculating the effective threshold which gives a 50/50 percent chance of entering parliament, a calculation proposed by Taagepera (2002, 383).

<i>Country</i>	<i>Elections</i>	<i>Threshold</i>
Bulgaria	1997-2001, 2001-05, 2005-09, 2009-13, 2013-14, 2014-17	4
Czech Republic	1998-2002, 2002-06, 2006-10, 2010-13, 2013-17	5
Estonia	1999-2003, 2003-07, 2007-11, 2011-15	5
Hungary	2002-06, 2006-10	5 [0,826]
Hungary	2010-14	5 [1,153]
Latvia	1998-2002, 2002-06, 2006-10, 2010-11, 2011-14	5
Lithuania	2000-04, 2004-08, 2008-12, 2012-16	5 [2,98]
Poland	1993-97, 1997-2001, 2001-05, 2005-07, 2007-11	5
Romania	1996-2000	3
Romania	2000-04, 2004-08, 2008-12, 2012-16	5
Slovakia	1994-98, 1998-2002, 2002-06, 2006-10, 2010-12, 2012-16	5
Slovenia	1996-2000, 2000-04, 2004-08, 2008-11, 2011-14	4

Table 4: List of Elections and Thresholds.

Note: Effective thresholds in brackets calculated according to Taagepera (2002, 383). Threshold information provided by Abou-Chadi & Krause (2018) and Pilet and Renwick (n.d.).

Table 4 lists the sample with legally defined nationwide fixed thresholds as well as effective thresholds. One can measure the number of districts in all electoral systems, but for mixed systems one must encounter the number of districts in the PR element (in Lithuania it is just one nationwide district, but in Hungary there were 20 districts at least until the electoral reform in 2014) and the number of districts in the majoritarian tier (equal to number of seats allocated to the majoritarian tier). Also, the effective threshold can be computed for all electoral systems, but for the purposes of this analysis it is not relevant for the countries with nationwide legal thresholds and PR system.

Conducting analyses with effective thresholds has been criticized. Effective thresholds are not “purely determined by electoral institutions but also depend on the behaviour of parties” (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018, 9). I therefore conduct analyses both with and without Hungary and Lithuania and additionally an analysis with effective thresholds for Hungary and Lithuania rather than their nationwide thresholds.

6.0 RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will repeat the hypotheses produced in Chapter 4 for the diverging expected effects from the independent variable. I will then present a figure of the main plot and a regression table. Next, different regression models that comprise of various components of the complete dataset will be presented. The coefficients in the models will be addressed in light of their sign, size, significance as well as sample size and other relevant results. Thereafter, a discussion of the results related to previous literature and empirical studies will follow. A summary of the most interesting findings and their implications for theory will end this chapter.

All figures and the content of tables are produced in *R Studio*. The '*dplyr*' package (Wickham, Francois, Henry & Müller 2019) and the '*ggplot2*' package (Wickham 2016) are attached as base packages for data manipulation and visualizing the data. The '*magrittr*'-package (Bache & Wickham 2016) entails an operator that will run a produced value into a second function. Fundamental regression functions are included in the '*car*' package (Fox & Weisberg 2019). The specific regression discontinuity functions used are; the '*jump.plot*' constructing the RD figures, the '*rd.base*' for producing estimates with different polynomial approaches and the '*rd.sens*' which tests various bandwidths (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018).

Chapter 4 concluded with two diverging hypotheses regarding the effect of new Anti-corruption parties' entrance to parliament on the salience of anti-corruption among established parties.

H1: Parliamentary presence of ACP will increase the salience of the anti-corruption issue in the programmes of established parties.

H2: Parliamentary presence of ACP will reduce the salience of the anti-corruption issue in the programmes of established parties.

Both hypotheses consider the threat of ACP parliamentary entrance to place substantial pressure on established parties. In the formulation of H1 it is expected that such a political threat will force a converging response as the only alternative. Successful issues on the political agenda initiate issue convergence because all parties in the party system have to pay attention and

answer to noticeable issues. Issue convergence ultimately raises the salience of the valence anti-corruption issue advocated by ACPs.

Simultaneously, H1 incorporates arguments that consider some beneficial prospects for established parties in meeting a valence issue like anti-corruption. The competence ownership that ACPs enjoy of fighting corruption remain less of a threat compared to issues subject to associative ownership, meaning that other parties may have capacity to reframe the issue to their advantage. While H1 assumes that all parties have a converging influence on one another through the political agenda on valence issues, H2 expects the valence character of the anti-corruption issue to initiate issue avoidance. H2 considers established parties as strategically capable to respond by steering clear of issues where the electoral prospects are less advantageous. When ACPs constitute an actual political threat, one should expect established parties to reduce the salience of anti-corruption because new ACP issue owners are considered more capable to handle the issue.

6.1 What is reported in the models

The RD models will report the local average treatment effect of the coefficient as well as standard errors and bandwidth window. Tables presenting different local average treatment effect estimations control for autocorrelation and are based both on the most extensive number of observations as well as observations within optimal bandwidths, more closely addressed in subsection 6.3.1. Since I have rather few observations (<172) it is relatively difficult to obtain statistical significance and I will interpret the degree of significance consciously.

The polynomial function and accordingly the type of approach used to estimate the size and direction of the effect are presented in the tables. Equally important is to interpret these statistical measures through figures. Figures are estimated with a third polynomial function and global bandwidth. According to Trochim (2020, 1) “sufficiently high-order polynomial functions will adequately account for whatever function exists.” Thus, this is the main model used for causal inference. I will comment also on the results presented in tables obtained from estimations with lower polynomial functions for comparison and robustness.

6.2 Results

A graphical representation of the results is the first step to evaluate effects within a regression discontinuity design. Figure 5 illustrates RD estimate of the shift in parties’ anti-corruption salience depending on the vote share of anti-corruption parties at the previous election. The

function plots the change that an established party shift in salience in election $t + 1$ as a function of ACP strength in election t . The horizontal axis measures the ACP vote share. The striped line represents the parliamentary threshold, the cut-off point, and the solid lines are fitted in a cubic form at a 95 percent confidence interval. To the left of the vertical striped line, ACPs did not manage to enter parliament in election t ; to the right, ACPs did enter parliament.

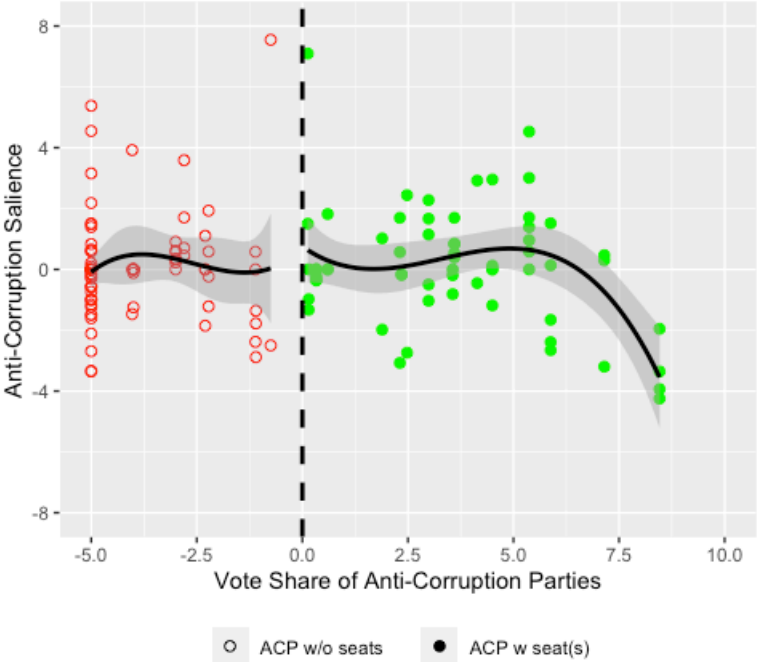


Figure 5: Established party salience shift on anti-corruption
 Note: The solid lines plot the cubic fit and the shaded areas denote the 95 percent confidence bands. Source: Volkens et al. (2019).
 R: ‘jump.function’ (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018)

Initially, the illustration confirms that a sharp RD design is applicable for the research question. All anti-corruption parties on the left side of the cut-off point did not enter parliament whereas ACPs on the right side acquired parliamentary seats. However, while there is a leap at the cut-off point it is not very substantial. The small jump suggests that in cases where anti-corruption parties exceed the threshold for parliament there is on average a positive but minor shift in the salience that established parties put on anti-corruption. Hence, in line with H1 Figure 5 indicates that parliamentary presence of ACP will *increase* the salience of the anti-corruption issue in the programmes of established parties, and this effect is independent of public opinion. However, the figure also illustrates that there are relatively few ACPs close to the electoral threshold, meaning that the results are based on a meagre evidence basis.

The x-axis that illustrate vote shares of Figure 5 shows the fixed threshold; negative values show the percentage below the threshold and positive values are vote shares above the threshold. Since the x-axis is calibrated to the threshold it is not directly translatable to vote share. Thus, when analysing the scatter plot, it would not be completely correct to interpret directly a negative linear relationship between anti-corruption party vote share and established party shift in salience. In fact, a regression analysis finds only a negligible negative relationship and it is not statistically significant, meaning that there might not be any effect at all between vote share and salience shift. The insignificant effect of vote share is also part of the idea of the RD design in this thesis.

Table 5 exhibit the findings for the local average treatment effect when estimating with both parametric and non-parametric estimation tools. Considering the arguments in the literature review and the theory chapter, the effect could go either way. The non-parametric and parametric techniques all show a *positive* effect for 1st, 2nd and 3rd order polynomials of an anti-corruption party’s parliamentary presence on the salience that established parties assign to the fight on corruption. Still, the results are not statistically significant.

TABLE 5 <i>Established Party Shift in Salience on Anti-Corruption</i>						
LATE	St. Err	Bandwidth	Polynomial	Approach	$N < c$	$N \geq c$
0.174	1.130180	4.636	1	Non-Parametric	40	44
0.557	1.899956	4.636	2	Non-Parametric	40	44
0.390	3.457622	global	3	Parametric	81	93

Table 5: Established Party Shift in Salience on Anti-Corruption.
Note: Two-way clustered standard errors used. Bandwidth estimation according to Imbens & Kalyanaraman (2009).
 $*p < .1$, $**p < .05$, $***p < .01$.
R: ‘rd.base’ (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018)

Table 5 shows that the main model produced in Figure 5 with a third polynomial estimation produces a local average treatment effect of 0.39. However, the model is not significant. While higher order polynomials will account for whatever function exists, one can eliminate unnecessary quadratic terms if these are insignificant and not needed in the model. Since the first polynomial model has a smaller standard error, a measure of the dispersion in the sample, than what do the second and third polynomial functions, it is a more effective estimation (Trochim 2020). The standard error is a sign of statistical weakness related to the sample mean. The larger the standard error, the larger the statistical weakness, because one has to account for

that the sample average will deviate from the population parameter. Usually, in regression analyses the standard error, and thus the statistical weakness, becomes larger with *smaller* samples, and can often be countered by increasing the sample size (Tuft 2005, 9). However, in the case of RD, where the estimated effect should rely on observations close to the threshold, the opposite seems to impact the standard error. Thus, global inclusive sample of all observations, rather than just observations close to the cut-off, in fact increase the statistical weakness.

Still, the LATE of 0.174 of the first order non-parametric approach is very small and suggests only a minor effect considering that the standard deviations of anti-corruption salience in my sample range between 1,4 and 3,8 for the individual countries. Looking at salience shifts in Czech Republic, a treatment effect of 0.174 is in size similar to the salience shift of 0.171 by the established party “Christian and Democratic Union - Czech People's Party” from 2010 having a salience score of 1.962 to increasing its salience to 2.096 in 2013, after the entrance of the ACP “Public Affairs” to Parliament in 2010. Given that the mean salience of fighting corruption is 1,71 in Czech Republic, a score of 2.096 is relatively high for a non-ACP. In the previous electoral period from 2006-2010 one can observe the opposite effect, a negative shift of - 0,171 by the Czech Social Democratic Party related to a lack of an ACP. Despite these corresponding shifts, in the given two electoral periods the shifts among other established parties seem quite arbitrary in size and direction. Therefore, it is not surprising that none of the model specifications show statistically significant results, even if LATE is positive. In sum, the overall evidence at this stage of analysis is rather weak; also, because the substantive size of the effect for all polynomials is small.

6.3 Robustness and placebo tests

Several additional analyses have been conducted in order to check the robustness of the findings and with respect to the required assumptions. Figures A1, A2, A3, A4 and tables A5, A6 in the Appendix present placebo tests and robustness tests to buttress the argumentation in the analysis. I also discuss, in theoretical terms, the extent to which the assumption of no manipulation of the forcing variable is met.

6.3.1 Choice of optimal bandwidth

The optimal bandwidth is also important to check for when evaluating the validity of an RD design. Preferably, the LATE should be unaffected by varying bandwidth windows. If LATE appears very sensitive to bandwidth adjustments the presented results will lose momentum.

Table 5 shows how the local average treatment effect varies with optimal estimated bandwidths and the global bandwidth. The optimal bandwidth used for the simple RD calculations is 4,635 (cut point using the Imbens & Kalyanaraman optimal bandwidth calculation). The difference in the LATE of the optimal bandwidths (0.174 - 0.557) and global bandwidth (0.39) is not very substantial, and the effects remain insignificant for both bandwidth windows. A further bandwidth analysis (see Appendix Table A5) encompasses bandwidths from 1.5 to 10 per cent for both first and second polynomial estimations. The Table shows that for various specifications of the bandwidth the estimate varies substantially both in strength and in direction.

Focusing on the first polynomial, the estimate becomes a negative sign for all bandwidth windows below 3,25 and above 5,25. This is in line with the direction found in the linear regression model. The estimates remain insignificant for all bandwidths. Changes in the direction of the effect as well its insignificance are critical results and seriously threatens any small sign of an initial effect observed in Figure 5. The bandwidth test steers towards a conclusion that there is no effect at all of anti-corruption parties on the emphasis that established parties assign to the fight on corruption, meaning that null hypotheses expecting no effect cannot be rejected.

6.3.2 Manipulation of Forcing Variable

Crucial for the RD design is that units are unable to exactly manipulate the forcing variable. One statistical test that has been proposed to test for this assumption is the McCrary (2008) test (Lo 2015). While I was unable to make the function work in R, this assumption can also be discussed in theoretical terms. To what extent have parties in CEE countries engaged in electoral fraud or changed electoral thresholds in order to prevent ACP's from gaining parliamentary seats? Such behaviour would undermine the validity of an RD design to answer the research question of this thesis because it would violate the assumption of "as if random" treatment assignment.

The histogram in Figure 6 presents the distribution in the forcing variable. An illustration of this distribution can demonstrate whether there is a jump in the ACP vote share at the threshold value. Such a jump would indicate violation of random treatment. In example, if very many units are able to just surpass the threshold, it could seem like ACPs are able to steer their vote share just enough to get into Parliament. In contrast if several parties fall directly beneath the

threshold, such a skewed distribution could indicate that established parties engage to deliberately hinder new party entrance.

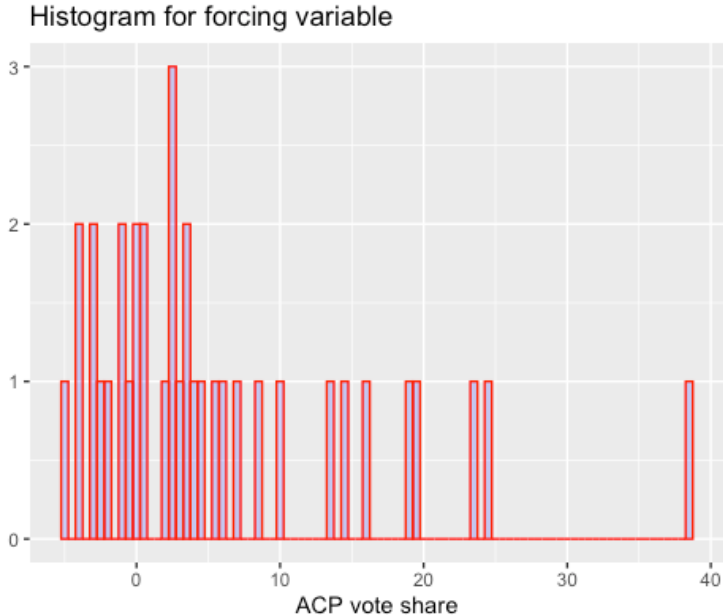


Figure 6: The distribution in the forcing variable (ACP vote share centered around the threshold value).
Note: 0.5% bandwidths are used.
R: 'car' (Fox & Weisberg 2019)

Figure 6 illustrates that just around the threshold the number of ACPs is spread rather evenly between 0 and 2. At three percentage points above threshold value one can find three ACPs being the highest number of ACPs in the analysis. However, it is not a drastic jump, particularly if one considers the average ACPs at percentage points within the optimal bandwidth window of 4.6 per cent. Within this window, the number of ACPs are about the same on both sides of the threshold. The jump may just be a coincidence or an indication of electoral fraud. Further evidence is necessary to check for the random assignment assumption.

Since data are restricted to CEE countries after the post-Communist period only including free democratic elections, the initial assumption is absence of fraud according to democratic norms. As has been argued in Abou-Chadi & Krause (2018), electoral fraud is not a prevalent problem in Europe. The few examples of manipulation in their article are drawn from WE. Also, within the period of investigation, the economic benefits and democratic requirements of EU membership have put additional pressure on the countries of interest to uphold democratic procedures and abstain from political manipulation. Still, the effect of the EU was stronger before the accession of the CEE countries to the Union. Post-accession the effect has clearly

decreased, as the examples of democratic deterioration in multiple countries in the region (Hungary most prominently) show. Also, an increase in legal thresholds or dubious system amendments have occurred in CEE countries.

Several controversial amendments have been made to the Slovak electoral system. In 1992 the electoral threshold of 3% was first raised to 5% which favoured the larger parties and rejected small parties from entering Parliament. More highly disputed was the threshold raise in 1998 which interfered with national elections shortly after.

“The new law altered constituency boundaries and, more importantly, significantly raised the electoral threshold for alliances of parties, hitting both the centre-right opposition grouping, the SDK and the Hungarian parties, but not the three governmental parties” (Fitzmaurice 1999, 296).

This modification was conducted by the incumbents to hinder competition from the opposition and smaller parties. However, only a year later the reform was struck down as unconstitutional by the Slovak Constitutional Court because it not only “effectively excluded citizens and members of various parties from participating in the political process” but also because the reform included restrictions on political campaigning which was deemed incompatible with “the European Convention on Human Rights, concerning the right to freedom of information and free speech” (Slovak summary authored by Hardman and Renwik in Pilet and Renwick, 13). The fact that undemocratic attempts of electoral restructurings have not been fully realized suggests that established parties do not have full power to change electoral institutions. Due to division of political power; there are other veto players - like courts, as in the examples above - that have authority to block reform.

One case of manipulative reform was passed in Hungary the year before the 1998 election. MSZP and SZDSZ feared that the opposition would engage in a grand coalition and thus raised the requirements for collaborations in which instead of polling in total 10 percent for parties on a joined list, every individual party had to obtain 5 percent of the votes each on a national level (Benoit 1999, 16).

In 2000 the two largest parties in the Czech Republic, CSSD and ODS, initiated electoral reform in the direction of a majoritarian system, which would favour larger established parties. The reform proposal however was rejected in the Constitutional Court. The electoral system in CR

has remained proportional with a 5 percent threshold for entering Parliament (Czech Republic Summary by Renwick and Spáč in Pilet and Renwick, 2). Similarly, in Slovenia the established parties preferred a majoritarian system while new parties had a preference for proportional representation. In 1989, as a result of the communist system, the Slovenian Parliament consisted of three chambers seeking to meet the competing preferences. The lower chamber was elected through PR with a 2.5 % electoral threshold. In 2000 the electoral threshold increased to 4%.

Considering the given examples, democratic division of power has functioned against electoral manipulation. For the other cases in this thesis, electoral reform has not been linked to motivated manipulation. Electoral thresholds in Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Poland have remained unchanged since the first half of the 90s. In 1996 Lithuania raised the threshold from 4% to 5% (Lithuanian Summary by Hardman and Renwick in Pilet and Renwick). Following its neighbouring countries Romania increased the threshold from 3% to 5% in 2000. Raises of electoral thresholds have largely been driven by a desire to reduce legislative party system fragmentation to increase stability rather than to exclude certain parties. Furthermore, in cases of reform, most obstructive for the design is the *precise* control over electoral results. Precise control should be unattainable within a democratic framework. Most threshold changes also occurred in the early 1990s, a period not included in the sample of this thesis. Hence, I argue that the evidence against the assumption that units do not manipulate the treatment is weak.

6.3.3 Placebo test: Is there a jump somewhere else?

Testing for jumps at non-discontinuity points is important to establish that the threshold does in fact impact outcome. This can be done by taking one side of discontinuity and do a placebo treatment at an arbitrary point of the forcing variable. For arbitrary cut-off points one should *not* expect to find a jump. I conduct four placebo tests using the eyeball approach in which the discontinuity is plotted to see how $f(X)$ is estimated (Lo 2015). In Figure 7 one can see the plot when arbitrary cut-off points is set to 2 points above the nationwide threshold are used. Indeed, there is no particular jump at the arbitrary cut-off. Figures A1, A2 and A3s in Appendix similarly present no significant jumps.

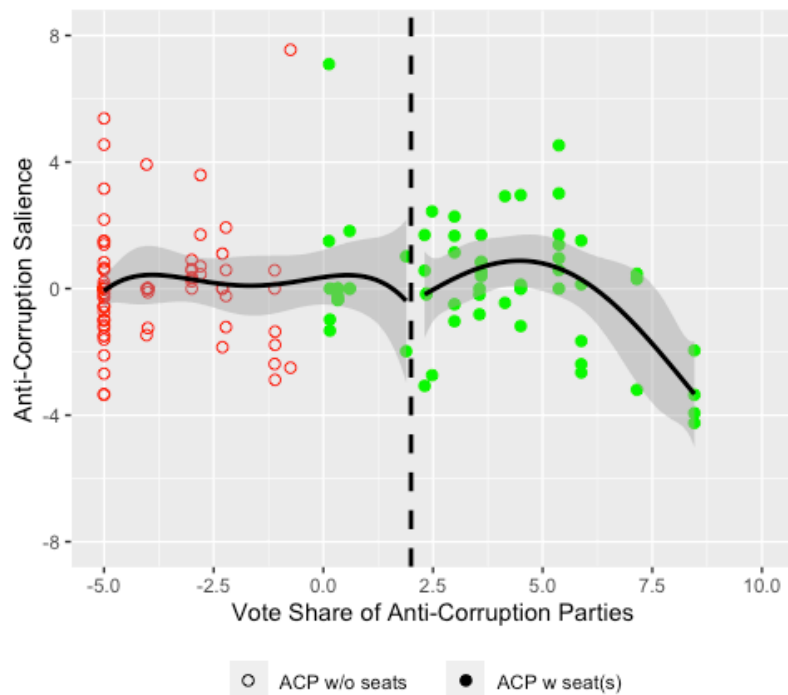


Figure 7: Established party salience shift on anti- corruption, arbitrary cut-off set to 2

Note: The solid lines plot the cubic fit and the shaded areas denote the 95 per cent confidence bands. R: ‘jump.plot’ (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018)

Since I do not find jumps at arbitrary cut-off points, I argue that there are no confounding variables that create discontinuities elsewhere than the threshold that would interfere with the results.

In addition, a “jack-knife” analysis is conducted in order to check whether particular countries are driving the results. In the Appendix, Table A6 provide information on changes in estimates and significance when single countries are removed consecutively from the analysis. The resulting differences in the size of the τ -coefficients are quite interesting. The results remain insignificant for most of the countries, but for Bulgaria and Czech Republic the results show highly significant effects for some estimates. Starting with Bulgaria, both the first and third polynomial estimations are positive and significant on a 1 and 5 percent level respectively. The low order model gives a substantial LATE effect of 1.777, and the high order model gives a very strong estimate of 5.778. Accordingly, when calculating the overall salience shift for each electoral period in Bulgaria, the shift in salience is positive in all elections where an ACP was elected to Parliament (except between 2014-2017, of which salience score was negative) and negative for the period 1997-2001 when no ACP managed to enter Parliament. The shifts among established parties for the electoral periods in Czech Republic seem much more arbitrary.

For the first order polynomial, the LATE vary between -1.354 and 1.035 (excluding Bulgaria), and estimates overall remain insignificant. Again, additional tests point in a direction of no effect.

6.3.4 Thresholds

Since HU and LIT operate with mixed electoral systems - where thresholds are not only determined by electoral institutions and are thus not completely exogenous - using the nationwide threshold as a cut-off point might disturb the results. Hence, the analysis is repeated with a sample limited to countries with a legal threshold. The result is illustrated by Figure 8.

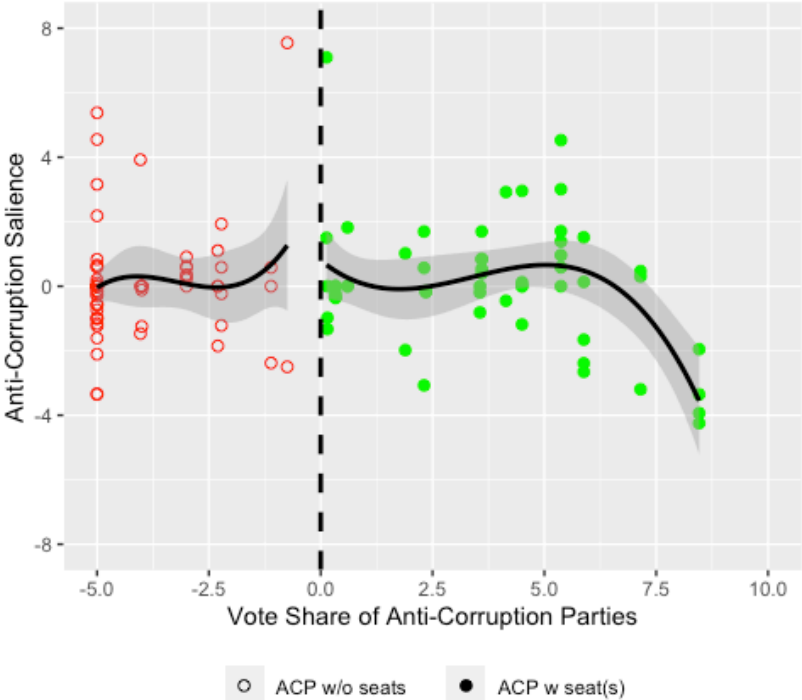


Figure 8: Established party salience shift on anti- corruption, countries with legal threshold
 Note: The solid lines plot the cubic fit and the shaded areas denote the 95 per cent confidence bands.
 R: 'jump.plot' (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018)

Figure 8 shows how anti-corruption vote share at t-1 impacts the salience of anti-corruption among established parties, but now only that of those from countries with a nationwide legal threshold. The figure indicates that the threshold implements treatment leading to a drop where the salience is decreasing when ACP vote share passes the threshold. Table 6 presents the LATE according to optimal bandwidth and approach. The direction of the effect is negative and the estimates higher than the estimates found in the initial model including all countries. However, the results have no statistical significance, thus contradicting both H1 and H2.

TABLE 6 Established Party Shift in Salience on Anti-Corruption (HU and LIT excluded)						
LATE	St. Err	Bandwidth	Polynomial	Approach	$N < c$	$N \geq c$
-1.361	1.0182	6.090	1	Non-parametric	68	49
-0.856	0.7671	6.090	2	Non-parametric	68	49
-1.910	1.9465	global	3	Parametric	68	76

Table 6: Established Party Shift in Salience on Anti-Corruption (HU and LIT excluded).

Note: Two-way clustered standard errors used. Bandwidth estimation according to Imbens and Kalyanaraman (2009). * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

R: 'rd.base' (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018)

I also repeat the analysis with effective thresholds for comparison as reported in Chapter 5.

Rather than just removing countries from the sample, estimating with effective thresholds takes into account that some countries have mixed electoral systems while keeping the number of observations high. Thus, I conduct the analysis with effective thresholds for HU and LIT rather than their nationwide thresholds. In contrast to Figure 8, Figure 9 demonstrates a jump indicating a positive shift in salience when ACPs enter parliament.

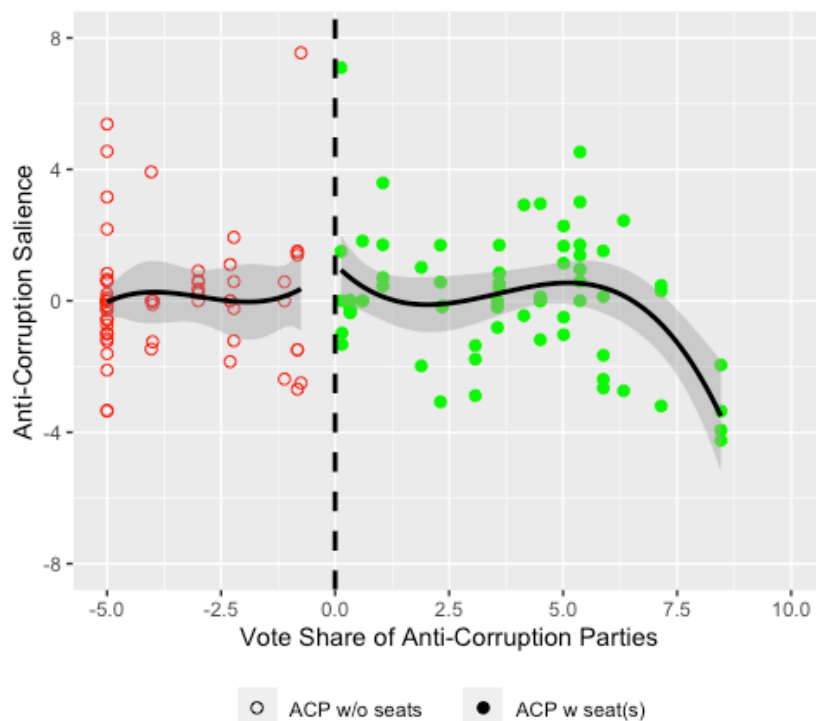


Figure 9: Established party salience shift on anti-corruption, countries with legal and effective thresholds.

Note: The solid lines plot the cubic fit and the shaded areas denote the 95 per cent confidence bands.

R: 'jump.plot' (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018)

Table 7 continues to confirm no significance for the results. The jump in Figure 9 loses any hint of momentum, again contradicting indications of any effect in either direction.

TABLE 7 <i>Established Party Shift in Salience on Anti-Corruption (effective thresholds)</i>						
LATE	St. Err	Bandwidth	Polynomial	Approach	$N < c$	$N \geq c$
-0.098	0.7257	4.865	1	Non-parametric	39	44
0.053	0.2755	4.865	2	Non-parametric	39	44
-0.069	1.5618	global	3	Parametric	74	100

Table 7: *Established Party Shift in Salience on Anti-Corruption (effective thresholds)*.

Note: Two-way clustered standard errors used. Bandwidth estimation according to Imbens and Kalyanaraman (2009). * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

R: 'rd.base' (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018)

For future research, one potential solution to the issue of having countries with mixed electoral systems can also be to explore the possibility of using a fuzzy regression discontinuity approach. Such a fuzzy design would mean that above threshold observations do not deterministically impose treatment while below threshold do not. Above threshold observations, $x \geq x^*$, only increases the probability of treatment. The design therefore also allows for other factors apart from x to have an impact on the treatment (Fernandez 2015).

6.4 Discussion

This thesis is theory testing in nature. Hypothesis 1 and 2 was constructed in order to confirm or disconfirm competing theories of issue competition on valence issues between niche and established parties. However, both the preliminary analyses and secondary tests contradict any sign of effect in either direction. Overall, the results are both weak in size and lack statistical significance, thus not supporting either H1 or H2. Furthermore, the bandwidth tests particularly demonstrated high sensitivity for the results.

The recurring findings of no effect on anti-corruption salience in all models can be explained by methodological and substantive implications. With regard to methodology, the small sample size has been a remaining concern for internal validity in this thesis and may be a central explanation for poor significance. Within a vote share bandwidth of 4.636 I have 84 observations. For comparison Caughey & Sekhon (2011, 398) in their article "Elections and the

Regression Discontinuity Design: Lessons from Close U.S. House Races, 1942-2008” randomly sample 75 elections within a margin of 0.75% vote share around the threshold.

Party volatility in the CEE forced me to leave out observations of established parties, because rather few parties have managed to keep their parliamentary position for consecutive elections. Furthermore, a major concern is the lack of ACPs with electoral support close to the electoral threshold, as illustrated in Figure 5. While it has been argued that surpassing the parliamentary threshold is key to achieve political influence, the above presented results cannot show this effect specifically.

Substantive explanations for no effect may be related to the theoretical outline for the hypotheses. Since H1 and H2 were constructed on two contradictory logics the hypotheses have counterbalancing potential. Empirically, no effect also suggests that the theorized dynamics that seem to apply to other issues do not work accordingly for the anti-corruption issue, since it is argued that this issue is different from other political issues.

6.4.1 Theoretical implications

In broad terms, the findings in this thesis cannot say whether dynamics of issue competition among parties theorized by Green-Pedersen (2007) apply to political competition in the CEE region. From this point of view, it was initially expected that successful new niche parties, like ACPs that enter Parliament, should contribute to building the complexity and the scope of issues on the political agenda in the CEE of which established parties must adhere to. However, no such effect has been detected.

Different explanations for this are possible. One immediate thought is that established parties can in fact resist pressure and choose to stick to their own preferred issues in a non-responsive manner even when the anti-corruption issue enters the agenda. According to this logic, some scholars have been unable to find a significant relationship between niche issues and adaptive convergent responses from other parties.

Lucardie & Krouwel (2008) conclude that established parties generally tend to ignore niche issues and rather stay faithful to their own issues. Still, the authors modify this inference to apply only for stable periods. In times of trouble and uncertainty established parties *will* respond in a convergent manner to new issues and accordingly raise salience. Indeed, the description of

party dynamics in times of trouble are more relevant for comparison with the findings in this thesis, which similarly are based on a politically troubled setting. However, then it is a puzzle that no general convergence is found. But this does not mean that no shifts occur.

When looking at the dataset there are shifts in anti-corruption salience in both directions, but they appear rather arbitrary. Thus, it might be that there are situational differences between the established parties, which I do not look into, that make them respond in a contrasting manner to ACPs, in which positive and negative shifts cancel out and hide possible effects. As has been argued, government parties held accountable should be more responsive in terms of convergence while opposition parties have greater freedom regarding where to assign their focus, allowing for a divergent approach to issues. Particularly with the anti-corruption issue, executive accountability presents itself as a relevant factor determining response since it is also the executive actor that is prone to be exposed for the harshest attacks.

6.4.2 The anti-corruption issue and factors of threat

Making anti-corruption a politically salient issue is undoubtedly a difficult task within institutions where corruption has been allowed to occur because political key actors have profited from it. At the same time, since corruption, normatively speaking, is negatively perceived in the CEE region the issue has proven itself to attract attention and thus voters. Faced with such a complex political setting of the anti-corruption issue together with a general disagreement among scholars regarding how parties respond to issues of a valence character, it is not surprising that the results fail to decide with one particular response pattern.

Finding both positive and negative shifts in anti-corruption salience without a clear pattern confuses the interpretation. Any shift may just as well be due to established party internal considerations as a response to external threat. Much likely, both factors may work together. A qualitative study of party considerations regarding salience shifts would enhance our understanding of why parties alter their salience in one or the other direction. Internal considerations are probably linked to the factor of public opinion; thus, I will focus the discussion on explanations for and against response to external threats linked to the anti-corruption issue.

Since valence issues only allow parties to inhabit one position, scholars consider it impossible to meet a successful valence issue by taking the opposite position. When parties are hindered

from proposing alternative answers to an issue, as is the case with fighting corruption, it magnifies the threat component. In addition, issue ownership is underscored as an important factor determining threat. The main inference by Abou-Chadi (2014) is that valence issues subject to issue ownership tend to *decrease* issue salience among non-owner parties because this combination of factors magnifies the threat component of an issue.

While finding that the valence issue of environment will lead other parties to circumvent the issue, the explanation includes a nuanced differentiation between associative and competence ownership which is relevant for nuanced inferences in this thesis. A decrease in salience among other parties is linked to valence issues subject to associative ownership. The threat of adopting the environmental issue is very high because the link between party and issue is strong since Green parties enjoy associative issue ownership. The threat of associative ownership is substantially higher than the threat of meeting valence issues subject to competence ownership, since the link between party and issue is weaker and rely strongly on proof of action. The anti-corruption issue is only subject to competence ownership which is a challenge to sustain. Ownership fragility reduces the threat of the issue. Hence, the lack of effect in this thesis do not contradict those by Abou-Chadi (2014). The finding actually highlights the importance of political threat in predicting response. While parties cannot campaign on a pro-corruption message, established parties may consider the threat of ACP competence ownership to be rather harmless and not respond at all.

Still, since the dataset shows that established parties tend to shift their anti-corruption salience, additional logics must be discussed. Parties that increase their anti-corruption salience may regard the issue as an opportunity. The opportunity component recognizes parties' abilities as strategic actors in debates, and even suggests that some established parties may seek to claim superior credibility over an issue. The variable notion of competence ownership implies that parties can easily lose it and the issue might change its owner. By raising their salience, established parties engage in the anti-corruption issue to reframe the debate to their advantage.

If it is not possible to gain ownership of the anti-corruption issue - which I deem unlikely due to the numerous scandals and the general popular distrust in politicians - established parties can still reap electoral benefits through an attempt to remove the ACPs ownership of the issue. Considering their niche nature, ACPs often have no other issue foundation to fall back on. Not all parties will approach the anti-corruption issue in an opportunistic way. Some parties may

feel more threatened by the issue. Particularly, parties whose members have recently been exposed in the media as corrupt, will have little capacity to reframe an anti-corruption debate and calculate it better to decrease the salience of the issue by not addressing it unnecessarily. Also, since anti-corruption is an issue different from other political issues it may even be the case that theories of issue competition and party response in fact do not even apply to the issue of anti-corruption.

6.5 Summary and literary contributions

From the findings in this thesis it is yet unclear if anti-corruption party success has an effect on the salience that established parties put on anti-corruption. Some established parties increase their salience while other parties decrease their salience when ACPs enter parliament. It is from the results, however, not possible to attribute these shifts to anti-corruption parliamentary entrance. Arbitrary shifts may be explained by different situations of political power as well as strategic considerations of threat and opportunities which may also vary from party to party. If anti-corruption party success in itself is intensifying a process of fighting corruption in Central and Eastern Europe remains unanswered.

Obtaining a result which infers that anti-corruption parties in Parliament have no effect on issue salience contributes to the literature on issue competition. The descriptive dynamics of increasing and decreasing salience of the anti-corruption issue among established parties shows that parties have picked up on the anti-corruption issue as it is included in most manifestos which support the overarching issue competition perspective that parties respond to successful issues on the political agenda. More particularly, the findings also contribute to more nuanced explanations on issue competition, particularly regarding the implications of threat variables as underscored by Abou-Chadi (2014).

Some issues create more possibilities for threat management and electoral fortune than other issues. The effect of the agenda component on the issue salience of political parties in the theory of Green-Pedersen & Mortensen can be structured further by adding, as subcategories, a threat and an opportunity component. This would create a bridge between diverging theories and enable more specific expectations of party responses to issues of the future. The type of issue as well as the form of ownership determine the extent to which other parties experience threat and opportunities. The media forces parties to address issues on the agenda and imposes issue accountability. Parliamentary debates will also institutionalize new issues. When parties

address such issues, they seek to reframe the debate in their favour. Some parties have little opportunities to reframe debate and therefore avoid addressing unfavourable issues on platforms that they can control, like their manifestos. However, the anti-corruption issue may not follow previously determined dynamics of issue competition. Future research could explore the relation between power positions and response. The reasons behind anti-corruption salience shifts should also be investigated through more intimate approaches.

7. CONCLUSION

In this thesis, diverging expectations of response among established parties to successful new niche issue owners have been tested. Built upon the literature on party competition, two hypotheses were constructed on the foundation that new parties that enter parliament represent a substantial threat to established parties. The first hypothesis expected that established parties will *increase* their salience of an issue that presents itself as electorally beneficial entering the political agenda. The logic behind a positive shift in salience underscores that parties are forced to address all issues that climb the ladder of the political agenda, regardless of the issue being beneficial or not. Nevertheless, new issues that are broadly popular may create opportunities for established parties when addressed strategically. The extent to which an issue is profitable to adopt depends on the type of issue ownership that the issue is subject to. Here, associative ownership is considered more difficult to challenge than ownership based on credibility. First, due to a well-equipped political toolbox there is a probability that an experienced political actor is able to steal an issue from a newcomer. Since the anti-corruption issue is characterized as an issue subject to credibility ownership, established parties may feel less threatened by the newcomer and will try to take over the issue. However, regarding the anti-corruption issue, established parties cannot persuasively adopt the issue due to their stained history with corruption scandals. Therefore, under growing pressure to address the issue, established parties can adopt a strategy of reframing the debate. By casting suspicion about the newcomers capability to tackle the issue, established parties may manage to remove the issue ownership of the anti-corruption party,.

In the second hypothesis a decrease in salience among established parties was anticipated. Rather than giving an issue more attention, which entail risking increasing the perceived urgency and to strengthen the link between the issue and its initial advocate party, established parties ought to avoid the issue. When established parties decrease their salience of an issue, this will most likely make it seem less relevant and interesting. A strategy of avoidance is aimed at not allowing a new party to dominate the political agenda.

Using cross-national longitudinal data on issue salience within a sharp regression discontinuity design, I tested causally whether new anti-corruption parties entering Parliament would lead to an increase or a decrease in the anti-corruption salience of established parties between elections.

The overall results indicate that established parties will not respond, by *either* increasing or decreasing their emphasis on fighting corruption, to newcomers whose main issue is anti-corruption. Still, descriptive data show that established parties do change their anti-corruption salience. Such shifts appear arbitrary, meaning that there are no patterns among parties that are exposed to ACP entrance to Parliament or not. Hence, there may be interfering factors such as situation of power or previous electoral results that can explain why some established parties increase their salience and others decrease their salience. Also, the anti-corruption issue has been described as an issue different from other political issues which might explain the variation in anti-corruption shifts both between and within party systems.

While there is general agreement in the literature that corruption has become one of the most debated issues in the Central and Eastern European political context, the question of how the success of the anti-corruption parties have contributed to this phenomenon has remained unanswered. Comparative studies have demonstrated an association between changing levels of issue salience and the influence of niche parties. However, inferences have been scrutinized because the potential confounder of public opinion has not been sufficiently and/or convincingly ruled out. Furthermore, while some attention has been given to anti-corruption parties considering their popularity and impressive electoral results, no studies have focused particularly on the party-dimension and the effect that parties that emphasize the need to fight corruption have on the political agenda.

By utilizing a quasi-experimental design, based on data treatment through regression discontinuity, this thesis sought to causally attribute shifts in established party positions to the strength of anti-corruption parties that enter parliament. However, due to data issues and/or substantive reasons I was unable to observe any overall shifts in the political system towards prioritizing or neglecting anti-corruption if ACPs gained representation in parliament. Still, by addressing the research gap this thesis demonstrates that competition on the anti-corruption issue is very complex and requires increased attention, particularly considering the key function of political parties and the prospects for democratic development.

Despite lack of significant results in support of H1 or H2, the lack of effect has implications for the literature on anti-corruption parties as well as party competition more generally. Firstly, no effect on the salience of anti-corruption shows that a successful anti-corruption party, as an inexperienced niche actor, meets opposition in the politicization of the anti-corruption issue.

While it is also possible that established parties already address corruption, as can be observed in the MARPOR data, lack of increased salience seems undemocratic if ACPs have gained a strong mandate to address the issue in a country.

Secondly, while many established parties reduce their anti-corruption salience when ACPs enter Parliament, just as many increase their salience. This indicates that ACPs have an impact on the strategic considerations of other parties also because public opinion in terms of vote share is not found to correlate with parties' issue salience. In relation to a more general literature on party competition, the continuous altering of salience is a dynamic buttressing the importance of issue competition arguments in determining political parties' behaviour. Hence, the transformation of the political space in the CEE that we are currently witnessing is not simply a reaction to shifting preferences in the European electorate, or the supranational body of the EU, but is a result of the strategic interaction of political parties.

Future research should investigate more closely the strategic considerations behind salience shifts. A qualitative approach could contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex competition on the anti-corruption issue. It is interesting to address the motivational background of established parties for adopting the issue or avoiding the issue related to factors of political pressure and possibilities, as both have been discussed as central for issue competition. An inductive in-depth study of issue competition on anti-corruption could potentially uncover variables relevant for this particular issue that remain excluded from the current theoretical frameworks. A further question is how anti-corruption parties respond strategically to converging and diverging strategies of established parties in order to stay put.

Both optimism and scepticism surrounding the success of anti-corruption parties is legitimized. Paradoxically, impressive success of newcomer ACPs does not result in an overall increase in anti-corruption salience on the party level political agenda. Lack of general issue convergence within the party systems should be of great concern for advocates of democracy. The findings indicate that the political institutions continue to struggle with corruption, which hinder ACPs from pursuing the issue effectively on the party level. Also, it is possible to discuss the genuineness of ACPs considering the potential of the issue within a populist strategy. Parties that campaign on fighting corruption mainly to gain political power may radically alter their focus when in position, rather pursuing their true preferences and avoid placing pressure on potential established allies.

8. LITERATURE

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The Causal Effect of Anti-Corruption Party Success on Established Parties' Salience Shifts. A Regression Discontinuity Approach.

Juni Maria Jebsen Lynngård

Appendix

The central hypothesis proceeding from the argumentation in this thesis is that established parties adjust their salience of anti-corruption on the basis of the performance of anti-corruption parties in the previous parliamentary election. Thus, I am interested in parties' responses under conditions of the entrance of ACPs to parliament and their influence with the consequence that established parties can be expected to be pressured to address the issue of anti-corruption regardless if the issue is beneficial or not. For that reason, I focus on countries in the CEE region where the emergence of new anti-corruption parties is considered a special phenomenon. CEE countries outside the European Union have been dropped in order to create a comparable foundation including only democratic countries with a similar understanding of corruption. Lastly, I leave out the first two free post-communist elections for two reasons. First, the process of establishing stable democratic institutions takes time. Thus, the preparatory years with a turmoiled political landscape does not invite to a comparative study of democratic party dynamics. Second, since I am interested in the salience shift of established parties, inherent in the term is an understanding of longevity and recognized existence, but in the first democratic years all parties were new.

TABLE A1 <i>Anti-Corruption Parties in Europe, 1993-2017</i>				
Country	Party abbr.	Party name english	Election year	CMP code
Bulgaria	NDSV	National Movement Simeon the Second	2001	80902
	ATAKA	Coalition Union Attack	2005	[0.567] 80710
	RZS	Order, Lawfulness and Justice	2009	[2.632] 80620
	BNG/DBg	Bulgaria for Citizens Movement	2013	[14.430]
	ABC	Alternative for Bulgarian Revival	2014	80330 [11.579]
Czech Republic	US	Freedom Union	1998	82421
	SNK	Association of Independents	2002	[0.299]
	VV	Public Affairs	2010	82952
	ANO 11	Action of Dissatisfied Citizens	2013	[6.287] 82430 [1.657]
Estonia	ResP	Union for the Republic	2003	83611

				[8.187]
Hungary	OMC	Center Party	2002	
	Jobbik	Movement for a Better Hungary	2006	
	LMP	Politics Can Be Different	2010	86110 [2.243]
Latvia	JP	New Party	1998	87431 [1.163]
	JL	New Era	2002	87423 [7.463]
	RL	Made in Latvia	2010	
	ZRP	Zatler's Reform Party	2011	87620 [3.175]
Lithuania	NS-SL	New Union	2000	88410 [0.220]
	DP	Labour Party	2004	88440 [2.105]
	TPP	National Resurrection Party	2008	88630 [10.687]
	DK	The Way of Courage	2012	88952 [6.998]
Poland	RDR	Movement for the Republic	1993	
	ROP	Movement for Reconstruction of Poland	1997	92621 [0.974]
	PiS	Law and Justice	2001	92436 [5.109]
	SRP	Self Defence of the Polish Republic*	2001	92622 [5.263]
	SDPL	Polish Social Democracy	2005	
Romania	PNL	National Liberal Party Campeanu	2000	93430 [4.698]
Slovakia	ZRS	Worker's Association of Slovakia	1994	96210 [8.511]
	Smer	Direction - Social Democracy**	2002	96423 [3.481]
	SaS	Freedom and Solidarity	2010	96440 [5.359]
	Olano	Ordinary People and Independent Personalities	2012	96620 [5.556]
Slovenia	SMS	Party of Slovenian Youth	2000	97952 [4.918]
	Zares	Party for Real - New Politics	2008	97440 [0]
	ZLJ/PS	Zoran Jankovic List - Positive Slovenia	2011	97340 [0]

Table A1: Anti-Corruption Parties in Europe, 1993-2017

Note: Salience score of CMP category of fighting corruption per304 in brackets. Source: Volkens et al. (2019)

*Although the Party Self Defence of The Polish Republic was a larger party and devoted more salience to anti-corruption, I have chosen to use Law and Order as the ACP in the dataset, because the latter through various sources has been highlighted as an ACP of great impact.

**Identified by director of TI Slovakia Gabriel Šípoš

TABLE A2 <i>Durbin-Watson Test of Salience</i>			
lag	Autocorrelation	D-W Statistic	p-value
1	0.1592	1.6788	0.04

Table A2: *Durbin-Watson Test of Salience*

Note: A Durbin-Watson test to check for autocorrelation.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

TABLE A3 <i>Durbin-Watson Test of Salience First Difference</i>			
lag	Autocorrelation	D-W Statistic	p-value
1	0.1016	1.79	0.158

Table A3: *Durbin-Watson Test of Salience, First Difference*

Note: A Durbin-Watson test to check for autocorrelation.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

R: 'car' (Fox & Weisberg 2019)

TABLE A4 <i>A linear Regression</i>					
Mod 1 - salienc ~ acp vote share	Coefficients	Std. Error	t	R-sq	N
Intercept	0.0868	0.169	0.514		
ACP vote share	-0.003	0.0176	-0.171	0.00017	172

Table A4: *A linear Regression*

Note: A simple bivariate regression between salienc of anti-corruption and ACP vote share.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

R: 'car' (Fox & Weisberg 2019)

TABLE A5 LATE Under Varying Bandwidths

	est	se	stat	p	lwr	upr	bw	poly
1	-9.63409495	NaN	NaN	NaN	NaN	NaN	1.50	1
2	-9.63409495	NaN	NaN	NaN	NaN	NaN	1.50	1
3	-9.68607245	NaN	NaN	NaN	NaN	NaN	1.75	1
4	-10.11086672	NaN	NaN	NaN	NaN	NaN	2.00	1
5	-6.04681461	1.7891259	-3.37975907	2.383937e-03	-9.731588	-2.362041	2.25	1
6	-1.04542488	1.4807596	-0.70600579	4.847287e-01	-4.048545	1.957695	2.50	1
7	-0.67408691	1.5329049	-0.43974476	6.627507e-01	-3.782962	2.434788	2.75	1
8	-0.19660580	1.5435357	-0.12737366	8.992122e-01	-3.305446	2.912235	3.00	1
9	0.31183110	1.3434788	0.23210720	8.173487e-01	-2.382846	3.006508	3.25	1
10	0.47994424	1.2779217	0.37556623	7.087384e-01	-2.083242	3.043131	3.50	1
11	0.56108053	1.2347104	0.45442278	6.511375e-01	-1.907875	3.030037	3.75	1
12	0.61332551	1.2129700	0.50563946	6.149321e-01	-1.812158	3.038809	4.00	1
13	0.35480541	1.1477747	0.30912460	7.580839e-01	-1.931679	2.641290	4.25	1
14	0.22267452	1.1359303	0.19602832	8.451182e-01	-2.040215	2.485564	4.50	1
15	0.14149368	1.1287396	0.12535547	9.005566e-01	-2.104770	2.387757	4.75	1
16	0.08525127	1.1274928	0.07561136	9.399171e-01	-2.158531	2.329033	5.00	1
17	-0.29720025	1.0672101	-0.27848336	7.811167e-01	-2.410024	1.815624	5.25	1
18	-0.44472566	1.0893583	-0.40824554	6.837755e-01	-2.600207	1.710756	5.50	1
19	-0.53752706	1.1080300	-0.48511961	6.284207e-01	-2.729954	1.654900	5.75	1
20	-0.58741161	1.1214011	-0.52381936	6.012760e-01	-2.805500	1.630676	6.00	1
21	-0.61197554	1.1327936	-0.54023571	5.899380e-01	-2.852597	1.628646	6.25	1
22	-0.63132726	1.1423168	-0.55267266	5.814152e-01	-2.890786	1.628131	6.50	1
23	-0.64717022	1.1504213	-0.56255061	5.746879e-01	-2.922659	1.628319	6.75	1
24	-0.66049560	1.1574273	-0.57065838	5.691941e-01	-2.949842	1.628851	7.00	1
25	-0.66661768	1.1625639	-0.57340307	5.673188e-01	-2.965658	1.632423	7.25	1
26	-0.66510049	1.1672264	-0.56981275	5.697448e-01	-2.973362	1.643161	7.50	1
27	-0.66437496	1.1714249	-0.56715112	5.715464e-01	-2.980939	1.652189	7.75	1
28	-0.66413957	1.1752136	-0.56512245	5.729215e-01	-2.988196	1.659917	8.00	1
29	-0.66421287	1.1786452	-0.56353929	5.739957e-01	-2.995055	1.666630	8.25	1
30	-0.65807103	1.1813521	-0.55704903	5.783834e-01	-2.993668	1.677525	8.50	1
31	-0.62254263	1.1860847	-0.52487196	6.005024e-01	-2.967496	1.722411	8.75	1
32	-0.59287543	1.1908984	-0.49783879	6.193788e-01	-2.947346	1.761595	9.00	1
33	-0.56764155	1.1955235	-0.47480583	6.356652e-01	-2.931256	1.795973	9.25	1
34	-0.54585093	1.1998616	-0.45492826	6.498655e-01	-2.918042	1.826340	9.50	1
35	-0.52679455	1.2038878	-0.43757777	6.623667e-01	-2.906945	1.853356	9.75	1
36	-0.50995062	1.2076095	-0.42228105	6.734677e-01	-2.897460	1.877558	10.00	1

Table A5: LATE under varying bandwidths

Note: * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

R: 'rd.sens' (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018)

Placebo Tests

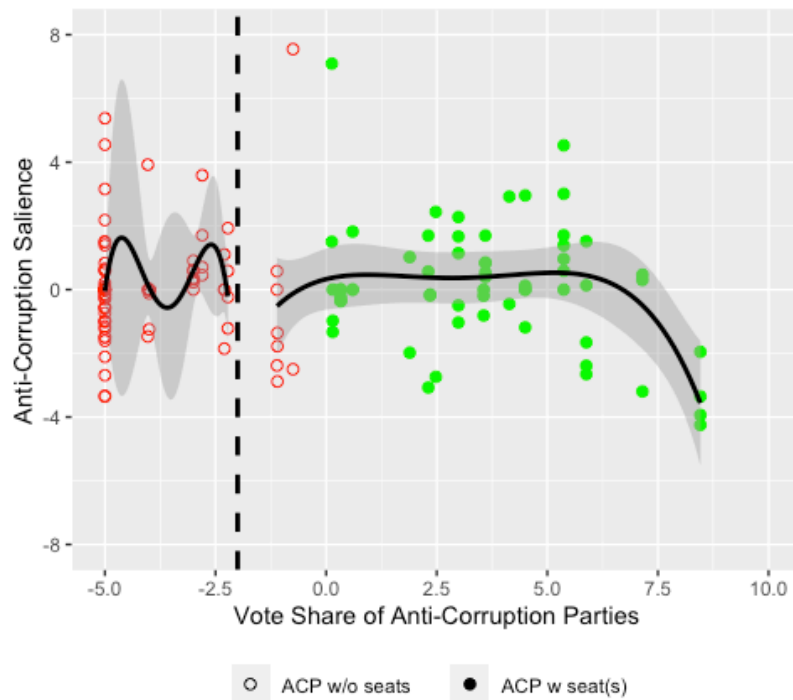


Figure A1: Established party salience shift on anti-corruption, arbitrary cut-off set to minus 2
Note: The solid lines plot the cubic fit and the shaded areas denote the 95 per cent confidence bands.
R: 'jump.plot' (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018)

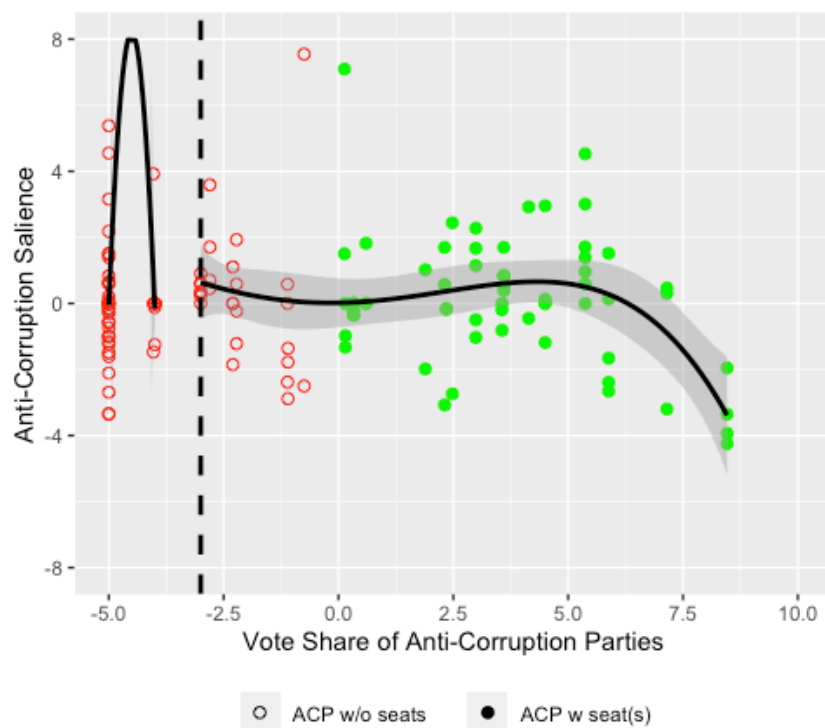


Figure A2: Established party salience shift on anti-corruption, arbitrary cut-off set to minus 3
Note: The solid lines plot the cubic fit and the shaded areas denote the 95 per cent confidence bands.
R: 'jump.plot' (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018)

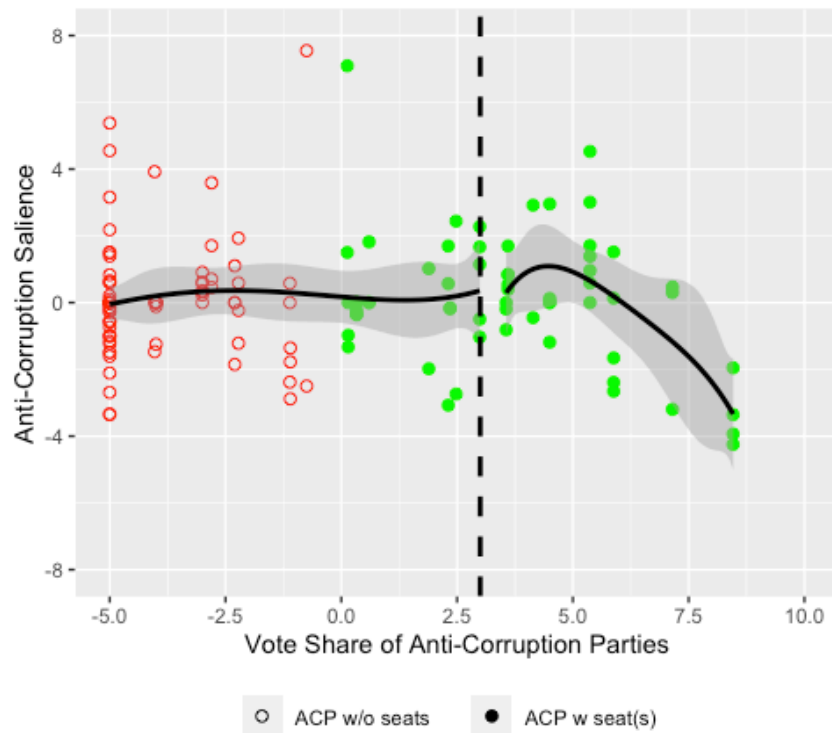


Figure A3: Established party salience shift on anti-corruption, arbitrary cut-off set to 3

Note: The solid lines plot the cubic fit and the shaded areas denote the 95 per cent confidence bands.

R: 'jump.plot' (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018)

Robustness test

TABLE A6 <i>Jackknife analysis</i>						
Country	Non-Parametric				Parametric	
	1st Order Polynomial		2nd Order Polynomial		3rd Order Polynomial	
	LATE	St. Err	LATE	St. Err	LATE	St. Err
Bulgaria	1.777*** [3.722]	0.23	-0.360 [3.722]	3.49	5.778**	2.66
Czech Republic	0.629 [3.943]	1.23	-7.304*** [3.943]	1.94	0.490	3.77
Estonia	0.132 [4.789]	1.13	0.647 [4.789]	1.92	0.376	0.91
Hungary	-1.354 [6.127]	1.02	-0.918 [6.127]	0.79	-1.912	2.01
Latvia	0.121 [4.947]	1.16	0.719 [4.947]	1.98	0.518	3.65
Lithuania	0.246 [4.503]	1.14	0.493 [4.503]	1.87	0.396	3.43
Poland	-0.759 [5.081]	1.54	0.635 [5.081]	0.77	0.782	3.90
Romania	0.115 [4.943]	1.14	0.734 [4.943]	1.99	0.580	3.53
Slovakia	0.199 [4.526]	1.14	0.523 [4.526]	1.87	-0.123	3.35
Slovenia	1.035 [5.183]	0.70	1.842 [5.183]	1.59	-0.771	2.58

Table A6: *Jack-knife analysis*

Note: Two-way clustered standard errors used. The bandwidths (Imbens and Kalyanaraman 2009) are denoted in brackets. * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

R: 'rd.base' (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018), 'magrittr' (Bache & Wickham 2016)

CMP data

Estimation only with CMP data will not produce valid results as the assumption of sufficient number of comparable observations around to the cutoff is violated. The CMP dataset only includes parties that have acquired seats in parliament, thus located above threshold exclusively. Due to lack of data on ACPs below the threshold, it was not possible to conduct a valid analysis solely based on CMP data. By combining CMP data with external sources to identify ACPs issues regarding reliability and validity must be attended to.

In order to control for measurement errors I conduct the analysis only with CMP identified ACPs. In this analysis, the counterfactual setting is violated because I am no longer comparing the effect of ACPs that, while located on different side of the threshold, are still similar. Instead I am now comparing outcomes in elections with ACP parliamentary presence to elections with a complete absence of an ACP. While valid inferences cannot be directly drawn from this analysis, it is still interesting to try to gather some information. Employing the eyeball approach on Figure A4 one can observe a drop in salience after the threshold. In contrast to preliminary analyses, this observation suggests support of H2 that CMP ACPs that manage to enter parliament will lead to a decrease in the salience that established parties assign to anti-corruption.

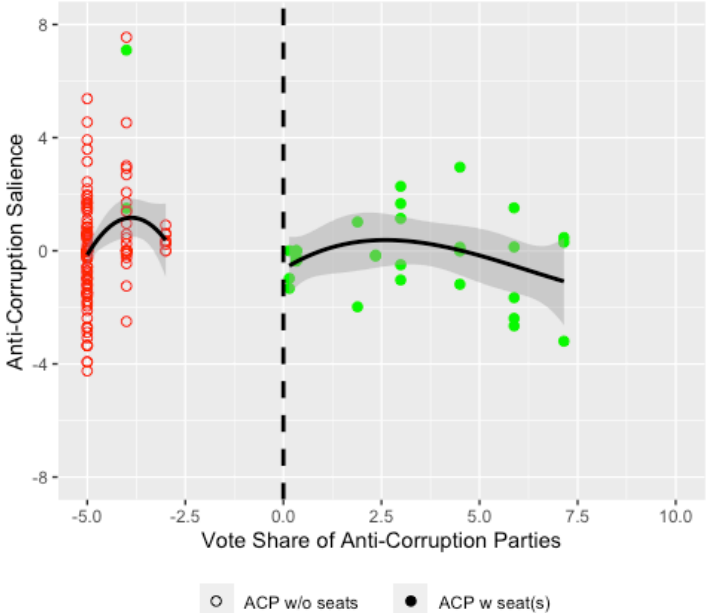


Figure A4: Established party salience shift on anti- corruption, CMP data exclusively
Note: The solid lines plot the cubic fit and the shaded areas denote the 95 per cent confidence bands.
R: 'jump.plot' (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018)

Table A7 also indicates a negative effect on anti-corruption issue salience for all polynomial estimations. The second polynomial function provides the strongest estimate of -1.111 and is significant on a 10 per cent level. While I emphasize that causal inferences about the effect cannot be drawn from this analysis, I wish to make some remarks. The contrast in the size of the coefficient response to CMP ACPs compared to the response estimated when including all identified ACP's may suggest that CMP ACPs poses a greater threat to established parties than do ACP's identified externally. Although what parties write in their manifestos are not necessarily public material, it proves a party's devotion to certain issues, considering the work behind writing such a document and the time it takes to change what has already been written. Hence, one can imagine that CMP ACP's represent a substantial threat to established parties in terms of institutionalization of the issue. In this analysis, CMP threat seem to initiate a response of avoidance among established parties, decreasing their issue salience.

TABLE A7 <i>Established Party Shift in Salience on Anti-Corruption, CMP data</i>						
LATE	St. Err	Bandwidth	Polynomial	Approach	$N < c$	$N \geq c$
-0.824	0.7239	4.865	1	Non-Parametric	39	44
-1.111*	0.5849	4.865	2	Non-Parametric	39	44
-0.373	0.5665	global	3	Parametric	74	93

Table A7: Established Party Shift in Salience on Anti-Corruption, CMP data

Note: Two-way clustered standard errors used. Bandwidth estimation according to Imbens and Kalyanaraman (2009). * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

R: 'rd.base' (Abou-Chadi & Krause 2018)

