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Daniel Lemmer

The Specificity Space Model

An Application to the Case of Spain

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Das Spezifizitätsmodell
Eine Anwendung auf das Beispiel Spanien

Der Philosophischen Fakultät
der Friedrich-Alexander-Universität
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vorgelegt von

Daniel Alexander Lemmer

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Preface

Dedicated to

my grandparents, Dietmar and Sigrid (R.I.P.),
and
my mother and sister,

and to the Hanns-Seidel Stiftung, which has made the writing of this
dissertation possible through its doctoral talent scholarship,
financed by funds from the Federal Ministry of Education and
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(Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF).

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1 Introduction

This dissertation¹ deals with one of the key concerns of political science research on democratic polities, namely how to approach, model and study the manner in which political parties compete with one another. On the one hand, while a number of different numerical measures such as party system fractionalization, the Effective Number of Parties (ENP) or volatility are frequently applied to the study of party systems, these and similar coefficients tell the researcher more about the effects of electoral results on party systems than they do about how parties compete over votes to produce these results in the first place. On the other hand, a number of abstract theories and models have been formulated in order to enable researchers to study the multi-faceted and complex nature of political party competition. Their theoretical and methodological limits and shortcomings have in turn provided the impulse for the emergence of a number of complementary and at times competing approaches. It is the contention of this thesis that, firstly, the evolution of these approaches has led to a somewhat accidental schism centred on the distinction between position issues and valence issues² and that, secondly, overcoming it has the potential to generate new insights into party competition.

Downs (1957) has formulated what is perhaps the best known model of party competition, in which voters' policy preferences are distributed along an economic left-right (LR) dimension and political parties attempt to maximize their share of the vote by formulating specific policies capable of appealing to the median voter. This model led to the development of the rational choice approach, which generated numerous highly abstract and formalized models which aimed to explain party behaviour under a set of more or less restrictive assumptions. Although Downs' model was criticized for a great many reasons, Stokes (1963) formulated the perhaps most important conceptual critique

¹ The writing of this dissertation was made possible by the Hanns-Seidel Stiftung's doctoral talent scholarship, financed by funds from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF).

² The terminology used to denote position issues varies in the literature and may also include issue positions, policy positions and the like. Here, the terminology used by Stokes (1963), who provided the best known distinction between position and valence issues, will be used. The meaning of these terms also varies, depending on the researcher. The precise definition by Stokes (1963) is discussed in section 2.2.1 on page 18 and, based on the specificity model, a novel operational definition will be provided in section 4.3 on page 107. See below for a basic discussion of these terms.

thereof. Stokes (1963) argued that party competition was driven not by specific and contrasting policy proposals, called position issues, but by vaguer valence issues, on which political parties adopt the same position.³

When the researchers Robertson (1976) and Budge and Farlie (1983) attempted to operationalize the policy based model by Downs (1957) by extracting position issues from electoral programs, they soon came to the conclusion that these documents simply did not contain a sufficiently large quantity of specific policies and that, even when they were mentioned, political parties almost never supplied contrasting positions on the same issues. In search of a method which would permit the placement of political parties in space by means of electoral program analysis, Robertson (1976) pioneered a new approach which – recalling Stokes (1963)⁴ – assumed that it was the relative emphasis on issues, rather than different positions on an issue, which mattered for party competition. This assumption permitted the coding of electoral programs in terms of the quantity of sentences with which political parties address different issues, thus circumventing the problems posed by a scarcity of specific policies. Subsequent work by the Manifesto Research Group (MRG), founded in 1979 and renamed Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) in 1989 (Volkens, Bara, and Budge 2009, p. 237), provided a more elaborate theoretical foundation – called saliency theory – on which to base this new method. Some 40 years after its foundation, CMP coding has generated a truly comprehensive dataset covering more than 50 countries from 1945 (Berlin Social Science Center 2021). Although mass or expert survey data on the position of parties in political space may be considered preferable by some, their costly nature, relatively infrequent execution and across country variation as well as the simple fact that the dead cannot be interviewed, but old electoral programs can be easily analysed, made the CMP an attractive data source and converted it into the major referent for political science research concerning spatial analysis of party behaviour.

In spite of its prevalence, saliency theory's assumptions as well as the method by which the data is generated have also increasingly come under critique for various reasons. What is perhaps most problematic from a substantive viewpoint, however, is that what the CMP ultimately measures – the relative

³ For example, instead of proposing particular contrasting environmental protection policies, parties position themselves in favour of environmental protection and against pollution.

⁴ See footnote 24 on page 22.

frequency of quasi-sentences⁵ with which particular issues are addressed in electoral programs – is conceptually much further removed from what Downs (1957) had aimed to measure by using policy positions, namely the ideological position of parties in a LR ideological space. Downs' (1957) postulated relation between a party's ideological position and the policies it proposes seems intuitively sensible. Thus, for instance, it seems reasonable to expect that the more a party is located to the left on an ideologically based LR dimension, the higher its proposal for a minimum salary increase is likely to be. The most glaring conceptual problem with this approach is of course how to convert specific policy proposals into ideological LR positions, especially when different policies are located on the same ideological dimension (such as, for example, minimum salary increases measured in Euro and parental leave measured in days). While this serious methodological challenge is difficult to overcome, the conceptual link between a party's ideology and its policy positions is much less tenuous than that between ideology and the frequency of issue mentions in electoral programs. For example, one may construct a scale ranging from a low to a high number of sentences concerning the labour market and assume that the more (less) a party talks about this policy field, the more left (right) the party is ideologically. The reason for this assumption could be that left wing parties' interventionist attitudes toward the labour market are likely to be viewed positively by a majority of voters (more job security, higher salaries etc.), whereas economically liberal parties' advocacy of flexibility is likely to be viewed negatively (less job security, lower salaries etc.). As a consequence, left wing parties may be expected to talk more about the labour market than do right wing parties. Although using the number of sentences concerning the labour market policy field as an indicator of a party's ideological LR position may result in a left wing party being located to the left of a right wing party, however, this does not mean that their actual location on that scale is an accurate reflection of their ideological position. This becomes all the clearer when one considers that what the party is actually saying in its electoral program – its content – is considered completely irrelevant to determining its ideological location. That quantity should be used instead of quality when nothing less than a party's ideological position is determined should be cause for concern, even more so when politicians' proclivity to say very little in many words is nothing short of notorious. Put differently, the rift between what is supposedly being measured – party ideology – and the indicator used to measure it – the number of sentences dedicated to a

⁵ The CMP does not code "natural" grammatical sentences, but text units called quasi-sentences, which are defined as containing one statement or message (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015, p. 6).

particular policy field – seems to be much larger than what Downs (1957) seems to have had in mind. While the approach of sentence counting may be acceptable within the strict confines of saliency theory (Budge 2001, p. 55),⁶ its major proponents have implicitly and explicitly inferred a party’s “classical” ideological position from saliency data (Laver 2001a, p. 73)

This thesis aims to provide an alternative method of electoral program analysis, which, based on a very simple model, both sidesteps the arguably insurmountable challenge of converting specific policies into an ideological LR unit of measurement, faced by Downs (1957), and the CMP’s problem of a lack of concern with electoral program content. The model is based on specificity, the degree to which a party commits itself to changing the status quo (SQ) by offering more or less specific issue positions.⁷ It overcomes the position issue-valence issue divide by dropping one of the two pairs of antagonistic elements associated with each – their conflictual and consensual nature respectively – and by maintaining the other two – the specificity of the former and the vagueness of the latter. Instead of being forced to either find specific policy positions or to completely abandon any concern for content in favour of counting quasi-sentences, the method identifies the different degrees of specificity with which issue positions⁸ are provided by political parties. The specificity model can thus be used to investigate a number of interesting questions, such as: Do parties vary in their level of specificity in general? Does specificity vary according to party type or different policy fields? Which variables influence a party’s degree of specificity? Is there a relationship between parties’ ideological positions and their specificity and, if so, is it positive or negative? In more qualitative terms, what are the actual policy position differences between parties? Going beyond the scope of this dissertation, is there a relationship between issue saliency and specificity? Is expected coalition formation related to specificity? To what extent are voters, the media and rival parties aware of the specific issue positions advocated in electoral programs? Overall, the method presented in this dissertation to code electoral programs provides researchers with a tool kit which permits them to systematically analyse any statement, code it according to specificity and conduct their own qualitative or quantitative analyses.

⁶ For a detailed discussion of saliency theory, see section 2.3 on page 30.

⁷ The inversion of the term position issue is intentional. While there are two kinds of issues, valence and position issues, when a party positions itself on an issue, it takes on an issue position. Also see section 2.1 on page 10.

⁸ See the preceding footnote.

In addition to providing the specificity model and method to analyse electoral programs, the second part of the dissertation conducts a case study of the Kingdom of Spain's party system from 2004 to 2019. The case study analyses the labour market, the center-periphery as well as the small-and-medium-sized business and self-employment (SMSE) policy fields of the biggest national parties, the conservative Partido Popular (PP), the social-democratic Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), the liberal center-right Ciudadanos (Cs), the extremely left wing Podemos and the extremely right wing Vox for the 2008, 2011, 2015 and April 2019 elections. In order to offer a first analysis of the role of specificity in party competition, three hypotheses are tested:

1. The more a party deviates from the political center, the more specific it will be.
2. The more a party is threatened by rival parties, the more specific it will be.
3. Parties that are certain of their electoral victory will be less specific than parties that are not certain of their electoral victory.

The Spanish case offers optimal conditions to test these hypotheses because Spain's party system has recently undergone important changes, thus exposing the country's two major parties to new and politically highly adverse conditions. Spain may indeed be considered a unique case due to the sheer number and diversity of parties which have managed to gain substantial national representation since the 2008 financial and economic crisis – one extreme left, one radical right and one liberal center-right party – as well as due to the massive shifts in electoral fortunes experienced by the PSOE and PP as a consequence of these developments. If one expects specificity to be a relevant phenomena to the study of party competition, then one would expect these extreme circumstances to help reveal its nature and relationship to other party system related variables.

Accordingly, this dissertation is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with the theoretical and methodological aspects related to the specificity model. Accordingly, chapter two discusses different theories and approaches to modelling party behaviour in political space, focusing especially on Downs (1957), saliency theory and election pledge studies, among others. Chapter three will present the conceptually simple specificity space model, which is then operationalized in chapter four. The latter describes the process by which the method was developed, provides a summary of the different

coding rules and justifies the subjective decisions made in order to assign specific statements to one rather than another specificity category.⁹

The second part of this dissertation commences by preparing the ground for the case study in chapter five, justifying the country, policy field and party selection and formulating and operationalizing the three hypotheses already stated above. Chapter six provides the historical and political context within which the subsequent analysis will unfold, thus providing an overview of the Spanish transition to democracy and subsequent party system developments until 2004. Moreover, chapter six provides a brief overview of the center-periphery and labour market policy fields,¹⁰ discussing their political significance and basic characteristics and development. The chapter concludes with a brief data overview.

The next four chapters all have the same structure. They commence by discussing the most important political and, where applicable, economic developments of the given legislature, briefly describe the nature of the respective national electoral campaigns and provide a summary of the introductions and structures of the respective electoral programs.¹¹ Thereafter, a descriptive data analysis provides an overview of the distribution of the different types of issue positions across parties and policy fields, briefly describes the most specific issue positions offered by the parties and discusses each of the three hypotheses with a focus only on the given election year. Chapter eleven, the last one prior to the conclusion, briefly summarizes the previous findings and provides a multivariate regression analysis of the variables mentioned in the hypotheses.

⁹ The coder manual, which contains the complete coding instructions, can be found in appendix A on page 397.

¹⁰ The SMSE policy field was included only as a control group, since it is assumed to be less ideologically charged and politically controversial than the labour market and center-periphery policy fields. As a control group, the interpretation of this policy field will be limited to discussing its specificity and not its policy content or the specific issue positions offered for it by the different parties. For more on this topic, see section 5.2 on page 126.

¹¹ As will become evident, the order of electoral program sections can be considered indicative of a party's political agenda.

Part I

Approaches to modelling party competition and the specificity space model

2 Theories and approaches to modelling party behaviour in political space

It is crucial for the social sciences that abstract theories and models can be operationalized in order to be able to apply them during empirical research endeavours to generate novel insights. Because the aim of this dissertation is to provide an alternative model and method to locate political parties in space, this chapter discusses both the theories and the methods developed by other researchers to this end. The specificity model, to be presented in the next chapter, is only very basic in nature, however, and has no ambition to be considered a theory. As a result, the theoretical elaborations of the authors which will be dealt with subsequently will only be discussed insofar as they are directly related to locating parties in space. Thus, for example, theoretical treatments on the nature and role of voters are entirely omitted, because they are a different kind of actor and play no role in the specificity model presented subsequently. As a consequence, the focus lies mostly on method, since it is in this area that, as will be shown below, the greatest difficulties arise.

It is especially with the challenge of operationalization in mind that this chapter will make two key arguments. Firstly, that it is (probably) not possible to translate a party's specific policies into a metric¹ spatial location on an ideological LR dimension. Secondly, Stokes' (1963) critique of the groundbreaking contribution made by Downs (1957) and the method with which Downs (1957) was ultimately operationalized by the CMP has led to an imprecise theoretical distinction between position and valence issues. Accordingly, this chapter will commence by offering a brief introductory discussion of why spatial models are important, what role spatial perceptions play in political reality, how the dimensionality of party politics and issues has evolved and which different methods to obtain data on spatial party locations, such as expert surveys and electoral program analysis, exist. Thereafter, a prior spatial models – for which the dimensions and the issues which constitute them are predetermined – will be discussed, commencing with the text which has

¹ It is possible to distinguish between three levels of measurement of variables, listed from lowest to highest: the nominal, consisting of unordered categories (e.g. the variable nationality, with each country being a category); the ordinal, consisting of ordered categories (e.g. the variable age, consisting of the categories young, middle-aged, old); lastly, the metric, in which the distances between the values of a variable are meaningful (e.g. age in years). Generally speaking, the higher the measurement level, the more information is provided by the variable and the more complex the permitted mathematical operations.

provided the point of departure for all subsequently presented approaches as well as the model provided here, namely the seminal work by Downs (1957). Thereafter, the approach adopted by Janda (1980), who attempted to use especially his informed qualitative judgement to determine party locations in an ordinal space, will be discussed. Next, attention is turned to inductive spatial models – those generated *ex post* by data analysis – commencing with Robertson (1976), whose work initiated both the development of saliency theory as well as issue ownership research. Saliency theory and its accompanying method will be discussed quite extensively, given that the CMP’s electoral program based data has become – as mentioned in the introduction – *the* source for locating parties in political space. Moreover, it was the CMP which utilized the somewhat blurry distinction between position and valence issues, famously provided by Stokes (1963), thereby producing an imprecise conceptual schism between position and valence issues. Thereafter, it will be shown how researchers have responded to this position and valence issue divide, either indirectly by conceptualizing valence issues differently, or directly by trying to combine valence and issue positions, although the latter kind of approach has usually attempted to patch up rather than to eliminate the imprecise distinction between the two concepts. Last but not least, the mandate theory’s election pledge approach will be discussed. Although it offers no spatial model, its concern with extracting pledges – which could be considered similar to Downsian policies – from electoral programs makes this sub-discipline a potentially important contributor to the development of an alternative approach to that of the CMP.

2.1 Spatial models, dimensions and issues

Before commencing with a general discussion of the relevance of spatial models, it is necessary to briefly provide working definitions for some of the terminology to be used subsequently. The term *issue*, the meaning of which is often not defined in the literature (Dolezal et al. 2014, p. 60, Guinaudeau and Persico 2014, p. 5), is for now considered to simply denote “[a]n important topic or problem for debate or discussion” (Oxford Dictionary 2021). An issue can thus – for the purpose at hand – be more or less loosely defined and may encompass entire policy fields, like the welfare state, or particular topics, like long-term unemployment. A position issue is an issue on which parties position themselves differently, meaning that, at the very least, they reveal contrasting positive and negative attitudes towards it. A valence issue is a position issue on which all parties position themselves in the same way. When a party positions itself on an issue, it provides an issue position. Whether

this position is the same as or different to the position of other parties does not matter in order for it to be considered an issue position. Additionally, it is possible for issue positions to be either vague, stating a party's explicit or implicit general support for or opposition to an issue, or to propose more specific (Downsian type) policies. Although these working definitions are possibly unorthodox and somewhat incomplete, they do provide a point of departure for the subsequent discussion, by creating a shared terminology to discuss Downs (1957), Stokes (1963) and the CMP. Many of the questions raised by these definitions will be dealt with in the next two chapters.

A set of issues gives rise to a political dimension if parties differ systematically on the positions they take or the policies they offer on them. That they differ systematically means that when they provide a particular position on a given issue, they are likely to also provide a similar position on another somehow related one. For example, a party which favours labour unions is also expected to oppose labour market precariousness. When parties differ systematically in their positions on a set of issues, the resultant dimension can be said to structure the political space, since parties can be viewed as positioning themselves on or vis-à-vis these dimensions. Depending on how issues relate to one another and how parties differ on them, a political space may be one, two or multidimensional. For example, in addition to the LR dimension, politics in western countries is also often structured by the libertarian-authoritarian (LA) dimension, to be discussed in greater detail below. In order to be considered truly two-dimensional, it is required that not all parties that cluster on one end of a particular dimension also cluster on one end of the other dimension, since both could otherwise be collapsed into one.

When a party is located in political space by means of its issue positions, it is assumed, implicitly or explicitly, that this location tells the observer more than just where that party is located in some abstract space. More particularly, it is assumed that a party's location tells the observer something about a party's ideological position. "Ideology" is a term that is inherently difficult to define, given its abstract nature. Common elements of the definition of the political science usage of the term is that it is a coherent and relatively stable set of beliefs or values (Knight 2006). As a consequence, when the term is used in reference to spatial models, ideology is usually assumed to exercise a restraining effect on the positions a party adopts on different issues. Although authors such as Robertson (1976, pp. 64–6), Budge (1987, p. 27) and Klingemann (1998, p. 186) provide somewhat similar direct and indirect definitions of ideology, Downs (1957) arguably provides one of the best thought out conceptualization of the relationship between a party's ideology and its issue positions. Downs

(1957, p. 96) defines ideology as “a verbal image of the good society and of the chief means of constructing such a society.” To Downs (1957), ideologies must be internally coherent and consistent with concrete policies if they are to serve their electoral function, which is to provide information short cuts for voters and parties alike. “In order to be rational short cuts, ideologies must be integrated with policies closely enough to form accurate indicators of what each party is likely to do in the future...otherwise they are not effective signals and the citizens...will not use them” (Downs 1957, p. 102). Once ideologies are offered by parties, their subsequent development depends on the policies the parties offer as well as on electoral competition between parties (Downs 1957, p. 102). “When policies change significantly, ideologies must also change...Thus whatever factors influence the development of policies also influence the development of ideologies” (Downs 1957, p. 102). Similarly to Downs (1957) and (some) approaches to locating parties in space (Gabel and Huber 2000, pp. 95–6), it is thus assumed here that a party derives its issue positions from its ideology, “a verbal image of the good society and of the chief means of constructing...[it]” (Downs 1957, p. 96). Ideology thus has a restraining effect on a party’s choice of issue positions in political space, leading it to provide a more or less coherent set of issue positions. While it was necessary to clarify the relation between ideology and issue positions, since the ultimate aim of placing the latter in space is to determine a party’s overall ideological position, the concept of ideology will play only a minor role in the specificity model and is thus of secondary importance.

While it is possible to conceptualize party behaviour through issue positions located vis-à-vis political dimensions, one may wonder why one should in fact do so. Theorists have usually answered this question by pointing to both to the intuitive nature and utility of these models to political science research. Concerning intuitiveness, the mere existence of distinct political labels which denote a particular set of contrasting issue positions invites for the conceptualization of a political space.² For example, if one expects that left parties favour income equality and one left political party proposes a 10 percent minimum salary increase while another proposes to double the minimum salary, an observer may easily come to the conclusion that the latter party is more politically left than the former. Because comparisons between parties invite for a distinction not just of category, but also of degree, it may seem only logical to postulate a political dimension with two extreme points and in relation to

² The political terms “left” and “right” originate from the seating arrangement of political “parties” in the French Constituent Assembly of 1789 (Laver 2001b, p. 4).

which parties are located.³ Moreover, spatial conceptualizations are attractive to quantitative researchers because more complex statistical analyses can “best [be] thought of as dealing with the relationship between points in space” (Robertson 1976, p. 56). Regarding the aforementioned usefulness to political science research, spatial models provide a mechanism to reduce complex or large amounts of data to a single or a relatively small number of points in space for each party, thus permitting researchers to place different parties in a common space both at a given moment in or across time as well as within and across countries (Laver 2001b, pp. 1–3, Mair 2001, pp. 10–11). Researchers can then use spatial models “in theoretical arguments and empirical tests on such topics as macro-economic policy-making, legislative institutional choice, electoral competition, voting behaviour, political representation, and cabinet stability” (Gabel and Huber 2000, p. 94). Spatial models are thus indispensable to key concerns of political science research from “party competition, coalition-building and policy outcomes” (Jahn 2010, p. 2) to “the working and effectiveness of representative government” (Mair 2001, pp. 10–11).⁴

Not only are spatial models useful to political scientists, but party ideology and parties’ spatial locations have also been found to be meaningful concepts for mass publics in a great many countries. Contrary to initial findings in the 1950s and 1960s⁵ and notwithstanding important national differences (Kitschelt and Staf 1990, p. 212), a large number of subsequent studies have shown that:

“Left and right constitute symbols and superissues that have the capacity to enable even citizens with moderate levels of information to relate their own political preferences to the positions they assign to parties in a one-dimensional left-right (L-R) space. By and large, citizens vote for the party that has the greatest affinity to their own position on the L-R scale. Moreover, L-R self-placements are one moderately reliable predictor of citizens’ issue positions” (Kitschelt and Staf 1990, p. 211).⁶

³ For similar arguments, see Robertson (1976, pp. 55–7) and Laver (2001b, pp. 3–4).

⁴ Similarly, Klingemann (1998, p. 184).

⁵ The major studies which produced these findings were Philip Converse’s *The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics* (1964) and *The American Voter* (1980) by Campbell et al., which concerned the United States (US) electorate in the 1950s and 1960s, thus being restricted to both a very specific place and time (Nie and Andersen 1974, p. 543).

⁶ Similarly, Laponce (1970), Blais, Blake, and Dion (1993, pp. 43–44), Klingemann (1972), Klingemann (1998, p. 191) and Spoon, Hobolt, and de Vries (2014, pp. 366–7). For an

Not only do (most) voters find it useful and are able to think of political parties more or less spatially, but “[p]olitical parties exploit this simplification process and seek to communicate with voters in this fashion in order to gain support in the competitive context of elections” (Klingemann 1998, p. 191). Moreover, although some researchers have argued that a LR scale “is possibly no more than a simple verbal convention without concrete meaning or substantive content” (van der Brug 1999, p. 148) and that left-right positioning is more the consequence of partisanship than issue preferences, there is evidence that a majority of voters has a limited but existing awareness of issues (RePass 1971, p. 400, Huber 1989) despite cross-national variation (Kitschelt and Staf 1990, p. 212) and a limited substantive understanding of the terms left and right (Evans, A. Heath, and Lalljee 1996, p. 98).

The importance of the classical LR dimension and political issues have not been unaffected in their nature and importance by the passage of time. Lipset and Rokkan’s *Party Systems and voter alignments* (1967) explained the relative stability of national party systems after the Second World War through the existence of country specific conflicts – between capital and labour, the countryside and industry, church and state as well as the center and periphery – which resulted in the formation of at times cross-cutting cleavages. In order to appeal to particular groups of voters, parties actively positioned themselves vis-à-vis these cleavages, thus providing them with an electorally relatively loyal and socio-economically distinct group of voters. The ability of democratic polities to resolve or at least alleviate the acuity of many of the aforementioned conflicts, the creation of the welfare state, the greater material wealth produced by the capitalist economy, accompanied by the decline of the working class and the rise of the service sector, however, eroded the relationship between socio-economic group membership and party vote and was accompanied by the emergence of a series of new issues such as gender equality, minority rights and environmental protection. These issues in turn contributed to the emergence of a new political dimension, identified especially by Ronald Inglehart and Scott C. Flanagan and dubbed post-materialist or libertarian respectively.⁷ These socio-economic changes and the rise of

overview of studies on the importance of ideology on party choice, see Eijk and Franklin (2009, p. 254).

⁷ The debate between Inglehart and Flanagan was concerned especially with how different issues were grouped into political dimensions in order to explain the changes which had taken place at the individual voter and the societal level and its knock-on effects on politics (Inglehart and Flanagan 1987, pp. 1290–1304). In contrast to Inglehart, Flanagan not only provided a libertarian, but also an authoritarian value scale, which included “law and order...fighting crime...respect for authority, discipline and dutifulness, patriotism and

new issues led to both structural dealignment at the mass level as well as a decline in party identification and party membership at the individual level. The voters' less predictable behaviour required parties to focus to a greater extent on issue competition, by reaffirming the importance of their traditional issues and positioning themselves on new ones, and led to a limited but partial decline in the importance of the classical LR dimension (Mair, Peter, Müller, Wolfgang C., and Plasser, Fritz 2004, pp. 1–17, Dalton 1996, Inglehart and Flanagan 1987, Flanagan and Lee 2003, Piurko, Schwartz, and Davidov 2011, Hellwig 2008, Steenbergen and Marks 2007, Eijk and Franklin 2009, pp. 95–100).

Having established the usefulness and relevance of spatial approaches to party ideology and competition, another important question is where the data to place parties in political space comes from in the first place. Mair (2001) discusses a number of potential sources, three of which are focused on the judgement of the researcher in the singular or plural. The researcher can, firstly, place parties into ordinal categories based on a priori judgements concerning a party's core identity and origin (such as social-democrats and conservatives); secondly, immerse him- or herself in literature on parties and a party system and subsequently deduct a party's (supposedly metric) spatial position score; or, thirdly, conduct expert surveys utilizing either one of the two previously stated approaches (see below). Placing parties in ordinal space is of limited usefulness when its categories are broad, however, because party positions are likely to be invariant across time and it may be impossible to differentiate between parties in the same general category (Mair 2001, pp. 12–14). The usefulness of the latter two approaches depends largely on the methodological sophistication of the undertaking.⁸ Expert surveys are preferable insofar as various placements of the same party by different experts may remove individual level bias and result in greater reliability. Despite these advantages, one key criticism⁹ of this approach is that “experts base their

intolerance for minorities...and support for traditional religious and moral values” (Inglehart and Flanagan 1987, p. 1305). Inglehart, however, conflated the materialist economic items with some of the items from Flanagan's authoritarian scale (Inglehart and Flanagan 1987, p. 1305). Subsequent research confirmed that, in the majority of countries, politics was best described by the existence of two political dimensions which could, with greater or lesser precision, be interpreted as consisting of an economic LR and a value based AL dimension.

⁸ For a description of the development of expert surveys, see Budge (2000, pp. 103–5). For an example which takes the critique by Mair (2001) into consideration, see Steenbergen and Marks (2007).

⁹ Mair (2001, p. 24) and Mair (1999, p. 16) describe the advantages of expert opinions as the avoidance of popular misconceptions (compared to mass surveys) and bias (compared

judgements on a combination of often unconsciously imbibed sources such as past coalition behaviour, party programmes and ideology, and both mass and elite perceptions. Expert judgements are therefore not really an alternative to...other approaches; instead, they reflect a crude synthesis...filtered through the perceptions of a well-read and intelligent observer” (Mair 2001, p. 25).

The preceding critique could of course also be levelled at another major source of party placements, namely mass surveys on ideological party positions, since such party placements are likely to be biased and “impressionistic” syntheses of a wide range of different aspects concerning party behaviour.¹⁰ A very practical problem concerning expert, mass as well as elite surveys¹¹ is that they are relatively time intensive, expensive and are, as a consequence, usually carried out infrequently and often only within particular countries. For example, one of the best known expert surveys precisely because of its international scope is the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, which has, since 1999, asked experts to place parties on the economic LR and value based LA axes (Bakker et al. 2015, p. 144). The survey has only been carried out in 1999, 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014 (University of North Carolina’s Chapel Hill’s Center for European Studies 2021), making it not only impossible to answer questions pertaining to earlier time periods, but also near impossible to answer questions requiring data at shorter time intervals, or at particular points in time, such as just before or after national elections. Last but not least, surveys cannot be carried out retrospectively, given that the longer ago the event, the more a person is likely to forget and to reinterpret the past through the prism of the present (provided a sufficiently large number of individuals are even still available to be interviewed).

Another approach to generate spatial data and which has the potential to solve several of the aforementioned problems is electoral program analysis. Coding electoral programs permits generating data retroactively and across a great many countries, at more or less regular time intervals and at points in time – elections – which are likely to reflect key political developments in the respective countries. Moreover, provided the method by which positions are

to political elite surveys) and that party positions are likely to be based on current party behaviour rather than assumptions derived from their past behaviour. See especially Mair (2001, pp. 19–25) for more specific reasons for being wary of expert surveys. McDonald, S. M. Mendes, and Kim (2007, p. 12) show that expert surveys do not reflect party position changes sufficiently and are insensitive to cross-national variation.

¹⁰ More specific problems include non-response, faulty response and the tendency to hide extreme positions (Daalder 1984, p. 95).

¹¹ See footnote 9 mentioning elite surveys as well.

derived is made explicit and is found to be reliable, subjectivity and personal bias can be minimized and coding results can be both checked and questioned on objective grounds. Thus, some, like Dinas and Gemenis (2010, p. 428), argue that electoral program data is more impartial than expert surveys and opinion polls. Moreover, electoral programs are also a useful source for party placement for more qualitative reasons as well, as Robertson (1976, p. 72) argues:

“[C]entral party manifestos...are the only direct and clear statements of party policy available to the electorate and directly attributable to the party as such. Though it is...unlikely that many voters read them themselves, they are the source and official backing for any impression that the electorate may get of what the parties stand for...they are the background for any mass media discussion of party policy, they are discussed and represented by the speeches of party leaders, and they are...the basic source for the campaigns of the constituency candidates...[P]arty leaders themselves take manifestos seriously.”

These arguments, which have been made in a similar fashion by various other authors,¹² suggest that electoral programs can provide a more objective, accessible and manageable alternative to individual researchers' estimates or survey based approaches.¹³

Having discussed spatial models in general terms, the following sections will turn to a more detailed discussion of different approaches to modelling party positions in political space. Overall, it is possible to distinguish between two particular types of models, namely *a priori* and inductive ones. In *a priori* spaces, the theorist deduces the political dimensions and the issues they consist of from theory or substantive knowledge on party systems. Thereafter, the theorist places parties in this space according to their positions on these issues. *A priori* approaches have been important because “argument[s] about the policy content of left-right ideology -i.e., the specific policy issues that define the left-right dimension...have had an enormous impact on how we think about the substance of left and right” (Gabel and Huber 2000, p. 95). In

¹² See, for example, Budge and Farlie (1983, p. 131) and Klingemann, Hofferbert, and Budge (1994, p. 21).

¹³ There is even some evidence that voters' perceptions of parties' LR positions are strongly linked to the parties' positions derived from electoral program analysis (van der Brug 1999, p. 156). Nonetheless, Bakker et al. (2015, pp. 149–50) find that party positions provided by experts are more similar to the evaluations of politicians and voters than to CMP manifesto data.

inductive political space, the researcher makes no prior assumptions about how issues cluster to give rise to political dimensions or how many dimensions a political space consists of (Laver, K. Benoit, and Garry 2003, pp. 312–3).¹⁴ Inductive approaches thus consider “ideology...as a ‘constraint’ on policy positions, such that positions on a broad range of issues are related to each other in consistent and identifiable ways...[reducing] differences in party positions over many policies to differences in party positions on a single [or a small number of] dimension[s]” (Gabel and Huber 2000, p. 95). Although, as Laver, K. Benoit, and Garry (2003, p. 313)¹⁵ point out, the difference between a priori and inductive models should not be overstated, this distinction can be useful to provide for a more systematic discussion of spatial models. As such, the following section will discuss a priori spatial models first, whereas the subsequent section will discuss the inductive model employed by the CMP.

2.2 A priori political space

This section will discuss the theoretical contribution of Downs (1957) and Stokes’ (1963) famous critique thereof as well as, by way of example, an attempt to operationalize his model by Janda (1980).

2.2.1 Downs (1957) and Stokes (1963)

As Robertson (1976, p. 55) points out, “[what] Anthony Downs and his imitators have done since 1957 on spatial modelling of party competition is to take seriously a metaphor that is quite basic to our conceptualization of political competition.” This metaphor, originating from the French Revolution,¹⁶ was that party politics could be understood spatially in left-right terms. By modelling electoral politics in this manner, Downs (1957) “moved the debate on parties away from party types to focus on party tactics...[and] theory which would go beyond the specifics of particular parties in particular countries at

¹⁴ Using factor analysis, however, the latter is done *ex post*, since the researcher can decide how many factors or dimensions (s)he wishes to extract.

¹⁵ Laver, K. Benoit, and Garry (2003, p. 313) state: “[A] purely inductive spatial analysis of the policy positions...is impossible. The analyst has no way of interpreting the derived spaces without imposing at least some a priori assumptions about their dimensionality and the substantive meaning of the underlying policy dimensions, whether doing this explicitly or implicitly [...] The crucial distinction between the two approaches concerns the point at which the analyst makes the substantive assumptions that allow policy spaces to be interpreted in terms of the real world of politics.”

¹⁶ See footnote 2 on page 12.

particular times” (Klingemann 1998, p. 185), providing a crucial impulse for the development of *a priori* spatial models, saliency theory as well as issue ownership and mandate theory research. More specifically, in his seminal work,¹⁷ Downs (1957) proposed a spatial model in which voters are distributed over an economic LR dimension according to their policy preferences and parties attempt to win the support of the median voter by offering that policy position closest to him or her in order to win elections. Although Downs (1957) provided a much more elaborate model concerned especially with the behaviour of parties and voters, providing a series of formal rational choice assumptions and integrating concepts such as information costs, utility maximisation and uncertainty, the focus of this section is exclusively on how Downs (1957) proposed to locate political parties on his ideological dimension(s) and how these theoretical elaborations could be operationalized.

Downs (1957) constructed, “for simplicity, a naive one-dimensional model of political conflict” (Robertson 1976, p. 26) in which parties are located on a metrically¹⁸ scaled LR economic dimension which shows “the percentage of the economy it wants left in private hands” (Downs 1957, p. 116). Since a spatial model in which a party’s ideological position is determined only by a single policy is very limited, Downs (1957) built on this simple model by permitting parties to offer various policies on the same LR dimension and discussed the implications of this change. Now, a single party could offer various policy positions, which the party may spread out to cover the whole LR space. As a consequence, the policy positions of different parties may overlap, since “in reality each party is leftish on some issues and rightish on others” (Downs 1957, p. 116).¹⁹ From these individual party positions, an average of “the party’s net position on this scale is a weighted average of the positions of all the particular policies it upholds” (Downs 1957, p. 133). The average is weighted because of the changed perception of the party by the voter. “The wider a party’s policy spread is, the more viewpoints the party’s ideology and platform will appeal to. But a wider spread also weakens the strength of the appeal... Thus voter’s judgement of each party becomes two-dimensional: he must balance its net position (the mean of its policies) against its spread (their variance) in deciding whether he wants to support it” (Downs 1957, p. 133). Moreover,

¹⁷ His aim was to formulate “a generalized yet realistic behaviour rule for a rational government similar to the rules traditionally used for rational consumers and producers” (Downs 1957, p. 3) in economic theory, based on the works of his intellectual predecessors Harold Hotelling and Arthur Smithies.

¹⁸ See footnote 1 on page 9 on the different levels of measurement.

¹⁹ If there is substantial policy overlap between two parties, the extreme party positions should be indicative of where a party ought to be placed spatially (Downs 1957, p. 135).

voters now have different evaluative schemes to determine their utility income, weighing the value of each policy differently. Since these considerations are related to the role of the voter in Downs (1957), the weighted nature of the average is ignored.

The key problem with an operationalization of this model is of course how to determine the location of particular policies on a single dimension and how to interpret these locations in a classical LR manner. In his one dimensional model example, Downs (1957) uses percentages as a unit of measure for his political scale, which is particularly useful because percentages range from 0 to 100 and can be calculated easily from different units of measurement (such as monetary amounts, the number of persons, time periods etc.). When Down's (1957) model is viewed solely as a conceptualization of parties' attempts to offer policies relative to the median voter and it is assumed that the parties' and voters' preferences can be determined, the privatization example does seem to work.²⁰ When these policy positions are interpreted as being indicative of parties' ideological positions on a LR dimension, something that Downs (1957) clearly seems to have intended and to which his definition of ideology (see above) alludes, however, numerous difficulties emerge. Concerning the privatization example, for instance, it seems difficult to determine what a centrist position in this space could possibly be. To assume that a party that proposes a 50 percent privatization of the economy is an ideologically centrist one is, at least from today's perspective, hardly tenable. In other words, the center of the privatization policy dimension is not equivalent to the center of the classical LR dimension. Additionally, it is also clear that the policy dimension's range and minimum and maximum values are not analogous to the LR dimension. Say a party suddenly proposes a five percent decrease in the percentage of the private economy (i.e. a five percent increase in nationalization), which is very substantial in absolute monetary terms. Such a change in policy should translate into a clear ideological shift of the given party on the LR scale. On the privatization dimension ranging from 0 to 100, however, the party shifts only by a small amount (one-twentieth of the range) to the left. The problem is that, as of today, most if not all parties are likely to cluster relatively closely around the actual percentage of privatization in a given country, making it necessary to "rescale" the privatization dimension to a smaller range to approximate what one would expect to see if this policy

²⁰ This is, in and of itself, of course a rather far fetched assumption, since it seems unlikely that a party would attempt to quantify, or provide sufficient data to permit others to quantify, the overall percentage of an economy it would like to see privatized. Moreover, voters may not hold such precise opinions on the matter.

were placed in ideological terms on a LR scale.²¹ There is, however, no hard and fast rule to achieve this conversion and the process is, accordingly, likely to be arbitrary and subjective.²²

As soon as other kinds of policies are added, additional complications arise. One could, for instance, attempt to place parties' policy positions on a more modern issue, parental leave measured in days, on that same LR dimension. The first problem is that calculating percentages is somewhat more difficult, because whereas the percentage of the economy to be privatized could hypothetically be determined by dividing the share of the economy to be privatized, measured in GDP, by a country's total GDP, no conceptually similar total is available for parental leave. Parental leave could hypothetically range from 0 days to 18 years, the age at which a person is legally considered an adult in most countries, or from 0 to 11 years, the age of puberty, but such totals would be arbitrary and excessively large given that parental leave is usually limited to a few weeks or months. Although some solution may be found, such as choosing the maximum parental leave available within a particular group of countries, the problem is that the location of a party on this scale then becomes highly dependent on some more or less arbitrarily chosen minimum and maximum values. Moreover, it may now become desirable to place both a party's proposal for the share of the economy to be privatized and its proposal for parental leave in days on the same dimension. If both policies have somehow been converted into percentages, it would have to be assured that the percentage changes of these policies, which are now interpreted as shifts on the LR dimension, are roughly compatible, since a five percent increase in parental leave can hardly be considered ideologically equivalent to a five percent increase in nationalization. Provided even this challenge could be surmounted, how would one place qualitative policy positions, such as the insertion of the right to housing into a country's constitution, on such a

²¹ For instance, one could reduce the range to a 75 to 100 percent range, a five percent shift thus being substantially larger (one-fifth), and rescale these values to run from 0 to 100.

²² One may attempt to work around this problem by, for example, considering the center of the space to be determined by the current percentage of the privatized economy and then positioning the parties vis-à-vis this central position in terms of their deviation from it. Although such an approach would make this space highly contingent on the given economic privatization SQ, this solution may still be considered somewhat acceptable. While this solves the problem of the center of the space, it does not, however, solve the range problem, among others.

dimension?²³ Although this discussion may seem somewhat unsophisticated, it illustrates the very real problems encountered when one attempts to operationalize Downs' (1957) model in terms of locating parties on an ideological LR dimension by means of their policy proposals. Expressed in more abstract terms, it does not seem possible to convert different policies into a common metric unit of measurement (such as percentages) which is indicative of a party's LR ideological position. The reason is simply that the unit of measure "ideology" or "leftness" and "rightness" does not exist.

Although Downs' (1957) model was heavily critiqued, the majority of these criticism targeted its highly abstract and formalized nature and supposedly unrealistic assumptions. Perhaps the most conceptually challenging critique of Downs (1957) was offered by Stokes (1963), however. Among other things, Stokes (1963, p. 373) differentiated between valence issues, those which "merely involve the linking of the parties with some condition that is positively or negatively valued by the electorate", and position issues, those defined as "government actions [selected] from a set of alternatives." His critique was potentially devastating to Downs (1957), because Stokes (1963) claimed that not position issues – assumed to be similar to Downsian policy proposals – but valence issues often played a crucial role in elections. Thus, "[s]ince the preferences of parties and voters must be distributed over an ordered set of policy alternatives for the spatial model to work, valence-issues plainly do not fit the spatial scheme" (Stokes 1963, p. 374). This critique by Stokes (1963) was of great importance insofar as it is likely to have inspired the novel approach developed by Robertson (1976) to determine party positions in space, to be discussed in greater detail below, and who laid the foundation of saliency theory and its associated research.²⁴ This distinction was also crucial, however, because its imprecise nature haunts some areas of spatial model related party research to this day. In order to explore this imprecision, it is necessary to analyse and discuss the terms valence and position issue, as used by Stokes (1963), more closely.

Valence issues, as discussed by Stokes (1963, p. 373), have a number of characteristics. Firstly, they aim to link a party "with some condition that is positively or negatively valued" (Stokes 1963, p. 373). Secondly, "[i]f the condition is

²³ It is not difficult to come up with many other specific as well as more general problems, perhaps the most important among the latter being the likely very different interpretations of the degree of "leftness" and "rightness" of policies across time and countries.

²⁴ Saliency theory assumes that issue competition between parties is non-positional and thus based on valence issues. Robertson (1976, p. 61), who pioneered the CMP's methodological approach, engages with the critique of Downs (1957) by Stokes (1963) in his work.

past or present...the argument turns on where the credit or blame ought to be assigned...if the condition is a future or potential one, the argument turns on which party, given possession of the government, is the more likely to bring it about" (Stokes 1963, p. 373). Thirdly, valence issues "do not involve even a shrivelled set of two alternatives of government action. The corruption issue of 1952 did not find the Democrats taking one position and the Republicans another. And neither were some voters in favor of corruption while others were against it" (Stokes 1963, p. 373). Similarly, in the US 1960 presidential election, "[b]oth parties and all voters...were for high [US] prestige. The only issue was whether or not America had it under the existing Republican Administration" (Stokes 1963, p. 373). Fourthly, valence issues tend to be vague, while position issues tend to be more specific, as becomes evident by the following quotation:

"It is of course true that position-issues lurk behind many valence-issues. [...] The successful Republican treatment of this issue was to link the unfinished Korean conflict with the fact of Democratic presidents during two world wars to hang the 'war party' label on the Democrats. However, it is not hard to find alternatives of government action that might have provided a focus to the debate. For example, the controversy might have centered on how aggressive a policy toward the Red Chinese forces America should adopt. Should the United States carry the war to Manchuria, using all weapons? prosecute the war more vigorously within Korea? negotiate a settlement on the basis of existing conditions...? or pull back to Japan?" (Stokes 1963, p. 373).

The quotation above suggests that the Republicans were against the Korean War in general, but did not state how they would translate this position into a particular policy, such as an all out attack, negotiations, or retreat. Valence issues thus seem to be unspecific about what a party wishes to do in the future, whereas position issues, as "government actions [selected] from a set of alternatives" (Stokes 1963, p. 373), are specific. Fifthly, as is acknowledged in the previous quote as well, a valence issue can become a position issue and thus also implicitly a position issue a valence one.

The second characteristic of valence issues provided by Stokes (1963) seems to restrict them to particular kinds of statements, namely claims of credit, attributions of blame and party competence to deliver. Researchers which have decided to employ the term valence issue subsequently have often primarily either focused on the competence dimension, such as the issue ownership approach, or simply dropped this characteristic, like the CMP. At first glance, the kinds of valence issue statements proposed by Stokes (1963) may even cast

doubt on whether parties position themselves on valence issues at all, since the statement by party A that “party B is to blame for high unemployment” only shows indirectly that party A is against unemployment. Nonetheless, that valence issues are positional is also made very clear, as indicated by the third characteristic identified above. All parties were against corruption, all voters for US prestige. Based on the first criteria, that valence issues aim to link a party “with some condition that is positively or negatively valued” (Stokes 1963, p. 373), it would seem somewhat arbitrary to not consider a statement like “We must reduce environmental pollution”, on which all parties may agree and which associates the party with a positive condition (a healthy environment), a valence issue, just because it does not praise the party itself, accuse the other of being responsible for pollution, or claim that it is particularly competent in this policy field. It should be kept in mind that the critique delivered by Stokes (1963) was concerned with political discourses in general and the role of valence issues in them, rather than an attempt to deliver a catalogue of statements which should (not) be considered valence issue statements. As such, the second criteria should perhaps best be viewed as providing examples of how parties attempt to (dis)associate themselves with (from) particular valence issues, rather than as a description of the actual content of valence issue statements as such. For these reasons, the second characteristic is dropped from further discussion.

The fourth characteristic, that valence issues tend to be vague while position issues tend to be more specific, is particularly important because, although it is strongly implied, it is not made explicit by Stokes (1963). While the most prevalent understanding of the distinction between valence and position issues focuses on whether parties agree or disagree in their positions on an issue, vagueness and specificity, the fourth criteria identified above, usually falls to the wayside and is at best implicit. This aspect of the distinction between valence and position issues also becomes evident from a closer reading of their definitions, the former merely aiming to (dis)associate a party with (from) some condition and the latter “involv[ing] advocacy of government actions from a set of alternatives” (Stokes 1963, p. 373). If one accepts that not only (dis)agreement, but also specificity is a crucial distinguishing criteria between the two types of issues identified by Stokes (1963), it also becomes clear why these definitions are so problematic. As is shown by table 1 on the facing page, the possible combinations of the two characteristics of specificity and agreement can result in not two (i.e. valence and position issues), but

Table 1: Valence and position issue distinction

		Specificity	
		vague	specific
Agree- ment	no	unmentioned	position issue
	yes	valence issue	unmentioned

four different types of issues.²⁵ As will be shown time and again below, the CMP's adoption of the concept of valence issues as being characterized by both consensus and vagueness and thus the rejection of the possibility that vague statements can be conflictual and specific statements consensual has been a cause for concern to many researchers.

As has been argued above, a key problem of operationalizing Downs (1957) by placing parties in a metric ideological space through their policy positions is that there is no formula which permits converting the latter into degrees of "rightness" or "leftness". One manner in which this problem could be addressed is to reduce the measurement level of the LR scale to an ordinal²⁶ one and to formulate criteria which permit the assignment of particular policies to its ordinal categories according to their perceived "leftness" or "rightness". Janda (1980), to be discussed in the next section, has attempted to address this problem precisely in that manner.

2.2.2 Janda (1980)

While Downs' (1957) *a priori* model is entirely theoretical, Janda (1980) was primarily concerned with applying spatial models to empirical cases. As such, Janda (1980) is an excellent example of *a priori* spatial models which, in numerous ways, come close to operationalizing Downs (1957). Janda (1980)'s

²⁵ A somewhat similar point is made by Guinaudeau and Persico (2014, p. 11), albeit from the perspective of issue ownership research, to be discussed below: "[Stokes'] definition refers both to the existence of an issue ownership (valence issues are owned by a party and should be salient above all in the discourse of this party) and to the consensual character of valence issues, suggesting that both characteristics tend to go hand in hand. Yet, this is empirically not necessarily the case (Pardos-Prado forthcoming) and there is no reason to postulate a *a priori* link between issue ownership and consensus."

²⁶ See footnote 1 on page 9.

International Comparative Political Parties (ICPP) project provides a comprehensive analysis of 158 political parties across 53 countries from 1950 to 1962²⁷ by means of some 100 variables, grouped together into 12 variable clusters which measure both a party's internal organization²⁸ and its external relations (Janda 1980, p. 7).²⁹ One of the external relations variables is issue orientation and is accompanied by a simple spatial model.³⁰

Janda (1980) defines a "political issue...as a social problem for which a vigorous division of opinion exists on the nature or appropriateness of government action toward solving the problem" (Janda 1980, p. 54). Janda (1980, p. 54) calls those topics not causing controversy consensus issues. It thus seems clear that Janda (1980) distinguishes between position issues and valence issues primarily in terms of confrontation or agreement rather than specificity. Janda's (1980, p. 55) spatial model is unidimensional and shows the extent to which parties either favour (on the political left) or oppose (to the political right) government intervention. The dimension consists of thirteen issues, such as government ownership of the means of production, redistribution of wealth, social welfare, secularization, electoral participation and the protection of civil rights. The space is ordinal in nature, consisting of eleven categories. The center category contains ambiguous or contradictory positions. Five categories extend outward from the center into each direction, the most leftward and rightward position thus being labelled with the negative and positive number five respectively. A party's position in this space is not only determined by its issue positions alone, but also by whether it actually acts on them. Thus, when program and practice coincide, a party position is assigned either a negative or a positive score of one, three or five points. When program and practice diverge, a party can either score two or four points (Janda 1980, pp. 54–55). What is of particular interest for the purpose at hand is how parties' issue positions are located in this spatial model, given the difficulties related to the operationalization of Downs (1957) discussed above.

The information used to assign a party's issue position to the different ordinal categories was derived from political party literature and was reviewed by country and area specialists (Janda 1980, pp. 12, 15). In order to assign parties' issue positions to these categories, Janda (1980) formulates a series of qualitative criteria. Table 2 on the facing page shows how this was done with the

²⁷ The project has subsequently been updated and the data made available online (Janda 2021).

²⁸ Examples include the degree of organization and the centralisation of power.

²⁹ Examples include the degree of institutionalisation and government status.

³⁰ The spatial model and variables are contained in Janda (1980)'s sixth chapter.

Table 2: Janda's (1980, 55-56) government ownership issue scores and criteria

Score	Left side (L), positive values	Right side (R), negative values
5	Strongly favours government ownership	Strongly opposes gov. ownership
	Gov. ownership of all basic industries	Opposes gov. regulation of production and marketing, except minimum for health, safety etc.
	Gov. ownership of means of production generally	Urges repeal of current regulation
3	Favours government ownership	Opposes government ownership
	Gov. ownership of some basic industries but not all	Opposes gov. ownership for any basic industry
	Some nationalization	Advocates privatization
		Advocates weaker regulation
1	Some government ownership, but mainly more government regulation	Some gov. ownership, but opposes spreading to all basic industries
	Active regulation of production and marketing activities of basic industries	Opposes nationalization
	Stronger regulation	Accepts current government regulation

government ownership issue, the table having been transposed directly from Janda (1980, pp. 55-6). A closer look at the criteria used for categorization reveals several problems associated with such an approach. To clarify this point, table 3 on the next page reorganizes the information contained in table 2 by breaking the government ownership issue into the four sub-issues of which it consists, which provide the column names of table 3. Moreover, the different categories are reordered so that the left and right categories no longer appear side by side, now running from the most leftward category, labelled "1", to the most rightward category, labelled "6", instead.

Table 3 reveals several problems. Firstly, there seems to be a clear overlap between the different sub-issues. It is hard to see the difference between the sub-issues ownership (second column), favouring and opposing ownership (fourth column) as well as nationalisation and privatization (third column). Moreover, the issue of regulation (fifth column), which is the most distinct from all others, arguably only has a contingent relationship with ownership.

Table 3: Janda's (1980, 55-56) government ownership issues separated

LR score	Ownership	Nat. & Privat.	Fav. & opp. ownership	Regulation
1	All basic industries and means of prod.	NA	Favours strongly	NA
2	Some basic industries	Some nat.	Favours	NA
3	Some	NA	NA	Active, stronger
4	Some, but not more	Opposes nat.	NA	Accepts current
5	NA	Advocates priv.	Opposes, esp. any basic industry	Less
6	NA	NA	Opposes strongly	Opposes, urges repeal

Complete government ownership does not necessarily mean that everything is highly regulated, just as privatization does not necessarily mean that everything is deregulated. Secondly, the criteria to assign issues a LR score often seem difficult to apply, like the distinction between simply favouring and opposing and strongly favouring and strongly opposing state ownership (in the fourth column). Others seem difficult to justify conceptually, such as in the second column, where it is argued that the acceptance of some, but not more ownership is a center right position, whereas the acceptance of some ownership is left of center (LR score three and four). Thirdly, these criteria have been provided in an inconsistent manner across sub-issues and LR ordinal categories, as is indicated by the NA³¹ values in the table. Thus, for example, the ownership sub-issue (in the second column) is not provided with criteria for the LR score categories 5 and 6. This same problem occurs across all four sub-issues, the most preoccupying cases perhaps being those where two adjacent ordinal categories lack categorization criteria. Despite clearly considering the different sub-issues distinct, providing the references to each with their own paragraphs in the original table, the inconsistency caused by the missing criteria is obscured by listing them not according to sub-issues, but only according to their LR score for the entire government ownership issue.

³¹ NA is short for Not Available.

Overall, the fuzzy terminology and unclear distinctions between and the missing criteria for the different categories of the different sub-issues reflect the difficulty of developing a categorization scheme for an ordinal ideological space consisting of six substantively meaningful categories.³² Clearly, if the space consisted of four rather than six categories – such as “very left”, “left”, “right” and “very right” – the problem of missing criteria would be ameliorated substantially. Moreover, reserving the central point of the space for ambiguous statements rather than those which embrace the SQ³³ leads to curious decisions, such as considering the acceptance of current regulations (fifth column) – irrespective of what these actually are – as center right and considering some ownership (second column) both a center left and right criteria, only distinguished by the “but not more” appendage to the latter. If these changes were to be applied, however, party positions would very likely become invariant across time. Thus, for example, a Communist or Euro-Communist party is likely to be located in the “very left” category for most issues, while a social democratic party is likely to remain in the “left” category for most if not all observations across time. Without variability in party positions, however, there is no point in providing a spatial model in the first place. This problem may also have motivated Janda (1980) to extend the number of ordinal categories by considering not only what a party proposes, but what it actually attempts to follow through on.

Downs (1957) had proposed a model in which policy positions can be placed objectively on a metric policy dimension in order to determine the ideological position of a party, but his contribution was largely theoretical and, as was argued above, difficult to operationalize. Janda (1980) tried to solve some of the problems associated with Downs (1957) by placing parties' issue positions in an ordinal space. As was shown, however, such an approach comes with its own set of methodological problems and, to work well, may require reducing the number of ordinal categories to such a low number as to make party behaviour invariant across time. Moreover, while some of the problems encountered in Janda (1980) could no doubt be resolved, the extent to which a party's given issue positions are to be considered more “left” or “right” is likely to vary across time as well as country cases. This is a problem associated especially – but not exclusively – with *a priori* models, which determine the qualities of

³² The second aspect which determines a party's LR score, whether a party actually follows through on its issue positions, as well as the additional categories thereby generated are not discussed further here, since these aspects are of no relevance to the subsequently presented specificity model.

³³ Thomas (1975, pp. 6, 51), who based his model on Janda (1980) and his data, for example, conceptualized the center category as SQ position.

the political space beforehand and are thus required to formulate qualitative criteria to distinguish between different degrees of “leftness” and “rightness”. Another approach entirely was the inductive one proposed by Robertson (1976) and which was subsequently developed further by the CMP.

2.3 Inductive political space: saliency theory

This section will discuss inductive political models,³⁴ commencing with Robertson (1976), who took his cue from both Downs (1957) and Stokes (1963) and who laid the groundwork for the development of saliency theory and subsequent electoral program coding by the CMP.

To Robertson (1976, p. 23), Downs (1957) “is both the inspiration of, and the starting point for...[his] theory...”. His perhaps most important theoretical contribution to Downs (1957) was to drop the assumption – also critiqued by Stokes (1963, pp. 374–375) – that voters and politicians share their perception of the same LR policy dimension, by separating the politicians’ from the voters’ political space through the policy-method and the policy-aim space. Parties select their policies³⁵ from the policy-method space, which consists of “discontinuous areas...requiring quantum jumps by any party trying to manoeuvre competitively” (Robertson 1976, p. 61) because “[p]olicies do not exist independently of men [and women]; they have to be imagined, devised, and are determined by the categories in which policy makers think, their experience, wisdom, and imagination” (Robertson 1976, p. 61). The policy-aim space consists of the continuous Downsian line-up of voters.³⁶ Thus “[the] vote maximizing point [of a party] is determined by the intersection of the distribution of voter preferences for policy aims...and policy methods” (Robertson 1976, p. 68). Because the policy-method space is discontinuous and the policy-aim space is continuous, the mapping of policy-method points onto the ideal policy-aim point is imperfect. Each of these spaces, moreover, contains its own political center, which may shift somewhat over time and is conceptualized as the SQ (Robertson 1976, pp. 66–7). The policy-method SQ,

³⁴ Although the CMP had also made use of a largely a priori spatial model, which will be described below, the CMP research both commenced with and returned to inductive spatial models after this a priori model interlude.

³⁵ Policies are defined as “suggested methods for solving social problems” (Robertson 1976, p. 61).

³⁶ This approach may be interpreted as another attempt to reconcile Downs’ (1957) metrically scaled abstract space with the fact that transforming specific policies into a unit of measure which would permit their placement in such a space may be impossible.

the new middle of the old Downsian space, “represents...the policies being pursued by the government of the moment” (Robertson 1976, p. 60) and remains mostly unchanged.

More important than the theoretical contribution made by Robertson (1976) to future party system research, however, was his methodologically innovative approach to the study of electoral programs and the derivation of party positions from them. These innovations were subsequently adopted by the CMP. Instead of focusing on locating specific policies or determining the ideological nature of issue positions, Robertson (1976, p. 73) concentrated on the “relative stress on a list of symbols [or issues]”. This approach required only that electoral program statements are assigned to different nominal issue categories based on the topics they addressed.³⁷ Thereafter, Robertson (1976) calculated the percentage of sentences dedicated to each issue category and applied the statistical method of factor analysis,³⁸ thereby deriving the dimensions and parties’ issue positions from the data inductively. As Budge (2015, p. 763) points out:

“[V]alence’ or one-positional issues such as ‘sin’ or ‘corruption’... were important in political campaigning...But they could not be represented on a political dimension with two opposed ends. This invalidated Downsian analysis from the start...Robertson’s operational decision ...achieved the best of both worlds by coding individual sentences into ‘valence’ one-position categories, but then factor analysing the percentages of sentences mentioning a topic to form two-ended ‘superdimensions’ capable of tracing overall shifts of emphasis – between ‘Left’ and ‘Right’ issues for example.”

³⁷ See footnote 1 on page 9 for an explanation of measurement levels.

³⁸ Factor analysis aims to uncover underlying dimensions or factors which reveal patterns in the data. Concerning the CMP data, these dimensions run between clusters of data points, each of which represents the percentage with which a particular party addresses a particular issue. Ideally, issues that could substantively be related to a LR economic dimension should thus be emphasized in such a fashion that, for instance, left parties speak comparatively more about protectionism and labour unions and relatively less about free trade and tax cuts (assuming categories are not positional), while right-wing parties act in the opposite fashion. Factor analysis then constructs dimensions (called factors) which connect these clusters. Different types of factor analysis have been applied to CMP data, varying especially in terms of the number of dimensions (or factors) to be extracted and whether the data was modelled on a country or across country basis and at a given moment in or across time (Jahn 2010, pp. 4–5). For a discussion of these approaches and associated problems, see Gemenis (2013, pp. 12–13) and Jahn (2010).

In addition to the desire to be able to represent valence issue competition spatially, the reason for the adoption of this method by Robertson (1976) and the CMP is likely to have originated precisely from those methodological difficulties associated with Downs (1957) and other approaches described above, although Robertson (1976) does not refer to these explicitly. The CMP in turn also preferred to justify its adoption of this inductive approach by claiming a general scarcity of “specific pro- and con positions” (Budge 2015, p. 762) in electoral programs, which, moreover, even when they did occur, rarely if ever referred to the same issues (Budge 2015, p. 762, Budge and Farlie 1983, p. 23), thus supposedly making it impossible to apply Downs (1957) in practice. While the argument that parties need to refer to exactly the same issues is somewhat arbitrary, since political dimensions consist of various issues and there seems to be no a priori reason why parties could not be placed in political space based on different but related issues,³⁹ a general scarcity of specific policies would of course make an operationalization of Downs (1957), premised on the existence of specific policy proposals, impossible.⁴⁰

Building on this innovative approach, Budge and Farlie (1983) replaced Robertson’s (1976) theoretical elaborations by the first explicit exposition of saliency theory,⁴¹ with the aim of providing the method of electoral program analysis with a somewhat more suitable theoretical foundation, an intent stated more or less clearly in Budge (1987, pp. 24–25):

“Underlying most technical decisions about methods is some theory of the process being studied. This is true even for the seemingly straightforward procedure of counting all sentences in the manifesto...[It was the finding that few sentences] refer even broadly to other parties or their policies...⁴² which prompted a coding based on emphasis in the first place since it was the only approach which covered all sentences in the manifesto....”

³⁹ For similar reasons, Robertson’s (1976, p. 73) argument that specific policies tend to “come and go” from one election to the next can hardly be considered sufficient to reject, in principle, policy proposal oriented spatial models.

⁴⁰ That this scarcity is questionable has already been shown by mandate theory pledge studies. See below.

⁴¹ In Budge and Farlie (1983), saliency theory is discussed especially in chapter six, in which they consider issue saliency in electoral programs in terms of parties’ electoral strategies (Budge and Farlie 1983, pp. 130–1) by focusing on the USA and Great Britain with data taken from Robertson (1976) and Budge and Farlie (1977) (Budge and Farlie 1983, p. 131).

⁴² As was pointed out in the preceding paragraph, this argument is spurious.

According to Budge (2015, p. 767), the key assumptions of saliency theory concerning party behaviour are that:

1. Parties' electoral rhetoric focuses on emphasis rather than on positioning themselves vis-à-vis their rival parties;
2. Different parties emphasize issues to different extents, making them distinguishable from one another;⁴³
3. Parties are advantaged when the issues emphasized by them become important during electoral campaigns.

The explanations provided to explain this party behaviour is closely linked to voters' and party members' views and expectations.⁴⁴ Since "[c]ertain electoral commitments simply make no sense for parties...they can be relied upon not to make them...[so that] parties are widely perceived as 'owning' certain issue types, such as support of traditional morality and religion, or law and order, or the expansion of welfare" (Budge and Farlie 1983, p. 25). To voters, parties are linked to particular issues by record, since voters "rely on the general association between certain events and a particular party's tenure in office" (Budge and Farlie 1983, p. 25). Moreover, "parties [also] have commitments to their activists and to change these would produce radical upheavals to little electoral advantage" (Budge and Farlie 1983, p. 25). As a consequence, "[p]arties are...tied to certain issues by their own origin and record...[and] cannot disown them even if they wanted to" (Budge 2015, p. 770). To deal with this situation, parties selectively emphasize those issues with which they are positively associated through good government performance, permitting them to distinguish themselves from other parties (Budge 2015, pp. 768, 770, Budge and Farlie 1983, p. 25). Mentioning certain policy areas that favour rivals "at all (even to refute mistaken policies) runs the risk of rendering an unfavourable issue salient and helping to push voters into another party" (Budge and Farlie 1983, p. 24). While "[i]t may not be inefficient for a socialist party to mention law and order when there is extensive crime on the streets...issues of this type produce a net benefit to [those] bourgeois [i.e. conservative] parties" (Budge and Farlie 1983, p. 130) which "own" them. As a consequence, "[f]ar from discussing details of their opponents' plans, parties tend in their public

⁴³ It is important to note that, as Budge and Farlie (1983, p. 24) and Budge (2015, p. 768) point out, saliency theory does not assume that different parties only emphasize particular issues, but that they stress those issues which favour them more than other issues.

⁴⁴ In Budge and Farlie (1983, pp. 24–6), voter perceptions play a much more central role than in subsequent works, which are much more concerned with party placement in political space.

pronouncements to ignore them as far as possible, and to deflect popular attention to other policies which have not been mentioned by their rivals. The latter in turn promote their own favourite issues, usually quite different ones” (Budge and Farlie 1983, p. 23). Through selective emphasis, parties thus not only draw attention to the issues with which they are positively associated, but also attempt to deflect attention from the inevitably negative aspects of their programs. Thus, a social democratic party may, for example, advocate an expansion of the welfare state, but not mention the accompanying increases in taxes (Budge and Farlie 1983, pp. 24, 32–3).⁴⁵

In the early stages of saliency theory, a substantial overlap existed between the latter and what has become known as issue ownership (or issue competence) research subsequently, a distinction which has emerged progressively over time (Walgrave, Tresch, and Lefevere 2015, p. 779). Although saliency theory originally assumed that parties “own” issues based on their origin and record,⁴⁶ it has become more appropriate to talk of a party’s association with certain issues instead (Budge 2015, p. 766). The reason for this development is that saliency theory assumes that parties compete with one another over votes by emphasizing those issues which favour them most, whereas issue ownership research investigates “the link between specific parties and issues in the minds of voters” (Walgrave, Tresch, and Lefevere 2015, p. 778) as well as whether and how parties compete over, acquire and lose ownership.⁴⁷ Moreover, issue ownership research is especially concerned with party competence (or party record),⁴⁸ an angle that was pioneered by Petrocik (1996), who took

⁴⁵ The electorate is responsive to these formulations, since they do not relate issues and policies to one another on their own initiative (Budge and Farlie 1983, pp. 25, 33). Also, although parties prefer emphasizing those topics with which they are positively associated, their selection of issue emphasis is nonetheless somewhat restraint, because parties do wish to pursue at least some of their desired policies (Budge 1987, p. 27) and because they cannot simply ignore issues which do not favour them due to the state of the world, ideological, financial and party activist constraints (Budge and Farlie 1983, p. 129).

⁴⁶ This assumption was a major addition by saliency theory to Robertson (1976). To Robertson (1976), parties emphasized the same issues when they thought it likely that they could win an election, moving to the center of the political space (and vice versa) to win votes, whereas to Budge and Farlie (1983, pp. 763–4) parties were bound to benefit from the saliency of particular issues if they owned them and were positively associated with them.

⁴⁷ Contrary to the fixed nature of issue ownership assumed by Budge and Farlie (1983), research on issue ownership has found that issue ownership is a much more dynamic process. See, for example, Budge (2015), Christensen, Dahlberg, and Martinsson (2015), Dahlberg and Martinsson (2015), or Petrocik, W. L. Benoit, and Hansen (2003).

⁴⁸ Walgrave, Tresch, and Lefevere (2015) analyse the various definitions of issue ownership and distinguish between the associative dimension, “the spontaneous identification between

Budge and Farlie (1983) as his point of departure and considered “the basis of issue ownership...the ability of a party to handle a societal problem...to resolve a concern of voters (Petrocik 1996, p. 826)” (Dahlberg and Martinsson 2015, p. 819).⁴⁹ CMP associated research is, in practice, barely concerned with testing saliency theory and its various assumptions, instead focusing on locating parties in political space through its data. As a consequence, from an issue ownership research perspective, the CMP data can only show how parties attempt to associate themselves with particular issues through the way in which they write their electoral programs, but it cannot show whether selective emphasis actually has an effect on issue ownership (Walgrave, Tresch, and Lefevere 2015, p. 786).

At first glance, it may seem contradictory that saliency theory permits the construction of a spatial model at all, since the CMP outright rejects positional competition between parties. “[What matter is] the degree of emphasis placed on certain broad policy areas, rather than each party’s support for, or opposition to, a specific policy within these areas” (Budge 1987, p. 24). Nonetheless, “[i]t is mistaken...to characterize...the MRG coding...as blind to questions of party positions. Rather they are positional in nature but only one-positional so far as most issue-areas are concerned” (Budge 2001, p. 57). Therefore, saliency theory assumes that the vast majority of issues, including – as is implied – those that matter most in politics, are valence issues and that, since parties agree on their stances, these positions are ultimately irrelevant. What matters are differences in emphasis. Nonetheless, the crucial theoretical step which allows the CMP to assume that emphasis derived spatial party positions are closely related and basically equivalent to “classical” ideological spaces (Laver 2001a, p. 73, Budge 2001, p. 55) is to assume that differences in emphasis *are* in fact indicative of ideological positional differences. Keeping in mind that saliency theory assumes the dominance and crucial nature of consensual valence issues in party competition, Laver (2001a, p. 73) basically confirms this: “‘Saliency theory’ legitimises using...[CMP] data on policy emphasis to estimate substantive party positions since it assumes a strong relationship between party positions on, and party emphasis of, an issue.”

some parties and some issues, regardless of competence” (Walgrave, Tresch, and Lefevere 2015, p. 780), and the competence dimension, “parties’ perceived capacity to competently handle and ‘resolve’ particular issues” (Walgrave, Tresch, and Lefevere 2015, p. 780).

⁴⁹ In Petrocik’s (1996, p. 826) own words: “‘Handling’ is the ability to resolve a problem of concern to voters. It is a reputation for policy and program interests, produced by a history of attention, initiative, and innovation toward these problems, which leads voters to believe that one of the parties (and its candidates) is more sincere and committed to doing something about them.”

The paradox of rejecting positional competition in favour of issue emphasis only to use the latter in order to position parties in political space can only be resolved by assuming that party competition is in fact positional, but that parties do not position themselves in electoral programs, where they resort to emphasis instead. This remark leads to two inevitable conclusions: firstly, the applicability of saliency theory is, at most, limited to electoral programs; secondly, political parties do have diverging issue positions. Although usually not formulated so directly, these points are of course very much implicit. After all, saliency theory assumes that parties talk past each other in their electoral programs on purpose, meaning that they could engage positionally, but prefer not to, because this would reveal the accompanying negative aspects of their program. To return to a previous example, a social democratic party may propose an expansion of the welfare state, but avoid talking about tax increases, whereas a liberal party will avoid talking about the dismantling of the welfare state, but talk about tax cuts, precisely because their positions on the welfare state and taxes are different and not all of them are looked upon favourably by the voter. But this difference in emphasis reflects positional disagreement, whether it is explicitly stated or not. Recognizing that saliency theory ought to be limited purely to quantitative electoral program analysis as it is carried out by the CMP is important, because it avoids erroneously supposing a general dominance of valence issues in party politics. This point can also be illustrated by reference to Laver (2001a, p. 73), who argues that, firstly, saliency theory permits inferring ideological party positions as long as differences on emphasis exist on issues on which parties take the same position, but that, secondly, this relationship breaks down when there is substantive disagreement on policies between two parties and both emphasize the issue. These two statements hold true only within the strictest confines of an application of saliency theory to electoral programs, however. After all, it would be illogical to expect differences in emphasis on an issue on which both parties take the same stance to be in any way indicative of ideologically divergent party positions. If both parties really take the same stance on an issue, there is no ideological difference between the two parties concerning that issue and interpreting a difference in emphasis in this manner would simply be wrong. The basic assumptions must be that parties differ in their issue positions, hide these differences in electoral programs by means of issue avoidance and that differences in emphasis thus reflect these differences in positions. Formulated in this way, one may even want to question the CMP's recourse to the concept of valence issues. Overall, instead of formulating saliency theory to justify the use of the CMP's method, it may have been better to simply argue that degrees of emphasis could be used as an indicator of

parties' ideological positions and to prove this point empirically by showing that they correlate with other measures of ideological party positions (see further below). Doing so would of course somewhat diminish the grandeur of the CMP's mission, which would be reduced to generating data in order to be able to use emphasis as an indicator of ideological party positions, instead of trying to prove the existence of a particular strategically based type of party behaviour which is implicitly relevant beyond the confines of electoral program analysis.

Methodologically, saliency theory's key assumption that competition on issues is one-positional is not reflected in the CMP's issue categorization scheme, thus having drawn substantial critique.⁵⁰ Many of its originally 56 issue categories are indeed positional in nature, such as by naming an issue and then providing a category for its positive and another category for its negative mentions. The CMP has repeatedly dismissed this critique by claiming that this step was taken to be able to prove that issue competition really is one-positional. There are two problems with this defence, however. Firstly, it has been shown, using precisely this data, that party competition is positional. Dolezal et al. (2014), for example, test the CMP's assumptions with its own data and, using the aforementioned positive-negative (pro and contra) issue categories, reject the hypotheses that parties mostly talk past each other (because the majority of the issue agenda are shared), reject that parties do not differ in their positions on different issues, since only some, like "social values, multiculturalism, security and European integration" (Dolezal et al. 2014, p. 69), are consensual, and reject that parties differ from each other more strongly in terms of issue emphasis than with respect to policy positions. Secondly, the CMP does not use the issue category data in an apositional or one-positional manner. In order to illustrate this second point and discuss the positional nature of the CMP's issue categories further, the CMP's a priori model will be discussed next.

The CMP's a priori RILE (Right-Left) scale, presented in Budge and Klingemann (2001, pp. 21–2), was offered as an alternative to the CMP's purely inductive approach. The RILE scale was constructed by selecting, by means of theoretical reasoning, a number of issue categories which were assumed to be ideologically meaningful. Next, factor analysis was conducted to determine whether the selected issues in fact did give rise to the expected LR dimension, leading to some changes to the selected issues. Thereafter, to determine a party's ideological position, the percentage sum of left issues was subtracted from the percentage sum of right issues, so that a negative score places a party

⁵⁰ See, for example, Dolezal et al. (2014, pp. 61, 63) and Pennings and Keman (2002, pp. 66–7).

to the left and a positive score places a party to the right in a space ranging from a negative to a positive 100 points. 13 issues were selected to represent the right and another 13 issue were selected to represent the left ideological spectrum. In keeping with saliency theory, these issues should be one-positional for all parties. Of the issue categories chosen for the RILE scale, some appear as negative or positive pendants on the left and right, however. These include military (positive/negative), protectionism (positive/negative) and social service (expansion/limitation).⁵¹ Moreover, the RILE scale includes a number of more or less explicit pendants, which could easily be reformulated into “positive” and “negative” stances on the same issues. Thus, the right side of the RILE scale includes free enterprise and (voluntary) economic incentives while the left side includes a controlled economy, the regulation of capitalism and nationalization. Clearly, a positive position on free enterprise strongly implies a negative position on the issue of a controlled economy and both could be surmised by the category “control over the economy”. Overall, these two problems affect five of thirteen issues on the right and six of thirteen issues on the left. Lastly, there are a number of issues which are one-positional in the sense that their pendants are not included in the RILE scale. These are, on the right, national way of life (positive) and traditional morality (positive) and, on the left, internationalism (positive), education (expansion) and labour groups (positive). Given the aforementioned argument by Budge (2001, p. 57) that the CMP’s issue categories are not apositional but one positional, this approach seems acceptable. Nonetheless, there are two reasons to question the way the CMP employed its own data. Firstly, ignoring the coding category pendants which exist in the broader coding scheme may favour the scale unduly. For example, while a right wing party’s positive mentions of the national way of life are included, a left wing party’s positive mentions, which one would expect to be insignificant at the most according to the CMP, are not included on the left side of the scale. Secondly, any categories included on one side of the scale should also be included on the other side, for that same reason. For example, if positive mentions of the national way of life are included on the right side of the scale, they should also be included on the left. Once again, if the CMP’s assumptions are adequate, the positive mention category in the above example should basically be empty for left parties. Excluding categories in these two ways, whether the selection process was conducted via factor analysis or not, ignores important saliency theory assumptions. That the scale

⁵¹ The issue social services was also considered explicitly positional because it was qualified with the term “limitation” on the right and the term “expansion” on the left, thus clearly providing pro and contra positions on this issue as well.

supposedly produces the kind of results one would expect to see should thus not be interpreted as a confirmation of saliency theory.

Based on the arguments above, it is evident that the RILE scale has relatively little to do with saliency theory. Firstly, including complementary issue position categories on both sides of the RILE scale directly contradicts the supposedly one-positional nature of the scale. Doing so, however, permits at least a partial examination of the assumption of the one-positional nature of party competition. Ironically, complementary issues were likely included because each party clearly emphasized one of them much more extensively than the other, thus actually pointing to positional and not valence based issue competition. Secondly, a full evaluation of the CMP's most important assumptions would require that each issue and its pendants are both included on both sides of the scale, because otherwise an important part of the data which would be necessary to put the capacity of saliency theory to generate LR scores to the test is simply being ignored. Some elements of this critique, exemplified in relation to the RILE scale, can be generalized to the CMP's entire issue category scheme as well as the use of its inductive method. That being said, and despite a great many additional problems,⁵² CMP data analysis does more often than not produce results with general face validity (Budge 2001, pp. 53–55), does possess external validity⁵³ and can be used to produce interesting analytical results.⁵⁴

Before concluding this subsection, a number of additional comments on the coding method are in order. Firstly, as mentioned before, the CMP codes

⁵² The CMP has received heavy, at times highly debilitating criticisms concerning virtually every step from theory to operationalization to document selection to data generation and, finally, data analysis. See, for example, Franzmann and Kaiser (2006), Gabel and Huber (2000), Gemenis (2012), Gemenis (2013) and Mikhaylov, Laver, and K. Benoit (2012, pp. 84–88). For a defence of CMP data, quality control and reliability and validity, see, for example, Volkens (2001) and Volkens, Bara, and Budge (2009).

⁵³ External validity means that a given measure correlates highly with others which measure the same phenomena (Dinas and Gemenis 2010, p. 443). Interestingly, the CMP's *a priori* scale also correlates highly (.75) with the Party Change Project's data (Harmel et al. 1995, pp. 9, 18).

⁵⁴ See, for example, Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009), Ezrow (2007), or Somer-Topcu (2009). Moreover, not all research that employs CMP data assumes that the latter can be equated with parties' ideological positions. Green-Pedersen (2007), for instance, finds that issue competition, considered as an approximation of saliency scores between parties, has increased over time. Similarly, Janda et al. (1995, pp. 177–78) consider the CMP data capable of capturing a party's identity, thus using CMP data not as an indicator "of substance (i.e. positions or 'principles')...[but of] packaging (i.e. the relative salience of issues in the manifesto)" (Janda et al. 1995, p. 178).

quasi-sentences, defined as containing one statement or message (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015, p. 6). Each sentence is thus considered at least one quasi-sentence but may contain more than one, such as when “a sentence contains two statements that are totally unrelated ...[or] a sentence contains two statements that are related (e.g. they come from the same policy field) but address different aspects of a larger policy...[E]xamples, reasoning, explanations, etc. are not unique arguments and are therefore no separate quasi-sentences” (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015, p. 6). Without going into unnecessary detail, these instructions are difficult to put into practice, since the coder is required to determine whether and how different statements are or are not related to one another without receiving barely any other additional written instructions.⁵⁵ Moreover, the CMP makes a concerted effort to code every single (quasi-)sentence. The only words not to be coded are “[c]hapter and section headings ...[as well as] statistics, tables of content, introductory remarks (e.g. by party leaders)” (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015, p. 5). In the case of ambiguous sentences which cannot be easily assigned to any category, coders are asked “to consider the context level closest to the quasi-sentence” (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015, p. 10) according to a hierarchy ranging from the rest of the sentence, following sentences, the paragraph, chapter or section, the whole manifesto or the political discourse at the time of the election program (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015, p. 10). Furthermore, even sentences which contain no message whatsoever, so-called introductory, terminal or connecting sentences, are to be coded given their context (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015, p. 11). If even this strategy fails or a position is not included in the category scheme, such as “modern issues or if the category scheme only includes codes in one direction (positive or negative) and the statement refers to the non-included direction” (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015, p. 12), these sentences are to be assigned to the ‘ooo’ category (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015, p. 12). Lastly, several categories⁵⁶ are so-called catch-all categories “for general policies that do not fit any specific coding category” (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015, p. 12).

The decision to code almost every sentence was justified with the argument that “party programmes are carefully considered and finely honed documents,

⁵⁵ One part of the coding instructions, applying to a particular kind of statement, is clearer. For statements like “We are doing B and C because we want to reach A...[.] the grand rule of ‘code the message’ applies. For these two examples, the message is that A is primarily important. B and C are simply means to achieve A. Goals usually take precedence over means when assigning codes” (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015, p. 11).

⁵⁶ These include categories 303, 305, 408 and categories of the 700 type, except category 703 (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015, p. 12).

so no sentence appears in them without a purpose” (Budge 2001, p. 56), which seems a rather fantastic claim, given the often very lengthy and imprecise nature of these documents, which are at times badly structured and not always free of spelling and grammatical errors. Even for an approach that is concerned with emphasis, it may be questionable why a text passage concerned, for instance, with increases in pollution levels in the past, should be treated as equally relevant to a text passage which talks about the future steps that a party wants to take.

Another noticeable feature of the instruction manual is that substantive content is categorically excluded or sidelined from analysis, although “[o]ften political actors are very clear in their statements and candidly say what they seek: more of one thing, less of another” (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015, p. 9). Consequently, statements that seek more or less of something (a value, a principle, a policy) are given the same value as ambiguous statements and statements devoid of content. The same applies to policy statements, which are described as not infrequent: “Quite often political actors not only say what they want to achieve but also how they want to achieve it” (Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015, p. 9). Where a party mentions both means and ends, the ends are prioritized over what it is that the party actually wants to do.⁵⁷

In terms of the previously discussed approaches to spatial models, Robertson (1976) provided a truly innovative way of solving the methodological problems of operationalizing Downs (1957) by resorting not to a metric placement of policies or ordinal categories, but to the nominal categorizations of electoral program statements, from which a political space could then be derived inductively. Stokes’ (1963) somewhat imprecise distinction permitted the future CMP researchers, upon supposedly discovering that electoral programs lacked specific policy proposals, to assume that vaguer valence issues are simply consensual in nature, instead of clearly distinguishing between agreement and specificity and thus addressing the diversity of ways in which parties may position themselves on issues, as was shown in table 1 on page 25. As the next section will illustrate, however, some efforts have been made to address this shortcoming.

⁵⁷ See footnote 55 on the preceding page.

2.4 Approaches using valence and issue positions

As was already argued in subsection 2.2.1 above, when the distinction between valence issues and policies is viewed in terms of the characteristics of agreement and specificity, it becomes apparent that these can be combined in four ways. For instance, it is easily imaginable that party A vaguely affirms further European integration alongside party B, making the topic a valence issue. From the perspective of party A, the emergence of an anti-integration party C may transform its still generic pro-integration stance into a still vague but now also conflictual position. Subsequently, important upcoming changes in the EU's institutional architecture as well as competition from party C may cause party A and B to provide the same specific issue position on EU integration, such as advocating that particular policies ought to fall under the co-decision legislative procedure, making the issue position both specific and conflictual vis-à-vis party C. Upon the subsequent disappearance of party C, this specific issue position becomes consensual for party A and B.

This realization, although perhaps not always articulated as clearly, is not new. As Stokes (1963) himself stated, “[i]t is of course true that position-issues lurk behind many valence-issues” (Stokes 1963, p. 373) and that “[if] parties manoeuvred for support by advocating different degrees of prosperity or distress...[an] issue would have been transformed from a valence-issue into a position-issue” (Stokes 1963, p. 374). Similarly, as Robertson (1976, p. 61) pointed out in his critique of Stokes (1963): “Even if one does take a single issue case, like corruption...it is altogether another matter how one proposes to deal with it, and how one accounts for its existence.”

The recognition that both issue positions and valence issues play a role in electoral campaigns has led some researchers, such as Enelow and Hinich (1984), to combine both concepts in their models. Another study by A. F. Heath, Jowell, and Curtice (2001, pp. 159–162) combines, among others, issue positions as well as a party competence measure, described as similar to the distinction between valence and position issues. As opposed to the usage of the term model up to this point, understood as a spatial model derived from theory or theoretical model building in order to primarily locate parties in space, these equation based mathematical models are interested in investigating the effect of various variables – including issue and valence positions – on vote choice.⁵⁸ Moreover, what these authors call “valence issues” is more

⁵⁸ This distinction is more one of degree than of kind, given that the point of departure, theoretical and qualitatively reasoned assumptions, as well as the destination, data analysis by means of mathematical or statistical models, are the same.

akin to what issue ownership research denotes issue competence than it is to positional agreement on an issue. Enelow and Hinich (1984, pp. 80, 174), for example, model voter choice in the 1976 and 1980 US presidential elections in terms of both policy issue positions as well as non-policy issues, which refer to personal attributes such as competence, and which, when the model is tested, includes the perceived morality and religiousness of candidates. These traits are described as valence issue because voters agree on the desirability that their presidential candidates possess these qualities. Thus, valence issues are understood primarily as personal candidate qualities or competency, the latter more akin to the understanding of issue ownership than CMP related research.

Other studies have used CMP data to distinguish between valence and positional issues, by focusing on the difference in emphasis on related antagonistic issue categories. Thus, for instance, Franzmann and Kaiser (2006, pp. 167–8) develop an approach to placing parties in ideological space by using CMP data to distinguish between valence issues – where political parties have similar saliency scores – and position issues – where the saliency scores differ significantly between parties based on regression analysis. They find that issues shift from position to valence issues (Franzmann and Kaiser 2006, pp. 169–170). Likewise, Guinaudeau and Persico (2014, p. 13) consider that if only one party emphasizes an issue, it is its owner, whereas when more than one party emphasizes an issue, that issue can be either consensual or conflictual. In reference to the saliency approach, Laver (2001a, pp. 69–70) distinguishes between salience, issue positions and valence issues by pointing out that issues can be either positional or valence and have either low or high salience. It is thus safe to say that there is a certain conceptual demand to recover the relation between valence and issue positions by focusing on and disentangling their two conflated and partially repressed key characteristics, namely specificity and agreement.

As was argued above, the best way to address the imprecision of Stokes' (1963) differentiation between Downsian policies and valence issues is to consider that an issue may be conflictual or non-conflictual and vague or specific. While it is relatively straight forward to identify whether two given issues are (non-)conflictual, searching for specificity is much more difficult. There already exists one branch of research, however, which, although not concerned with spatial models, is concerned with the extraction of specific electoral promises or pledges – akin to Downsian policies – from electoral programs, namely mandate theory. It is this strand of research which will be discussed next.

2.5 Mandate theory electoral pledge studies

Mandate theory research is concerned with the extent to which political parties implement their electoral pledges and the identification of the variables driving this behaviour. As such, mandate theory is not, like saliency theory, concerned with the translation of problems into program, but with the translation of program into policy (Pennings and Keman 2002, pp. 55–6) and does not aim to provide a model of party competition. Mandate theory research was initiated by Pomper and Lederman's (1980) study of US election pledges from the 1940s to the 1970s and was followed by a series of single country case studies (Mansergh and Thomson 2007, p. 312). The starting point of election pledge studies is inevitably the identification of specific pledges,⁵⁹ which are arguably quite similar in their nature to Downs' (1957) policy positions. In contrast to the findings by proponents of saliency theory, pledge studies have identified a relatively large amount of specific statements in electoral programs. Mansergh and Thomson (2007, p. 314), who provide an overview of all seven major pledge studies until 2007, state that the average number of pledges per decade per electoral program⁶⁰ lay anywhere between a low nine in Canada, also the country which exhibits the smallest number of pledges in general, to 592 in the United States. Indeed, of the 21 averages provided, ten have a value of 93 to 592, five averages range from 49 to 65 and only another six range from 9 to 24 pledges. Given the point made above that a key difference between valence issues and position issues is the specificity with which a party states its issue positions, this section will discuss how mandate theory studies have defined and operationalized the term pledge. Given the lack of transparency concerning the pledge coding rules in earlier works (Thomson 1999, p. 25), this section will focus especially on the works of Pomper and Lederman (1980), Royed (1992), Thomson (1999) and Mansergh (2004).

Although Pomper and Lederman (1980, pp. 130, 236) base their model on Downs concerning their definition of voter and party rationality and provide a series of pledge categories which reflect different degrees of specificity, the

⁵⁹ Mandate theory has also been tested by using saliency data, such as by Klingemann, Hoferbert, and Budge (1994). A distinction is thus made here, in line with Thomson (1999, p. 9), between mandate theory as such, which may be explored by different methods and data, saliency data based mandate theory research and election pledge studies. The latter is understood more narrowly as the study of the extent to which specific electoral program pledges have been fulfilled.

⁶⁰ The authors use this seemingly odd metric to check whether the number of electoral pledges have increased over time.

authors emphasize that they do not attempt to provide a spatial model. Compared to the pledge study successors discussed below, which limit themselves to merely considering a given statement either a pledge or not a pledge, however, Pomper and Lederman (1980) provide by far the most sophisticated approach to studying pledge fulfilment. The authors provide three general pledge categories, the latter two consisting of various subtypes. The first pledge category is defined as: “1. Rhetoric and fact: Approval of commonly accepted values; appeals to ‘valence’ issues without any specific context; support for diffuse symbols; citation of truism and clichés. All purely factual statements, if not in a particular context, are also included” (Pomper and Lederman 1980, p. 235). The second category contains: “2. Evaluations of the parties’ records and past performances” with four sub-categories which distinguish between (a.) general approval and (b.) criticism as well as (c.) policy approval and (d.) policy criticisms (Pomper and Lederman 1980, pp. 235–6). The third category, entitled “3. Statements of future policies” is of greatest interest for the purpose of this dissertation. Six different types of pledges are identified, (a.) rhetorical pledges, (b.) general pledges, (c.) pledges of continuity, (d.) expressions of goals and concerns, (e.) pledges of action and (f.) detailed pledges (Pomper and Lederman 1980, pp. 236–7). Pomper and Lederman (1980, p. 236) are at pains to point out that “[t]he six minor categories are in order of increasing commitment and specificity...[but] these categories are nominal classifications and do not constitute a continuous, unidimensional scale”.

Of the six different types of future policy pledges, it is possible to distinguish between a series of vague issue positions and the so-called detailed pledges. Unfortunately, although the description of detailed pledges is intuitively comprehensible, it is likely to elicit a great deal of uncertainty from the coder when (s)he is required to apply them:

“The character of the action pledged, as well as its direction, is stated. A specific bill or executive action may be mentioned, or its context explicated. Pledges to continue specific past policies or to exact quantitatively defined policies are included as well. Even in this category, however, specificity must be understood as considerably less than the details of an actual law” (Pomper and Lederman 1980, p. 237).

If one were to unpack this citation in order to apply it to electoral program coding, the clearest instructions concern the identification of a “[p]ledge to continue specific past policies or to exact quantitatively defined policies”. Nonetheless, some questions may emerge. To what extent does the past policy

need to be specified? Does “quantitatively defined policies” – as one may well wish to assume – mean any pledge which quotes a number? What happens if a single statement quotes various quantities? Concerning the other instructions which have been provided, what is to be understood as the “character of the action pledges”? Is the mention of “[a] specific bill or executive action...or its context” in an of itself sufficient to constitute a detailed pledge, or is this a necessary or optional additional criteria to the character and direction of a pledged action? Moreover, if “specificity must be understood as considerably less than the details of an actual law”, what exactly is still sufficiently specific?

The other five vaguer pledges pose the same problem as the definition of detailed pledges, namely that it is unclear what the abstract definitions and criteria which are provided are supposed to mean in the concrete. The second vaguest category called general pledges, for instance, consists of “[s]tatements with a policy content unspecified or unclear, but not logically necessary. Typically, these statements could be made by either major party, and a reader would find it difficult to attribute the pledge to one party or the other” (Pomper and Lederman 1980, p. 236). Moreover, general pledges have “some relation to government action...[but] it is difficult to measure performance on pledges in this group” (Pomper and Lederman 1980, p. 236). It is unclear what “logically necessary” is referring to and the criteria that a statement is so generic as to be attributable to either party is both very demanding of the coder, who is expected to have extensive knowledge of parties’ sets of issue positions, and subjective, because it requires the coder to interpret the statement’s relation to a party’s ideology, a connection that can be more or less explicit and direct. Perhaps the most useful criteria offered to identify general pledges is the difficulty to measure pledge performance, but the criteria is again unclear because evaluation is not impossible or easy, but “difficult”. Demanding extensive knowledge of the coder and requiring him or her to use the substantial subjective leeway provided by the instructions “correctly” are problems which are also especially pronounced concerning rhetorical pledges. The latter are the least specific kind of future policies, defined as “[f]uture support of commonly accepted values, ‘valence’ issues, truisms, and clichés. A simple test of a sentence in this category is to state the opposite. If the resulting sentence is absurd and could not be a logical policy, the pledge of future support is only rhetorical” (Pomper and Lederman 1980, p. 236). Here, the coder is asked to be able to evaluate what commonly accepted values are, what kind of issue has valence character, what a logical policy is and whether a particular statement is absurd or not, possibly across extensive periods of time and on different continents. Another somewhat clearer type of pledge, the pledge of continuity, is “[a] pledge to maintain present governmental policy, but without

specification of its character, or with reference only to the general nature of a program...Although the details of future policy are unclear, a pledge in this category would provide the voter with a notion of future actions, if he were informed of present policies" (Pomper and Lederman 1980, p. 236). While being clearer, one may question whether a promise to continue a policy, which does not provide any details on what this entails and only "provide[s] the voter with a notion of future actions", should really be considered more specific than the other two aforementioned pledge types. A similar critique could be made of pledges of expressions of goals and concerns, "[s]tated intentions to meet specific problems or to achieve a particular goal, but without specification of the means to be employed, or without complete commitment to the goal; recognition of a need or statement of concern, without the promise or possibility of government action" (Pomper and Lederman 1980, pp. 236–7), as well as pledges of action, "[a d]efinite promise of the direction of policy, as well as of the problems to be considered, although detailed provisions are not included" (Pomper and Lederman 1980, p. 237).⁶¹ What many of these pledges seem to have in common is that they provide little information on what the party actually wishes to do, but the potential overlap between these pledge types seems – with the exception of very few criteria – rather substantial. For example, is the statement "We will fight crime" by a conservative party rhetorical, because its inverse ("We will support crime") is absurd? Or a general pledge, because one could also expect a center-left catch-all party to make such a statement, especially but not exclusively if crime is a particular salient issue? Or is it an expression of goals or concerns, because the party states that it will deal with a specific problem? Or is it a pledge of action, because it is a definite promise of the direction of a policy, namely against crime?

It is curious that Pomper and Lederman (1980, p. 236) state both that the different kinds of future policy pledges increase in specificity, but are nominal – not ordinal – in nature.⁶² One possible reason for this decision is that, in general, as the preceding example has shown, this claim is hard to sustain when the rules provided to determine specificity are so vague. In order to

⁶¹ Concerning pledges of action, Pomper and Lederman (1980, p. 237) provide at least one clear criteria: "Pledges in this category dealing with government finances or other quantitatively measurable policies indicate the direction, but not the amount of intended changes." This criteria is only one of several, however.

⁶² The reason for not doing so provided by the authors was that "the categories are constructed on more than one criterion...[and are thus] nominal classifications and do not constitute a continuous, unidimensional scale" (Pomper and Lederman 1980, p. 236). Why using several criteria to categorize information into ordinal categories representing a single "unidimensional" phenomena is a problem is unclear to the author, however.

aid the coder in distinguishing between different types of pledges, Pomper and Lederman (1980, pp. 236–7) do provide a series of verbs. Thus, pledges of continuity verbs are “‘continue’...[or] ‘support’”, expression of goals and concerns verbs include “‘aid’, ‘foster’, ‘develop’ [etc.]”, pledges of action verbs are “‘insist’, ‘offer’, ‘favour’, ‘oppose’[etc.]” and detailed pledge verbs are “‘endorse’, ‘recommend’, ‘pledge’” (Pomper and Lederman 1980, pp. 236–7), among others. Given that the distinction between the different types of pledges is in many cases difficult to apply, a coder may thus fall back on these word groups. The problem is of course that the use of such verbs may be more or less arbitrary and does not seem to impact on the specificity of a statement, as is illustrated by the use of verbs from these groups in a similar statement: “We will fight crime”; “We will support the fight against crime”; “We will foster the state’s capacity to fight crime”; “We will favour the fight against crime”; “We pledge ourselves to fighting crime”. More often than not, the choice of verbs is likely to be driven by a desire to avoid excessive repetitiveness in what are often hundreds of pages long documents, than it is likely to reveal the specificity of a pledge.

Although Pomper and Lederman (1980) may be critiqued on these grounds, their work is no doubt sophisticated and a valuable contribution to political science research. In more general terms, the greatest problem lies in the abstract nature of the description of the different types of pledges, which cannot, as illustrated above, be compensated for by providing a number of verb groups. Compared to the other approaches to pledge studies discussed below, however, Pomper and Lederman (1980) represent the most detailed study of the different kinds of pledge statements one may encounter in electoral programs.

In subsequent studies, the vast majority of Pomper and Lederman’s (1980) criteria were dropped and the testability criteria was elevated to almost exclusive importance. Royed (1992), who studied pledges in Great Britain and the United States from 1979 to 1988, defines pledges as consisting of two types of clauses. The first clause indicates the degree of commitment of the party to carrying out an action or implementing a policy and can be either hard or soft. An example of the former is “We will...” and an example of the latter is “We must...” (Royed 1992, p. 374). The second clause reveals “the action or policy for which commitment is indicated” (Royed 1992, p. 374). These may be either specific or vague and are differentiated into four levels, the first two of which are: “a. Definitive. Definite action is promised, and determining fulfilment is clear-cut. The action/policy either takes place or it doesn’t. b. Difficult definitive. Definitive action is promised, and theoretically determining fulfilment

can be objectively done, but testing is difficult - e.g., testing involves not just determining if legislation was or was not passed, but what detailed provisions of legislation were, and whether they will result in the outcome promised" (Royed 1992, p. 374). The other two levels are: "c. Judgemental. Action is promised, but it is impossible to objectively determine whether or not promise has been fulfilled. Adjectives are used, which means a value judgement is involved - e.g., 'resources will be used more efficiently.' d. Rhetorical. An even greater level of subjectivity involved than (c). e.g., 'measures will be taken to reduce the poverty and unemployment 'traps.' What are these 'traps?' How would you reduce them? Rhetorical pledges are intestable" (Royed 1992, p. 375).

From the different combination of the two types of clauses which make up pledges, Royed (1992, p. 375) constructs a typology in which a combination of a hard commitment with a definitive action or policy scores five points and a soft commitment and a definitive action or policy scores a four. The combination of either a hard or a soft commitment with a difficult definitive, judgemental or rhetorical action or policy scores three, two or one points. Any pledge scoring three or more points is considered a pledge.⁶³

Like Royed (1996), Thomson (1999) considers that pledges consist of two clauses and that the former can be either hard or soft. Thomson (1999, p. 80) defines statements as pledges "if they contained unequivocal support for proposed government policy actions that are testable". Unequivocal support means that a pledge is hard, "synonymous with promises or guarantees", whereas soft pledges concern a party's intentions or preferences and use phrases like "we must...", 'we should...', or 'we will strive towards...'. In contrast to Royed (1992) and others, however, Thomson (1999) rejects the relevance of this distinction, including both soft and hard pledges, because "[it] would be pedantic to stipulate that a party must use particular wording to express its unequivocal support for a particular position in order for the statement to be of interest" (Thomson 1999, p. 81), not least since such wording is often likely to be arbitrary (Thomson 1999, p. 81). The second part of his definition, the "proposed government policy actions that are testable" (Thomson 1999, p. 82), refers to the specificity of a statement. "[T]his clause demands that pledges describe the proposed policy in such a way that a criterion is provided, on the basis of which the enactment of the pledge can be judged. These criteria consist of the passing of particular legislation or executive orders" (Thomson 1999, p. 82). Thomson (1999, p. 83) thus defines "specificity" as a statement

⁶³ In a later article, the levels c. and d. are collapsed into one, entitled "Judgemental/rhetorical" (Royed 1996, p. 80).

providing “some criteria that can be used to categorise the enactment of the pledges”.

In addition to these general instructions, Thomson (1999) also provides instructions for a series of particular kinds of statements. So-called outcome pledges, which set specific goals like reducing inflation or reducing unemployment by a particular number, are not considered pledges because their fulfilment relies less on political will than on exogenous conditions like the global economy (Thomson 1999, pp. 82–3). Similarly, “[s]tatements in which parties promised to ‘consider’ or ‘look into’ specific policy actions” (Thomson 1999, p. 231), promises “to carry out policy actions ‘if necessary’, without specifying when these actions would be necessary” (Thomson 1999, p. 231) and statements that a party will do something as soon as possible are not considered pledges (Thomson 1999, p. 231). So-called conditional pledges, which promise that “a specified action will be taken if certain socio-economic conditions are met” (Thomson 1999, p. 231), are only considered pledges if these conditions come to pass subsequently. It is assumed, moreover, that a party aims to fulfil its pledges within the coming legislature, unless stated otherwise, in which case the statement is no longer considered a pledge (Thomson 1999, p. 231).⁶⁴ Overall, Thomson (1999)’s much greater focus on the key distinction between pledges and non-pledges and the reduction to a single criteria to make this distinction, the ease with which pledge fulfilment can be evaluated, is likely to have contributed substantially to reducing the subjectivity and uncertainty encountered in Pomper and Lederman (1980).

Mansergh (2004), who identified 2013 manifesto pledges by Irish parties across eight elections from 1977 to 1997, uses the pledge definition provided by Thomson (1999), defining the latter as “[u]nequivocal support for an action that is testable”. New is Mansergh’s (2004, p. 257) exclusion of statements “[w]here support is pledged for an idea, principle or concept unless it clearly refers to a practice in law which can be changed by law”. Concerning the testability criteria, the five rules provided by Mansergh (2004) are a mixture of somewhat more general rules as well as particular examples, only the former being of relevance here. As was the case with Royed (1992), adverbs “negate pledge status as it becomes subjective as to whether or not [a] pledge is fulfilled” (Mansergh 2004, p. 258). Moreover, when “[the] onus is on someone other than just the political party to do the action” (Mansergh 2004, p. 258), it is

⁶⁴ Thomson (1999, p. 232) provides two further coding rules: firstly, if a pledge is repeated with the same wording, it is counted as one, unless one of them is more specific, in which case only the latter is considered a pledge; secondly, if a pledge explicitly depends for its enactment on the enactment of another pledge, both are considered as one pledge.

unclear who would be to blame if the pledge is unfulfilled and these kinds of statements should thus not be considered pledges. Also, statements like “We will review/review and reform” are not considered pledges because they are not considered testable as such (Mansergh 2004, p. 258). Mansergh (2004, p. 257) also addresses the problem of interrelated statements⁶⁵ and how pledge statements are to be coded when presented within a single or across several sentences. Thus, she discusses several examples:

“Fianna Fáil will set up an agricultural agency to develop research activities into the area. A minister will be put in charge of this. Founding capital will be in the region of £400m.’ These three sentences should not be coded as three separate pledges. The reason is that the latter two sentences are dependent on the first. If the agency is not set up then the following two sentences are irrelevant. Therefore it should only be one pledge. There is an issue also with natural sentences. Take the following sentence: ‘Women’s refuges will be given more funding and we will give £100m to help agencies that help the homeless this year’. The two parts of this sentence are in essence dealing with the same subject – funding non-governmental agencies to help those in need. Code this as one pledge. However, should you come across two parts of a sentence or more which do not have a strong common theme like ‘We shall pass legislation dealing with the problem of wandering horses and shall legislate against circus acts which inflict pain on animals’ then code as separate” (Mansergh 2004, p. 257).

Thomson (1999) and Mansergh (2004) thus show a greater concern with applying coding rules than this was the case in the more abstract work by Pomper and Lederman (1980), by reducing pledge categories, adopting rules that are more concrete, such as by elevating the importance of the testability criteria, by focusing on specific types of statements to determine their pledge status instead of attempting more abstract descriptions thereof and by showing greater concern with very practical issues such as how different pledges, which are (un)related to one another within or across different sentences ought to be coded. Nonetheless, of all the pledge studies discussed above, Pomper and Lederman (1980) provide a method which comes closest to offering something akin to a spatial model.

Having discussed especially the approaches by Downs (1957), Janda (1980), Robertson (1976), the CMP and Pomper and Lederman (1980, p. 236), the

⁶⁵ See footnote 64 on the preceding page as well.

next two chapters will present a new approach to analysing parties spatially by focusing on specificity rather than on issue position agreement or the “leftness” and “rightness” of electoral program statements.

3 **The specificity party space model**

As was already pointed out in the preceding chapter, the realization that valence and position issues are intimately related has already existed for some time and several studies have combined both mainly in one of two ways: either by incorporating both concepts into mathematical models to explain vote choice, conceptualizing valence issues more in terms of competence than positional (dis)agreement between parties, or by trying to disentangle both concepts and focusing to a greater degree on their conflictual nature rather than their specificity. In contrast to these approaches, the specificity model, to be presented below, is concerned with the degree to which parties' electoral program issue positions are either more or less specific. Additionally, this approach is distinct in a number of different ways. Firstly, the specificity model is not concerned with the consensual or conflictual nature of parties' issue positions, which is really an empirical question that can best be answered once the different issue positions have been extracted from electoral programs. Secondly, as opposed to the work by Downs (1957) and the CMP, which postulate a relationship between a party's ideological position and its policy proposals and emphasis respectively, the specificity model does not make any *a priori* assumption about the relationship between ideology and specificity. As was argued in the previous chapter, it is very difficult and perhaps even impossible to translate policy proposals into metric LR party positions. Both approaches are likely to be inherently subjective in the sense of being place and time bound. Similarly, it is very challenging to create an ordinal ideological scale with a sufficiently large and distinctive number of categories so as to permit the tracing of party movements in a LR political space. Thirdly, instead of opting for either of the two extremes presented by Downs (1957) and the CMP, amounting to a fixation on specific policy proposals and a complete lack of interest in electoral program content, the specificity model and its operationalization permit combining both concerns by coding electoral program statements in terms of their degree of specificity, conceptualized as the degree to which a party commits itself to changing the SQ.

Because the specificity model is theoretical only insofar as it purports that party competition can be analysed in terms of specificity, requiring only a small set of assumptions concerning expected party behaviour, but does not aim to directly postulate a relationship between specificity and other party system or electoral competition related variables, the specificity model should by no means be understood as a theory. It only offers a new manner to perceive

of party competition by focusing on the specificity of parties' issue positions and a way to place these in a novel political space. This chapter will proceed by first outlining the specificity space model, thereafter briefly explaining the issue positions it consists of and discussing the assumptions on which the model is based both explicitly and implicitly. The last section will discuss a number of hypotheses, which are derived from the specificity model and which are – in the absence of prior research findings on specificity – of a purely speculative nature. These hypotheses will be examined in the case study provided in the second part of this dissertation.

3.1 The specificity party space model

This section presents the specificity space model. Some of the theoretical considerations discussed below developed during the actual process of deducting the method of text analysis from electoral programs, such as the differentiation between actors and agents. They were nonetheless included here because the description of the operationalization process presented in the next chapter ought to focus less on novel abstract concepts than on transforming them into tools for actual content analysis. Moreover, it should be noted that the specificity model was, from the very beginning, conceptualized as an approach to electoral program text analysis. For the advantages of using these documents to derive party positions, please see section 2.1 on page 10.

The specificity party space model is a model of a political space which shows the extent to which a party commits itself to changing the SQ. The SQ is the sum of laws (including the constitution) and policies which are in force at a given point in time. Policies are defined broadly as the objectives a government pursues, its regulations as well as instructions given by the government to its agents,¹ such as its ministries. When an election approaches, a political party publishes its electoral program, which provides a summary of the issue positions for or by which it wishes to make changes to the SQ in the future. In other words, issue positions include both a party's aims and the measures by which it wishes to realize them, each of which can be more or less specific. Because parties state their issue positions as if they could pursue or implement them, it should be assumed that a party will in fact be able to do so (such as by winning at least an absolute parliamentary majority in the upcoming elections, whether this is a realistic possibility or not).² When a party or several parties

¹ For a discussion of the term agent, see below.

² Accordingly, when the term "party" is used below, it may refer to either the party in government or the party in parliament or both, depending on the context.

actually pass laws and implement policies between two elections, the SQ undergoes the corresponding changes.³

As was already mentioned above, a party states its commitment to changing the SQ by formulating issue positions. The term issue position consists of two words, each of which can be defined to arrive at the meaning given to the term here. The term position simply refers to the fact that a party can choose to commit itself to a greater or a lesser extent to changing the SQ by being either more or less specific about the aims it wishes to pursue or what it wishes to do in the future. The term issue refers to a particular topic which may be more or less narrowly defined and which can be identical to or form part of a broader policy field. A policy field is a more or less arbitrarily defined broad area of law and policy making which encapsulates some fundamental or important function(s) of the state.⁴ Policy fields are more or less arbitrarily defined because no “true” a priori comprehensive delineation between different policy fields exists. One could, for example, choose to define the welfare state as a policy field, or two of its constituents, the education and the health sector, or choose to distinguish between public and private education and health respectively, depending on the research interest and the level of focus chosen by the investigator. Moreover, some issue positions may be considered to form part of several policy fields at once, such as a position on the higher education system for future medical professionals, requiring some more or less arbitrary decision rule which permits assigning them to either the one or the other. Ultimately, the definition of policy fields and the resolution of these kinds of problems is best left to the researcher in pursuit of the answer to a particular question. Because of this conceptual flexibility, an issue mentioned in an electoral program may also at times be equivalent to an entire policy field, depending on how the latter are defined.⁵ For example, an electoral program statement may point out the need to reform a given labour market. The sum

³ Given the model's focus on the extent to which a party commits itself to making changes to the SQ, the specificity model is in no way concerned with whether it realizes or attempts to realize its stated issue positions in the future, as is the case with mandate theory related research.

⁴ Conceptually, policy fields are similar to “superissues” or dimensions in the sense that they group issues together or consist of them. They are different from political dimensions because the policy fields themselves have no spatial attributes. They are merely a collection of issue positions.

⁵ For the sake of clarity, it is thus assumed that parties can position themselves only on issues, but not on policy fields, so that every policy field also theoretically includes an issue that goes by that same name.

of existing policy fields, in relation to which parties state their issue positions, constitute an important part of a given country's SQ.

One may wish to critique the definition of issue positions provided above. Firstly, one may wish to define an issue as a problem for which the party proposes a solution, rather than just as a general topic. Although the result of this approach can often yield somewhat similar results to that of defining an issue as a topic, this alternative definition is much more complicated to apply. Many electoral program statements may not explicitly state the problem which causes a party to propose an aim or a measure, nor can the problem always be directly inferred from these. Secondly, one may be dissatisfied with the idea that issues are considered to fall within more or less arbitrarily delineated policy fields, without any attempt to predefine which issues belong to which policy field. Ideally, electoral programs would provide positions on narrowly defined issues, permitting the researcher to trace how each of these issue is dealt with by a party in comparison to other parties and how its treatment shifts, across time, to vaguer or more specific positions. Such a conceptualization, in which policy fields are split into issues and these issues are potentially split into sub-issues, is much more complicated than it may seem at first sight, however. The first problem one is likely to encounter is that the narrower the definition of the issues, the fewer the statements which make reference to it and the less likely one is to find meaningful variance across time and between parties. The second, much more serious problem, is that more specific issues tend to be composites of more general ones, thus potentially requiring the definition of a plethora of specific issue categories. Moreover, once one decides to split issues into sub-issues, the question is when this process should be stopped and how to deal with the increasing amount of overlap. For instance, the labour market issue of unemployment could be split into (short-term) unemployment and long-term unemployment; the long-term unemployment category in turn could be split into long-term and very-term unemployment (more than two years); the long-term unemployment category in turn could be split into particular issues such as those long-term unemployed who form part of a household, all members of which are unemployed, or those above 50 years of age, or those with disabilities and so forth. Another labour market issue may be gender equality, raising the question of whether the issue of long-term unemployed women belongs to the gender equality or long-term unemployment issue. At this stage of the development of the specificity model, the best way to deal with such complexities is to avoid them as much as possible by placing all issue categories on the same level or plane, without conceptualizing sub-issues and sub-sub-issue categories and so forth. Therefore, depending on how policy fields are delineated, a plethora of potential issue positions are

simply considered to fall within it and potential policy field overlap requires formulating more or less arbitrary decision rules. The usage of the term “policy field” is not necessary per se, since one may choose to replace it by the term issue and to relabel what has been called issues above sub-issues, but these are semantic questions of little conceptual consequence. Here, it was decided to make a clear verbal distinction between issue positions, by which parties commit themselves to changing the SQ, and policy fields, which are major areas of state activity and which divide the universe of issues into subsets.

That a party commits itself to changing the SQ by assuming a more or less specific position concerning a particular issue is still somewhat vague about what such an issue position actually is. There are two principal means by which a party can commit itself to making changes to the SQ, namely by stating an objective or by proposing a measure. The difference between the two is that an objective does not specify the manner in which the party wishes to realize it, whereas a measure provides information about the actual content of the laws, policies, regulations and so forth which a party wishes to implement. Generally speaking, it is clear that objectives, such as “We will reduce poverty”, are vaguer about the changes a party wishes to make to the SQ than are measures, like “We will increase the minimum salary”.⁶ The key difference between the two is that the party could, with an absolute majority, pass a law which increases the minimum salary, but it could not pass a law that literally reduces poverty, because to do so requires some or other measure(s).

Although the statement of an objective does not address the content of a measure by which a party wishes to change the SQ in order to realize that aim, it does nonetheless implicitly commit that party to changing the SQ to make its attainment possible.⁷ The only issue position which contains no information about how the party wishes to deviate from the SQ are the so-called Status Quo Issue Positions (SQIPs), which promise to sustain or defend the SQ instead and will be discussed in greater detail in the following section. Issue positions can thus be defined as the more or less specific means, including both objectives and measures, by which a party commits itself to making future changes to a particular part of the SQ called policy fields.

In order to be able distinguish between objectives and measures, it is also necessary to consider the target at whom or which the mean is aimed. There are

⁶ While objectives are generally less and measures more specific, the specificity of each of these means can vary. The objective “We will reduce the rate of poverty to below five percent” may, for example, be considered a specific objective.

⁷ Although it is possible that parties state particular aims and hope that they will be achieved simply by the passage of time, such aims are likely to be scarce in frequency.

five kinds of targets which will be discussed in turn: collectives, institutions, systems, actors and agents. A collective is a clearly distinguishable group of people for or against whom a change to the SQ is being proposed. An institution consists of a body of related rules, formulated by laws and policies, and which carries out particular functions. Agents are particular governmental institutions or public offices which are bound to follow the instructions of the government. A system forms a significant part or extension of an institution or agent and, in order to be considered as such, must require a substantial amount of additional resources (human or financial) to function. Actors are particular organizations constituted by civil society or public offices or institutions which are not officially bound to follow government instructions (such as NGOs, the judiciary etc.). As opposed to institutions, which merely carry out a function, agents and actors possess agency. For example, the labour market is an institution, the ministry of labour is an agent and labour unions are actors. Given the (presumed) power of the party over institutions, agents and systems, but only indirect power over actors via regulations and legislation, the former three also form a part of the SQ.

These terminological distinctions may seem somewhat excessive, considering that all these terms could be equated to “issues”, but it is necessary to be able to dismantle statements in order to extract issue positions from them correctly. To be able to do so, it is especially important to be able to identify collectives – which is relatively straight-forward – and to distinguish between actors and agents. The latter distinction is important because there is a difference between a party giving instructions to an agent, who or which is obliged to comply, or to an actor, who or which can choose freely whether to do so. For example, if the ministry of labour is instructed to increase its rate of inspections, this may be considered a measure, whereas when labour unions are asked to exercise wage demand restraint to control inflation, this mean is at best an objective, since it is unclear what the party wishes to do to entice labour unions to comply.

Lastly, it is possible to distinguish between tasks and functions. A task is to be carried out either once or only a small number of times before it is completed, after which the task is considered accomplished. A function is to be carried out many or a potentially endless number of times, which gives it much greater permanence than a task. Since a function is also often of a more fundamental nature than a task,⁸ functions are more likely to be vague rather than specific. Since it would be unreasonable to expect a party to provide a great amount of

⁸ A task may involve writing a report to make recommendations to resolve a particular problem, whereas a function may require that a continuous process is being supervised.

specificity on an institution's or agent's functions, like reporting on a particular phenomena and the like, the amount of information required in order for the statement of functions to be considered a specific issue position is somewhat lower than for other kinds of statements.⁹

As was mentioned previously, the specificity model is a political space in which parties are located according to the extent to which they commit themselves to changing the SQ. When a party states issue positions in its electoral program, it creates the expectation that if it wins an election, the party will try its best to realize these issue position. A party's commitment to changing the SQ increases as the specificity of its issue positions does because the more specific its stated objectives and measures, the easier it becomes to evaluate whether the party will have fulfilled its promises in the future. When an objective is unspecific, the party can select one of a large number of general developments in order to argue that it has at least partially achieved its goal. For example, a great many legislative changes could be interpreted as "promoting greater gender equality". Similarly, when a measure is vaguely formulated, the party has much greater leeway on the specific law or policy by which the party wishes to put that issue position into practice. Although electoral program issue positions will never be so specific as to permit one to directly transpose them into policies or laws, thus always giving parties some room for manoeuvre, there are still great differences in the extent to which parties commit themselves to changing the SQ in their electoral program statements.

3.1.1 Different types of issue positions

The specificity party space model consists of an ordinal scale in which each issue position category marks an increase in the amount of specificity with which a party commits itself to changing the SQ. The lowest category is the aforementioned SQIPs. SQIPs do not aim to make changes to the SQ, but instead commit the party to defending it. This commitment lacks specificity because any change that is to be made to the SQ – defined as the sum of laws and policies currently in place – in order to prevent changes to some other part thereof, or in order to preserve a more abstract SQ of power relations existing in politics, society, or economics, is not an SQIP. SQIPs can thus at best exalt the current SQ and proclaim the party's vague desire to support or defend it.¹⁰

⁹ For a more detailed discussion, see section 4.2.5.1 on page 88.

¹⁰ The operationalization of this term expands somewhat on this core concept. See especially appendix A.3.4 on page 429.

General Issue Positions (GIPs) reflect a greater commitment to changing the SQ because they do aim to make changes to it, but the nature of these changes or the aims pursued are very vague. As will be discussed below, it is generally assumed that parties prefer to give the impression that they are being specific when this is in fact not the case. Parties employ two major methods to give this impression. The first approach is to state that the party will do something which it can be expected to do anyway, such as to assess, research or conduct a study, or to formulate or to re-evaluate, or adjust some mean in the future. These kinds of statements are considered GIPs because any party can be expected to pursue such activities before coming to or once in power, and there is no real need to state them explicitly. The second approach is to promise cooperation, such as by calling for a pact or an agreement, cooperation, consultations, or negotiations between different targets, based on which the party will determine, or through which the party wishes to formulate an objective or carry out a measure. These kinds of statements are considered extremely vague for two reasons. Firstly, promising to address an issue in cooperation with others in the near future permits delaying the formulation of what the party actually wishes to achieve. Secondly, even if it does state its particular aims, the party will be able to shift the blame for not achieving a particular issue position with ease, possibly even being able to sabotage negotiations in order to avoid having to make the promised change to the SQ. Moreover, as was the case with the first set of GIPs mentioned above, any political party can be expected to seek the cooperation of those targets which are necessary or could make it very costly for a party to achieve its means. In other words, while such means may reflect the good, true and honest intentions of a party, they also lend themselves too easily to smoke and mirror tactics in order to permit a party to hide its preferences while appearing to be specific.

In contrast to SQIPs and GIPs, Vague Issue Positions (VIPs) and Issue Positions (IPs) are the most numerically common and what may be considered more in line with general expectations of what issue positions are. VIPs either only state a party's unspecific objectives, remain vague about the measures a party wants to implement, or call upon actors to behave in a certain way without indicating how the party intends to make them comply.¹¹ As opposed to VIPs, IPs state specific goals, provide specific measures the party wishes to implement in the future, or give specific instructions to agents.

¹¹ As opposed to the aforementioned somewhat similar kind of GIP, the party does not state that it seeks cooperation with the actor and clearly states its (vague) wishes.

In the ordinal space discussed above, the more specific an issue position, the greater the party's commitment to changing the SQ and thus the greater its deviation from it. If one assigns these issue positions a positive integer value, increasing by 1 with every increase in the level of specificity (in brackets), the resultant ordinal space consists of SQIPs (1), GIPs (2), VIPs (3) and IPs (4).

3.1.2 Assumptions

Having presented the specificity model, its issue positions and some related conceptual definitions, this section will discuss the assumptions which accompany the model. These assumptions are necessary in order to be able to formulate expectations about party behaviour in the specificity space, which in turn permits the formulation of hypotheses in order to investigate which factors may be related to party specificity.

Based on observations from a preliminary electoral program analysis, three general assumptions of the specificity model were formulated: firstly, that political parties generally prefer vaguer statements to more specific ones; secondly, that political parties generally prefer addressing a policy field to not addressing it; thirdly, that political parties generally prefer to give the impression that they are specific about a given topic although they are being vague.¹² The third assumption is closely related to the first two in the sense that parties frequently embellish statements with verbose and complex sounding but ultimately vacuous phrases. In addition to these observations-turned-assumptions about how parties behave, an additional set of assumptions is needed to explain why parties are expected to behave in this manner. These additional interlocking assumptions are: firstly, that parties wish to win votes, although this need not mean the prioritization of vote maximization above all other party pursuits; secondly, that the general public, including voters, partisans, researchers, the press as well as their political opponents, are at least to some extent aware of and expect that the given party follows through on its issue positions; thirdly, that not following through especially on its most specific issue positions – those the fulfilment of which are the easiest to evaluate – exposes the given party to potential electoral punishment and makes it vulnerable to attacks by political opponents and the media. Although these assumptions may be questioned to some extent, they are rather minimalist in

¹² The validity of the first two assumptions is corroborated by a vast amount of CMP related research findings. The second assumption is based especially on the reading of the center-periphery policy field sections of electoral programs for the case of Spain, in which especially the politically left parties clearly struggle to position themselves meaningfully, but nonetheless prefer to not simply ignore that policy field altogether.

nature and may well be considered supported by an observation of empirical political reality. Combining these two sets of assumptions, one may surmise that political parties generally prefer not to commit themselves to changing the SQ because being vague maximizes their ability to argue that they have in fact acted in accordance with their proposed issue positions. Thereby, political parties avoid the potentially negative effects that not following through on their proposed issue positions may have on them in the future.

That parties prefer being vague in order to avoid failing to implement their issue positions requires one to consider, firstly, why parties would be uncertain about their ability to do so, and, secondly, why parties offer any specific issue positions at all. Concerning the former question, parties operate under uncertainty because they are aware that circumstances beyond their control may change and have a significant impact on the extent to which they can realize their issue positions. The two most important unknowns are the election results themselves, which may force a political party to go into a coalition with another party and to make compromises, as well as economic downturns, which reduce a government's revenue and increase its expenditure (by, for example, leading to a drop in tax revenue and an increase in unemployment benefit spending), making the implementation of potentially costly measures difficult.¹³ The answer to the question of why parties offer any specific issue positions at all requires a brief and eclectic recourse to what may be considered the best theoretical conceptualization of parties' internal life, namely Panebianco (1988). To the latter, the function of a political party is to achieve its official goals or organizational ideology. The party leader has the purpose of carrying out this function through the so-called articulation of ends, the linking of his or her party's official goals with its activities by means of a strategy (Panebianco 1988, pp. 16, 41).¹⁴ It is during this process that "[t]he organizational ideology...becomes latent...[and] a permanent gap opens between official aims and organizational behaviour" (Panebianco 1988, p. 16). Dropping the conceptual distinction between party leadership and the party for parsimony's sake, it may thus be argued that parties derive (the majority of) their issue positions from their organizational ideology¹⁵ and

¹³ Similarly, Mansergh and Thomson (2007, p. 317).

¹⁴ The term "strategy" does not play a key role in Panebianco's (1988) theory and is not used here in any major analytical sense. Panebianco (1988, p. 41) describes the choice of alliances and tactics as examples of strategy. Here, strategy refers to the extent to which a party commits itself to changing the SQ, given electoral, political and economic concerns.

¹⁵ As stated previously, this does not mean that the specificity model assumes that specificity is generally related to political ideology. In other words, just because issue positions are derived from a party's organizational identity, this does not necessarily mean that their

state these in their electoral programs. If a party provides no specific issue positions at all, its strategy lacks credibility because the party does not provide any specific future measures with which it wishes to change the SQ or any specific objectives which it wishes to pursue in accordance with its official goals. All else being equal, such a lack of credibility makes a party vulnerable to attacks by its rivals and alienates potential voters, which prefer to vote for one of the more specific rival parties. As a consequence, political parties must thus balance the need to provide a credible strategy by means of specific issue positions with their desire to minimize specificity in order to avoid the potentially negative consequences of not being able to follow through on them. In order to ameliorate this tension somewhat, electoral programs often give the impression that they are specific when in fact the vast majority of their issue positions are vague. While it may thus be true that parties formulate electoral programs with good and honest intentions, the specificity model assumes that parties attempt to trick its electoral program readers into a false sense of specificity.

3.1.3 Hypotheses

The above stated assumptions concerning party behaviour permit the formulation of hypotheses about how specificity may be related to other party system related variables. It must be pointed out once again that these hypothesized relationships do not form a part of the specificity model. Instead, the hypotheses to be discussed below are a first attempt at investigating such potential relationships.

From a theoretical viewpoint, the relationship between a party's ideological positions and specificity is the most interesting, given the key role of this variable in party system related research. Without pre-existing empirical evidence on specificity, it is difficult to come to a clear conclusion about whether to expect a relationship between these two variables and, if so, whether it should be expected to be positive or negative. Supposing that such a relationship were to exist, it may be argued that specific issue positions are more "ideologically charged" than vague ones. While parties can be expected to agree on vague objectives, like reducing poverty, and vague measures, like reforming a particularly troublesome institution, they are likely to differ on

degree of specificity is somehow linked to a party's ideological position. Specificity could also, for instance, be motivated by strategic concerns. See the preceding footnote and below.

the specifics of how a particular problem is best resolved.¹⁶ Ideologically left and right parties may both, for example, affirm that poverty is bad, but while the former may want to actively redistribute wealth by means of a progressive tax reform, the latter may want to cut taxes in order to stimulate the economy, thus boosting employment to achieve that very same end. Thus, when a left (right) party proposes more specific issue positions, it shifts to the left ideologically, whereas when it proposes vague issue positions, it shifts toward the political center. One may, however, also be inclined to argue just the opposite, namely that many specific issue positions are likely to be more technical and thus likely to be of no ideological significance, such as the purchase of modern information technology equipment for the state administration, while vague issue positions may be considered highly ideological, like being for or against immigration. In this case, the vaguer a party's issue positions, the more it deviates from the political center. Nonetheless, the latter relationship seems somewhat contradictory in general, because greater vagueness would leave more room for interpreting a party's measures or aims and thus likely cause the party to be perceived of as more moderate. Thus, a party may position itself against (uncontrolled) immigration by proposing to "strengthen our country's borders", rather than by proposing to station more security personnel on them. Moreover, according to the specificity model, the more specific a party's issue positions, the more it deviates from the SQ. If a party proposes a large number of specific issue positions, it has the intention to make a large amount of specific changes to that SQ and is thus perhaps more likely to be perceived of as more left (right) than it would be perceived of if it were to merely offer more generic general statements. In addition to the first argument about the greater ideological content of specific issue positions presented above, the last two points seem to incline the balance toward postulating a positive relationship between a party's ideological distance from the center and its specificity. Thus:

- The more a party deviates from the ideological political center, the more specific its issue positions.

Another factor which is likely to have a major impact on the specificity of a party's strategy is its need to distinguish itself from a rival party in the eyes of the voter. Thus, as the ideological distance between two parties declines, it may no longer be sufficient to issue generic statements, because both parties

¹⁶ Measures make up the vast majority of more specific issue positions. Based on the argument that ideology is revealed by the manner in which particular objectives are to be realized, one would perhaps be led to expect that specific objectives are also likely to be less ideologically revealing than specific measures.

are likely to make very similar ones. Moreover, an ideologically similar rival party may attract a given party's key electorate, thus possibly causing the latter to make specific commitments to changing the SQ in order to retain these voters. In order to boost their distinctiveness, parties can thus be expected to increase their commitment to changing the SQ by offering more specific issue positions. This could lead to the formulation of the following hypothesis: The smaller the ideological distance between two parties, the more specific its issue positions. It is also clear, however, that if the rival party is much smaller than the party in question, the latter may not feel the need to adjust its specificity because it does not consider the electoral proximity of its rival a threat. As such, not only the ideological proximity, but also the rival party's performance in electoral polls may play an important role in determining a given party's specificity. When both these indicators, ideological proximity and expected future electoral performance, are combined into the concept of party threat,¹⁷ the hypothesis can be reformulated as:

- The more a party is threatened by rival parties, the greater its specificity.

Furthermore, given the general desire to avoid specific commitments, parties are likely to try to anticipate electoral outcomes and adjust the specificity of their issue positions accordingly. Three scenarios, ordered from the one implying greatest to the one implying the smallest amount of specificity, are possible: firstly, a party is uncertain but believes it has a chance of winning an election; secondly, a party believes it will lose an election; thirdly, a party believes it will win an election. Concerning the former scenario, when electoral victory seems a realistic but highly uncertain possibility, a party is enticed to offer more specific issue positions to win over voters. Regarding the second situation, when a party believes to have little or no prospect of winning, the incentive to offer specific issue positions is smaller. Although parties believe that they will not be given an opportunity to enact their issue positions and could thus make all sorts of promises, they will exercise restraint because of the possibility of the occurrence of unanticipated events in the course of an electoral campaign, which could carry the party into government despite its assumption to the contrary. More importantly, a party also anticipates running in subsequent elections and it may become difficult to explain why it has suddenly dropped a large number of specific issue positions between two elections, although these are supposedly derived from the party's – relatively

¹⁷ This concept is somewhat similar to the one formulated by Meguid (2005) and Spoon, Hobolt, and de Vries (2014). The latter, for example, conceptualize threat in terms of the electoral strength of a party, understood as issue owner, and the spatial location of voters vis-à-vis that issue (Spoon, Hobolt, and de Vries 2014, p. 366).

stable – organizational ideology.¹⁸ Lastly, when a party is certain that it will win, it has little or no incentive to offer specific issue positions to maximize its freedom of action once in government (and parliament). These considerations permit the formulation of the following hypotheses:¹⁹

- Parties that are certain that they will win an upcoming election will be less specific than other parties.

These hypotheses will be tested in the second part of this dissertation, which presents a case study of the Spanish party system. Before proceeding to this part, however, it is necessary to discuss how the specificity space model presented above has been operationalized and why. That is the subject of the following chapter.

¹⁸ They could also decide not to offer any specific issue positions, but this may give the impression that the party has quite literally given up, thus still reducing the party's electoral prospects further.

¹⁹ There is also some empirical support for this hypothesis, provided by Pomper and Lederman (1980, pp. 145–6): “We have earlier found that the party trailing in a particular campaign tends to emphasize future pledges. Similarly, the party expected to lose the presidential election is always more specific. It is as if the underdog...attempts to win converts by making more detailed promises. The leading party needs only to protect its advantage, which can be done best by not antagonizing any group and by holding to relatively ambiguous positions”.

4 Operationalization of the specificity party space model

This chapter discusses the operationalization of the specificity party space model described in the previous chapter, or, to be more precise, the coding rules which should be applied to electoral programs in order to extract issue positions from them. While giving a detailed overview of the procedure and the different types of issue positions, the focus of this chapter lies especially on coding rules which may be considered most controversial and does not concern itself with the more technical aspects of the method.¹ The comprehensive list of coding rules is contained in the coding manual found in appendix A on page 397. As becomes evident by a cursory reading of that document, the number of decision made during the process of operationalizing the specificity model are too numerous to be dealt with comprehensively and would in any case be very tedious to read if such an attempt was made. Moreover, there is no doubt that the decisions which were taken when formulating these coding rules were made subjectively, as is inevitable in a process which derives the procedure to be applied directly from the object of analysis. Literally thousands of decisions were made during a process in which electoral program text was read; the degree of specificity of a given text passage was “intuitively” – that is, subjectively – determined; the reason behind this intuition was identified and thus made somewhat more objective; that reason was formulated as a rule to be able to generalize it from the particular statement to other similar statements; the functionality of this rule was tested and the rule adjusted or rejected accordingly. Finally, provided the rule had proven itself useful, its compatibility with the larger set of already derived rules was considered and, if found to be unsatisfactory, the rule was adjusted or dropped. This process led to at least a handful of distinct rule systems, which morphed into one another in a non-linear process of evolution as new rules were formulated and old ones dismissed. Over time, however, cycling through different combinations of rules, those which functioned best in terms of their applicability and their place in the rule system as a whole formed part of a set of barely changing core rules to which, over time, additional rules began to attach themselves until the method was comprehensive enough to be used for the analysis of entire text passages. As the number of rules were increased and brought into

¹ More technical aspects include, for example, the definition of text elements such as paragraphs, very particular rules to be applied only to certain kinds of expressions, or the so-called exceptions, specified in the coding manual to clarify potentially ambivalent situations.

alignment, the subjectivity of the process also declined notably. Nonetheless, any and all rules may and should of course be questioned and there is no point in denying the ultimately subjective origin from which all these rules have sprung.

During the trial-and-error process described above, three motives played a key role in determining whether a rule should be adopted or discarded: firstly, congruence with the theoretical model laid out in the previous chapter; secondly, that a given rule could be applied in a (subjectively) reliable manner² to different text passages or statements; thirdly, that the overall coding process remained manageable, despite the complexity of the evolving rule framework. Often, it was necessary to weigh these different considerations up against each other, given that neglecting any one of them in favour of the others would ultimately render the method of little use.

The aim of this chapter is thus to provide an overview of the system of rules that has been developed for electoral program analysis and to elaborate on the thoughts behind some of the key decisions that were made during this process. Although an effort was made to present the developed method as systematically and clearly as possible, it is at times inevitable to refer to concepts which will be dealt with in greater detail further along the way. Moreover, the amount of detail may at times be difficult to digest, but this should not lead to the erroneous conclusion that the method is too complex to be of any use. The basic rules are in fact quite simple and can be easily applied to electoral program text, as is demonstrated by being able to comprehensively summarize them down to three A4 mind map pages (see appendix B on page 446).³ That impression may, however, not be gained here at first sight because this chapter includes a lot of information about the evolution of the method as well as the reasons for taking particular decisions and goes into a level of detail which aims to disambiguate and to provide a source of reference to find answers to more particular kinds of questions. None of this additional information, although it is important from a theoretical and methodological viewpoint, is normally required when the method is applied to electoral programs in practice. In order to present the method by which the

² High reliability assures that the application of a method produces similar results, such as when two different persons apply it to the same document. Since the method's reliability was not tested formally due to a lack of time and the in and of itself sizeable nature of the research project, it would be wrong to state that the method is scientifically reliable. At best, one may say that it appears to be or is subjectively reliable.

³ These include all rules, except the two (rather comprehensive) tables contained in the coder manual in appendix A.3.4 on page 410.

specificity model was operationalized, this chapter will thus proceed by first discussing failed approaches to analysing electoral text in order to explain why one key decision, the coding at the sentence level, was taken. The next section will show how issue positions can be broken down into different elements. The subsequent sections will then provide an operational definition of issue positions and discuss general coding rules, distinguish between irrelevant and relevant text and, lastly, present the so-called adjudication rules, which ought to be applied in situations of doubt.

4.1 Discarded approaches to analysing electoral program text

The coding method aims to extract issue positions from electoral program text. In the previous chapter, issue positions were defined as the more or less specific means, including both objectives and measures, by which a party commits itself to making future changes to a particular part of the SQ. This definition is the end result of a long process of experimenting with different approaches to analysing text, in each of which especially the centrality and the definition of the term issue has varied. The original approach defined issue positions simply as the future means a party wishes to implement to make changes to the SQ. Departing from this definition, which did not yet determine the meaning and role of the term issue, three major approaches to text analysis were experimented with, which differed especially in terms of the text unit to be coded, namely the paragraph, text block and natural sentence. Each of these approaches will now be discussed in turn in order to justify why it was decided, firstly, that text will be coded at the sentence level and, secondly, that issues were simply defined as topics which fall into more or less arbitrarily delineated policy fields, as was already mentioned in the preceding chapter.⁴

One of the first approaches which was attempted was to analyse electoral program text at the paragraph level, meaning that an entire paragraph would be analysed and coded, as an entire unit, as a particular issue position. This seemed desirable primarily for two reasons: firstly, because paragraphs “naturally” divide text into smaller units which are likely to be focused on a particular topic, which may serve as the issue; secondly, if coding could proceed at the paragraph level, the coding process would be much faster. Nonetheless, several problems led to an abandonment of this approach. Firstly, different electoral programs may be written using different “styles”, so that some documents may

⁴ See section 3.1 on page 54.

have a tendency to provide large paragraphs, whereas others break text up into smaller paragraphs, sometimes consisting of only a single sentence at a time. The number of issue positions would thus ultimately be the outcome of stylistic choices rather than content. Secondly, although a single paragraph may include several different statements containing future means, some of which may be vague and some of which may be specific, the paragraph would have to be coded as a single issue position. Given the specificity model's assumption that the majority of issue positions are vague and that parties try to give the impression that they are being more specific than they actually are, one could argue that the method searches for specificity. Therefore, it would be reasonable to code a paragraph as a whole based on the most specific mean it contains. For example, if a paragraph contained several vague and one specific mean, the whole paragraph would be coded as an IP. The ultimate consequence of such an approach is that it is not possible to know exactly how many means of each type are contained in a given document, rendering the comparison between documents impossible. Thirdly, as a careful reading of the previous two points reveals, even when entire paragraphs are coded as issue positions, of which type a paragraph is ultimately depends on the different types of means found within it. In other words, a careful analysis below the paragraph level is still necessary, but only a potentially small amount of the information which this analysis generates is eventually recorded, namely the most specific mean type contained in the paragraph. Fourthly, coding text at the paragraph level implicitly assumes that all means within a single paragraph address the same issue. If this assumption was made, it would be ultimately unsatisfactory to be unable to identify the issue to which all these issue positions supposedly refer. If a method to identify issues were developed, however, it is very likely that one of the key findings resulting from its application would be that the majority of the larger electoral program paragraphs in fact address various issues. This renders the whole approach ultimately pointless. Overall, the main reasons for abandoning this approach were that paragraph length depends on the "style" utilized to write the document, that choosing the most specific issue position contained in a paragraph and ignoring all others would render document comparison meaningless and that even if coding was conducted at the paragraph level, it would be necessary to develop and apply rules which permit one to analyse text much more closely.

Motivated especially by the perception that many electoral program paragraphs contain statements which refer to various issues, the attempt to analyse paragraphs was abandoned in favour of analysing text blocks. Text blocks consist of a number of consecutive statements which are concerned with the

same issue. This approach, which puts much more focus on the issue as a concept,⁵ seemed desirable especially for three reasons. Firstly, coding text according to the issues it refers to seems the most appropriate solution from a theoretical standpoint, since different issue positions addressing the same particular issue could vary in specificity and content across time and between parties, permitting comparability despite variation. Secondly, since all issue positions contained within a text block address the same issue, equating the issue position type of the given text block to the most specific mean(s) contained within it seems more theoretically justifiable, since what is now being recorded is the maximum amount of specificity with which a specific (and identifiable) issue is being addressed. Unfortunately, the definition and identification of issues turned out to be much more difficult than expected.

One of the first difficulties which emerged from the text block approach was the sheer number of potential issues found within a given text passage. For example: “We need to tackle long-term unemployment, a problem that has grown especially during the 2008 economic crisis. It is necessary to increase the efficiency of our active labour market policies and make the reception of unemployment benefits more dependent on the search for new employment, to provide those seeking employment with sufficient incentives to find it.” This text passage contains at least four potential issues, long-term unemployment, active labour market policies, unemployment benefits and job searching incentives. In order to resolve this ambivalence, various definitions of issues were formulated, which included defining issues as problems which a party wishes to resolve by some mean(s), as forming a part of the SQ – like laws or policies – or, more broadly, as topics.⁶ No matter how issues were defined or which unit of textual analysis these definitions were applied to, however, the same question emerged: How should one relate and divide the seemingly infinite variability of issues in order to determine the primary issue of a given paragraph? For example, is unemployment a separate issue from long-term unemployment and are both distinct from unemployed single mothers? Moreover, is the issue of unemployed single mothers an issue concerning unemployment, or an issue concerning gender equality?⁷

⁵ The previous approach only assumed that paragraphs were equivalent to issue positions and thus implicitly that each paragraph dealt with a single issue. It was not concerned with determining what these issues were, however.

⁶ See below for a more detailed discussion of these.

⁷ This question is crucial because each text unit, in this case each text block, should only be coded as a single issue position.

The perhaps most immanently suitable approach to resolving some of these concerns is to break down issues into sub-issues and sub-sub-issues. Therefore, the labour market policy field could consist of issues such as “unemployment”, “salary” and “contract type”. Each issue in turn consists of sub-issues, such as “unemployment” consisting of “normal”, “long-term” and “very long-term” unemployment. These could in turn consist of sub-sub-issues such as the long-term unemployed without previous job experience, or above the age of 55 and so forth. As the sub- and sub-sub-issue examples show, however, creating an a priori issue categorization scheme which permits sorting any given sub- or sub-sub-issue into an issue category is likely to be extremely difficult to conceptualize, given the sheer number and possible combinations of different topics. Moreover, the more specific an issue category, the less likely it becomes that a party actually addresses it by means of an issue position, defeating the ultimate purpose of sorting means into issue categories in the first place, namely to trace the variability in specificity with which particular and identifiable issues are dealt with. While it would thus be recommendable to limit the categorization schemata to the issue and sub-issue level, this limitation may only somewhat ameliorate, but certainly does not resolve the other problems associated with this approach. The most important challenge continued to be, as the example concerning labour market policies above shows, that although there is often a sense that several statements ought to belong to one text block, these are in fact often quite different in content, in some ways leading up to and in other ways pointing away from the statement which may be considered to ultimately contain the primary issue. Deriving rules to determine with precision which particular issue ought to be selected from various options and to determine the points at which a series of statements ought to be separated into different text blocks seemed a task impossible to resolve. Therefore, both the text block as well as the associated a priori categorization approaches were abandoned.

Up to this point, the term issue has been equated implicitly and somewhat generically with the term topic, although, as was already mentioned above, other definitions were experimented with in the hope of resolving some of these concerns. Issues were, firstly, defined as problems. Although electoral programs do mention problems, however, many paragraphs, text blocks or sentences may nonetheless propose means without relating them directly to a problem.⁸ For example, the measure “We will increase the minimum salary”

⁸ Compared to measures, objectives are more likely to mention problems when the objective is to ameliorate or resolve something negative, although objectives may also be stated positively. An example of each is “We will reduce unemployment” and “We will reach full employment”.

does not state a problem. One could solve this difficulty by assuming that the opposite of what the mean does is the problem, thereby reading into this particular example that the problem which prompted this measure is that the minimum salary is too low. This solution ignores the difference between means and ends, however, and that a single measure could be related to a large number of potential problems. For example, the problem this measure is intended to address may be poverty, or gender based discrimination (if a disproportionally large amount of women are paid the minimum salary). In general, asking coders to frequently and actively read something into a text that is not explicitly stated in it is not an appealing solution.⁹

Secondly, defining issues as parts of the SQ¹⁰ is a theoretically desirable conceptualization, but faced a similar challenge as the definition of issues as problems: Many statements may in fact not state which part of the SQ they wish to address. As was explained in the previous chapter, the SQ is defined as the sum of laws and policies in place at a given point in time, so that a mean proposing a minimum salary increase would aim to change that part of the SQ which sets the minimum salary. Objectives, however, tend to talk not about parts of the SQ, but about phenomena which exists in the “real world”. For example, the objective “We will reduce unemployment” aims to reduce unemployment, but the phenomena of unemployment does not form a part of the SQ.

Lastly, coming a full circle, the more generic definition of issues as topics seems appealing since it potentially subsumes the problem and the part-of-the-status-quo definition of an issue. While every mean has a topic, however, it is also plain to see that the definition of an issue as a topic is basically circular, since both terms are somewhat synonymous, and does not resolve the conundrums which seemed to have called for a more precise definition of the term in the first place.¹¹

⁹ Moreover, while many units of analysis may not state them, problems are, by their very nature, somewhat vague and a party may thus often attribute the power to affect particular problems to means merely as a rhetorical device, without giving such statements too much significance.

¹⁰ This definition was developed in relation to the a priori categorization scheme, but was also applied in different contexts.

¹¹ Another problem associated with coding at the paragraph and text block levels is that there is no good reason to consider two statements on the same issue as constituting one issue position if stated within the same paragraph or text block, but as two separate issue positions when stated spatially apart. Arguably, if the logic of this approach was to be taken further, its consequence would be the need to summarize entire electoral programs down to particular

From the discussion above, it may already have become clear that the specificity and thus the issue position type of a given text unit is not determined by the specificity of the issue it addresses, but by the specificity of the mean it contains. What is ultimately of interest is the specificity of a party's measures and objectives – the amount or type of information they contain – and not how narrowly or broadly the issues they are formulated in reference to are defined. This begs the question of whether issues could not simply be defined as means. Unfortunately, this is not a theoretically sound solution either because measures are generic actions a party can execute and are thus not inherently aimed at particular issues. For example, a party may propose a measure to increase the punishment for a particular kind of activity, irrespective of whether this measure is concerned with the issue of house break-ins, tax fraud, discrimination, or environmental protection. Defining issues in terms means is thus somewhat misguided.

Due to the problems discussed above, it was thus decided to opt for an approach in which the term “issue” plays a secondary role in the sense that it is simply defined as one of a large number of potential topics which is related to a particular policy field, which is in turn defined as a more or less arbitrarily delineated broad area of law and policy making which encapsulates some fundamental or important function(s) of the state. As was already explained in the previous chapter, given the laxity of these definitions, the term with which an issue may be identified and the label the researcher has given to a particular policy field may at times be identical, but its meaning – a topic or an area of state activity – is different. For example, the issue position statement “We will reform the labour market” contains the issue “labour market”, which falls into the labour market policy field. As will become evident below, the flexibility of the definition of the term issue – which is not fixated on the concept of problems, measures and the like – is what ultimately permits the unfolding of a very precise method to extract issue positions from electoral programs.

Another still unresolved question was the choice of the unit of analysis. Given that the paragraph and text block units were, as discussed above, problematic and natural sentences were basically affected by the same problems,¹² it was decided that coding should proceed on a sentence-by-sentence basis,

issues, a massive and highly complex exercise that would be very laborious and difficult to accomplish.

¹² This approach too was attempted, but ultimately failed due to some of the the same reasons as the other two. For example, the stylistic choice of the length of a sentence, not its content, would determine the number of issue positions contained in electoral program text.

but that each sentence should first be de-constructed into its constituent elements, from which the number of issue positions contained within each single sentence could then be determined. All means contained in an electoral program can thus be extracted without any loss of information and the impact of stylistic choices, especially the length of paragraphs and even sentences, on the outcome of the analysis was reduced.¹³ The method that was ultimately developed will now be elaborated on below.¹⁴

4.2 Positions and text elements

Electoral program text and the issue positions it contains consist of a number of different elements: the verb element, the mean, the target, the positive consequence and ancillary elements. Before discussing these in more detail, the first part of this subsection provides an overview of how some of these different key concepts relate to one another. The verb element, which also forms an inseparable part of the mean, consists of one or more verbs which describe the action the party wishes to carry out to pursue or implement the mean. The mean is the particular objective or measure which the party proposes to carry out in the future. The target is that collective, actor, or agent at whom or which the mean is directed. The positive consequence (PC) is the result of implementing or reaching a mean successfully. The verb elements, targets and PCs determine the number of issue positions found within a given sentence. The means determine the issue position type (VIP, IP etc.).¹⁵ Since all these elements determine both the number and types of issue positions found in electoral program text, they are called key elements. This distinguishes them from ancillary elements, which are a collection of

¹³ Of course, this does not mean that none of the stylistic choices parties make no longer matter. A party may prefer to talk profusely about a matter and to build up to its more specific measures by first stating them more vaguely, including the vague objectives pursued by it, while another party may decide to state its issue positions more parsimoniously.

¹⁴ This method in fact emerged from the trial-and-error approach described above and its fusion with another attempt, not mentioned thus far, which aimed to analyse text from a grammatical vantage point, such as by building coding rules on top of subject-verb-adjective/adverb-object structures. Given the in-depth linguistic knowledge required to pursue such an approach when it comes to analysing more complex statements and that this would hardly make the method more appealing to political scientists, this approach was only pursued for a few weeks. Nonetheless, the fusion of these approaches ultimately resulted in the method presented below and its traces are still somewhat visible in the final method.

¹⁵ If several means form a mean par group, such a mean par group also determines the number of resultant issue positions. See below.

textual elements or items of information which impact neither on the number of issue positions nor their type. Once all the elements contained within a particular sentence have been identified, the X-by-Y rule is applied to them in order to determine the number of issue positions which they constitute. While the different text elements thus permit de-constructing sentences, the X-by-Y rule permits the reassembling of these elements into issue positions. In its abridged and simplified version, the X-by-Y rule states that the number of issue positions within a single sentence is equal to the number of related verb, mean, PC and target elements multiplied with one another. The word “related” is key to this definition, since elements can be related to one another in terms of causality or parity, to be discussed next.

When two elements are related causally, this describes a situation in which one or several means are presented as being the outcome of one or several other means. When this occurs, the mean flowing from another mean – the latter usually being an objective – becomes a PC. This relationship of causality, which can occur only between means, is signalled by words such as “in order to” or “by”. In the example “In order to reduce household poverty (PC), we will increase the minimum salary”, the increase in the minimum salary causes the reduction in household poverty. The definition of relations of causality already indicates that it is somewhat more complex and will be discussed in greater detail at a later stage.

When two elements are related to one another on a par, they are presented “side by side”, in which case they are said to form a par group (a term that will become relevant below). This is often signalled by words like “and” as well as “neither” and “nor”. While two (or more) means of *any* type may form a par group, the other kinds of key elements only form a par group if they are related to the same mean and are of the same kind. As a consequence, there are mean par groups, verb element par groups, target par groups and so forth. For example, “We will increase the minimum salary and improve working conditions” consists of two means, to “increase the minimum salary” and to “improve working conditions”, both of which are related to one another on a par.¹⁶ “We will offer retraining programs for mothers re-entering the job market after having given birth and the long-term unemployed” contains one measure, to “offer retraining programs”, and two targets which are on a par, mothers and the long-term unemployed. “We will offer retraining programs for mother re-entering the job market after having given birth and increase the period of welfare benefit coverage of the long-term unemployed” contains

¹⁶ An example using “neither” and “nor” is “We will permit neither changes to the constitution nor the parliamentary rules”.

two measures on a par, each with their own respective target (which is what is meant above where it states that key elements form par groups only when they are related to the same mean).

Whether two (or more) elements are on a par is relevant to the application of the X-by-Y rule, since those elements on a par with one another are multiplied by the number of means which are on a par with one another in order to determine the total amount of issue positions. In the statement “We will offer retraining programs (measure) for mothers re-entering the job market (target) in order to close the gender based salary gap (PC)” no element is on a par with another, because there is only one mean and none of the other kinds of elements occurs more than once. The sentence thus contains only one issue position. In the example “We will strengthen (verb element 1) and increase (verb element 2) the efficiency of our active (target 1) and passive labour market policies (target 2)”, however, two verb elements¹⁷ as well as two targets are on a par, the total number of issue position contained within the statement thus being four. The reason that the total number of issue positions is calculated by multiplying these elements is because each kind of element is considered important in and of itself – as will be argued in their respective sections – and because, given the manner in which they are stated, the different elements can be combined into the resultant number of issue positions. For instance, the above example results in four distinct issue positions: “We will strengthen our active labour market policies”; “We will increase the efficiency of our active labour market policies”; “We will strengthen our passive labour market policies”; “We will increase the efficiency of our passive labour market policies”.

From a critical perspective, it may seem that splitting this single statement into four, each of which constitute separate issue positions, is somewhat redundant because each resultant issue position is in fact very vague in content. Nonetheless, if one takes what a party says in its electoral program seriously and considers that the statement of any mean (except SQIPs) can be interpreted as a lesser or greater commitment to changing the SQ, then this procedure is plausible. After all, although the statements are vague, active and passive

¹⁷ As was mentioned previously, verb elements are intimately linked to means. Technically, the above example contains two means, to “strengthen...the efficiency” and to “increase the efficiency”. In the explanation above, the focus was placed on the verb element rather than the mean, because “efficiency” on its own is not a mean. This distinction is irrelevant in situations such as the one above. It may become relevant, however, in other situations, where, for instance, two verb elements like “strengthen” and “increase” are combined with “efficiency” and “capacity”, each verb element being combined with each noun and thus resulting in four issue positions.

labour market policies constitute a distinct set of policies, resources and regulations. Moreover, the difference between “to strengthen” and “to increase the efficiency” may be non-existent if the party considers both synonymous. But strengthening may ultimately mean hiring more public servants, while increasing efficiency may mean reducing the required paperwork in order to dole out unemployment benefits. Each of these verb elements may thus imply different kinds of measures, which may, moreover, be distinct for active and passive labour market policies. These more theoretical justifications can be supplemented by two more practical ones. Firstly, it is obviously impossible for this method to determine the extent to which a party really considers that there is a difference, for instance, between the two verb elements employed in the (fictional) example above. It is possible, however, to disaggregate the stated information in a systematic fashion and to derive issue positions from it. Secondly, there will no doubt be cases where such disaggregation makes intuitively little sense. The problem with intuition, however, is that, almost by definition, the reasons behind it are either unknown or very difficult to convey inter-subjectively. The formulation of objective rules to evaluate whether the differences between terminology should be considered significant enough to warrant treating a statement as a single or more than one issue position is – insofar as this is even possible – likely to dramatically increase the complexity of the coding method and to substantially decrease (subjective) coding reliability. It is thus best to take text at face value, identify the different elements contained in a statement, recognize the relation between them and constitute the respective issue positions.

Introducing various key elements in addition to the mean implicitly gives them great significance, because they have the power to multiply the number of issue positions. The theoretical and practical arguments provided above justify this approach, but since it is always desirable that important methodological choices are motivated as much as possible by theoretical concerns, where these exist they will be elaborated on in the respective subsections below.

As was mentioned various times before, although statements are broken down into their elements and reassembled into issue positions via the X-by-Y rule, what is eventually coded are not individual elements, but the resultant issue positions. Breaking text down into its elements mentally permits (subjectively) reliable coding, while coding at the issue position level permits efficiency. Once the next subsection has discussed the extent to which the given party is required to be the grammatical subject of means in electoral program text, the rest of this section will discuss the different elements as well as the X-by-Y rule mentioned above in greater detail in turn.

4.2.1 The party as grammatical subject

Before commencing a discussion of key and ancillary elements, it is necessary to discuss the role of the actual “grammatical subject” of a mean. Contrary to what one may expect due to the definition of an issue position as the proposal of a mean by a political party, it is not necessary that the party is the explicit subject of the issue position it proposes. The subject may also be words like “we”, “our country”, or the third person (among others). Even statements in which someone or something other than the party is called upon to do something without any explicit involvement of the party itself is also considered a mean, such as, for example, the statement “The labour unions must realize that the minimum salary should not be increased”.¹⁸ The reason why it is not necessary that the role of the party is clarified is that, as stated previously, it is implied that it is the party that will do the implementing or pursuing of some mean. Thus, the above statement leads to the expectation that the political party will take the necessary actions to make labour unions realize that the minimum salary should not be increased.

4.2.2 The verb element

The verb element consists of one or several verbs which form part of the statement of a party’s mean(s), appearing at the beginning of that statement, and names the action that will be performed as an usually intricate part of the execution of that mean. For example, in the statement “We must reform the labour market”, “must reform” is the verb element. Not every verb that appears in electoral program text is a verb element, however. Based on the carefully worded definition of a verb element stated above, in the example “We must prevent those that do not want to work from receiving unemployment benefits”, the verb “to do”, “to want” and “to receive” do not form part of any verb element. Instead, the verb element with which the party presents its mean is “must prevent”. Identifying the verb element is easy if one keeps in mind that the verb element forms the first part of the statement of a given mean or means. Moreover, while a verb element may consist of a number of verbs, not every string of verbs is considered a verb element. For example, in the statement “We must reform and increase the efficiency of the labour market”, the verb element is not “must reform and increase”. Instead, the

¹⁸ Strictly speaking, this statement is considered relevant text and thus also to contain at least one issue position due to the occurrence of the word “must” (see the next subsection and section 4.4 on page 108). Nonetheless, the example shows that the party need not be the explicit subject in order for a statement to be considered an issue position.

statement contains two verb elements, “must reform” and “must increase”, both elements thus forming a par group.

A concept which is closely related to but distinct from the verb element is the word group. Word groups consist of distinct sets of verbs which are likely to form part of verb element statements related to particular types of means. For example, the verb “to reform” is likely to appear as part of a VIP measure and the verb “to increase” is likely to form part of an IP measure. The emphasis must be placed on “likely” for various reasons: Firstly, there may be many verbs that do not belong to any word group at all. Secondly, the word groups presented with the different types of means in the coder manual in the appendix are not exhaustive, meaning that many verbs that may belong to a given word group are not explicitly included. Thirdly, the combination of different kinds of verbs into a verb element can affect the final coding decision. For example, “may reform” is not the same as “must reform”.¹⁹ Fourthly, it is possible for the same exact verb phrase to determine or to have no influence on an issue position’s type, depending on the context in which it is presented.²⁰ While especially the third and fourth point may not be very illuminating at this stage, the three essential points that are being made here are only that, firstly, verb elements may contain verbs belonging to different word groups; secondly, that these word groups may help to indicate what type of mean a coder is dealing with; thirdly, that, with one exception and as opposed to verb elements, word groups do not determine coding outcomes. The ultimate purpose of word groups is to support the coder in the coding process. Because verb groups do not determine, but may only indicate mean type, they are said to signal the latter.

In general, the verb element was (re-)introduced as one of the last changes made to the method in order to solve a conceptual problem. Verbs were often stated as a part of different kinds of means (for example, to in- or decrease punishment) and as a part of different word groups which signal the type of mean (for example, an IP as opposed to a VIP mean)²¹, without explicitly relating the two. As was just pointed out above, introducing the verb element

¹⁹ See the distinction between relevant and irrelevant text in section 4.4 on page 108 and appendix A.5 on page 438.

²⁰ As will be elaborated on in section 4.2.4 on page 83, verb phrases can form a part of either a mean or a PC and are treated differently accordingly.

²¹ The different types of means – SQIPs, GIPs, VIPs and IPs – can each consist of various *kinds* of means, like eliminating a policy, increasing an amount etc. This distinction only aims to increase conceptual clarity and serves no “practical” purpose.

clarified this relationship. The verb element forms an intimate part of a mean²² and may consist of one or several verbs belonging to one or more different verb groups. Moreover, two word groups had been formulated not in order to help distinguish between different mean types, but to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant text.²³ Relevant text contains means *and* communicates a party's will to pursue or implement it, or that the party considers the mean as being of necessity, urgency, or priority. For example, the necessity word group includes the word "must". Irrelevant text does not contain means²⁴ *or* contains means but does not communicate the party's will to bring it about, or does not communicate that the party considers the mean as being of necessity, urgency, or priority. An example is the can word group, which includes the word "can". The statement "We can reform the labour market" does not suggest that the party strongly wishes to do so, whereas the statement "We must reform the labour market" does. Without introducing the concept of the verb element, it remained unclear how word groups which distinguish between different mean types and word groups that distinguish between (ir)relevant text could be combined and the effect this was to have on the given statement. Moreover, it was not clear when the appearance of verbs such as "can" and "must" would actually be considered to signal relevant or irrelevant text and when this was not the case. For instance, "We must reform our active labour market policies so that the unemployed can freely choose which training programs they wish to participate in" contains both the word "must" and "can", but only the word "must" is relevant here (because it forms part of the verb element). Lastly, in addition to all the above usages and functions of verbs, the term "verb phrase" was also used to refer to phrases combining several verbs, such as "must reform", in relation to the application of the X-by-Y rule. Introducing the verb element thus enabled greater clarity by pointing out that, firstly, verbs ought to be considered relevant for coding elements only when they occur at the beginning of a statement which introduces a mean, not when they form part of the description of the mean itself; secondly, that verb elements can consist of several verbs which may come from different verb groups and some of which may affect whether a given statement is considered relevant or irrelevant text; thirdly, that several verbs which are intimately linked to a

²² The word "intimate" is supposed to indicate that it makes little sense to separate verb elements from the means, because the latter often make no sense without the former. For example, if the phrase "will reform" is removed from the statement "We will reform the labour market", the mean the party intends to carry out is no longer clear.

²³ This distinction is discussed at length in section 4.4 on page 108.

²⁴ For example, means concern the future, so that when a party talks about a past mean, this is not considered relevant text. See section 4.4 on page 108.

mean form only one verb element and not a verb element par group unless they are related to one another on a par, which is crucial for the application of the X-by-Y rule (such as “must reform”, which forms one verb element, not a par group). In conclusion, the purpose of introducing the concept of the verb element was mainly to create greater conceptual clarity. The most important effect of verb elements is to impact on the number of issue positions. The only causal effect of word groups on the outcome of the coding process concerns the distinction between relevant and irrelevant text.

4.2.3 Targets

Targets are those institutions, agents, systems, actors or collectives at whom or which a given mean is aimed. The definitions of these different targets were already provided and the relationship, similarities and differences between them discussed in the previous chapter.²⁵ This subsection will thus limited itself to discussing those aspects which arise out of the operationalization of the theoretical concept of the target.

Concerning the number of targets found in a statement, when targets are mentioned in the plural, such as, for example, “labour unions”, they are treated as one entity, since their number is not known. Moreover, when a collective, defined as a clearly distinguishable group of people for or against whom a particular change to the SQ is being proposed, is defined by several characteristics, such as “unemployed individuals without previous work experience above 25 years of age”, such a phrase is treated as a single collective.

The reason why targets are considered key elements, thus having an effect on the number of issue positions, is that they provide, like verb elements, crucial information concerning a given mean. Consider, for example, the following statement without its collective: “We will support the self-employed”. Clearly, targets have a high informational content, because they provide important

²⁵ See section 3.1 on page 54. The most important practical implication of the distinction between these different types of targets is that between agents and actors. For example, the statement “Companies must increase their work safety related inspections” is a VIP because it is unclear how the government aims to make companies, which are actors not directly bound by the will of the government, comply. The statement “The Department of Labour will increase its work safety related inspections” is an IP, because the government’s agent can be directly instructed to carry out the government’s wishes. The definition of a “system”, which forms a significant part or extension of an institution or agent and, in order to be considered as such, must require a substantial amount of additional resources (human or financial) to function, was provided because the term was at times abused to give the impression that a particular issue position was more specific in content than it really was.

clues as to the intention and nature of future measures, whether these are stated explicitly or not.

There are a number of limited circumstances in which several targets are treated as if they were one target, especially because such mentions do not provide any additional information or distract from more specific ones. An example of such a rule is where, for reasons of gender neutrality, pronouns or professions (for example in Spanish) are stated in both their male and female versions. Another such rule, which may require some justification, is that when a number of different targets is mentioned and then one is selected or emphasized with words such as “for example”, “such as”, “especially”, “including”, or “in particular”, only that target which is selected or emphasized in this manner is considered a target. The reason is that while parties may wish to mention several targets to broaden their appeal, such selective emphasis reveals more clearly what or which collectives the party is really concerned with. Often, the listing of several targets can also be considered a mere rhetorical device leading up to a particular mean aimed at a particular target. Therefore, statements like “We need to help the unemployed, especially the long-term unemployed”, only has one target (in this case, the long-term unemployed). Issue may be taken with the inclusion of expressions like “for example” in this list, but it should be noted that these kinds of expressions often seem to be used as synonyms for terms like “in particular” in order to reduce repetitiveness in electoral program text.

4.2.4 PCs and their relation to means, the X-by-Y and the chain rules

As discussed in the previous chapter, parties can be expected to prefer vague to specific means. One way to commit parties to changing the SQ without stating specific means, like “We will increase the minimum salary by two Euro”, is to state vague objectives, such as “We will fight poverty” or “We will reduce precarious employment”. These kinds of statements may also often be related to other vague means like “by reforming the labour market”, which do not provide any details on how the party wishes to achieve its objective either.

Given that objectives were also, alongside measures, considered means, when coding the sentence “We will implement an ambitious labour market reform in order to reduce precarious employment” one would be inclined to consider the “labour market reform” and “reduce precarious employment” each a mean in their own right. Nonetheless, it is self-evident that these two elements are closely linked to each other by means of a causal relationship (“in order to”)

and do not represent two distinct means. The party's labour market reform aims to achieve a particular objective, the party does not want to separately conduct a labour market reform and reduce precariousness. It thus seems desirable to treat both means as one. Nonetheless, if the objectives "reduce precarious employment" or "labour market reform" were stated on their own, they would most certainly each be considered (vague) means in their own right. In order to permit that an identical phrase can be considered either a mean in its own right or to form part of another mean, the PC element was created.

A PC is the anticipated desirable outcome of implementing a measure or reaching an objective. Stated on its own, "to reduce precarious employment" is an objective. Stated as the outcome of the aforementioned "labour market reform" mean, the same phrase becomes that mean's PC. PCs are thus causally linked to a mean,²⁶ which is indicated by words like "by", "in order to" and sometimes "that" or "which". Beyond the causal relationship to a mean, there is little or no difference between a mean and a PC.

Since PCs are by definition text elements which are causally linked to means, but different types of means exist, this raises the question of whether PCs relate differently to the different types of means. As becomes evident by the "We will reform the labour market in order to reduce precarious employment" example, PCs provide the reader with important information about VIP type means, because these are by definition vague. If the PC was removed from the above statement, one would know absolutely nothing about the labour market reform, except that it is intended to take place. That is why it was decided that when a mean is vague and a PC is presented as its outcome, both are coded together as a single VIP. Moreover, for that same reason the X-by-Y rule determines that for every additional PC that a VIP mean is related to, that VIP mean is duplicated.²⁷ This makes sense because reaching different objectives is likely to require different future measures by the party. Thus, the example "We will implement an ambitious labour market reform in order to reduce precarious employment and strengthen labour unions" contains two VIP statements: "We will implement an ambitious labour market reform in order to reduce precarious employment" and "We will implement an ambitious labour market reform in order to strengthen labour unions". Both may be

²⁶ PCs are the only elements that can have a causal relation to mean elements.

²⁷ Stated more formally, the X-by-Y rule states that the number of issue positions found within a sentence is equal to the sum of each mean (par group) multiplied by its respective number of PCs.

related, but are nonetheless presented as distinct by the party and thus coded as such.

Concerning IP type means, however, this scenario is inverted because the mean is specific and the PC can add relatively little useful information to it.²⁸ Therefore, it would make little sense to permit PCs to duplicate IP means and, as a consequence, it was decided that IP issue positions do not, as opposed to all other issue position types, include PC elements, unless these are explicitly mentioned as a criteria required in order for a particular mean to be considered of the IP type.²⁹

The question which follows from the decision to code IPs without including their related PC elements is what to do with the latter. Two possible options were pondered: to consider such PCs irrelevant text, or to code them as VIPs. On the one hand, to consider such PCs irrelevant text was a distinct option, given the argument presented above that they contribute relatively little information to more specific IP means and that a number of other types of statements are considered irrelevant text as well (see section 4.4 on page 108). On the other hand, just because a PC contributes little useful information to understanding a particular IP mean, this does not necessarily imply that this PC does not contribute to an overall understanding of the party's position in the specificity space. If a given mean can take the form of a VIP or a PC and both are usually considered key elements, why should some PCs be ignored only because they appear in combination with IPs? Moreover, if a VIP mean can be considered a PC of another VIP if stated differently, why should the PC of an IP not also be considered a VIP statement if it appears in such a particular constellation? Lastly, it would seem somewhat inconsistent to consider an almost identical statement either a VIP mean, a PC or – additionally – as irrelevant text. Thus, in order to increase internal consistency while avoiding the artificial inflation of the number of IPs, it was decided to code the PCs of IP means as if they had been stated apart from their respective IPs.

It should be noted that the discussion thus far has been focused on VIPs, IPs and PCs. However, the other mean types, namely SQIP and GIP means, may also be related to PCs and a PC that is detached from its IP mean may be coded not only as a VIP, but also as a SQIP or a GIP. To summarize the above, if a statement presents a SQIP, GIP, or VIP mean as causing one or several

²⁸ It only reveals the expected positive outcome of implementing or pursuing a specific mean.

²⁹ Whether a particular kind of mean (see section 4.2.2 on page 80) is a VIP or IP depends on whether it contains particular kinds of information. These informational requirements are called criteria. See the following section on mean types as well as appendix A on page 397.

PCs, that or these PCs form part of the resultant issue position(s) and also impact on their number (as PC par groups). The only exception is when a PC is caused by an IP, in which case the PC is coded as if it was never stated in relation to an IP, that is, as a SQIP, GIP, or VIP.

In the vast majority of statements, the relationship between means and PCs is as clear and straight-forward as in the examples above. It is possible, however, to be faced with more complex scenarios. Firstly, it is possible that words such as “and”, “in order to” or “by”, which signal the nature of relations between elements, either on a par or causal, are omitted, thus obscuring whether an element is a PC or not. An example of such a statement is “We need to increase spending, (by) decreasing tax exemptions and consolidating the budget”.³⁰ Secondly, instead of a single mean or par group of means being related causally to a single PC or group of PCs, it is possible for various such means and PC elements (or par groups) to be linked to one another in more complex chains. For instance, “In order to increase the efficiency of our active labour market policies, we will implement a reform to ensure a smooth transition from unemployment to employment.” How are the three elements in this statement related causally? A vague measure, the implementation of a reform, can be identified, but how are an increase in efficiency and the smooth transition from unemployment to employment related to that measure and each other? Is the “smooth transition” not the PC of an “increase in efficiency”? Should, in that case, the “increase in efficiency” be considered both the PC of the “implement a reform” measure and the measure of the “smooth transition” PC? Moreover, while this example still permits a logical discernment of a chain of causality between the different elements, there are situations in which this is no longer possible.

When faced with these kinds of statements, it is not the the X-by-Y rule, but the chain rule which is applied. The chain rule is applied only when the causality between more than two elements or par groups within a sentence is unclear and after IP means have been coded and thus extracted from the given sentence.³¹ These related elements form a chain, with each individual (lone) mean or PC – which is not related to another element on a par – and each

³⁰ That the “by” is missing becomes evident by considering the ing-form of the verbs after the comma, but not of the verb “increase” before the comma. Therefore, when the form of the verbs change from the present to the present continuous (or vice versa) in these kinds of statements, this may be indicative of a causal relationship between two elements.

³¹ Relations of causality can, as previously mentioned, only exist between means and PCs. IPs are extracted because PCs are not recorded for IPs, so that IPs cannot occur in a causal relationship with PCs.

mean or PC par group forming separate links in that chain. Each element in each link is combined with each element in all other links, producing a total number of unordered pairs of elements.³² The reason for forming unordered pairs is that an issue position, by definition, can only consist of maximally one mean and PC. Since the chain rule is applied in situations in which it is not possible to distinguish between means and PCs because the relations of causality are unclear, all imaginable combinations of elements are produced by forming such unordered pairs. Each of these pairs is then coded as a VIP. The reason for coding them as VIPs is because IPs have already been extracted and it is not possible to ascertain whether an informational item which would usually convert an issue position to a GIP or SQIP actually forms part of a mean or a PC of a mean. Since VIPs are likely to be the most common issue position, the best guess is in any case to assume that the resulting issue positions are VIPs.

Returning to the above example, the statement “[a.] In order to increase the efficiency of our active labour market policies, [b.] we will implement a reform [c.] to ensure a smooth transition from unemployment to employment”, contains no IP. The statement consists of more than two individual elements or par groups which are causally related to each other. In this case, each link of the chain only consists of a single element. Each element of each link is now combined with each element of the other links until the total number of unordered pairs have been formed. These are (a, b), (a, c), (b, c). Each of these unordered pairs is coded as a VIP. As a consequence, the sentence consists of a total of three VIPs.

Although this procedure may seem rather complicated, it should be kept in mind that, firstly, while the X-by-Y rule is applied very often, statements such as in the example above occur rather infrequently; secondly, it is not necessary to actually combine the different elements in this manner when coding, since issue positions, not elements (or their combinations) are coded; thirdly, since each element of each link is combined with all other elements not belonging to that same link, it is no longer necessary to identify and causally relate the different chain elements; fourthly, as will be discussed below, once three or more issue positions of the same type have been found to occur within the same sentence, the list rule (to be discussed below) assures that these are coded as single issue positions (see section 4.2.5.4 on page 103). In practice, this means that in any situation where elements form a chain, that chain is coded as a single VIPL. Thus, although this rule may appear to cause a

³² In unordered pairs, it does not matter which item appears first. For example, the pair of elements (a, b) is equivalent to (b, a).

proliferation of issue positions, it actually reduces coding complexity while the application of the list rule assures that coding at the issue position level can still proceed speedily.

Up to now, the discussion of PCs has assumed that these elements are unspecific. While this assumption may generally hold true because PCs are usually objectives and these are in turn usually formulated vaguely, the definition of a PC does not state that these are either vague or specific, but only that they are the PCs of a mean. As such, there may be instances where a PC is as or even more specific than an IP mean in terms of the information it contains. The example “By reducing unemployment, we will be able to redirect funds spent on social welfare programs to primary education”, for instance, contains a vague mean – to reduce unemployment – in order to reach a specific objective – to redirect funds. If this mean and the PC derived from it were stated independently of one another, the reduction in unemployment would be coded as a VIP and the redirection of funds as an IP. Since it is obviously problematic that specific information about what the party wishes to do in the future is coded as a PC instead of as a mean just because some statements may break a generally observed pattern in which PCs are vague and derived from more or less specific means, an additional rule was formulated: If a PC contains information which would convert that PC into an IP if it were stated independently from its accompanying mean, it is always coded as an IP. In such cases, the rest of the statement is analysed as if the PC-turned-IP had never formed a part of it in the first place. Stated differently, if a PC contains information which would qualify a similar statement as an IP, it is always coded as an IP and not as a PC.

4.2.5 Mean types

Having discussed the key elements of issue positions, which determine the latter's number, this subsection will discuss the different types of means in turn, beginning with VIP and IP means, which are the most common, and introduce a new concept called lists. Since the aim is to provide an overview and discuss the thought processes behind some of the text coding rules, the amount of detail with which these means are discussed varies. For more detail, please consult the coder manual in appendix A.3.4 on page 407.

4.2.5.1 VIP and IP means

Overall, a distinction can be made between means which are only considered to be of the VIP type, to be discussed first, and the majority of means, discussed

thereafter, which could be either VIPs or IPs, depending on whether they fulfil particular informational criteria or not.

The means which can be considered VIP means only, listed in tabular form in table 13 on page 415, can be subdivided into four groups to provide a clearer overview. The first group consists of those VIPs with which the party states its objective to do something “good”, such as to increase efficiency, transparency, sustainability, or equality, or to tackle or fight something “bad”, like corruption, poverty, pollution, crime and discrimination. The second group includes means which consist primarily of the so-called form of a mean, which refers to the mention of nouns like “reform”, “law”, “plan” or “incentive”. In and of themselves, these terms provide no useful information about which specific means the party wishes to pursue or implement and they could usually just as well be dropped from mean statements. For example, “We will carry out a labour market reform to reduce unemployment” is basically equivalent in content to “We will implement an unemployment reduction plan”, “We will provide incentives to reduce unemployment” or simply to state the objective “We will reduce unemployment”. What makes a measure or an objective specific is not whether it is implemented as a plan, reform, or incentive, but whether information is provided about each of these concerning the future intentions of a political party to change the SQ. Moreover, this second group of means includes statements such as the promise to propose, reform, reorganize, guarantee, provide, develop or apply (new) laws, rights, rules, policies, incentives, institutions, organizations, plans, or programs. Thirdly, there are a large number of what may be called somewhat generic VIP means, such as to modernize or simplify something, to offer help or support to somebody or something, to expand, deepen, or broaden a service or policy, or to increase, strengthen, or provide policies for the exercising of a particular right or several rights.

Lastly, there are a number of somewhat more specific VIP statements which require special mention. These include, firstly, VIPs which aim to put some “organizational principle” into practice. Like the other VIPs, this mean is considered vague because it is ultimately unclear how this ought to be done. Concerning, for example, the organisational principle of federalism, how does a party intend to reform the constitution or state institutions to convert a country into a federal one? Since the content of the measures required to do so are not addressed, such statements are considered vague. Secondly, as was already discussed above, when a party calls upon an actor – by definition not bound by government instructions – to (not) do something without providing a mean which would either force or potentially induce that actor to behave

as desired, such a mean is considered of the VIP type. Thirdly, the increase or reduction in the size of an institutions or organization is ultimately vague, since there are many ways this may be done. If the statement refers to actual resources being increased or decreased, another rule applies.³³ Fourthly, the objective to universalize or to eradicate something is also considered vague. The main reason for this coding decision is that it is unclear how this universalization or eradication ought to be achieved. Although statements providing particular numbers are usually considered IP means and universalization implies, for example, 100 percent primary school enrolment or access, while eradication implies, for instance, 0 percent poverty, it is assumed that such expressions ought not be taken literally. Ultimately, increasing something to 100 percent or reducing something to 0 percent either requires intermediate steps, in which case a specific numeric goal would be, for example, to reduce poverty to below 5 percent, or would, if one was already very close to reaching 0 or 100 percent, require an exorbitant amount of resources to be reached. As such, stating the aim to completely universalize or eradicate something is considered a rhetorical device and thus vague, unless the numbers 0 or 100 percent are explicitly stated.

As was mentioned above, many means can be considered either VIP or IP type means, depending on particular criteria. The elimination measure, for example, could be either a VIP (“We will eliminate all laws and policies which make temporary employment attractive to employers”) or an IP (“We will eliminate social security rebates for the hire of unemployed persons if the contract that is awarded is temporary”), depending on whether it is clear what is being eliminated. In the first example above, it is unclear which “laws and policies” will be eliminated, while the second statement makes this very clear (namely particular social security rebates). In general, the formulation of criteria to distinguish between VIP and IP type means and how these should be treated were influenced by the following considerations: firstly, whether the mean proposed by the party is a measure that it could implement more or less as stated; secondly, the amount of detail one can reasonably expect to find in an electoral program concerning particular measures; thirdly, the amount of detail with which such means are usually stated in electoral programs; fourthly, whether the type of information provided in relation to a given measure is so important as to justify treating each informational item as a separate issue position mean, or whether several of these should at times be treated as constituting a single mean, thus resulting in only one as opposed to various issue positions. Each of these rather abstract considerations, which

³³ See the “Resources” section contained in table 14 on page 418.

informed the formulation of criteria to distinguish between VIP and IP type means, will now be discussed briefly in turn. Thereafter, the actual kinds of means and their more concrete criteria will be described.

The most important criteria to distinguish between a VIP and an IP mean is, from a theoretical standpoint, to consider whether that measure is sufficiently specific in order to be implemented more or less as stated in the electoral program. If this is the case, the measure ought to be considered specific. If not, the measure ought to be considered vague. The addition of the phrase “more or less” refers to the obvious fact that institutional and organizational realities are, in the vast majority of cases, too complex and interrelated to permit directly implementing a measure based on a single or a handful of sentences. Therefore, the question is whether a measure is sufficiently specific in order to be implemented more or less as stated in an electoral program, provided it is accompanied by a framework of additional measures which are conducive to its direct implementation.³⁴

Secondly, concerning the amount of detail one could reasonably expect to find in an electoral program, it is likely that a party could go into much more detail than it actually does concerning a fairly large number of means. It must be kept in mind, however, that these kinds of documents aim to provide a more or less accessible summary statement of the party’s future means especially to the (interested) general public, party members, politicians and the media. Not only would it be wrong to expect vast amounts of specificity, but the specificity that may be reasonably expected also varies with the type of mean. If a party proposes to launch an informational campaign to reduce work-related injuries, for example, there is little more that could be added to this statement which would not be considered an abstruse and ultimately unnecessary amount of detail, such as the media channels to be used, or by what strategy different strata of society or professions will be reached. More detail should, however, be expected if the party announces an overhaul of labour legislation to reduce precariousness. Different kinds of means should thus require different degrees of specificity to be considered VIPs or IPs.

Thirdly, while there are some kinds of measures about which one should not expect vast amounts of detail, there are also some measures which seem to demand more specificity than that which is usually provided by electoral programs. In some such cases, it was decided to adjust the demands made on specificity somewhat downward. An example are the functions or objectives

³⁴ The “Rules/ criteria to be made into law, policy etc.” mean listed in the “Punish, prohibit, make obligatory, extend measure, make targets equal” section of table 14 on page 418 is very similar to this general criteria. See below.

of a newly created institution. The nature of the measure seems to provide ample room for specificity on this matter, but it is very rarely provided. Instead, such functions are usually termed rather vaguely. Nonetheless, even vague functions are obviously important to understanding the nature of new institutions. Without them, the measure would probably not make any sense at all, since the motives for its creation would be unknown. As a consequence, the creation of a new institution is considered an IP if two or more vague functions are stated. Such downward adjustments of specificity were made very rarely, however.

Fourth and lastly, the coding rules which are applied to text ought to be applied to each mean, so that if two means occur in a given sentence, this should result in each mean being coded accordingly. There are some kinds of measures, however, which demand that a particular kind of information be provided, but that information is not considered of such importance as to justify that each informational item which matches its description ought to result in its own issue position. For example, one particular kind of mean is the “Creation of a new/ changes to existing website” measure. An example of a statement of this kind of mean is “We will revamp the ministry of labour’s website so that those in need of its services can register online and follow the status of their application”. Technically, the statement contains two informational items on a par (indicated by the “and”), to permit online registration and to be able to follow ones application status, and both match the website mean description. This statement should thus result in two IPs (since it is clear what the party wants to do). Given that the “Creation of a new/ changes to existing website” measures is considered of relatively minor political significance when compared to many other measures, however, this particular measure and others of its kind are provided with the additional rule that the maximum number of IPs which can result from its multiple occurrence are limited to one. Normally, this rule is applied – by default – at the sentence level. However, there are three means of this type which are coded across consecutive sentences and paragraphs, thus breaking the otherwise sacrosanct rule of within sentence coding. The reason for these three exceptions are mean specific.³⁵ In the website mean case, for example, it was found that some parties like to provide elaborate descriptions of such rather minor policies, sometimes across several sentences.

These various motives have played a role in the formulation of the criteria of the more than 40 kinds of means listed in table 14 on page 418 and how they

³⁵ The other two measures are the “Competencies/ functions” measure and the “Definitions to be made into law/ orient policy/ serve as basis for agreement” means, to be discussed below.

should be translated into issue positions. Although many different criteria were formulated, three were used rather frequently to distinguish between VIPs and IPs. The first such criteria is that it is often sufficient for a concrete number or the terms “increase” or “decrease” to be mentioned in relation to particular means in order for them to be considered IPs rather than VIPs. Secondly, it is often required that a mean is presented with the target at which it is directed, or specifies which law, treaty (etc.) or part thereof it is aimed at. A particular target, law or treaty or part thereof (etc.) can be identified either directly, by providing its formal or colloquial name, or indirectly, by describing it. Either way, this identification must be clear enough so that the party’s ability to choose freely between a large number of targets to argue that it has followed though on its promises is clearly restricted or eliminated.³⁶ The third quite common criteria is that the general aim or purpose of a particular measure is provided. For example, the promise of tax incentives is considered an IP mean provided that it is clear what this incentive is offered for, such as tax incentives for company investment in digital infrastructure.

Finally, before commencing a discussion of the different kinds of means listed in table 14 on page 418, it is important to note that, while all the rules mentioned in the previous sections of this chapter continue to be valid in general, the criteria mentioned to determine the type of a mean overwrite these. Thus, for example, PCs usually do not impact on issue position type, but if a criteria concerning a particular kind of mean requires the mention of information that could also be viewed as a PC, it may nonetheless have this effect.³⁷ Returning to the previous example, tax incentives may be considered a measure that a party wishes to implement in order to bring about greater private sector investment in digital infrastructure, the latter thus potentially being considered a PC of the former. Nonetheless, since mean criteria overrule other rules, this is not considered contradictory. Another example is the “Provide more money” issue position, which requires that it must be stated what the money is being provided for, which may include PCs like “in order to promote the green economy”. Similarly, the form of a mean is usually not important. However, when the words “program” or “plan” are mentioned in relation to offers of public education or training, they are important because they convert the mean into one rather than another kind, thus requiring the

³⁶ Here, the influence of mandate theory’s testability criteria is apparent, although what it is applied to and to what purpose is clearly different.

³⁷ Ideally, it would be possible to differentiate between the general aim or purpose of a mean and its PC(s). Unfortunately, while such a distinction may be possible in the abstract, it is often near impossible to make in practice and was thus abandoned.

fulfilment of different criteria.³⁸ This overwriting rule is not problematic to coders. When a coder identifies a particular kind of mean, (s)he consults the coder manual, finds the relevant kind of mean and checks whether the criteria listed there have been fulfilled. In other words, coders need not remember any “exceptions” as such. When faced with more generic statements, the general rule set applies.

Table 14 on page 418 was subdivided into eight sections in order to help the coder find a particular mean more quickly. The rest of this subsection will discuss the different sections of that table in the same order in which they appear in the coder manual, elaborating on those aspects which may be considered to require further comment. It was often decided to directly quote the names of the respective sections and measures although this may be considered to make the text less readable, because the paraphrasing required to insert these section titles and measure names more smoothly would make their identification in the respective tables more cumbersome.

The first section of table 14 on page 418, entitled “Resources: new, increase, decrease (no number required)”, groups together various means which concern the explicit statement of the increase, decrease, or, where applicable, the commitment of new “resources”, such as state spending or debt, investment, personnel or public servants, tariffs, taxes, tax incentives, scholarships, social security payments, minimum salaries and the like. To be considered IPs, it is not necessary that particular amounts are stated (which is what the phrase “no number required” refers to).³⁹ The reasons why such specificity is not required in order for this kind of statement to be considered an IP is that parties rarely mention this kind of information, given that – from a theoretical perspective – they usually prefer to avoid such very specific costly commitments. Additional criteria were introduced for many of these measures. Concerning taxes, for example, it must be clear which tax is being spoken about, thus making a statement such as “We will cut taxes” a VIP measure. Provided that such criteria are met, all the measures contained in this section are considered IPs because the party can directly implement them.⁴⁰ The two measures which perhaps require most discussion are the “Reversion of spending cuts/increases” and “Something being free of charge” ones. The former requires that the time period from which these changes stem ought to be stated, so that it is clear which spending cuts or increases are to be affected. The “Something

³⁸ These issue positions will be discussed in greater detail below.

³⁹ This kind of information is considered another kind of mean. See below.

⁴⁰ See footnote 2 on page 54 on how the term party is understood here.

being free of charge” measure makes the aforementioned distinction between agents, in which case the party is directly promising that something will be free of charge and the resultant issue position is an IP, and actors, in which case it must be clear how the party wishes to motivate these actors to offer something free of charge (such as by offering incentives, or simply by making it obligatory).

The next table section concerns “Specific directly executable action[s] by the party, or its agents”. These include voting a particular way in parliament (for or against, or to abstain), organizing public protests or mobilizations, firing somebody from public office as well as the party making reports or particular information public or accessible to somebody or something. The measure requiring most discussion is the “Instruct [a] particular agent to take [a] measure” item, which requires that the agent is clearly identified and the task it is being instructed with is clear. This last criteria excludes statements such as that an agent is asked to shift its general focus, but does plausibly include instructing an agent to increase its rate of activity, such as by conducting more inspection. When an agent is given such instructions, it is not necessary to specify how the agent will actually be expected to realize them (such as, in reference to the example above, by hiring more inspectors). The reasons for the latter are that this concern is very rarely addressed in electoral programs and that it is likely to be up to the agent to carry out the instructions it is given in the way it sees fit.

The following section, entitled “Information, personalized assessment and education” includes measures such as the provision of information by actors, the creation of a new website or changes to an existing one, conducting a public awareness or informational campaign, creating a certificate or award for doing something in one way and not in another, the assessment of individual human beings in order to offer them a specific service or plan as well as several training and education measures. Concerning the latter, the offer of public education and training programs or plans requires only that their general aims or the collectives at which they are aimed are made known. Another very similar sounding measure concerns the offer of public education or training, for which it is required that the party clarifies how this new offer is to be realized, or what it consists of, or which target will offer it. The reason for the differences between these two means is that programs or plans are usually not directly concerned with the core public education system (including the school system, universities as well as colleges and more technically oriented schools), but are often of a more temporary, less institutionalised and auxiliary nature, aiming to benefit those collectives with particular problems and to

“fix” the latter in a once off effort. Thus, it is considered sufficiently specific to offer an education program or plan to help a particular collective, but it is insufficient to state the intention to make changes to the core education and professional training system without providing further details. Regarding these two means, the motives of what can reasonably be expected of and what is actually provided in electoral programs have played an important role. Can a party really be expected to provide more details on measures such as “We will provide special retraining programs for the long-term unemployed”? These kinds of statements are clearly distinct in their nature from those which aim to make changes to the core education and training system, such as “We will boost the language competencies of our primary school pupils”. Here, a party should be expected to state how it aims to do so. Moreover, in the latter case, such an issue will likely be addressed by a reform rather than a program or plan. A third kind of mean that is related to education is the “Offer of non-public educational or training program/plan” mean, which must make clear how an actor will be motivated to follow the party’s wishes in order to be considered an IP.

The subsequent section is entitled “IFOS”, which is an abbreviation consisting of the first letters of the following nouns: institutions, funds, organisations, systems. Its first measure is the “Competencies/functions” mean, which was already discussed above, where it was pointed out that a target’s new functions are usually only vaguely described, but are nonetheless of relatively great informational value. Accordingly, this measure is provided with a special rule which states that when more than one vague competency or function is assigned to a target, these are collectively considered an IP. If one or several of these functions are – based on the other coding rules provided – specific, they should be coded separately as IPs. Given that the competencies of funds may be described indirectly by who or what is given access to them, when such information is related to funds, it is considered as its competency or function. The “Competencies/ functions” measure is also one of three measures which are coded across consecutive sentences and paragraphs.⁴¹ The “Competencies/functions” measure occurs most frequently in relation to the creation of a new IFOS, since the latter obviously calls for explaining what the purpose of such a new entity is.

The next IFOS measure, “Organizational structure/ power distribution”, concerns internal organisational structures, or the relations between targets, such

⁴¹ The other two are the “Creation of a new/ changes to existing website/ registry” and the “Definitions to be made into law/ orient policy/ serve as basis for agreement” measures, to be discussed below.

as the actors involved, internal vote distributions, procedures and the like. The question that needs to be affirmed in order to determine whether such a measure is specific or not is whether it is clear when the organizational structure or power distribution is being violated. The last two measures, which are more straight-forward, concern the elimination of as well as the substitution or replacement of one IFOS by another IFOS. To be considered an IP, the target to be eliminated and, if applicable, by what it is to be replaced, must be clearly identified.

The next group of means is entitled “Rates, time periods, events triggering actions, numerical goals, rewards” and is somewhat different from previously mentioned measures, because some of them can occur in combination with many other means and are very exact about the specificity required. Its first mean type is the “Increase/ decrease amounts, quantities, rates, durations, time limits, time something takes etc.” mean. This mean complements the previously discussed means contained in the “Resources: new, increase, decrease (no number required)” section, because it ought to be applied to all those means which mention increases or decreases of quantities without specifying their exact number and which have not been mentioned in that section.

The next so-called “Amounts/ rates” measure requires that a particular increase, decrease, minimum, maximum, or rate is specified numerically. Alternatively, an unspecified amount can be made dependent on another specific variable, such as household income, or the number of household members. Such specific variables exclude group membership variables, however. Thus, for example, stating that someone who is unemployed will receive an unspecified amount is not considered an “Amounts/ rates” IP measure, since the variable employment status only designates group membership. Similarly, this criteria does not apply to the statement that unemployed individuals above the age of 55 qualify for some welfare benefit, since the number 55 only distinguishes between those younger and equal to and older than 55 years of age. In order to distinguish between the specific and group membership variables, it is required that the former is of the ordinal or metric, as opposed to the nominal, kind and that, if ordinal, it consists of at least three categories.⁴²

The “Amounts/ rates” mean is often applied to statements which also contain issue positions contained in the “Resources” section. When this occurs,

⁴² The latter rule avoids, for instance, that the variable age with the values equal to and older or younger than 55 years of age could be thought of as ordinal because those in the former category are older than those in the latter category.

each rule is applied independently, so that the example “We will decrease the income tax for lower income brackets by 1.5 percent” contains two issue positions, the decrease in and of itself and its specific amount. The reason for considering this informational item as an IP in its own right is because it is the kind of specificity parties usually wish to avoid. Another measure, the “Duration/ time intervals/ number of times” one, is very similar to the “Amounts/ rates” mean, except for the fact that it is concerned with time related units of measure (time of day, days, weeks etc.). An additional time related measure is the promise to “Flexibilize/ extend/ reduce timetables/ schedules etc.”, in which case the mention of a number is required for the mean to be considered of the IP type.

The next kind of mean, the “Event triggering action” one, concerns statements of the type “We will do y until/ when/ if X happens”. The criteria requires that it must be clear when the event X can be considered to have occurred. If this criteria is met, the statement “if X happens” is an IP, if not, it is an ancillary element. The second part of the statement, the thing to (no longer) be done (when or if X happens), is to be coded as would any other statement about what the party wishes to do in the future. Since a party is unlikely to cite a condition that is generally considered improbable, since this would be a very obvious attempt to avoid making commitments to the SQ, these kinds of statements are actually considered specific rather than vague.

The last measure of this section, called “(Quasi-)Numerical goals”, applies to statements of goals or objectives which are expressed numerically, or in a quasi-numerical fashion. Quasi-numerical is to say that the information about the goal must be so precise that a specific number could be looked up to check whether it has been fulfilled. An example of a specific quasi-numerical goal is “to reduce inflation to below the Eurozone average”. The measure does not, as was mentioned before, apply to the statement of objectives which employ absolutes, such as to “eliminate poverty” or to “universalize education”, unless the 0 or 100 percent are stated explicitly.

The subsequent “Punish, prohibit, make obligatory, extend [a] measure, [or] make targets equal” section contains various means such as the “Punishment” one, which aims “to “[e]stablish, abolish, increase, or decrease punishment for [a] particular action”, or the “Putting a new limit on something” measure, which does not require the statement of numbers because the introduction of a limit is in and of itself considered a measure of relatively great importance. Two means in this section require a more detailed treatment. The first is the “Make sth. [something] or sb. [somebody] equal to another” mean, which demands that it must be clear who or what is to be made equal to whom or

what and in which respect. Thus, for example, “to reach complete equality between men and women” is not an IP measure. The criteria is further clarified by the question: “Can the existence of equality in the specific area be assessed directly?” This is not the case in the above example, because the area in which equality is to be achieved is not specified. “Equal pay for women and men” concerns salaries and the state of this (in)equality could be directly assessed by analysing the pay of women and men.

The most challenging criteria of this section, due to its generic nature, is the “Rules/ criteria to be made into law, policy etc.” mean. It is a generic mean in the sense that it could be applied to a great many possible statements and is a coding rule version of the earlier general criteria used to identify specificity,⁴³ namely that a mean could be implemented more or less as stated. The first criteria that must be fulfilled so that this mean can be considered of the IP type is that it is specific enough to be applied within a broader framework of rules. Any statement of a single rule normally raises questions about many other related aspects, which also require rules in order for the original rule to be applied adequately. Thus, if a rule (or criteria) is considered specific enough to be applied, provided it was hypothetically being presented within a broader framework of rules (or criteria), then it is considered an IP mean. This specificity is further tested by the question: “Is it clear when the rule is being broken, or the criteria not fulfilled?” Overall, a mean should only be coded with this rule if none of the other more precise means discussed above and below apply.

The second-to-last section is entitled “Role models, definitions, textual fusions/ changes, elimination of laws/ policies”. The “Role models” measure applies to statements which refer to the way in which things are done in another place or by other targets or entities in order to describe what the party wants to do. In order to be considered an IP, it is necessary that the target or entity which does or has the thing to be emulated is identified clearly. In order to categorize the mean, it is also necessary to consider whether the statement as part of which this role model is mentioned would be considered a VIP or an IP statement without reference to the role model. If that statement would already have been an IP anyway, the role model reference becomes an ancillary element. If it would be a VIP, the statement of the specific role model converts it into an IP. For example, “We will adapt country A’s model of active labour market policies, by permitting the unemployed to access their accumulated unemployment benefits to invest in their human capital” is a statement that would have been an IP even without the reference to the role

⁴³ See section 4.2.5.1 on page 91.

model and the latter therefore carries relatively little new information. Had the statement only read “We will adapt country A’s model of active labour market policies”, the reference to the role model is more informative and converts that statement to an IP.

The next mean is the “Definitions to be made into law/ orient policy/ serve as basis for agreement” item, which is limited to those definitions which are explicitly aimed at orienting policy, being made into law, or setting the terms for an agreement. Definitions of concepts provided to aid the reader in processing the information contained in the electoral programs, serving essentially as background information, do not fall into this category. These definitions need not be comprehensive or detailed, given that a “perfect” definition would be too much to ask of electoral programs. This mean can maximally result in one IP or VIP, meaning that if the definition consists of several parts, they all count maximally as one position, and this applies even when the definition is spread across several sentences or paragraphs, as may sometimes be the case.

The last item of this section which requires further discussion is the “Insert/ change/ add text into/ of/ to constitution/ law” measure, which concerns explicit and literal changes that the party intends to make to a text. The actual changes to be made may be formulated vaguely because wanting to make the change to the text in and of itself is considered the measure and because asking for a precise formulation of the change to be made may be too demanding. Care must thus be taken to apply this rule only when the party explicitly states that it wants to make a change to a text, making it clear what this change will be, or what it is intended to achieve. An example of the latter is the statement “We will change the crown succession clause to eliminate its discrimination of the female gender”.

The last section of the table is entitled “Rights and international politics”. The most complex item of this section is the “Provide/ recognize a new right for individuals and/ or targets vis-à-vis the state” one. For such a measure to be categorized as an IP, the right must be named or its content stated. Moreover, it must literally be made a lawful right, meaning that it is insufficient for parties to just “consider” something as if it were a right out of their own volition. Moreover, the term right refers to rights of a basic or fundamental nature, such as the right to employment or right to housing. It does not include, for example, having a claim to a particular welfare benefit or the like. The way in which such rights will be given effect by translating these into laws and policies does not matter, since the measure concerns the establishment of new rights. The other mean which requires discussion is the “Fulfilment of international

treaty/ international organization's membership obligations", which requires that the part of the treaty or the particular membership obligation which the party aims to fulfil must be specified. This requirement was added since membership or treaty obligations may be manifold and the country is likely to be lacking in its efforts in some areas more than in others. It is thus simply too vague to refer to treaties or organisational membership as a whole.

4.2.5.2 GIP means

As discussed in the previous chapter, GIPs are issue positions that are so vague as to be almost ambivalent about what it is a party wishes to do in the future. The first group of GIP means include providing "sufficient" or an unknown amount of resources in a context in which it is ambivalent whether this means an increase or a decrease; to make two things equal to one another, leaving unclear which is to be made similar to which (or if both are to be made partially like the other) and/ or in which ways; to consider two or more alternatives or alternative means, even if voicing a particular preference for one as long as the other is not unambiguously rejected; to assess, research or study something, or a target; lastly, to formulate or provide a specific plan or assessment in the future. The latter two means are considered GIPs because any party can be expected to pursue such activities before or once in power, and there is no real need to state such means explicitly. All these GIP means are to some extent complements to more specific IP or VIP ones.

The second group of GIP means are related to cooperation. These include, among others, to make a pact or an agreement with targets, to increase (or decrease) or call for (the end of) unity, consensus, cooperation, consultations or negotiations between different targets (including possibly, but not necessarily, the party itself); to make more intensive use of rules, organizations or institutions which already exist in order to increase cooperation or consensus; to consult with or ask targets for their input; to permit a target to participate more in processes, or institutions; or to hold a public debate, or to debate a topic to determine ones position. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, these kinds of means easily permit blame shifting and sabotage by the party and any party should be expected to seek the support of those targets which make the pursuit of its means easier. Lastly, in those rare cases where it is unclear, even after conducting background research, what a position is actually about in terms of its content, it is coded as a GIP.

It should be kept in mind that all these GIP means are means like any other, so that when, for example, some VIP mean is expected to lead to more cooperation, that entire statement is not considered a GIP, but a VIP, because the

increase in cooperation is only a PC of that VIP. If an IP is stated to lead to more cooperation, then the IP is coded on its own and the rest of the statement is coded as a GIP.

4.2.5.3 SQIP means

As was mentioned previously, SQIP means support or aim to defend the current SQ, defined as the the sum of laws, policies, rules and institutions in place at a given point in time. This definition of the SQ clearly excludes more abstract interpretations of the term, such as, for example, “power relations” existing in actual society or the economy. As a consequence, any new law or policy, or a change made to an existing one, even if its ultimate aim is to support, for instance, the interests of an economic elite, is considered to be making changes to the SQ. It should thus not come as a surprise that SQIP measures are relatively scarce. These include a number of statements which promise activities by the party in order to prevent changes to the SQ, such as to vote against a mean to change the SQ, to mobilize the population or societal actors, or to launch a (media or an informational) campaign.

Additionally, SQIP objectives include statements in which the party expresses its opposition to change, or the defence of what is given (such as principles, rules of the game and constitutions) in a general way as well as the statement of a numerical or quasi-numerical goal which aims to maintain the current SQ (for example, “We will not increase social welfare benefits”). Means which promise to continue, culminate or complete a process that has already been started are also considered of the SQIP type.

SQIPs are somewhat exceptional, since they appear most frequently as side note statements that something will be left unchanged, accompanying means that do aim to make changes to the SQ. These SQIP side note statements include, for example, that the party will “do X without affecting/ causing Y”, or “do X in line with Y”. The part of such expressions which follows on the “X” are thus coded as SQIPs. For example “We will initiate a comprehensive labour market reform (VIP), without affecting those labour market policies left to the unions (SIQP) and employer organisations to negotiate (SQIP)”. The X-by-Y rule applies to SQIPs as it applies to any other type of mean, meaning that the number of verb elements, SQIP means, targets and PCs determine the number of SQIPs. The X-by-Y rule is also applied to SQIP side note statements themselves, but the evaluation of SQIP side note statements does not affect the coding of the rest of the statement. So, for example, the statement “We will do X (mean I) and Y (mean II) without affecting A (side note I) and B (side note II)” contains two means and two SQIP side note statement. Based

on the discussion of the method up to this point, one would expect that the statement would be broken down into four issue positions, because each side note can be combined with each mean. Since mean I and II propose a change to the SQ, while side note I and II do not and the specificity space aims to show the degree to which a party commits itself to changing the SQ, however, it makes little sense that issue positions which aim to make changes are multiplied by issue positions which aim to make no changes to the SQ. As such, the application of the X-by-Y rule is, in the case of SQIP side note statements, limited only to these side note statements.

4.2.5.4 Lists

The four issue position types discussed thus far, SQIPs, GIPs, VIPs and IPs, were extended by another four positions, the SQIPL, GIPL, VIPL and IPL types, which were not originally anticipated by the theoretical formulation of the specificity model. The letter “L” in each of these abbreviations stands for the word “list”. Each of these list type issue positions occurs when the respective issue position type on which the list is built occurs three or more times in a single sentence. Thus, for example, a VIPL occurs when three or more VIPs are found within a single sentence. This subsection will discuss the reasoning behind the creation of these four issue position types.

The original specificity model included a position called Detailed Issue Position (DIP), which was assumed to be more specific than an IP. The underlying assumption leading to its postulation was that it would be possible to group items of information or statements around particular measures (and possibly objectives). Thus, for example, a single DIP would be equivalent to a set of measures which all contribute to a single “major” measure. At the same time, electoral program coding and especially the application of the X-by-Y rule, essential to systematically construct issue positions from the key elements contained in statements, showed that especially vague VIPs could often appear in fairly large numbers in a single sentence. For example, the statement “We need to reform the labour market (mean) to improve working conditions (PC I), to fight precariousness (PC II) and increase fairness (PC III)” would result in three individual VIP positions. Application of the X-by-Y rule thus caused a significant slowdown of the coding process, because the coder was often required to analyse especially vague text very carefully in order to dis-aggregate and then code it accordingly. While it makes sense to go through a reasonable amount of effort to analyse text consisting of various types of issue positions carefully, this is not necessarily the case when the statement concerns issue positions of the same type and which are, moreover, likely to

be quite vague, given the general aim to sift out specificity. Accordingly, it was decided to introduce a rule by which the mention of three or more VIPs within a single sentence could be coded as a single VIPL. This also arguably made sense because a single sentence that contains three or more VIPs is likely to be even vaguer than a sentence containing less than three VIPs. In this regard, it should be kept in mind that a single VIP consists of a verb element and a VIP type mean, but may also contain one or several targets and PCs. Assuming that most sentences are of more or less reader friendly length, when three or more VIP means occur within a single sentence, it is likely that most of the other elements are not provided, or are shared between the different means, making it likely that the VIPs contained within such a VIPL are even vaguer than “normal” VIPs. Colloquially speaking, such VIPLs often sound suspiciously like “bla-bla-bla”.

The decision to introduce VIPLs could be critiqued by using a previously made argument in favour of the method against it: namely that this approach leads to a loss of information about how many VIPs are contained in an electoral program. This is of course true, since a VIPL contains three or more VIPs and once coded as a VIPL, it is impossible to know how many VIPs a given VIPL actually consists of. Two arguments were believed to outweigh this disadvantage: firstly, substantial gains in efficiency, since there is little point in developing a method that is not put to use because it is too cumbersome; secondly, the aforementioned assumption that the larger the number of VIPs found within a single sentence, the vaguer the overall content of that statement.

Returning to the DIPs, the original intention to code these as a group of means which collectively referred to a single major mean was essentially discarded with the decision to code at the sentence level, because the statement of a series of specific IPs referring to the same major mean would most likely require the formulation of several sentences. The DIP concept was originally related to the approach of coding at the text block level and would ultimately be accompanied by similar problems, the largest being the provision of (subjectively) reliable rules to determine which specific mean is the major one and which IPs refer to it rather than to another major mean.⁴⁴ Having decided to code at the sentence level and to apply the list concept to VIPs, however, it was also decided to apply that same concept to IPs, because the mention of various specific issue positions within one sentence made it at least likely that they were referring to the same “general mean”, which was being elaborated on with a great deal of specificity through various kinds of means. Accordingly, while

⁴⁴ See section 4.1 on page 69 for a more detailed discussion of the problems associated with such an approach in general.

VIPLs are considered vaguer than VIPs, IPLs are considered more specific than IPs. Once the list concept had been applied to VIPs and IPs, it was also extended to SQIPs and GIPs for the sake of consistency. Consistency was assured because if only some issue position types could occur both individually or as lists, whereas others could only appear individually, this would also hamper the ability to compare the frequency of occurrences between different types of issue position. For example, if only VIPL and IPL issue positions had been created, one could compare the number of IPs to VIPs and the number of VIPLs to IPLs, but not the number of VIPs to GIPs, because some VIPs would now form part of VIPLs, while GIPs would have no list equivalent. This across the board application of the list rule thus mitigated such a lack of comparability between the different issue position types.

Substantively, like VIPLs, GIPs can be interpreted as indicating even greater vagueness than their non-list counterparts. This is not the case for SQIPLs, however, because SQIPs are marked by the absence of a commitment to changing the SQ. Since an absence cannot be potentiated, the SQIPL category can at most be interpreted as a very insistent defence or advocacy of the SQ. Although issue position lists were first introduced to be able to code large numbers of VIPs more efficiently,⁴⁵ that a practical motive initiated this development does not mean that it is necessarily devoid of substantive meaning.

4.2.6 **Ancillary elements**

The ancillary elements category emerged for practical and not theoretical reasons, by functioning as a ragbag collection of disparate types of statements which did not form part of any of the previously discussed elements and were not considered worthy of impacting on the number or type of issue positions due to their low informational content. Ancillary elements are simply absorbed into the surrounding key elements and, by extension, the issue position(s) resulting from these elements. Despite their lack of significance, it is important that coders are aware of these elements so as to not be wrongly influenced in their coding decisions by them. In order to provide a better overview of the different ancillary elements, these were sorted into three different groups, which will now be discussed in turn.

The first group consists of statements which describe the manner in which something will be done, either in terms of the order, or in terms of continuity or

⁴⁵ As will be discussed below, the list rule also reduces the effort needed to apply the X-by-Y rule.

speed. These statements include, for example, doing X step by step, gradually, sequentially, or by launching pilots first; doing X continuously, or steadily; doing X immediately, slowly or fast; doing X cooperatively, systematically, without hesitation or in the most detailed or comprehensive way possible. What these ancillary elements have in common is that they describe the manner in which a measure will be executed, sometimes in the adjectival or adverbial sense.

The second group includes statements which describe the manner in which a mean is carried out, often in relation to some motive. These include doing X based on loyalty for or dedication to Y; doing X in terms of Y (e.g. a reform in terms of a proposal that has been made); doing X from or out of a certain position, impulse or perception; doing X, which was inspired by Y; lastly, doing X, taking into consideration A, B, C, provided that X was not designed particularly for A, B and C (i.e. they are not also the direct target of the mean). In all these cases, the X itself, the mean with which the ancillary element occurs, ought to be coded according to the rules provided above and below, while the attached ancillary element is subsumed.

The third group consists especially of statements which can be considered to state the obvious, or can be considered to be so closely related to a measure that they do not merit being considered a position on their own. These include statements such as that a target must follow the laws or rules which are directed at it; that one may only benefit from a measure if one actually does what is demanded of one in order to benefit from it; that something is voluntary, which is, more often than not, obvious and could also just be signalled by the use of particular words such as “may” (unless something that was previously obligatory is being made voluntary, which is a particular kind of mean); that something will be done using all available information; that something or somebody will be guided through or accompanied in some process, which is usually obvious and inevitable in those cases where it is explicitly mentioned in combination with a mean; lastly, that somebody will be receiving personalized and/ or individualized attention. All these statements may be used to explain a particular mean elaborately and emphatically, or they may be used to give the impression that a mean is more specific than it actually is.

Lastly, in reference to the previous discussion on whether issues should be defined as problems, it should be noted that problems – which are technically not even considered ancillary elements – are either considered irrelevant text, when they are not presented in relation to a mean, or are subsumed into the element of which they form a part, thus ultimately being subsumed into the respective issue position(s) as well. Thus, in the example “We will increase job

opportunities to reduce poverty”, instead of considering “poverty” a problem, “to reduce poverty” is considered a PC.

4.3 Defining and coding issue positions

Having discussed the various kinds of elements, it is now possible to provide a more comprehensive definition of issue positions. A single issue position consists maximally of one verb, mean, PC and target element each as well as any number of ancillary elements. For example, “We will reduce long-term unemployment (PC) by improving our active labour market policies (VIP mean) especially for those above the age of 45 years of age (target)” is one VIP mean. Minimally, a single issue position consists of a verb and mean element (e.g. “We will decrease unemployment”).

The disaggregation of electoral program text and its reconstitution into issue positions occurs by using the X-by-Y rule, which has been mentioned several times before.⁴⁶ As the name of the X-by-Y rule suggests, provided that the causal relationship between elements does not form a chain of more than two links, the number of issue positions contained in a single statement is equal to the number verb elements, PCs and targets associated with a single or a par group of means which occur within a single sentence⁴⁷ all multiplied with one another. Thus, for example, a statement including one mean aimed at two distinct targets results in two issue positions ($1 \cdot 2 = 2$), whereas the statement of two means aimed at the same target also results in two issue positions ($2 \cdot 1 = 2$) and the statement of a mean directed at two targets and with two PCs results in four issue positions ($1 \cdot 2 \cdot 2 = 4$).

Alternatively, in those cases in which a chain of causality exists between more than a total of two mean and PC links, the total number of issue positions is determined by a combination of a given element of a link with each element of each other link. For example, a statement including three causally linked mean or PC par groups, each consisting of two elements (Group_A includes a_1 and a_2 , Group_B includes b_1 and b_2 , Group_C includes c_1 and c_2), results in each element in one par group being separately combined with all possible combinations of the issue positions in the other par groups. So each element in Group_A is combined with the other four elements, resulting in the following

⁴⁶ For a more detailed and condensed exposition of the X-by-Y rule, see appendix A.4.1 on page 431.

⁴⁷ The only exception to this rule are the three means which are coded across sentences. See footnote 41 on page 96.

eight issue positions: (a_1, b_1, c_1) , (a_1, b_1, c_2) , (a_1, b_2, c_1) , (a_1, b_2, c_2) , (a_2, b_1, c_1) , (a_2, b_1, c_2) , (a_2, b_2, c_1) , (a_2, b_2, c_2) . Because issue positions and not individual elements are coded and because issue position lists permit summarising the occurrences of the same issue position types within a given statement into one for each type, this approach is more manageable and easier than it may appear at first sight.

Given that coding occurs at the sentence level, at times electoral program text may appear to “chop up” a single issue position and present some of its elements in individual sentences, raising the question of how to deal with such a situation. For these situations, the following rules were formulated:

- If a target is mentioned in a separate sentence from its mean, it is coded as a separate VIP (for example, “Especially the long-term unemployed”).
- If a PC is stated in a separate sentence apart from the mean to which it supposedly belongs, it is coded as a VIP (for example, “That is how we will reduce unemployment”).
- When an ancillary element is found in a separate sentence from the mean or element to which it belongs, that ancillary element is coded as irrelevant.
- If coding an IP leaves behind a sentence consisting only of a short statement which, on its own, makes no or little sense, it is coded as irrelevant.

4.4 Irrelevant text

When actually analysing electoral programs, the first coding decision the coder makes is whether a given statement is relevant and should thus be analysed further in the search for issue positions, or irrelevant, in which case it is coded as such and not analysed further. Irrelevant text is defined both negatively and positively. Concerning the former, irrelevant text does not contain issue positions, which were defined as future means proposed by the party and which aim to make changes to the SQ. As such, the first group of irrelevant statements concerns those which are not concerned with *future* means. The term “future” is further defined as the (expected) end of the coming legislature, so that means which concern the time period thereafter are no longer considered relevant text. The justification for this limitation is twofold: firstly, what is being analysed are electoral programs, the purpose of which is to make proposals for the coming legislature; secondly, stating long-term goals is an easy way to distract from a lack of specific means, including

specific goals of a short or medium term nature, to reach them. By default, it is assumed that the party wishes to realize or reach all its means in the coming legislature, but at times a party may mention that this is not the case explicitly, for example by mentioning a time period for realization clearly outside of the coming legislature. At other times, the party may make use of the expressions short term, medium term and long term. If not explicitly contradicted, it is assumed that the short and medium term or a combination thereof (e.g. short to medium term) refer to the coming legislature, while a reference to the long term or a combination of short or medium with the long term (e.g. medium to long-term) is considered irrelevant text. If a statement mentions both means to be realized in the medium and in the long-term, for example, the former is considered relevant and the latter irrelevant.

Since issue positions concern the future, text in the past tense is also considered irrelevant. Given that the coding rules are applied at the sentence level, this includes entire sentences, so that even if only one part of a sentence is formulated in the past tense, it is considered irrelevant as a whole. This also includes statements in which the party relates the past to its future, with statements such as “We have always supported the expansion of the welfare state”, “Already back then we said that we need to expand the welfare state” or “We have defended a state capable of X and Y”. This rule is in some ways suboptimal, since it may at times lead to a loss of information. However, it is also likely that sentences which relate the past to the present are in any case vague and redundant, since they tend to lead up to more specific or at least more explicit statements concerning future means. In a similar vein, descriptions of what the party is doing “right now” (instead of what it wants to do in the future) are also considered irrelevant. Additionally, it is possible that statements talk about about means that were already reached or implemented in the past in the present tense. Such text is considered irrelevant if this fact becomes evident from the text itself. The default assumption is that things that have come to pass are expressed in the past tense, since a coder cannot be expected to have in-depth knowledge on when (at times very) particular laws or policies formed a part of the SQ.

Irrelevant text is also defined positively as statements which provide background information. These include explanations of concepts, descriptive information about the current state of the world, or a particular policy field, problems that exist in the world, challenges which are posed by these problems, or challenges in general as well as the assigning of responsibility, or blame, comments about deficient measures of the past and the like. While the assignment of these kinds of statements to the irrelevant text category

seems rather uncontroversial, it also includes a series of much more debatable ones, which will be discussed next.

Irrelevant text also includes statements that something is important, indispensable, a prerequisite, or requirement (unless directly related to a mean). The reasons for this decision were that it can be assumed that everything mentioned in an electoral program is considered at least of nominal importance to the party, since a party would not mention it otherwise, and that these kinds of statements contain little or no informational value. Instead of being means, they often appear to be mere rhetorical devices. Nonetheless, one may be inclined to challenge this point with a previously made argument: When a party states the importance of something, it is implicitly committing itself to changing the SQ. Nonetheless, there is a clear difference between stating that something is important and stating an objective, whether the latter is vague or not. Ultimately, statements of importance occur somewhere on the continuum of specificity between statements providing descriptive background information and the statement of vague objectives. The reason for including these kinds of expressions in the one rather than the other coding category is that they occur most frequently near or in text which is concerned with the state of the world, the country or a particular part thereof, and its associated problems, all of which are considered irrelevant.

The argument that such statements could be considered in some very limited and clearly abstract sense commitments to changing the SQ, but that they are considered irrelevant text because they contain little concrete information and usually tend to occur in or near text passages that do not contain issue positions, can be applied to many of the other kinds of irrelevant statements, which include: a party's feelings, emotions, "personality traits", attitudes (e.g. trust), values, beliefs (in a metaphysical sense), perceptions, or convictions, or those of the country, its people, or its constitution; statements that a party has knowledge of, an understanding of, a perception of, or beliefs (in the sense of preconceptions, particular perspectives etc.) about a problem, or considers something best⁴⁸ or expects something to occur.

Additionally, a series of statements may cause doubt as to whether they should be considered irrelevant or not, in the sense that they could be interpreted more as background information than means. Three kinds of statements have thus been explicitly identified as relevant statements and, in order to aid in their identification, are provided with particular word groups: firstly,

⁴⁸ Words which may signal this kind of statement include to know, understand, consider and recognize something or believe it advisable that something happen.

statements which express the party's desire to do something in the future, signalled especially by the will word group, which consists especially of the word "to do" in the future tense; secondly, statements which underline that something is necessary to do, must or should happen (verb or noun), signalled by words in the necessity word group and which include, among others, "must", "have to", "should", "need to", "be (self-)obliged to", "to want", "to demand" etc.; thirdly, statements of priority, which emphasize that something is urgent, a top priority or will be done before other things. The latter are distinct from a party's statement that something is important because, as stated previously, anything the party is concerned with can be assumed to be of nominal importance, whereas not everything the party is concerned with can be a top priority (since otherwise that would be a contradiction in terms). The pendant to the necessity word group is the can word group, which includes words such as "can", "may", "could", or "would" and which are likely to signal irrelevant text, because they are usually not stated when making future mean proposals. As was mentioned previously, the mere appearance of words belonging to one of these word groups does not automatically convert that statement into relevant text. These words need to appear in the verb element and do not automatically convert statements into (ir)relevant text, instead requiring a consideration of the rest of the statement as well. There is one exception to this rule: The occurrence of a necessity word group verb in the verb element of a potential statement of a mean converts that statement into a mean and thus relevant text.

Given that ancillary elements are basically also considered irrelevant, this raises the question of why an irrelevant text (or ancillary element) category is necessary at all. The irrelevant text category aimed to identify especially the kind of text which provides the reader of electoral programs with background information and descriptions, which occur frequently in the form of several paragraphs at the beginning of different electoral program sections or at the beginning of paragraphs prior to the first mention of a party's means. Ancillary elements, by contrast, do not tend to concentrate in particular parts of electoral programs, but are scattered throughout and are often mentioned directly in combination with means. In order to avoid having to search each statement of a mean carefully for ancillary elements and to explicitly code them as irrelevant text, it was decided that they should simply be subsumed into their surrounding elements, thus not requiring explicit coding, whereas statements which often do not contain any means at all are coded, as a whole, as irrelevant text.

4.5 Adjudication rules

Lastly, a number of rules have been formulated to resolve situations in which the coder is confronted with a contradictory coding outcome, meaning that the same statement or mean could be considered either of the one or the other kind of text or issue position type, depending on which rule is applied. Except for the last one, these rules have in common that they make decisions in favour of vagueness rather than specificity, thus being more demanding on the method in the sense that its ultimate aim, to identify and extract specificity, is more difficult when situations of uncertainty arise.

- When there is uncertainty about whether text is either relevant or irrelevant, it is considered irrelevant.
- When there is uncertainty about whether a statement is a SQIP or another type of position, it is considered a SQIP.
- When there is uncertainty about whether a statement is of one position type or another (excluding SQIPs), it is of the vaguer type.
- When there is uncertainty about whether two or more PCs are on par or linked causally, it should be assumed that they are linked causally.

The latter rule was formulated to avoid an artificial inflation of issue positions caused by uncertainty in complex coding situations in which various means and PCs are linked to one another in a causal chain.⁴⁹ Overall, adjudication rules should be needed infrequently, since in situations where more than one rule could be applied to the same statement, this is not inherently problematic as long as the application of each rule results in the same outcome.

4.6 The contribution of pledge studies to the specificity model

The specificity model was originally motivated by a reading of Downs (1957) and Stokes (1963) and the dissatisfaction with the CMP's approach to electoral program analysis. Conceptually, these authors as well as Pomper and Lederman (1980), provide the "intellectual genealogy" of the specificity model. As

⁴⁹ If an individual element is considered on a par with other elements instead of forming a separate link of a causal chain, the number of elements to be combined with the elements of all other links increases the number of resultant issue positions. If such an element forms, on its own, a link, it is simply combined once with all other combinations of elements from the other links. See section 4.3 on page 107 for more details.

pioneers of mandate theory, Pomper and Lederman (1980) in fact provide the closest theoretical and methodological approximation to the specificity model. Despite their claim that their future pledges “are nominal classifications and do not constitute a continuous, unidimensional scale”, the authors did present their six future pledge types “in order of increasing commitment and specificity” (Pomper and Lederman 1980, p. 236). Unfortunately, their more abstract descriptions of different sub-types of future pledges could only make a limited contribution to a method which aims to deconstruct statements into key elements and to reconstruct issue positions from these, coding them by means of a catalogue of over 40 kinds of very concrete means and their related criteria. In other words, the method that was presented above should be considered to have been inspired by Pomper and Lederman (1980), among others, but the latter’s contribution to the operationalization of the specificity model is rather circumstantial.⁵⁰ The same could be said of other mandate theory approaches which followed on Pomper and Lederman (1980) and which did make some methodological suggestions concerning electoral program coding which reappear to some extent in the specificity model’s coding method. The reason for these occasional similarities is of course that mandate theory, like the specificity model, is concerned with analysing electoral programs in order to extract specificity. The major differences, above and beyond the ultimate goal of these research projects – testing the extent to which parties follow through on their pledges as opposed to exploring specificity as a phenomena through which to view party competition – is that the distinction quickly became one of pledges and non-pledges, with little to no graduations in specificity, and the abandonment of attempts, clearly implicit in Pomper and Lederman (1980) despite their disclaimer, to place parties in a political space.

Given that the method presented above was derived by constant trial and error and that the connection to mandate theory’s operationalization of pledges is at best occasional and incidental, illustrated by the difference both in the manner and complexity of these various approaches to the one presented here, it was decided to present a bullet list of connections between the two below, instead of integrating these cross references directly above. In addition to the

⁵⁰ Although this is ultimately irrelevant, it should be noted that the potential usefulness of the mandate theory approach to the enterprise of developing the specificity model was only discovered after the method had already been developed and the coding applied. Nonetheless, just because one is unaware of walking in someone else’s footsteps, that does not mean that one is not indeed doing so. Accordingly, the mandate theory’s ex post “contribution” is addressed as if it had occurred prior to or during the development of this method.

scarcity of significant connections between the two, another reason which motivated this decision was that it would not have been sufficient simply to insert such cross-references to mandate theory, but to deconstruct their coding instructions systematically and to re-interpret them in order to make them relateable to the specificity model. In order to illustrate what is meant by this, one may wish to look again at Pomper and Lederman's (1980) definition of detailed pledges, already quoted and discussed in the previous chapter, and compare them to the specificity model's counterpart:

"The character of the action pledged, as well as its direction, is stated. A specific bill or executive action may be mentioned, or its context explicated. Pledges to continue specific past policies or to exact quantitatively defined policies are included as well. Even in this category, however, specificity must be understood as considerably less than the details of an actual law. Verbs such as 'endorse', 'recommend', 'pledge' and 'commit' are followed by a definite object, often modified by strengthening adjectives such as 'immediate', 'prompt', 'complete', and 'full'" (Pomper and Lederman 1980, p. 237).

As opposed to the abstract description of detailed pledges as "[t]he character of the action pledged, as well as its direction", IPs are defined much more precisely by focusing on the concrete proposals (or kinds of means) parties actually formulate – perhaps Pomper and Lederman's (1980) "character" – and the "direction" of IPs is generally irrelevant. The mention of "[a] specific bill or executive action" may be required by a criteria of a particular kind of mean to determine a statement's issue position type, but the form of a mean is generally not an important element. Provided that "context" should actually read "content" and is thus a spelling mistake, there is a definite overlap here, but it is clearly insufficient to consider the instruction to look for the content of a law or policy enough in order to be able to systematically distinguish detailed pledges from others. If the "x" in context was not a spelling error, there is little to no relation to the conceptualization of the specificity model's IPs here. Additionally, pledges "to continue...specific past policies" are not considered IPs, but SQIPs and as such they signal the absence of commitment to changing the SQ. The greatest similarity between detailed pledges and IPs is the "exact quantitatively defined policies" criteria, which is addressed in much greater detail especially by the "Amounts/ rates" and "Duration/ time intervals/ number of times" means. Not only is this the most obvious criteria one may come up with, because it requires only looking for the mention of numbers in relation to future electoral promises, but

in the specificity model IPs also include “inexact” quantities, because the mention of increases and decreases in relation to particular laws and policies are sufficient for a statement to be considered an IP. That “specificity must be understood as considerably less than the details of an actual law” was also pointed out several times above, but this is of course somewhat self-evident. Lastly, Pomper and Lederman (1980) also make use of word groups, but as was argued above, if intended to be applied in a deterministic fashion, the distinction between these groups is rather arbitrary, because the verb (element) used bears little to no relation to the specificity of a mean, as was also subsequently recognized by Thomson (1999), who drops the distinction between hard and soft pledges precisely for that reason. Focusing only on the verbs offered here in relation to detailed pledges, the words “endorse’, ‘recommend’, ‘pledge’ and ‘commit’” may reappear in different specificity model word groups, but the most important word group is the necessity one, because it makes a statement relevant. Once again, the difference to Pomper and Lederman (1980) is apparent here because the authors do not make such a distinction between relevant and irrelevant text. Furthermore, to the latter such verbs are supposedly followed by “definite objects”, which play no role in the method provided above, unless one considers that targets and/ or the SQ are considered objects, but such grammatical designations are very likely to lead to a myriad of problems when applying coding rules in practice. Lastly, that such statements “often” include “strengthening adjectives” means that their appearance is, like most of the word groups of the specificity model provided above, treated as an indicator rather than a hard and fast rule. To some extent, such “adjectives” are designated to the ancillary element category.

As was illustrated by the search for a close knit relation between Pomper and Lederman (1980)’s detailed pledges and its greatest conceptual specificity model equivalent, IPs, differences far outweigh similarities and the scarce overlap that does exist is usually superficial. As was already stated above, there are inevitable similarities because both deal with the same primary sources, electoral programs, and pursue the same general aim of extracting specific positions, thus forcing different researchers to grapple with similar challenges. The way these were dealt with are very different, however, making the identification of similarities a strenuous exercise which yields few results. Given the complexity of the subject matter above, it was thus preferred to deal with the relation between mandate theory and the specificity model separately instead of digressing from the presentation of the method in order to point out and thus being forced to discuss such rather tenuous links. In addition to the connections between mandate theory and the specificity model already discussed above, the following list shows some of the clearest methodological

overlap between the mandate theory's and the specificity model's coding approach, without discussing it in great detail, but with the intention of fully acknowledging its existence:

- Pomper and Lederman (1980, p. 236) conceived of pledges of continuity, which “maintain present governmental policy”. Such pledges of continuity make their appearance as an SQIP type kind of mean, which promises to continue, culminate or complete a process that has already started.
- Royed (1992, pp. 374–5) differentiates between four levels of subjectivity involved in the hypothetical determination of pledge fulfilment, definitive, difficult definitive, judgemental and rhetorical. Testability is also employed by other mandate theory authors as a criteria to determine “specificity”, although this is usually reduced to a distinction between pledges and non-pledges. As was discussed above, a similar abstract criteria informed the formulation of many of the specific kinds of means which have been conceptualized, namely whether a measure is sufficiently specific in order to be implement more or less as stated in the electoral program, provided it is accompanied by a framework of additional measures which are conducive to its direct implementation. Similarly, concerning some kinds of means, it was required that their targets are identified in such a manner that the party's ability to choose freely between a large number of targets to argue that it has followed through on its promises is clearly restricted or eliminated. A similar formulation also occurs as part of the “Make sth. [something] or sb. [somebody] equal to another” mean, which demands, among other things, that the existence of equality in the specific area be assessed directly.
- As is generally assumed in the mandate theory literature, long-term pledges which fall outside the coming legislature are not considered pledges. Similarly, long-term electoral promises are not considered relevant text, because making long-term commitments through documents considered valid only in the short-to-medium term are not considered commitments to changing the SQ.
- Outcome pledges, defined by Thomson (1999, pp. 82–3), set specific goals like reducing inflation or reducing unemployment by stating a particular number (but which are not considered pledges) and are similar to the “(Quasi-) Numerical goals” mean.

- Thomson (1999, p. 231) also does not consider “[s]tatements in which parties promised to ‘consider’ or ‘look into’ specific policy actions” pledges. These types of means are considered of the GIP type.
- Thomson (1999, p. 231) considers that “to carry out policy actions ‘if necessary’, without specifying when these actions would be necessary”, does not qualify as a pledge. Similarly, when the if-condition is not specified, the “Event triggering action” mean is not considered an IP, but a VIP. Thomson’s (1999, p. 231) conditional pledges promise that “a specified action will be taken if certain socio-economic conditions are met”, but are only considered a pledge if these conditions actually come to pass. In the specificity model, these kinds of statements also fall into the “Event triggering action” category.
- Thomson (1999, p. 231) determines that statements that a party will do something as soon as possible are considered pledges. Similarly, such statements are considered to signal relevant as opposed to irrelevant text, although the mean type (the thing to be done as as soon as possible) is not determined by the use of this phrase.
- Mansergh (2004, p. 257) excludes statements “[w]here support is pledged for an idea, principle or concept unless it clearly refers to a practice in law which can be changed by law.” These kinds of statements are reminiscent of irrelevant statements in the specificity model, which include “[f]eelings, emotions, ‘personality traits’, attitudes (e.g. trust), values, beliefs (in a metaphysical sense), convictions of the party, constitution or country”.
- As Mansergh (2004, p. 258) states, when “[the] onus is on someone other than just the political party to do the action”, it is unclear who would be to blame if the pledge is unfulfilled and these kinds of statements should thus be excluded. In the specificity space model, a distinction is made between actors and agents and, in a similar fashion, when actors are called upon to cooperate or come to an agreement etc., these kinds of statements are considered GIPs because the party can engage in blame shifting.
- Mansergh (2004, p. 258) considers that statements like “‘We will review/ review and reform’” are not considered pledges because they are not considered testable as such. These kinds of statements are also considered GIPs because any party can be expected to make such promises and these kinds of statements are thus likely to be intended to give the impression of specificity.

- At times, adverbs and adjectives have been considered to impact on the nature of pledge statements (such as Pomper and Lederman (1980) above). Similarly, ancillary statements also include, among others, statements describing the manner in which something will be done, such as in terms of the order or in terms of continuity or speed.

It should be noted that especially Thomson (1999) and Mansergh (2004) appear in the above list precisely because they show a still limited but greater concern with the actual content of statements, without resorting to a great level of abstraction. As was stated already above, none provide a method to deconstruct text, none provide the individual elements of which an issue position exists, with the exception of the “verb element” and the “action”, although the significance of the former is later discarded and the latter is never specified further in a systematic fashion.

4.7 A comment on the influence of the Spanish language on the development of the method and its applicability to other languages

As described above, the specificity model’s method was developed by directly coding and deriving coding rules from Spanish language electoral programs. This obviously raises the question of the extent to which the Spanish language has had an influence on the development of the coding rules and their subsequent application to electoral programs in other languages. The influence of the Spanish language becomes evident in specific rules, such as that when a target is mentioned twice in order to avoid sexual discriminations, both mentions are to be treated as one. This issue cannot result from the word employee, but from the word(s) “empleado” and “empleada”, since noun endings can indicate the male and female gender of the person(s) being referred to in the Spanish language. This very specific and exceptional rule aside, the area which may require the greatest adjustment is the selection of verbs which constitute the different verb groups, perhaps especially regarding the distinction between relevant and irrelevant text. The reason is that the terms and phrases considered to signal irrelevant text were chosen based on their frequent appearance in introductory sections where few or no means are proposed, but such usage conventions may vary across languages. Nonetheless, the vast amount of rules formulated above are likely to be impervious to differences in language.

4.8 Defence of the practicality of specificity coding and conclusion

Although a first time reader may consider the method presented above overly complex and impractical in its application, such a conclusion would be far from the truth. As was mentioned previously, the aim of this chapter was to provide a very detailed exposition of the manner in which the method was developed, the motives for the adoption of particular coding rules and to deal with the greatest possible number of scenarios that can arise during coding. Although some electoral statements may require a close study and the weighing up of the correct application of different rules and their outcomes, the vast majority of electoral program statements are easy to code with this method. Moreover, the fact that issue positions and not elements are coded, the simplicity of the identification of key elements other than the means, the bundling of the different kinds of means into eight groups, the clarity of criteria to determine a statement's issue position type, the ease with which the X-by-Y rule can be applied and the possibility to code a series of issue positions of the same type within one sentences as list permit a coder to proceed at a surprisingly fast rate. A practised coder can – depending on page formatting and content – easily code an A4 electoral program page in anything from five to ten minutes. Moreover, the entire coder manual found in the appendix was further summarized into three A4 coding instruction maps, which are comprehensive enough to apply the coding instructions without a need to resort to the entire coding manual and illustrates that the method's application is more than manageable.⁵¹ Lastly, it should be noted that the probability of misclassifying individual means is relatively low because the coder first determines whether a statement is relevant or irrelevant, then whether it is either an SQIP, GIP or a VIP/IP, a distinction that is quite easy to make, and lastly determines whether a particular mean is a VIP or IP.⁵² The probability that a coder categorizes means correctly is thus quite high, because the categories between which (s)he needs to choose at each step of the way are few in number. Having dealt with the theoretical and methodological aspects of the specificity model, the second part of this dissertation will be concerned with its application to the case of the Spanish party system.

⁵¹ See footnote 3 on page 68. The coding summary sheets can be found in appendix B on page 446.

⁵² This sequence of steps is also shown in the coding instruction maps found in appendix B on page 446.

Part II

Case study of the Spanish party system (2004-2019) and specificity

5 Analysing the Spanish party system through the lens of the specificity party space model

Having presented and operationalized the party specificity space model in the first part of this dissertation, the second part turns to an application of the model to the Spanish party system from 2004 until 2019.¹ This chapter prepares the ground for the case study by justifying the selection of the country, time period, election years and policy fields chosen for analysis. Lastly, the hypotheses' independent variables will be operationalized and additional methodological issues discussed.

5.1 The country case study selection

The method of electoral program analysis discussed in the previous chapter can be applied to any democratic country with political parties which formulate electoral programs. For this particular case study, the Kingdom of Spain was selected due to its immanent suitability for testing the hypotheses presented in the preceding chapter. More precisely, three hypotheses, which will be discussed in greater detail below, are to be investigated: firstly, that the more a party deviates from the ideological political center, the more specific it becomes; secondly, that the more a party is threatened by rival parties, the greater its specificity; thirdly, that political parties that are certain that they will win an upcoming election will be less specific than other parties.

The 2008 financial and economic crisis as well as massive migration especially from Africa and the Middle East produced fertile soil for the growth of old and new far left and right-wing as well as so-called populist parties in various European Union member states and beyond. Some of these parties have been able to achieve substantial electoral successes and have questioned the respective national political status quo,² at times claiming to exist outside of the typical left-right divide which has characterized Western politics at least since the emergence of socialist parties in the last quarter of the 19th

¹ Although the 2008 election is the first for which electoral programs were analysed, the qualitative case study commences at the beginning of that legislature in 2004.

² When the term status quo is used below, it refers to the general meaning of the term, thus referring, for instance, to general power relations as they exist in society. When used in the sense of the specificity model, it is denoted SQ.

century. Modern Spain has been an exceptional case among its European peers, given that not just one, but a total of three relatively large political parties have entered the country's parliament, the Congress of Deputies, since the 2015 national election. Moreover, these parties are about as ideologically heterogeneous as can be: a radically left (Podemos), radically right (Vox) and a liberal center party (Ciudadanos). Their emergence in a two-and-a-half party system dominated by the right-wing Partido Popular (PP), the social-democratic Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and the much smaller left-wing Izquierda Unida (IU) has led all three parties to experience situations which could be described as existential threat. Up to 2015, the centre oriented ideological distribution of Spanish voters caused both the PSOE and PP to compete around the political center, although the PP was clearly positioned further away from it than the PSOE throughout the post-transition period.³ After 2015, however, each party became wedged between two formidable competitors: the PSOE between Podemos – which basically “absorbed” the electorally weaker IU – and Cs; the PP between Cs and Vox. For the PSOE, the situation was unprecedented, since, with the exception of the highly uncertain first democratic election in 1977, the IU and its predecessor, the Partido Comunista de España (PCE), had never posed a threat to the party's hegemony, usually only benefiting from the electorate's disenchantment with the PSOE by gaining a few percentage points. For the PP, the situation was entirely novel, because the party had been able to cover the entire ideological spectrum from the center to the radical right at least since 1982. Despite the rise of the occasional challenger from the political center to both “traditional” parties⁴ from 1982, especially the Centro Democrático y Social (CDS) in the 1980s and the Unión, Progreso y Democracia (UPyD) some two decades later, none of these parties had ever posed a serious threat to their hegemonic positions. This situation changed with the emergence of Cs, which, although relatively small, held – among other parties – the key to national government formation repeatedly and reached, at its peak, a comparatively unprecedented popularity and share of national congressional seats. Moreover, between 2014 and 2020, both the PSOE and the PP fell behind Podemos and Cs in electoral surveys at different points in time, a situation which neither of Spain's two major parties had experienced at least since 1982. These developments were accompanied by the experience of unprecedented electoral setbacks by the PSOE and PP, as became evident by the PSOE's massive decline especially in 2011 and the fragmentation of the political right especially since 2019.

³ See fig. 6 on page 204.

⁴ The PP's history only extends back to the 1970s.

As a consequence of these developments, Spain is an excellent case study for the application of the specificity space model and the testing of the above stated hypotheses. Firstly, the breakthrough and sheer number of important new national parties should provide a great deal of variability in deviation from the political center and is a potential driver for party shifts in their ideological positions. Secondly, the breakthrough of these newcomers, which directly challenged the PP and PSOE's hegemony, can be expected to have led to massive and varied shifts in party threat. Thirdly, during each national election which took place from 2008 to 2019, one party could always be sure of victory.⁵ In more general terms, this case study offers an opportunity to analyse how parties respond to situations of heightened ideological and electoral competition, circumstances which should be particularly propitious to revealing potential relationships between the aforementioned variables and specificity.

An additional important reason to choose the case of Spain has been the relative lack of attention paid to the country in international political science research in comparison to many other Western democracies. Although Spain has the thirteenth largest GDP in the world and ranks fourth both economically and in terms of its population of 49 million among European Union member states after the Brexit (World Bank 2020, Eurostat 2021a), Spain lacks the industrial clout of Germany and the nuclear and military capabilities of France and Great Britain and is neither a member of the G7 nor of the United Nations Organisation's Security Council. These economic and political "power deficits" aside, an important reason for the lack of scholarly examination has been Spain's late transition to democracy, with one of its most important milestones, the first democratic election since the end of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), only occurring in 1977.⁶ Although Spanish democratization itself received a great deal of attention, since it was considered as a potential model of peaceful regime transition during what Huntington described as the third wave of democratization, at this point in time the majority of European countries to the west of the Iron Curtain had already experienced at least some 30 years of uninterrupted democracy and more than 20 years of supranational institutional integration. While countries such as West Germany, France, the

⁵ The 2008 election was characterized by a comparatively greater degree of uncertainty, but empirical evidence, to be provided below, will make the case that the PSOE could be sure of its electoral victory that year.

⁶ Another reason for this relative neglect may be that the Spanish language is only an official language in one Western style parliamentary country, whereas French and German have national official language status in various EU countries and English continues to be the lingua franca of the world.

UK and Italy thus received plenty of attention from political science scholars concerned with the functioning of democratic parliamentary regimes and European integration, Spain was at best one of several cases of Southern European and Latin American authoritarianism. Moreover, even though Spanish democratization ended decades of relative political and economic isolation, the post-transition period could be characterized, at least from 1982 until 2008, as “politics as usual”, with some noteworthy but fleeting moments of glory or notoriety, such as Spain’s influence on the introduction of the European Structural Funds under Felipe González (Nohlen and Kölling 2020, p. 511), the country’s phenomenal economic performance under José María Aznar or the latter’s membership in George W. Bush’s “Coalition of the Willing”. From 2008, the world financial crisis once again drew more attention, when Spain’s economic deterioration seemed to pose a threat to the Euro’s survival as a currency, followed by the escalation of the center-periphery conflict between Madrid and Catalonia and the emergence of the aforementioned new national political parties. Despite the increase in scholarly interest produced by these events and Spain’s “promotion by elimination” in the rank of EU member countries due to the Brexit, more comprehensive English language analyses of these recent developments are still relatively scarce. Thus, the selection of the Spanish case not only provides optimal conditions to test the hypothesis to be operationalized below, but also permits the study of a still only partially and often fleetingly analysed case.

5.2 The selection of the time period and election years, parties and policy fields

The analysis of the behaviour of Spain’s major parties through the lens of specificity commences with the analysis of their 2008 national electoral programs. That election was the last which could, in a broad sense, be described as reflecting Spanish politics as usual: the PSOE and PP were still the main contenders for powers, none of the two parties were expecting a devastating victory or defeat and the world economic crisis had not yet erupted, although the first signs of its immanency were becoming visible. Indeed, if there was something exceptional about the election, it was the extent to which the two largest parties dominated the party system, concentrating 84.75 percent of the vote (see section 5.2 on the facing page). To provide the political context within which these electoral programs were presented and the election took place, the case study chapter for the 2008 election commences at the beginning of that legislature in 2004.

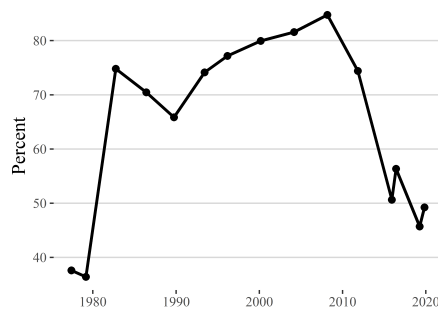


Figure 1: Electoral vote percentages of the PP and PSOE (1977-2020)

In the period of observation from 2008 to 2019, six elections took place in March 2008, November 2011, December 2015, June 2016, April 2019 and November 2019. Of these six elections, only four were selected for further analysis, excluding the June 2016 and November 2019 ones. These two elections were held following the national December 2015 and April 2019 elections respectively, which had resulted in a highly fragmented parliament and political deadlock, requiring an electoral repetition in order to force the national political parties to behave more cooperatively. Given that there is little reason to suppose that the political parties in question would undertake drastic changes to their electoral programs, especially due to the proximity of the respective elections and the absence of major party leadership changes,⁷ it was decided only to analyse the first of the two electoral contests respectively.

For this case study, the largest Spanish national parties were selected for electoral program analysis, which include the PP, PSOE, Cs, Podemos and Vox. The UPyD as well as the IU were excluded from electoral program analysis. The UPyD, a center political party which was founded in 2007 by former PSOE member Rosa Díez,⁸ was excluded because of its relatively poor electoral performance. In the March 2008 election, the party won 306 thousand votes (1.2 percent) and one deputy, in the November 2011 election, the party won 1.14 million votes (4.77 percent) and five deputies. This made the UPyD the fourth largest party in the Congress of Deputies, preceded by the much larger

⁷ According to Panebianco (1988, p. 41), party leader strategies are not easily interchangeable and thus – in the context of this thesis – neither are the issue positions that have been derived through these strategies from a party's organisational ideology, at least in the short-term.

⁸ The UPyD favoured Spanish patriotism, was critical of decentralisation, the role of Basque and Catalan nationalism in Spanish politics as well as the Spanish two-party system and advocated political renewal (Teruel and Barrio 2016, p. 7, Kennedy 2012, p. 679).

IU with 1.69 million votes (7 percent). During this period, Cs, which shared a similar ideological profile and aimed to enter into an alliance with the UPyD, was still a regional Catalan party until 2014, but in 2015 Cs won 3.5 million votes (14.05 percent), while the UPyD plummeted to 155 thousand votes (0.62 percent) and was unable to win representation. The UPyD thus experienced only ephemeral electoral success⁹ and its electorate was attracted especially to Cs subsequently.¹⁰

The IU, which had played a relatively important role in the Spanish party system since the transition, being the third largest party and an ideological competitor to the PSOE, was also excluded from electoral program analysis. One reason for this decision was, as was the case with the UPyD, its comparatively weak electoral performance. During the period of observation from 2008 to 2019, the party's maximum percentage of the vote was 7 percent, notably lower than the smallest percentage won by all major parties which were selected for the case study (the smallest being Vox in April 2019 with 10.34 percent). Moreover, the party was displaced as main far left competitor to the PSOE by Podemos from the 2015 national election and subsequently formed a party alliance with Podemos from 2016. While Spain's parliament also includes a number of regional parties, the support of which has been essential to assure parliamentary majorities, the most important being the Basque Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV) and the Catalan *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) and *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC), these parties have always held a relatively small percentage of the national vote. Moreover, focusing only on national parties is more conducive to the comparison of issue positions, since all national parties can be expected to formulate them with the aim of appealing to voters spread across the whole country.

Concerning the selection of policy fields, if one only considers Spain's national political parties, it is possible to conceptualize the universe of political issues to form a single left-right dimension along which all national parties can be located.¹¹ In this space, typical libertarian value related issue positions coincide with more pro-welfare state and interventionist economic issue positions, while more authoritarian value related issue positions coincide with pro-privatization and neoliberal economic ones. The center-periphery policy field, which includes, among others, the issue of decentralization to

⁹ See Junquera (2020) for a description of the UPyD's development.

¹⁰ According to the post-electoral CIS survey, 52 percent of the 2011 UPyD voters who were interviewed voted for Cs in 2015 and 15.6 percent voted for Podemos (*Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* 2016, p. 202).

¹¹ See Vidal (2018, pp. 264, 273) on this topic in terms of voter perceptions.

the Spanish Autonomous Communities (ACs), also conforms to this division. Parties on the far left generally favour more decentralization, while parties on the right *de facto* favour recentralization. With the uni-dimensionality of Spanish politics in mind, the labour market, center-periphery and the small and medium sized enterprises and self-employed (SMSE) policy fields were selected for analysis. The reasons for their selection will now be discussed in turn.

Since the vast majority of time dedicated to this dissertation was employed to develop the method of electoral program analysis, only a small number of policy fields were chosen to conduct the case study. These policy fields should ideally be related to salient issues considered problematic by the general public, thus potentially providing an incentive for parties to provide specific issue positions to address them. In that sense, it is also advantageous if the positions on the involved issues are likely to be conflictual. Moreover, since there is an interest in investigating the relationship between parties' ideological positions and specificity, these policy fields should also be meaningful ideologically to the parties which provide issue positions on them. Lastly, although the economic LR and value based AL dimensions coincide in the case of Spain, they are clearly conceptually distinct and also of high relevance when analysing politics in other democratic countries. As such, it is desirable that the chosen policy fields relate more or less separately to these two dimensions, thus permitting one to consider these policy fields tentatively as representative of the parties' specificity on these political dimensions as a whole. Both the labour market and center-periphery policy fields fulfil these requirements to different extents.

Concerning the labour market policy field, Spain has suffered from comparatively high rates of unemployment and especially youth unemployed even during prolonged periods of economic expansion. Moreover, in comparison to countries such as Germany or the Nordic countries, the welfare system is deficient in the sense that once unemployed individuals have passed through various social security nets, they are no longer eligible for state support.¹² As a consequence, unemployment has ranked as the most important or one of the most important issues in the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas

¹² See Lemmer (2017, pp. 145–149) for a discussion of the unemployment welfare system. The above stated problem was at least partially addressed in June 2020, when the Spanish parliament passed, with a large majority of votes, the so-called *Ingreso Mínimo Vital* (IMV) or essential minimum income (L. B. García 2020), which aims to improve welfare support to those who face the greatest risk of poverty and social exclusion.

(CIS)¹³ surveys of the last decades. Even in 2006, at which point in time the unemployment rate had been in continuous decline since 1995, falling to below 10 percent for the first time since the early 1980s (Eurostat 2021b), the issue was still considered as one of the three major Spanish problems by 43.1 percent of the interviewees (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2006). In November 2011 that number reached 83 percent (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2011b). Additionally, the Spanish labour market suffers from a disproportionately large number of badly paid and precarious temporary jobs, which have a negative effect both at the personal and the macroeconomic level.

Due to these problems, the labour market has drawn the attention of all Spanish governments since the transition, which have undertaken more or less substantial reforms with the intention to improve its functioning. Although political tensions surrounding labour market reforms are not new, the PP's 2012 labour market reform, generally considered its most severe and neoliberal reform to date, elevated this policy field to a new level of political significance. Undoing the PP's labour market reform has been one of the major promises of the PSOE since then and of Podemos thereafter. The political differences between the different parties in this policy field can be viewed as a classical LR conflict, since the conservatives believe that the labour market requires liberalisation and flexibilization in order to function optimally, while left parties consider the issue positions this entails an attack on labour rights and unions and believe that market interventions, such as minimum wage increases, are necessary to assure a certain degree of equity. The labour market policy field also extends into the welfare state, since it includes topics like unemployment insurance and (some) welfare benefits. In this respect, the conservatives put the onus on the responsibility and effort of the individual and the involvement of private actors, whereas the social democrats emphasize that employees must be well protected and socially secure in return for offering their human capital and labour. The labour market policy field is thus intimately related to the classical LR economic political conflict. While it is true that some measures proposed within this policy field are also related to AL value issues, like gender equality or non-discrimination, these can be expected to be in the minority.

¹³ The CIS is a state run social science research institute which conducts, among other activities, a large number of socio-political surveys. Although the institute has suffered from a certain erosion of its prestige following Pedro Sánchez's ascent to the presidency in 2018, claimed by critics to be accompanied by its politicization and loss of scientific rigour, this development took place largely outside of the period of observation.

One may want to question why the labour market would be considered a more suitable policy field to analyse party specificity in relation to the LR economic policy dimension than, for example, a more all-encompassing economics policy field. In Spain, however, economic policy is characterized largely by consensus for a number of reasons: agreement on the fundamental tenets of economic policy; the system of social concertation or bargaining between unions and employer organizations (despite its recurrent breakdowns); leadership continuities in the Ministries of Economy and Finance;¹⁴ lastly and perhaps most importantly, European integration (Royo 2009, pp. 439–447, I. Molina 2012, p. 69). It was especially the latter which has conditioned Spain's economic and finance policy throughout its post-authoritarian period, as becomes evident by the sequence of major European Community and Union developments. Negotiations on Spanish membership had been opened already in February 1979 (Kennedy 2013, p. 41) and were finally concluded after intensive negotiations in 1986, the very same year which saw the passage of the Single European Act, which aimed to make the European Single Market a reality. The European Commission's Delors Plan of 1989, only three years later, aimed to establish a monetary union, requiring the fulfilment of economic criteria, included in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, which required controlling inflation, the budget deficit, debt, the exchange rate and long term interest rates.¹⁵ Although there is still room for the manifestation of ideological differences in parties' economic policy related issue positions, this process of voluntary integration has required the acceptance of the aforementioned Maastricht criteria, which thus condition fiscal policy; has led to the renouncement of control over the country's monetary policy, including money supply and interest rates, as well as, indirectly, over the exchange rate, now determined by the European Central Bank; has meant the loss of control over import and export tariffs and international trade agreements, in the hand of the European Commission; lastly, has required the dismantling of non-tariff barriers of trade and the implementation of supranational restrictions on state intervention in the national economy to assure a level playing field on which European companies can compete with one another in the Common Market.¹⁶ While ideological differences still manifest themselves in issue position differences, especially concerning the willingness to increase debt,

¹⁴ The two ministries were often combined into one "super-ministry". The most long-serving ministers of finance were Carlos Solchaga from 1985 to 1993, Pedro Solbes from 1993 to 1996 and 2004 to 2009 and Cristóbal Montoro from 2000 to 2004 and 2011 to 2018 (Escudero 2018).

¹⁵ For more details, see Kennedy (2013, pp. 55–84) and Luis Ángel Rojo Duque (2005).

¹⁶ For a more detailed discussion, see Royo (2009, pp. 446–7).

regulate and control sub-state spending, increase or decrease taxes, or invest in infrastructure and research and development,¹⁷ the margin for difference has narrowed substantially.¹⁸

While diminishing the importance of some economic issues in national politics, European integration has in fact increased the importance of the labour market's role in economic policy making, a development which has been accompanied by its increasing political salience. In the past, Spain had periodically suffered from high inflation and associated exchange rate increases, reducing the price competitiveness of its exports and resulting in their relative decline. The latter was in turn accompanied by the widening of the country's unfavourable trade balance and an increase in its current account deficit. Despite now sharing a single currency, the differences in the rates of inflation between different Eurozone countries – Spain's major trading partners – function in some way as a *de facto* exchange rate, in the sense that the Euro has more purchasing power in one Eurozone country than another. As a member of the EU and Eurozone, however, Spain can no longer resort to currency devaluations to recalibrate its imports and exports as it had done in the past. Especially the political right has been advocating greater labour market “flexibility” as a solution. Thus, in order to restore price competitiveness, labour unions' negotiating positions are weakened by institutional reform to slow wage increases and worker rights are adapted to permit companies to reduce labour costs when necessary, with the added benefit of dampening private household consumption and thus also inflation as a consequence (Escrivá and López 2010, p. 321, Estrada, Jimeno, and J. L. M. d. Molina 2009, p. 88). It is in this sense that the 2012 labour market reform has been particularly polemical, because it has been interpreted as a head on attack on union and labour rights, dressed up as a solution to economic crisis while in fact implementing austerity and further diminishing a potentially important driver of economic recovery, namely internal demand. Due to its importance to the general public, its clear links to the LR dimension and its increasingly controversial nature, the labour market was thus considered an ideal policy field for further study in terms of the criteria laid out above.

The center-periphery policy field is somewhat distinct in its features from the labour market. The issue of Catalan independence, for example, the epitome

¹⁷ For an example, see Lemmer (2017, pp. 133–9).

¹⁸ Thus, for example, despite critiquing the PP's austerity measures in general, at no point had the PSOE before, during or after the 2008 economic crisis fundamentally and seriously questioned the need for austerity in order to be able to comply with the EU's macroeconomic rules of the game.

of the center-periphery conflict, did not rank among the top concerns of Spanish citizen for extended periods of time, except during the more heated phases of the Catalan crisis, especially surrounding the failed independence referendum of 2017. Nonetheless, it is safe to say that there is no political issue which has had – austerity aside – such high salience among the national parties and such a series impact on the Spanish party system's development. The regional and national breakthrough of Cs, a party of Catalan origin, can be attributed directly to the Catalan conflict; the attempt by the PSOE's General Secretary Pedro Sánchez to form a government coalition with Podemos and Cs in 2016 failed especially (but not exclusively) due to the contrary positions concerning the Catalan question; his following initiative to form a coalition only with Podemos and the support of Catalan parties led to a party internal coup against Sánchez's leadership; the Catalan parties' vote against Sánchez's budget in early 2019 prompted the latter to dissolve parliament and to hold a new election in April 2019; that election brought Vox, a party in favour of the immediate suspension of Catalan autonomy and the abolishment of the State of Autonomous Communities (ACs),¹⁹ into the Congress of Deputies. Above and beyond these major events, the willingness of Sánchez to cooperate with pro-independence parties was constantly used in the PP's, Cs' and Vox's political discourse to claim that Sánchez was jeopardizing Spanish unity in return for his own political survival.

In addition to the real and rhetorical political importance of the center-periphery conflict, there is also some relationship between the AL political dimension and the somewhat broader nature of the center-periphery policy field. Right-wing parties in favour of greater centralization or defending the status quo tend to believe that the authority of the central state should reign over the interests of diverse political and cultural identities which seek political expression and that these "minority interests" can and should be rightfully outweighed by that of the Spanish majority. In order to lend support to this line of argument, cultural and political differences are de-emphasized and adherence to the current status quo, the constitutional and legal framework, is portrayed as the ultimate source of politically legitimate behaviour. As a consequence, the political status quo must not only be defended, but also respected, thus calling for the toughening of legislation on offences against symbols of the Spanish nation and state, such as the flag or the Spanish monarchy. Left parties, on the other hand, are more willing to embrace cultural diversity and the multi-faceted nature of identity, without feeling uncomfortable

¹⁹ The ACs are Spain's regional territorial units, which are to a large extent *de facto* but not *de jure* equivalent to federal states.

when these cannot be neatly discerned or “allegiances” are somewhat ambivalent. As a consequence, left political parties do not view the existence of strongly developed Spanish and regional or nationalist identities as in and of themselves problematic, are more willing and able to pact with regionalist or nationalist parties²⁰ and are generally in favour of more decentralization to accommodate nationalist aspirations.²¹ The parallels to the AL political dimension are apparent: discipline, law and order, adherence to the status quo, nationalism and traditional values versus cultural (and political) diversity, self-realization, freedom of expression, willingness to embrace change, horizontal cooperation rather than vertical control. As such, both due to its political salience and significance, its conflictual nature and its relation to the AL axis, the center-periphery policy field was selected for a closer examination of the role of specificity in Spanish politics.

Lastly, the SMSE policy field is also of great importance in Spain, since the business sector consists, as of 2017, to 99.8 percent of small and medium sized businesses with 250 or less employees, 93.8 percent of these employing less than nine persons (Nohlen and Kölling 2020, p. 159). In 2018, the SMSE share of total employment was 65.9 percent (Ortega 2019). Given the very salient and polemical nature of the labour market and center-periphery policy fields, the SMSE policy field was included as a control group to compare against the other two. While it may be expected, based on the discussion above and the peculiarities of the labour market and center-periphery policy field, that parties provide a greater degree of specificity, the SMSE policy field is arguably of a more general, technical and less politicized nature. As such, it may be viewed as representative of more uncontroversial policy fields and the specificity parties provide in these. Because this policy field functions

²⁰ Throughout this dissertation, “national” parties are political parties which are rooted in the large majority of Spanish ACs and are thus country or nation wide parties. “Nationalist” and “regionalist” parties are defined as parties which are primarily rooted in only one or a small number of Spanish ACs. As opposed to regionalist parties, nationalist parties not only aim to ferment a distinct regional cultural identity or consider themselves its expression, but also aim to use this distinctiveness as a basis for the construction, in the short or long term, of their own sovereign nation state. Calling these parties “nationalist” is in no way intended to imply that national parties do not behave nationalistically in the general sense of that word.

²¹ It should be noted that these are abstract generalizations which inevitably deviate somewhat from reality. The PSOE has, at least until the leadership advent of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, but arguably even throughout the current period of democracy, also been a status quo party, while the PP has overseen decentralization processes from government and made various pacts with nationalist parties. See the discussion of the center-periphery policy field in section 6.4 on page 176 for a more detailed treatment.

as a control group, its development and issue position content will not be discussed in detail, but only evaluated quantitatively in terms of specificity.

5.3 Operationalization of variables and policy fields as well as additional methodological issues

This section will operationalize the hypotheses formulated in the previous chapter, briefly discuss the potential problem of treating ordinal as metric data, operationalize policy fields and provide a brief description of how MAXQDA, the software used to analyse the electoral programs, was applied to generate the electoral program data.

5.3.1 Operationalization of the hypotheses

This subsection will proceed to operationalize each hypothesis that was formulated in the previous chapter in turn.

5.3.1.1 H_1 : The more a party deviates from the political center, the more specific it will be

The hypothesis that the more a party deviates from the political center, the more specific its issue positions, requires some measure of the ideological positions of parties. The advantages and disadvantages of different approaches were already discussed in section 2.1. For the case of Spain, the best source of parties' ideological positions in political space is the aforementioned CIS,²² since it has regularly provided data on ideological party positions and, what is even more important, also at particularly useful points in time, namely just before national elections.²³ CMP data was not used due to the methodological concerns discussed in section 2.3 on page 30 and because it may be problematic to use the same primary source, electoral programs, to estimate parties' ideological positions and their specificity.

The CIS has conducted large-N political surveys asking voters, among other questions, to place parties on a single LR axis ranging from 1 (left) to 10

²² See footnote 13 on page 130 for a brief comment on the CIS.

²³ The specific CIS surveys from which the ideology data was taken can be viewed in appendix C on page 449.

(right).²⁴ Since the center of the space is 5.5,²⁵ a party's deviation from the ideological center is the absolute difference between the value 5.5 and a party's given average ideological position.

A problem which was not addressed in chapter 2, but which is relevant when considering the operationalization of the deviation from the center variable, is how to deal with center political parties. The assumption of a positive relationship between deviation from the political center and specificity was based especially on two assumptions: firstly, that it is easy for parties to agree on an empirically manifest problem, but the ideological nature of parties is revealed by how they wish to address these, more specific issue positions thus being more ideological in nature; secondly, that when a party proposes issue positions, it commits itself to making changes to the SQ and when a party thus offers many specific issue positions, it is perceived to be more "radical" because it wishes to change the SQ in many, in sum perhaps even fundamental, ways. In relation to the first assumption, it was also argued in chapter 2 that political parties derive their issue positions from their organizational ideology via a strategy. In these terms, it makes sense that when issue positions are more specific, they are more ideological because they provide substantive information about how a party's "beliefs" translate into practice via a strategy, thus shifting the party to the left (right) ideologically as specificity increases. For example, a left party which employs a catch-all strategy may prefer vague and generic statements, appearing to be more moderate and thus less to the left ideologically, whereas when that party wishes to emphasize its left ideological nature, it will provide a series of specific proposals like increasing the minimum salary or increasing state investment. The party can thus be said to have a "true" organizational ideology located permanently to the left (right), but its ultimate ideological position in space is variable and can shift according to the strategy employed by the party.

These arguments work when a party is either ideologically left or right, but may become contradictory when applied to a center party like Cs. The extent to which this is the case turns on the question of how the political center is conceptualized: merely as a midpoint location which exists on a straight line or as substantively meaningful (Daalder 1984, pp. 93-4). If it is understood

²⁴ As mentioned above, since the Spanish issue space is unidimensional, this approach represents a rather good approximation of national politics.

²⁵ Voters are offered ten categories to choose from to locate a given party in ideological space, the smallest category being 1 and the largest being 10. When this arguably ordinal variable is treated as metric – as done by the CIS, which calculates averages from these values – the center of the space – in ordinal terms between category 5 and 6 – is 5.5 in metric terms.

as a midpoint, a center party is by definition characterized by an absence of “leftness” and “rightness” and should thus be expected to lack specificity. Nonetheless, it is also possible to argue that center parties, which are located between “left” and “right” parties on the LR dimension, can have organizational ideologies distinct from left and right organizational ideologies, as is the case concerning political liberalism. Since this approach seems more sensible, since political liberalism is a substantively meaningful political ideology and it would be questionable to assume that liberal parties are per se vague while left and right parties can be more or less specific, depending on their deviation from the center, the latter conceptualization of the political center was chosen. This would mean, however, that since a party with a left (right) organizational ideology is expected to become more specific as it shifts to the left (right), one should expect that a party with a liberal center organizational ideology becomes more specific as it shifts towards the center. When operationalizing the above hypothesis, it is thus necessary either to invert the expected relationship stated in the hypothesis above for liberal parties only, assuming that as a liberal party deviates more from the center, it becomes less specific and discussing this additional hypothesis separately, or to invert the party’s deviation score. In order not to unnecessarily complicate matters, it was decided to choose the latter option. Thus, when Cs actually moves toward the political center on the CIS ideology scale, the party’s deviation from the center will actually increase because it draws closer to its “true” organizational ideology, just as a left (right) party’s deviation from the center increases as it draws towards its “true” organizational ideology.²⁶

This leaves open the question of which point in time should be chosen to test whether a party’s specificity is related to its ideological position. Because specificity is determined by a party’s electoral program, it follows that the relationship between these two variables should, if it exists, be strongest if the ideological position of a party is measured as close as possible to the point in time when that document was written. In Spain, the electoral campaigns of the elections included in the study lasted 15 days.²⁷ Parties usually present their electoral programs maximally a few weeks before the commencement of the electoral campaign, the final decision on its specificity thus being made at the latest another one or two weeks before that point in time (in order to permit its timely distribution and study by campaign teams, candidates

²⁶ Since a measurement of the deviation from the center is blind to whether this deviation occurs to the left or the right, one need not be concerned with whether a liberal party deviates toward the left or right.

²⁷ The November 2016 reform reduced the duration of campaigns from 15 to eight days for electoral repetitions (G. R. 2019).

etc.). One should thus expect a party's specificity to be most in line with its perceived ideological position roughly one to one-and-a-half months before the election,²⁸ at which point the so-called pre-campaign phase, characterized by greater confrontation between parties and the announcement of individual issue positions has usually also already commenced. With this aim in mind, those CIS surveys closest to the desired dates were chosen to determine a party's approximate ideological position for a particular election: for the election on the 9. of March 2008, the data from the survey conducted between the 21. of January and the 4. of February 2008 (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2008); for the election on the 20. of November 2011, the survey conducted between the 6. and the 23. of October 2011 (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2011a); for the election on the 20. of December 2015, the survey conducted between the 27. of October and 16. of November (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2015); lastly, for the election held on the 28. of April 2019, the survey conducted between the 1. and 18. of March (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2019).²⁹

5.3.1.2 H_2 : The more a party is threatened by rival parties, the greater its specificity

As was hypothesized previously, a party may be motivated to increase its specificity when it feels increasingly threatened by rival parties. Threat was argued to consist of two elements, a rival party's ideological proximity, called ideological threat, and its expected electoral results, called electoral threat hereafter. Ideological threat is operationalized as the absolute distance between a given party and its rival on the aforementioned LR CIS scale and is taken from the same surveys which have been identified above. Given that the maximum distance between two parties on a ten point scale is nine, the absolute difference between two parties is divided by that number in order to result in a number that ranges from zero to one. Moreover, since threat increases with proximity, that number is subtracted from one. The resultant formula is

²⁸ For example, for the election which took place on the 20. of December 2015, the POSE presented its electoral program on the 21. of October, roughly one week before the PP and Cs, while Podemos presented its program in the first week of December (Y. González 2015, EFE 2015a, Expansión and Agencias 2015, 20 Minutos 2015a). For the 28. of April 2019 elections, Vox presented its program already on the 12. of March (65 y más 2019), the PSOE on the 27. of March (Cué and J. Marcos 2019), Podemos at the beginning of April (Europa Press 2019b), the PP at the end of the first week of April (Regué and Santos 2019) and Ciudadanos in mid-April (Europa Press 2019a).

²⁹ For the dates on which the surveys were carried out, please see the respective "fichas técnicas" found with the respective survey result files on the CIS website (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2020).

$$\text{Ideological threat} = 1 - \frac{|I_{\text{party}} - I_{\text{rival}}|}{9} \quad (1)$$

where I is the ideological position of a given party. For example, if a party and its rival are located at the position 2 and 4 on the ideological scale: $1 - \frac{|I_{\text{party}} - I_{\text{rival}}|}{9} = 1 - \frac{|2-4|}{9} = 1 - 0.22 = 0.78$.

Electoral threat is operationalized by calculating the negative or positive difference which results from subtracting the given party's expected percentage of the vote from the rival's expected percentage of the vote and dividing that difference by 100,³⁰ because ideological threat ranges from zero to one and both figures will be combined below. Accordingly, when the value becomes positive, the rival party is bigger than the party in question, thus increasing threat, whereas when the value is negative, the rival party is smaller than the party in question, reducing party pair threat. The maximum and minimum values of electoral threat are positive and negative one. The formula is thus:

$$\text{Electoral threat} = \frac{|\text{vote}_{\text{rival}} - \text{vote}_{\text{party}}|}{100} \quad (2)$$

Next, the electoral and ideological threat values are added and divided by the number two in order to determine the threat that a rival party presents to a given party, called party pair threat. Threat becomes bigger as the ideological distance between the parties declines and the difference between the expected results grows in favour of the rival. It shrinks as the two parties move apart ideologically and the difference between the two parties favours the party in question. Because ideological threat can only vary between zero and one and electoral threat ranges from negative one to one, the overall threat caused by a rival party can become negative when electoral threat becomes smaller (more negative) than ideological threat. The minimum threat value is reached when ideological threat is zero and the electoral threat value is negative one, the final value, divided by two, thus being -0.5; the maximum party pair threat value is reached when ideological threat is one and electoral threat is also one, the final value, divided by two, thus being one.

Because the difference in the expected vote between major parties in a given party system are likely to be relatively small, when this difference is divided by 100, substantively large differences appear to be numerically small. For example, if the difference in the expected vote between two parties is 20

³⁰ See footnote 31 on the next page.

percent, which is a large difference, the resultant party threat value would be .2. Under these circumstances, the difference in expected vote is likely to have a small impact on party pair threat when compared to ideological threat. In order to solve this problem, the divisor of these differences in the expected vote was reduced from 100 to 40.³¹ Based on the electoral data of the Spanish case, no difference in expected electoral results between any of the selected major parties exceeds a difference of plus minus 40 percent. The largest absolute difference in expected vote is that between the IU and the PSOE in 2008, which was 34.4 percent. As a consequence, a favourable percentage difference of 20 percent in the expected vote now decreases party pair threat by .5 and not .2 points. The final formula is thus:

$$\text{party pair threat} = \left[\left(1 - \frac{|I_{\text{party}} - I_{\text{rival}}|}{9} \right) + \frac{|EV_{\text{rival}} - EV_{\text{party}}|}{40} \right] / 2 \quad (3)$$

where I is the ideological position and EV is the expected percentage of the vote.

In a last step, the party threat level, the overall party threat experienced by a given party due to all its rivals, is calculated by simply adding the individual party pair threat values for a given party:

$$\text{threat level party}_A = \sum \text{party pair threat}_{Ai} \quad (4)$$

The party pair threat values are added and not averaged out because it is assumed that the threat experienced by a party is cumulative. Thus, when a party is threatened first by one and then by two rivals, all ideologically equidistant to it and with the same electoral prospects, the threat level experienced by the party in the second scenario should be twice that experienced in the first scenario. This also means that there is no limit to the size of a party's threat level, because it could hypothetically be threatened by an infinite number of parties.

Table 4 on the facing page shows how changes in electoral and ideological threat affect party pair threat. The first row of values shows the difference

³¹ The original approach of dividing the positive or negative expected vote difference by 100 was in fact already doubling the size of the resultant value, since the values could range, strictly speaking, from -100 to 100 and should thus technically be divided by 200 instead of 100. The same applies analogously to the new divisor. Although the interval of possible differences in the expected vote is now plus minus 40, the possible range of values thus being 80, these difference are not divided by 80, but by 40, effectively doubling the size of the final electoral threat value.

5.3 Operationalization of variables and policy fields as well as additional methodological issues

Table 4: Party pair threat values as outcome of ideological distance (ID) and electoral difference (ED)

		ED								
		40 (1)	30 (.75)	20(.50)	10(.25)	0	-10(-.25)	-20(-.5)	-30(-.75)	-40(-1)
ID	1 (.89)	1.89	1.64	1.39	1.14	0.89	0.64	0.39	0.14	-0.11
	3 (.67)	1.67	1.42	1.17	0.92	0.67	0.42	0.17	-0.08	-0.33
	5 (.44)	1.44	1.19	0.94	0.69	0.44	0.19	-0.06	-0.31	-0.56

in the expected vote, which varies from the most unfavourable 40 percent to the most favourable -40 percent, showing the resultant electoral threat values in brackets. The leftmost column of values shows three ideological distance values and their ideological threat values in brackets, varying from a very near 1 point difference on the original 10 point CIS scale to a relatively large distance of 3 points and a large distance of 5 points. The rest of the cells show the resultant party pair threat values.

As can be seen from the table, a party that is exposed to an ideologically very proximate rival (1) that is much larger (40 percent difference) than itself experiences a high amount of party pair threat (1.89). When the rival is comparatively weak (-40 percent difference) instead, however, party pair threat actually becomes slightly negative (-.11) despite such a high ideological proximity. Similarly, when a party is exposed to a rival that is ideologically quite distant (5 points), but much larger (40 percent difference), party pair threat is also large (1.44), but some .45 points less than if the party was ideologically very near (a 1.89 point party pair threat, as already discussed above). When a party is exposed to a rival that is both ideologically distant (5 points) and much weaker (-40 percent difference), party pair threat declines to -.56.

In order to determine the expected vote of a given party, recourse was taken to the election result estimates provided by the CIS in the same surveys that have already been mentioned above for the 2008 and 2011 elections (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2008, Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2011a).³² For the 2015 and 2019 elections, recourse is taken to an article by Garrido (2019), which provides an overview of the evolution of electoral polls across different institutes and determines a single rolling average, which is thus likely to be a better estimate than a single survey. The graphic provided in that article is also shown in the respective subsequent chapters. The estimated

³² These estimates are found on the last pages of the respective PDF documents which summarize the survey results.

percentage of the vote was read off these graphics, rounding the respective numbers up or down to the nearest 2.5 percentage point interval starting from zero.³³

Another remaining question is which rival parties should determine a party's overall threat level. There are several possibilities. Assuming a Downsian one-dimensional simple model, one would consider that only ideological adjacent parties compete with one another. Another option would be to determine threat for all possible party pairs and to simply sum them indiscriminately. Here, an intermediate approach was chosen in order to approximate "political reality", as narrated by the media and as is reflected by the behaviour and statements of politicians, as much as possible. Thus, the following party pair threat levels were calculated, contributing to the overall threat level of the respective parties concerned: the PP and PSOE, as government and major opposition parties, traditional contenders over the center vote and as major representatives of their respective ideological spectra (left and right), for all four election years; the PSOE and IU for 2008 and 2011, after which the IU is replaced by Podemos as a major rival for the 2015 and 2019 elections; Podemos and the IU in 2015, prior to both parties' decision to enter into an alliance; Cs and the PP for 2015 and 2019, competing for the center right voter; Cs and the PSOE for 2015 and 2019, competing over the center left spectrum; Cs and Vox for 2019, competing over the far right voters concerned especially with Spanish unity and nationalism; lastly, the PP and Vox for 2019, also competing over the far right electorate. While Podemos and Cs do have some potential overlap, such as a desire to reform the so-called 1978 regime³⁴ and the call for more participation, democracy, transparency and the fight against corruption, by the December 2015 election Podemos' profile had taken on a more distinctly left, less transversal profile and both parties clearly appealed to different socio-economic groups.

³³ Thus, for example, if a party was to win 11.7 percent of the vote, that value lies in an interval from 10 to 12.5 and is closer to its upper limit, thus being rounded up to 12.5. If it is unclear from the graphic whether a value should be rounded up or down, the rounding was determined by the tendency of the line showing the respective party's evolution. The dates from which the values were taken are the 12. November for the December 2015 elections and 20. March for the April 2019 elections. The aforementioned graphic does not show the IU for 2015, the year in which the party competed especially with Podemos. The IU's expected vote was thus taken from the 2015 CIS survey (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2015), which has already been mentioned above.

³⁴ The 1978 regime refers to the democratic regime which resulted from Spanish transition to democracy, characterized, so its critics, by a continuation of particular societal, economic and state elites and an electoral system favouring the two largest Spanish parties, among others.

As was argued previously, both the UPyD and IU were excluded from electoral program analysis, but that does not mean that they should not influence a given major national party's threat level. As has become evident from the above, the IU is included in some party pairs, whereas the UPyD is not. The reasons for the latter's exclusion are both of a quantitative and a resultant qualitative nature. In the 2008 CIS survey, the UPyD was expected to win 0.6 percent of the vote (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2008), in the 2011 CIS survey that value was 2.9 percent of the vote (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2011a). The difference in expected vote to the PP and PSOE would thus be large, reducing the threat level of both parties notably,³⁵ although this effect cannot be explained substantively. Although the UPyD was still a small and organizationally weak party, why should the emergence of a new center party reduce the PP's and PSOE's threat level? The situation is different for the IU, which was expected to win more than double the UPyD's percentage points, 5.8 and 6.2 percent of the vote respectively, and has traditionally represented a potential electoral threat to the PSOE. As such, an electorally weak IU should reduce the PSOE's threat level vis-à-vis the past, whereas the new and much weaker UPyD, with no party pair threat track record, should at least increase it slightly. The same argument applies to the relationship between the PP and UPyD.

5.3.1.3 *H₃: Parties that are certain that they will win an upcoming election will be less specific than other parties*

The last hypothesis which requires operationalization is that parties which are certain that they will win an upcoming election will be less specific than other parties. Certainty is operationalized as a dichotomous variable which takes on the value one if a party is certain that it will win the upcoming election and zero otherwise. Although the "certainty of winning" is of course a subjective judgement made on the part of various individuals within a political party, it is assumed that either one or no party is certain of victory, because this certainty is assumed to be based not on personal convictions or attitudes (like optimism), but on empirical fact. Thus, it is assumed not to be possible that two parties are both certain of an upcoming electoral victory. Such a situation would in fact be paradoxical, because a large degree of uncertainty would have to exist in order for at least one party to come to the erroneous conclusion that it will win.

³⁵ Moreover, including such a small contender would arguably require the increase of the aforementioned 40 percent difference in expected vote divisor in the above formula in order to accommodate the UPyD, thus decreasing the effect of the expected electoral difference on party pair threat.

In order to determine whether a party ought to be sure of victory or not, two sets of indicators are taken into consideration. The first is once again based on survey results as well as public perceptions on which party is likely to win. The greater the differences between rival parties on these indicators, the greater their certainty of winning should be. Narrow advantages may be the result of random sampling error in electoral survey data, or may quickly disappear, such as due to the occurrence of unexpected events like accusations of corruption, or simply because undecided voters incline the electoral balance in one rather than another direction. This set of indicators includes the expected percentage of the vote difference to rival parties, used also to determine party pair threat, the predictions of other electoral polls in the run-up to a particular election as well as the percentage of people who believe that one of the largest Spanish political parties will win the upcoming election. The latter is likely to reflect the prevalent media opinion of who will win and thus also indirectly the assessments of political analysts and the general public (via surveys) as well as the personal (dis)approval of the conduct of the major political parties.³⁶ Lastly, additional indicators like perceived party performance and candidate popularity will also be consulted.

The second major set of indicators of a party's certainty of victory consists of non-national – that is, regional, municipal and European parliamentary – electoral trends. Compared to pre-electoral surveys and poll results, these have a key disadvantage and advantage, namely that while they usually occur much earlier than the given national election, they are also manifest electoral results, making them much harder to sweep under the rug of political optimism. These electoral trends are determined by calculating the vote percentage difference between the previous and the current election at a given political level³⁷ and for a given geographical unit, displaying these changes graphically with a trend (or linear regression) line to aid interpretation. When the line has a positive slope, it shows that the party is performing better at the given set of elections compared to its prior performance, whereas when the slope is negative, it is performing worse. Vote percentages are calculated based on votes for party lists (*votos a candidatura*), thus excluding blank and invalid votes, in order to better reflect the power distribution between parties rather than voter dissatisfaction with politics (or misunderstandings concerning the ballot and voting process). For the sake of greater consistency, all electoral

³⁶ As will be shown below, this indicator proves to be quite a good predictor of electoral outcomes.

³⁷ Municipal election results are only discussed globally and in a more general nature in terms of changes in the mayorship of the largest five Spanish cities.

results mentioned throughout this case study are party list vote percentages. The electoral result data sources can be viewed in appendix D on page 449.

Lastly, it should be noted that the data points of scatter plots showing two metric variables have often been “jittered”, meaning that small negative or positive random values have been added to them to shift the points slightly. This was done in order to avoid, for instance, that different election result dots occurring on the same date (on the x-axis) cover one another, thus hiding some results from view.

5.3.2 Testing the hypotheses

As will be discussed in greater detail below, the hypotheses which were operationalized above are tested both on an election year basis and in the form of a linear regression model. The former is the focus of the qualitative analysis conducted in chapters 7 to 10, each of which deals with one of the four election years in detail. To test these hypotheses, average specificity values were calculated for each party. A hypothesis is accepted as true for a given election year if at least three-quarters of the observations conform to what is expected. Moreover, for the case study as a whole, a hypothesis is accepted if it was found to hold true in at least three-quarters of the four elections being analysed. Moreover, average specificity values were also calculated on a policy field basis, given that one may expect parties to behave differently in different policy fields and it is thus necessary to take these differences into account. While these policy field based specificity values are also discussed at length in these four chapters, they are not used to test the hypotheses, but to provide greater insight into the nature of specificity and its relation to the independent variables. These year, party and policy field based specificity values were used, however, in a multivariate regression analysis, to be conducted in chapter 11. In addition to the need to distinguish between the different policy fields, this approach permits a tripling of the number of observations to be used in the regression from thirteen to 39. As is well known, the greater the number of observations, the greater the accuracy of statistical models. These topics will be discussed at greater length in the following subsection and the aforementioned chapter 11, which both discusses the more qualitative year based hypothesis tests and conducts the linear regression.

5.3.3 Treating ordinal as metric data

One key assumption of the subsequent quantitative analysis is that the ordinal specificity data can be treated as metric. The key difference between an

ordinal and a metric variable is that the former takes on values which can be brought into a particular sequential order, whereas the latter takes on values the distances between which are mathematically meaningful.³⁸ As a consequence, when a variable is metric, more complex mathematical operations are possible, such as the multiplication and division of values, in turn permitting more advanced types of statistical analysis.

The manner in which specificity, the degree to which a party commits itself to changing the SQ, is measured by means of the method provided in the previous chapter appears to be clearly ordinal. Nonetheless, it is the contention of the author that specificity is a variable that is metric in nature. Thus, if one had access to a complex algorithm, for instance, which could analyse the composition, length and content of a given statement, one could thereby determine its exact metric specificity score.³⁹ It is only because the method provided to measure specificity is not sufficiently sophisticated so as to be able to capture the precise specificity value of a given statement that the scale is integer based and thus appears to be ordinal, although it measures a metric variable. While it is not possible, for example, to say that a particular issue position scores 1.73 points on a five point specificity scale, it is possible to say that a particular issue position scores roughly two points. This argument is intended to justify why the seemingly ordinal data generated by an application of the method developed above can be treated as metric, provided one is willing to accept a certain degree of inexactitude.

There is substantial and long-lasting controversy surrounding the question of whether and to what extent ordinal variables can be treated as metric.⁴⁰ Some authors would no doubt argue that even such basic operations as calculating averages from ordinal data are invalid, despite the fact that treating ordinal as metric data is common practice, perhaps most famously, but far from exclusively, relating to the Likert scale as well as statistical measures like Spearman's rank coefficient. Similarly, although the CIS calculates average ideological party positions, implying that the data is metric, the latter assumption is indeed questionable. Interviewees are shown a number of lined up boxes containing the different numbers of the ten point ideology scale, implying

³⁸ An example of an ordinal variable is the quality of a product, which can be "good", "satisfactory", or "bad". While these categories clearly have an order, it is not possible to subtract "satisfactory" from "bad", for example.

³⁹ Developments in artificial intelligence and machine learning may indeed make such a process realizable.

⁴⁰ See Harwell and Gatti (2001, pp. 106–7) and Liddell and Kruschke (2018) for a brief overview of some of the literature and the debate on this issue.

ordinal categories, and which parameters interviewees base their estimates on remains unmentioned. The question of whether it is statistically legitimate to perform particular kinds of analysis on this data now turns on whether these 10 values are interpreted as “real” numbers or only as ordinal category labels like “radically”, “far”, “very”, “moderately” and “center left” and its equivalent right categories.

Just because one may be willing to agree with the above argument that specificity can be treated as a metric variable and just because doing so is not uncommon, that does not necessarily make the potentially very real statistical problems associated with analysing ordinal data as if it were metric disappear.⁴¹ Although different kinds of statistical models exist, including some that were developed to analyse ordinal data, the approach chosen to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the aforementioned hypotheses was the multivariate linear regression, which assumes metric data. This decision was motivated, in addition to the above arguments, by two related problems. Firstly, the structure of the data to be used to test the hypotheses was somewhat problematic. Often when data is analysed, each observation takes on a particular freely varying value for each of the variables being measured. For instance, one may wish to investigate the relationship between the variables age and income. Each person is an observation which has a particular age and income, independently of the other persons in the sample. This situation is not analogous to a statistical analysis of the relationship between specificity and other variables if the observations that are being used are individual issue positions, however. For example, one may wish to investigate the relationship between the ideological position of a party and its specificity. While the specificity of individual issue positions extracted from a given electoral program for a given election can vary, the ideological position of the party for that election is the same for all these issue positions. Secondly, moreover, this is problematic especially if one takes the nature of the documents being analysed to produce the specificity data into consideration. Assuming that the ideological position of a party has an effect on specificity, because electoral programs are usually not so much bullet lists of future party actions, but elaborate documents which embed more specific issue positions in a larger body of vaguer text, the expected effect of a change in the ideological position of a party from one election to another will not manifest itself through an increase in specificity of the large majority of statements in its electoral program, which continue to be vague. Thus, if the data is analysed at the issue position level, the potential

⁴¹ As was argued above, it is assumed that specificity is in fact metric in nature, but if it were ordinal and one would analyse it as if it were metric, this could cause various problems.

effect of a change in a party's ideological position on its specificity is ultimately drowned out by the large number of issue positions. These two problems were addressed by treating the issue position based specificity data as metric and calculating party based average specificity values from them. The unit of observation now becomes a given party, the ideological positions and average specificity values of which now vary freely from one election to the next.⁴²

Given the methodological difficulties described above and that a closer examination of the potential statistical problems with the approach chosen here would probably require running various sophisticated statistical analyses and comparing their results, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation, a multi-pronged approach to analysing the specificity data was chosen. Data is presented graphically in terms of distributions of issue positions across ordinal categories and the most specific individual issue positions (IPs and IPLs) are discussed qualitatively; average specificity values are calculated and plotted to test the above-mentioned hypotheses on an election-by-election and hypothesis-by-hypothesis basis, interpreting these results in the qualitative context of previous political developments; lastly, independent variables are regressed against the average specificity values mentioned above in a multivariate regression analysis. As will become evident from the following chapters, no matter how the data is examined, the conclusions are in fact the same.

5.3.4 Operationalizing policy fields

As pointed out previously, only particular policy fields and not entire electoral programs were analysed for the case study at hand. As has also been mentioned, the method presented in chapter 3 and 4 does not come with an a priori delineation of policy fields and a breakdown of their associated issues. Accordingly, this subsection describes how the aforementioned policy fields were delineated.

Given that political parties group particular issue positions under different electoral program headings and sub-headings, it was decided that when a

⁴² Although average specificity is calculated for each election year, party and policy field, thus resulting in three different specificity values which are related to the same independent variable value for a given election, this situation is distinct from using individual issue position values for each policy field instead. Now, there is only one specificity value per policy field and since it is expected that parties behave differently in different policy fields, their specificity must be determined individually before investigating their relationship to the independent variables.

given electoral program heading or subheading indicates that it will be dealing with one of the three policy fields to be analysed, the respective party's assignment of issue positions to that policy field was accepted at face value. Notwithstanding some exceptions, the issue positions contained within such sections concern similar topics, showing that there is a broadly shared underlying understanding of which issue positions refer to which policy fields. Nonetheless, to increase comparability, a number of topics were identified which were either explicitly included or excluded from a given policy field analysis,⁴³ as will be discussed next.

Concerning the labour market, in addition to the issue positions contained in electoral programs' labour market sections, the labour market related issues of gender equality, the conciliation of work, family and personal life, pre-school care for very young children (to permit their parents to work) and means to keep or help older people return to or stay in the labour market, including pensioners, were explicitly included. The latter means that these issues were actively searched for outside of clearly designated labour market sections and coded accordingly. This additional rule became necessary because parties occasionally decided to list such measures in sections dedicated to particular collectives or to deal with them under different headings, although they clearly refer to the labour market. The following topics were explicitly excluded from analysis, meaning that even if they occurred in labour market designated sections, they were not coded: public sector salaries (such as state officials, judges, military personnel and security and rescue services) and non-profit equivalents and their working conditions, labour rights etc.; immigration; measures to stimulate economic activity in general in the hope that this will generate more employment; issues of state or personal debt; any statement that proposes labour market measures to be applied at the municipal level; pensions, unless in reference to making receiving a pension and employment compatible or extending the working life of pensioners.

The center-periphery policy field was considered to consist of issue positions occurring in electoral program sections concerning the structure of the state, such as its federal or unitary nature, (de-)centralization, the division or reform of national and regional competencies, issues related to national unity and nationalism, such as a concern for the use of the national language, or for the "respect" or protection of key national institutions which represent the state, such as the Spanish monarchy. Issues which were explicitly included were the topic of the Spanish AC finance system as well as electoral law changes which are likely to affect nationalist parties. Issues that were excluded were those

⁴³ For additional information, see appendix E on page 450.

referring to the Spanish judiciary, those concerned with the municipal and provincial levels as well as measures which aim to benefit only particular regions, such as infrastructure investments in a particular ACs.

Lastly, concerning the SMSE policy field, in addition to coding sections containing the terms “PYME”, the Spanish abbreviation for small and medium sized enterprises, and “autonomous”, the Spanish term for the self-employed, in their headings, a word search was conducted looking for issue positions containing these words.⁴⁴ The only issues which were explicitly excluded were those related to the sports and culture sectors.

5.3.5 Using MAXQDA for electoral program analysis

The software program used to analyse the electoral programs for the case study was MAXQDA. Given that this program was (obviously) not designed specifically to enable the application of the coding rules presented in the coding manual, some additional rules were required to carry out this coding process using MAXQDA. Because different programs may be used to code electoral programs, these considerations were not discussed in chapter 4, which operationalizes the method.

When a statement contains more than one issue position, these must be coded so as to indicate the number of resultant issue positions. The example “We will fight long-term [/] and female unemployment in order to increase social justice” contains two issue positions, which read “We will fight long-term...unemployment in order to increase social justice” and “We will fight...female unemployment in order to increase social justice”. It is not possible to code these issue positions in this fashion, however, because both are VIPs and MAXQDA does not permit applying the same code to multiple but overlapping statements. The program also does not, to the knowledge of the author, allow linking different text fragments to a single item and even if it did, using such a function would be too cumbersome to code thousands of issue positions. In such situations, the existence of several issue positions within one statement were indicated by coding the first part of the statement up to the dash as the first and the second part following the dash as the second issue position. Key elements which duplicate the number of issue positions were thus used as “natural” cut off points. Although coded in this manner, the issue positions should be read as stated above.

⁴⁴ The actual string of letters that was searched for concerning the self-employed was “autonom”, since the word endings in Spanish designate gender and the singular or plural and may thus vary.

While it is not possible to apply the same code to the same text, it is possible to apply different codes to the same text. Thus, for example, if three VIPs are interspersed with an IP, the entire text is coded as a VIPL and the IP is additionally coded as an IP. This way of coding makes it clear that the IP does not, but the three VIPs do form part of the coded VIPL.

In line with the coding manual, IPs should be coded without their PCs. Sometimes, however, the rest or parts of the rest of the given sentence in which an IP occurs contains information without which the IP mean on its own would be difficult to understand. In such cases, it may be preferable to include such text in the coded IP segment in order to be able to work directly from the dataframe and to additionally code the PC part as the respective issue position type.⁴⁵

Moreover, sometimes it may not be easily apparent how or why particularly issue positions were coded together as lists, in which case the different issue positions constituting particular lists were highlighted – not coded – in green in order to make the decisions made clearer. The coded documents can be found as digital copies accompanying this dissertation.

Concerning the discussion of specific IP type issue positions in the center-periphery and labour market policy fields in the following chapters, an effort was made to both show their policy proposal details as well as to provide an overview of the kinds of issue positions parties propose. The latter motive may at times have caused the mentioned issue positions to sound vaguer than they actually are in the original. Please refer to the coded documents or the dataset (both in digital format) to view the original statements and their coding. Moreover, the page numbers provided when referencing issue positions from electoral program documents are the page numbers found at the bottom of the respective pages of the original documents. As a consequence, while easy to locate in the original, these page numbers may be different from the page numbers recorded in the dataset, since MAXQDA counts the actual pages of a given document, starting with the first, while electoral programs may only start to count pages after the cover page or after an introduction and so forth. Moreover, in the case of Cs this point is particularly important. The 2015 electoral program was only found in the form of a very large PDF file which was encoded in such a way as to not be directly readable by MAXQDA. As a consequence, the relevant parts of this document had to be converted into several smaller PDF files of a readable nature. These documents were

⁴⁵ As mentioned previously, IP type issue positions do not contain PCs, the latter being coded either as a SQIP, GIP or VIP instead.

then coded separately and accompany the dissertation in digital form. Cs 2019 electoral program was only found directly on the party's website and not in PDF format and the electoral program thus provides no page numbers in the original. The cited page numbers are thus the result of "printing" the content of the webpage. The coded document is also made available in digital form and the cited issue positions can be found by counting the page numbers of that document, starting with its first page.

5.4 The structure of the following analysis

Having explained the major choices made in order to carry out the following case study and having operationalized the major variables and more abstract concepts to be employed, the following six chapters will conduct a case study of specificity in Spain. Chapter 6 will provide the context within which the election year based analysis of the subsequent chapters will unfold. It will provide a historic overview of the development of the Spanish political and party system from 1975 to 2004 and provide a brief discussion of the center-periphery and labour market policy fields, with a focus on the major political and structural problems with which they are associated. The chapter will conclude by providing a preliminary descriptive data analysis of the operationalized variables. The major aim of this last subsection is to show that the data has variability and is accessible to substantive or qualitative interpretation.

The next four chapters are structured in a similar fashion. Each chapter commences by discussing the most important political events of the given legislature(s), including especially economic policy, so crucial to the beak-up of the two-party system in 2015, the center-periphery conflict, with a focus on Catalan politics, and the emergence of new parties. Thereafter, each chapter turns its attention to the particular national election, briefly summarising the electoral campaign and discussing especially the introductions and structures of the analysed electoral programs, the latter providing a first indication of the importance given to different policy fields and issues by the respective parties. Next, the specificity data is analysed and the most important specific issue positions are briefly discussed. Subsequently, each of the three hypotheses will be discussed for a given election, qualitatively interpreting the changes observed in the variables as well as the extent to which the formulated expectations have been fulfilled or not.

The last chapter prior to the conclusion briefly summarizes the results of the analysis conducted in the four election year based chapters. This data based, but more qualitative discussion is followed by the aforementioned

multivariate linear regression. The conclusion summarizes the entire research project and its key findings, discusses its major weaknesses and suggests future avenues for research.

6 The Spanish transition and party system developments from 1975 to 2004

The failed military coup of July 1936 against the Spanish Second Republic, which had been proclaimed only some five years before, in April 1931, led to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Three years later, in April 1939, the authoritarian regime under the leadership of Francisco Franco had established control over the Spanish territory. That part of the militarily and politically involved pro-Republican coalition which had escaped the systematic mass executions of the victors either went into hiding or fled the country into European or Latin American, especially Mexican, exile, with a small group of Communists continuing guerilla warfare near the French border until their defeat in the early 1950s. During and following these events, the republican political system was replaced by a series of seven so called fundamental laws,¹ which provided the evolving institutional basis of the new regime. This structure vested and maintained absolute power in Franco, the head of the government, state and the military, giving him the power to pass laws and rule without any de facto institutional counterweights (Schleifer 2006). Additionally, Franco was the head of the only legal Spanish “party”, the National Movement, which brought together the heterogeneous coalition which had supported the military uprising, consisting of Spanish fascists (members of the Falange), Catholics, monarchists, conservatives and militarists (Morodo 1985, pp. 51–52, 54).

Although Spain remained neutral in the Second World War, Franco had been more than willing to enter the global conflagration on Adolf Hitler’s side in return for massive military aid and support for his colonial ambitions in French North Africa. Given the state of the Spanish military, however, Spanish involvement was viewed more as a risk than an opportunity by Nazi Germany (de Riquer 2017, pp. 79–87). Nonetheless, Spain was willing to make various contributions to the Axis’ war effort and only began to distance itself as defeat became increasingly inevitable. As a consequence of its foreign policy, Spain was left out of the US-shaped post-war order, being denied Marshall Plan aid as well as membership in the emergent international and supranational

¹ These were the *Fuero del Trabajo*, the *Ley de Cortes*, the *Fuero de los Españoles*, the *Ley de Referéndum*, the *Ley de Sucesión en la Jefatura del Estado*, the *Ley de Principios del Movimiento Nacional* and the *Ley Orgánica del Estado* (Schleifer 2006, p. 94).

institutions of the new era.² Nonetheless, the intimate alliance between Spanish authoritarianism and the Spanish Catholic Church – which had been given control over public education, was represented in Franco's various governments and preached submission to the regime – facilitated the signature of a Concordant with the Vatican in August 1953. Moreover, following the outbreak of the first “hot war” against Communism on the Korean peninsula, the United States of America (USA), in an exercise of political realism, shifted its priority from anti-authoritarianism to anti-communism, leading to the signature of the Pact of Madrid with a regime that had been espousing its fervent abhorrence of Communism for almost two decades (Kennedy 2013, p. 34).

Economically, Spain was to undergo an important transformation in the coming decades. In the 1930s, the Spanish economy was still largely agricultural and outdated, with the exception of key regions like Madrid, Catalonia, Asturias and the Basque Country. Although the Civil War had dealt a harsh blow to the country's economy and contrary to the regime's propaganda, which blamed the socio-economic misery of the vast majority of the Spanish population on this traumatic event as well as the country's international isolation, the extremely slow economic recovery can be attributed largely to the regime's endogenously determined economic policy. Although it facilitated the generation of business profits through its regressive tax policy, the virtual absence of a welfare state, its prohibition of independent labour organisations and its permissiveness regarding the extreme exploitation of labour as well as widespread corruption, the regime was also highly interventionist. Imports, exports, the internal circulation of goods as well as their prices were jealously controlled by the executive, leading to the blooming of a large black market to which not only private households, but also companies were forced to resort to ensure production. More than two decades after the conclusion of the Civil War, Spain had still not recovered to Second Republic levels on a number of key economic and social indicators, never mind its comparability with other key European countries (de Riquer 2017, pp. 247–289). In 1959, however, newly empowered technocrats within the regime adopted the Stabilization Plan, which included, among other measures, liberalization, the opening up to foreign investment, the introduction of a single exchange rate regime as well as monetary and fiscal measures to bring inflation under control (Andreu 2014,

² An exception was Spain's membership in the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organisation since 1950 (Andreu 2014, p. 60). The exclusion from the European Community was formalized by the Birkelback report of January 1962 (Kennedy 2013, p. 36). The 1970 preferential trade agreement with the EC was “the first official document regulating Spain's relations with the Community” (Kennedy 2013, p. 38).

pp. 65–8, Kennedy 2013, p. 35). Combined with a favourable world economic cycle, remittances from Spaniards forced to work abroad to earn a living, an increase in foreign investment and exports and a growing tourism sector, these policies inaugurated the so-called phase of development (*desarrollismo*) from 1961 to 1974, during which the Spanish economy grew by 7.2 percent on average (Andreu 2014, pp. 63, 67–9).

By the end of the 1960s, a number of important changes had thus taken place: Spain had become one of the largest economies in the world, with a substantial middle class; the Spanish youth was free from the trauma of the Civil War, less receptive to the discourse of the Franco regime as a bulkhead against Communism and attended universities in much larger numbers; the spread of television and tourism increased the exposure to “modern” citizens of other democratically governed European states. These developments led to a surge of “subversive” activities. Among its many instigators were the current and future members of two organizations which were to emerge as two of the most important parties of the dawning democratic era, the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and the Partido Comunista Español (PCE). The PSOE, which had been founded in Madrid in 1879 and had survived “regime and government changes, the fall of monarchies and republics, the passage of constitutions, military uprisings...[and a] civil war” (Tezanos 1989, p. 435), had been forced into exile in Toulouse with the conclusion of the Civil War, despite maintaining a low key presence in the future Basque Country (Euskadi) and Asturias (Díaz 1982, p. 86). The PCE, which had split off from the socialists in 1921 (Kennedy 2013, p. 17), had maintained a numerically larger and qualitatively more active presence within the country, the latter achieved especially by being voted into the regime’s vertical labour unions. Thus, while the PSOE was still primarily focused on building up its organisational infrastructure and membership, the PCE as well as other socialist groups, first among them Enrique Tierno Galván’s Partido Socialista en el Interior (PSI), renamed Partido Socialista Popular (PSP) in 1974 and which had inherited the domestic socialist opposition milieu when the PSOE had turned to exile (Caciagli 1986, pp. 49–50, Díaz 1982, p. 93), actively contributed to the increasingly generalized and frequent university protests and labour strikes against the regime (Díaz 1982, p. 87, Tezanos 1989, p. 451, de Riquer 2017, pp. 547–607). The growing number of PSOE members within Spain, led by the Andalusian Felipe González and Alfonso Guerra, among others, gave rise to internal party demands by the so-called *renovadores* for a modernization of the PSOE’s strategy, including its more active involvement in opposition activities, cooperation with other opposition organizations, including the Communists, and its expansion into the middle class. Following the 24. party congress in 1970, the *renovadores* constituted

the majority of the party's executive committee. The continued reticence of the *historicos* which had led the Socialists in exile, Indalecio Prieto and Rofolfo Llopi, to adapt to the changing circumstances, fractured the party in two. The resultant confrontation over the party's history and political legitimacy concluded with the victory of the *renovadores*, achieved especially through their official recognition as PSOE leaders by the Socialist International in January 1974 (Caciagli 1986, pp. 194–5). At the 26. party congress at Suresnes in October 1974, attended by François Mitterand and the Socialist International's President Bruno Pitterman, the party was effectively re-founded under the leadership of the still rather unknown González (Caciagli 1986, p. 196, Kennedy 2013, pp. 21–22).

While these developments were taking place, the authoritarian regime proved incapable of offering meaningful concessions to a modernizing society increasingly desiring or outright demanding redistribution, democracy and European integration, as was exemplified by its paltry offer of “liberalisation” through measures such as the permission to form political associations within the National Movement in 1974 (Morodo 1985, pp. 93–4). The regime had, moreover, failed to put an end to the most militant expression of resistance in the form of the Basque terrorist organization Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), which, in addition to killing several dozen persons including state security apparatus members, had assassinated Luis Carrero Blanco, Franco's recently appointed head of government, right hand man, confidant and most likely successor as head of government. Internationally, the Spanish marginalisation in European politics and its isolation from the project of European integration, viewed as a symbol of economic development and democracy, was painstakingly obvious.³ Moreover, the collapse of the Portuguese regime in 1974 converted Spain into the last non-democratic European state west of the Iron Curtain. On the 20. of November 1975, Franco died after a prolonged period of illness.

6.1 From Franco's death to the first democratic election (1975-1977)

Given divisions within the regime about Spain's future, ranging from a desire to leave the political system largely unchanged to the establishment of a parliamentary democracy,⁴ two political actors were likely to have a decisive

³ The Treaty of Rome had established the European Communities in 1958 and in 1973, Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom (UK) had become additional members.

⁴ See Huneus (1985, pp. 36–42) and Morodo (1985, p. 83) for more details.

influence on its evolution: Spain's current president, Arias Navarro, who had succeed Carrero Blanco after his assassination, and Juan Carlos, who had been proclaimed king and thus head of state shortly after Franco's death on the 22. of November.⁵ On the day of his proclamation in the franquist assembly, the Cortes, Juan Carlos paid tribute to Franco, promising to act within the Fundamental Laws of the state, and pointed out the necessity of change in the direction of more freedoms and modernity (Powell 2001, p. 145). More than a ceremonial figurehead, the head of state could both dismiss and appoint a new president of government from a short-list of three candidates chosen by the (de facto not independent) Royal Council (Schleifer 2006, pp. 171, 184-5). Thus, in return for the king's support for his continuance as head of government, Navarro agreed to appoint a number of reformists and monarchists into his government⁶ and named Torcuato Fernández-Miranda president of the Cortes and the Royal Council (Huneeus 1985, p. 82, Powell 2001, p. 146). The government's political influence eroded rapidly, however, due to various reasons: its reluctance to propose meaningful reforms; its lack of support within the Cortes; its repressive strategy against the opposition, in the hands of the Minister of the Interior Manuel Fraga, which seemed to risk an escalation of violence and a loss of control over the political situation; finally, its failure to divide the opposition and draw the PSOE into the desired two-party system, which became evident when the PSOE and PCE's rival opposition platforms were joined into the Democratic Coordination platform in March 1976. The latter made the legalization of the PCE – anathema to the more conservative elements of the franquist regime – increasingly unavoidable (Carmona 2005, pp. 57-63, Huneeus 1985, pp. 59-77, Morodo 1985, pp. 81, 132, Powell 2001, pp. 146-8, 155-6).

At the same time, Juan Carlos had established contacts with the regime's most resistant groups as well as the opposition, had been received enthusiastically

⁵ The Law of Succession of the Head of State, passed in July 1947 with the intention of thwarting the monarchical restoration of Don Juan de Borbon and of distracting from the authoritarian nature of the regime (Morodo 1985, pp. 60-1), had nominally converted Spain into a monarchy without specifying the royal lineage destined to fill that office, leaving the monarch's and thus the head of state's appointment in Franco's hands (Schleifer 2006, pp. 136-7). Juan Carlos was proclaimed successor to the Spanish throne in 1969, skipping the next in line of succession, his father Don Juan, who had been considered too liberal by the regime and who renounced his claim to the crown thereafter (Carmona 2005, pp. 42, 44, 50, Powell 2001, p. 145).

⁶ These individuals included Manuel Fraga, José María Areizla, Antonio Garrigues, Alfonso Osorio, Adolfo Suárez González, Rodolfo Martín Villa and Leopold Calvo-Sotelo (Powell 2001, p. 146).

on his travels through Spain and had held a speech in the US Congress promising the advent of Spanish democracy (Huneus 1985, pp. 81, 83–85). As a result of these developments, “[w]ithin a few months, the political situation at the top of the state had changed radically: the backbone of politics was already no longer the president of the government, but the king; he who drew on popular support and had contacts with the opposition was neither Arias Navarro nor Fraga, but the king” (Huneus 1985, p. 85). These circumstances enabled Juan Carlos to ask for Navarro’s resignation and to appoint Suárez, which the king had placed on the Royal Council’s shortlist through his ally Fernández-Miranda, in July 1976 (Huneus 1985, pp. 93–96, Powell 2001, p. 160).

Suárez’s appointment was received with widespread surprise and scepticism, given his position as vice secretary and national advisor to the National Movement from April 1975 and as secretary minister of the Movement in the first King’s government. Nonetheless, Suárez had gained the support of different franquist groups, had successfully argued for the passage of the Political Associations Law in the Cortes in 1976 and had intervened during the Vitoria incident, de-escalating a confrontation between the regime’s security forces and strikers, three of which had been killed and dozens of which had been injured, while Fraga was travelling abroad (Huneus 1985, pp. 67–76, 89–97, Morodo 1985, pp. 102–3). Suárez’s goal to control the political process towards a fully fledged democracy while simultaneously avoiding a break in the institutional and legal order (Carmona 2005, pp. 63, 65) required the passage of the Political Reform Law, the eighth fundamental law of the Spanish state, by the franquist Cortes in order to convoke a democratic election (Huneus 1985, p. 107). The Reform Law was as continuist as a law calling for a democratic election within an authoritarian regime could be: it left the regime’s institutions, including the franquist Cortes, untouched (Morodo 1985, p. 122), established no provisional government and, instead of calling for a constituent assembly, created two chambers, the Congress of Deputies and the Senate (Morodo 1985, pp. 120–1), which continued to pass ordinary legislation and which were conditioned by the regime’s interests, including the acceptance of the monarchy (Carmona 2005, pp. 104–5, de Esteban Alonso 1989, pp. 276, 278–282). The choice offered to the members of the Cortes, the *procuradores*, boiled down to voting in favour of the Reform Law, thereby keeping the transition in the hands of Juan Carlos and Adolfo Suárez and under the watchful eye of the military, or to vote against it, risking not just an escalation of violence, but a political rupture which would permit the victims of the regime to pass to the offensive and to hold those which had benefited from their repression and persecution responsible. Moreover, many *procuradores* aimed to partake in

the coming democratic regime, no less than 183 of them having joined Fraga's recently founded political party called Alianza Popular (AP). The majoritarian features of the new proportional electoral system, outlined in the Reform Law itself, seemed to facilitate these aspirations for power (Huneus 1985, p. 112, Powell 2001, p. 169). Following the passage of the Reform Law⁷ with 425 out of 497 votes in favour (Carmona 2005, p. 75), two events demonstrated to the political opposition that a political rupture was lacking popular support. The first was the relative failure of the general strike convoked on the 12. of November to oppose the government led reform process from above. The second was the result of the referendum on the Reform Law, in which 77.7 percent of the census had participated and which had received the favourable vote of 95.1 percent of the participants, despite calls by the opposition to abstain (Carmona 2005, pp. 75–6, Huneus 1985, pp. 114–5, Morodo 1985, p. 150, Powell 2001, p. 172).

The time period prior to the first democratic national election witnessed two important political developments. The first was the PCE's legalization, against the will of the military and in response to which the PCE formally recognized the Spanish monarchy. Its legalization had become increasingly unavoidable when the Communist leader Santiago Carrillo was arrested in Madrid in December 1976 (Carmona 2005, p. 69, Powell 2001, pp. 178–80). The second was Suárez's candidature for the upcoming national election. Having successfully piloted the transition up to this point and disposing over important political resources and media access, Suárez lacked nothing but a moderate political party to enable him to run in the upcoming national election (Gunther, Sani, and Shabad 1986, pp. 96–7). He would find it in the Centro Democrático (CD), a coalition of parties which had formed around the Partido Popular (PP) and which had been founded in 1976 with the aim of creating a moderate catch-all party that would position itself between the rupturist PSOE and the continuist AP in order to give stability to the political transition (Gunther, Sani, and Shabad 1986, pp. 95, 107, Powell 2001, p. 187). The party, consisting of liberals, social democrats, Christian democrats and monarchists (Gunther, Sani, and Shabad 1986, pp. 93–95), lacked the political and social networks necessary to create a nationally functional organization and was virtually unknown to the public (Gunther, Sani, and Shabad 1986, pp. 96–7). Shortly before the election, Suárez announced his candidature at the head of the – now renamed – Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD).

⁷ Although the application of the Law of the Principles of the National Movement would have voided the Reform Law, since the latter violated the regime's principle of "organic representation", the process required to declare it void was never set in motion (Schleifer 2006, p. 230).

Although a substantial number of its members originated from the previous regime, these had, in contrast to the AP, emerged from the state apparatus rather than leadership positions and did not glorify the past or use alarmist language (Gunther, Sani, and Shabad 1986, pp. 103–4). The stage was set for the first democratic national election since 1936.

6.2 The Suárez administrations (1977–1981) and the Calvo-Sotelo interlude (1981–1982)

The 1977 election delivered a clear mandate for a negotiated transition. With a participation of 78.8 percent, the UCD was the largest party, receiving 34.5 percent of the vote and 165 out of 350 deputies, thus falling 11 deputies short of an absolute majority. The PSOE received 29.4 percent of the vote and 118 deputies, becoming the biggest opposition party, while its two main opponents, the PCE and the PSP,⁸ did worse than expected, receiving 9.4 and 4.5 percent of the vote and 20 and 6 deputies respectively. While the PSOE had benefited from its political history and modern, young and dynamic party image, the PCE was still being led by veterans of the Civil War and was disadvantaged by decades of anti-Communist propaganda and its late legalization (Caciagli 1986, pp. 60–3, Carmona 2005, p. 91, Powell 2001, p. 196). The AP's ambitions were sorely disappointed, coming in fourth after the PCE with 8.2 percent of the vote and 16 deputies. The party had suffered from its emergence from within the regime, its lack of moderation, exemplified by its placement of Arias Navarro on the party's ballot, Fraga's well known authoritarian attitudes and the AP's ambivalent posture toward a new constitution (Carmona 2005, pp. 91–2). While the UCD drew much of its support from the more rural and sparsely populated Spanish regions as well as the urban middle class, the PSOE received its votes from more industrialized and densely populated areas, qualified workers, the younger segments of the population as well as from the agricultural proletariat of Andalusia (Caciagli 1986, p. 60, Powell 2001, p. 195). The most important distinguishing factor dividing the PSOE's and the UCD's electorate was the Catholic religion, however (Powell 2001, p. 195). The emergent party system was shaped not only by the LR economic, but also by the center-periphery cleavage: the Basque Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV) and the Catalan Pacte Democràtic per Catalunya (PDPC), from which the *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* (CDC) under Jordi Pujol was to emerge subsequently, received 1.6 and 2.8 percent of the vote as well as 8 and 11 deputies respectively.

⁸ The PSP was to join the PSOE before the next national election in 1979.

Following the first national election, the most important political task was the passage of a constitution to establish the institutions of a new democratic state. This undertaking was threatened by the possibility of a military coup, terrorist activity from the radical left and right, demands for decentralization and political autonomy, especially in the historic regions of Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia, and which spread rapidly to other Spanish regions and, lastly, the faltering economy, which suffered from the second oil price shock of 1979.⁹ To provide political stability, the major parties agreed to work together in a spirit of political consensus, most clearly embodied by the Moncloa Pacts of October 1977, an agreement on economic and institutional reform. Despite the politics of consensus, the work on the constitution in the Congress' Commission for Constitutional Matters and Public Liberties and especially the smaller council drawn from it, which included three UCD and one PSOE, PCE, AP and Basque-Catalan minority representative each, were not free of conflict (Carmona 2005, pp. 112, 114, de Esteban Alonso 1989, p. 291). Because the UCD, AP and the Catalan-Basque representative – all conservatives – frequently outvoted the PSOE in different constellations, the latter briefly abandoned the council in March and threatened to abandon the commission in May. As a consequence, Fernando Abril Martorello (UCD) was instructed to forge a constitutional consensus with Alfonso Guerra, González' right-hand man, in a series of informal late night meetings (Powell 2001, p. 223). When the constitution was put before Congress, it received the favourable vote of 331 of 350 deputies, 13 abstentions (one from the CDC, three from the AP and seven from the PNV)¹⁰ and six votes against (five from the AP and one from the left-wing Basque Euskadiko Ezkerra, EE) (Carmona 2005, p. 125). Although 87.9 percent of the Spaniards voted in favour of the text during the constitutional referendum, the much higher than expected abstention of 32.9 percent reflected both a general sense of frustration with the politics of consensus and negotiations behind closed doors as well as the Basque politicians' call to abstain in the Basque Country and Navarre (de Esteban Alonso 1989, pp. 296–7).

The Spanish Constitution of 1978 inevitably reflects the pacted nature of the transition and thus a compromise between historically right and left-wing political positions. The Spanish state took the form of a parliamentary monarchy (Las Cortes 1978, art. 1.3), the monarch's functions as head of state

⁹ The Spanish economy, reliant on oil imports, was hard hit by the 1973 as well as the 1979 oil crises, providing another potentially destabilizing factor during this critical and potentially volatile period.

¹⁰ The PNV abstained because it believed that the Basque Country's historical rights were not sufficiently recognized by the new constitution (Carmona 2005, pp. 124–5, 130–1).

being largely representative – as a symbol of Spanish unity – and – with the exception of his role as “the highest representation of the Spanish State in international relations” (Las Cortes 1978, art. 56.1), especially in regards to Latin America, and as supreme commander of the armed forces (Las Cortes 1978, art. 62.h) – of minor ceremonial importance (Las Cortes 1978, art. 62, 63, 64). Moreover, while affirming “the unresolvable unity of the Spanish nation, the common and indivisible homeland of all Spanish citizens” (Las Cortes 1978, art. 2), the Constitution also “recognizes and guarantees the Spanish nation’s nationalities’ and regions’ right to autonomy” (Las Cortes 1978, art. 2) and protects the “other Spanish languages” (Las Cortes 1978, art. 3.2), thus permitting decentralization without establishing a federal state. The Monarchy and the State of Autonomous Communities appear, in addition to an extensive section on the fundamental rights and public liberties, in a part of the Constitution which requires two-third majorities in each house, a general election and a subsequent referendum (Las Cortes 1978, art. 168) in order to be reformed, effectively locking in this political status quo.

That the passage of the Constitution was not sufficient to proceed to “politics as usual” became evident by several subsequent events. The general public had become increasingly disillusioned with the transition and Spanish politics, caused especially by a perceived lack of political, societal and economic change, anti-inflationary policies and the perception that Suárez was more concerned with international relations than domestic affairs (Caciagli 1986, pp. 125–7, Powell 2001, pp. 239–40, 280–1). The period following the general election of March 1979, which did not alter the political status quo substantially,¹¹ thus witnessed a decline in Suárez’s popularity as head of government and as leader of his own party, culminating in his resignation from both offices in February 1981. This decision was motivated especially by internal party politics. The UCD’s emergence from a coalition of various smaller parties with diverse ideological positions led to conflict over particular issue positions, such as on divorce or taxation, giving the impression of an indecisive executive. Moreover, many of these parties were led by politicians who were unwilling to cede political power to Suárez and openly defied his attempts to unify and centralize the party under his leadership. The internal disarray was intensified by González’ surprise motion of censure in May 1980, which – although it failed – was considered to give political expression to the feeling of frustration among the Spanish citizens and showed the UCD’s political

¹¹ The AP, which experienced the largest change in the number of deputies, lost seven, falling to 9.

isolation, the latter being the only party which had voted against it.¹² His designated presidential successor, Calvo-Sotelo, failed to obtain the necessary absolute majority during the first investiture vote in parliament on the 20. of January 1981. The second investiture vote, which is constitutionally mandated to take place within 48 hours after the first and requires only a relative majority to succeed, was interrupted by a military coup which had been motivated by the government's supposed incapacity to control the decentralization process and to put a stop to ETA's terrorism. Following Juan Carlos' televised defence of democracy, dressed – as head of the armed forces – in military attire, and the arrest of those responsible, Calvo-Sotelo was invested with 186 votes, including those of the Catalan minority and the AP (Powell 2001, p. 300).

The failed coup attempt inaugurated another round of increased political cooperation, leading to the passage of the Democracy Defence Law in order to deal with possible military coups and ETA, the Organic Law of the Harmonization of the Autonomous Process (LOAPA) to rationalize the decentralization process and the National Employment Agreement (ANE), a socio-economic pact to counter the economic crisis, signed by the Spanish Confederation of Business Organizations (CEOE), the communist and socialist trade unions, the Workers' Commissions (CC.OO.) and the General Workers' Union (UGT), as well as, for the first time, the national government (Powell 2001, pp. 302–6). Following the UCD's poor electoral performance in regional elections in Galicia and Andalusia and the resignation of the recently elected party president and suarist Agustín Rodríguez Sahagún, a series of prominent politicians abandoned the party, taking their closest followers with them. In order to stop the haemorrhage, which had reduced the UCD's parliamentary group from 168 to 123 deputies, and to prevent the rise of the recently founded Centro Democrático y Social (CDS), led by none other than Suárez himself, Calvo-Sotelo called an early election (Caciagli 1986, pp. 157–8). Its outcome certified the political demise of the UCD, which lost 28 percent of the vote and 157 deputies compared to the previous election, being reduced to 6.8 percent of the vote and eleven deputies. Calvo-Sotelo, second on the UCD list for Madrid, as well as several other UCD ministers, were not re-elected (Caciagli 1986, p. 168, Powell 2001, p. 326). The main cause of its decline was the UCD's internal conflict, the government's perceived lack of authority, the economic situation as well as competition from the CDS, which had attracted 600 thousand of its former voters (Gunther 1986b, pp. 54–55, Powell 2001, pp. 324, 327, Caciagli 1989, p. 404).

¹² See, for example, the accounts of Gunther (1986a), Gunther, Sani, and Shabad (1986, pp. 106–7, 127, 139–144), Powell (2001, pp. 202, 241, 279–291) and Caciagli (1989).

The UCD's collapse overwhelmingly benefited the PSOE and AP, which received one and three million former UCD votes respectively (Caciagli 1986, pp. 174, 181). Additionally, the PSOE had attracted one million PCE voters (Caciagli 1986, p. 174), triggering Carrillo's resignation. The socialists had thus been able to win 48.3 percent of the vote and to increase their number of deputies by 81 to 202, thus holding a comfortable majority in Congress, while the PCE had fallen by 6.8 percent and 19 deputies to four percent of the vote and four deputies.

The PSOE had also benefited from its course of political moderation. The party had never possessed a well-developed Marxist ideology and had usually combined its generally more radical rhetoric with moderate political practice (Kennedy 2013, pp. 16–17, Tezanos 1989, pp. 462–4). This divide between action and rhetoric was exemplified by the PSOE's top leadership: González – an admirer of European social democrats like Olof Palme and Willy Brandt (Powell 2001, p. 336) and generally accepting of liberal economics – as general secretary and Guerra – popular leader of the party's left wing – as vice-general secretary (Carmona 2005, pp. 198, 202, Powell 2001, p. 338). Following this pattern, while the PSOE had adopted the Marxist label in 1974 and had proclaimed its aim to create a socialist society through mass mobilization by means of the so-called *ruptura democrática*, the discourse promoted by González in the media was much more moderate (Gunther, Sani, and Shabad 1986, pp. 74–5) and by 1976 the PSOE had already accepted the future role of the monarch (Carmona 2005, p. 51). Subsequently, the party accepted the political status quo, participating in the transition and, although not always succeeding, aimed to convert itself into a catch-all party by projecting a moderate image (Gunther, Sani, and Shabad 1986, pp. 167–170). When González failed to bring the party members to vote in favour of abandoning the Marxist label at the 1979 party congress, a proposal which caused great commotion within the party (Gunther, Sani, and Shabad 1986, p. 170), González announced that he would not run for the office of general secretary again (Powell 2001, p. 243). Without having realized the full implications, the PSOE delegates had, at that same party congress, voted in favour of reforming the party internal voting system by transferring the power to vote from local party groups (*agrupaciones*) to the provincial and regional federations, permitting the party apparatus much greater control over voting outcomes (Kennedy 2013, pp. 30–31). Given his enormous popularity and projection among the Spanish public, González was re-elected general secretary with 86 percent of the vote at the subsequent extraordinary congress and the Marxist party label was dropped (Powell 2001, p. 244). The party's left wing had thus been successfully sidelined and by 1982, the PSOE had abandoned its aim

of a transition to socialism or alternative models of society, running with a reformist program and a united party leadership (Powell 2001, p. 320).

The AP was converted from the fourth largest party with less than six percent of the vote in 1979 to the major opposition party with 26.5 percent of the vote in 1982, increasing its number of seats from nine to 107. In spite of this victory and Fraga's attempts to move the party toward the political center, subsequent electoral results would demonstrate that the AP was still a long way off from becoming an electorally viable alternative to the PSOE. Originally, Fraga had in fact wished to create a reformist center-right party, but more centrist politicians and proto-parties rejected his advances and caused him to seek support to the right, leading to the integration of several politicians dubbed the "magnificent seven", six of which had previously been ministers under Franco, and their supporters (Gunther, Sani, and Shabad 1986, pp. 78–83, Montero 1989, pp. 499, 535–6). This development converted Fraga into one of the most progressive members of his own party (Gunther, Sani, and Shabad 1986, p. 83). Thus, "the AP appeared to the electorate in 1977 as a party of the far right...[and] to some ...as a last-ditch attempt to maintain the basic character of the Franquist regime through electoral means" (Gunther, Sani, and Shabad 1986, p. 78). Fraga's support for the 1978 Constitution in the referendum despite its recognition of Spanish nationalities in the plural, the possibility of the establishment of ACs and the rather distant relation between the state and the Catholic Church,¹³ caused the radical right wing to abandon the party, taking with it half of the AP delegation in the Congress of Deputies (Gunther, Sani, and Shabad 1986, p. 173). At the second party congress in January 1978, "the defensive, alarmist, authoritarian language [was removed] from the party's ideological declarations" (Gunther, Sani, and Shabad 1986, pp. 170–1). Pursuant of Fraga's vision of the *gran derecha*, a "great right" ranging from more radical positions to the political center, these developments enabled the AP to create a more moderate electoral alliance, the Coalición Democrática (CD), for the 1979 election, which included the Acción Ciudadana Liberal (ACL) headed by José María de Areilza (Gunther, Sani, and Shabad 1986, p. 173, Montero 1989, pp. 501–2). While the AP seemed to shift to the center concerning many of the traditional Spanish tenets of conservatism, including religion, nationalism as well as order and authority, its alliance with the ALC also led to an infusion of neoliberal economic ideology, which emphasized free markets and the reduction of the role of the state in economy (Gunther,

¹³ The Constitution states that "[n]o confession will have state character. The public powers will take the religious beliefs of Spanish society into account and maintain the respective cooperative relations with the Catholic Church and the other confessions" (Las Cortes 1978, art. 16).

Sani, and Shabad 1986, pp. 174–7). Moreover, at the third party congress in December 1979, the AP was converted into a presidential party which no longer described itself as center-right, but as liberal-conservative, reformist, popular and democratic; the party was purged of franquist elements; its leadership was partially renewed; finally, the party was adapting its organization to the state's new territorial structure (Montero 1989, pp. 504–5, Powell 2001, p. 247). For the 1982 election, the party formed an alliance with the Partido Demócrata Popular (PDP) and was able to attract not only many of the former voters of the more moderate UCD, but also the voters of small far right parties (Caciagli 1986, p. 181, Montero 1989, p. 507).

6.3 The Spanish party system and politics from 1982 to 2004

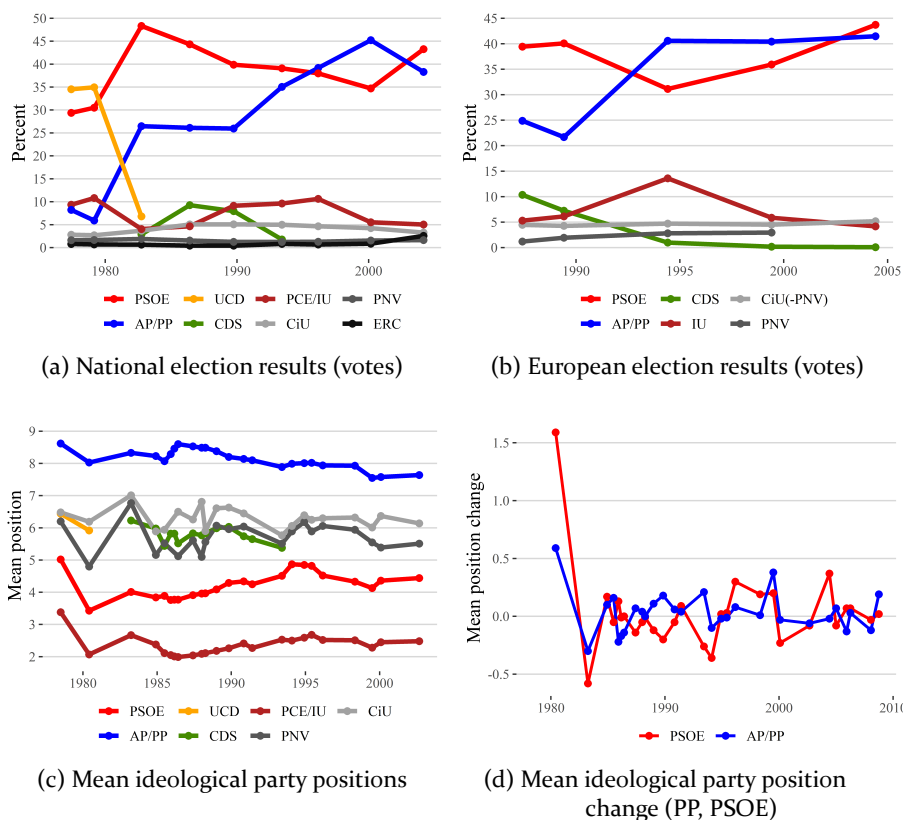


Figure 2: Party system developments (1977-2004)

The 1982 election inaugurated a long period of PSOE rule until 1996, in which the PSOE won another two absolute and two relative seat majorities. Nonetheless, in the four elections in 1986, 1989, 1993 and 1996, the PSOE's share of the vote declined continuously by 4, 4.6, 0.8 and 1.1 percent of the vote, falling from 48.3 in 1982 to 38 percent in 1996. Especially during the first decade of PSOE rule, the Spanish economy underwent an important process of industrial privatization, dubbed "reconversion", a massive bank restructuring as well as economic liberalization. The aim of these rather "right-wing" economic measures, the effects of which the government was pushed to ameliorate by the massive general strike of 1988, was to overcome the adverse effects of the oil crises of the 1970s as well as to modernize the economy in order to obtain European Community membership. As a consequence of the application of these policies, the PSOE experienced increasing ideological tension both within its leadership, especially between those ministers who were driving these reforms and Guerra, as well as within the party as a whole. Although the 32. party congress permitted the *guerristas* to take over the party apparatus and to constitute the majority of the parliamentary group, the socialist government continued to remain insulated from their influence. When Guerra resigned from his government post due to a financial scandal involving his brother only two months later, the influence of the left wing on the government as well as on the party apparatus went into a partial decline (Carmona 2005, pp. 284–5, 287, Kennedy 2013, pp. 67–8, Powell 2001, pp. 509, 513, 519–20). In addition to causing party internal tensions, the PSOE's economic policies also estranged the party from its associated labour union, the UGT. After the UGT had called for and participated in the massive 1988 general strike, the union terminated its traditional voting recommendation for the PSOE in 1989, to which the PSOE responded in kind by eliminating its double UGT-PSOE membership (Powell 2001, pp. 343–5, 353–4, 435–6).¹⁴

During the PSOE's long rule, several factors eroded the party's popularity. These included, firstly, the weathering of several economic crises; secondly, the government's liberal economic policies; thirdly, its policy of (progressive) tax increases, which also affected the middle class (Powell 2001, p. 552); fourthly and perhaps most importantly, the party's numerous political scandals and corruption cases, including "episodes of illicit party financing, kickbacks for public works commissioned by Socialist regional governments, the enrichment of political appointees through tax evasion and secret funds" (Bosco 2013,

¹⁴ Another important development which took place during the 1990s was the increasing political weight of the PSOE's regional barons, caused by the relative decline in power of both Guerra and González (see below) as well as the deepening of decentralization (Kennedy 2013, pp. 157–8).

p. 23). Perhaps the two most problematic cases went far beyond what could be described as personally motivated illicit financial gains: the first involved the Ministry of the Interior's secret organisation and financing of the so-called Anti-terrorist Liberation Groups (GAL), which assassinated 28 ETA members between 1983 and 1987 (Powell 2001, p. 388); the second concerned the systematic tapping of phone lines belonging to important politicians, business men and journalists by the Spanish intelligence agency, the Centro Superior de Información de la Defensa (CESID), which was uncovered in 1995 (Kennedy 2013, p. 153). The situation had become so critical that, within "less than two years, González had been obliged to let go five of the 17 ministers named in 1993 against his will" (Powell 2001, p. 535). The PSOE's manner of dealing with these cases was outright denial or a defensive strategy which assumed innocence even in the face of clear evidence to the contrary, thus showing little enthusiasm for the principles of responsibility and accountability (Powell 2001, p. 511).

On the far left, the PCE did not immediately benefit from its attempt of renewal in the form of an electoral alliance with other left and ecological parties under the name Izquierda Unida (IU) (del Castillo and Shabad 1986, pp. 626–7). In the 1986 election, the IU had increased its share of the vote only by 0.6 percent and 3 deputies to a total of 4.7 percent and 7 deputies, when compared with the PCE's previous results. In 1989 the party doubled its number of votes to 1.8 million, however, and was able to win between 9.1 and 10.6 percent of the vote until 1996, peaking at 21 deputies that year. This ascent was enabled especially by the PSOE's decline.

The AP, as largest opposition party, was also unable to benefit from the PSOE's decline initially, its share of the vote actually declining slightly from 26.5 to 26 percent in 1989. One reason for this development was that, although the UCD, which had still drawn 1.4 million votes in 1982, had disappeared off the map, the CDS, which had received 0.6 million votes or 2.9 percent in 1982, had managed to attract another 1.3 million additional voters in 1986, receiving 9.3 percent of the vote and coming in third after the PSOE and AP. Between 1986 and 1993, however, important changes within the AP permitted the party to finally conquer the political center. Following the party's 1982 breakthrough, successive electoral defeats had given rise to the belief that as long as Fraga remained party leader, the AP would not be able to break through its current electoral ceiling (Powell 2001, p. 418). Unable to fill out its role as major opposition party, either appearing too passive or overly aggressive, and increasingly entering into crisis due to internal political tensions and resignations, electoral campaign debt and attempts to replace Fraga, the

latter resigned after the disappointing 1986 national election results, in which the party had run as *Coalición Popular* (CP) (del Castillo and Shabad 1986, pp. 641–2, Montero 1989, pp. 511–515). His replacement, elected at the eighth extraordinary party congress in February 1987, was Antonio Hernández Mancha. Not only did Mancha fail to put an end to the string of electoral defeats, but his status as senator robbed him of visibility in congressional debates. Perhaps in order to compensate for this lack of visibility as well as to slow the CDS's electoral rise, Mancha registered a motion of censure in Congress. That Mancha had brought a motion of censure against a government supported by its own absolute majority backfired politically and put his leadership ability into serious doubt. In this moment of political weakness, a group of AP politicians including José María Aznar presented their plans to refound the AP with its Christian and liberal coalition partners under Fraga's leadership, the latter being considered the only person capable of leading this renewal (Powell 2001, pp. 502–3). At the ninth party congress in January 1989, Fraga was elected party president without opposition, the name *Alianza Popular* was changed to *Partido Popular* (PP), former UCD members as well as liberals and conservatives from smaller political parties joined the party and its values were redefined as liberal, conservative and Christian democratic in order to gain access to the European People's Party (EPP) (Powell 2001, p. 504). When the government called for an early election in 1989, Aznar was chosen as PP candidate and new party leader.¹⁵ Aznar, who had joined the AP in 1979 and had been elected as deputy in 1982, had been one of the few party members in positions of political leadership, having successfully led an AP coalition government with the CDS as president of Castile and León (Palomo 2006, pp. 32–3, 38–9, Powell 2001, p. 505, Tussel 2004, pp. 20–1). Aznar, much like Fraga before him, attempted to purge the party of old and nostalgic elements and to rejuvenate its member- and leadership; to increase the party's attractiveness especially to young and centrist voters by means of a new ideological and programmatic definition; to join the EPP and the Christian Democrat and People's Parties International, achieved in 1991 and 1993 respectively; to adapt the party structure to the existence of ACs; lastly, to centralize power in the party presidency (Palomo 2006, pp. 47, 53–4, Powell 2001, p. 507).

The effects of this process of renovation became visible in 1993, when many CDS voters turned their back on the latter (Carmona 2005, pp. 314–5), which fell to just 0.4 million votes, or 1.8 percent of the total, losing all seats in the process and being condemned to electoral insignificance thereafter. The PP

¹⁵ See Palomo (2006, pp. 44–46) and Tussel (2004, pp. 21–3) on the selection process and potential political rivals for that office.

under Aznar's leadership had finally broken Fraga's electoral ceiling, receiving 35 percent of the vote and 141 deputies. Nonetheless, since some surveys had predicted a PP victory in 1993, these results were nonetheless considered disappointing (Powell 2001, pp. 516–8). Aznar subsequently intensified his attacks on González, their relationship having become very acrimonious. He accused the PSOE of corruption and the aforementioned CiU, a permanent party coalition formed between the Catalan CDC and the Unión Democrática de Cataluña (UDC) in 1978, of supporting a corrupt government. This political pressure moved the CiU to reject supporting the PSOE's 1995 budget, causing González to hold an early election (Palomo 2006, pp. 82–88, Powell 2001, p. 545). This time, in 1996, the PP finally, although the conservative's gains – 4.1 percent of the vote and 15 deputies, totalling 39.2 percent of the vote and 156 seats – were once again bitter sweet. The PP had expected to do much better and fell 20 seats short of an absolute majority in parliament (Powell 2001, p. 550). Nonetheless, both the 1993 and 1996 elections had shown that the PSOE's attempt to mobilize voters by emphasizing the supposed dangers of PP rule no longer had the desired effect (Powell 2001, pp. 516–7, 548–9).

As can be seen from fig. 2a on page 168, compared to the preceding period, the 1993 election inaugurated a period of much more balanced political competition between the two major parties, which lasted until 2011. In 1996, the PSOE's 14 year period of rule had finally come to an end. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this event caused political turbulences within the PSOE. Following the electoral defeat and the rejection of his party renewal plan at the 34. party congress in June 1997, González resigned and proposed Joaquín Almunia, his former minister of work and public administration, as his successor at the head of the party (Bosco 2013, p. 24, Kennedy 2013, p. 155, Powell 2001, p. 613). As a continuist candidate lacking in programmatic proposals, Almunia neither enjoyed the support of those party members who were clamouring for a more genuine renewal nor of some of his internal rivals, who were unwilling to submit to his leadership (Bosco 2013, p. 24, Tussel 2004, pp. 168–9). In order to boost his legitimacy, Almunia organized a primary election for the first time in the PSOE's history (Bosco 2013, p. 24, Tussel 2004, p. 170). Unexpectedly, it was the much more popular left-wing former Minister of Public Works Josep Borrell who beat him to the office of general secretary in April 1998, but Borrell was forced to resign after two of his former colleagues were accused of fraud (Powell 2001, pp. 613–4). Lacking alternatives, the PSOE's federal committee chose Almunia as the candidate for a new round of primaries, which he won in July 1999 with 95 percent of the vote (Bosco 2013, p. 24, Powell 2001, p. 614).

In addition to other developments, the PP's first term in government was no doubt identified with Spain's high economic growth and the country's ability to fulfil the necessary Maastricht criteria in order to become a founding member of the Eurozone. Of high symbolic value to a country previously isolated from the project of an ever closer European union, the aim of accession and joining the vanguard of European integration was a key ambition of all Spanish governments. The hoped for economic benefits included modernizing impulses due to increased competition, a better control of Spain's above average inflation and unwanted exchange rate appreciations, which had been the cause of macroeconomic imbalances in the past, as well as economic convergence with the rest of Europe. Spanish integration efforts were generously rewarded by the EC and EU, benefiting especially from the structural funds from 1987 and the Cohesion Fund from 1992 (Kennedy 2013, p. 98). Nonetheless, EC and EU membership and the PP's economic policies had their downside as well.¹⁶ Spain's Eurozone membership had eliminated the exchange rate risk and low European Central Bank (ECB) interest rates as well as financial market deregulation permitted an influx of capital and an increase in lending, directed especially at the booming housing market and construction sector (Estrada, Jimeno, and J. L. M. d. Molina 2009, pp. 89, 111), both of which are characterized by low productivity and innovation (I. Molina 2012, p. 57). Additionally, the strong performance of the Spanish economy was based on massive immigration especially from Latin America, which increased from a positive average of 142 thousand between 1991 and 1995 to 352 thousand from 1996 to 2004 to 685 thousand from 2004 to 2007. This influx boosted internal consumption and contributed further to the burgeoning housing bubble (Estrada, Jimeno, and J. L. M. d. Molina 2009, p. 113). While nominal salaries had only increased by 2.6 percent from 1996 to 2000, housing prices had increased by 28 percent and, by 2004, they had doubled (Andreu 2014, p. 137). The resultant massive increase in private household debt was financed especially by Spanish saving banks (Andreu 2014, p. 124, I. Molina 2012, p. 57), which obtained their funds by borrowing on the international financial markets. Overall, the growth model which had thus developed under Aznar was based on cheap, often immigrant labour employed especially in the low skill construction sector to build debt financed homes and tourism related infrastructure.

When the 2000 national election approached, however, these negative developments had only just begun to acquire greater visibility and the PP's relatively

¹⁶ For a more detailed discussion on the unfulfilled hopes of Eurozone membership, see Escrivá and López (2010, pp. 321, 324), Estrada, Jimeno, and J. L. M. d. Molina (2009, pp. 102–3, 106, 108) and Nadal Belda (2005, pp. 442–3).

centrist government conduct, economic growth and Eurozone membership strengthened the conservative's hand. The PSOE, in contrast, was lead by the rather unconvincing candidate Alumnia, who had, moreover, made an electoral pact with the IU's Francisco Frutos. Given the pact's ultimately insubstantial and politically contradictory nature, given that the agreement was limited to the Senate and both parties had until recently been adversaries, the pact may well have boosted the PP's moderate appearance instead of benefiting the socialists (Powell 2001, pp. 615–6, Tussel 2004, pp. 188–9). As a consequence, the PP won an additional 600 thousand votes and a massive increase in abstention from 22.6 to 31.3 percent – affecting particularly left voters (Powell 2001, p. 619, Tussel 2004, pp. 191, 193–4) – caused the conservative's share of the vote to increase from 39.2 to 45.2 percent of the vote, delivering the PP an additional 27 seats and thus an unexpected absolute majority of 183 mandates (Powell 2001, pp. 617–8, Tussel 2004, p. 187). The PSOE, on the other hand, had lost 1.5 million voters, falling to 34.7 percent of the vote and 125 seats, causing Alumnia and the entire executive committee to resign (Bosco 2013, p. 24). The IU had not been able to benefit from the PSOE's decline either, itself losing more than half its electorate, 1.4 million voters, and falling to 5.5 percent and 8 deputies.

Despite these events, the PSOE would soon find its way to political renewal. At the 35. federal convention in July 2000, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero was elected general secretary, beating the party apparatus candidate, expected winner and five times president of Castilla-La Mancha, José Bono, by nine votes (Bosco 2013, pp. 24–5, Kennedy 2013, pp. 159–161). Zapatero, former general secretary of the León federation, was supported by the PSOE internal Nueva Vía group,¹⁷ which aimed to realize profound political and organizational changes and a generational renewal, without breaking with the democratic transition period party elite (Bosco 2013, p. 25).¹⁸ Being relatively unknown to the rank-and-file, some ten years younger than his rival and propagating an optimistic discourse about the PSOE and its future, Zapatero embodied the party members' desired break with the PSOE's immediate past (Kennedy 2013, pp. 158–60). Once in power, Zapatero went about updating the PSOE's political agenda, modernizing the party, revitalizing the party on the ground and exercising “useful opposition”, which materialized in agreements on terrorism and the judiciary with the PP (Bosco 2013, pp. 25–6, Kennedy 2013, p. 162, Tussel 2004, pp. 221–2).

¹⁷ For more on the Nueva Vía, see Bosco (2013, p. 25) and Kennedy (2013, pp. 159–160).

¹⁸ Bosco (2013, p. 25) cites López Alba (2002). See the source for a full citation.

Meanwhile, the PP government, supported by its absolute majority, had adopted a much more aggressive political style, had received bad publicity on a number of counts¹⁹ and had taken some unpopular political decisions, first among them the June 2002 labour market reform, which had triggered a general strike, and Spain's participation in the US invasion of Iraq. The latter decision, motivated more by ideological than political concerns,²⁰ was rejected by the vast majority of Spaniards, leading to massive anti-war protests in February 2003 (Tussel 2004, pp. 335–6, 339). The PSOE, which had already abandoned its cooperative approach vis-à-vis the PP in order to pass to the offensive, participated actively in these protests and promised to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq if the occupation was not put under a UN mandate (Kennedy 2013, p. 162). Shortly before the 2004 election, on the 11. of March, several bombs exploded on four trains in the Community of Madrid, killing 191 commuters and injuring 1,198 people (Colino and Cotarelo 2012, p. 21). Despite Al-Qaeda already claiming responsibility for the attack that morning, confirmed by concrete evidence that very same day (Colino and Cotarelo 2012, p. 22), the Aznar government – well aware that its foreign policy could be considered as motivation for the attack – immediately blamed ETA, activated all the resources at its disposal to propagate this view of events and subsequently refused to rectify, insisting on its blatantly false narrative for months thereafter and advancing conspiracy theories instead (Colino and Cotarelo 2012, p. 23, Sampedro and F. S. Pérez 2009, p. 133, Schmidt 2013, p. 520). All these events contributed to the PSOE's electoral victory in 2004, in which the party won some 3.1 million additional votes, receiving 43.3 percent of the vote and 164 deputies, while the PP fell to 38.3 percent of the vote and 148 deputies. The IU was roughly able to defend its share of the vote, losing only 0.5 percent thereof but also three deputies, falling to five. Further political developments will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

¹⁹ These included controversy around the wedding of Aznar's daughter, the management of the sinking of the oil tanker *Prestige* and the death of more than 60 Spanish soldiers in a plane crash on the way back from Afghanistan, attributed to budget cuts rather than "bad luck" (Tussel 2004, pp. 282–283, 324–329).

²⁰ The ideological concerns included the PP leadership's affinity toward American neoconservatism and neoliberalism as well as a desire for Spanish aggrandizement. Political reasons include the incorporation of ETA into the international agenda on the fight against terrorism. Economic motives include a Spanish share in the Iraqi post-invasion "reconstruction effort" (Palomo 2006, pp. 320–334, Tussel 2004, pp. 336–41).

6.4 Policy fields

This section will provide a brief discussion of the two main policy fields to be analysed in terms of specificity, the labour market and the center-periphery policy fields.

6.4.1 The labour market policy field

From 1980 to 2011, the Spanish labour market has been reformed 52 times by various Spanish governments (Fundación Uno de Mayo 2012, p. 19). Both the frequency and timing²¹ of these reforms suggest that the major Spanish political parties consider the labour market at least partially an in and of itself deficient institution which is to some extent to blame for high unemployment and precariousness (Rodríguez Vilar 2012, p. 4). This assumption is questioned especially on the left. Thus, for example, the left labour union CC.OO. argues defensively that “the labour market neither creates nor destroys employment, but reflects the evolution of the product markets. A mechanism which can work worse or better, but the evaluation of which requires taking the factors which negatively affect the economic activity into account” (Fundación Uno de Mayo 2012, p. 6). Such factors are generally recognized to include: comparatively low investment in research and development; excessive investment in low productivity sectors with relatively unskilled and labour intensive activities, especially construction, tourism and services; the predominance of small-and-medium-sized enterprises, which have less access to capital and less capacity to innovate; lastly, massive immigration during boom periods, permitting the use of cheap labour instead of capital investment, among several others (Estrada, Jimeno, and J. L. M. d. Molina 2009, p. 98, Ó. Molina and Godino 2013, pp. 107–9). The Spanish public education sector contributes to these problems especially in two ways, by providing a comparatively large number of poorly educated job seekers²² and by providing a large number of highly educated individuals for whom no adequate employment exists (J. R. García 2011, pp. 4–8, Mingorance-Arnáiz and Pampillón Olmedo 2015, p. 231). From the left perspective, labour market liberalization or flexibility is an ideologically misguided neoliberal project which aims to benefit companies at

²¹ The most significant of these labour market reforms were carried out during economic downturns, from 1976 to 1985, from 1991 to 1994 and from 2008 to 2011. Moreover, the 2001 labour market reform also aimed to counteract the effect of a relatively minor economic slowdown.

²² As of 2011, “more than 30% of those in the 15-29 year age bracket...[left] school with at most lower secondary education” (Wölfl and Mora-Sanguinetti 2011, p. 20).

the cost of their employees under the auspices of permitting market forces to optimally allocate labour and determine its cost, thereby permitting the state to restrain its investment in human capital and competitiveness. Nonetheless, while it is true that other policy fields which impact on economic activity leave much to be desired and thus have a negative impact on sustainable economic growth and employment, the claim that the labour market is simply a conduit for supply and demand, with no impact in its own right, does not withstand empirical analysis. Spain's labour market is dysfunctional in various ways, especially by being both too sensitive – in terms of employment – and too insensitive – in terms of the downward adjustment of labour costs – to economic downturns, leading to a number of undesirable macroeconomic effects.²³ The rest of this section will provide a more detailed discussion of the overall evolution of the Spanish labour market as well as its most important deficits and reforms.

Generally speaking, the labour market inherited from the Franco regime was characterized by high job security, the absence of independent and officially sanctioned union representation and relatively low wages (Bentolila, Dolado, and Jimeno 2008, p. 49, Rodríguez Vilar 2012, p. 3). The high rate of employment had been achieved by the systematic discrimination of women, massive emigration in search of jobs and the outright manipulation of labour market statistics (Rodríguez Vilar 2012, pp. 3–4). During the transition to democracy, the regime's vertical union system was dismantled and labour regulations underwent numerous reforms until negotiations between the UGT, CEOE and the UCD government resulted in the passage of the 1980 Labour Statute (Galacho 2006a, pp. 8–10, S. Gómez, Contreras, and M. D. Gracia 2008, p. 8), which laid the foundation for today's Spanish labour market.²⁴ The desire to successfully complete the pacted democratic transition²⁵ required that all major social and political forces could be enticed to participate, causing the labour statute to be written more in the spirit of the post-world war “golden age of capitalism” than in the spirit of liberalization which was being implemented in other western countries (Rodríguez Vilar 2012, p. 16). Thus, as Bentolila, Dolado, and Jimeno (2008, pp. 49–50) summarize:

²³ For detailed studies of the effects of the labour market as an institution while taking the structure of the economy into consideration, see, for example, Meléndez (2012) and Polavieja (2006).

²⁴ The labour statute does not apply to public servants.

²⁵ For more information on how the Franco regime and the transition shaped the labour market, see Rodríguez Vilar (2012, pp. 5–14) and Galacho (2006b, pp. 8–12).

“[T]wo main institutional features characterized the Spanish labour market at that time: a high degree of employment protection against both dismissals and occupational/ geographical mobility, and the prevalence of collective bargaining at the provincial/ industry level as the means for setting wages, working hours and other employment conditions. Permanent contracts represented more than 90 percent of all contracts, while temporary contracts could only be used to hire workers performing non-regular productive activities like, e.g., seasonal jobs in agriculture or tourism. Under permanent contracts, firing costs depended on the worker’s seniority and on the reasons for dismissal, which comprised: (a) objective reasons (worker’s incompetence, lack of adaptation to the job), (b) economic, organizational, and technological reasons, and (c) disciplinary reasons. [...] Dismissed workers under permanent contracts could appeal to labour courts,²⁶ where judges would decide whether the dismissal was fair, unfair or void. In the last case employers were forced to readmit the worker immediately and, in the case of unfair dismissals, to choose between readmission and termination of the contract with...[a much higher payment for years of service]. Further, employers had to pay interim wages (for two months at most) while labour courts reached their decisions. Collective dismissals could be justified only because of reason (b) and required...administrative approval.”

Because dismissal for economic reasons was usually only accepted when employers and employees had come to a mutual agreement, involving the increase of severance pay, and judges usually ruled dismissals for other reasons unfair, this legislation was very restrictive (Kugler, Jimeno, and Hernanz 2002, p. 4).

In addition to the difficulty of passing labour market regulations in the context of labour union mobilisation and a pacted democratic transition, the first and especially the second oil price shocks had caused a massive surge in unemployment from 1.1 to 21.6 percent between 1975 and 1985 (World Bank 2019). The completion of the transition and the decisive PSOE victory in 1982 permitted the socialists to implement the 1984 labour market reform, which aimed to reduce companies’ reticence to hire (Ferreiro and F. Serrano 2001, p. 32, Fundación Uno de Mayo 2012, p. 8). In order to do so, additional types

²⁶ For the circumstances under which an appeal was possible, see Kugler, Jimeno, and Hernanz (2002, p. 4).

of temporary contracts were introduced and their usage generally permitted for business cycle motives (S. Gómez, Contreras, and M. D. Gracia 2008, p. 12, Fundación Uno de Mayo 2012, pp. 8–9, 45). The most important of these new contracts was the Employment Promotion Contract, which had a much lower severance cost²⁷ than permanent contracts and the termination of which could not be challenged before labour courts (Bentolila, Dolado, and Jimeno 2008, p. 50, Lobregad and J. F. J. Serrano 2004, p. 18). In the context of the rigidities described above, the effect of liberalizing the usage of temporary contracts while leaving the permanent contract legislation unchanged was that companies resorted to hiring temporary employees for jobs of a permanent nature in order to be able to fire them at a lower cost during periods of economic downturn. The reform thus led to a massive increase in temporary employment, which had reached 24.2 percent of total employment by 1993, causing the level of temporary employment to be far above that of other European countries, as can be seen in fig. 3c on page 181. This high percentage of temporary employment was accompanied by a number of negative effects, which included: a rapid increases of unemployment during periods of economic downturn, as can be seen in fig. 3a on page 181, accompanied by negative effects on welfare state spending; lower paid temporary contracts for jobs of a permanent nature, with companies “rehiring” employees or contacting new labourers to cover the same positions; accordingly, a low incentive for companies to invest in human capital; the difficulty especially of younger employees with lower educational levels to transition from temporary to permanent contracts; lastly, these factors also contribute to Spain’s unusually high youth unemployment rate, as shown in fig. 3d and 3e (Mingorance-Arnáiz and Pampillón Olmedo 2015, pp. 225–7, 231–232, Wölfl and Mora-Sanguinetti 2011, pp. 6–7). Reversing this dualisation of the labour market brought about by the 1984 reform has been a key motive of all major labour market reforms from 1984 to 2008 (Bentolila, Dolado, and Jimeno 2008, pp. 51–2, Lobregad and J. F. J. Serrano 2004, pp. 7–9), “either by restricting the use of temporary contracts or by reducing mandatory firing costs for open-ended contracts” (Bentolila, Dolado, and Jimeno 2008, p. 51).

In the early 1990s, the labour market once again revealed its dysfunctional nature, when a sharp recession was accompanied by massive job destruction, wage increases and an accompanying increases in inflation, demonstrating that the wages of permanent contract employees were unresponsive to the forces of supply and demand (Ferreiro and F. Serrano 2001, pp. 36–8). This

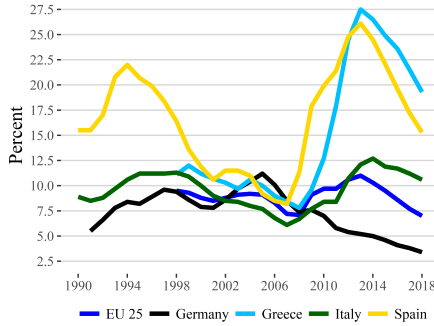
²⁷ Moreover, if the temporary contract expired as stipulated, no severance payment was due (Kugler, Jimeno, and Hernanz 2002, p. 5).

behaviour of the labour market would repeat itself during economic downturns in the future²⁸ and was indicative especially of two problems. Firstly, that companies lacked the mechanisms to halt the increases in or adjust the labour costs of permanent employees downward, or to put their labour to work in a more flexible fashion, given labour market rigidities and the dominance of sectoral collective negotiation.²⁹ Secondly, not least due to a lack of alternatives, companies resorted to the massive dismissal of employees in order to reduce their labour costs, thus paradoxically also strengthening the negotiating position of the permanently employed (Sánchez-Amaya and Vicente 1997, pp. 119–120). In order to deal with these issues, the 1994 reform adopted a sets of measures which was intended to increase firms' flexibility: to permit the negotiation of the distribution of employees' working time over the year; to ease wage pressures by permitting greater emphasis on variable parts of salaries in accordance with a company's performance; a number of issues such as working hours or geographical and functional mobility were to be negotiated through collective bargaining and were no longer determined by state law; companies were permitted to avoid implementing wage increases negotiated above the company level if their implementation was to have a negative effect on the company, among others (Ferreiro and F. Serrano 2001, pp. 39–40). Moreover, the use of temporary contracts was tightened by limiting their use only to particular collectives (such as those above 45 years of age or the long-term unemployed) and objective dismissal was permitted when the *future* financial viability of the company was at risk (Bentolila, Dolado, and Jimeno 2008, p. 51). In spite of this as well as subsequent reforms, Spain continued to be one of the EU countries in which employers resorted most frequently to dismissal instead of other mechanisms to adjust labour costs (Meléndez 2012, pp. 41–2), making labour market flexibility a recurrent topic of future reforms. Additionally, the 1994 reform had a very limited effect on temporary employment because companies often simply ignored the new regulations, while the conditions related to permanent contracts remained

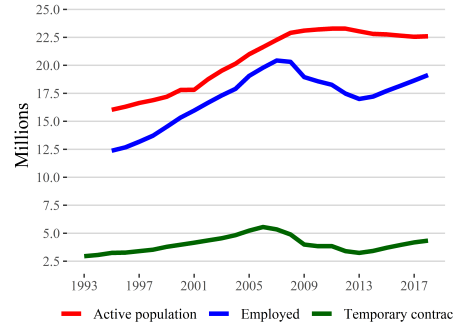
²⁸ See, for example, Meléndez (2012) for a similar description of the labour market's behaviour following the 2008 financial and economic crisis.

²⁹ Spain has an intermediary level of collective negotiation, situated between the company and the national level, since the majority of collective agreements are sectoral and apply mostly at the provincial level, but there are also national or company level agreements. While the latter two polar models are associated with particular advantageous and disadvantageous, the intermediary level is generally considered least ideal (Sánchez-Amaya and Vicente 1997, pp. 122–3). Because all companies must adhere to sectoral collective agreements irrespective of their membership, some 80 percent of Spanish companies operate under these agreements (Köhler and Calleja Jiménez 2014, p. 372).

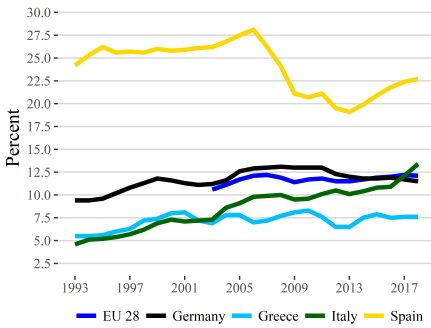
basically unchanged (S. Gómez, Contreras, and M. D. Gracia 2008, pp. 19–23, Kugler, Jimeno, and Hernanz 2002, p. 5).



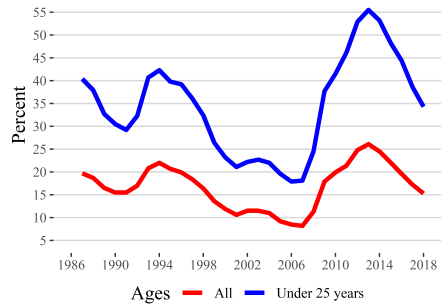
(a) Unemployment rates compared



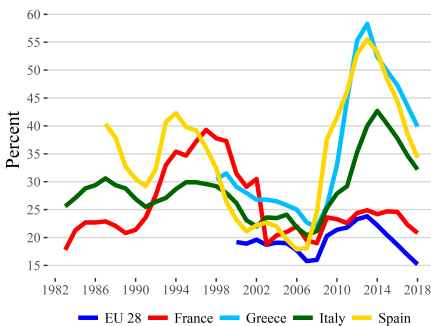
(b) Basic indicators



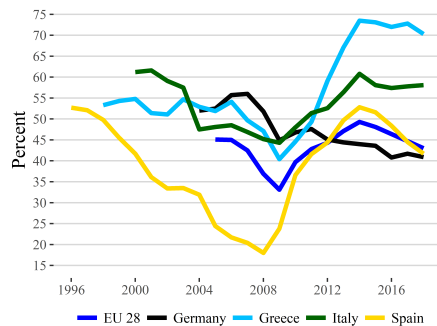
(c) Temporary employment compared



(d) Unemployment rate and age



(e) Youth unemployment rate compared



(f) Long-term unemployment compared

Figure 3: The Spanish labour market (1983–2018)

Data source: Eurostat (2019)

Under Aznar, two labour market reforms were carried out in 1997 and 2001, with the main objectives of reducing the use of temporary contracts (Kugler, Jimeno, and Hernanz 2002, p. 6), the former reform being based on an agreement between the social partners and which introduced a new permanent contract called Permanent Employment Promotion Contract. The contract had the potential to reduce the labour market's duality by providing lower severance costs to companies in the case of unfair dismissal, but since the contract could only be used to hire workers outside of the age bracket of 30 to 44 years of age, unless they had been unemployed for more than one year,³⁰ a significant number of job seekers were excluded and its effect on labour market duality was somewhat diminished (Bentolila, Dolado, and Jimeno 2008, pp. 51–2). Moreover, the two reforms introduced social security rebates for companies using this new contract modality as well as for those which converted temporary to permanent contracts; introduced severance pay for some of the other types of temporary contracts; extended the usage of the PECPs in time and to new collectives by increasing the eligible age group and reducing the required period of unemployment; adopted measures to encourage part time contracts; lastly, firms could now acknowledge that a dismissal had been unfair, requiring it to pay a higher severance fee but avoiding the cost of having to pay the employees' wages while waiting on a labour court judgement (Bentolila, Dolado, and Jimeno 2008, p. 52, S. Gómez, Contreras, and M. D. Gracia 2008, pp. 31–2). The novelty of the Aznar reforms was their emphasis on creating incentives for permanent contract hire, rather than on limiting the use of temporary ones (Kugler, Jimeno, and Hernanz 2002, p. 6).³¹ While these reform can be considered to have been successful in increasing the number of permanent contracts (S. Gómez, Contreras, and M. D. Gracia 2008, pp. 26–30, 32–36), they also initiated a tendency to direct an excessive amount of active labour market policy resources to providing incentives for hiring and maintaining employment, rather than on re-training the unemployed (J. R. García 2011, pp. 10–12).³²

As has been shown, the major reforms discussed above have attempted to reach especially the overlapping aims of decreasing unemployment by increasing

³⁰ As explained by Bentolila, Dolado, and Jimeno (2008, p. 52): "This exclusion was due to legal reasons, since it would have been against the spirit of the Spanish Constitution to have two open-ended contracts subject to identical labor regulations except for severance pay...unless the workers hired were disadvantaged".

³¹ The 1997 reform did reduce the possibility of the usage of two temporary contracts, eliminating one of them (S. Gómez, Contreras, and M. D. Gracia 2008, p. 25).

³² Additionally, Spain suffers from comparatively low investment per capita in active labour market policies, which aim to get the unemployed back into a job (J. R. García 2011, p. 11).

flexibility and reducing the usage of temporary contracts, with limited success.³³ That both major parties essentially pursued similar explicitly stated policy goals – reducing unemployment and temporary employment and increasing labour market flexibility – is indicative of the somewhat technical nature of this policy field. Nonetheless, the ideological dimension of labour market reform was to become much clearer following the outbreak of the 2008 financial crisis and, as will be shown below, a closer look at the parties' specific issue position proposals clearly reveals important ideological differences.

6.4.2 The center-periphery policy field

In addition to the threat of Communism, the Franco regime had justified its existence especially with the supposed danger of the Catalan and Basque cultural and political identities to Spanish unity. As a result of their ensuing repression, the concepts of democratization and territorial autonomy became closely linked (Reyes 2006, p. 77). Following Franco's death and the onset of the transition toward democracy, the UCD government was unable to slow the dynamic of nationalist and regionalist agitation for self-government, which led to the formation of provisional governments in the three historic Spanish regions of Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia, between September 1977 and April 1978, a process emulated by other regions and which led the government to decree pre-autonomy regimes³⁴ in 11 regions between April and October 1978 (Carmona 2005, p. 103, Powell 2001, pp. 214–5) prior to the passage of the Spanish Constitution in December that year. The political negotiations which determined the content of the Constitution represented a compromise between, firstly, the military and AP, which were opposed to extensive decentralization; secondly, an ambivalent UCD and, thirdly, the PSOE, PCE and nationalist parties, which were in favour of a decentralized state (Lecours 2007, pp. 85–88). As a consequence, its second article bases the 1978 Constitution on the “insoluble unity of the Spanish Nation, the common and indivisible fatherland of all Spaniards, and recognizes and guarantees the right of autonomy and solidarity of the nationalities and regions of which it

³³ Although it would be possible to provide a much more detailed discussion of the evolution of the Spanish labour market, for an overview see especially S. Gómez, Contreras, and M. D. Gracia (2008) and Fundación Uno de Mayo (2012).

³⁴ Mixed commissions consisting of representatives of the central state and the respective regions were set up to negotiate the competencies which were to be decentralized (Carmona 2005, pp. 103–4).

consists". This right to autonomy³⁵ could be exercised through article 143.2 or article 151.1,³⁶ both requiring the approval by a majority of the provincial³⁷ electoral census. As an additional requirement, article 143.2 demanded the consent of two thirds of each province's municipalities to the creation of a given future AC. Article 151.1 permitted the respective AC to avoid a five year waiting period before assuming competencies within the limits provided by article 149,³⁸ but was more demanding on the prerequisites. Article 151.1 required the approval by an absolute – as opposed to a simple – majority of the provincial electoral census and of three fourths of each province's municipalities (Las Cortes 1978). Moreover, the second transitional disposition permitted that territories could directly accede to more extensive autonomy via article 148.2 if they had approved autonomy statutes by plebiscite in the past, a condition which the three historic regions had fulfilled during the Second Republic and Spanish Civil War (Lecours 2007, pp. 88, 92–3).

The institutional setup chosen to reconcile right-wing concerns over Spanish unity and left-wing and nationalist desires for decentralization and political autonomy has resulted in a rather curious relation between the Constitution and the AC statutes. Since the statutes and not the Constitution create the ACs, which, furthermore, determine their names, delimit their territories

³⁵ Another fundamental demand, the protection of regional languages as core elements of their nationalist identities, was achieved by stipulating that Castellano is the official Spanish language (Las Cortes 1978, art. 3.1), while ACs can determine their own co-official languages in their respective statutes (Las Cortes 1978, pp. 3, 2). The linguistic richness of the country was also recognized as a valuable cultural inheritance (Las Cortes 1978, art. 3.3). Politically, moreover, ACs could design and display their own flags alongside the Spanish one (Las Cortes 1978, art. 4.2).

³⁶ The first transitional disposition facilitated the integration of the political bodies which had been formed especially by nationalists in parallel to the constitutional process. It established that already existing provisional organs (instead of provinces) could also, by an absolute majority vote, initiate the process of autonomy (Las Cortes 1978, *Primera disposición transitoria*).

³⁷ The Spanish provinces are an intermediate territorial and administrative unit between the municipalities and Spanish ACs. Some ACs consist of only one, the majority of them of more than one province.

³⁸ Accession through article 143.2 permitted the affected ACs to assume those competencies explicitly reserved for them in article 148, which includes, for example, health, city management, agriculture, environmental protection and tourism. Article 149 lists those competencies exclusive to the state (such as those concerning international relations, the armed forces, immigration, or the justice system) and permits ACs to adopt those competencies not included in that list through their respective statutes. If particular competencies are not explicitly reserved to the state nor regulated by a statute of autonomy, state law prevails over AC law (Las Cortes 1978, art. 149.3).

and create and organize their own self-governmental institutions (article 147.1), they function as the ACs' constitutive norms. Moreover, due to article 149,³⁹ statutes can assume particular competencies, thereby making them complements to the 1978 Constitution. The passage of statutes as well as statute reforms, which are organic laws, require an absolute majority approval in the Congress of Deputies (art. 81, art. 147.3). While this means that AC parliaments cannot pass statutes against the will of national parliament, the statutes may determine their own reform procedure (article 147.3 and 152.2), which is beyond the scope of other ordinary and organic laws, an option which ACs have used to claim the monopoly to initiate statute reforms. Moreover, the Resolution of the Presidency of the Congress and the Senate of September 1993 permits ACs to withdraw their statutes from the Congress of Deputies and the Senate prior to their final approval, the central state thus being unable to unilaterally amend and then pass an AC statute and thus requiring the consent between the national and regional legislatures. In this sense, the process of passing AC statutes becomes an overarching rather than a central state law (Reyes 2006, pp. 83, 91–2).

Following the passage of the Constitution, the Basque Country (1979), Catalonia (1979) and Galicia (1981) rapidly acceded to the more extensive version of autonomy through article 151.2 and the second additional disposition of the Constitution. Given the low participation in the statute referendums, administrative chaos and public expenditure increases, however, the UCD hoped to channel the overall decentralization process, such as in Galicia and Andalusia (Powell 2001, pp. 252–3).⁴⁰ The latter case was particularly important because Andalusia was not considered a historic territory with a distinct cultural and political identity, but aimed to accede to autonomy through article 151.2. Aiming to avoid the blurring of the distinction between historic and non-historic territories, the UCD government advocated abstention in the required referendum of February 1980. The referendum, in which 58 percent of the census participated and roughly 94 percent voted in favour, showed that the UCD's position on this issue did not enjoy broad based support. Despite technically failing, since only 42 percent voted in favour in the municipality of Almeria, Andalusia was permitted to accede to autonomy through article 151.2 (Abad Liñán 2020, Powell 2001, p. 254). As a consequence of this development, regions like the Canary and Balearic Islands, Valencia and Aragon began to clamour for more extensive autonomy by rapidly unearthing their own cultural and historic distinctiveness (Lecours 2007, pp. 92–3). The position of

³⁹ See footnote 38 on the facing page.

⁴⁰ The author cites Martín Villa (1984), see Powell (2001, p. 253) for the original source.

the PSOE, which exploited the case of Andalusia to attack the government, shifted after the failed coup attempt of February 1981, which was partially motivated by the dynamic of the decentralization process, leading the UCD under Calvo-Sotelo and the PSOE under González to sign the Autonomy Pacts of July 1981 (Kennedy 2013, p. 145, Reyes 2006, pp. 80–1). The Autonomy Pacts intended to assure the quick approval of outstanding statutes, the AC financing system and the aforementioned Organic Law for Harmonizing the Autonomy Process (LOAPA) by parliament (I. A. Sanz 2009, p. 80). The LOAPA included an agreement to limit the application of article 151 and aimed to regulate competency transfers by making AC legislation in particular areas subject to central government approval in order to achieve a certain level of homogeneity between the different ACs (Carmona 2005, p. 131, Kennedy 2013, p. 145, Powell 2001, pp. 305–6, I. A. Sanz 2009, p. 80). Although the Basque and Catalan nationalists brought the LOAPA before the Constitutional Court, resulting in its partial annulment, the law helped to create consensus for the approval of at least 10 AC statutes, including that of Andalusia (Powell 2001, p. 306).⁴¹ The result of these early developments was the formation of two groups of ACs with different levels of competencies, the one with greater competencies including the three historic regions as well as Andalusia, Navarre, Valencia and Canary Islands (Reyes 2006, p. 81). By 1983, all statutes except those of the future Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla had been approved (Reyes 2006, p. 81)⁴² and in May the first AC elections were held for all those ACs which had not yet held any elections as well as Navarre, which was to join the other ACs in their electoral cycle. From 1985 to 1990, the most important competency transfers concerned university education (I. A. Sanz 2009, p. 81).

The institutional structure of the Spanish state and the subsequent evolution of the State of Autonomies were to have a profound impact on the dynamic of decentralization. The historical regions – first and foremost Catalonia and the Basque Country – would continue to fight against the tendencies of homogenization pushed by the central governments, demanding the recognition of their exceptional status. This dynamic became evident in 1987, when the five year waiting period for the assumption of further competencies by those ACs which had acceded to autonomy via article 143.2 was coming to an end (Kennedy 2013, p. 147). Instead of leaving the initiative to the regional governments and parliaments, as intended by the Constitution, the PSOE administration offered a state pact in 1988 which was intended to transfer a homogeneous package of competencies to these ACs through the passage

⁴¹ See Powell (2001, p. 392) and Reyes (2006, p. 81) for more details on the LOAPA's significance.

⁴² The two cities saw their statutes approved in 1995.

of organic laws. Reticent to permit the government to condition the content of the regional statutes in this manner, however, Castile and León, the Balearic Islands, Aragon and Asturias passed new statutes in their regional parliaments, which were sent to Congress for approval. Finally, in February 1992, the PSOE and PP signed a new Autonomous Community pact, replacing its 1981 predecessor between the UCD and the PSOE and leading to the passage of Organic Law 9/1992 as well as the aforementioned resolutions of the Presidency of Congress and the Senate in 1993, thereby preparing the transfer of 32 competencies to the ten ACs which had not yet taken action and were initiating their statute reforms (Kennedy 2013, p. 147, Reyes 2006, p. 82, I. A. Sanz 2009, p. 82). As a consequence of these developments, the level of competencies between the different ACs became much more similar once again, despite some notable differences (Powell 2001, pp. 478–9). In response to the equalization of competencies, the CiU, PNV and the Galicien Bloque Nacionalista Galego (BNG) issued the Declaration of Barcelona in 1998, which argued that the Constitution had been interpreted restrictively, that the distinction between regions and nationalities had been glossed over by the construct of ACs and that Spain's plurinational character was not being sufficiently recognized, thus proposing a constitutional reform to transform the Spanish state into a confederation (Powell 2001, pp. 596–8). In October that same year, the socialist presidents of Castilla-La Mancha, Andalucía and Extremadura signed the so-called Mérida Declaration, in which they defended the Constitution and opposed attempts to create an asymmetrical distribution of competencies across different ACs (Fernández de Soto 2008, p. 111). Moreover, jealousy over competencies existed not only between historic nationalities and regions, but also among the historic nationalities themselves. As the conflict between the central state and Catalonia was to gain momentum in the 2000s, the demand for a fiscal arrangement similar to that of the Basque Country and Navarre became increasingly virulent. The first additional disposition of the 1978 Constitution recognized the Basque Country and Navarre's historic rights (*fueros*). These include especially an economic agreement (*concierto económico*) with the central state according to which the Basque Country and Navarre collect most taxes and then transfer a periodically negotiated amount (the *cupo*) to the central state to compensate the latter for its rendered services. In contrast to the treatment of these two ACs, the central state levies its major taxes directly in the rest of Spain and then (re-)distributes funds to the different ACs.

During the same period in which the ACs were becoming more similar in terms of their competencies, the influence of nationalist parties on the central

government also underwent an important qualitative shift. Although nationalist and regionalist parties were able to exact concessions⁴³ from the party in central government when the latter desired to govern in coalition with these forces in their respective ACs, from 1993 the decline in the share of the vote of the PSOE made the direct support of nationalist parties in the Congress of Deputies necessary in order to be able to form parliamentary majorities. The Spanish electoral system facilitates the representation of nationalist parties in national parliament because the existing three percent electoral threshold is applied at the provincial electoral district level and parties are not required to gain a particular minimum percentage of votes across a particular number of provinces or ACs. Moreover, while the electoral system benefits especially the largest national parties and disadvantages small nation wide parties (due to a combination of frequently occurring small electoral district size and the application of the d'Hondt method), regionally concentrated nationalist parties which are strong only in a small number of electoral districts are treated more or less equitably by it (Gunther 1989, pp. 838–40). Instead of opting to form government coalitions, nationalist parties – first among them the CiU – preferred to negotiate concessions in return for the support of the government's legislative agenda from within parliament. This approach enabled the nationalist parties to influence national politics and obtain particular – politically valuable – concessions, while remaining sufficiently detached from the central government in order to play the nationalist card and critique it when it became expedient to appeal to their key nationalist constituents. In the two-and-a-half party system which dominated until 2011, the adversarial relationship between the only two parties capable of forming government, the PP and PSOE, and the competition between the PSOE and IU thus permitted nationalist parties greater political influence when the largest party found itself in a parliamentary minority. The PSOE found itself leading a minority government from 1993 to 1996 and from 2004 to 2011, whereas the PP had been in minority from 1996 to 2000 and from 2015 to 2018. From 2018, the PSOE formed Spain's first national government coalition with Podemos, a radically left party to be discussed in greater detail below, but this coalition too was forced to govern in minority. Overall, both the evolution of the different levels of competencies across different ACs as well as the influence of nationalist parties on the central government contributed to feelings of inequity, with nationalists demanding greater distinctiveness, regionalists demanding

⁴³ See Barrio et al. (2010, p. 17), Palomo (2006, pp. 158–172), Martínez (2016, pp. 78–9), Tussel (2004, pp. 67–9), Heller (2002, p. 676) on the discussion of the content of these political pacts and Field (2013) for a detailed account of Zapatero's party coalitions.

equal treatment and especially the PP exploiting the central government's "concessions" in return for parliamentary support to attack the PSOE.

In addition to the problem of asymmetry, another series of institutional features have facilitated the conflictual nature of the center-periphery policy field. Especially during the early phase of decentralization, the ability of the ACs to arrogate those competencies not explicitly reserved for the central state to themselves led to a large number of legal disputes (Powell 2001, p. 485).⁴⁴ The vagueness of the Constitution on the precise nature of the distribution of competencies, concurrent law making and the limits of framework legislation invited for constant conflict. Another major issue was the vagueness of the AC financing system and the financial autonomy of ACs espoused in article 156 of the Constitution (Kennedy 2013, p. 146), necessitating the recurrent renegotiating of the mechanism by which the state redistributes resources between the different ACs. Not only did the Spanish magna carta thus provide much room for political and legal disputes, but it also failed to provide the adequate channels to deal with them. Spain's Senate, the primordial institution to permit subnational political units to participate in state wide politics, fails to fulfil its constitutional purpose of functioning as a chamber of territorial representation (Las Cortes 1978, art. 69.1). The reasons for this failure are various, although one of the most important may be the manner in which senators are designated. Thus, each mainland province – instead of each AC – is provided four senators, which are elected directly and concurrently with the congressional deputies by the respective provinces' – not the respective ACs' – inhabitants. Additionally, the regional legislative assemblies – instead of the respective AC governments – elect at least one senator plus one additional senator for each one million inhabitants in their respective region (Las Cortes 1978, pp. 69, 5). Of the 266 senators, 208 are elected directly, whereas only 58 are named by the respective AC parliaments (Senado de España 2021). This election process thus blurs the difference between congressional and senatorial elections, reduces the proclivity of the voter to distinguish between national and regional politics and undermines the representation of regional interests. Moreover, even if the system was geared more toward providing institutional incentives for the representation of regional interests, the Senate basically possesses the same fundamental competencies as does Congress and although the second chamber can make amendments and possesses a veto, the former can be voted down by simple majority and the latter overturned by an absolute

⁴⁴ See, for example, Reyes (2006, pp. 84–87) for an overview of the period from the 1980s to the early 2000s.

majority in parliament (Las Cortes 1978, art. 90.1-2). This means that a potentially crucial institution in which nationalist and regionalist interests could be negotiated and reconciled is essentially defunct. Recognizing these deficits, a debate about the reform of the Senate commenced in 1989, in 1993 the General Commission of Autonomous Communities was formed to strengthen the Senate's function as an institution representing territorial interests and in 1994 the Senate itself agreed on the necessity of constitutional reform (Powell 2001, pp. 481, 525). Nonetheless, despite several announced reform attempts, none have materialized to date. Another potentially important institution for center-periphery cooperation is the Conference of Presidents, founded in October 2004, but which has only been convened six times – four times under Zapatero, twice under Rajoy – until January 2017 (Ministerio de Política Territorial 2021b) as well as sectoral conferences. The latter usually meet much more frequently and are constituted by the respective national and regional ministers (Ministerio de Política Territorial 2021c), the most important one being the Fiscal and Financial Political Council. Moreover, since the 1980s a number of so-called bilateral commissions of cooperation between a particular AC and the central state have been created to negotiate issues of regional interest (Ministerio de Política Territorial 2021a). These institutions function in parallel to the Senate, however, and are often dependent on the will of the central government to come to an agreement. As such, they offer no real institutional counterweight to the central government or Congress of Deputies and cannot compensate for the relative political insignificance of the Senate.

The period especially from the PP's second term in government from 2000 to 2004 was accompanied by important changes in center-periphery dynamics. On the one hand, the competency transfers to the slow-track ACs, particularly concerning education and health, were continued during Aznar's two terms, thus in a sense completing the decentralization which the PP and PSOE had previously agreed upon (Buesa 2015, p. 105, I. A. Sanz 2009, p. 83). On the other hand, the PP aimed to make use of its absolute majority in the 2000 election to try to put an end to the dynamic of decentralization witnessed since the 1980s, implementing a series of recentralizing measures which were correctly perceived as direct attacks of the central government on nationalist aspirations (Baldi and Baldini 2009, p. 107).⁴⁵ The clearest example thereof was the PP's Cooperation Law, which aimed to delineate the concurrent competencies between the AC and the central state, thereby basically closing off the decentralization process while at the same time attempting to strengthen

⁴⁵ See Powell (2001, p. 594) and Tussel (2004, pp. 284–7) for a more detailed discussion. For some policies which may be considered advantageous to the role of ACs under Aznar, see Powell (2001, p. 595).

the role of the Conference of Presidents and the sectoral conferences as well as to increase the participation of ACs in European institutions (via the central state). Given the political opposition it aroused, this reform attempt was subsequently abandoned, however (Tussel 2004, pp. 288–290).

During this same period, the PSOE, which had decided not to support the PP's Cooperation Law, decided, under the new found leadership of Zapatero, to use the center-periphery antagonism conjured up by the PP in its favour. Since November 2001, the PSOE had advocated two relatively minor changes to the Constitution in order to convert the Senate into a true chamber of regional representation, firstly, by holding senatorial elections separately from congressional ones and, secondly, by making the number of senators up for election dependent on the population of the respective ACs (Tussel 2004, p. 290). When it became clear that a great many ACs were intent on following the Basque example of initiating a new round of statute reforms, to be discussed in greater detail below, the PSOE signalled its general amiability toward this process and embraced the concept of a plurinational Spain, thus directly contradicting the PP's aims to lock in the institutional status quo (Tussel 2004, pp. 290–1). The PSOE's change in position was made official in the Declaration of Santillana in 2003, in which the socialists proposed a federal model, to increase self-government, to convert the Senate into a truly territorial chamber and to increase the weight of the ACs within the central state and EU, although more conservative elements within the PSOE had insisted that the prioritization of the principle of equality over autonomy be stated explicitly (Fernández de Soto 2008, p. 111). The PSOE's willingness to recognize Spain's cultural and linguistic diversity, its acceptance of further and potentially asymmetric decentralization and its willingness to reform the Constitution was thus diametrically opposed to the PP's vision of the nation as Spanish, rooted "in the Catholic struggle against the Moors as well as a common prosperous and democratic future as underpinned by the 1978 Constitution" (Lecours 2007, p. 94). To the PP, the term "plurinational" was arguably particularly offensive because it implicitly went beyond the constitutional recognition of the existence of Spanish nationalities held together by a single Spanish nation. While the constitutional term "nationalities" arguably implies only the possession of a quality which is not sufficient to lay claim to sovereignty as manifest nations do, the term plurinational implies that sovereignty is shared between different nations which, in sum, constitute the sovereign. At the very least, this formulation seemed to strengthen the position of nationalist parties which demanded greater political influence and competencies.

No account of Spanish politics can be considered complete without at least acknowledging the importance of the Basque and Catalan nationalisms. Because the conflict around Catalan independence gathered momentum especially from 2006 and has had a massive impact on national politics especially from 2015, Catalan politics and the developments leading to the rise of the independence movement will be discussed in the subsequent chapters. Basque politics, in contrast, were especially salient during the period of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) terror, during which nationalist political parties had to both position themselves on Basque nationalism and to try to reign in the terrorist organization, as well as during the late 1990s and early 2000s, when Aznar's hostility clashed head on with the Basque President Juan José Ibarretxe's intent to bring about a negotiated ceasefire with ETA and to agitate for greater autonomy and co-sovereignty. During the time period covered in the subsequent chapter, namely Zapatero's first legislature, ETA had already entered into a period of decline which would result in its subsequent dissolution and the 2009 Basque election permitted the PSOE's regional party branch, the Partido Socialista de Euskadi (PSE), and the Basque PP to displace the nationalists from government, thus terminating Ibarretxe's political adventures. Thereafter, the PNV adopted a much more moderate and cooperative attitude, replacing the increasingly radical Catalan CiU in its role as a (more or less) reliable facilitator of congressional majorities. Thus, instead of discussing both the developments in Basque and Catalan politics here, only to basically close off the narrative on the former because the PNV was no longer actively and directly working against the central state and its nation wide parties, while focusing extensively on the Catalan case in the subsequent chapters, it was decided to deal with the Basque conflict in this introductory chapter to the center-periphery policy field and to focus on the Catalan conflict in the later ones. That is not to say, of course, that the manner in which Zapatero chose to deal with the ETA threat did not become one of the major battle horses of the PP in its virulent opposition to the socialists.

Like a number of other Basque parties, the PNV – the historical party of Basque nationalism and leader of Basque political resistance from exile during the Franco regime – had advocated the abstention of the Basque population in the referendum on the 1978 Constitution, arguing that it did not recognize a Basque right to self-determination (Lecours 2007, p. 88). Despite a certain lack of legitimacy of the new constitutional regime, the Basque autonomy (or Guernica) statute realized key demands of Basque nationalism: The Basque Country was to consist of three provinces which it considered constitutive of its territory, Basque (Euskara) was the co-official language and the government received the competency for the regional Basque police force. Most

importantly from the perspective of central government, the statute also secured the Basque country's historic fiscal relations with the Spanish state (included in the aforementioned *fueros*). The more radical elements of the Basque nationalist movement were dissatisfied, however, about the lack of reference to the right to self-determination and that neither Navarre – in accordance with its own volition – nor the French Basque territories formed a part of the Basque Country, which constituted, in their totality, the Basque nationalist “homeland” of Euskal Herria. As a consequence, Herri Batasuna (HB), founded as the political arm of ETA in 1978, was the only party which rejected the Guernica Statute (Lecours 2007, pp. 89–91).

The Basque party system was dominated by the PNV, which remained the largest party despite important electoral losses from 1986 to the early 2000s due to the schism of the left Eusko Alkartasuna (EA). Moreover, with the exception of the 2009 to 2012 period, the PNV formed coalition governments with the second largest Basque party from 1984 to 1998, the PSE, as well as with other nationalist parties (Observatorio de los Gobiernos de Coalición en España 2018). Despite the occasional government crisis, caused by tensions between the PNV, pushed to more radical nationalist positions by its rivals, and the PSE, the PNV did not issue any major challenge to the national political and institutional status quo until the early 2000s. During this period, despite the murderous activities of ETA and HB's political isolation, reinforced by a number of political pacts in 1987 and 1988 to that end, HB continued to win between 14.7 and 18.3 percent of the vote from 1984 to 1996.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, the aforementioned political pacts and the painfully obvious brutality of ETA, exemplified by the murder of María Dolores González Katarain and Miguel Ángel Blanco as well as the 1987 supermarket bombing in Barcelona, among others, eroded the image of ETA as “the lost sons of the Basque nationalist family whose methods might be questionable but who held commendable objectives” (Lecours 2007, p. 97) and brought the societal rejection – scared into silence by the threat of violence – into the open (Lecours 2007, pp. 97–8, Powell 2001, pp. 601–2, El País 1988).

For the PNV, the activities of ETA and its relations with more or less radical nationalists had constituted a difficult balancing act (Lecours 2007, pp. 85, 90–5). In 1998, however, the PNV decided to change strategy by announcing

⁴⁶ HB renamed and refounded itself or formed a part of various political parties, including, among others, Euskal Herriarrok (EH) prior to the 1998 election, Batasuna in 2001, which was declared illegal in 2003, and Euskal Herrialdeetako Alderdi Komunista (EHAK), declared illegal in 2008 (Partido Popular 2005, Agencias 2008a). In order to facilitate a summary of the political developments in the Basque Country, the major party most closely associated with ETA and its past will be called HB, until otherwise stated.

the Pact of Lizarra, which included, among other parties and civil society organizations, HB in order to bring a negotiated end to ETA violence. In order to entice HB's cooperation, the PNV embraced its radical nationalist discourse and signalled its openness to discuss any and all issues, moves that were rejected by the PP and PSOE (Lecours 2007, pp. 101–5). This rejection by the national parties led the PNV to pursue a common front between the PNV, HB and ETA – provided the latter stop the violence – in order to negotiate a set of nationalist demands from a position of strength with the national government. These goings-on caused the PSE to abandon the regional government coalition, while the PNV went ahead to negotiate an indefinite cease fire with ETA in August 1998 in return for accepting demands for a unified and sovereign Euskal Herria (Powell 2001, pp. 603–4). The corresponding Pact of Lizarra of September 1998 was supported by a majority of the Basque parliament, consisting of the PNV, EA and HB, a move reciprocated by ETA's promise of an indefinite cease fire. Thus, between 1997 and 1998, the political situation had changed drastically for ETA and HB, from one of political isolation to forming part of an alliance of Basque organizations in pursuit of their goals (Powell 2001, pp. 605–6).

Nonetheless, the political pact, which had not benefited the PNV, but the more radical parties of Basque nationalism in the 1998 election, broke apart when neither the PNV nor the EA were willing to create an elected sovereign constituent parliament in July 1999, leading to the termination of the ceasefire and HB's abandonment of the Basque parliament (Lecours 2007, pp. 104–5, Powell 2001, pp. 606–9). The 2001 election brought the moderate nationalism slight gains, losses for HB and massively rewarded the Basque PP, which had been most critical of the Pact of Lizarra, converting the conservatives into the second strongest party (Lecours 2007, pp. 105–6). During this period and especially following the 2000 national election, the Aznar administrations intensified police action, cracked down on civil-society organisations with close ties to ETA, increased cooperation with the French government and created the legal basis on which to outlaw ETA related parties from 2002 through the passage of the Political Party Law (Lecours 2007, pp. 106–7, Palomo 2006, pp. 179–181, Powell 2001, pp. 599–601). The pressure emanating from the Spanish institutions, Basque nationalists and the complete deterioration of relations between the PP and PNV pushed the latter to launch the Ibarretxe Plan (2002–3), named after then Basque President Ibarretxe, which entailed a Basque statute reform which “[a]t a minimum...would rearticulate Spain as a multinational composite state with asymmetrical government. At a maximum...[it] would create a loose confederation between Spain and the Basque country” (Lecours 2007, p. 107). The 2005 Basque election showed that the

Ibarretxe Plan had failed to rally the voters behind the PNV's embrace of the nationalist cause, benefiting the more radical nationalists rather than the traditionally more moderate PNV and its coalition partner, the EA (Lecours 2007, p. 108). Passed with only the votes of the PNV, EA and IU in the Basque parliament in December 2004, the statute reform was rejected by Congress in January 2005 with 313 votes against, 29 in favour and two abstentions (Baldi and Baldini 2009, pp. 108–9). Despite its failure and Ibarretxe's continued agitation, the Basque statute reform, which attempted to shape the national institutional framework "from below" by arrogating various competencies to the Basque parliament, as well as the PP's belligerent attitude concerning decentralization and reform, inspired other regional governments to seriously consider initiating their own statute reforms (Colino and Cotarelo 2012, p. 38).

When the socialist Luis Zapatero assumed power following the 2004 national election, ETA had already been weakened substantially by Aznar's policies. Having last murdered in 2003, ETA approached the new government to offer a negotiated end to the conflict. In May 2005, all parties in Congress except the PP voted in favour of the Spanish government's initiation of negotiations with ETA and HB in return for its renouncement of violence (Colino 2013, pp. 93–4, Lecours 2007, p. 110). The PSOE's willingness to enter into negotiations with ETA was considered a tactical error by the conservatives, who believed that they had brought ETA to the brink of collapse, and led the PP to attack the PSOE harshly (Palomo 2006, pp. 186–7). Following the government's unilateral termination of negotiations with ETA when a car bomb accidentally – the terrorists had given a warning of their impending attack and the area had been, as it turns out, only partially evacuated – killed two persons at the Madrid international airport (Sánchez-Cuenca 2009a, p. 145). Further police arrests and the effectiveness of the party ban between 2008 and 2010 led the radical Basque nationalists to accept that their objectives could best be reached through a non-violent approach (Colino 2013, p. 95). This new strategy of legalization was to be pursued through the successive morphing of HB and its "successor" parties into the organization which would eventually be denoted EH Bildu, one instantiation of which became the second strongest political force in the 2011 local Basque election (Colino 2013, p. 96).⁴⁷ Following several declarations renouncing their strategy of violence, ETA announced the definitive end of its armed activity and its acceptance of the democratic rules of the game at the so-called Peace Conference in San Sebastian in October 2011, without, of course, renouncing its aim of Basque independence (Colino 2013, p. 96).

⁴⁷ See footnote 46 on page 193.

During most of this period, Ibarretxe, who had not abandoned his aim of statute reform and greater political power for the Basque Country, had failed in his plan to, firstly, negotiate the central government's approval to hold a referendum about a renewed round of negotiations with ETA, and, secondly, to create the legal basis for holding such a referendum through the passage of a Basque law to that effect, which was declared unconstitutional (Colino and Hombrado 2012, pp. 194–5). Under the new PSE leadership of Francisco Javier López Álvarez, known as Patxi López, the PSE won the 2009 Basque election and López was voted into office with the support of the PP (as well as the UPyD), making him the first Basque non-nationalist president (Montañés and Lardies 2009, *El País* 2009). Although the PNV returned to government in 2012 with the support of the PSE, the nationalists had by then begun to abandon their pursuit of greater sovereignty, opting for the approach of extracting concessions from national minority governments from the 2016 national election onward.

The developments which had taken place in the center-periphery policy field with the advent of Zapatero's leadership were to have important implications for the relations between the PP and PSOE. On the one hand, the Basque inspired wave of new statute reforms received the favourable votes not only of the PSOE, but also of the PP in the case of Valencia, Andalusia, Aragon and the Balearic Islands (Colino and Cotarelo 2012, p. 26). On the other hand, the distance between the PP's constitutional patriotism and defence of the status quo and the PSOE's willingness to support and pursue statute and constitutional reforms was to lead to a major political clash between these two national parties as well as Catalan nationalists over the 2006 Catalan statute reform. The evolution of this conflict is one major and recurrent subject of the following chapters.

6.5 Data overview and discussion

Having discussed the basic nature, problems and evolution of the two key policy fields to be analysed in the subsequent chapters, this section will provide a first overview of both the specificity data as well as the data related to the variables that will be used to test the three hypotheses which were formulated above.

6.5.1 Specificity

A first review of the specificity data is promising. In general, variability in the dependent variable is desirable because if there is no variance, there is nothing to explain. The absolute frequency distribution shows clear variability in the number of the different types of issue positions, as can be seen in fig. 4a on the following page. Of a total of 3621 coded statements, 565 (15.6 percent) were coded as irrelevant and 87 (2.4 percent) as repetition, leaving a total of 2969 issue positions.⁴⁸ Of these, VIPs are, as may have been expected, the largest category, containing 1351 issue positions, equivalent to 45.5 percent of the total. Perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, however, the second biggest category, with 729 issue positions, are IPs, constituting 24.6 percent. The third biggest category are VIPLs, containing 438 issue positions (14.8 percent) and the fourth largest category consists of 117 IPLs (3.9 percent). Together, the IP and IPL categories include 846 issue positions, constituting 28.5 percent of the sample. If one accepts the manner in which specificity was operationalized in chapter 4, it is safe to say that electoral programs do not lack specific issue positions, as claimed by some.

The other four issue position categories total another 334 issue positions (11.2 percent). From most to least detailed, there are 188 GIPs (6.3 percent), 57 GIPLs (1.9 percent), 76 SQIPs (2.6 percent) and only thirteen SQIPLs (0.4 percent). A very positive feature of the frequency distribution is that as the specificity of issue positions increase, so does the frequency of issue positions in each category – with the exception of GIPLs⁴⁹ – until it peaks at the VIP category, after which the numbers decline as specificity increases further. Figure 4b shows the relative distribution of issue positions, excluding text coded as repetition and irrelevant.

⁴⁸ A distinction is made between the use of the word codes, which includes the coded segments of the irrelevant and repetition categories, and issue positions, from which the latter two categories are excluded.

⁴⁹ The absolute difference of 19 observations between SQIPs and GIPLs is so small as to be consider random, however.

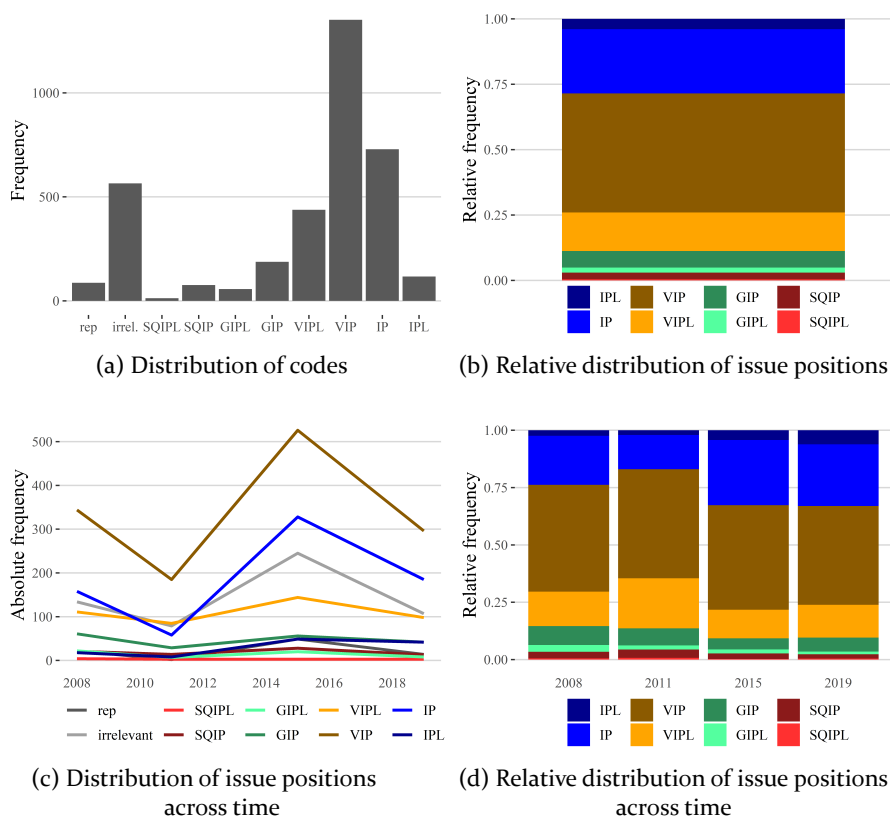


Figure 4: Specificity data overview (part I)

Not only is there clear variability in the overall number of different issue position types, but there is also variation across time, as can be seen both in absolute and relative terms in fig. 4c and fig. 4d respectively. This variability seems to, moreover, not be associated with the number of parties. For both 2008 and 2011, only the PP and PSOE were analysed and although the largest number of issue positions occurs in 2015, when two additional parties, Cs and Podemos, were analysed as well, the total number of issue positions for 2019 – when Vox joined the sample⁵⁰ – is substantially smaller than that for 2015. In other words, the number of parties does not drive the number of issue positions and there is clear variability in the number of issue positions across

⁵⁰ Although Vox presented a very short electoral program, excluding Vox would only accentuate the difference between 2015 and 2019.

time.⁵¹ Not only does the total number of issue positions vary, but there is also clear variability in the relative frequency of different issue positions across time, except in the SQIPL category, which is constituted by a very small number of observations. Thus, for example, the relative frequency of IPs was lowest in 2011, clearly higher in 2008 and much higher in 2015 and 2019. Despite this variation in the data, it should be noted that there is a non-significant small to medium sized negative correlation (-0.273) between the number of coded issue positions and average specificity.⁵² In other words, if specificity is treated as metric and the average specificity of parties is calculated, as the number of issue positions increase, party specificity tends to decrease somewhat.

Lastly, it is possible to compare the distribution of codes across political parties. Adjusting the absolute number of issue positions for each party, shown in fig. 5a on page 201, by dividing them by the number of elections in which they have participated, shown in fig. 5b, interesting trends emerge. Firstly, the most blatant fact is that Vox offers comparatively few issue positions, except for the IPL category.⁵³ Secondly, Podemos and Vox are marked by the almost complete absence of SQ (SQIPL and SQIP) type issue positions, while the “traditional” Spanish parties, the PP and PSOE, have both the greatest number and a similar amount of these types of positions, with Cs falling in between the two groups.⁵⁴ Thirdly, the PP has, except for Vox, the least number of IPs and, including Vox, the least number of IPLs, while the new parties offer a larger number of IPs and IPLs.⁵⁵ Fourthly, although the PP has at times been accused of being vague, the relatively small difference in IPs and IPLs and the relatively larger differences especially in the GIP, VIPL and VIP categories make the PSOE the vaguest of all parties.⁵⁶ Fifthly, while Cs has by far the largest number of IPs, Podemos has – with the exception of Vox – by far the

⁵¹ The data for each year will be discussed in more detail in the respective subsequent sections.

⁵² Pearson’s r using electoral program based values: $t = -0.94092$, $df = 11$, $p\text{-value} = 0.367$.

⁵³ The average number of issue positions offered by each party at each election in which it participated is: PP, 219.8; PSOE, 274.3; Podemos, 181; Cs, 292; Vox, 47. For IPLs, these figures are: PP, 4.8; PSOE, 7.5; Podemos, 14; Cs, 15.5; Vox, 9.0.

⁵⁴ The average number of SQ type issue positions are: Vox, none; Cs, 3.5; Podemos, 0.5; PSOE, 12.3; PP, eight.

⁵⁵ The average number of IPs and IPLs respectively are: PP, 44.8 and 4.8; PSOE, 53.2 and 7.5; Podemos, 59 and 14; Cs, 100.5 and 15.5; Vox, 18 and nine.

⁵⁶ The issue positions of the PP compared to those of the PSOE in the respective categories are: SQIPL, eight and 2.5; SQIP, 7.2 and 9.8; GIPL, 4.8 and seven; GIP, 14.5 and 2.2; VIPL, 37 and 48.2; VIP, 106 and 124; IP, 44.8 and 53.2; IPL, 4.8 and 7.5.

smallest number of VIPs and VIPLs⁵⁷ and, as a consequence, the PP and PSOE are much vaguer on average than the three newcomer parties.⁵⁸

A look at the relative distribution in fig. 5c on the next page confirms these impressions. The larger the categories further up and the smaller the categories further down relative to the other parties, the more specific a given party. The two traditional parties are the most similar to each other, with the PSOE being vaguer than the PP, just like Cs and Podemos are more similar to each other in specificity than to any other parties, although Podemos is clearly more specific. Ironically, Vox is the most specific relatively speaking, since, out of its small total of issue positions, the majority are specific.⁵⁹

Considering party specificity by policy fields, while the relative distribution of labour market and SMSE issue positions in fig. 5d and fig. 5f are relatively similar to the overall distribution, the center-periphery field, shown in fig. 5e, is quite different to the previous two.⁶⁰ In the labour market policy field, the PSOE is vaguer than the PP, becoming especially clear in the relatively larger share of less specific issue positions, and a lot vaguer than Podemos, which may be expected, as well as Cs, which may be surprising. In the center-periphery policy field, the PSOE is by far the vaguest party, followed at some distance by the PP and again with some distance by Podemos. Cs and Vox are the most specific. That Vox is the most specific party in both policy fields is simply an artefact of the overall low number of issue positions offered by the party, as shown in fig. 5a. Having provided a first glance at the specificity data, the following sections will briefly do the same for the major dependent variables.

⁵⁷ For the parties other than the PP and PSOE (see footnote 56 on the preceding page), the number of VIPs and VIPLs are: Podemos, 79.5 and 17; Cs, 129.5 and 28.5; Vox, nine and 18.

⁵⁸ See the subsequent footnote.

⁵⁹ Average specificity values by party are: PP, 5.73; PSOE, 5.65; Podemos, 6.25; Cs, 6.19; Vox, 6.6. As opposed to other values, specificity is shown with two decimals because the variance is smaller in the average values. It should be noted that what matters is the relative variance in the data, not the absolute, so that even variance within decimals can be considered substantively important. For example, a .5 change in specificity of a party from one election to another may seem small in absolute terms, but if parties usually only vary in specificity by .2, such a change is large in relative terms.

⁶⁰ The average specificity of each party in the SMSE, labour market and center-periphery policy fields respectively are: PP, 5.58, 5.78, 5.6; PSOE, 5.83, 5.68, 5.28; Podemos, 6.15, 6.39, 5.57; Cs, 6.27, 6.1, 6.32; Vox, 6.75, 6.8, 6.48.

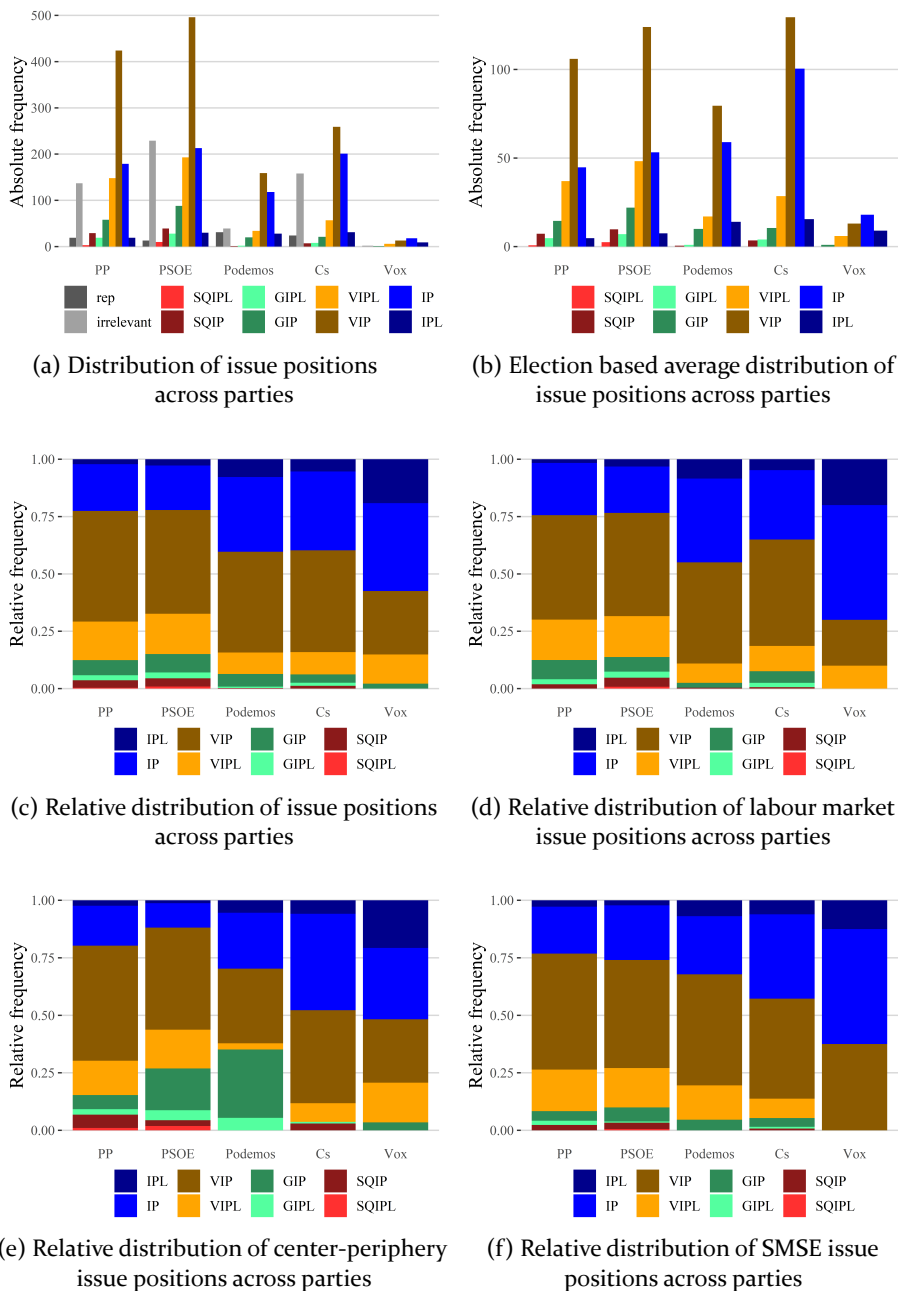


Figure 5: Specificity data overview (part II)

6.5.2 Deviation from the center and threat

The first independent variable concerns a party's deviation from the political center. That the ideological position data provided by CIS surveys is suitable in order to determine the extent to which a party deviates from the ideological center becomes evident by considering fig. 6a on page 204. As is evident, there is substantial variability in the data, which possesses face validity. Thus, for instance, the AP/PP, which had emerged from a radically right-wing political milieu, was considered far from the ideological center for a very long time, while the PSOE had a clearly left, but overall more centrist profile, the difference in the distance to the center between the two parties at times reaching up to one point. Both parties pursued a strategy of political moderation from the end of the transition in 1977, reflected by their constant migration toward the political center. This trend peaked for the PSOE in February 1994 following Guerra's resignation as vice-president in 1991 and the decline of the PSOE's left wing, at which point the party was located at a distance of 0.63 points from the center. Following González' loss of power in 1996, the party resumed a leftward course away from the political center, peaking at 1.37 points in July 1999, thereafter once again moving toward the center until shifting clearly to the left in June 2004, to a position of 1.43 points, under Zapatero's leadership. The PSOE had not been considered to be positioned at such a large distance to the center since April 1988. For the AP/PP, the approximation to the center became especially successful at least from 1986, the year of Manuel Fraga's resignation, when the party was still located at 3.1 points, followed by the party's re-foundation in 1989 as PP and the party's electoral victory in 1996, which permitted the Spanish population to accustom itself to being ruled by the AP successor only some 20 years after the end of the Franco regime. Having managed a significant shift toward the center at the end of 1999, when the party moved from a position of 2.43 to 2.05 points, the party slowly migrated away from the center once again following Aznar's absolute majority victory, reaching 2.16 points at the time of the 2004 national election. As such, the ideological position changes of parties in the CIS data seem to reflect qualitative political events and developments and are thus suitable to investigate the relationship between parties' deviations from the political center and their specificity.

This same CIS data is also used to calculate the ideological threat component – the absolute ideological distance between parties – of the second independent variable, namely parties' threat levels. Figure 6b on page 204 shows the ideological distance between the PSOE and PP (in black) as well as between each of these two parties and its main national competitors. As was to be

expected based on fig. 6a on the following page, the ideological competition between particular party pairs also varies substantially, reflecting their shifts in the ideological spectrum. Given that the variability in the expected vote of parties based on electoral survey data, the electoral threat component, can be assumed without further discussion, fig. 6c on the next page provides an overview of the threat levels experienced by each major political party during the period under investigation. As can be seen and will be discussed in further detail in the respective chapters below, the amount of threat experienced by each party varies substantially across time and possesses face validity. Thus, for example, the PSOE experienced a massive increase in threat due to its devastating expected electoral decline in 2011 and the rivalry with Podemos and Cs in 2015, while the PP experienced relatively lower levels of threat, given that it was protected on its right ideological flank by a lack of rival parties. This situation changed for the PP in 2019 through Vox's electoral breakthrough, which weakened the PP's electoral expectations and thus caused the conservatives' electoral threat to increase both vis-à-vis Vox and the PSOE. At the same time, the PSOE's threat level fell steeply not only due to a weakened PP, but also because its main political rival, Podemos, was falling in the polls. These changes in threat level were further reinforced by Cs, which had at this point in time veered off toward the political right.

6.5.3 **Certainty of victory**

The third independent variable is certainty of victory. Only one party was certain of victory at every one of the four elections to be analysed below, both the PP and PSOE each being certain of victory twice. As mentioned above, the certainty of a party at a given election is analysed in terms of differences in expected votes, the evolution of survey trends, additional answers to electoral survey questions as well as the parties' electoral performances at the non-national levels between two national elections. Concerning the latter, although the relative difference in the percentage of the vote for each party will be calculated for each electoral contest and its respective participating territorial units, the interpretation of relative increases and decreases from one election to the next also requires some background knowledge on the political significance of victories and defeats. As such, this section will provide an overview of the electoral performance of the AP/PP and PSOE from 1979 to 2004, which is the year from which the next chapter commences.

At the European election level, the electoral results for the PSOE and AP/PP reflected the national trend toward the end of the González era (see section 6.3 on page 168 above). The PSOE declined from 39.4 percent of the vote in 1987

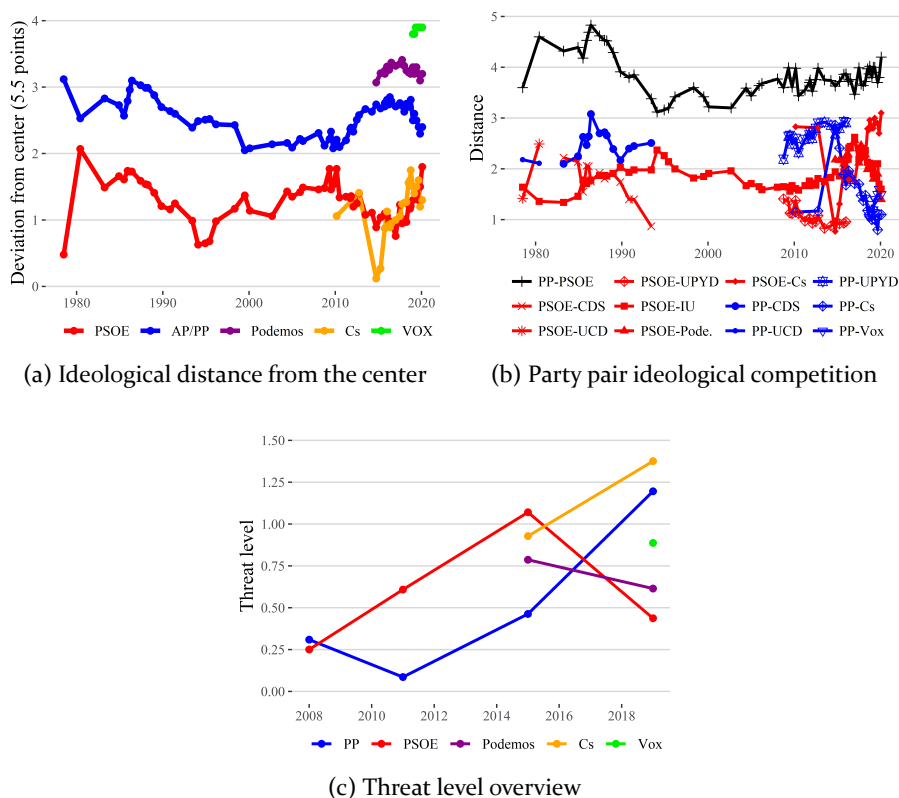


Figure 6: Changes in independent variables, overview

to 31.1 percent in 1994, while the PP increased its share of the vote from 24.9 to 40.6 percent during that same period. In the 1999 election, the PP held its ground (declining by 0.2 percent of the vote), while the PSOE began to recover at the cost of the IU, gaining 4.8 percent of the vote and reaching 35.9 percent of the vote.

At the regional level, the large majority of ACs hold elections on the same day every four years. The historic regions of Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia as well as Andalusia hold elections separately. In order to distinguish between these two types of elections, the group election will be referred to as AC elections subsequently. The first AC elections were held in 1983, at a point in time when the UCD had already disintegrated and the two largest parties were the PSOE and the AP. Although the AP/PP would have to wait until 1996 to be victorious at a national election, its regional political power began expanding at a much earlier point in time, however. Already by 1983,

the PP had been able to form government in Galicia, the Balearic Islands and Cantabria, in the latter with an absolute majority of seats. Except for the Basque Country and Catalonia, the PSOE formed governments in all other twelve ACs, governing by absolute majority in all of these except Navarre, Aragon and Castile and León.⁶¹

Until the beginning of Zapatero's first term, a number of ACs had become AP/PP strongholds, while others remained firmly in the hands of the socialists.⁶² Conservative strongholds included Galicia, Castile and León, won over by Aznar in 1987 and governed by a PP absolute majority since 1991, as well as, from 1995, a year before González' national election defeat, Madrid, La Rioja, Murcia and Valencia. Except for one coalition government in Valencia, the latter four ACs had since been governed by PP absolute majority governments. Moreover, the Canary Islands and Navarre were somewhat special cases of PP rule, given its junior partner coalition status vis-à-vis the conservative *Coalición Canaria* (CC) in the Canary Islands (1996-2005) and in Navarre, where the PP had allied itself with the *Unión del Pueblo Navarro* (UPN) since 1991, the latter governing both alone and in coalition with other parties since 1996. Overall, at the beginning of Zapatero's first term, the PP was thus governing in nine out of 17 ACs.

The PSOE, on the other hand, had managed to hold on to power in Castilla-La Mancha (all absolute majorities), Extremadura (absolute majorities, with one exception), Andalusia (absolute majorities and in minority or as a majority coalition between 1994 and 2004) and Asturias (mostly minority governments). In addition to its four electoral strongholds, at the time of Zapatero's national victory the PSOE was, moreover, in government in coalition with the regional *Partido Regionalista de Cantabria* (PRC) – which had previously enabled PP rule – in Cantabria, with the *Partido Aragonés Regionalista* (PAR) in Aragon⁶³ and, in the form of the *Partido de los Socialistas de Cataluña* (PSC), in coalition

⁶¹ Please note that all information concerning AC party governments and their minority or majority statuses in this case study has been taken from *Observatorio de los Gobiernos de Coalición en España* (2018), unless otherwise indicated. As mentioned previously, for the sources consulted for electoral data, please see appendix D on page 449.

⁶² Electoral strongholds are here defined as a period of party rule spanning across at least three consecutive legislatures and which may maximally be interrupted by a single period of party rule by another party for no longer than one legislature. For example, a series of two victories by party A and one defeat does not convert an AC into a stronghold. If this series is continued by another victory, the given AC becomes a party A stronghold. If this victory is followed by another defeat, stronghold status is once again lost.

⁶³ Aragon is perhaps the politically most contested Spanish AC, which has always been governed either by a minority government or a coalition. Until 2004, the PSOE (1983-87, 1993-95) and

with the left independentist Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC) and the left and green Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds (ICV), in Catalonia, totalling 7 ACs. Given the AP/PP's history, the PSOE had much deeper roots both in Catalan and Basque societies and was considered a more likely candidate for coalition formation by regionalist and nationalist parties in general. Thus, until 2004 the AP/PP had never formed part of any government coalition in Catalonia nor the Basque Country.⁶⁴ As mentioned previously, the nationalist confrontation with the central state propagated by the PNV had caused the PSE to go into opposition, however, so that the Basque Country was governed by a PNV-EA-IU coalition as of 2004. As pointed out by Rodon and Hierro (2016, p. 350), despite the absence of coalition governments at the national level (until 2019), "only 39.4 per cent of all regional governments between 1981 and 2015 were single-party majority governments, compared with 34.1 per cent of coalition governments and 26.5 per cent of minority governments".

In the municipal elections, held concurrently with AC elections, from 1983 the AP/PP's share of the vote grew continuously from 25.6 percent, while that of the PSOE declined from 43 percent. In 1995, the PP had beaten the PSOE for the first time by winning 35.8 percent of the vote, 4.5 percent more than the PSOE. In the two subsequent municipal elections, the PSOE began to recover once again, narrowly surpassing the PP by 0.6 percent in 2003 with 35.5 percent of the vote. Overall, the long period of PSOE rule under González had thus been accompanied by the expansion of AP/PP political power, resulting in a highly competitive relationship between the two major parties on all electoral levels.

Having provided a brief description of the process of the Spanish transition to democracy, the subsequent development of Spanish party politics until 2004, an overview of the two policy fields at the center of the subsequent electoral program analysis and a first descriptive analysis of the data, the next four chapters will proceed to analyse the political developments, policy fields as well as the specificity data and evaluate the respective hypotheses for each of the analysed elections.

nationalist PAR (1987-89) had governed both alone as well as the PAR in coalition with both the PP (1990-93, 1995-99) and the PSOE (1999-2003, 2003-2007).

⁶⁴ As was mentioned previously, the PSOE had been included in various Basque coalition governments from 1986 to 1998, except for the period from 1990 to 1991.

7 **The first Zapatero administration and the 2008 election**

Following its first two consecutive national election defeats at the hands of the PP, in the March 2004 election the PSOE, under the leadership of Zapatero, emerged victorious once again, winning 43.3 percent of the vote and 164 deputies, while the PP had come in second with 38.3 percent of the vote and 148 deputies. The IU, as third largest party, despite having received 1.3 million votes, equivalent to five percent of the total, gained only five deputies. As a consequence of these results, Zapatero pursued a strategy of variable alliances with small nationalist parties in order to be able to guide his agenda through Congress.¹

The first Zapatero administration was characterized by an acute level of political confrontation between the PP and the PSOE, which had its origin in the particular circumstances of the PSOE's 2004 electoral victory and was driven by the conservatives' incessant attacks on the PSOE's leadership and policies. Concerning the former, as was already mentioned above, the PP, instead of recognizing that Al-Qaeda and not ETA had been responsible for the terrorist attack just prior to the election, attempted to undermine the PSOE by claiming that their victory was based on false claims and was thus ultimately illegitimate. Almost immediately after his election victory, Zapatero ordered the withdrawal of troops from Iraq (Chari 2008, p. 1069).

Regarding the PSOE's ideological position, the party had shifted to the left under Zapatero's leadership, one probable reason for this development being especially his pursuit of progressive policies. These policies aimed to advance civil liberties and equality and to terminate the state's relative silence and political reticence to position itself unequivocally against the Franco regime through the so-called Historic Memory Law. Moreover, Zapatero had, as previously mentioned, signalled openness to a new wave of statute reforms and would subsequently be willing to negotiate a ceasefire with ETA. Especially the PSOE's positions on the last three issues were viewed by the PP as breaking a consensus between the two major parties on matters of state and were to play a key role in the political debates and confrontations of the coming decade. The subsequent 2008 national election, the first one to be analysed in terms of specificity, marked the zenith of the PP's and the PSOE's dominance of the Spanish party system and was also arguably the last election which could,

¹ For a detailed account of Zapatero's party coalitions, see Field (2013).

in reference to the period from 1982, be characterized as Spanish politics as usual.

7.1 Civil rights, equality and historic memory

Like other European social democratic prime ministers, Zapatero had, in his own particular fashion, attempted to modernize Spanish socialism, basing his approach on the political philosopher Philip Pettit's theory of civic republicanism (Colino and Cotarelo 2012, p. 28, Kennedy 2013, p. 167). The latter understood freedom as the absence of domination, emphasizing liberty and equality as guarantees of dignity in democracy (Colino and Cotarelo 2012, p. 28). Consequently, the promotion of "freedom, equality and solidarity was identified as being a key aim of contemporary social democracy, constituting nothing less than a historic advance towards greater tolerance, social justice and individual freedoms" (Kennedy 2013, p. 170). Therefore, the Zapatero administration put a number of issues, which had not played an important role for the party before, on the PSOE's political agenda (K. Calvo 2009, pp. 205–6), leading to the passage of legislation which included: a substantial number of laws concerning gender equality² and violence; the liberalisation of marriage and divorce legislation; the legal right to same sex marriage – of which a large majority of the population was in favour (K. Calvo 2009, p. 215) – and gay adoption rights; an education reform, which made religion an optional school subject and introduced the compulsory civic education class to promote tolerance, respect for diversity and equality as well as "to stop the growing disinterest in politics and the scepticism toward the functioning of democratic institutions" (K. Calvo 2009, pp. 217–8); the "regularization" of the status of 700 thousand immigrants, many of whom had previously been working in the black economy; the fight against corruption, with an impressive array of measures; lastly, an increase in the independence and impartiality of the public media and a reform of party financing (K. Calvo 2009, Colino and Cotarelo 2012, p. 30, Mendieta and F. J. Sánchez 2012, Kennedy 2013, pp. 168–9). Moreover, in addition to various welfare state measures (Bernardi and Sarasa 2009),³ another key area of legislative activity concerned Spain's historic memory. While the legacy of the Franco regime had been redressed by reparations to some of the collectives which had fallen victim to it as well

² His cabinet was also the first to have the same amount of women and men (Field and Botti 2013, p. 1).

³ Of these, the so-called dependency law was the most important, which aimed to provide comprehensive state assistance to the elderly and those suffering from severe disabilities, with more than one million people estimated to be eligible (Kennedy 2013, p. 169).

as the return of confiscated property to labour unions and political parties, among others, previous legislation had shied away from decrying its human rights abuses as well as its anti-democratic and illegitimate nature, avoiding terminology such as “dictatorship”, “perpetrators”, “victims”, “injustice” and the like. Zapatero’s abundant legislation in this area, the most important being the Law of Reparations, known as Historic Memory Law, eclipsed Aznar’s largely symbolic gestures, broke with the painstaking silence and provided, moreover, financial support for the excavation of mass graves, the removal of Franquist symbols from the public sphere and the remembrance of the victims of regime violence (Kennedy 2013, pp. 170–1, Paloma 2009, pp. 153–4, 158, 160–2).

7.2 Center-periphery conflict: Catalan politics and the emergence of Ciudadanos

As is the case for the Basque Country, Catalonia possesses its own party system, including a distinct set of nationalist parties. The interaction of regional and national political events and developments were to lead to the slow but inexorable development of the Catalan crisis, which was to dominate Spanish national politics increasingly from 2011 and which ultimately escalated during the unfolding of the 2017 independence “referendum”. Although the roots of this conflict are complex and arguably extend far back in time, the focus of this and subsequent sections dealing with the center-periphery conflict view politics primarily as a struggle for control over institutions and thus, in democracy, especially over votes. This approach is somewhat blind to normative questions such as whether Catalan secession is “justified”, is generally not interested in distinguishing between strategy and personal convictions and does not attempt to resolve any of the key questions tangled up in the debate over Spanish unity and Catalan demands for self-determination. Instead, its focus lies especially on party competition and the behaviour and actions of political actors in a given institutional setting, the Spanish Constitution of 1978.

Historically, during the phase of Catalan pre-autonomy, Suárez had orchestrated a shift of political power away from the left-wing Catalan Assembly, dominated by the opposition, to the Parliamentary Assembly, which consisted of those deputies and senators elected in Catalonia in the 1977 national election. With the latter institution, Suárez negotiated the restoration of the Generalitat, Catalonia’s historical system of institutions, including its government, the Govern, and its parliament, the Parlament, as well as the return

of Catalonia's former president in exile, Josep Tarradellas, who was willing to embrace the political status quo (Carmona 2005, pp. 100–1, de Carreras 2017, pp. 132–140, Powell 2001, pp. 184, 210–2). Given that the Constitution represented very clear gains to Catalan nationalism, all Catalan deputies except the (only) ERC deputy, voted in favour of the magna carta, which was subsequently approved by referendum in Catalonia with a participation of 59 percent and with 88 percent voting in favour. Immediately after the 1979 election, negotiations over the Catalan statute commenced (de Carreras 2017, pp. 135–7, Powell 2001, pp. 247, 250), which was passed that same year. The 1980 Catalan regional election did not lead to the expected left, but to a conservative nationalist victory of the aforementioned CiU, a catch-all party federation consisting of the nationalist CDC, founded in 1974, and the Unió Democràtica de Catalunya (UDC), a nationalist Christian democrat party with a very heterogeneous voter base (Barberà, Barrio, and J. Rodríguez 2009, p. 10, Powell 2001, p. 488). From 1984 to 2003, the Catalan party system was to be dominated by the CiU, which received between 38 and 47 percent of the vote⁴ and three absolute majorities and was continuously in government under the leadership of the Generalitat's President Jordi Pujol. This long period in power permitted the CiU to become identified with Catalonia's regional institutions and to project itself as sole defender of Catalan interests against major national parties' attempts to equalize and seal off the process of continuous decentralization. Pujol had pursued the aim to *fer país*, or country making, a process which aimed to introduce a Catalan consciousness into regional politics once the Franco regime was defeated, an agenda which turned into the *procés de contrucció nacional*, which involved the propagation of Catalan nationalism by emphasizing Catalan cultural distinctiveness, the promotion of the use of the Catalan language in the public sphere and in education, the establishment of a Catalan media and the development of a Catalan historical narrative (de Carreras 2017, pp. 145–166). The Partido de los Socialistas de Catalunya (PSC), a Catalan socialist party tied closely to the PSOE (Barberà, Barrio, and J. Rodríguez 2009, p. 10), was the largest opposition party to the conservatives. While the CiU's policy aims were to strengthen Catalan self-government, create "zones of sovereignty" and interpret the Spanish Constitution in a way favourable to Catalan interests in this sense, the PSC was federalist and desired to see the plurinational nature of the Spanish nation recognized (Bel 2013, pp. 113–4). The AP/PP's regional branch, only founded in 1984, came in third and led the opposition against Catalan nationalism in general, while the far left-wing, historic and still largely federalist Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC) came in fourth for much of this period.

⁴ In 1980, the CiU received only 28 percent of the vote.

Developments from the late 1980s to the early 2000s were to lead to important shifts in political power, however, with serious consequences for the coming decades. During this period, the CiU was increasingly losing electoral support, declining from 46.7 to 41.3 percent of the vote in 1995, losing its absolute majority and declining to 38 percent of the vote in 1999. Among the various reasons for this decline was the CiU's willingness to support the PSOE minority government in 1993 in return for various concessions, an event which was followed by a string of socialist political and corruption scandals (see section 6.3 above). This decision was followed by the CiU's vote for a PP led government in 1996, which the national conservatives had very much desired in order to demonstrate their political moderation and ability to govern within the constraints of the State of Autonomous Communities (Powell 2001, pp. 569, 574–5). In return for the CiU's support, the PP – which had increased its Catalan share of the vote from its lowest point in 1988 at 5.3 percent to 13.2 percent in 1995 – removed its highly successful Catalan regional president, Alejo Vidal-Quadras, who had attacked the CiU's nationalist discourse head on (Ellakuría 2015, p. 19) and supported the CiU minority government in Catalonia. In 2000, despite the PP's absolute majority, the CiU once again voted in favour of the second Aznar government, not least due to its reliance on the conservatives in the Catalan parliament, which was to exhibit a much greater hostility to nationalist aspirations in its second term (El País 2000a, El País 2000c, El País 2000b).

During this same period, at the end of the 1980s the federalist ERC, now led by Àngel Colom, shifted, due to an influx of nationalist from the *Crida a la Solidaritat en Defensa de la Llengua i la Cultura Catalanes*,⁵ from a pro-federalist to a far left and openly pro-independence stance, drawing on the support especially of the young and highly educated (Martínez 2016, pp. 68–9, Powell 2001, p. 488). These developments, in addition to the eruption of Catalan corruption scandals affecting the CiU (El País 2003, Guil 2012), made the ERC one of the main beneficiaries of the CiU's decline, a situation which pushed Pujol to reaffirm Catalan nationalism in 1989, when the CiU supported an ERC proposal which exhorted the right to self-determination and questioned the priority of national over regional law (Powell 2001, p. 489). As a consequence, while the CiU declined electorally, the ERC grew from 4.4 percent of the vote in 1984 to 8.1 percent in 1992. In 1999, the PSC under the leadership of Pasqual Maragall won more votes, but less seats than the CiU,

⁵ The *Crida* had been organized in resistance to the LOAPA and, for first time in the still young Spanish democracy, fundamentally questioned the transition and its achievements, aiming for Catalan self-determination (Martínez 2016, pp. 68–9).

permitting the CiU to return to government with the PP's support (Martínez 2016, p. 83).

The 2003 election culminated the political shifts of the 1990s. The CiU, led in the campaign by its new candidate Artur Mas, the CDC's general secretary since 2000 (Valls 2000), lost another 6.8 percent of the vote, falling to 31.2 percent, while the ERC gained 7.8 percent of the vote, increasing to 16.6 percent. Although the PSC lost 6.8 percent of the vote, falling to 31.4 percent, the PSC, ERC and the ICV, the Eurocommunist, nationalist and green successor to the communist Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya (de Carreras 2017, pp. 141–2), formed the so-called tripartite government under Maragall, sending the CiU into opposition for the first time ever. Although the PSC led coalition, sealed by the so-called Tinell Pact, advanced a series of left-wing policies, its key proposal was the reform of the 1979 Catalan Statute in order to break the CiU's perceived monopoly on Catalan nationalism (Martínez 2016, pp. 84–5, 87–8). The idea for statute reform stemmed from a lunch in October 1998, at which Maragall and then future president of the ERC Josep-Lluís Carod-Rovira agreed to a partial reform of the Catalan statute to address issues like immigration or relations with the EU (Company 2006). Aznar's recentralizing tendencies, Zapatero's openness to statute reform, signalled by his publicly made promise to support the Catalan reform initiative (Martínez 2016, pp. 87–9), the power struggle among Catalan nationalist parties as well as the Basque Ibarretxe Plan provided new impulses to take the statute reform further. In October 2002, the Catalan Parliament approved initiating the statute reform in the next legislature (I. A. Sanz 2009, p. 84). That same month, Mas broke with the CiU's traditional position that the 1979 statute should remain as is and announced that he favoured a complete revision of the statute (de Carreras 2017, p. 171, Company 2006, I. A. Sanz 2009, p. 84).

From June 2004, the Catalan parties began to formally deal with the reform in the Catalan parliament, where the tripartite government would also require the favourable votes of the CiU to reach the necessary two-third majority. This situation permitted the CiU to include some of its own demands in the text and triggered a nationalist outbidding between the latter and the ERC. Despite its influence, however, the CiU was reticent to vote for the tripartite's pet project, leading to direct negotiations between Zapatero and Mas in September 2005, the latter thereby effectively side-lining Maragall and defeating the ultimate purpose of the initiative, namely to break the hold of the CiU on Catalan nationalism.⁶ Given the willingness of the CiU to make concessions especially

⁶ Zapatero was willing to negotiate directly with Mas because the PSOE and PSC had become increasingly estranged in the latter's bid to hold its coalition with the ERC together and

regarding the issue of regional finance, at the end of that same month all Catalan parties except the PP – which had initially been willing to join in on the project – voted in favour of the new statute. During the amendment process, however, both the CiU and ERC rejected various PSC amendments which were intended to make the statute more acceptable to Congress and the central government. Triggering a massive rejection from Spanish civil society and various state institutions, the PP set out to collect 400 thousand signatures against the statute. From the end of 2005, with the statute pending discussion and approval in the Congress and the Senate, the PSOE initiated negotiations with the Catalan parties. Under rising political pressure, Zapatero once again decided to directly negotiate some of the major remaining critical issues⁷ directly with Mas. The agreed upon changes were applied in Congress and approved by both chambers by May (Company 2006). Although the ERC abstained in the Senate, thus permitting the passage of the statute, the party had decided to break with the Tripartite government and the PSOE, given the role played by the CiU and the downgrading of nationalist vindications during the negotiations (Baldi and Baldini 2009, pp. 110–111, Company 2006).⁸ With all parties except the PP and ERC advocating a favourable vote in the subsequent referendum to approve the statute (Martínez 2016, p. 94), only 50 percent of the Catalan census participated, with 73.9 percent voting in favour, 20.8 against and 5.3 percent casting blank votes (El Mundo 2006).

The major innovations of the Catalan statute reform were the description of Catalonia as a nation in its preamble; the shielding of particular competencies from central state intervention; the definition of Catalan not as co-official with Spanish, but as official like Spanish; the duty to know and the possibility to direct oneself at state institutions, including the supreme and Constitutional Court, in Catalan; the definition of a new regional finance system modelled on the German one (Martínez 2016, pp. 88–9). The shielding

to participate in the nationalist outbidding. Moreover, since the PNV was not governing with the PSE in the Basque Country and the Ibarretxe Plan had just recently been rejected, Zapatero was left with no other option than to seek the political cooperation of the CiU in parliament. Mas in turn wanted to demonstrate his political relevance after the CiU had been banished to the opposition (Baldi and Baldini 2009, pp. 110–111, de Carreras 2017, pp. 173–176).

⁷ These included “the definition of Catalonia as a nation, the finance formula, the management of some large transport and communication infrastructures, the requirement that judges and magistrates in Catalonia need to have knowledge of the Catalan language, among others” (Company 2006).

⁸ The terms sovereignty, independence and self-determination of nations had been eliminated in negotiations with the central government (Baldi and Baldini 2009, p. 110).

of regional competencies was achieved by formulating exclusive, concurrent and executive competencies, a distinction not foreseen in the 1978 Constitution, and by declaring a Catalan legislative monopoly over agriculture, water as well as associations and banks registered in Catalonia, among others. It also permitted the AC to arrogate local level competencies to the regional level (Baldi and Baldini 2009, p. 112). Some of these innovations were soon emulated by other ACs, which were also desiring to reform their statutes, especially regarding “the definition of Catalonia as a nation, the vindication of the uniqueness of the AC and the defence of its ‘distinguishing features’ [‘hechos diferenciales’] (prioritizing especially the language)” (Baldi and Baldini 2009, p. 110). While the national PP had decided to bring the Catalan statute before the Constitutional Court and attacked the PSOE incessantly for supposedly encouraging Spain’s disintegration, regional PP governments initiated statute reforms in the Balearic Islands (2007), Castile and León (2007) and Valencia (2006) and regional PP party organizations voted in favour of reformed statutes in Andalusia (2007), Aragon (2007), Navarre (2010), and Extremadura (2011), despite some strong similarities to the Catalan statute (Baldi and Baldini 2009, p. 115, Colino 2013, p. 84). Ironically, the PP’s decision to call upon the Constitutional Court to preserve Spanish unity and to benefit politically from the Catalan statute reform would have precisely the opposite effect, namely to massively increase the support for Catalan independence and to contribute to the rise of two rival parties which saw themselves as direct challengers to the conservatives. A first, albeit barely recognizable sign of this development was the November 2006 Catalan election, which witnessed the breakthrough of a new Catalan party, Ciutadans, meaning citizens and which was subsequently translated from Catalan to the Spanish Ciudadanos (Cs) to compete elsewhere.⁹

The frustration experienced in some sectors of Catalan society regarding the dominance of Catalan nationalism, combined with the feeling of having been abandoned by the two major national parties – the PP having replaced Vidal-Quadras and the PSC having pushed the project of statute reform – motivated a group of intellectuals, convoked by Arcadi Espada Enériz, to begin meeting informally from May 2004 in order to search for ways to address this situation (Ellakuría 2015, pp. 18–23). The outcome of these meetings was a publicly presented document, named Taxidermista Manifest after the restaurant in which these meetings had taken place, in June 2005, which

⁹ Although the PSC and ERC had lost 4.1 and 2.3 percent of the vote respectively in 2006, the ICV had gained 2.4 percent of the vote, thus permitting the renewal of the tripartite government under the new PSC leader José Montilla Aguilera. The CiU had gained 0.9 percent of the vote.

voiced fundamental opposition to Catalan nationalism (Ellakuría 2015, pp. 17–8). This was followed, in March 2006, by a second manifest, which opened with the following lines:

“Catalonia has become inhospitable to those who are not nationalist. The project of nation building, in which all political parties except the PP participate, leave aside, without political representation, an important part of the population. [...] This situation must end. The nationalist monopoly of the public space, the eagernesses to intervene in all spheres of the citizens’ life, the obligation to embrace the Catalanist credo to be able to participate in politics without being assaulted...must be ended. [...] The Generalitat and the other autonomous institutions should be at the service of all citizen, not just one part of it, and certainly not at the service of a fanatical minority” (Ciudadanos 2006).

A few months later, in July 2006, this group proceeded to found *Ciutadans*, a party which considered itself liberal in the sense of complementing its fervent opposition to Catalan nationalism with the promotion of individualism and equality among citizens of the Spanish state. Considering itself beyond the classical LR divide, in addition to individualism, liberalism and equality, Cs aimed to promote democratic regeneration, greater transparency, the fight against corruption and proposed economic stimulus measures, tax cuts and welfare state oriented measures (Teruel and Barrio 2016, pp. 9–10). Programatically, the party could thus be described as libertarian in terms of its societal values¹⁰ as well as both economically liberal and clearly pro-welfare state, accompanied by a desire for a slimmer, more transparent, efficient and modern state, despite all the potential – perhaps more ostensible than real – incompatibilities this may entail. Only some three months after its foundation, in November, *Ciutadans* entered the Catalan parliament with three deputies, which included the party’s President Albert Rivera. Often accused of being fascists in the Catalan parliament, Cs opposed linguistic immersion, critiqued the marginalization of the use of Spanish in schools and the Catalan administration, decried the supposed lack of objectivity of regional state run media like *TV3* and *Catalunya Radio*, demanded social politics concerning education, health and housing, questioned the need for a

¹⁰ This statement may be taken issue with in the sense that Cs’ anti-nationalism could also be interpreted as a rejection of Catalan cultural distinctiveness. Given the complexity of this issue, as is perhaps best illustrated by the bullfighting issue discussed in section 8.4 on page 248, Cs’ argument that it is anti-nationalistic but liberal and thus not hostile toward Catalan culture in general is taken at face value.

new Catalan statute and defended the ideas of the Spanish Constitution and the unity of the Spanish nation (Ellakuría 2015, pp. 30–1, 40).

Despite its initial success, the early phase of the party's development was characterized by an internal ideological divide between its liberal and socialist wing,¹¹ conflict over electoral strategy and accusations of a lack of internal democracy, triggering direct and indirect challenges to Rivera's leadership,¹² which were aggravated by a series of electoral defeats. These included the May 2007 municipal election, in which Cs won only 13 city councillors, most of them in Barcelona (Ellakuría 2015, p. 56), Cs failed participation in the national and Andalusian elections in 2008 and, most severe of all, Cs participation in the 2009 European election. Concerning the latter, following the UPyD's rejection of Cs renewed request for an electoral coalition,¹³ Rivera entered into an alliance with the anti-European Libertas party, unbeknownst to other party elites and partisans. Although Rivera managed to receive the approval of the party's executive after the fact, this alliance, considered everything from ideologically incompatible to incomprehensible, caused a wave of membership resignations, public critique and the abandonment of two of Cs deputies in the Catalan parliament, the third and only remaining representative of Cs being Rivera himself (Sastre 2009, Ellakuría 2015, pp. 103–12). The substantial upheaval caused by this decision was rewarded with 0.15 percent of the votes cast in the European election. In response, Rivera posed a question of confidence to Cs general council, receiving 30 votes in favour and 16 against (Ellakuría 2015, p. 112). As was the case with the 2007 election results and the subsequent party congress (Ellakuría 2015, pp. 76–82), the Libertas experiment paradoxically consolidated Rivera's position by leading to the internal opposition's abandonment of the party (Ellakuría 2015, p. 113).

7.3 Economic policy and the labour market

One of the few policy fields which was exempt from the political polemic during most of Zapatero's first term was – at least initially – the PSOE's economic policy. As described above, despite being in the seemingly desirable position of inheriting a growing economy, low unemployment and a balanced

¹¹ The party was split between a left and a liberal wing, the former being represented by De Carreras and the latter by Arcadi Espada (Ellakuría 2015, pp. 10–11, 23–24). The party apparatus included many former PSC members, while the party leadership was dominated especially by liberal intellectuals (Müller 2015, p. 13).

¹² See Ellakuría (2015) for a detailed account of these early years.

¹³ About the failure to form an alliance with the UPyD, see Ellakuría (2015, pp. 92–6).

budget (Mulas-Granados 2009, p. 180), the economic model on which this positive evolution was based was simply unsustainable. The PSOE was well aware of the underlying problems, which it had criticized in the 2004 election run-up and which included the rapidly growing real estate bubble, private household debt increases, excess demand, low productivity, relatively high inflation and a growing exterior and current account deficit (Mulas-Granados 2009, p. 183, Royo 2009, p. 437). To solve these problems, the PSOE had proposed redirecting investment towards high growth and innovative sectors, the digital and green industry, and too deflate the housing bubble (Colino and Cotarelo 2012, pp. 31–3). Nonetheless, its economic policy proposals had been characterized by vagueness and a lack of ambition (Mulas-Granados 2009, p. 202, Tussel 2004, pp. 226–7) and Zapatero's economic policy was marked largely by continuity and only a lacklustre effort to change course (Andreu 2014, pp. 122–3, I. Molina 2012, p. 58, Royo 2009, pp. 438–9). Fiscal incentives to become house owners were not rescinded, nor was the control on borrowing by Spanish banks tightened (I. Molina 2012, p. 58). Perhaps the most important policy change which actually took place was a substantial increase in welfare state spending, including on education, as well as on infrastructure and research and development (Mulas-Granados 2009, pp. 192–3). Furthermore, the socialist administration, like its predecessor, introduced several in their sum rather massive tax cuts (I. Molina 2012, p. 60, Royo 2009, p. 439). Additionally, the so-called baby cheque, a once off payment of 2.500 Euro for the birth or adoption of a child, was implemented shortly before the 2008 election (I. Molina 2012, p. 60), when the first signs of economic trouble had already begun to emerge. Spending increases, unhampered borrowing, tax cuts and the burgeoning housing bubble meant that the budget surplus of 2.2 percent of GDP in 2007 did not slow inflation, which increased further due to, among some of the aforementioned factors, energy and cereal price increases (Mulas-Granados 2009, pp. 190, 198). Nor could the reorientation of state investment restore Spanish competitiveness in the short term. Without the option of a currency devaluation, the only other possibilities, a contention or reduction of salary increases or budget cuts to reduce internal demand, were hardly attractive to a social democratic party benefiting from an economic bonanza.

Nonetheless, as was the case for the previous governments, the Zapatero administration also undertook a labour market reform in 2006, following an agreement between the social partners, with the major aim of reducing the labour market's duality. The reform, which has had only a short-term impact and was ultimately unable to resolve the duality problem (Bentolila, Dolado, and Jimeno 2008, pp. 52–3, Conde-Ruiz, Florentino Felgueroso, and

García-Pérez 2010, pp. 9–29, S. Gómez, Contreras, and M. D. Gracia 2008, pp. 37–9), included making the Employment Promotion Contract – with lower dismissal costs than the traditional permanent contracts – available for the hire of 30 to 45 year old, provided these have previously had a temporary contract; modifying tax bonuses to provide incentives for using permanent contracts for the hire of lower paid workers; an extraordinary temporary-to-permanent-contract conversion plan, offering tax rebates and an extension of their duration; lastly, new restrictions on the consecutive use of temporary contracts and their duration (Conde-Ruiz, Florentino Felgueroso, and García-Pérez 2010, pp. 6–9, Bentolila, Dolado, and Jimeno 2008, p. 52). Given that it was based on the agreement between labour and employer representatives and was basically continuist in nature, this labour market reform was fairly uncontroversial.

7.4 *Crispación under Rajoy*

While the generally more consensual nature of economic and fiscal policy and the seemingly positive evolution of the economy provided relatively little material from which to generate political tensions between the two major parties, the civil rights and historic memory policies of the Zapatero administration were anathema to more conservative and right-wing sectors of society and their organisational and institutional representatives. Especially from the far right, these policies were viewed as a left-wing assault on the rather favourable 1978 regime and an attempt to reshape society in the socialists' progressive image. The PP gladly assumed the role of the defender of the political status quo, portraying Zapatero's policies as a threat to Spanish unity, an insult to ETA victims and an assault on the "freedoms" of its citizens, which apparently included being able to make up one's own mind about the nature of the Franco regime without being "conditioned" by the state, or to choose whether one's children ought to be exposed to "conservative" rather than "progressive" values in education.

Having publicly committed himself to only being president for maximally two terms prior to the 1996 election, Aznar had personally selected Mariano Rajoy – who had run against Zapatero in the 2004 election – as his successor as party president, a decision ratified by one abstention and all else in favour at the PP's 15. party congress that same year (Astudillo 2009, pp. 80–1, Palomo 2006, pp. 340–7, 385). Rajoy had, among other important offices, been minister of public administration, education, culture and the interior and had successfully dealt with numerous issues of a highly sensitive political nature (Botti 2013, p. 43, Tussel 2004, p. 212). Although he was considered a generally more

moderate politician than Aznar in some quarters, his absolute majority rule would arguably prove this moderation to be at best relative and partial, of form rather than substance (see below). Either way, the continuance of Aznar's proteges in key positions within the party and the PP's 2004 ETA terrorist misinformation campaign (Botti 2013, p. 45) were conducive to the decision by the party leadership to adopt an opposition strategy based on half-truths and polemical language to question the government's legitimacy as well as its policies, a strategy dubbed *crispación* or tension, which is perhaps best translated as polarization.

From a strategic perspective, *crispación*, which had already been practised by the PP from 1993 to 1996, aims to focus the political and public agenda on issues that are not associated with the LR political dimension in order to overcome the problem that the majority of Spaniards position themselves politically left-of-center. This has led to the politicization of the previously relatively uncontroversial issues of terrorism and the territorial question. Given that Spanish left voters are more prone to abstain in elections, *crispación* thus ultimately aims to present the PSOE as the greater of two evils, thereby demoralizing and thus demobilizing the left electorate (Barreiro 2002, Sánchez-Cuenca 2009b, pp. 32–5, 42, 47, Bosco 2009, p. 66). Under Rajoy, the strategy of maximal confrontation led the PP to participate in and organize various protests in alliance with different civil society organisations, including, for example, its participation in protests organized by the Catholic Church against same sex marriage and civic education, and to bring numerous laws before the Constitutional Court (Botti 2013, pp. 48–9, K. Calvo 2009, pp. 216–7, 218–9, Colino and Cotarelo 2012, p. 26).

The attempt to provide a rational explanation for the strategy of *crispación*, especially the attempt to politicize issues unrelated to the LR dimension in order to gain an advantage over the PSOE's "natural left majority", seems only partially satisfactory. After all, the PP did polarize on issues which do have a clear LR, LA character, such as historic memory, same sex marriage and gender equality issues, thus risking to mobilize rather than to demobilize left leaning voters. Moreover, just because a political issue such as decentralization (or, more generally, the center-periphery conflict) did not meaningfully divide the PSOE's and PP's electorate (Astudillo 2009, pp. 87–8, Sánchez-Cuenca 2009b, pp. 40–1), that does not mean that this issue did not have an important influence on how political party elites and members as well as civil society organisations define or position themselves. In other words, the contradictions which emerge when one considers *crispación* purely as a strategic phenomena may be reconciled with reality by considering that what is said is as much

the result of an attempt at relative vote maximization as it is the outcome of deep-seated political convictions. Either way, once Rajoy had strengthened his own position within the party, following the 16. party congress, at which the party's right wing was defeated and María Dolores de Cospedal elected general secretary, the most radical voices of the Aznar administration began to wane (Botti 2013, pp. 45–7, 49, Colino and Cotarelo 2012, p. 27, Palomo 2006, pp. 356–7).

7.5 Analysis of the March 2008 national election and specificity

7.5.1 Electoral campaign and electoral programs

Continuing the PP's strategy of *crispación* during the 2008 electoral campaign, the conservatives attacked the PSOE especially on the issue of terrorism and the territorial question, while imitating the PSOE's socio-economic policy promises (Astudillo 2009, p. 90, Sampedro and F. S. Pérez 2009, p. 131, El País 2008a, El País 2007, 20 Minutos and EFE 2007, Sánchez-Cuenca 2009b, p. 34). Zapatero responded to the PP's attacks by accusing the party of polarizing Spanish society ideologically and in terms of the center-periphery conflict, accusing them of voting against reforms enjoying wide parliamentary consensus and opposing Spanish plurality (Sampedro and F. S. Pérez 2009, p. 130), "which respects the cultural differences and nationalities which lived together in the country" (Sampedro and F. S. Pérez 2009, p. 130). Additionally and somewhat in contradiction to the strategy of *crispación*, the PP aimed to present Rajoy as a moderate political candidate (Astudillo 2009, pp. 91, 94).¹⁴ The PSOE too tried to focus attention on the party candidates, but to its own advantage, contrasting the appearances and personalities of Zapatero and Rajoy as "positive/ negative...future/ past, contemporary/ old, optimist/ pessimist" (Bosco 2009, p. 58). Although *crispación* made it more difficult for the PSOE to give visibility to its social policies (Bosco 2009, pp. 54–6), its most important effect was to facilitate the PSOE's mobilization strategy, which was focused especially on the left electorate in general as well as on abstainers and young voters (Bosco 2009, pp. 57–58). One of the PP's major strategists' admittance that the party's aim was to produce abstention among the left electorate prior to the election may also have contributed to the ultimate failure of this approach (Chari 2008, p. 1072).

¹⁴ The PP's position on issues like immigration and the behaviour of its allies of *crispación*, especially the Catholic Church and the right-wing media, made this attempt at moderation all the more difficult (Astudillo 2009, pp. 94–7).

Although some signs of economic troubles had already become visible in the second half of 2007, economic data at the beginning of 2008 showed worrying increases in inflation and unemployment (Bosco 2009, pp. 68–9) and declining GDP growth. The PP thus began to focus on the fear of recession, linking it to the issue of immigration, while Zapatero, whose campaign was built on positivism, insisted that Spain would be capable of overcoming any economic turbulences (Bosco 2009, p. 69). In this context, the victory of the socialist Minister of Economy and Finance Pedro Solbes over the conservative's shadow minister Manuel Pizarro in a televised debate was a key moment of the campaign (Bosco 2009, pp. 69–70, Chari 2008, p. 1071), reinforced by Zapatero's victories in the two debates against Rajoy (El País 2008b). The final electoral campaign rallies were cancelled, following ETA's assassination of the former socialist city councillor Isaías Carrasco (MDO and EFE 2008).

A closer look at the PSOE's 317 page¹⁵ electoral program structure provides some insights into the party's priorities, commencing with a section on "Employment and Social Welfare" consisting, in that order, of a subsection on employment, the welfare state (including, among others, pensions, health, disability and social cohesion), the societal model (including, among others, family politics, the youth and the elderly) and a section entitled "Financing public policies while maintaining budgetary stability" (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 3). This is followed by another major section on "Innovation, Knowledge and Sustainable Progress" (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 4) and a third one entitled "Liberty, Cohabitation¹⁶ and Rights in a Globalized World" (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 5). In the program's introduction, Zapatero (whose name appears at its end) commences by highlighting the PSOE's achievements, including economic growth and stability, social dialogue (with the labour unions), welfare state politics, including pension and minimum salary increases, the passage of the dependency law, its family related policies, the extension of civil rights and gender equality and the support for autonomous statute reforms, among others. Emphasizing that the PSOE had fulfilled the promises for which it had been elected, Zapatero outlines three major and largely continuist objectives: "(1) to reach full employment, and develop and consolidate our welfare state's...social politics; (2) to modernize Spain...; (3) to guarantee and reinforce...cohabitation and cohesion" (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 10). In addition to

¹⁵ These page numbers refer to the total number of pages of these documents, including cover pages and the like.

¹⁶ Cohabitation is the translated term for the Spanish word "cohabitación", which may be interpreted as referring to the peaceful and congenial coexistence of Spain's different nationalities.

promising to continue to implement various reforms, plans and policies in different policy fields, including the 2004 National Reform Plan to increase Spain's economic competitiveness, such as by further reducing the tax burden on low-income groups (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 11), as well as the continuation of the process of statute reform, a number of new policies are announced. The latter include a law against discrimination, the extension of paternal leave, the creation of 300 thousand additional spots for 0 to 3 year olds in kindergartens as well as specific pension and minimum salary increases and the promotion of 1.5 million subsidized social homes over ten years (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, pp. 10–15). Moreover, the PSOE also states its intention to increase public safety as well as to fight against terrorism and illegal immigration, although ETA is only explicitly mentioned for the first time on page 235 (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, pp. 13–4, 235).

The PP's 326 page long electoral program's first five sections deal, in that order, with the issue of terrorism, the center-periphery conflict, a section on institutional and administrative reform (entitled "Improving the quality of our democracy" (Partido Popular 2008)), law and order (including the military) and foreign policy (Partido Popular 2008, p. 4). The document's introduction commences by lamenting that the PSOE government has broken a previously existent consensus, thereafter focusing especially on the negotiations with ETA as well as the approval of statute reforms (Partido Popular 2008, pp. 10–11). The PP declares itself a party of the center, specifying: "We defend the values of liberty, equality, concord and justice" (Partido Popular 2008, p. 8). Affirming that the "national sovereignty resides in the Spanish people" (Partido Popular 2008, p. 8), the party vouches to defend "the Constitution, its institutions and symbols" (Partido Popular 2008, p. 8). Pointing out the necessity for individual rights to trump collective ones (Partido Popular 2008, p. 11), the program commends the State of Autonomies, which "reflects the plurality within Spanish unity" (Partido Popular 2008, p. 8). At the same time, however, it calls for the "consolidation of our autonomic model in order to strengthen the capacity of the state as guarantor of equality, solidarity and territorial cohesion" (Partido Popular 2008, p. 11). Merit and effort, stimulated by education and training, and a free economy are the key to the welfare of the Spanish citizenry (Partido Popular 2008, pp. 8–9). The need for law and order as well as exemplary political behaviour and moderation are emphasized (Partido Popular 2008, pp. 9, 12). Of the subsequent sections discussing various key problems, the one entitled "The loss of competitiveness" (Partido Popular 2008, p. 13) is the longest. Additional topics, not mentioned thus far, include education, in which PSOE policies supposedly reward mediocrity

and penalize effort, immigration, calling for an end to illegal immigration and for better integration, climate change and the welfare state, the latter being focused mainly on health and housing (Partido Popular 2008, pp. 14–17). Overall, the PP's introduction thus reflects both its right-wing and catch-all nature.

7.5.2 Specificity and policy field IP discussion

Having discussed the electoral campaign and the basic structure of the electoral programs above, this subsection will discuss the specificity data for the 2008 election and provide a summary of the most specific issue positions provided in each of the two policy fields by each party.

7.5.2.1 Specificity

As can be seen from fig. 7a on the next page, the distribution of the PP's 362 and the PSOE's 377 issue positions is quite similar. Nonetheless, the PSOE is also clearly vaguer than the PP, as becomes evident by the PSOE's larger number of GIPs (38 compared to 23) and VIPLs (68 compared to 43) and smaller absolute number of IPs (73 compared to 85), although the PP offered a much larger number of VIPs than the PSOE (184 compared to 160). As shown in fig. 7b on the following page, showing the relative distribution of issue positions for each party, the PSOE's and PP's issue positions consist to 18 and 11.9 percent of VIPLs, to 42.4 and 50.8 percent of VIPs and to 19.4 and 23.5 percent of IPs respectively. In all vaguer categories, the relative share of issue positions is also greater for the PSOE, although the party offers a slightly larger number IPLs (2.7 as opposed to 2.2 percent). On average, the PP's specificity is 5.85, whereas the PSOE's specificity is 5.59.

A look at the different policy fields reveals a different pattern, however. The distribution of issue positions in the labour market policy field, shown in fig. 7c on page 225, is somewhat similar to the overall distribution of each party, but the PSOE offers more issue positions in all categories, especially in the SQIP (eight as opposed to two), VIPL (41 to 22), VIP (103 to 86), IP (51 to 37) and IPL (nine to three) categories. Nonetheless, given that the greater number of IPs and IPLs is accompanied by a greater number of vaguer issue positions as well, average labour market specificity for the PP (5.82) is still greater than for the PSOE (5.68).

In the center-periphery policy field, shown in fig. 7d on page 225, the distribution of issue positions is somewhat more distinct. The PSOE offers double the GIPs (16 as opposed to eight) and less than half the number of VIPs (26 versus

57) as well as IPs (eight versus 20) than the PP does. Despite the much larger number of GIPs, reflecting the party's emphasis on cooperation with the ACs, the PSOE also offers less SQIPs (two as opposed to seven) than its conservative counterpart. Nonetheless, the PP is also more specific in this policy field, averaging 5.59 as opposed to the PSOE's 5.2 average specificity score. As can be seen in fig. 7e on the next page, the SMSE issue position distribution is very similar to the labour market for the PSOE, while the PP actually offers most specific issue positions in the SMSE policy field, a difference that is especially large when viewed relatively rather than in absolute terms. The average specificity of the PP and PSOE in the SMSE policy field was 6.24 and 5.71 respectively, making it by far the most specific policy field for the PP and very similar to the PSOE's specificity in the labour market policy field.

Although the PSOE's and PP's issue position distributions are arguably most similar in the labour market policy field, the PSOE, as socialist party, makes clearly more specific proposals than the conservatives, perhaps reflecting the expectations that state intervention in favour of employees is more appealing than labour market liberalization to the majority of voters. Given the PP's onus on individualism and economic initiative, its greater specificity in the SMSE policy field may have been expected, while the PSOE's similar treatment of the labour market and SMSE policy field also seems plausible, given the aforementioned importance and prevalence of this sector for employment. Both parties are vaguest in the center-periphery policy field, a complicated terrain because a large majority of Spanish citizens both favour Spanish unity and identify themselves strongly with their respective ACs (and their cities, towns and villages). Nonetheless, the PP's much greater number of specific

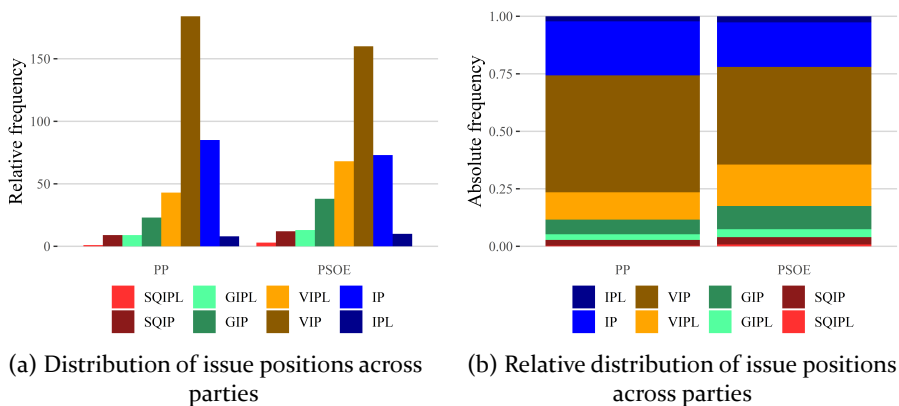


Figure 7: Specificity (2008)

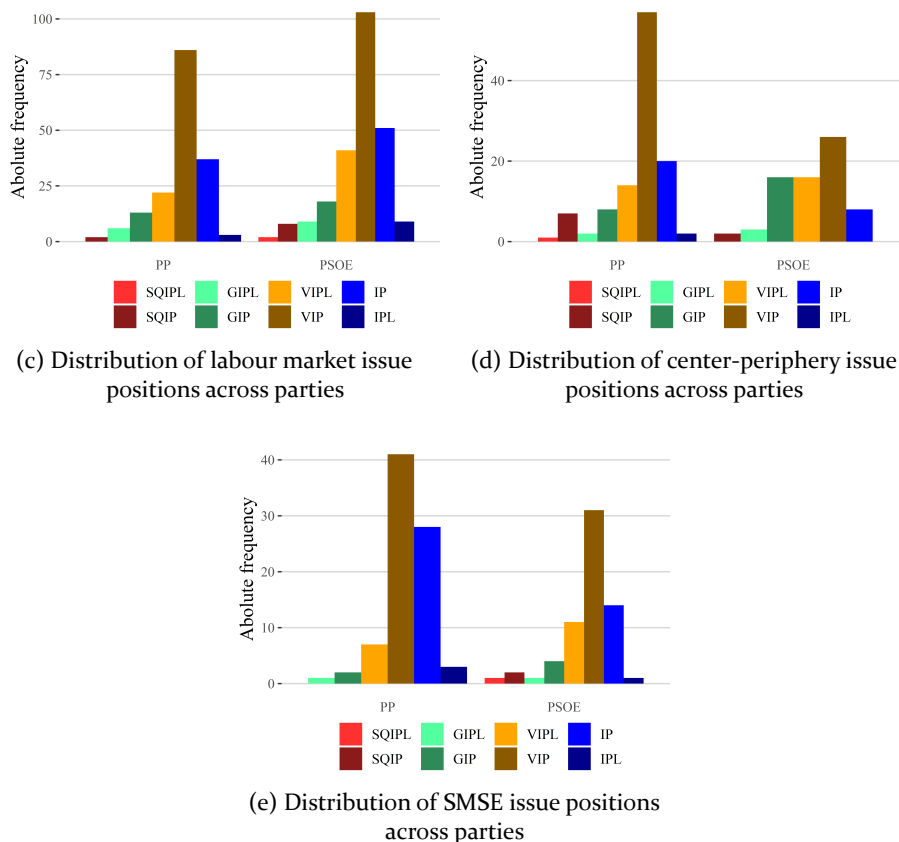


Figure 7: Specificity (2008), cont.

and SQ type positions indicate that the PP is quite comfortable with making concrete proposals with the aim of defending Spanish unity, while the PSOE is much more reticent, possibly a result of the PP's incessant attacks on the socialists concerning this issue and the complicated evolution of the Catalan statute reform process. What may be surprising is that the PP is more specific than the PSOE in each of the respective policy fields and, overall, more specific than the socialists in two out of three policy fields.¹⁷

¹⁷ Only the PP's center-periphery average specificity is lower than both the PSOE's labour market and SMSE average specificity values. See also fig. 8b on page 233.

7.5.2.2 Labour market IPs

In the labour market policy field, the PSOE offered to create two million new jobs, to create 200 thousand jobs for people with disabilities, to increase the employment rate to above 70 percent (and 60 percent for women), to reduce the unemployment rate to about seven percent and to reduce temporary employment to 25 percent (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 22). The party also promised to increase the minimum salary progressively from 600 Euro in 2008 to 800 Euro in 2012 (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 23) and offered a host of measures concerning gender equality and families with working parents. These included an increase in maternity leave from 16 to 18 weeks for the birth of the second child as well as for single parents; to increase maternity leave to 20 weeks for the third child; an increase of paternity leave from two to four weeks; the recognition of parental leave for same sex couples; lastly, an increase in the child's age from eight to twelve years in order for parents to be eligible for working hour reductions. The PSOE also wished to reduce the minimum period of social security contributions required of mothers below the age of 31 in order to have access to contributive maternity benefits and promised to assure that the non-contributory maternity benefit was to be increased at least to the level of the *Indicador Público de Renta de Efectos Múltiples* (IPREM) (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, pp. 50, 220).¹⁸ In order to make child rearing and employment more compatible, the PSOE promised to increase Spain's nursery school capacity by 300 thousand spots within the coming legislature; to offer company tax deductions for those companies which made pre-schools and kindergartens available through the workplace (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 80); to offer discounts if collective negotiation agreements included measures to favour working hour flexibility and the adaptation of working hours to the needs of families and school schedules (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 31); lastly, the extension of educational centres' opening hours, stating specific time goals (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 80).

A number of measures were also proposed to strengthen labour union representation within larger enterprise groups (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 35) as well as to permit the social partners to structure the areas and levels of collective negotiation and to determine the rules concerning the applicability of coexisting and potentially overlapping agreements (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 36), thus strongly implying delegation to

¹⁸ The IPREM is a monetary amount similar to the minimum salary, but which is smaller than the latter and used as a threshold value to grant particular welfare benefits (iprem.com.es 2021).

the social partners and a possible increase in flexibility. The socialists also promised to return those assets which had been confiscated by the Franco regime and not yet been returned to the labour unions, wishing to establish a commission of experts to formulate proposals to address this issue (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 36).

The issues of labour market duality and workplace precariousness were addressed by various specific issue positions, which included establishing a maximum duration for temporal contracts (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 24). Specific measures were also provided to assure that temporary contracts were only used when the respective prerequisites were given, to promote the use of part-time permanent contracts and to assure the hire of those who had completed their vocational training (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, pp. 25–6).

In order to improve the labour market's functioning, the PSOE proposed that active labour market policies were reformed by improving the Public Employment Service, such as by offering individualized itineraries for job seekers and providing basic training for people without professional qualifications (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 32), to establish employment observatories in the different ACs to collect information on the supply and demand of jobs as well as to offer a scholarship program for young persons who have finished their university education or vocational training (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 34). Moreover, the party also promised to reduce the workplace accident rate to below the EU average (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 27) as well as to provide a unified law on, to train judges concerning and to increase budgetary spending on public policies related to workplace risk prevention (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, pp. 28–9). Moreover, the party proposed to make the reception of pensions compatible with a specific income, depending on particular circumstances (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 51). Lastly, to boost controlling, the socialists promised to improve the Labour and Social Security Inspection by increasing the number of inspectors and sub-inspectors to 3,000 until the end of the legislature, with 300 hires to take place within the first year, as well as by creating a new inspector training school (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 34).

Overall, while the proposed issue positions to reduce labour market duality, workplace precariousness or accident rates were perhaps to some extent uncontroversial, there was a clear emphasis on extending welfare state related services and benefits. Perhaps a reflection of the PSOE's "optimism" concerning the future evolution of the Spanish economy, the socialists did not shy

away from making costly and specific commitments despite the first signs of an approaching world economic crisis.

Similarly to the PSOE, the PP made a number of specific promises concerning various labour market variables, which included reducing the unemployment rate to 6.5 percent, creating 2.2 million jobs in the coming legislature as well as increasing the populations' and the female activity rate to 78 and 70 percent respectively (Partido Popular 2008, p. 131). The party also promised to increase the minimum salary, within the context of the social dialogue between unions and employers and in line with improvements in productivity and inflation (Partido Popular 2008, p. 133). Moreover, the party proposed to carry out more auditing to achieve greater workplace risk prevention (Partido Popular 2008, p. 134).

The PP also offered a host of policies concerning gender equality and the work-life balance. The party promised to increase fines for companies which practised gender based salary discrimination (Partido Popular 2008, p. 167); to extend maternity and paternity leave by two weeks, provided both parents had made full use of their rights (Partido Popular 2008, p. 173); to reduce the personal income tax for working women by a specific amount; to increase social security discounts for four years for the indefinite hire of women returning to the labour market within three years after childbirth (Partido Popular 2008, p. 133); to offer training programs aimed specifically at women with family responsibilities as well as at women wishing to found new companies especially in rural Spain, through the National Employment Service; to make the conciliation of the personal, family and working life an explicit right in the labour statute (Partido Popular 2008, p. 172); to provide tax incentives for companies which were to take measures to improve work-life conciliation and which offered more flexible working hours (Partido Popular 2008, p. 133); to offer tax incentives to encourage companies to cover the current deficit in pre-school care and to create 400 thousand new kindergarten spots (Partido Popular 2008, p. 173); to make it a lawful right that working or studying parents had guaranteed kindergarten spots for children younger than three years of age; to permit the social partners to negotiate increases in parental leave, provided both parents had made full use of their legally granted parental leave periods; lastly, to grant parents the right to work leave if their child required hospital treatment (Partido Popular 2008, p. 135).

Moreover, the party offered specific issue positions to different collectives. The party offered to create a dual training-work contract (*contrato dual formación-trabajo*) to assure that those who underwent vocational training simultaneously enjoyed their first employment (Partido Popular 2008, p. 188); to

introduce a ten percent company social security contribution discount for companies who continued to employ workers older than 55 years of age with indefinite contracts, a discount set to increase continuously with the age of the worker; to offer entrepreneurship and training programs, including administrative simplifications, to the aged population (Partido Popular 2008, pp. 134, 179); to increase the quota of public jobs reserved for the disabled to seven percent (Partido Popular 2008, p. 184) and to make sure that it was adhered to by means of workplace inspections; to provide a 70 percent social security contribution discount paid by disabled self-employed individuals (Partido Popular 2008, p. 184); lastly, to make pensions compatible with gainful employment for persons older than 65 years of age (Partido Popular 2008, p. 134). Similarly to the PSOE, the PP proposed the creation of an Agency of Professional Training, Employment and Qualification Research to monitor economic activity and to determine the most in demand jobs and qualifications on the labour market (Partido Popular 2008, p. 136).

From the above, it becomes clear that while some means that the PP proposed were quite similar to those of the PSOE, the party put much greater emphasis on tax incentives and voluntary private sector action – with notable exceptions, such as the promise to increase fines for gender based discrimination – and on the individual, such as by offering education programs and aiming to facilitate greater entrepreneurship. Benefiting from some measures was made dependent on other factors, which were thus likely to benefit some more than others. For example, conditioning additional parental leave on both parents having made full use of their already granted parental leave periods is a measure that high earners with stable employment are more likely to be able to enjoy than low earners in precarious employment positions. Similarly, conditioning minimum salary increases on the evolution of inflation and productivity is clearly an economically liberal approach. Despite some issue position overlap especially concerning objectives, a careful reading of the PSOE's and PP's proposed measures in the labour market policy field thus reveals the clearly distinct ideological profiles of the two parties in question.

7.5.2.3 Center-periphery IPs

The PSOE's specific issue position proposals in the center-periphery policy field were few in number. The socialists proposed a territorial finance system reform to guarantee that all ACs could provide the same essential welfare state social services at a similar level, provided they exerted a similar fiscal effort. The required levels of fiscal effort were to be determined by the central state (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 110). The PSOE also vouched

to support the statutes approved by AC parliaments, provided they were compatible with the Constitution, and promised to reject them if this was not the case (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 268). Additionally, the PSOE proposed a limited senate reform to extend its functions, by assuring that laws concerning AC related issues received their first reading there, that it issued verdicts on laws which were to be developed by the ACs as well as to use the organ as meeting place of the different “multilateral organs”, presumably referring to the Conference of Presidents and sectoral conferences (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 269). Moreover, the PSOE aimed to introduce a reference to Europe in the Constitution and to reform the clause which discriminated the female gender in the Spanish crown’s succession (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2008, p. 270).

The PSOE’s proposals clearly aimed to avoid the controversy surrounding the center-periphery policy field as much as possible by making rather low key proposals. Thus, the territorial finance system proposal seems equitable, but clearly attributed the power to determine its specifics to the central state. The proposed senate reform IPs would likely have had no major impact on the functioning of that institution and seem largely symbolic, much like the constitutional reforms to introduce a reference to Europe and to provide the daughters of the royal family with access to the throne, none of which could be considered particularly controversial issues.

The PP commenced its center-periphery section by emphasizing the Constitution’s role in assuring liberty and equality, independently of the territory and cultural or linguistic distinctiveness of Spanish citizen, which should not be cause for any privilege (Partido Popular 2008, pp. 32–33). Moreover, despite the party’s oft proclaimed constitutional patriotism, the party proposed a limited constitutional reform to assure the state’s “viability” (Partido Popular 2008, p. 34). The party’s specific issue position proposals included: that the exclusive competencies of the state, defined in article 149.1 of the Constitution, could not be renounced nor transferred to ACs; the prevalence of state law in the areas of exclusive state competencies; that the territorial organisation, urbanism and immigration were to be made central state competencies; the modification of article 150.2, so that the delegation of faculties to sub-national entities was to be more closely circumscribed by accompanying and assessable criteria and would require approval by a two-third majority in Congress (Partido Popular 2008, p. 35). Moreover, as part of this constitutional reform, the PP proposed that four principles, already contained in various articles of the Constitution, ought to be declared fundamental to the autonomous system, namely loyalty to the Constitution, coordination, cooperation and

collaboration between the public administrations as well as the unity of the interior market (Partido Popular 2008, p. 36).

Moreover, the conservatives proposed that a modification of AC statutes should require a two-third majority for approval in Congress (Partido Popular 2008, p. 37); that statutes and statute reforms were susceptible to a prior judicial recourse of unconstitutionality, resulting in their suspension until the Constitutional Court had ruled on the matter within six months (Partido Popular 2008, p. 37); that AC relations with other countries were channelled exclusively through the Spanish Foreign Ministry (Partido Popular 2008, p. 36). Additionally, the PP proposed the creation of the Council of State-AC Cooperation, which ought to convene every three weeks to evaluate cooperation mechanisms, to manage policy fields with shared competencies and to assure that reached agreements were adhered to, as well as the creation of a Crisis Management Agency with national competencies to coordinate and reinforce crisis management efforts at the different governance levels when necessary (Partido Popular 2008, p. 41). Although a finance system reform was proposed, the only specific issue position which was mentioned in relation to it was that population increases ought to be a key variable in determining the redistribution of funds (Partido Popular 2008, p. 119).

Last but not least, the PP proposed several specific issue positions which were concerned with the Spanish language: that regulations concerning the Spanish language in education were a direct competency of Congress (Partido Popular 2008, p. 35); that the use and study of Spanish was to be guaranteed throughout all stages of the education system by law; that Spanish was to be, in addition to the co-official language of a given AC, the vehicular language¹⁹ in all areas and educational subjects; lastly, that those persons which temporarily resided in a given AC due to family or work related reasons would be able to be educated in the Spanish language if they so desired it (Partido Popular 2008, p. 39).

Overall, the PP thus proposed to shut down some of the possible constitutional mechanisms and “loopholes” which could facilitate further decentralization and aimed to increase the assertiveness of national institutions over AC statute approval, a clear response to the statute reform wave under Zapatero. In addition to the latter, the PP’s attempts to assert its influence on the decentralized AC competencies in education and to boost the importance of Spanish compared to co-official languages were measures of a clear anti-nationalist and

¹⁹ “Vehicular language” means that the language is used to teach as opposed to just being taught.

anti-regionalist nature. This behaviour thus reflects the aforementioned comfortableness with which the PP supposedly defended Spanish unity and the discomfort with which the PSOE advocated changes to the current territorial model, well aware of its vulnerability to attack by the conservatives and the risks of pursuing such a path, as had only recently been demonstrated in Catalonia.

7.5.3 Hypotheses discussion

Having provided some insight into the more specific issue positions proposed by the two major parties, this subsection will evaluate the three hypotheses with a focus on the 2008 election.

7.5.3.1 Hypothesis 1: Deviation from the ideological center

As was already shown in fig. 6a on page 204, ideologically both the PSOE and the PP were located far from the political center in the early 1980s and both parties migrated towards the center until the mid-1990s. As can be seen from fig. 8a on the facing page, this tendency came to an end toward the end of Felipe González' last term. Having reached its closest point to the center in February 1994 at 0.63, the party initiated a leftward course. Under its subsequent secretary generals and with the PP in power until 2004, the PSOE first peaked at 1.37 points in July 1999, thereafter once again moving toward the center until shifting clearly to the left in June 2004, to a position of 1.43 under Zapatero's leadership. The PSOE had not been positioned so far to the left since April 1988. By the time of the 2008 election, marked by the black vertical line in fig. 8a, the PSOE had shifted still slightly further to the left, to a position of 1.46. The PP, on the other hand, had always been further away from the political center, at times up to 1 point further along the scale than the PSOE, reflecting its dominion of the entire right-wing ideological spectrum. Nonetheless, its journey had been one of approximating the center at least from 1986, when the party was located at 3.1 points. The trend toward the center, which set in thereafter, received a significant boost at the end of 1999, when the party shifted from 2.43 to 2.05 points, a possible consequence of Alumnia's electoral "alliance" with the IU described above.²⁰ Despite once again migrating to the right thereafter, the party's approximation to the center was only partially eroded and, at the point of the 2008 election, the party stood at 2.31 points.

²⁰ See section 6.3 on page 174.

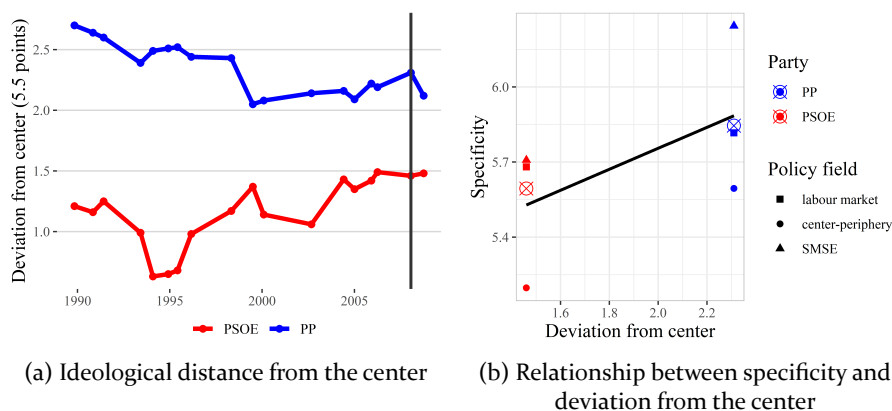


Figure 8: Deviation from the center hypothesis discussion (2008)

Figure 8b shows various aspects of the relationship between deviation from the center and specificity and is also similar to fig. 9c on page 235, which shows the relationship between party threat and specificity, thus warranting a brief general explanation. Figure 8b shows the average specificity values for each of the different policy fields, indicated by the symbol shapes shown in the legend, as well as the overall mean specificity of each party, shown by the round cross-hair symbols. The black regression line shows the trend in the data based on the individual policy field specificity averages (since comparing several policy based means is not as straight-forward as comparing party based averages). The positively sloped regression line in Figure 8b thus shows that, based on the policy field based mean specificity values, a positive relationship exists between deviation from the political center and specificity. The deviation from the center hypothesis expects that the more a party deviates from the political center, the greater its overall average specificity (indicated by the cross-hair symbols). The hypothesis is confirmed by the greater deviation from the center and the clear but narrow lead in specificity of .26 points by the PP. Given that this discussion was based on only one election year, it remains to be seen whether these trends hold for subsequent elections.

7.5.3.2 Hypothesis 2: Party threat

Figure 9a on the following page shows the two major parties' threat levels, which are the sum of the party pair based threat values. The latter are determined by the two components which determine threat, namely competitive threat and ideological threat, shown separately for each party in fig. 9b. As was noted before, competitive threat can be negative (if the party in question

has an advantage over its rival), whereas ideological threat is always either zero or positive and equivalent for a given pair of parties, since the distance between them is identical. As can be seen from these two graphics, in the 2008 election the PSOE's threat level was very low, given the combination of its relatively large ideological distance to and its electoral lead over the PP,²¹ resulting in a party pair threat score of 0.27 points, as well as due to the IU's much greater ideological proximity, but much weaker electoral expectations,²² resulting in an overall negative party pair threat value of -0.02 by the IU.²³ As a consequence, despite facing one more rival party than the PP, the PSOE's threat level of .25 points was lower than that of the conservatives' .31 point threat level.²⁴ As can be seen by fig. 9c, the PSOE thus suffers from a lower threat level and is also less specific (5.59) than its rival (5.85). As such, the hypothesis of a positive relationship between threat and specificity is confirmed for 2008.²⁵

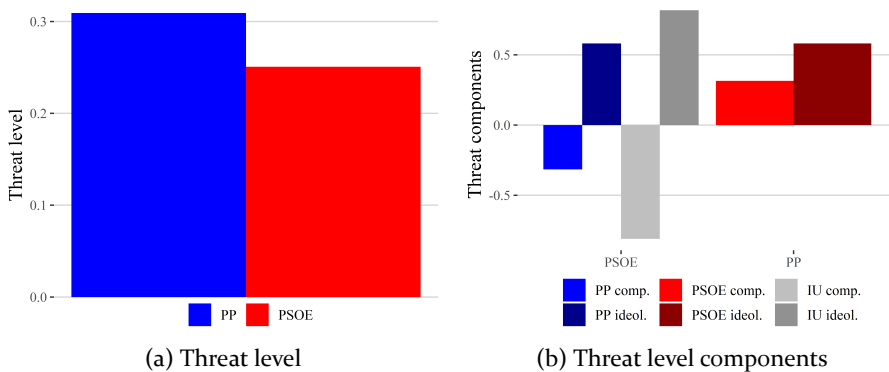


Figure 9: Threat hypothesis discussion (2008)

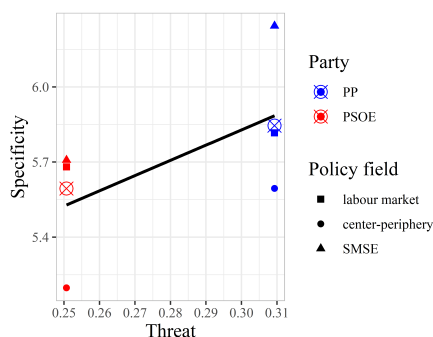
²¹ Ideological threat: .58. Competitive threat: -.04.

²² Ideological threat: .82. Competitive threat: -.86.

²³ Since the IU's electoral programs were not analysed, the party's own perceived threat levels are not reported.

²⁴ Ideological threat: .58. Competitive threat: .04.

²⁵ This relationship is also confirmed by a look at the policy field based specificity values, but since these are identical for each given election and were already discussed for the first hypothesis, they are not repeated here.



(c) Relationship between specificity and threat

Figure 9: Threat hypothesis discussion (2008), cont.

7.5.3.3 Hypothesis 3: Party certainty of victory

As shown by fig. 10 on the next page, the first four electoral contests of the first Zapatero administration until the end of 2006 brought the PSOE substantial electoral gains of more than four percent. In the Andalusian election, which coincided with the national one, the PSOE received its largest percentage of the vote since 1982, 51.1 percent, thus recovering the absolute majority status it had enjoyed from 1982 to 1994 under the leadership of Manuel María Chaves González, president from 1990 to 2009. In the European election of June 2004 as well as in the Galician and Basque elections of April 2005, the PSOE received its best results ever in the former two electoral contests with 43.7 and 33.6 percent and its second best result ever in the last mentioned AC, with 22.7 percent. Except for the European election, in which the PP managed to increase its results by 1.1 percent to 41.5 percent of the vote, thereby setting its own record, the conservatives experienced electoral declines of around six percent. In Andalusia, the PP received its worst result since 1994, falling to 32.2 percent, the conservatives in Galicia were unable to renew their absolute majority of seats, held since 1989 under Fraga's leadership, falling two seats short and declining to 45.8 percent of the vote, and in the Basque Country the PP received its worst result since 1998, with 17.4 percent of the vote.²⁶

²⁶ Concerning the regional government formation and electoral data sources consulted, please see footnote 61 on page 205.

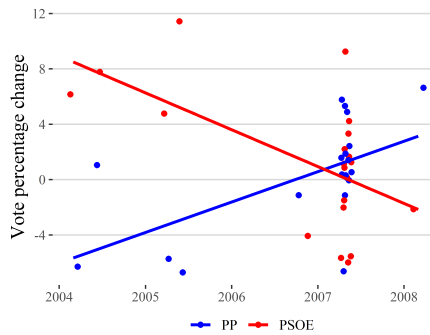


Figure 10: Certainty based on electoral trends, hypothesis discussion (2008)

From the Catalan election in November 2006, however, this rather spectacular string of PSOE victories was giving way to a much more mixed picture. In that election, the PSOE lost 4.1 percent of the vote, falling to 27.4 percent, its worst result since 1999, in which the party had won an exceptional 38.2 percent. The PP only declined marginally to 10.9 percent, close to its record of 13.2 percent in 1995. In the May 2007 AC elections, ignoring changes in the percentage of the vote which are smaller than 2.5 percent,²⁷ the PP's only but substantial loss occurred in the Canary Islands, with 6.6 percent of the vote, while the party gained between 4.9 and 5.8 percent in Valencia, Madrid and Castilla-La Mancha. The PSOE, on the other hand, experienced electoral losses between 5.5 and six percent in the latter two ACs as well as in Cantabria. It gained votes in Aragon (3.3 percent), the Balearic Islands (4.2 percent) and made substantial gains in the Canary Islands (9.3 percent). These electoral changes did not lead to any major changes in regional governments, however, the only noteworthy developments being three: the formation and renewal of two PSOE based coalitions in the Balearic Islands and Cantabria respectively, effectively ending their PP stronghold status²⁸, as well as the formation of the second ever PSOE based coalition government in Galicia (EFE 2005, Observatorio de los Gobiernos de Coalición en España 2018). In the municipal election, held the same day as the AC elections, the PP held a slight advantage over the PSOE, having received 0.7 percent (155 thousand) more votes and some 700 more city councillors than its rival. Concerning Spain's biggest cities, the municipal election brought little change. The PP continued to govern in Madrid (Ayuntamiento de Madrid 2021) and Valencia city, which

²⁷ Within that interval, the PP gained in six ACs and the PSOE in four, while both lost in three ACs. In general, the PSOE's losses and gains were bigger within the interval, however.

²⁸ See footnote 62 on page 205 for the definition of electoral strongholds.

it had done since 1991 (J. Clemente and X. Clemente 2015), and a left PSC led coalition governed Barcelona (RTVE and Agencias 2011). The biggest news were the PSOE's renewed victories in Sevilla, ruled by the regional Party of Andalusia (PA) from 1979 to 1983 and 1991 to 1995 and by the PP from 1995 to 1999 (Bedia 2019), as well as in Zaragoza, where the PP had ruled from 1995 to 2003 (Heraldo.es 2019).

Overall, these developments indicated a substantial increase in competition between the two parties over time, commencing with a string of clear electoral victories by Zapatero over Rajoy, followed by both parties becoming much more balanced competitors. The reason for this evolution is most likely the persistence of the PP's unpopularity after its national election defeat in 2004 and Zapatero's initial popularity, followed by a more mixed assessment of Zapatero's performance in the center-periphery, anti-terrorism and economic policy fields.

Despite these electoral trends, however, the PSOE had led continuously in national electoral surveys since 2004, although here too the margin narrowed significantly over time (Torcal and Ignacio Lago 2008, pp. 365–6). A closer look at the CIS 2008 pre-electoral survey (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2008) provides evidence suggesting that the PSOE could be relatively certain of victory, however. The difference between the PSOE's expected electoral results compared to those of the PP was narrow, with some 40.2 percent compared to 38.7 percent of the vote. The closeness of these figures is not reflected in approval and popularity of the electoral rivals, however. Comparing the PSOE's performance in government to the PP's performance in opposition, 28 and 11.9 percent of interviewees judged their activities to be good to very good, 41.2 and 34.4 percent considered it average and 25.9 as opposed to 46.2 percent viewed it as bad to very bad. Asked to give a grade from zero (very bad) to ten (very good), Zapatero scored 5.36 on average, as opposed to Rajoy's 3.95 points. Zapatero and Rajoy inspired some to a lot of confidence in 40.1 percent and 21.4 percent of interviewees, little confidence in 34.1 and 34.8 percent and no confidence in 22.3 and 39.7 percent respectively. 50.4 percent also preferred Zapatero as future president, whereas only 26.2 percent wished it to be Rajoy. On all these counts, the PSOE and its leader were thus much more positively evaluated than the PP and its leader. Perhaps one of the most revealing indicators, reflecting the general tenor of media reports, analysts and voter sympathies, a clear 52.4 percent of the interviewees believed that the PSOE would win the upcoming election, whereas only 15.3 percent believed that the PP would be able to do so.

Table 5: Certainty and party specificity values (2008)

Party	Certainty	Specificity
PP	0	5.85
PSOE	1	5.59

Several indicators thus point to a highly competitive situation between the PSOE and PP, with the difference in performance narrowing dramatically over time. While the PSOE could not be sure of victory in terms of its very narrow lead in estimated expected electoral results, the party had led in the surveys for an extensive amount of time and the socialists and its candidate performed clearly much better than their conservative rivals. Moreover, the percentage of interviewees believing that the PSOE would win was more than three times the percentage of those who believed that the PP would win. Despite the narrowness of the lead, it is argued here, the much more positive evaluation of the PSOE and Zapatero meant that – in the absence of major unfavourable events – the latter could be relatively sure of victory. Additionally, even after the PSOE started to experience some electoral losses at the non-national level, its electoral performance was still sufficiently good to sustain its previously achieved regional government takeovers (in Catalonia, Balearic Islands and Cantabria) and to rule in many of Spain's largest cities. Although the subjective probability of victory is thus not extremely high, the binary nature of the variable leads to the categorization of the PSOE as being certain rather than uncertain of victory. A look at table 5, showing the two parties' certainty and specificity values, confirms the hypothesis that a party that is certain of victory will be less specific than a party that is uncertain of it, since the PP's specificity of 5.85 was greater than the PSOE's score of 5.59.

8 The second Zapatero administration and the 2011 election

The second Zapatero administration was overshadowed by the unfolding of the 2008 economic crisis and the government's policy response,¹ which was accompanied by another labour market as well as a pension and constitutional reform. The unpopularity of these austerity policies led to the emergence of the so-called movement of the enraged (*indignados*), a broad based grass root protest movement which mobilized against budget cuts and a seemingly unresponsive political ruling class. The POSE's devastating national electoral defeat and the PP's victory in the 2011 national election provided the preconditions for the highly unpopular unilateral imposition of even more severe austerity as well as a number of neo-conservative measures under the Rajoy administration. In addition to the increasingly polemical confrontation between the Generalitat and the Moncloa, these events contributed to the breakthrough of Cs and Podemos in 2015, thereby leading to the disintegration of the national two party system.

8.1 2008 national election results and investiture

The 2008 election results were, despite first clear signs of a future economic crisis on the horizon and the rather aggressive opposition strategy of the PP, marked to a large extent by continuity. The PSOE had won the support of 11.289 million voters, 43.9 percent of the total, and 169 deputies, thus gaining some 250 thousand votes and five deputies compared to 2004. Overall, Zapatero's stance on statute reform and a plurinational Spain had been beneficial to the PSOE, permitting the party to attract more regionally minded voters, especially but not exclusively in Catalonia² and, already since 2000, in the Basque Country (Sánchez-Cuenca 2009b, pp. 31–2, Chari 2008, pp. 1073–5). Like the PSOE, the PP had actually made gains, receiving an additional 500 thousand votes, totalling 10.278 million or 39.9 percent, and winning an additional six deputies, summing 154. While the PP's strategy of *crispación* had

¹ Zapatero's second administration's first government was the first to consist of a majority of women (Agencias 2008b), including the popular female Catalan Defence Minister Carme Maria Chacón Piqueras.

² In Catalonia, the PSOE's results were also in part attributable to Chacón (see footnote 1), a politician with leadership aspirations at the national level in the near future (Chari 2008, p. 1073).

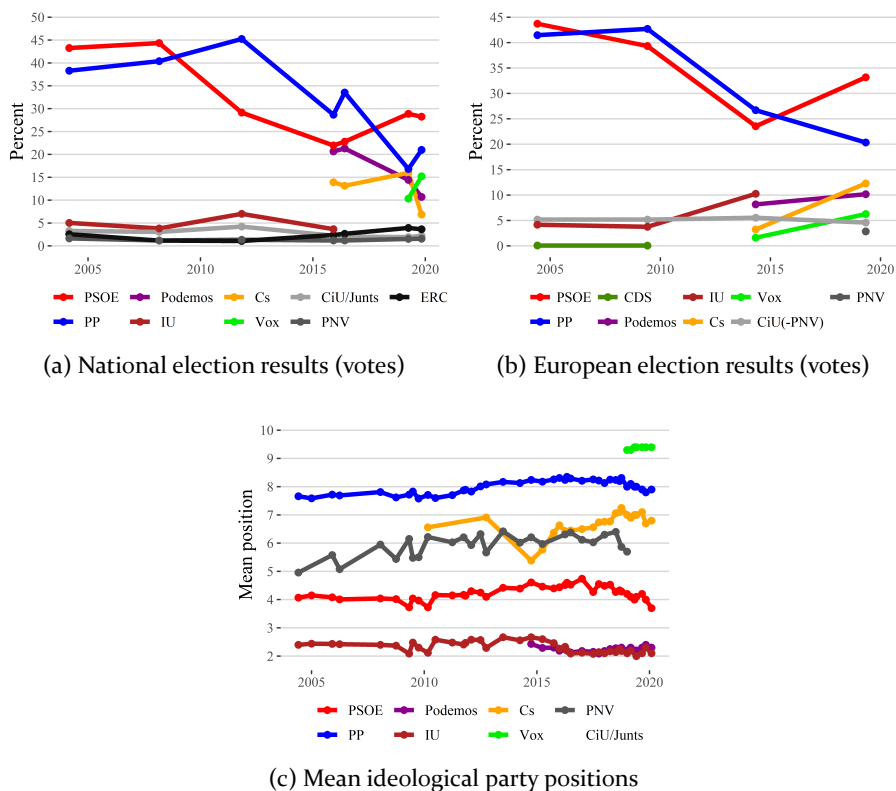


Figure 11: Party system developments (2004-2015)

(somewhat ironically) permitted the party to make important gains among center voters, it had also partially backfired by mobilizing the left electorate (Sánchez-Cuenca 2009b, pp. 31–2, 34, 38, Bosco 2009, p. 72). The level of two party dominance had thus reached an unprecedented level, both parties summing 83.8 percent of the vote and 92.3 percent of the deputies (323 out of 350).

For the IU, the 2008 election was a clear setback, having lost some 314 thousand of its 1.28 million 2004 voters, thus declining from five percent of the vote and five deputies to 3.8 percent and two deputies. Among the major nationalist parties, all of which lost votes, the CiU was barely affected, while the ERC lost 327 thousand votes, declining from five percent of the vote and eight deputies to 3.8 percent and two deputies. Thus, despite a decline in participation from 75.7 to 73.9 percent, the PSOE managed to maintain its lead by attracting votes from the left (especially the IU and ERC) as well as from regionalists,

nationalists, former abstainers and new voters (Bosco 2009, p. 72). Lastly, as a national newcomer, the UPyD³ received 306 thousand votes, 1.19 percent of the total, and won one seat as a consequence. The Catalan Cs only received 46 thousand votes.

Compared to Zapatero's investiture in April 2004, when he had received 183 votes in favour of the PSOE, the ERC, the CC, the BNG and the Chunta Aragonesista (CHA) and 19 abstentions by the CiU, PNV, EA and Nafarroa Bai (NaBai), Zapatero's second investiture in April 2008 failed in the first round, something that had only happened once before during Calvo-Sotelo's investiture in February 1980 (Mira, J. C. Sanz, and Cano 2017).⁴ This time, only the PSOE had voted in favour, with 168 votes, while the IU, CiU, PNV, CC, BNG and NaBai abstained and the ERC had voted, alongside the UPyD and PP, against Zapatero's investiture. These abstentions permitted Zapatero to obtain the relative majority necessary for his investiture in the second round two days later (El Periódico de Aragón 2008, El Periódico de Extremadura 2008). Rather than being the unwanted result of failed negotiations, Zapatero had, based on his experience especially with the ERC, consciously decided not to make commitments in return for regional and nationalist party support, in part responding to the PP's virulent criticisms and in part preparing a strategic transition to closer cooperation especially with the PNV, given tense relations with the ERC and the CiU's still all too recent defeat at the hands of the PSC in Catalonia (Field 2013, pp. 64, 74–5).

8.2 Economic policy and labour market reform

Following a period of real estate price hikes and the liberal lending practices of American banks, the bursting of the US housing bubble in 2007 and 2008 caused a grave financial banking crisis in the USA, affecting international banks and financial institutions and causing a significant slow down in the US and the global economy. Despite the general awareness that Spain's economic growth had in no small part been generated by the construction sector, that Spanish housing prices had grown substantially for almost a decade and that private household and construction sector related debt had increased massively due to very low and even negative real interest rates, the Zapatero

³ For more details on the UPyD, see section 5.2 on page 127.

⁴ In December 1989, González receives 167 “yes” votes, 155 “no” votes and 10 abstentions. Given the temporary reduction in the size of Congress to 333 deputies due to the annulment of election results in Pontevedra, Galicia and in Murcia, the 167 votes constituted an absolute majority (El País 1989, Mira, J. C. Sanz, and Cano 2017).

government propagated the belief that Spain was in an optimal macroeconomic situation – low debt and a budget surplus – to react to a potential economic downturn. Nonetheless, the bursting of the Spanish real estate bubble caused a massive contraction in the construction sector, destroying hundreds of thousands of jobs within months, and brought especially the countries' saving banks, which had concentrated a large amount of their lending portfolios in these sectors, under pressure.⁵ In addition to becoming exposed to massive debt defaults from both construction sector businesses and private households, the banks had financed their long-term loans by short-term lending from other financial institutions on the international market, so that when the global capital markets began to restrict credit in response to the US crisis, Spanish banks were forced to follow suit, leading to a massive fall in economic activity and further unemployment (Barrón 2020, Buesa 2015, pp. 29–30, Consejo de Redacción 2012, pp. 577–8). As a consequence, Spain slipped into recession and sizeable saving banks ran the risk of becoming insolvent, a scenario which came to pass after the collapse of Lehman Brothers in September 2008 (Kickert and Ysa 2014, p. 454).

During the unfolding of these events, already heralded by the evolution of some economic indicators at the end of 2007, the government strenuously avoided the term crisis, Zapatero himself only using the term for the first time toward the end of June 2008 (C. Pérez and Bolaños 2008), and took measures which were critiqued especially for their half-heartedness (I. Molina 2012, p. 61, *El Mundo* 2008). The first substantial set of measures were implemented through the government's Economic and Employment Stimulus Plan, or Plan E, which considered investment in research and development, infrastructure and education and training key elements of the strategy for economic recovery (Government of Spain 2009, pp. 37–8, Government of Spain 2011, pp. 31–32). Additionally, temporary fiscal stimulus measures amounting to 11.2 billion Euro in 2009 included, for example, the creation of two funds for local public and strategic sector investments to boost employment and competitiveness as well as social security rebates conditioned on the indefinite hire of unemployed workers (Government of Spain 2009, pp. 8, 22). The 2009 Stability Program Update still assumed that “[e]conomic recovery will begin in the second half of 2009, Spain's GDP will increase by 1.2% in 2010 and...will accelerate...to 2.6% in 2011” (Government of Spain 2009, p. 16). Indeed, as can be seen in fig. 12a on page 246, following a 3.57 percent contraction of GDP in 2009, GDP

⁵ The construction sector's collapse led to the loss of 1.1 million jobs between 2008 and 2011 and accounted for 53 percent of all job losses (Fundación Uno de Mayo 2012, p. 62).

growth turned ever so slightly positive in 2010 (Eurostat 2019).⁶ Despite its optimism, the Zapatero administration would soon be confronted both with a massive budget deficit and the unfolding of the European sovereign debt crisis, a potentially devastating combination of factors.

From 2008 until the outbreak of the sovereign debt crisis, the main concern of economic actors had been the European banking system's stability, but towards the end of 2009 "larger-than-expected increases in deficit/GDP ratios...the scale of the recession...rising estimates of prospective banking-sector losses on bad loans [and the Greek government's announcement of] a revised 2009 budget deficit forecast of 12.7 percent of GDP" (Lane 2012, p. 56) shifted the focus increasingly towards budget deficits and public debt (Lane 2012, pp. 55–56). As a result, sovereign bond yields for Greece, Ireland and Portugal skyrocketed, cutting these countries off from the international bond market and required these countries to call upon the assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the EU (Lane 2012, pp. 57–8). In Spain too state debt had risen rapidly, more than doubling between 2007 and 2011 to 69.5 percent of GDP (Eurostat 2019), while the budget deficit had increased from a 2.8 percent of GDP surplus in 2006 to 0.3 percent in 2007 and to a 9.7 percent deficit in 2011 (Eurostat 2019), leading to the opening of an Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP) against the country in April 2009. The reasons for this large shortfall were numerous: tax cuts implemented just prior to the outbreak of the 2008 crisis, a massive fall in tax revenue due to the end of the real estate boom and the economic crisis, an increase in interest rate payments on sovereign debt as well as increases in public expenditure, such as on unemployment insurance and fiscal stimulus measures (Martí, F. and J. J. Pérez 2016, pp. 9–13, 31, Uxó 2014, pp. 90–91). Moreover, in order to control the banking crisis and support the process of bank fusions advocated by the government, the Fund for Orderly Bank Restructuring (FROB) was set up in June 2009 in order to inject thousands of millions of Euro into the banking sector to avoid insolvencies. As a consequence, some twelve bank fusions reduced the number of saving banks from 45 to 22 (Mars 2012). Moreover, in February 2011, the government tightened banks' capital requirements, several of these entities were put on the stock market to raise capital and others were intervened or nationalized (Mars and Barrón 2012).

Reacting to the sovereign debt crisis, the Council of the European Union's May 2010 Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) initiated a coordinated effort at fiscal austerity at the European level, including a call for the adoption of national legislation, preferably constitutional amendments, to increase the

⁶ The GDP growth was 0.01 percent that year (Eurostat 2019).

commitment to low debt and a balanced budget. Moreover, in order to provide loans to struggling member states and to calm the financial markets, the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) was set up. Responding to massive international and financial market pressures, the Zapatero administration passed a large austerity package, including budget cuts, pension freezes and increases below the rate of inflation, a reduction of the public hiring rate, a five percent public sector wage cut and a wage freeze for 2011 and the elimination of the aforementioned baby cheque, among others (Government of Spain 2010, pp. 23–26, Government of Spain 2011, pp. 24–25, Martí, F. and J. J. Pérez 2016, p. 13, ABC 2010). Despite cutting welfare state spending by 808 million Euro between 2007 and 2011, however, the vast majority of cuts, some 11 thousand million, affected non-welfare state budget items, especially infrastructure (Lemmer 2017, pp. 138–9).

Moreover, the PSOE carried out two structural, albeit rather limited reforms of the pension system as well as the labour market. The former reform, passed in 2011, aimed to reduce pension system expenditure by increasing the retirement age from 65 to 67 years, by increasing the required years of labour in order to receive a full pension from 35 years to 38 years and 6 months, by increasing the period used to determine the pension from the last 15 to the last 25 years of employment and by introducing the still vague, but rather polemical sustainability factor (M. A. García 2016, pp. 71–72). The sustainability factor – still treated rather vaguely and to be fully developed by the PP's future reform – aimed to convert life expectancy at the age of 67 years, to be updated regularly, into a key determinant of the amount of pensions to be received (M. A. García 2016, p. 70). Regarding the labour market, the economic crisis led to a massive surge in unemployment. As can be seen in fig. 12b on page 246, in 2007 unemployment had fallen to 8.2 percent, the lowest level since the 1970s, only to jump to 17.9 percent in 2009 and to peak at a staggering 26.1 percent in 2013 (Eurostat 2019). As had been the case during previous economic crises, Spanish businesses once again resorted more to firing than to other mechanisms like lowering salaries or working hour reductions, once again affecting especially the most vulnerable collective of temporary contract employees (Meléndez 2012, p. 41). And once again, despite massive increases in unemployment, salaries continued to grow, reducing Spain's international competitiveness while national and international demand fell massively (Meléndez 2012, pp. 42–3). The reasons for the continued salary increases were the relatively “low number of collective agreements at the company level, the automatic extension of sectoral collective agreements, the difficulties associated with the unhinging (descuelge) [from above

company level agreements] and the continued applicability of those collective agreements which...[had] already expired” (Meléndez 2012, p. 45).⁷

In order to address these issues, the Zapatero government undertook a labour market reform which, like its predecessors, aimed especially to reduce labour market duality as well as to slow job destruction (Fundación Uno de Mayo 2012, p. 64) by limiting successive and abusive temporary contracts; by increasing and by extending unemployment coverage for some temporary as well as vocational contracts and extending, once again, the applicability of the Employment Promotion Contract to new collectives; by permitting the activity of private employment agencies; by increasing flexibility by permitting the temporary reduction of working hours; by clarifying the regulations permitting companies to detach themselves from above company level agreements and for objective worker dismissal; by facilitating the faster processing of group dismissals, the so-called *Expedientes de Regulación de Empleo* (ERE); by reducing company expenditures incurred through the termination of contracts through the Salary Guarantee Fund, among others (García Serrano 2011, pp. 168–171, Fundación Uno de Mayo 2012, pp. 16–17). In spite of these measures, the reform was once again considered only partial and unable to overcome the major disfunctionalities of the Spanish labour market (García Serrano 2011, p. 172). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the government’s measures of austerity, including civil servant pay cuts and pension freezes, as well as the labour market reform terminated the cooperative relationship with the labour unions and led to a general strike in September 2010 (Hamann 2013, pp. 128–33).

Last but not least, to calm the financial markets and with the intention to avoid the need for further cuts (Cué 2011a), the PSOE, with the support of the PP and UPN and with all other parties either voting against or being absent, amended article 135 of the Spanish Constitution, thereby institutionalizing the European aims of budgetary stability and debt control (Lemmer 2017, pp. 136–7, El País 2014). These policies were viewed especially by left voters as a betrayal of socialist values. Their aim was to avoid a de facto debt default, which would have forced the government to submit to the tutelage of the so-called Troika, consisting of the EU Commission, the BCE and the IMF, as had been the case for Greece (Hamann 2013, p. 133, I. Molina 2012, p. 66). During this period of economic crisis, the PP somewhat softened its attacks on the PSOE regarding its usual topics of choice, shifting them instead to the

⁷ This continued applicability, the so-called *ultractividad*, of collective agreements refers to the fact that the terms agreed upon therein remain valid even after the agreements have expired.

economic terrain in the face of the dawning of the financial and economic crisis. Nonetheless, the PP neither supported the Zapatero administration's first spending cuts in May 2010 nor its various structural reforms, including the labour market and the pension system, among others (Field 2013, p. 69).⁸

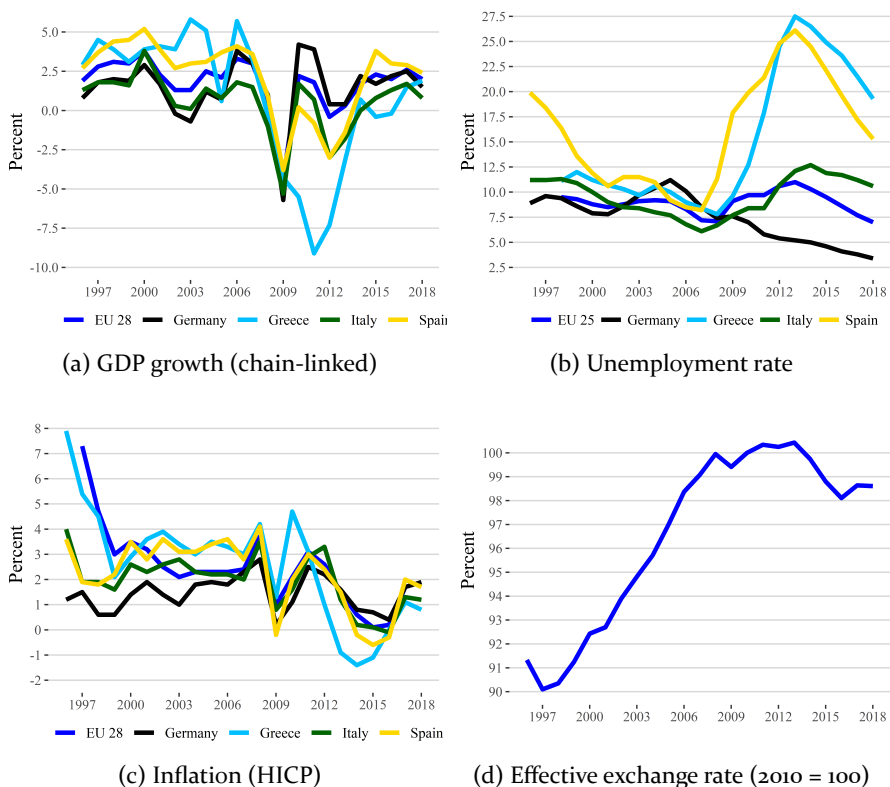


Figure 12: The Spanish economy (1996-2018)

Data source: Eurostat (2019)

8.3 The Indignant

The economic crisis and the policies pursued to fight it had left a devastating imprint on the socio-economic well-being of the Spanish population: "From 2000 to 2015 there was a hike in the Gini coefficient of almost 3 percentage points.... In 2014, no EU country had a wider gap between the income of

⁸ There were also a few points of agreement. See Botti (2013, pp. 48-9).

the richest 10 per cent and that of the poorest 10 per cent; 29 per cent of the population...[were] at risk of poverty or social exclusion...6 points more than in 2007” (González-Enríquez 2017, p. 5). Moreover, the perception that Spanish politics were being conditioned by international financial markets and institutions, the austerity policies pursued by the PSOE and the impression that no other political organization was about to challenge the course of events, led Real Democracy Now, a small group of Spanish internet activists, to call for protest marches on the 15. of May 2011. That day, tens of thousands of citizens in more than 50 Spanish cities protested against austerity, giving birth to the so-called movement of the enraged (the *indignados*) or 15-M movement (Romanos 2017, p. 137). The 15-M movement consisted, at its core, of experienced activists organized in various small and now rapidly growing civil society organizations. The latter included the Platform of Persons Affected by Mortgages (PAH), which became known especially for attempting to stop evictions of persons unable to pay their mortgages, Youth Without a Future, which aimed to draw attention to the plight of the Spanish youth (see below) as well as newly created movements like the green and white tides (the *mareas*), organized especially by education and health sector workers respectively, to oppose budget cuts and job precariousness Flesher Fominaya (2015). Rejecting a vertical organization and centralized leadership structure as well as the participation of political parties and unions,⁹ the 15-M occupied central city squares, creating the necessary infrastructure to maintain their camps; organized open discussion circles on socio-political issues and set up so-called assemblies; organized protest marches against austerity; lastly, carried out more questionable activities, such as so-called *escraches*, in which protesters aim to publicly and directly confront and decry individuals for their actions, and the so-called encirclements of the national and regional parliaments, which at times escalated into violence but did not enjoy the general approval of the 15-M movement (Romanos 2017, pp. 137–42). The discourse propagated by the 15-M rejected the Spanish two-party system, which seemed to offer no real alternative to austerity as well as the submission of the political class to economic interests at the cost of the general population; critiqued the lack of responsiveness and accountability of the ruling class, which was seen to consist not only of national politicians, but also of unelected representatives of international financial and political institutions; lastly, the 15-M rejected

⁹ The general strike on the 29. September 2010, intended only as a once-off mobilization to pressure the PSOE, was followed by an agreement between unions and the government on the pension reform in January 2011. This event demonstrated that the unions were unwilling to lead an organized, broad based and sustained resistance against the politics of austerity (Antentas 2015, p. 139).

its identification with the political left or right, instead considering itself a transversal movement of the people (Antentas 2015, pp. 142–147, Romanos 2017, pp. 132–135). Although the 15-M was politically, socio-economically and generationally diverse, the group consisting of well educated middle-class youth was preponderant among its participants (Antentas 2015, pp. 147–8, Romanos 2017, pp. 147–8). The motives for this group's participation were its exceptionally high unemployment rate, its difficulty to find jobs suitable to their attained qualifications and to earn an income which would permit them to become independent from their parents (Köhler and Calleja Jiménez 2015, pp. 246–7). Although the majority of 15-M's demands would not be met in the coming years, the movement provided both the impulse for the creation of the left-wing Podemos and created fertile ground for its electoral success in the future.

8.4 Center-periphery conflict: the point of inflection

During Zapatero's second term, the Catalonia conflict was to reach a new level of saliency. After a prolonged waiting period of some four years, the Constitutional Court finally delivered its verdict on the Catalan statute in June 2010.¹⁰ The fundamental question to be dealt with by the court was the extent to which AC statutes, approved by the respective regional parliament and as organic laws by Congress as well as – in some cases – by regional referenda,¹¹ could more or less indirectly condition the institutional relations between the central state and the ACs (Colino and Hombrado 2012, pp. 197–8). The internal division among the judges lead to an awkward compromise: most of the statute's provisions were considered compatible with the 1978 Constitution, but much of its content was deprived of its potential effects, by interpreting them restrictively or considering them mere political recommendations (Colino and Hombrado 2012, pp. 197–8, 200). As a consequence, of the 114 articles that the PP laid before the Constitutional Court, 14 were declared totally or partially unconstitutional and 27 were interpreted restrictively (Colino and Hombrado 2012, p. 198). For example, the term “nation” used to describe the Catalan population in the preamble was denied any juridical significance; the statute's fifth article, which formulated a Catalan claim to historic rights, was accepted, but the Court ruled out parallels to the Basque Country and

¹⁰ The long delay was caused by the politicization of the issue, external pressures and the division among the judges on the verdict (Colino and Hombrado 2012, p. 192).

¹¹ According to article 152.2, those ACs which acceded to autonomy via the fast track must hold referenda to approve statute reforms (Las Cortes 1978).

Navarre; the term “preferred” to describe the use of Catalan vis-à-vis Spanish was eliminated; the proposed obligation to know Catalan and the right to address courts and judicial organs in Catalan was rejected; the statute’s rights charter was not awarded constitutional status; lastly, its articles dealing with the finance system were interpreted as mere recommendations (Colino and Hombrado 2012, pp. 199–202).¹² In a more general sense, the Court’s ruling ultimately rejected the possibility that autonomous statutes could be employed as quasi-constitutional reform instruments to directly or indirectly limit the reach or content of the competencies of the central state, thus rejecting the insulation of competencies from central state “intervention” by considering them mostly as concurrent or shared (Colino and Hombrado 2012, pp. 199, 201–2).

The Constitutional Court’s ruling caused a wave of political and societal indignation in Catalonia, not least because some of the supposedly unconstitutional articles appeared, almost verbatim, in other approved AC statutes, giving the impression that the ruling was motivated by antagonism toward Catalonia rather than judicial reasoning (Martínez 2016, p. 98). Shortly after the Constitutional Court ruling, the Catalan socialist President Maragall called for a public protest in Barcelona on the 10. of July and which was, according to local police, attended by 1.1 million people. The most repeated slogan during the demonstration was not the official motto “We are a nation, we decide”, but the call for independence from Spain (Ellakuría 2015, pp. 147–8 Colino and Hombrado 2012, p. 205).

While there can be no doubt that the court’s ruling was a point of inflection in the Catalan public’s attitude toward the Spanish central state, a perceptible societal change in favour of Catalan independence had already been sweltering for some time. The Platform for the Right to Decide, its name likely inspired by the Basque Ibarretxe Plan and founded in December 2005, organized a protest in February 2006 under the title “We are a nation and have the right to decide”, in which the ERC and 82 to 700 thousand people participated. In 2007, another protest took place, with still more participants and which the CiU had also decided to attend. Then, from 2009 to 2011, hundreds of informal “consultations”, organized by tens of thousands of volunteers, were held across Catalonia, asking people to cast their vote on Catalan independence. While the Catalan parties generally held their distance, some one million people ultimately participated in these consultations (Martínez 2016, pp. 111–116). The 2010 ruling would give a renewed and decisive impetus to Catalan nationalism

¹² Some articles which were beneficial to ACs, but ultimately of a lesser symbolic value, were also accepted by the Constitutional Court. See Colino and Hombrado (2012, pp. 201–2).

and calls for independence. Up to this point in time, the Diada, a Catalan public holiday on the 11. of September to commemorate the fall of Barcelona to Bourbon troops in 1714 and understood to symbolise the political repression visited on the Catalans, had previously been accompanied by an ERC led protest of some two to three thousand people. In 2010, that number increased to 10 thousand and would reach truly massive proportions from 2012 (de Carreras 2017, p. 183). Moreover, between 1991 and 2006, the percentage of people in Catalonia in favour of independence had usually ranged between 15 and 20 percent, but from 2007 to 2010 that percentage increased to 30 percent and to between 40 and 45 percent in 2012 and 2013 (Arza and Mari-Klose 2014, p. 33). Clearly, the 2006 statute reform and the PP led recourse to the Constitutional Court marked a point of inflection in the Catalan society's perception of the relation between Catalonia and the Spanish state.

Moreover, the conflict over the Catalan statute occurred during a period in which the Catalan population was suffering from an increase in unemployment and the onset of austerity. In this context, several measures of the Zapatero government were perceived as being of a recentralizing nature: the Plan E's centrally executed stimulus measures, the fusion of regional saving banks as well as the central government's assertiveness over budgetary stability, fiscal consolidation and debt limits to condition AC policies (Colino and Hombrado 2012, p. 212). The "deactivation" of the Catalan statute's AC finance system as well as the measures of financial austerity seemed to give credence to the belief, encapsulated in the expression "Spain is stealing from us" ("España nos roba"), that Catalonia was being unjustly disadvantaged by the financial redistribution system between ACs.¹³

To Cs, pushed to the brink of extinction by the political adventures surrounding the 2009 European election, these economic and political developments permitted the party's survival. The Constitutional Court's 2010 sentence pushed the previously more moderate parties like the PSC and the CiU to more aggressive nationalist stances and the regional repercussions of the economic crisis, for the management of which the PSOE was heavily criticized, weakened the tripartite coalition (Ellakuría 2015, pp. 130, 144, 156–157). Moreover, Cs had adopted a new media strategy, which consisted especially of Rivera attending all the major TV shows to which he was invited, where he often encountered his future rivals Pablo Iglesias and Pablo Casado (see below), and the party's more intensive use of social media (Ellakuría 2015, pp. 121–123, 152, 264). Moreover, a number of corruption scandals concerning both Catalan and major national parties favoured Cs discourse of democratic

¹³ For more on this topic, see the next chapter.

regeneration, transparency and its fierce stance on corruption (Ellakuría 2015, pp. 125–6, 155). Furthermore, two specific issues had provided Cs with greater visibility. Firstly, Cs had opposed the passage of a bill prohibiting bullfighting – not just a Spanish, but also a Catalan tradition – by the nationalist parties, arguing that their motive was its symbolic association with Spanish nationalism (Ellakuría 2015, pp. 130–2). Secondly, the party had attempted to pressure the Catalan government into facilitating the public viewing of the Spanish participation in the 2010 soccer world cup (Ellakuría 2015, pp. 142–3).

As a consequence of the developments during Zapatero's second term, the biggest winner of the November 2010 Catalan election was the CiU under Mas' leadership, which increased its share of the vote by 7.4 percent, reaching 39.6 percent, its best result since 1995, the year the party had lost its absolute majority. Despite the commotion around the Constitutional Court's ruling and the issue of Catalan independence, the CiU had focused its campaign primarily on its promise to be "business friendly" and to negotiate a new fiscal pact with the central state. Although the term "right to decide" had already occasionally been used by Mas, especially in reference to infrastructure, a possible fiscal pact and in response to positioning the CiU on the anticipated partial rejection of the statute, the term had played no major role in the 2010 campaign and the words "independence" or "independent state" were not used (Martínez 2016, pp. 109–11, Vidal-Folch 2013, pp. 91–2). The ERC was, however, already advocating Catalan independence, while the PSC continued to call for a federal state (Vidal-Folch 2013, pp. 93–4). Either way, the former members of the tripartite were harshly punished at the polls, the PSC falling by 8.5 percent to 18.9 percent, its worst result to date, while the ERC lost 7.1 percent, its worst result since 1992. The PP barely profited, making only slight gains of 1.9 percent, but nonetheless achieved its second best result ever in Catalonia with 13.2 percent. Cs was saved from extinction, attracting 3.5 percent of the vote and thus being able to hold onto its three deputies. In an act of flagrant pragmatism, the CiU decided to ally itself with the PP in order to be able to form government, a decision that did not bode well for the CiU's popularity in the near future.¹⁴

¹⁴ For a description of the Mas government's activities, see section 9.6 on page 283.

8.5 Analysis of the November 2011 election and specificity

8.5.1 Electoral campaign and electoral programs

In 2011, important changes were taking place within the PSOE. Given his steep drop in popularity and in order to soften the potential electoral blow of the May 2011 municipal and autonomous elections, Zapatero had announced that he would not present himself as PSOE candidate for the national 2012 election (J. M. Romero, Díez, and V. G. Calvo 2011). Following two related power struggles over, firstly, whether Zapatero should continue as general secretary or let the party's future presidential candidates take over and, secondly, whether that person should be Carme Chacón, minister of defence and exponent of the Nueva Vía, or Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba, vice-president, minister of the interior and *felipista*, Chacón withdrew her candidacy to avoid dividing the party (Bosco 2013, p. 30, El Mundo 2011). Backed by Zapatero as well as all the PSOE regional secretaries, Rubalcaba's selection as the PSOE's prime ministerial candidate secured Zapatero's positions as general secretary and thus also indirectly as president of the government until the general election (Menéndez Ferraz 2011, M. Sánchez 2011). In light of the abysmal AC elections in May, the economic outlook, rising social and political critique and Rubalcaba's – possibly temporary – popularity, Zapatero decided to move the national election forward from March 2012 to November 2011, causing Rubalcaba to abandon the government to prepare his election bid (Bosco 2013, p. 32, Garea 2011).

As an electoral candidate, Rubalcaba faced a number of challenges: he had led the ultimately failed negotiations with ETA, although the latter officially and permanently renounced the use of violence just one month before the general election; he was not the head of the party and Zapatero had not consulted with him on key issues like the constitutional reform, undermining his credibility; lastly, as a former member of Zapatero's cabinet, he had been complicit in the PSOE's turn toward austerity. As a consequence, Rubalcaba's strategy to distance himself from Zapatero by moving the PSOE to the left in order to offer credible policy alternatives and to arouse fears of the PP's supposed plans austerity and liberalization thus required a great deal of indulgence on the part of the electorate (Bosco 2013, p. 32, Kennedy 2012, pp. 676–7).

Based on election polls, which unanimously declared the PP victor of the coming election, Rajoy's strategy consisted in attacking the government especially concerning its economic policies, projecting political moderation and revealing as few specific policy proposals as possible to demobilize the left and attract the voters of the political center (Kennedy 2012, pp. 677–8, 680,

J. M. Romero, Díez, and V. G. Calvo 2011). Moreover, Rajoy made a number of promises, which included not to increase taxes, not to reduce pensions, not to cut unemployment benefits, not to increase or broaden the so-called pharmaceutical co-payment as well as to continue to implement the dependency law. Thus, although his references to austerity as well as a labour market reform were blatantly obvious to careful observers, the manner by which these were to be implemented remained unclear (Moreno 2011). The outcome of the televised debate between Rajoy and Rubalcaba in November seemed to favour the former (Kennedy 2012, pp. 677–8).

Concerning the parties' electoral programs, the PSOE's 150 page strong document is much shorter than the previous one. It is structured into four major sections, presented as the party's main axes of action for the coming legislature, each of which consisted of a large agglomeration of subsections (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 8). The first section following on the introduction deals with a "competitive economy", followed by sections concerned with employment, equality of opportunities as well as democracy (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, pp. 2–5). The program opens with a clear leftist appeal, claiming that while globalization has had its benefits, it has also brought with it systemic risks (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 6). It continues: "Citizens all over the world are calling for a greater presence of politics, which must reclaim a space that has been abandoned to economic powers in these last decades. It is unacceptable that the destiny of the lives of millions of people, their employment and their material well-being, depends on the arbitrary decisions of some international financial markets, the decisions of which at times have a greater influence over the economy of a country than the representatives which have been elected democratically by its citizens. We need changes in the international and global governance" (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 6). In a somewhat contradictory manner, the importance of the social democratic project and its values, based on freedom in equality and solidarity, are emphasized, but the program shifts its focus to performance and outcome: "Citizens identify with those political projects which put their values at the service of political programs capable of generating a more prosperous and cohesive society" (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 6), a point re-emphasized subsequently (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 7). Moreover, no clear alternative to the economic model already pursued by Zapatero is offered: "We propose, therefore, to recover economic growth, to open with full determination a new period based in the knowledge economy, innovation and sustainable energy" (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 8).

The PP's 214 page long program is structured into six sections, namely stability and reforms to generate employment, education, the welfare state, the administration, democracy and, lastly, European and foreign policy, reflecting its main focus for the coming legislature (Partido Popular 2011, pp. 7–8, 16–17). It commences with a one page long “letter” signed by Mariano Rajoy, which points out the need for a change which offers credible solutions to real problems, for political moderation and to fight unemployment, promising to “support our entrepreneurs, and to guarantee education, health and the welfare of everyone, without exception. [...] We ask that a majority of citizens support us in order to obtain a clear and reformist mandate. For an austere government which makes transparency and responsibility the cornerstones of its identity” (Partido Popular 2011, p. 5). The subsequent introduction briefly abandons this rather benign tone, however, pointing to the dismal economic management of the PSOE, which has put the welfare state in danger, as well as the rupture of political consensus, continuing: “the Socialist Party has taken Spain off its reformist and modernizing path to drive it towards impoverishment, the deterioration of the prestige of its institutions and international irrelevance. [...] Faced with the economic crisis, the answer consisted first in denying it, then in trying to hide it by incurring in excessive debt to finance unproductive spending and, lastly, in cuts, improvisation, a lack of strategy and vision” (Partido Popular 2011, p. 13). The following pages are a more elaborate version of Rajoy's condensed address, focusing especially on the PP's competence, its transparent, honest and moderate nature and its desire for modernization, the welfare state always being portrayed as a dividend of economic growth and with a relatively great deal of emphasis being placed on education (Partido Popular 2011, pp. 14–17).

8.5.2 Specificity and policy field IP discussion

8.5.2.1 Specificity

The 2011 issue position distributions, as shown in fig. 13a on the facing page, are somewhat different to the previous year. Overall, both parties reduced their absolute number of issue positions substantially, although the PP did so much more drastically, from 362 to 150 (by 58.6 percent), than the POSE, from 377 to 239 (by 36.6 percent). Moreover, while the PP offers almost no SQ type issue positions, the PSOE does (16 versus one). The PSOE offers substantially more GIPs (18 versus eleven), VIPs (116 versus 69) and VIPLs (49 versus 36) than the PP, while offering only marginally more GIPLs (five versus two) and IPs (31 versus 27) and the same number of IPLs (four). The PSOE's greater relative vagueness when compared to the PP is reflected in fig. 13b, in which

the PP clearly offers a relatively greater number of IPLs and IPs and fewer less specific issue positions than the PSOE. On average, the PP has a specificity score of 5.78, declining slightly from its 2008 score of 5.85, while the PSOE has an average specificity score of 5.46, thus also having declined slightly from 5.59 points in the previous election.

Concerning the issue position distribution by policy fields, in the labour market policy field the drop in the absolute number of issue positions has not been so dramatic for the PSOE (from 241 to 203), while the PP's issue positions in this policy field dropped massively from 169 to 56. Compared to the PP, the PSOE offers many more SQ type issue positions (14 versus 0) as well as GIPs (thirteen versus five), VIPLs (43 versus thirteen), VIPs (98 to 25) and IPs (28 to twelve). The distribution did not change much in shape for the PSOE, while

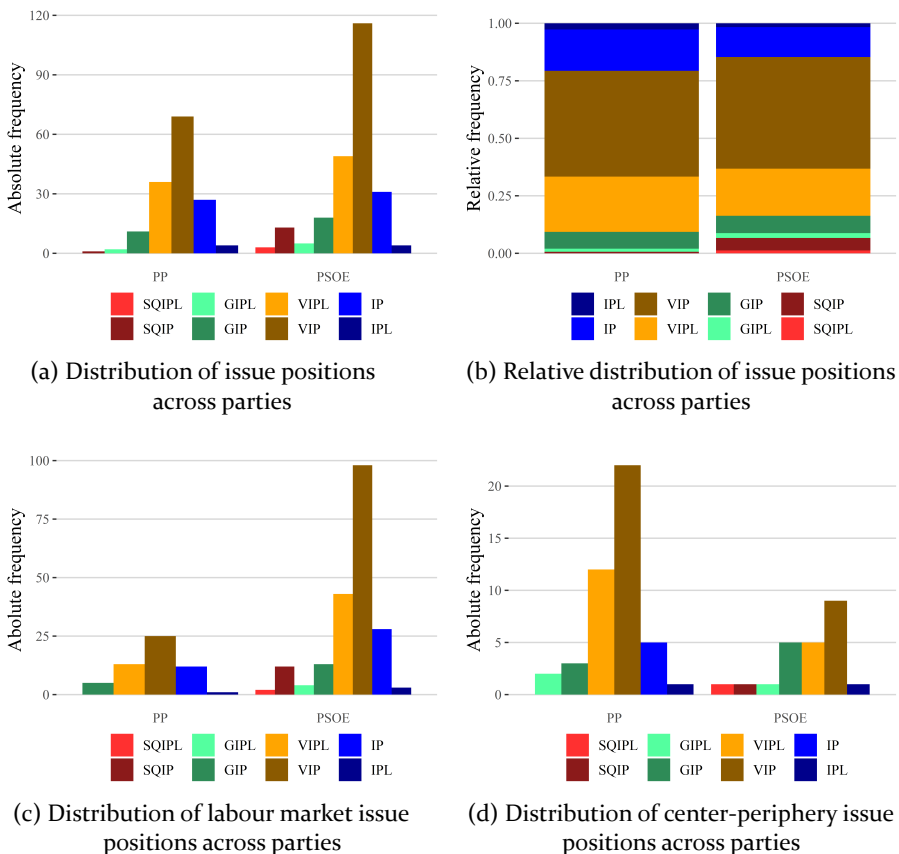
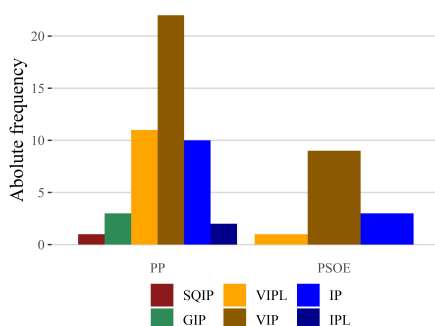


Figure 13: Specificity (2011)



(e) Distribution of SMSE issue positions across parties

Figure 13: Specificity (2011), cont.

it became more symmetrical for the PP, meaning that the party resorted to VIPs and VIPLs to a greater extent than to other issue position types. These changes actually cause the PP's labour market specificity to increase slightly from 5.82 to 5.84 points, while the PSOE's specificity once again declines by a much clearer margin, from 5.68 to 5.48 points.

In the center-periphery policy field, the PSOE only offers a total of 23 issue positions, while the PP offers 22 VIPs alone (and a total of 45 issue positions). Moreover, while the PSOE offers only one IPL and no IP, the PP offers 5 IPs and 1 IPL. Except for the much lower number of issue positions, the PSOE's specificity value distribution is very similar to that of 2008 in this policy field, while the PP's distribution has also become more symmetrical here. On average, the PSOE's specificity in this policy field is 4.91 points compared to 5.2 points in 2008, whereas for the PP specificity increased very slightly from 5.59 to 5.62.

In the SMSE policy field, shown in fig. 13e, the PP's issue position distribution in 2011 seems more similar to the labour market than to the center periphery one.¹⁵ For the PSOE, the SMSE issue position distribution is markedly different from the other two, as shown especially by the scarcity of VIPLs and a general lack of issue position diversity. The PP and PSOE's specificity values are 5.86 and 6.15. The PP thus drastically decreased its specificity in this policy field from 6.24 points in 2008, while the PSOE increased it from 5.71 points. This may be considered a response of both parties to the substantial difference in

¹⁵ Please note that the visual difference is caused primarily by the difference in scale of the y-axes.

policy field specificity between them in 2008, with each party noticing the behaviour of its rival and making to its own advantage.

Based on the political context, it may thus be argued that the labour market policy field offered the PSOE a way to demonstrate its left credentials, following its policies of austerity in government, although this demonstration may have been tempered by the outbreak of the economic crisis, as is reflected in the overall drop in the number of issue positions and specificity and the relatively large number of SQIPs and VIPs, among others. In contrast, the political tensions concerning the center-periphery policy field and the evolution of the Catalan statute reform caused the PSOE to avoid committing itself to almost any specific means. The PP, while preferring to remain relatively silent on its neoliberal labour market reform program, wished to counteract the PSOE's center-periphery policies by committing itself to changes to the SQ and by continuing to politicize this policy field. The extent to which this interpretation is borne out by the specific issue positions which the parties have provided will be discussed next.

8.5.2.2 Labour market IPs

Concerning the labour market, in the area of gender equality the PSOE proposed to make the reception of public support to companies dependent on the fulfilment of the Equality Law, including the formulation of gender equality plans, with the primary objective of reducing the gender based salary gap (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 100); proposed a program to stimulate female entrepreneurship by providing particular training and support, including micro-credits (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 100); to implement a 20 percent female quota for the boards of directors of big companies, to be reached within the next legislature (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 100); the creation of (specifically mentioned) indicators and controls to monitor infant education centres (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 96); to establish a four day workplace leave for the urgent and transitory care of children younger than 12 years of age or other dependent family members (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 96).

In order to support the transition from education to employment and to preserve jobs, the PSOE promised to increase the resources of the Public Employment Service (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 55), such as by means of the creation of the Employment Fund, to be financed in part through the penalization of large companies which execute EREs that include people 50 years of age or older (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, pp. 55–6); to launch the Initial Professional Qualification Program to provide those who

have not obtained a specific qualification and are younger than 20 years of age a second educational opportunity (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 61); to implement the Youth Employment Plan to enable those between 20 and 30 years of age to complete their education or training by means of providing dual training and employment through Training and Learning Contracts, the *Contratos para la Formación y el Aprendizaje* (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 61); to create 200 thousand new vocational training spots in education (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 62); lastly, to create personalized itineraries for job seeking disabled persons, which would provide information on their capacities (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 107).

In order to reduce work place precariousness, the socialists proposed to introduce a bonus-malus, which would increase companies' unemployment contributions in accordance with the extent to which they hire temporary labour (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 56); the extension of social security discounts which had provided an incentive for hire, in order to avoid their termination during the crisis (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 56); to pass an assistance law for those affected by workplace accidents and diseases, including juridical and additional economic support (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 60). Additional measures included stimulating the use of part-time contracts by permitting job seekers to substitute employees currently undergoing training (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 55) as well as the possibility to negotiate internal flexibility measures at the company level (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 57).

The PP only provided a very small number of specific measures, which included the creation of a fund to which employees were to contribute to and which could be accessed to provide unemployment coverage, promote mobility or pay for training (Partido Popular 2011, p. 37); the provision of training vouchers to permit the re-qualification of workers (Partido Popular 2011, p. 38); the permission for private companies to participate in the intermediation between job seekers and employers (Partido Popular 2011, p. 38); social security discounts for self-employed individuals who hire their first employee (Partido Popular 2011, p. 38); to provide a freely distributable number of hours in which employees could deal with personal matters (Partido Popular 2011, p. 119); lastly, an increase of paternity leave in line with the evolution of the economy as well as the implementation of an obligatory minimum (Partido Popular 2011, p. 119). Moreover, salaries and working conditions were to be determined by collective agreements at the company level (Partido Popular 2011, p. 38).

Overall then, both the PSOE and the PP have, when compared to 2008, retreated from making costly and overly specific commitments. Most of the PSOE's measures were focused on vocational training, accompanied by one of the few seemingly ambitious policies, namely to create 200 thousand new vocational training spots. Some means shifted the burden to companies, such as the publication of gender equality plans, others seemed low cost to the state and uncontroversial. Overall, left ideological overtones were clearly recognizable, but they were moderate in intensity, perhaps conditioned by the assumption that particularly costly labour market policy proposals would have been neither realizable nor provide a boost to the PSOE's economic policy credibility. The conservatives' issue positions reflected their belief in individual initiative, greater flexibility and competition, the most social and interventionist mean arguably having been their commitment to implement an obligatory minimum paternity leave. Moreover, their program clearly shied away from showing the PP's hand regarding specific future labour market policies, the only major hint in this sense being the – no doubt crucial – proposal to shift collective agreement negotiations from the sectoral to the company level.

8.5.2.3 Center-periphery IPs

The number of means proposed by the PSOE and PP in the center-periphery field in 2011 were very small. The PSOE limited itself to stating its desire to continue to pursue a senate and constitutional reform, on which it provided no further details (and which are thus not considered IPs). Instead, the PSOE stated three rather uncontroversial potential reforms, the last two of which had already appeared in its previous program: to make explicit mention of the ACs in the Constitution; to insert a reference to the process of European integration; lastly, to reform the article discriminating the female gender in the succession of the Spanish Crown (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2011, p. 125).

The PP focused almost exclusively on financial issues, proposing the establishment of spending roofs for all administrative levels as well as to set pre-determined limits of indebtedness (Partido Popular 2011, p. 31); to eliminate superfluous expenditure and duplicities (Partido Popular 2011, p. 32); to establish sanctions for violating budgetary stability regulations (Partido Popular 2011, p. 32); to provide more economic and financial information on all public administrations (Partido Popular 2011, p. 32); lastly, as was the case in 2011, to reform the territorial finance system by making population, among other variables not further specified, a key factor (Partido Popular 2011, p. 158). Thus,

neither parties could be said to be addressing the center-periphery conflict of the preceding two legislatures adequately, while the PP was being rather transparent with its intention of disciplining and limiting sub-national spending and debt. At the same time, the conservatives did not commit themselves to a great degree of specificity regarding other center-periphery policy field issues, perhaps forming part of their strategy of political moderation.

8.5.3 Hypotheses discussion

8.5.3.1 Hypothesis 1: Deviation from the ideological center

Between the 2008 and 2011 elections, both the PSOE and the PP experienced spikes in their distance to the ideological center, as shown in fig. 14a on the facing page. The PSOE increased from 1.46 to 1.77 points in May 2009, thereafter falling and spiking back up to that same level in March 2010. Thereafter, the PSOE was positioned at 1.34 points, the closest the party had been to the political center since September 2002, roughly continuing at this level until the 2011 election. For the PP, the spikes during this period are the result of a drop rather than an increase in the deviation from the center, falling from 2.31 to 2.12 points in October 2008, thereafter increasing to 2.33 points in July 2009. After another downward drop and comparatively smaller spike, the distance to the center continued to grow to 2.37 by October 2011. While the PSOE was thus, despite attempts to create a clear left profile, perceived to be more moderate – or perhaps still as neoliberal – under its new electoral candidate Rubalcaba in the run-up to the 2011 election, the PP, despite its attempts to give a more moderate impression, was viewed slightly more right-wing than it had been in the 2008 election run-up, perhaps a result both of the PP's attempt at moderation and the PSOE's intention to stoke fears of a PP led neoliberal offensive if the latter would win the election.

As becomes evident from fig. 14b on the next page, the overall relationship between specificity and deviation from the center in 2011 is similar to 2008. Thus, the deviation hypothesis is once again confirmed by the greater overall deviation from the center and greater issue position specificity of the PP compared to the PSOE (as shown by the party cross-hair symbols), the former being .32 points more specific than the latter. Compared to fig. 8b on page 233 showing that same relationship for 2008, this graphic also shows the policy field based regression line trends for each party (red or blue) across time. With the exception of the SMSE policy field, for which the PSOE increased and the PP decreased their specificity, these regression lines show that the positive relationship between deviation and specificity also holds at the policy

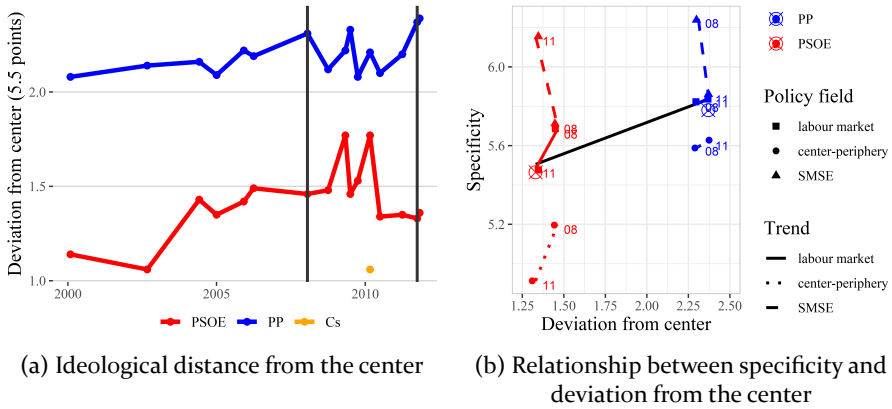


Figure 14: Deviation from the center hypothesis discussion (2011)

field level across time. Thus, the PSOE's specificity in the labour market as well as the center-periphery policy fields in 2011 declined as the party moved toward the ideological center, while the PP increased its specificity in these policy fields as it deviated more from it, both parties thus behaving as one would expect. Despite the contrary SMSE policy field trend, this relationship also holds when based on the overall policy field based data across time, the relationship between policy field based specificity and deviation from the center still being positive (as indicated by the black regression line). Although this is purely speculative, the PP's decrease and the PSOE's increase in the SMSE policy field, both noticeably large when compared to the respective parties' behaviour in their other policy fields, may, as previously mentioned, be owed to a process of adjustment, given that in 2008 the PP offered a large degree of specificity in this policy field while the PSOE was comparatively vague (see fig. 8b on page 233). Since the trends revealed in the data are still based on relatively few observations, they must still be considered with a relatively large degree of scepticism.

8.5.3.2 Hypothesis 2: Party threat

2011 saw clear changes in the parties' overall threat levels, shown in fig. 15a on the following page, primarily because of the massive shift in electoral expectations. The PP's threat level was more than halved, falling from .31 to .09 points, whereas that of the PSOE increased from 0.25 to .61 points. While the 0.59 point ideological threat between the PSOE and PP was almost the same as in 2008, the competitive advantage of the PP exerted a .42 competitive threat on the PSOE and benefited the PP (i.e. was positive for the former and

negative for the later), as can be seen in fig. 15b and fig. 15c. Concerning the IU-PSOE party pair, ideological threat fell slightly to .8, but competitive threat increased substantially from -.86 points to -.59 points. As can be seen from fig. 15d, however, the 2011 data does not confirm the hypothesis of a positive relationship between threat and specificity. In 2011, the PP experienced a low level of threat, but was much more specific (5.46 points) than the much more threatened PSOE (with 5.78 points), as shown by the cross-hair symbols.

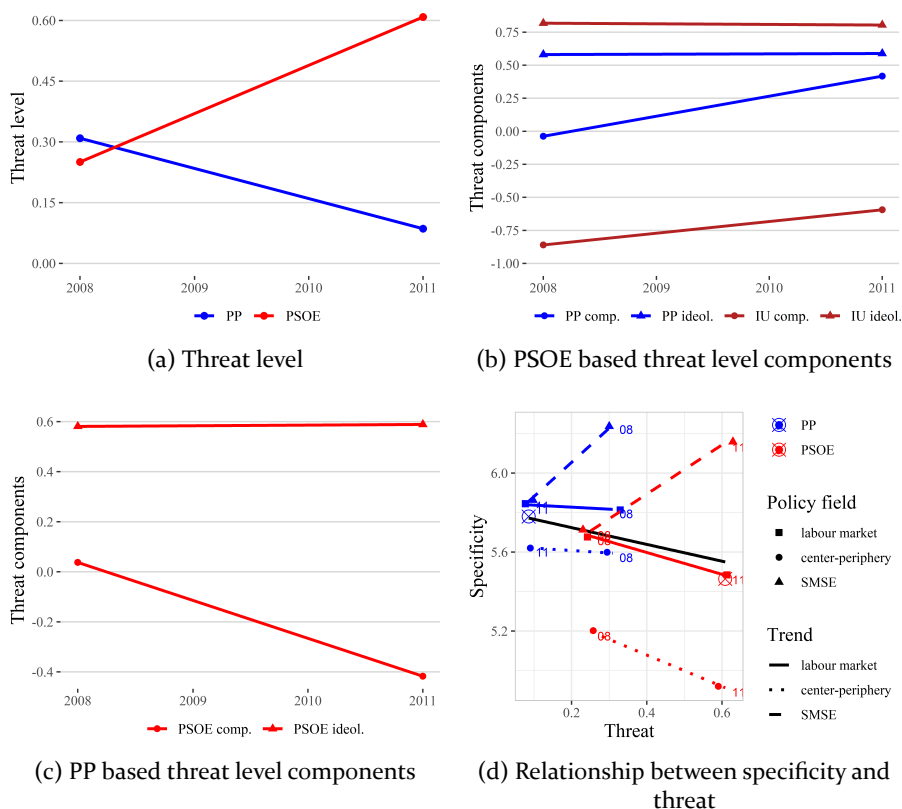


Figure 15: Threat hypothesis discussion (2011)

Concerning the policy field based data across time, also shown in fig. 15d, the decline in the PP's threat level between 2008 and 2011 was accompanied by slight decreases in the specificity of two policy fields and dropped massively in the SMSE policy field. For the PSOE, as the threat level increased between 2008 and 2011, the party actually became less specific in two policy fields, only the SMSE policy field's specificity increasing. Thus, if the hypothesis were to

be evaluated across time, only the party behaviour in the SMSE policy field would seem to confirm the existence of a positive relationship between threat and specificity.

8.5.3.3 Hypothesis 3: Party certainty of victory

In Zapatero's second term, between March 2008 and June 2009, four electoral contests took place in Spain. In the Andalusian contest, which once again coincided with the national election, the PSOE declined by 2.1 percent to 48.9 percent, defending its absolute majority of seats, while the PP gained 6.6 percent, reaching 38.9 percent of the vote and setting a new record slightly above its 2000 results.¹⁶

In the March 2009 Galician election, the PP only made small gains (1.7 percent), reaching 47.5 percent, while the PSOE lost 2.1 percent, falling to 31.5 percent of the vote. Although the PSOE's performance was still respectable, given that it had been able to mostly hold on to the substantial gains it had made in 2005, these minor changes permitted the PP to retake the Galician presidency with an absolute majority of seats under the leadership of Alberto Núñez Feijóo, a PP moderate and important future party baron. In the Basque election that same month, the PSOE won a clear victory, gaining 8 percent, permitting the formation of the first non-nationalist Basque government by the socialist Patxi López, with the votes in favour of the PP (which had lost 3.3 percent, falling to 14.1 percent of the vote) and the UPyD (El País 2009), brining the Basque nationalist adventures of the last decade to an end. Although the PNV had actually been able to gain an additional seat and had only lost 0.1 percent of the vote, the PNV's leader Ibarretxe announced his withdrawal from politics only minutes before López's investiture (Montañés and Lardies 2009). In the much more representative European election three months later, the PP set a new party record once again, gaining an additional 2.3 percent of the vote, totalling 42.7 percent, while the PSOE lost 4.4 percent, falling to 39.3 percent. Nonetheless, the PSOE's performance was still notably better than in the 1994 and 1999 European elections.

¹⁶ Concerning the regional government formation and electoral data sources consulted, please see footnote 61 on page 205.

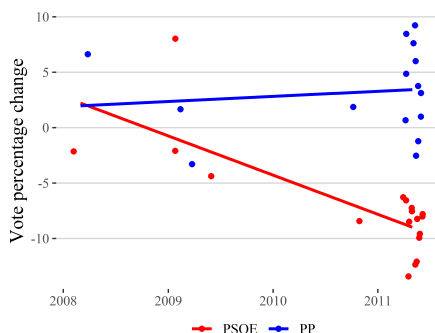


Figure 16: Certainty based on electoral trends, hypothesis discussion (2011)

Up to the November 2010 Catalan election, already described above, these regional as well as the European elections showed that the PSOE was in gradual decline, but was still able to defend itself rather well. In the Catalan election, however, the PSC lost 8.4 percent, falling to 18.9 percent, its worst result to date, while the PP was barely able to profit, making only slight gains (1.9 percent) but achieving, with 12.7 percent of the vote, its second best result ever. That the Catalan election outcome could be interpreted not only as the result of the Constitutional Court ruling on the AC statute reform, but also as a punishment for the PSOE's questionable economic management, became evident in the crushing May 2011 AC elections. In five ACs, the PSOE lost between 6.3 and 7.8 percent, in another five ACs between eight and 9.9 percent, and in Canary Islands, Asturias and Aragon between 12.1 and 13.4 percent of the vote. The PP did not benefit as much as one may have expected, however. In two ACs, Navarre and Asturias, the conservatives lost a whopping 35.3 and 22 percent respectively. Both were exceptional cases, however, and were thus also removed from fig. 16 so as to not impact on the overall slightly positive party trend. In Navarre, the regional party alliance which had permitted the PP's integration into the Navarrese UPN had fallen apart; in Asturias, former PP general secretary and government minister, Francisco Álvarez-Cascos (Mansilla 2020), had founded the regional party Foro Asturias Ciudadanos (FAC), which drew massive electoral support both from former PP and PSOE voters. Moreover, the PP experienced losses in Valencia and Madrid, where the conservatives lost 2.5 and 1.2 percent of the vote. The party gained one percent or less in two ACs. In three other ACs, the PP gained between 3.1 and 4.8 percent of the vote. Only in Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura, the Canary Islands and Aragon did the PP gain six, 7.6, 8.5 and 9.2 percent of the vote respectively.

The difference between the PSOE's losses and the PP's gains was a clear sign of the inability of the conservatives to absorb the voters' dissatisfaction with the PSOE, but was nonetheless sufficient to bring about a massive shift in regional power: the PSOE lost Castilla-La Mancha, the Balearic Islands and Cantabria to PP absolute majorities and Extremadura as well as Aragon to PP minority governments. Asturias was lost to a FAC minority government. The PSOE had thus lost control over two of its electoral strongholds, Castilla-La Mancha and Extremadura, for the first time ever, over Aragon for the first time since 1999 and over Asturias for the second time only. In Canary Islands and Navarre, the PSOE entered into government for the first time since 1993 and 1996 respectively, but was reliant on nationalist parties to form governments. Overall, then, the PSOE ruled in only four ACs (including Andalusia), in all of them in coalition, while the PP ruled in twelve ACs and the PSOE minority government in the Basque Country was reliant on PP support. The municipal election, held on the same day as the AC elections, also reflected the PSOE's unpopularity. The PP won 38.5 percent of the vote and 26.5 thousand city councillors, while the PSOE only won 28.5 percent of the vote and 21.8 thousand city councillors respectively. As a consequence of that election, Barcelona, which had been ruled by various leftist coalitions under PSC leadership since 1979, was lost for the first time ever to the CiU and Sevilla, ruled uninterruptedly by the PSOE since 1999, was lost to the PP. Nonetheless, the PSOE was able to hold on to mayorship in Zaragoza. Madrid and Valencia city remained firmly in the hands of the PP (RTVE and EFE 2011, Pi 2011). The very clear signs of a coming electoral setback for the PSOE were also confirmed by CIS electoral surveys, which had begun to occasionally predict PP electoral victories from August 2009. From June 2010, the PP began to clearly surpass the PSOE in the polls (I. Martín and Urquizu-Sancho 2012, p. 350). The 2011 pre-electoral CIS survey reflected the turn about in the mood of the general population. Only 0.1 and 1.6 percent of the interviewees considered the political situation very good or good, while 17.5 considered it average, 36.9 bad and 41.3 percent very bad. Still worse, the economic situation was considered very good or good by only 0.1 and 0.7 percent, average by 8.9, bad by 33.2 and very bad by 56.5 percent of those interviewed.¹⁷ Concerning the PSOE's performance in particular, while 0.4, 5.1 and 29.3 percent of the population considered the PSOE's management during the last four years very good, good and average respectively, 62.3 percent considered it bad or

¹⁷ In the 2008 pre-electoral CIS survey, the political situation was considered as follows: 0.6 very good, 14.6 good, 43 average, 24.6 bad, 10.9 very bad. The economic situation was considered as follows: 0.4 very good, 13.8 good, 38.1 average, 30 bad, 15.9 very bad (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2008).

very bad, with some 20.8 percent believing that the PP would have done a better job. Despite these negative assessments of the PSOE, however, the assessment of the PP's role in the opposition had not changed much since 2008: 0.8, 10.2 and 33 percent considered it very good, good and average and 49 percent considered it bad or very bad. Moreover, although the conservative candidate was now in the lead when compared to Zapatero, both inspired somewhat dismal levels of confidence: some to a lot of confidence in 13.4 and 25.8 percent of voters, little confidence in 32.4 and 32 percent and none in 52.5 and 39.7 percent of voters. Rubalcaba, the PSOE's actual electoral candidate, inspired a lot to some confidence in 26.4, little in 34.2 and no confidence in 35.1 percent of voters, with a slightly greater percentage of voters in the better and clearly less voters in the worse categories than Rajoy. Asked whom they would prefer if given the option to choose only between Rubalcaba and Rajoy, 36.9 preferred the socialist candidate and 38.8 percent the conservative one. On the popularity scale, Rajoy actually scored slightly below his (new) socialist rival Rubalcaba, with a 4.43 as opposed to a 4.54 average. Although the candidate assessments may have been cause for hope in spite of the rather devastating assessment of Zapatero's policies and the state of the country, the differences in expected vote clearly favoured the PP. The CIS predicted a 46.6 percent share of the vote for the PP and a 29.9 percent share of the vote for the PSOE, a distance that was near impossible to erode so close to a national election. Moreover, a massive 82.1 percent was expecting a PP victory, while only 4.2 percent expected a PSOE victory (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2011a).

There can thus be little doubt that the PP could, despite its relatively minor ability to profit from the PSOE voters' disillusionment and the party's and Rajoy's still somewhat low popularity, be certain of a clear victory over the socialists. A look at table 6 on the facing page shows that the hypothesis that a party that is certain of victory is less specific is not confirmed for 2011, since the PP could be sure of victory, but was being more specific than the PSOE, with 5.78 as opposed to 5.46 points. Even across time, the expectation of a relationship between certainty and specificity is not confirmed. While the PP's specificity declines (marginally) as it becomes certain of victory, the PSOE's specificity declines although the party is no longer certain of victory, thus clearly contradicting the formulated expectation of a positive relationship.¹⁸ The latter may be fruit of the exceptionally difficult circumstances of the economic crisis and the divided PSOE leadership, however. Whether such an

¹⁸ For a summary of all the results of the election year based hypothesis tests conducted thus far, see table 10 on page 382.

Table 6: Certainty and party specificity values compared (2011)

Parties	Variables	Years	
		2008	2011
PP	Certainty	0	1
	Specificity	5.85	5.78
PSOE	Certainty	1	0
	Specificity	5.59	5.46

argument could be made depends especially on the 2015 and 2019 hypothesis test outcomes.

9 **The first Rajoy administration and the 2015 election**

With a clear national electoral mandate, including an absolute majority in both the Congress of Deputies and the Senate, the PP under Rajoy faced few direct political obstacles to implementing its policy preferences. Nonetheless, the further deterioration of the economic situation forced the government to take much more drastic steps, which took the form of a package of severe austerity measures. While the blame for the deepening of the politics of austerity cannot be attributed to the Rajoy administration alone,¹ it may well be justified to question the political nature of the budget cuts and reforms which were implemented.² Moreover, many of the PP's reforms, including those outside the economic sphere, were imposed unilaterally, with little or no consideration for the opinions of the political opposition, civil society organizations or the general public, a manner of doing politics which is remarkable for its short-sightedness³ and revealing of the sectarian degeneration that Spanish politics had suffered especially since Aznar's second term in government and Zapatero's first electoral victory. That an important number of corruption scandals involved the very same governing party which was radically cutting welfare spending in times of massive unemployment and rising poverty, that the PP continued to defend the Spanish Constitution despite its varied and obvious shortcomings, while refusing to engage constructively with the Catalan society and politics, preferring to use the judiciary to stifle political opposition and thus only fanning the flames of dissatisfaction, would result in the greatest legitimacy crisis of the Spanish political system since Franco's death.

9.1 2011 national election results and investiture

In the 2011 national election, the PP received 45.2 percent of the vote and obtained a comfortable majority of 186 seats in the Congress of Deputies,

¹ Short of ignoring the demands for austerity emanating from the EU and the international financial markets, thus risking potentially devastating political and economic consequences, the PP had no option but to drastically cut overall state spending.

² For a detailed and critical assessment, see Sánchez Andrés and Tomás Carpi (2014).

³ The lack of agreement between the major political parties on any major reform is likely to lead to counter-reforms once a change in government has taken place.

beating Aznar's 2004 national election result record. The PSOE, on the other hand, fell by 15.2 percent of the vote to 29.2 percent and 110 deputies, its worst result in post-Franco Spain. In absolute numbers, the picture changes somewhat, however. Compared to 2008, the PSOE had lost 4.3 million votes, while the PP had only won over an additional 589 thousand voters. The IU's gains were, given these exceptional circumstances, relatively poor, winning an impressive sounding additional 716 thousand votes, but which only increased its share of the vote from 3.2 to seven percent, still some three percent below its heyday results. Two other important recipients of former PSOE voters were the UPyD, which had increased its number of votes from 306 thousand to 1.1 million, 4.8 percent of the total, permitting the party to increase its number of deputies by four to a total of five. Moreover, abstention increased from 26.2 to 31.1 percent and the percentage of invalid (null) and blank votes increased from 166 and 286 thousand to 317 and 333 thousand respectively. A number of nationalist parties also profited from the PSOE's decline. In the Basque Country, the biggest winner was Amaiur, the immediate predecessor of EH Bildu, which came in sixth, with 1.39 percent of the vote and seven deputies, beating the PNV by ten thousand votes. In Catalonia, the CiU had attracted an additional 236 thousand votes, increasing by 1.2 percent to 4.2 percent and from ten to 16 seats, while the ERC lost another 41 thousand votes, but was able to hang on to its three deputies. Overall, the number of parties with representation in Congress had increased from ten to twelve and the total share of the vote won by the two largest parties had dropped from 84.8 percent of the vote to 74.4 percent. The 2011 election was thus, despite the clear PP majority, replete with the first signs that neither of the two largest parties represented attractive political options for an increasingly large reservoir of voters, which either decided to cast their votes for the IU, UPyD or nationalist parties, or to abstain or cast null or blank votes. Zapatero reacted to the harsh voter verdict by convoking a party congress for February 2012 to determine a new party secretary (Díez 2011a). Rajoy was invested in December 2011, with 187 votes in favour,⁴ 14 abstentions by the PNV, CC and Amaiur as well as the negative votes of the PSOE, IU, UPyD, CiU and ERC as well as all other parties (Yanel 2011).

⁴ The additional vote in favour came from the aforementioned former PP General Secretary Francisco Álvarez-Cascos's party, now denoted Foro de Ciudadanos.

9.2 Economic crisis and labour market reform

Shortly after coming to government, on the 30. of December 2011, with the Spanish budget deficit 3.6 percent off the 4.4 percent deficit target agreed upon with Brussels for the coming year, the government announced a budget cut of 8,900 million Euro and increased – despite Rajoy’s repeated promise to the contrary – income and capital taxes. Additionally, the government froze public sector salaries, increased their monthly working hours from 35 to 37.5 hours and reduced the staff replacement rate to ten percent in the public health, education, security and the military sectors. Moreover, pensions were increased by only one percent and the 400 Euro welfare payment to the long term unemployed was extended (Cué 2011b). Trying to gain more margin for movement, at the beginning of March 2012 Rajoy announced surprisingly in Brussels that Spain’s target deficit for 2013 was to be 5.8 and not the above mentioned 4.4 percent agreed upon by the previous Zapatero administration (M. González 2012), triggering the risk premium of Spanish debt to increase from 300 points to a maximum of 638 points in July (Buesa 2015, p. 41). Only eleven days later, the Eurogroup determined that Spain’s deficit, now at 8.5 percent, ought to be reduced to 5.3 percent, thus requiring another 5,000 million Euro cut (C. Pérez 2012a). Determined to reach this goal and administer the measures left pending since December, at the end of March the government announced further budget cuts amounting to 13,400 million Euro, including a massive cut of active labour market policy funds, a company tax increase as well as a fiscal amnesty that was hoped to generate another 2,500 million in tax revenue (Cué 2012, J. S. González 2012, M. V. Gómez 2012a).

Concerning the ongoing banking crisis, especially from 2012 the financially precarious situation of Bankia – a merger of several Spanish saving banks heavily affected by the crisis – was increasingly drawing attention from parliament, government, the IMF and EU entities (F. G. d. León 2012, Maqueda 2017a). In February and again in May the Minister of the Economy Luis de Guindos Jurado increased the bank capital reserve requirements concerning mortgage and construction sector loans and Bankia was nationalized for 28 billion Euro, causing international rating agencies to downgrade Spain’s credit rating and strangling its access to international financial markets (Kickert and Ysa 2014, p. 455, Mars and Barrón 2012). Combined with the mutation of the financial crisis into a sovereign debt crisis, the upcoming Greek election, the decreasing credibility of the Spanish banking sector supervision and fears of a chain reaction which could lead to the end of the Eurozone, international political – including German and American – and financial market pressures

led Rajoy to accept a European rescue of Spanish banks through the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), amounting to 100,000 million Euro (Barrón 2020, C. Pérez and Doncel 2012). The acceptance of the rescue was accompanied by conditionalities, including supervision by the Troika, and the possibility to withhold disbursement if particular targets were not met by the Spanish government. The recommendations emanating from Brussels included “to restrain AC spending, increase the VAT, accelerate the pension reform and toughen the labour market reform, among others” (C. Pérez and Doncel 2012). Moreover, the BCE would directly supervise the banking sector reform (C. Pérez 2012b), leading to much tougher legislation, which provided the necessary mechanisms “to liquidate entities, establish the legal basis to intervene in banks urgently – even before they fail to fulfil the solvency criteria – and create...[the legal] figure of the bad bank” (Mars and Barrón 2012). Half a year before the deadline, Spain was able to exit the ESM program, in January 2014, having made use of some 42 percent of the 100,000 million Euro that had been made available (Martí, F. and J. J. Pérez 2016, p. 14). The aforementioned Spanish FROB, which had been set up to stabilize the Spanish banking system, disbursed some 56,000 million Euro for this purpose, of which only 5,900 Euro had been recovered by the beginning of 2020. Although it had required most funds in absolute terms, in relative terms Bankia had not been the institute with the worst financial standing. In terms of public funds received divided by total assets, Bankia had received support equivalent to 7.5 percent, while the Bank of Valencia, the Caixa Bank (CB) and Mediterranean Savings Bank (CAM) had required an amount equivalent to 25.9 percent (6,100 million), 16.6 percent and 18.5 percent (roughly 12,500 million Euro each). Another eight additional banks required more than 1,000 million Euro each (Barrón 2020).

Despite the explicitly stated conditionalities related to the European bank rescue (El País 2012a), fears concerning the escalation of the sovereign debt crisis caused Brussels to make further demands, requiring the government to make a downward adjustment of the budget deficit of 65,000 million Euro for the coming two years. In order to do so, the government increased the Value Added Tax (VAT) by three percent, eliminated public servants’ Christmas bonuses and reduced their holidays, introduced a ten percent cut in contributory unemployment benefits after the first six months, reduced dependency law related transfers, cut ministerial budgets by another 600 million and tightened control over AC and municipal spending, among others (Garea 2012, Expansión 2012). By April 2013, Spain’s absolute number of unemployed had increased to above 6 million, the unemployment rate reaching 27 percent (M. V. Gómez 2013).

The Rajoy government's politics of austerity also included various structural reforms. On the 30. of November 2011, Rajoy had asked the CEOE, CC.OO. and UGT to negotiate a labour market reform, setting the 7. of January as a deadline, which was later extended to the 15. of January. Despite the labour union's acceptance of salary increases below inflation and the possibility that companies detach themselves from sectoral collective bargain agreements (EFE 2012b), the CEOE proposed salary freezes for 2012 and 2013 and the reduction of dismissal costs, measures which were rejected by the labour unions (Europa Press 2012). As a consequence of the stalling of negotiations, important topics which should have been covered were not dealt with in the final proposal sent to government (Frias and Agencias 2012), which thus proceeded to prepare its own reform. The intention was to once again reduce labour market dualisation and to slow job destruction by increasing flexibility, thus: providing incentives for the use of permanent contracts and new limits on the use of temporary contracts, increasing the latter's unemployment protection; reducing the cost and broadening the conditions for worker dismissal substantially; limiting the almost indefinite extension of expired collective agreements, the aforementioned *ultraactividad*, to two years; giving priority to collective bargaining at the firm as opposed to the sectoral or regional level; making it easier to detach individual companies from such agreements, provided that the income or sales of a company have been declining for two consecutive trimesters and that employers and employees agree to such measures; eliminating the need to obtain the approval for collective dismissals (the so-called EREs) from the Ministry of Labour, which had previously required some form of agreement between unions and employers and which had usually included higher severance costs; lastly, permitting the dismissal of public employees if the budget was insufficient to cover public sector salaries (García Pérez and Jansen 2015, pp. 5–11, M. V. Gómez and Á. Romero 2012, Velardiez 2014, pp. 294–6, Mingorance-Arnáiz and Pampillón Olmedo 2015, p. 256). Passed as decree law, the reform was subsequently approved in Congress by the votes in favour of the PP, CiU⁵ and Foro Asturias and with 142 votes against (Díez 2012b). Subsequently, the labour unions complained of the unwillingness of the government to negotiate, including Rajoy's refusal to meet with union leaders (although the head of state had met with them), leading to a general strike in March 2012 (M. V. Gómez 2012b). Needless to say, the reform was perceived as a massive attack on labour rights and the negotiating power of labour unions, its harshness and basically unilateral approval converting the issue of labour market reform from a more or less technical into a highly

⁵ In return for the CiU's support, an article of the decree law attributed active labour market policies to the ACs (Díez 2012b).

politicized one. Dismantling the labour market reform, fiercely defended by the PP, became a frequently cited goal of the Spanish left as well as more moderate center-right parties. One reason for this new saliency was that, as already discussed in section 5.2 on page 132, within the context of Spain's EU and Eurozone membership, labour market "flexibility" has become an integral part of the broader neoliberal economic agenda of the political right in order to assure price competitiveness on international markets. In light of the aforementioned problems of the Spanish labour market, the effect of the reform was – according to various studies and irrespective of its pernicious social effects – to reduce salary rigidity, slowing and eventually reversing job destruction (García Pérez and Jansen 2015, pp. 19–36).

Another hugely unpopular structural reform in 2013 concerned the Spanish pension system, which developed the aforementioned sustainability factor and introduced the reassessment index (*índice de revalorización*). The former consists of a formula which is intended to assure that new pensioners, who are likely to have a greater life expectancy, receive the same total amount of pensions over their whole life as pensioners with a lower life expectancy (M. A. García 2016, p. 71), amounting to the somewhat cruel logic that people may live longer, but will have to do so with fewer resources. The reassessment index de-linked pension increases from inflation, instead depending on the pension system's balance of payments, except for a minimum percentage increase of 0.25 percent (M. A. García 2016, p. 73). Although Spain came out of the recession in 2014, the devastating socio-economic effects of the crisis – especially high unemployment and poverty – would take many more years to decline significantly.⁶

9.3 The neoconservative policy response: education and law and order

Zapatero had attempted to modernize the PSOE's program during a period of economic bonanza, by recognizing the importance of and advocating a party shift along the AL political dimension, advancing minority and gender equality rights and confronting Spain's authoritarian past head on. The Rajoy administration adopted various strategies to deal with these changes. On the issue of same-sex marriage, for instance, the party chose to remain silent, given that its legalization had enjoyed broad based societal support; concerning abortion, which had been liberalized under Zapatero, the massive opposition to and the divisive nature of the PP's reform proposal, which aimed to prohibit

⁶ See fig. 12 on page 246.

abortion even in cases of proven foetal disabilities, ultimately resulted in only one important legislative change – namely that minors of 16 and 17 years of age would require the consent of their legal guardians to abort – and the Justice Minister Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón Jiménez’s resignation; the effects of the Historic Memory Law were diminished simply by eliminating its budgetary provisions (Borraz 2020, Cué 2014, Plaza 2015, 20 Minutos 2015b, Caro 2014). Lastly, the PP resorted to directly imposing its policy preferences through unilateral reform projects, which were noteworthy for their neo-conservative nature.

Perhaps the most notorious legislative project was the PP’s education reform, the Organic Law of the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE), dubbed Wert’s law after the Minister of Education José Ignacio Wert Ortega. Passed in Congress in November 2013 with only the votes of the PP in favour and two abstentions, while the vast majority of the parliamentary opposition was simultaneously signing a document in which they committed themselves to derogating it as soon as possible (Viñao 2016, p. 139, EFE 2013), the reform was harshly criticised by a large number civil society actors and triggered numerous protests and education sector strikes (El País 2017c). The reform, although complex in nature, was critiqued for attempting to convert the education sector into a quasi-market by implementing a series of national exams, the results of which were to be used to publish school rankings; parents would be permitted to choose the schools to which they wished to send their children; schools could decide which pupils to admit in cases of “excess demand”; lastly, those schools which performed best were to be rewarded financially (Gutiérrez Díez 2014, pp. 109–112, Viñao 2016, pp. 158–161). The conclusion drawn by many observers was that this new system would benefit those pupils who, due to their socio-economic background, were more likely to perform better at school, providing them with access to the best schools “on the market”, while those who commenced from a position of disadvantage were, in the drive of schools to maximize their own performance, increasingly marginalized. The reform was also criticized on a number of other counts: it reintroduced public funding for sexually segregated schools; classes such as music, arts and humanities were given less weight; new subjects focusing on entrepreneurship and business economics were introduced; Zapatero’s citizen education was replaced by Catholic religion – taught by priests – or, alternatively, ethics, indirectly privileging the former; the age at which pupils were segregated according to their performance was moved forward and a large number of state exams increased educational pressure; it undermined the democratic nature of the school administration; lastly, it was considered to be recentralizing in nature, since it defined the education system as Spanish, the Spanish language

as vehicular and gave greater influence over the curriculum and evaluation to the central state, causing several ACs to appeal to the Constitutional Court (Gutiérrez Díez 2014, pp. 107–8, Subirats 2014, pp. 51–55, Viñao 2016, pp. 153–6).

Another highly controversial law, more so than the justice reform (Viúdez 2015), was the Organic Law for the Protection of Citizen Security, dubbed the Gag Law (*Ley Mordaza*), which was passed, like the LOMCE, only with the votes in favour of the PP, at the end of March 2014. It was critiqued by the political opposition as well as the international press, NGOs like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International and the United Nations Organisation, among others, for eroding individual and political rights. The first draft also received a very critical assessment by the General Council of the Judiciary (CGPJ),⁷ for permitting security forces to retain individuals based on the mere suspicion that they have committed or will commit an offence and to identify individuals who find themselves in public spaces without cause, for criminalizing the taking of pictures or the taping of security forces and for requiring the payment of “judicial fees”⁸ if the actions of security forces were to be challenged before a court (Europa Press 2014). Even in its revised version, the law is notable for its severity, permitting security forces to directly issue fines between 100 Euro and 600 thousand Euro respectively, without previous judicial review and privileging the statements of security forces if challenged judicially (Europa Press 2015b, Lobo 2015). The gravest category of offences includes “unregistered or prohibited protests near critical infrastructure” (Europa Press 2015b), potentially incurring a fine of 600 thousand Euro per person, while illegal protests in front of the Congress of Deputies may be fined with up to 30.000 Euro if citizens’ security is put at risk (Lázaro 2014). The law also permitted the direct return of immigrants who had illegally crossed into the Spanish African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. Unsurprisingly, the PSOE as well as several other opposition parties brought the law before the Constitutional Court (La Vanguardia 2015b).⁹

⁷ The CGPJ is a constitutional organ, constituted by judges and charged with maintaining judicial independence vis-à-vis the other powers of the state (Consejo General del Poder Judicial 2021).

⁸ In a similar fashion and as part of the austerity package, the Justice Minister Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón increased court fees charged to bring a case before a judge by between 50 and 750 Euro (El País 2012b).

⁹ In November 2020, the Gag Law was, with the exception of the prohibition of the recording of security personnel, ruled constitutional by the Constitutional Court (RTVE and Agencias 2020).

9.4 Corruption and the crisis of trust

Before the backdrop of economic crisis, severe austerity measures and the 15-M movement, which was organizing the societal opposition, the period of the first Rajoy administration was also marred by the discovery of a number of notable corruption scandals. Three of the most important scandals were the Gürtel case, in which public contracts were awarded by PP politicians in return for bribes by the winning companies, the Bárcenas paper scandal concerning the PP's illegal party financing and payment of "bonuses" to its politicians as well as the ERE scandal, in which the Andalusian PSOE redirected hundreds of millions of Euro officially intended to aid companies in their payment of compensation to groups of laid off workers to politicians and their associates (Orriols and G. Cordero 2016, pp. 474–5, Salvador and Lucas-Torres 2019). These as well as a number of additional corruption scandals – the black credit card scandal, the Palma Arena and Nóos affairs, the Pujol case – involved a host of politicians at all political levels and in a number of Spanish regions, new discoveries and their political and juridical consequences constantly making media headlines in the years to come (Orriols and G. Cordero 2016, pp. 474–5, Rodon and Hierro 2016, p. 342, Vidal 2018, p. 269). As a consequence, the public concern with corruption peaked in November 2014, when it was considered Spain's second biggest problem after unemployment (Orriols and G. Cordero 2016, p. 474, Vidal 2018, p. 269). Moreover, two scandals affected none other than the Spanish monarchy. The Nóos scandal involved the Spanish King's daughter, Princess Cristina, who was absolved, and her husband, Don Iñaki Urdangarin Liebaert, who was sentenced to six years and three months in 2017, a sentence subsequently reduced to five years and ten months in June 2018 by the Supreme Court, for embezzlement, malfeasance and fraud (Urreiztieta and Colom 2017, *El Diario* 2018). The eruption of the scandal coincided with a drastic decline in the popularity of Juan Carlos I and the Spanish monarchy, triggered by the discovery that Juan Carlos had been in Botswana in April 2012 shooting elephants, a costly – and some might say distasteful – hobby he enjoyed in the company of Corinna zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, a woman which was subsequently considered to have been his mistress (Urreiztieta and Colom 2017). Following doubts about the state of the monarch's health, Juan Carlos announced his abdication in June 2014 (A. Romero 2014) in favour of his son, Felipe VI. This royal spectacle undermined the standing of one of the key figures of the Spanish transition, remembered especially for his selection of Suárez as replacement of Arias Navarro as head of government and his defence of democracy during the 1981 coup attempt.

The sum of these circumstances caused a significant surge in the generalized negativity of citizens towards politics: Rajoy became the most unpopular prime minister in Spain's recent history and election polls revealed that the PP had fallen to almost half the support it had been enjoying only a few months before, with an increasingly large amount of disaffected citizens stating that they did not know which party to vote for or whether they would cast their vote at all (Orriols and G. Cordero 2016, pp. 475–6). Moreover, between 2007 and 2014, the number of people satisfied with democracy fell from 77 to 22 percent and the percentage of people trusting parliament fell from 50 percent in 2008 to less than 10 percent (Vidal 2018, p. 268). Nonetheless, as the confidence in political parties and politicians plummeted, the interest in politics actually grew (Orriols and G. Cordero 2016, p. 476). While the major political parties still seemed oblivious to the possible meaning of these developments, a small group of left thinkers at the Complutense University of Madrid knew how to read the writing on the wall.

9.5 The emergence of Podemos

The 15-M was to make a crucial contribution to the success of the far left and populist political party called Podemos, founded in January 2014. The movement had already begun to question the dominant political and media discourse, which had by and large been unsympathetic to the socio-economic misery of large parts of the population, creating fertile ground for an alternative message which sided with the victims and decried the effects of austerity; it had mobilized and politicized a large number of previously indifferent citizens and enjoyed broad public support; the 15-M had perceived of itself as a permanent movement rather than just a sporadic series of protests, but the PP had remained largely unresponsive to its demands, making an alternative approach to pressuring government from the streets increasingly attractive; many of the political and social movements which came to constitute and grew around the 15-M were to make important contributions to Podemos both in terms of organisational support as well as member- and leadership, the former coming especially from the recently founded far left Izquierda Anticapitalista (IA) and the latter from the so-called confluences (*confluencias*), regionally based broader left-wing and ecologist movements and parties, of which Podemos later formed a part or which would enter into alliance with Podemos (Antentas 2016, p. 470, Kouki and Gonzalez 2016, pp. 67–8, Meyenberg 2017, pp. 225, 228–9, Torreblanca 2015, pp. 113–135). Moreover, since a large segment of the 15-M participants were young, they were easy to reach via social media (Meyenberg 2017, p. 227).

Despite these propitious circumstances, it was by no means obvious that the far left – which had responded to its defeat in the 1970s and the disintegration of the Soviet Union by abandoning the idea of pursuing electoral victory – would use this perhaps only in hindsight obvious opportunity to launch a “democratic assault” on the state to realize its aims (Antentas 2016, pp. 478–481). This decision originated from the core of Podemos’ future party leadership, consisting of Pablo Iglesias Turrión, Íñigo Errejón Galván and Juan Carlos Monedero Fernández-Gala, who had developed their particular left-wing world views at the Political Science and Sociology Faculty of the Complutense University in Madrid (Torreblanca 2015, pp. 84–5). Despite important overlaps in their thinking, Iglesias had been influenced especially by the reading of Antonio Negri’s writings on the mobilization of the multitude and disobedience as well as by Antonio Gramsci’s writings on hegemony; Errejón had also been influenced by Gramsci as well as by Ernesto Laclau’s view that politics is a struggle over the shaping of the dominant discourse and that the rupture between the oligarchy and the general population must be revealed by creating a dichotomy between the elite and the people; lastly, Monedero was inspired in his thinking especially by former Venezuelan and Bolivian presidents Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías and Juan Evo Morales Ayma,¹⁰ who had won elections by displacing the political left-right dichotomy by the dichotomy of “the people” and “the elite”, the former thereby becoming the subject on which to base their “popular democracies” (Torreblanca 2015, pp. 60–81). Along similar lines, Iglesias understood the situation in Spain at the time as a Gramscian loss of hegemony: “[Hegemony is defined as] the power of the elites to convince the subordinated groups that their interests coincide with their own, thereby obtaining a general consensus.... An organic crisis is the loss of hegemony by those elites, which normally manifests itself in the difficulty...to maintain and renovate the legitimacy they enjoy. In Spain...the economic crisis generated...[a] regime crisis, that is, the exhaustion of the political and social model which emerged from the transition to democracy [...] characterized by leaving the position of the Spanish economic elites untouched and by favouring the recycling of a large part of the old Franquist political elites” (Iglesias 2015, pp. 28–30). The 15-M was seen as a manifestation of that crisis, remarkable for the absence of political party and labour union leadership and its broad public support, providing, in line with the thinking

¹⁰ The aim to “latinoamericanize” politics, stated explicitly especially in Podemos’ early phase and understood as applying the Latin American recipe of left-wing populism to Europe, was to become a major reference point for attacks especially from the political right, which emphasized the party’s personal ties to these increasingly authoritarian regimes, portrayed the party as their more or less direct agent and claimed that Podemos ultimately aimed to establish an authoritarian communist regime.

of Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, an opportunity for a political party to serve as an organizational tool to shape disconnected and (formerly) passive groups into a new subject called “the people”, which would be capable of bringing that party to power through elections (Meyenberg 2017, p. 224, Torreblanca 2015, pp. 119–120). These left-wing theoretical approaches and understandings resulted in a conceptualisation of “politics as basically electoral work; the need to go beyond the LR divide; and communication as the primary source of political strategy ...aimed at winning the general election...a kind of blitzkrieg to electorally assault institutions before the window of opportunity closes” (Antentas 2016, p. 475).

In order to appeal to “the people”, Podemos denied its left ideological position (Iglesias 2015, pp. 36–7, Ramiro and Gomez 2017, p. 113), declaring the classical LR political dimension obsolete and a mere distraction from the real conflict between the political “caste” and “the people” (Iglesias 2015, p. 32). The “caste” was decried as “‘traitors’, ‘rabble’, ‘thieves’, ‘rogues’ and ‘shameless’” (Sanders, Molina Hurtado, and Zoragastua 2017, p. 558), enemies of the “ordinary” and “decent” people (Sanders, Molina Hurtado, and Zoragastua 2017, pp. 557–558). The political solutions which Podemos offered were twofold. Firstly, at the national level, to terminate the 1978 regime, which had never fully broken with the franquist legacy and which had benefited its facilitators, the PP – which had emerged more or less directly from the regime – and the PSOE, which had accepted the status quo. This regime change was to be brought about especially by defeating the PSOE, ending two-party rule, and introducing a host of participatory mechanisms and reforms to “revitalize” democracy, reduce elite privileges and crack down on corruption (Kouki and Gonzalez 2016, pp. 67–8). Secondly, at the international level, Podemos called for a recovery of Spanish sovereignty from neoliberal international institutions, thereby ultimately salvaging the rule of the people, by focusing especially on the EU’s economic governance, the Troika and German dominance (Iglesias 2015, pp. 26–27, Ramiro and Gomez 2017, pp. 111–2, Sanders, Molina Hurtado, and Zoragastua 2017, p. 558). Just like Podemos’ claim to exist beyond the classical LR distinction, the – normally incompatible – adaptation of a nationalist discourse by a far left party was an attempt to reconstruct the “discursive battlefield” in the party’s favour and to move toward the constitution of a popular subject. Nonetheless, the attempt to employ nationalism as a discursive tool proved difficult in a “plurinational” country such as Spain (Antentas 2016, p. 478, Torreblanca 2015, pp. 152, 156) and would remain a key problem for the party, which would adopt a benign but ultimately ambivalent position on Catalan calls for independence.

Despite agreement on key strategic issues, some subtle but important differences emerged from the contrasting intellectual heritages and personal convictions of Podemos' leaders. Iglesias considered left-wing populism as an efficient strategy to boost the general appeal of a left political project, ultimately aimed at the popular and working classes (Antentas 2016, pp. 477–478). In contrast to this more instrumentalist approach, Errejón gave primacy to the discursive dimension of the populist strategy, aiming to genuinely distance the party from any symbolic and linguistic association with the left especially in order to win over the declining middle class (Antentas 2016, pp. 475–7). The concrete political manifestations of these two approaches, which were to lead to repeated tensions and power struggles between *pablistas* and *errejonistas* was a verbally much more aggressive and Machiavellian style of politics advocated by Iglesias and a more moderate discourse and willingness to compromise on behalf of Errejón.

In addition to the 15-M and Podemos' theoretically grounded political strategy, another key ingredient to the party's initial success was Iglesias' charismatic leadership and his experience with the media and information technology in order to project the party's discourse. Iglesias initially drew attention due to his casual dress code and his pony tail, which underlined his status as a member of the people and as a political outsider with the potential to undermine elite rule. More than his mere physical appearance, however, Iglesias was a very eloquent speaker, able to improvise passionate speeches and deliver scathing rebukes in debates. In addition to his polarizing discourse, Iglesias also had command over a vast amount of factual knowledge and figures, which he brought to bare on his opponents without mercy and which distinguished him from the more "typical" politician's phraseology, replete with vague statements of principle and elusive platitudes. This prowess stemmed not only from his university background, but also from his substantial experience with public media appearances, having actively produced and participated in programs which were made available online¹¹ and which dealt with political, socio-economic and philosophical issues for several years. Given his forceful style, Iglesias had also increasingly been invited to televised political debates prior to Podemos' foundation. Given his oratory skills, media experience and popularity, Iglesias was the natural choice of a public face for Podemos. Like its future supporters, Podemos' leadership consisted of young digital natives and thus made intensive use of social media to reach its audience, especially Facebook and Twitter (Casero-Ripollés, Sintes-Olivella, and Franch 2017 Jerez and Maceiras 2015). Moreover, the internet was used as a tool to

¹¹ These programs were La Tuerka and Fort Apache.

push a more participatory form of politics: membership required only an online registration and members were able to vote their party leaders in open primaries, to contribute to the drafting of electoral programmes through online discussions and voting and could initiate referenda and consultations among party members concerning sensitive issues like political pacts and electoral alliances (Rico Motos 2019, p. 191).¹²

From the party's foundation in January 2014 until the European election that year, the party appeared to be a project emerging directly from the 15-M, with a large number of so-called circles (local branches), in which people and activists discussed politics and gave expression to their political desires, being founded all over the country (Antentas 2016, p. 472). As a concession to the IA, its EU election program had also included the nationalization of private banks, essential public services and Spain's exit from NATO (Torreblanca 2015, p. 132). Following the party's success in the European election (see section 9.7 on page 288), Podemos became more of a catch-all party, attracting all those dissatisfied with austerity and politics, a change accompanied by a – partial – discursive and programmatic moderation (Antentas 2016, pp. 472, 475). At the party conference at Vistalegre in October 2014, the concept of a movement party, advocated by IA, was defeated in an all-or-nothing bid for power by Iglesias and the IA was to be dissolved into the party subsequently. Instead, a seemingly participatory, but ultimately centralized party model was established, in which the party circles had little influence and the low hurdles for party membership, combined with the social and general media predominance of its leadership, undermined the influence of the more active and politicized party members, whose perhaps more critical opinions were drowned out during the frequent online votes on party leadership, program and strategy (Antentas 2016, pp. 472–3, Lisi 2019, pp. 252–4, Meyenberg 2017, pp. 229–231, Torreblanca 2015, pp. 165–167). Instead, the party was “structured as a political party with a strong electoral and communicative machine with the intention of winning the forthcoming Spanish general election...the leitmotiv that defined all of the party's strategy, discourse and functions” (Antentas 2016, p. 472).

In terms of its programmatic content, both Cs – about to emerge as a national party – and Podemos had the common goal of challenging the so-called 1978 regime, although each party viewed it through their own peculiar ideological lenses. Both parties coincided in the belief that the Spanish transition to democracy was marred by its creation of institutions which strongly favoured

¹² See Meyenberg (2017, pp. 229–231) for more details.

the establishment and maintenance of the PSOE and AP/PP's two-party dominance, especially through the electoral system. This dominance was then exploited by these two parties to their own benefit, facilitated by a lack of "real" democracy – meaning more (direct) participation and political accountability – and transparency, the most nefarious manifestation of which has been political corruption. This development was also accompanied, so the story goes, by increasing political decadence, reflected in the inability of the two major parties to resolve the most pressing concerns of Spanish citizens, such as those related to their employment, education and welfare. While Cs would perhaps not go much further in its characterization of the 1978 regime, Podemos, as mentioned above, considered the 1978 regime a mechanism by which the Franco regime elites had been able to preserve their privilege and the political incarnation of which was the AP/PP.

9.6 Center-periphery conflict: austerity, corruption and Catalan agitation

During the PP's absolute majority rule, the somewhat typical political tensions between the Catalan government and the central state acquired a new dynamic, driven by the CiU's shift from "nation building" to supporting demands for Catalan independence. Several developments may account for this change during the period from 2011 to 2015, namely the recentralizing tendencies of the Rajoy government's policies, the unpopular nature of Catalan austerity, corruption as well as the pre-existing demands for an AC finance system reform, the rejection of which would permit Mas to justify why his party was now embracing demands for independence.

Concerning re-centralizing policies, the conservatives implemented various measures which affected Catalonia negatively and which included infrastructure investment cuts, a particularly sensitive issue due to the systematic mistreatment of Catalonia in this policy field,¹³ attempts to weaken the development of the European Mediterranean Corridor project, a halt to the privatization of Barcelona's del Prat Airport and the freezing of the planned transfer of various hospitals and other buildings to the Generalitat, among others (Vidal-Folch 2013, pp. 44–56). Moreover, the central state's application of austerity was of a recentralizing nature, since the ACs, responsible for one third of total state expenditure, largely directed at education and health care, were forced to act within the limits of a 1.5 percent of GDP deficit limit, while

¹³ For a discussion of a lack of infrastructure investment in Catalonia and related issues, see Bel (2013, pp. 189–226).

the central state would be given a four percent margin (Juan Romero, Collado, and M. T. Rodríguez 2014, p. 351, Vidal-Folch 2013, pp. 80–82). Moreover, like the rest of Spain, Catalonia was hard hit by the 2008 economic and financial crisis. Having recovered government in the November 2010 election, the CiU implemented a rigorous austerity program which included a 10 percent budget cut in January 2011, privatizations, reductions of the social security net coverage (the *renta mínima de inserción*), the extension of the polemical co-payment on pharmaceuticals and cuts in public servant incomes, measures which were accompanied by the elimination of the inheritance tax (Vidal-Folch 2013, pp. 68–9). These measures were highly unpopular and, shortly after the eruption of the 15-M movement, in June 2011, protesters surrounded the Catalan Parliament in various “sieges” to prevent its deputies from voting through measures to deepen austerity, among them the infamous Omnibus Law. These “sieges” obliged the Catalan government to make ten journeys by helicopter in order to enter parliament without causing turmoil, a situation which proved a turning point for the CiU and its leader Mas (Torreblanca 2015, p. 48). Additionally, a number of CiU related corruption scandals surrounding especially Pujol and his family increasingly came to light (Guil 2012).

These developments, before the background of increasing civil society demands for Catalan independence discussed previously,¹⁴ led Mas to pursue a new political strategy centred on his electoral promise to negotiate a new fiscal arrangement with the central state, modelled on the Basque case. Building on the pre-existing discourse of “*España nos roba*”, in May 2012 the Generalitat published a study which came to the result that the “fiscal deficit” of Catalonia – the money “lost” due to the redistribution between different ACs – amounted to 8.4 percent of the Catalan GDP in 2009, although the method chosen to determine that figure seems to have been intended to maximize it (Vidal-Folch 2013, pp. 75–79).¹⁵ In July 2012, Catalonia, indebted with 17.8 percent of its GDP, was forced to request a financial bailout via the Autonomic Liquidity Fund (Vidal-Folch 2013, pp. 61–64, 70–1). Pushing the central state on the question of the AC finance system was thus politically

¹⁴ See section 8.4 on page 248.

¹⁵ The extent to which the finance system disadvantages Catalonia is a complex question. The Generalitat, for example, bases its estimate only on actual monetary in- and outflows, whereas when expenditure on services executed elsewhere, but to the benefit of Catalonia are also accounted for (such as defence, international relations etc.), the fiscal deficit declines from 8.5 to approximately 6 percent or less (de la Fuente 2014). If measured in term of per capita GDP, the percentage redistributed in excess relative to Catalonia’s wealth may be some 3.6 percent (Bel 2013, pp. 173–4, 176).

convenient in several ways: it permitted redirecting citizens' rejection regarding austerity toward the central state and permitted the CiU to fill out its role as defender of Catalan interests, thus distracting from the cases of political corruption. Additionally, however, Mas would use this topic as a mechanism to embrace an issue position shift in favour of Catalan independence, thereby trying to secure the CiU's only recently regained hegemony. Shortly after the massive 2012 Diada under the motto "Catalonia, a new state in Europe", with some 600 thousand participants (Ellakuría 2015, p. 183, Martínez 2016, pp. 151–155), Mas met Rajoy in Madrid, where he threatened that if the central government would not comply with his desire for a new fiscal arrangement, the CiU would call a new election and prepare the holding of a referendum on the right to decide (*dret a decidir*), still a rather vacuous concept as of 2014. Unsurprisingly, given both the political nature of the PP and the general economic situation of the country, Rajoy rejected Mas' demands. Given the developments described above and that Rajoy's reaction ought to have been expected, much points to the strategic nature of Mas' decision to embrace the Catalan independence movement (de Carreras 2017, p. 184, Ellakuría 2015, pp. 183–4, Martínez 2016, pp. 135, 137–9, 145, 151, Vidal-Folch 2013, pp. 75, 86–8).

Up to this point, the CiU and the PP had, despite rising tensions, still cooperated with one another. While the CiU supported Rajoy's austerity laws, including the labour market reform as well as the so-called stability and Montoro laws, which imposed budgetary restrictions on ACs and municipalities respectively, the Catalan PP supported the CiU's budgets and policies in Catalonia (Martínez 2016, pp. 156–7). Shortly after his meeting with Rajoy, in September 2012, the Catalan parliament, with the votes in favour of the CiU, ERC, ICV and the pro-independence Solidaritat per Catalunya (SI), passed a resolution which affirmed the desire to consult the Catalan people to determine its future, avoiding the phrase "referendum" and its potential legal implications (Martínez 2016, pp. 170–1, Noguer and Piñol 2012). Mas' attempt to obtain a clear electoral mandate to pursue the *dret a decidir* by calling an early election for November 2012 backfired notably, however. The ERC was able to more than double its votes and seats, to almost half a million and 21 parliamentarians, while the CiU lost some 80 thousand votes, and, due to the increase in participation, lost 12 seats, falling to 50 deputies. Following a pact between the CiU and the ERC in order to invest Mas and the subsequent coordination of the two parties in parliament, centred on the holding of a referendum on Catalan independence (El Huffpost and Agencias 2012, Huffington Post and Agencias 2012, RTVE and Agencias 2012), subsequent attempts to

hold an officially sanctioned Catalan referendum failed. In 2013, the Parliament issued a resolution which declared the Catalan people the juridical and political sovereign and called, once again, for the holding of a consultation, supported by the same parties which had supported the previous resolution as well as the Candidatura d'Unitat Popular (CUP), a far left, anarchist and pro-secessionist party (Martínez 2016, pp. 178–80, Roger and P. Ríos 2013). The Constitutional Court declared this (mere) resolution, as it would many of the subsequent ones, unconstitutional. Since the Spanish Constitution requires that a consultative referendum be directed at all citizens, requiring, moreover, that the president be given authorization by Congress to convoke it, the Catalan parliament requested that this competency be delegated to the Generalitat through article 150.2 (Nuevo 2014, p. 60). This request – in the form of a legislative proposal (*proposición de ley*) – was rejected by Congress with 299 votes against and 47 – including those by the IU, the PNV and various nationalist parties – in favour in April 2014 (Garea 2014a).¹⁶ In September, following a meeting between Mas and Sánchez, in which the latter tried to convince the former that a federal reform could be a viable alternative to independence, and a massive Diada, the Catalan parliament approved the Law of Consultations to create the necessary legal ground to hold a consultation itself, but it was suspended by the Constitutional Court in September (Martínez 2016, p. 191, La Vanguardia 2015c). Unwilling to both give up and avoid breaking the law, the planned referendum was renamed “citizen participation process” and received no more direct support by the Generalitat.¹⁷ Of the 1.9 million people which cast their vote, less than 50 percent of the census, more than 80 percent voted in favour of an independent state, but the lack of democratic guarantees and oversight diminished its formal – albeit not symbolic – political significance (Martínez 2016, pp. 193–5). Insisting that the results of the consultation were clear, Mas called for an early election in 2015, described as a quasi-referendum on Catalan independence (Martínez 2016, pp. 200–1, Noguer 2014). In June 2015, the alliance of the two parties which had constituted the CiU, between Mas' CDC and the UCD, was terminated when the latter rejected the demand to declare itself unequivocally in favour of Catalan independence (Gisbert 2015).

¹⁶ As pointed out by Nuevo (2014, pp. 60–1), it is in any case questionable whether it would be constitutional that a question concerning the territorial integrity of a the Spanish state be delegated to only a part of the nation which inhabits it.

¹⁷ Subsequently, Mas was condemned to a hefty fine and prohibited from exercising a public office for 18 months for his involvement in the organisation of the “referendum” as Catalan president (RTVE and EFE 2021, Europa Press 2021).

Given the ERC's realistic chance of outperforming the CDC, the rise of Podemos and the still recent victory of the popular Ada Colau, leader of the left-wing Comunes, in Barcelona, the CDC took two measures: firstly, it pressured the ERC into forming a single electoral list called Junts Pel Sí (Junts), which also included a series of pro-independence civil society organizations, including the powerful National Catalan Assembly (ANC) and Òmnium Cultural; secondly, the CDC shifted its discourse somewhat from a neoliberal to a more social one, which emphasized the recovery of the welfare state (Martínez 2016, pp. 198–9). Despite these strategic moves, the November 2015 results did not provide Junts with its desired majority, receiving 39.8 percent of the vote and 62 out of 135 deputies. In total, the party alliance had attracted 1.6 million votes, similar to the CiU's 1.1 and the ERC's 0.5 million votes in 2012. At the same time, however, the CUP had markedly improved its performance, reaching 8.3 percent and winning a total of 10 seats, making a cooperation with the CUP a political necessity. This more radical influence became visible already in November, during the government formation negotiations between these parties, when the Parlament passed another resolution which called for the establishment, within 30 days, of institutions which were considered necessary to found an independent state, namely a Catalan internal revenue service and a social security system, as well as the initiation of a constituent process (Martínez 2016, pp. 205–6). Following a prolonged political deadlock in the government investiture negotiations, the CDC finally accepted the CUP's demands that Mas, viewed as an opportunist with doubtful pro-independence credentials, be replaced by Puigdemont as CDC investiture candidate (Cinco Días 2016a, Martínez 2016, pp. 204, 208–9, 211).

The parties which had not directly supported the Procés experienced important setbacks. The PSC and PP fell to 12.8 and 8.1 percent and 16 and 11 deputies respectively. Podemos' Catalan alliance, Catalunya en Comú-Podem, which had positioned itself somewhat ambivalently, both in favour of an officially sanctioned referendum and Catalonia's continued integration in Spain, had also erupted in Catalan politics, winning 9 percent of the vote and 11 deputies. Moreover, the constant agitation by pro-independence political forces had permitted Cs to grow by another 10.3 percent, reaching 18 percent of the vote and 25 seats, converting Cs into the major opposition party to the Catalan government formateurs. This electoral success, following the Andalusian March and the May AC elections,¹⁸ permitted Cs to make massive gains in the

¹⁸ See section 9.8.3.3 on page 316 below.

national election polls,¹⁹ converting the center-right party into a serious political rival to the PSOE, but also especially to the PP (Orriols and G. Cordero 2016, p. 477, Teruel and Barrio 2016, p. 9). Pro-independence agitation also had another much more ominous effect on the national opinion on Spain's territorial model. The percentage of people approving of the State of Autonomies in its present form dropped from almost 60 percent in 2007 to around 30 percent in 2013, while the percentage of those favouring a single central government with no ACs at all increased from around 10 to almost 25 percent (Bel 2013, p. 25). In 2019, the far right party Vox would gain parliamentary representation by promising, among other things, precisely the latter.

9.7 The political (r)evolution: Podemos and the PSOE, Cs and the PP

The rise in popularity of Podemos prior to the 2015 national election was to have serious repercussions for the PSOE leadership. Despite having lost the November 2011 national election, then presidential candidate Rubalcaba – backed by González – narrowly defeated Chacón – who belonged to the Nueva Vía – in February 2012 in his bid for general secretary with 487 to 465 votes, in a highly contested setting (Bosco 2013, pp. 33–5, Díez 2011c, Díez 2011b, Díez 2012a, RTVE and EFE 2012, Sánchez Martín 2012, RTVE 2012). Nonetheless, in the prevailing general climate of political dissatisfaction and crisis, Rubalcaba's leadership, which had commenced under extremely difficult circumstances as PSOE presidential candidate, came under further pressure due to his lacklustre opposition to Rajoy, perhaps best illustrated by his search for national pacts with Rajoy's absolute majority government in an attempt to put the interests of the state before that of the party (Garea 2012). Following the results of the May 2014 European election, in which the PSOE lost 15.8 percent of the vote, declining to 23.6 percent, and Podemos won 8.2 percent of the vote and five deputies only a few months after its foundation, Rubalcaba resigned.

At this point in time, Susana Díaz Pacheco, president of the mighty Andalusian PSOE federation, had become one of the main contenders for party leadership. Given the party's negative electoral outlook and that her rival Eduardo Madina Muñoz, who enjoyed both Rubalcaba's and González' support, could defeat her bid for leadership, Díaz searched for an alternative approach to a direct challenge. This alternative was the relatively unknown Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón, whom Díaz, backed by Zapatero and several other prominent party politicians and barons, offered their combined support to become general

¹⁹ See fig. 17 on page 291.

secretary, provided that he would delay his decision to run as presidential candidate until after the municipal and AC elections in 2015. Díaz thus hoped to defeat Madina without running the risk of losing against him, thereafter having the option to run as PSOE presidential candidate at the upcoming national election (Cintora 2017, pp. 24–5, 211–2)²⁰ without having to first absorb the no doubt politically damaging expected electoral setbacks at the hands of Podemos. In mid July 2014, Sánchez won the primary election, with 48.7 percent, against Madina, with 36.1 percent, and Atonio Pérez Tapias, with 15.1 percent of the vote (Díez 2014). Nonetheless, in September 2014 Sánchez announced his intention to run in the upcoming primaries for the 2015 election (EFE 2014). At the latest from this point onward, the relationship between Sánchez and Díaz turned increasingly hostile (Lucio and Díez 2015, Martín-Arroyo 2014).

As can be seen from fig. 17 on page 291, although the leadership change in the PSOE did not reverse the party's decline in the polls, like his new political rivals, Sánchez began to maximize his televised appearances, “‘hanging from bridges, sitting in wheelchairs or appearing in excessively light TV programs” (Díez 2015). Meanwhile, Podemos rose spectacularly in the polls between August and November 2014, to the point of actually overtaking the socialists and the PP (Garea 2014b). Following its peak of popularity in January 2015 and its show of force during its March for Change in Madrid, with some 100 thousand participants, Podemos experienced a decline in voting intentions, however. Although the reasons were numerous – tax evasion accusations against Monedero, who resigned subsequently, unfavourable media reports as well as a series of internal disputes – the most important was perhaps the concomitant rise in popularity of Cs.²¹ Cs' rise called Errejón's strategy of moderation into question, strengthening Iglesias' internal party position (Antentas 2016, pp. 473–4, 481, Torreblanca 2015, pp. 162, 167–8, I. Gil 2015a, I. Gil 2015b, Diego and I. Gil 2015). Lastly, the PP, which had initially fallen behind Podemos, recovered its position as largest party in the polls and remained largely unaffected by Cs poll surge.²²

The March 2015 Andalusian election, to take place shortly before the 2015 regional, municipal and further off national elections and the first test of the new power relations between the PP, Cs, the PSOE and Podemos since the European election almost a year before, were considered absolutely crucial. In

²⁰ This political pact, reported by Cintora (2017), is also reflected in Díez (2014).

²¹ See fig. 17 on page 291.

²² See fig. 17 on page 291.

several ways, its outcome would indeed prove indicative of the future: while the PSOE continued to decline moderately, Podemos performed below its heyday expectations; the PP suffered a massive electoral setback and Cs, which had just recently improved in surveys, proved that it was capable of making substantial gains outside of Catalonia, providing it with an important impetus for the coming elections. Moreover, Cs had utterly defeated its greatest ideological rival at this point, the UPyD (Urquizu 2015). Cs success can be attributed to its self-portrayal as an agent of moderate change in contrast to Podemos' radicalism and Catalan secessionism, an approach which had resonated especially with those economic and media actors which were beginning to lose confidence in the PP's capacity to defend their interests. Moreover, Cs had benefited enormously from the PP's tactical error of beginning to attack Cs publicly, thereby boosting its popularity and further increasing its media exposure (Ellakuría 2015, pp. 92, 228–9, 234–5).

9.8 Analysis of the December 2015 national election and specificity

9.8.1 Electoral campaign and electoral programs

The December 2015 national election, set to the latest possible date by Rajoy (Lancaster 2017, p. 925), thereby permitting the last-minute passage of the 2016 budget, which included pension and public sector wage increases (Orriols and G. Cordero 2016, pp. 477–8), was followed with great expectations by the media, political analysts and an important part of the general public. Nonetheless, some of the excitement surrounding the newcomer parties had already waned at this point in time, since both parties had already participated in various elections since the May 2014 European contest, and was reflected in both newcomer parties' substantial and more or less continuous decline in electoral surveys in the first half of 2015. Although Cs recovered from October 2015 due to its gains in the Catalan election, which signalled to the voter that Cs was a credible electoral competitor, Cs surge did not seem to affect the PP's predicted results so much as it did the PSOE's and Podemos' expected share of the vote (see fig. 17 on the next page). Although the PSOE leadership was still distressed by the possibility that Podemos could achieve its major goal of *sorpasso*, to outperform the socialists electorally and thus eclipse them as major referent of the Spanish left, most surveys predicted that the PSOE would be able to defend its position. Moreover, by December the PP had once again led most surveys by a substantial margin as largest party for some eight months. Nonetheless, the large portion of undecided voters, frustration

with politics in general, a larger than usual interest in the campaign, two new parties and three new candidates (including Sánchez) provided a substantial degree of uncertainty (Orriols and G. Cordero 2016, p. 478).

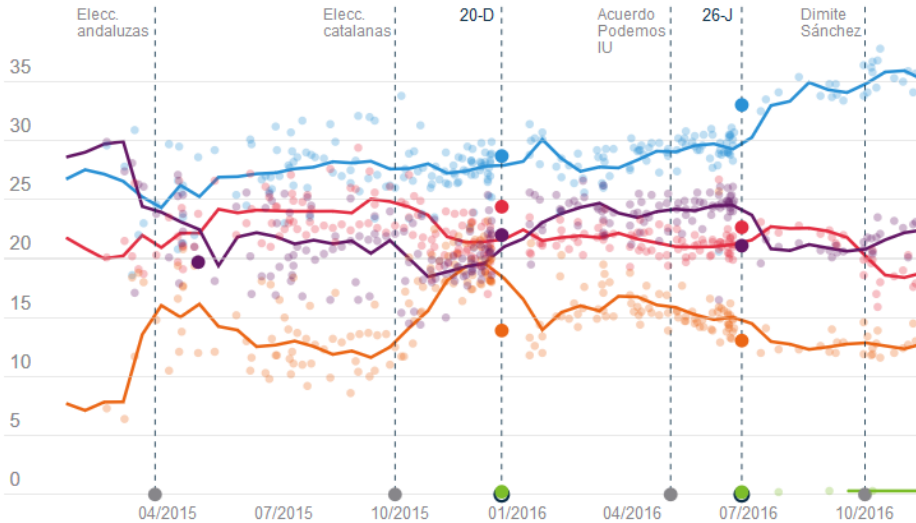


Figure 17: Electoral survey trends (2015-2016)

Colours: PP, blue; PSOE, red; Podemos, purple; Cs, orange. *Image source:* Garrido (2019)

In the course of the campaign, the PP focused its efforts on emphasizing its role as steward of economic recovery, as a moderate and competent political party and last bulkhead against left populism; the PSOE, Podemos and Cs attacked the PP for its austerity politics and corruption; Podemos portrayed the PSOE as just another element of the antiquated 1978 regime and as equivalent, as member of the political elite, to the PP; the PP tried to emphasise that Cs lacked experience, while Podemos portrayed the party as the PP's crutch (*muleta*) or henchman, equating both in terms of their right-wing nationalism and economic neoliberalism; Podemos was attacked for its populism and radicalism, the latter especially concerning its much more accommodating position toward the Catalan independence movement and its supposed links to Latin American left-wing populist regimes, being portrayed as a wolf in sheep's clothing. Beyond these electoral messages, the campaign was marked especially by a series of televised debates, preceded by a very public display of conflict over their format, with only one debate ultimately including all four parties and with Rajoy only participating in a one-on-one debate with Sánchez (Lancaster 2017, p. 926).

The PP's 226 page electoral program commences with an exposition of its so-called "principles", instead of offering a typical introduction. The party's top three principles are, firstly, employment, secondly, sustainable and competitive growth, and, thirdly, Spanish unity and the right to equal access of all Spaniards to public services, within the context of the AC state (Partido Popular 2015, pp. 6–7). While the first principle does not extend beyond pointing out Spain's recent decreases in unemployment (Partido Popular 2015, p. 6), the second one, growth, is clearly more ideological in nature, since it is argued that greater employment and income are preconditions for the financing of the welfare state and to decrease inequality (Partido Popular 2015, p. 6). "Growth and being competitive means prosperity. [...] We should consolidate our position ...by concentrating on a strong economy, capable of competing in international markets ...[with] a fiscal system which contributes to growth and employment creation ...to reduce the fiscal burden of our families, persons with disability, the youth and the elderly" (Partido Popular 2015, p. 6).

The economic logic contained in these growth related statements is dealt with more elaborately in the first section of the PP's program, entitled "Consolidate the economy to create employment and well-being" (Partido Popular 2015, p. 11). In that section, the PP exhorts the supposed economic fruits of its market and competitiveness oriented economic policies, namely employment, including its labour market reform, prosperity and an increase in well-being (Partido Popular 2015, p. 12). Not a strong welfare state, but employment was identified as the key to improving the well-being of the Spanish population, a goal which requires that "countries internalize, [that they] assume the commitments which accompany belonging to the Monetary Union and, in a broad sense, assume the demands of globalization" (Partido Popular 2015, p. 14). If these demands are fulfilled, Spain will be competitive and "the Spanish companies and consumers can have access to the best financing" (Partido Popular 2015, p. 14), leading to more competitiveness and prosperity in turn. In summary, a benign cycle of competitiveness and prosperity, the starting point of which is austerity, phrased in terms of economic stability and sustainable growth. The exposition of this logic resorts to the typical set of neoliberal terminology: growth, employment, consumers, financing, investment and investor confidence, prices, tax cuts, competitiveness, goods and services and exports. For the future, the PP promised policy continuity as well as lower taxes, combined with a broader tax base as well as a reduction of the public deficit (Partido Popular 2015, p. 14).

Ignoring the third principle, which concerns the center-periphery policy field and which will be dealt with below, the text elaborating on the PP's fourth

principle, the reinforcement of the welfare state, commences: “First, the persons. That is our priority. Our undertaking to continue to grow and create employment has only one objective: You. Because there is no social policy without good economic policies” (Partido Popular 2015, p. 7). The exposition of the PP’s fifth principle, completing the improvement of education, includes the beliefs “that education is the best guarantor of the equality of opportunity” (Partido Popular 2015, p. 7), but this equality is conditioned on individual “effort...merit...[and] the capacity of everybody to develop their potential” (Partido Popular 2015, p. 7). Last but not least, the PP attributes an important part of Spain’s economic growth to its modernization of the administration and considers that its politics of democratic regeneration have made Rajoy’s government the one which has done most “to prevent, pursue and sanction corruption” (Partido Popular 2015, p. 8).

Although the PSOE’s electoral program’s 274 pages do not make it the longest, being surpassed by Cs’ 338 and Podemos’ 332 pages, it is certainly one of the most densely packed documents. The PSOE’s 2015 program, like that of the PP, also omits a general introduction, commencing with the chapter “Toward a knowledge-based Spain”, which contrasts quite drastically from that of the PP: “Knowledge and a good education are the basis of a well calibrated societal welfare and is its real future perspective. Education, culture, science and research are the only guarantee of a development both sustainable and just. In them lies the foundation for effective innovation...” (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 4). Key terms include participation, productivity, knowledge, education and resources. In its second section, “The defence of the public sector” (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 34), the tone becomes markedly more political. The PSOE points out that the economic and financial crisis was dealt with by “abandoning the politics of growth stimulus...producing great political and societal tensions” (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 35), a decision made by “hardly representative transnational authorities...in which economic rationality comes before any kind of social consideration” (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 35). This has led to a questioning “of the capacity of the current political systems when it comes to defending general welfare. [...] Voting seems to have lost its power as the major tool by means of which citizens can influence political decision-making” (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 35). In response to this crisis of confidence, aggravated by corruption, the PSOE proposes to democratize European institutions further, to improve representation, participation and transparency in general and of as well as within political parties and the government in particular; to pursue the equality between women and men as well as of various minorities; to fight corruption; lastly, to create a modern public

administration and a more just society, among others. A treatment of the welfare state is delayed, however, to the second to last section of the electoral program, from page 181. Here, the PSOE criticizes the interruption of the PSOE led expansion of the welfare state through budget cuts, citing the dependency law as an example, and the decision to carry out a fiscal consolidation not by means of a far reaching tax reform, but by obliging the ACs and city councils to carry out the necessary adjustments, thereby “strangling the social protection system” (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 182). In order to tackle these problems, the PSOE proposes to fight especially for the welfare of the youth “in a society demanding knowledge [and] innovation” (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 183), a public essential minimum income (*ingreso mínimo vital*) for especially vulnerable families and the eradication of childhood poverty, among others (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, pp. 183–4).

Cs’ 338 page long program also provides no general introduction. Its first page of electoral program text, in the section entitled “Democratic and institutional regeneration”, proposes constitutional reform. As opposed to Podemos, which also proposes a constitutional reform, but resorts to rhetorical dramatization and at least implicitly aims for a complete overhaul of the magna carta, Cs is careful to emphasize that “the Constitution of 1978 has been an unquestionable success...One could say without any exaggeration that never before has Spain in such a short time advanced so far in civil coexistence, economic progress, social welfare and the opening up to the world” (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 3). Subsequently, however, the party distances itself from the de facto insistence of the PP on the constitutional SQ: “Nonetheless, the cause of all this has not only been the Constitution, perhaps it was not even the most decisive one...” (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 3). Emphasizing that a constitutional reform should be limited to those aspects which have proven to be dysfunctional, Cs proceeds to identify these as partocracy (*partitocracia*), considered “a degeneration of democracy[,] and ...a mostly dysfunctional political and territorial organization” (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 4). Thereafter, some 30 constitutional reform proposals are offered, affecting areas including fundamental and social rights, the electoral system, the judiciary, including the Constitutional Court, the legislature, the executive and the aforementioned territorial organization of the state (Ciudadanos 2015, pp. 4–5). The proposals include an electoral reform made in the image of the German electoral system; to reduce the number of signatures needed for a popular legislative initiative from half a million to 250 thousand; the elimination of the right of public office holders to be trialled by the Supreme Court rather than an ordinary court if their

parliamentary immunity is lifted (the so-called *aforamiento*); various measures to increase the independence of the judiciary and the elimination of the Spanish executive decree law (Ciudadanos 2015, pp. 5–10). Moreover, Cs enumerates a number of new rights, to transparency, health, social services, housing, equal access and to the enjoyment of public services and states that it wishes to guarantee that these rights are made effective through the necessary budgetary means (Ciudadanos 2015, pp. 4–5). In a similar vein to Podemos, Cs also demands more internal democracy, transparency and accountability (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 5).

Podemos' 332 page long electoral program was formulated in a public participatory process, having received the input of experts as well as citizens, with more than ten thousand individuals contributing online at the so-called Plaza Podemos and through more than three thousand programmatic assemblies, after which more than 15 thousand persons voted on all the proposals (Podemos 2015, p. 10). As opposed to the other parties, Podemos offers an extensive prologue. The program begins by pointing out the party's successful beginnings in a thoroughly populist manner: "Podemos was born out of the construction of a majority, it was born from a citizen and popular outburst, which had brewed on the basis of close-downs, cuts, dismissals and evictions. Podemos was born from the shamelessness of a few and the pain of many" (Podemos 2015, p. 9). As opposed to the other political parties, which do not take their proposals seriously, Podemos' electoral program "is a contract with the people.... We will defend these proposals and we will erect them, one by one, with the support of the people" (Podemos 2015, p. 10). "It will not be easy to change the functioning of the judiciary, the administration and the government, but we know that we can achieve it because we have the most powerful ally: the people. We know and we feel that we are the majority of people, fed up with seeing the institutions defending the interests of the most powerful while remaining indifferent to the problems of the people" (Podemos 2015, p. 11). The introduction ends with another rhetorical flourish: "The moment for which we were born has arrived. The moment has come for the popular outburst which has brought us to this point in time, to take the reigns of government of our country. We want to, we know how to, we can! [“¡Queremos, sabemos, Podemos!”] (Podemos 2015, p. 13).

The aim of these emotive appeals is to leave behind "the Spain of the five million unemployed, of precariousness, of exploitation of the self-employed, of the competitiveness of salary cuts and energy dependency" (Podemos 2015, p. 11) in order to "democratically construct a plurinational Spain...in which the institutions...guarantee the people's right to work and political equality,

universal health care and the right to petition, public and free education and a fiscal system that treats the middle class and workers fairly” (Podemos 2015, p. 11). In order to do so, the party proposes, already in the introduction of its program, a constitutional reform, which, among others, endorses the right to health, education, housing and work with the same rank as civil and political rights; to “establish” public investment in research and development, to provide a justice system free of levied charges; to guarantee an adequate amount of resources to courts and the state’s security forces; to crack down on corruption, especially by modifying political parties’ organization, financing and transparency; the recognition of a plurinational Spain, including the right to democratically decide the type of relation desired with Spain; lastly, to guarantee political equality by assuring that every vote has the same weight (Podemos 2015, p. 12).

9.8.2 Specificity and policy field IP discussion

Having provided some insight into the key concerns and approaches of the respective parties as described in their electoral programs above, this subsection will describe party specificity in 2015 and the various specific issue positions proposed by the different parties in the labour market and center-periphery policy fields.

9.8.2.1 Specificity

As can be seen in fig. 18a on the facing page, compared to 2011 both the PP and the PSOE increased the absolute number of issue positions by 46.7 and 27.2 percent to 220 and 304 respectively, possibly a response to the increasing competition from the newcomers, the PSOE’s leadership renewal and the waning of the economic effects of the 2008 crisis, the latter providing more financial leeway for the future implementation of policy proposals. While Podemos offered a similar number of issue positions to those of the PP, with a total of 198, Cs offers by far the largest number with 432. Overall, interesting trends emerge. The PSOE increased its number of IPs massively, from 31 in 2011 to 89 in 2015, while the PP’s IPs only increased from 27 to 29. Podemos and Cs, with 58 and 152 IPs respectively, offer substantially more specific issue positions than the PP, with the PSOE occupying an intermediate position between the latter and the two newcomers. Somewhat similarly, the PP only offered two IPLs, compared to both the PSOE’s and Podemos’ 15 IPLs each and Cs 17 IPLs. Podemos offers the smallest number of VIPLs (21), ranging between 36 and 44 for all other parties, and also offers the smallest number of VIPs (91), followed by the PP (108), PSOE (135) and Cs (192). The same applies to

GIPLs and GIPs respectively, with Podemos (two, eleven) offering the smallest number, followed by the PP (four, 15), PSOE (six, 16) and Cs (eight, 14). Lastly, as could be expected, the PP has the largest number of SQ type issue positions (18), followed by the PSOE (seven) and Cs (six), while Podemos has none. In relative terms, the PP (5.42) was the least specific party, followed by the PSOE (6.01), Cs (6.16) and Podemos (6.2), as is reflected in fig. 18b. The two newcomers parties were thus most similar to each other in terms of overall specificity and quite distinct from the PP as well as – to a lesser extent – from the PSOE.

As shown in fig. 18c, in the labour market policy field, the PP is once again the most parsimonious, offering the least number of issue positions (80 compared to the next largest number of 129 issue positions, offered by Podemos, and followed by the 200 and 252 issue positions offered by the PSOE and Cs). The PP also offers by far the smallest number of IPs and IPLs (17 and one) compared to Podemos (42, ten), the PSOE (59, eleven) and Cs (79, seven). That Podemos offers fewer specific issue positions than the PSOE in the labour market may, given its radically left and “revolutionary” profile, be considered somewhat surprising. Moreover, Cs not only offers by far the largest number of IPs, but also by far the greatest number of VIPLs and VIPs (31, 116), compared to the PP (18, 34), the PSOE (20, 89) and Podemos (14, 62). In comparison especially to the PSOE, but also to Cs and the PP, Podemos’ issue position distribution is marked by the almost complete absence of any issue positions vaguer than VIPLs (totalling one). Moreover, the PSOE offers most SQ type issue positions (seven), although this difference, when compared to the PP (four), is not great, while Cs only offers two and Podemos none. Overall, the

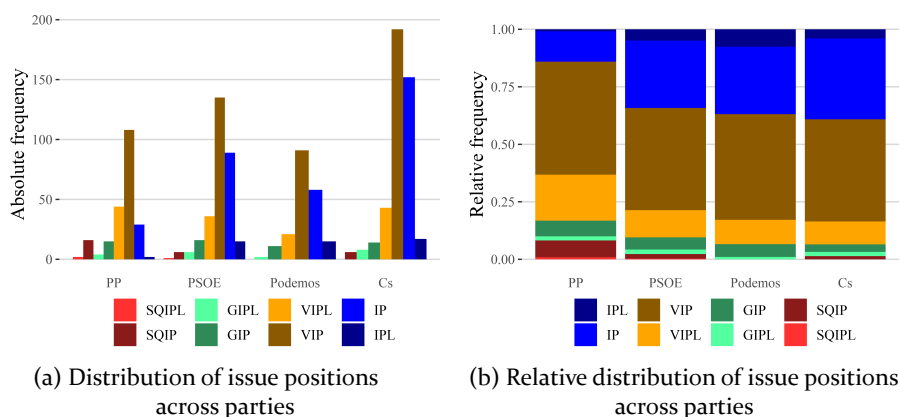


Figure 18: Specificity (2015)

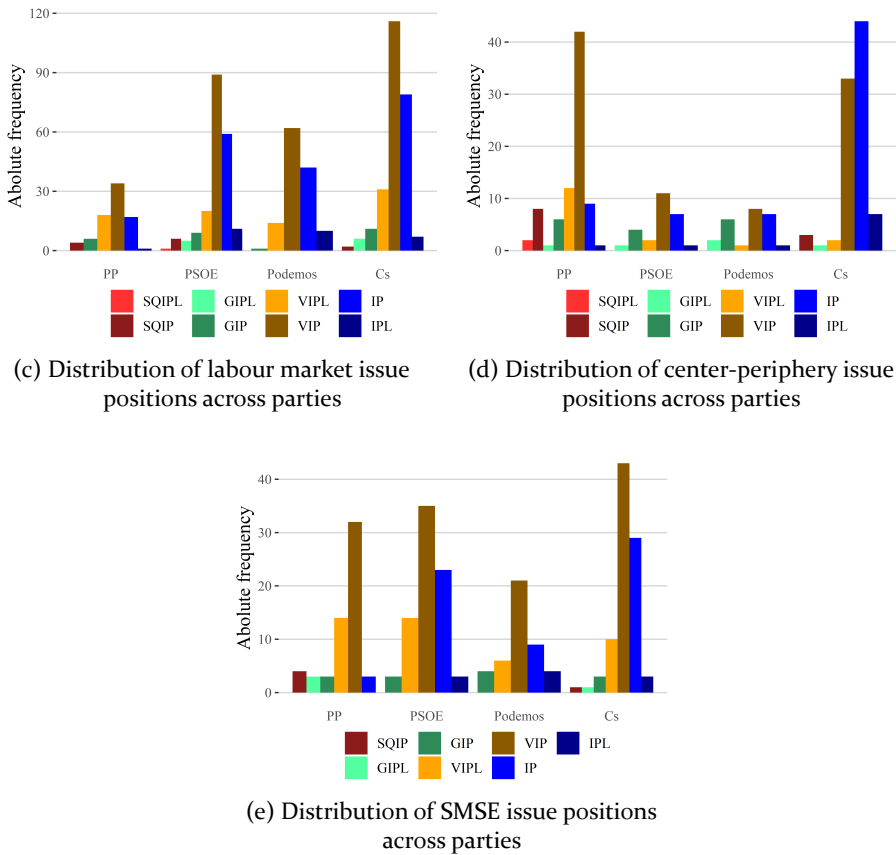


Figure 18: Specificity (2015), cont.

vaguest party in the labour market policy field is the PP (5.66), followed by the PSOE (six), Cs (6.06) and Podemos (6.36). In terms of average values, the order of parties may have been expected, with the PP being by far the vague, the PSOE and Cs being almost the same and Podemos being clearly the most specific. As was argued in the same respective section of the previous chapters, that the neoliberal PP avoids proposing specific issue positions in this policy field may be expected, because most voters are likely to prefer greater security and pay to flexibility and the forces of supply and demand. That the PSOE massively increased its issue positions should come as no surprise. The party was in opposition at the time, the PP had recently reformed the labour market and Podemos had experienced its electoral breakthrough in the EU and Andalusian elections. Neither should it surprise that Podemos, as a far left and newcomer party, had a greater average specificity than the more

moderate and traditional PSOE. Somewhat surprising may be the proximity of Cs to the PSOE, although it should be kept in mind, as was mentioned before, that the liberal party also contained an important socialist element, which distinguishes the party somewhat from its neoliberal rival to the right. The extent to which Cs' labour market proposals can be considered of a pro-welfare state nature will be revealed by the subsequent discussion of the party's issue position proposals.

In the center-periphery policy field, shown in fig. 18d on the preceding page, center-right to right-wing parties offered a much larger number of issue positions than left ones. Thus, the PP and Cs offered 81 and 90 issue positions, while Podemos and the PSOE only offered 25 and 26 issue positions respectively. A number of additional facts stand out. Firstly, both the PSOE and Podemos are quite similar in terms of their overall issue position distribution. Secondly, the PP has by far the most SQ type issue positions (ten compared to the only other three being offered by Cs) and VIPLs compared to all other parties (twelve compared to the second largest number of two offered by Cs and the PSOE, while Podemos only offers one). Thirdly, the PP also has a comparatively large number of VIPs (42), most similar in number to those of Cs (33) and very distinct from those of the PSOE (eleven) and Podemos (eight). Lastly, Cs offers by far the largest number of IPs (44) and IPLs (seven), compared to the other parties' seven to nine IPs and one IPL each. As a consequence, the PP (5.28) has the smallest average specificity score in the center-periphery policy field, followed by Podemos (5.6), the PSOE (5.85) and Cs (6.46). Overall, left parties are thus rather reticent to address the center-periphery policy field; the PP is not, but prefers not to commit itself excessively to changing the SQ, while Cs is both more elaborate than the left parties and much more specific than all others, both in absolute and relative terms. The PSOE's and Podemos' verbal sparsity may thus once again be indicative of the discomfort with which the political left positions itself in favour of the recognition of cultural and political heterogeneity and further decentralization in a country marked historically by concerns over unity and the increase in intensity of the Catalan conflict, best exemplified by Puigdemont's pro-independence course and the CDC's alliance with the ERC and the CUP. The PP, as a party essentially interested in preserving the SQ and at the most seeking to partially reverse decentralization and to further condition the political and economic autonomy of the Spanish ACs, does not have this problem. Perhaps as a consequence of its conservatism, however, the party seems to have relatively little to say in terms of specificity. In the center-periphery policy field, the only party which thus seems to be providing a more comprehensive political agenda

is Cs, a finding compatible with the party's Catalan origin and its reformist ambition.

In the SMSE policy field, shown in fig. 18e on page 298, the issue position distribution is markedly different to the center-periphery one and more similar to the labour market one for the two left parties as well as Cs, notwithstanding important differences especially regarding the former two. This is not the case for the PP, which shows rather disparate issue position distributions across all policy fields. The PP (5.29) is once again the vaguest on average and is followed with a clear distance by the other three parties, Podemos (6.07), the PSOE, (6.12) and Cs (6.13).

If one compares all three policy fields concerning party averages, the PP is always by far the vaguest. Podemos is the most specific party in the labour market policy field, Cs is by far the most specific in the center-periphery policy field. In the SMSE policy field, all parties other than the PP behave quite similarly. Despite the very small difference between the PSOE and Cs, that the liberals are on average most specific in the SMSE policy field and the center-periphery one, fundamental to the party's identity, and Podemos is the most specific party in the labour market policy field could certainly be expected. That the PP is vaguest in all policy fields may be surprising at least in the case of the SMSE one, given the party's emphasis on entrepreneurship and the onus on the individual. The following two subsections will discuss the detailed issue positions offered by these parties in the the labour market and center-periphery policy fields.

9.8.2.2 Labour market IPs

In the labour market policy field, the PSOE proposed, among other measures, to derogate the PP's labour market reform (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 122); to increase the minimum salary (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 124); to recognize a number of new labour rights, such as of religious freedom, the privacy of communications and the intellectual property rights of employees (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 123). Moreover, the socialists wished to include some of these labour rights in the Constitution, like the right to security, health and dignity in the workplace and judicial protection from unjustified dismissal (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 123).

Concerning gender equality, the PSOE aimed to make the registration of companies' equality plans obligatory (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 123); to require companies to provide disaggregated data on salaries and

perks as well as to elaborate plans to fight against gender discrimination; to reduce the gender based salary gap by increasing workplace inspections and toughening fines (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, pp. 124–5); to increase paternity leave from two to four weeks, making it obligatory and non-transferable (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 123); to provide a six week long non-contributory maternity benefit for women with no access to the contributory one (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 123); to ratify the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Treaty 189 to strengthen the labour rights of housekeepers, which are mostly women (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 123). Moreover, the party provided a definition of work related disease – those which come into being or are aggravated in the workplace – mentioning musculoskeletal disorders explicitly, since they also affect especially women (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 124).

Concerning unemployment and precariousness, the party proposed to double the investment in active labour market policies (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 120); to substitute the Public Employment Service by the Public Employment and Qualification Agency in a bid to improve on the former (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 120); to reimplement the unemployment subsidy for those older than 52 years of age (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 121); to abolish all hiring related tax discount incentives, except those targeting the disabled and those at risk of social exclusion as well as victims of gender violence, redirecting such funds to training instead (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 121); to provide 700 thousand young persons who have abandoned school early with the basic training and education for their professional re-qualification, establishing a training and tutor system (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 122); to reform the unemployment subsidy to provide coverage to the unemployed with family responsibilities, those older than 45 years of age, victims of gender violence and those with disabilities for 24 months, excluding those above 52 years of age, who enjoy more extensive specific coverage (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 191); lastly, to provide economic support for those unemployed who are undergoing training and complete it successfully (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, pp. 191–2).

In addition to the above measures, the PSOE proposed to return the competency to negotiate the unhinging from collective agreements concerning salaries from the company back to the sectoral level (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 125); that flexibility related company measures require the assent of labour unions; that the limiting and controlling of extra hours is regulated in collective agreements (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015,

pp. 125–6). Moreover, the party wished to reduce the labour market's duality by reducing the number of possible contracts to three types: permanent contracts, temporary contracts and a relief and training contract, thus also abolishing the contract for the promotion of entrepreneurship (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 124). The use of temporary contracts was to be further restricted, prohibiting durations of more than a year, unless extended by collective negotiations to a maximum of two years. Moreover, collective negotiations were also permitted to set maximum quotas of temporary employment in different economic sectors. Companies with excess temporary employment ought to pay greater social security contributions (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 124). The party also proposed to assure that those employees subcontracted by a company via outsourcing were paid the same salaries as those of the parent company (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 124). Additionally, the PSOE promised to demand that scholarships to support training at the work place were to pursue only the aim of training and would not be productive in nature, requiring that scholarship recipients participate in actual training programs and were covered by the social security system (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 125).

Last but not least, the PSOE proposed to modernize the Work and Social Security Ministry technologically and to increase its inspectors to 3,000; to create a specialized unit within that institution in order to assure the recognition of professional diseases, to control workplace absenteeism, to check whether equality plans were being implemented and provisions regarding the employment of disabled individuals were being followed suit; lastly, to increase the overall amount of resources made available for inspections (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 127). The socialist also wished to create a Competitiveness and Productivity Observatory with various reporting functions and to ratify the treaty on the European Social Charter of 1996 (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 126).

The PP promised to reach the number of 20 million employees in the next legislature (Partido Popular 2015, p. 18) as well as the introduction of the so-called Austrian system, which would provide a capitalization fund for each employee, to which the latter could contribute throughout his working life and which could be accessed in case of unemployment, geographic mobility, training activities and retirement (Partido Popular 2015, p. 21). The party also offered to create the National Talent Institute to reinforce the functions of the Public State Employment Service in the development of human capital through training and education (Partido Popular 2015, p. 21); to invest in technology to permit better control over these public services and their

evaluation as well as to improve web based services in general (Partido Popular 2015, p. 21); to provide job seekers with personalized itineraries; to provide the long-term unemployed as well as the disabled with greater individualized attention and an assessment of their capacities (Partido Popular 2015, pp. 22–3, 200); to provide staff responsible for disabled individuals with specialised training (Partido Popular 2015, p. 121); to launch a public campaign to create awareness about different disabilities and the fiscal benefits of hiring such individuals (Partido Popular 2015, p. 121); to offer incentives to hire participants within the context of the Youth Guarantee Program (Partido Popular 2015, p. 22); to increase the period of parental leave for families with many children (Partido Popular 2015, p. 23); to create a public-private forum and an expert commission to analyse and make recommendations concerning digitalization and employment (Partido Popular 2015, p. 22). Compared to the PSOE, which came close to proposing a policy field overhaul and aimed to substantially expand labour market related welfare state measures, among others, the PP thus seemed to offer few “significant” measures, an important exception being the introduction of the Austrian capitalization system. Once again, the onus seems to be on facilitation rather than direct “intervention” to aid different societal groups.

While Podemos and the PSOE had several similar issue position proposals, the far left party also offered much more costly policies. Podemos aimed to derogate the last number of labour reforms, including the one under Zapatero (Podemos 2015, p. 58); to gradually increase the minimum salary to 800 Euro within two years and to 950 Euro until the end of the legislature (Podemos 2015, p. 62); to reduce weekly working hours progressively to 35 hours a week (Podemos 2015, p. 69); to return to the pre-crisis level of employment (Podemos 2015, p. 62). Podemos also proposed two massive interrelated projects, aiming to spend 25,000 million Euro a year on the Social Welfare and Economic Modernization Plan, which included a guaranteed minimum income, salary increases and the elimination of spending cuts undertaken since 2010 and a part of which was aimed at the welfare state (Podemos 2015, p. 57) and thus also at labour market related policies. The party thus proposed the creation of an additional unemployment insurance system which ought to be activated in times of crisis and aimed to assure the portability of rights acquired in other European countries (Podemos 2015, p. 61) as well as a complementary income for households below the poverty threshold. The amount to which a household would be eligible was to be a function of the number of its members, ranging from a maximum of 600 Euro for single household members to a maximum of 1290 Euro a month (Podemos 2015, p. 67).

Concerning labour unions and worker rights, the party wished to re-establish the dominance of sectoral agreements over company level ones concerning the recognition of basic rights (Podemos 2015, p. 62); to eliminate specific provisions in order to decrease judicial uncertainty concerning the exercise of the right to strike (Podemos 2015, p. 63); to treat company groups, including their respective subsidiaries, as a single entity during labour negotiations, with all their employees being represented as a single group by the unions (Podemos 2015, pp. 62–3); to involve employees with more than 100 workers in the running of their companies, especially by establishing works councils, modelled on those in Germany (Podemos 2015, p. 66).

Regarding labour market duality and precariousness, Podemos aimed to eliminate the entrepreneurial contract (Podemos 2015, p. 66); to convert particular types of temporary contracts to indefinite ones when their duration was longer than a year or when several such contracts were used to cover the same position for longer than a year; to regulate part time contracts more strictly; to convert part time temporary contracts to fixed contracts of a limited duration, thereby providing more labour rights (Podemos 2015, pp. 62–3); to make dismissal more restrictive by means of several particular measures (Podemos 2015, pp. 63–4), while aiming to increase internal flexibility, especially by means of the reduction of working hours without a concomitant reduction in salaries, the resultant shortfall of which was to be compensated by the state (Podemos 2015, p. 65).

In relation to gender equality, Podemos proposed increasing parental leave until it was equal to maternity leave as well as to make it non-transferable and assure that it could be enjoyed without pay reductions (Podemos 2015, pp. 65, 125); to establish a state commission to monitor and control companies' equality plans and which was to be able to make proposals (Podemos 2015, p. 66); the introduction of gender equality measures, similar to those implemented in France or Germany, for executive boards (Podemos 2015, p. 69); to offer public and free preschool care for children from zero years of age (Podemos 2015, p. 125); to increase the resources dedicated to workplace inspections, especially to fight contractual fraud (Podemos 2015, p. 62); to increase the rate of activity of disabled persons to 50 percent (Podemos 2015, p. 117); the ratification of the ILO's Treaty 189 (Podemos 2015, p. 131). Compared to the PSOE, Podemos' measures could thus be said to stand out especially due to their very costly and much more restrictive nature. While the PSOE limited itself to a number of key reforms and aimed to strengthen unions, delegating a number of issues to collective negotiations, Podemos seemed to favour a much more direct and comprehensive intervention in the labour market.

Although this may be considered surprising, Cs' labour market proposals were perhaps even more ambitious than those made by Podemos. The party proposed an Annual Guaranteed Complementary Salary (AGCS) to complement the earnings of low-income households and those suffering from precarious employment, similar to the US Earned Income Tax Credit, the UK and various other European countries, with approximately five million households being potentially eligible (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 25). The quantity of the complementary salary was intended to increase or decrease as a function of household income up to a ceiling, the height of which was to be determined by the number of adult household members and their children (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 25). The anticipated cost of one percent of GDP was intended to be covered by the savings expected from a decline in unemployment benefits during economic recovery (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 26). Moreover, recipients of the AGCS were to be exempt from the income tax (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 191).

In order to deal with precariousness, the party proposed to eliminate temporary contracts for new hires, which were to be conducted through a permanent contract with a severance pay that increases over time. Moreover, the party aimed to establish a "dismissal insurance" based on individual accounts for each employee and to which companies were to contribute one percent of their salaries. Employees would then be given access in case of dismissal or retirement and these accounts would also be used to deposit public subsidies for training or the fight against long-term unemployment. Employees would thus be the direct recipients of state support (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 23) and would be able to choose which measures they wished to spend their funds on (see below). Additionally, the party proposed introducing social security discounts for companies with low dismissal rates (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 23), subsidies for hiring new employees, including a 100 percent social security contribution rebate for companies hiring youth (Ciudadanos 2015, pp. 26, 180–1) as well as social security rebates for the hire of the long term unemployed (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 190). Lastly, the party demanded that collective agreements ought to include mechanisms to convert internships into permanent contracts (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 181).

Moreover, Cs proposed to increase spending on active labour market policies (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 38). Its main proposal in this area was to provide training and education cheques directly to the (un)employee, permitting the latter to choose freely among education providers, the latter thus being forced to compete amongst themselves (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 27). In order to detect fraud, the party aimed to increase auditing and promised that if cases of fraud were to be detected, the entire defrauded amount of money would have to

be returned (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 27). Training and education vouchers were intended especially for the long term unemployed with little work experience or who would require sectoral or occupational mobility (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 39). Cheques would also be provided to the unemployed and the Income Rehabilitation Program (IRP) and Reintegration Income aimed to provide the means for employees and the long term unemployed to acquire new skills, the former program doing so while workers kept their current employment (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 39). A part of the funds necessary to carry out these policies was intended to come from the future European Program Against Unemployment, intended to consist of a common fund directed entirely at the provision of training to the (un)employed and a system of active labour policies (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 32).

Next, Cs proposed the creation of an Independent Agency of Employment Politics, which was intended to create and maintain the personalized profiles of job seekers, which could also be accessed by the ACs, in order to evaluate employment policies and its results, making them public, as well as in order to set priorities and to make proposals (Ciudadanos 2015, pp. 39–40). Moreover, the party proposed to digitalize many of these processes, to increase interconnections between different platforms and to make use of statistical data (Ciudadanos 2015, pp. 26–7, 38, 60).

In the area of equality, Cs proposed that companies had to publish yearly reports on their hiring practices, differentiating the provided information by gender and the hierarchical level (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 198), and that companies on the stock exchange as well as public sector institutions had to publish objectives to increase the representation of women (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 198). The party also promised to withdraw public subsidies and state contracts from those associations and companies which practised gender based discrimination (Ciudadanos 2015, pp. 198–199); a joint parental leave of 26 weeks, eight weeks of which were to be reserved for each partner, while the other ten weeks could be freely distributed between them (Ciudadanos 2015, pp. 176–7); to provide free education to all children between zero and three years of age and to increase the number of public and semi-private catholic preschools (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 177); to make it possible to start working at eight o'clock in the morning; to accumulate and then later reduce working hours; to permit home office at least once a week; to reduce lunch time breaks to 30 to 45 minutes; to reduce the summer school holidays by two months (for a better work-life balance); to award companies which participate in making these adjustments certificates and to publish information about their efforts on a website (Ciudadanos 2015, pp. 207–8); lastly, that companies which could

prove their efforts in the area of work-life conciliation would be favoured during public contract bidding (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 187). Concerning the disabled, the party promised to increase resources to promote their employability (Ciudadanos 2015, pp. 188–189) and to increase inspections (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 197). Overall, the measures proposed by Cs seem of an intermediate nature somewhere between the PSOE's and Podemos' more interventionist and the PP's more neoliberal and individualistic approaches. On the one hand Cs proposed a large number of costly welfare state type measures, on the other hand the party seemed to favour personal initiative and competition.

9.8.2.3 Center-periphery IPs

In the center-periphery policy field, the PSOE once again promised to explicitly name the ACs and the autonomous cities in the Constitution (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 271); to recognize the singularity of the nationalities and regions and their languages, cultures, historic privileges, rights and so forth (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 271); to reform the Senate's functions in terms of the role it plays in the passage basic state legislation, laws with territorial significance as well as finance and EU related laws affecting the ACs (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 271). Three measures which the PSOE proposed were of a more centralizing nature: to include the principle of loyalty between the state and ACs in the Constitution (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 271); to attribute to the state the responsibility to assure the equality of Spaniards in their basic living conditions, basic services, rights, liberties and duties across the different territories in which they reside (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 271); finally, in reference to the territorial finance system proposed by the PSOE in 2011, to define the concept of a similar fiscal effort through a congressional reference law containing tax rates (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2015, p. 271).

In 2015, the PP increased its number of specific center-periphery issue positions substantially. Implicitly offering to undo its politics of austerity, the conservatives promised a stable growth in spending on basic services, including education and health, to increase the ACs' financial capacity and that financing would not be made dependent on economic activity (Partido Popular 2015, p. 83).

Additionally, the party offered a number of specific issue positions in the center-periphery policy field which had a rather tenuous connection to its actual subject matter: to reduce the duration of electoral campaigns as well as election related expenditures (Partido Popular 2015, p. 142); to increase congressional transparency by creating a new website which would make it easier to search

for information and to make more information available (Partido Popular 2015, p. 142); to permit citizen to initiate non-binding propositions (*proposiciones no de ley*), which ought to be dealt with by parliamentary commissions (Partido Popular 2015, p. 142); to reform the congressional regulations in order to make speaking times proportional to party size (Partido Popular 2015, p. 143); to increase the time dedicated to political debates on laws in plenary session; lastly, to enable citizen to follow the evolution of project laws (*proyecto de ley*) online and to submit their opinions and suggestions on these (Partido Popular 2015, p. 143). While it may be assumed that such measures may increase cohesion, thus indirectly addressing the center-periphery policy field, this connection is at best indirect. Moreover, the impact of many of these measures would likely have been low. Both these comments may lead a critical observer to conclude that these proposals were included in the center-periphery policy field section to increase its content, rather than to make politically relevant proposals. Although the PSOE did not offer more specific issue positions than the PP in the center-periphery policy field, these were at least more closely related to it. Beyond promising an end to austerity, the PP made no directly relevant specific proposals, except perhaps for the adjustment of congressional speaking time to party size, which was likely to be disadvantageous to smaller regional and nationalist parties.

Cs is by far the most prolific in terms of making specific reform proposals in the center-periphery field. The party proposed to include the names of the ACs and autonomous cities in the Constitution; to abolish the Constitution's fourth transitory provision, which permits the incorporation of Navarre into the Basque Country (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 11); to eliminate all the transitory provisions permitting the establishment of ACs (Ciudadanos 2015, pp. 11–2); to derogate article 150.2, which permitted the transfer or delegation of state competencies to ACs; to include a residual clause attributing competencies which had been neither reserved for the central state nor ACs to the latter; to give the central state the ability to legislate directly, whenever necessary, in order to guarantee the equality of living conditions in the entire country, to maintain its juridical and economic unity as well as to assure the equality of the rights and liberties of its citizens (Ciudadanos 2015, pp. 12–3); to establish the rules for the prevalence of state legislation (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 12). Moreover, Cs wished to make ACs, which ought to implement laws which fall into the exclusive law-making powers of the central state, subject to supervision and control by the High Inspection (*alta inspección*) (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 12).

Concerning the territorial finance model, the party proposed the creation of the Territorial and Social Cohesion Fund to substitute the Convergence

and Sufficiency Fund, in order to eliminate the existing inequities after the application of the Guarantee Fund (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 13). The party also proposed that ACs could offer better service provisions, provided they were financed by the respective AC's own tax revenue increases (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 13). Spending that was not justified by the aim to guarantee basic equality could not be considered justified (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 16) and ACs would not to be bailed out by the central state (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 16).

One of the key reforms Cs proposed was to abolish the Spanish Senate (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 13) and to replace it with the Council of Presidents of the Autonomous Communities and the Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla, of which no central state representative ought to be a member (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 18). The council members ought to have had proportionally and regressively weighted votes according to their respective territorial units' populations, with Ceuta and Melilla each receiving a single vote (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 18). Its functions were to approve, in second reading and by a majority of its members, the laws related to the organization of the state, the AC finance system, laws in areas of shared competencies, when these were concerned with assuring equal living conditions in the entire national territory, the maintenance of juridical and economic unity as well as basic equality concerning rights and duties, projects which affected various ACs, such as infrastructure and hydrological plans and, lastly, to emit reports in Congress concerning legislation to be executed by the ACs. Although a coordination commission ought to try to find a common position first, however, Congress would still have the last word on the approval of legislation. Additionally, all laws not concerned with any of these issues would no longer require a second reading (Ciudadanos 2015, pp. 14, 18–19).

Moreover, a fairly large number of specific issue positions was concerned with an electoral reform which would make the Spanish system very similar to the German one, with each voter casting a vote for candidates in single candidate districts, the winners having secured their representation in parliament, as well as for national party lists. The votes for the latter were then to be employed to fill the remaining vacant seats. The potential excess of single district candidates over won party list seats was to be dealt with by providing such deputies with mandates until a maximum of 400 seats was reached (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 18). Moreover, Cs wished to implement a national three percent electoral threshold (Ciudadanos 2015, p. 18). While the impact of the former reform is hard to determine without further study, based on the April 2019 national election results, the three percent rule would have prevented

Junts per Catalunya,²³ the PNV and EH Bildu, among many others, from gaining national representation, forcing these kinds of parties either into electoral coalitions or out of parliament. Except for the five national parties, only the ERC would have been represented in national Congress. Overall, Cs clearly intended to eliminate the room for manoeuvre over competencies left open by the Constitution in favour of the central state, to convert the Senate into a (more) territorial chamber, but without giving it equal status to Congress, and to make the participation of regional parties in national parliament more difficult. From a nationalist perspective, this agenda would have to be considered hostile and exclusionary; from a Spanish nationalist perspective, it was highly ambitious, going far beyond the kinds of proposals the PP would have dared to make in the recent past and until this point in time.

Podemos, like the PSOE, was rather vague in the center-periphery policy field. The party wished to reform the Constitution in order to recognize the plurinational nature of the Spanish nation (Podemos 2015, p. 45). Like Cs, Podemos proposed a senate reform, but it aimed to partially reduce the remuneration of senators and to convert them into regional government representatives, interchangeable and equipped with a block vote, thereby also reducing their overall number. The functions of the Senate would include its participation in the approval of laws of a territorial nature and the state budget, in the latter to determine the items attributed to different territories, as well as the naming of Constitutional Court magistrates (Podemos 2015, p. 189). The party did not specify whether the Senate could block legislation approved by Congress. Podemos too proposed an electoral reform, in which ACs ought to function as electoral districts and deputies were to be proportionally distributed according to voting district population size, with the method of the greatest average being applied (Podemos 2015, p. 159). Overall, Podemos' proposals would likely have strengthened the territorial nature of the Senate, while its electoral reform would have benefited the more populous ACs, including Catalonia and the Basque Country, vis-à-vis less populous ones.²⁴

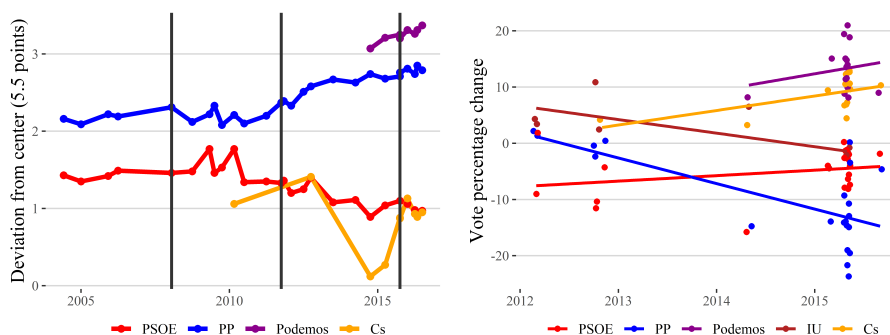
²³ Junts per Catalunya was a 2017 electoral list including the successor party to the CDC as well as independent pro-independence candidates. See below.

²⁴ The electoral system, which assigns each province two senators before distributing the rest proportionally according to the electoral district population distribution, both over-represents sparsely populated provinces and under-represents densely populated ones.

9.8.3 Hypotheses discussion

9.8.3.1 Hypothesis 1: Deviation from the ideological center

As can be seen from fig. 19a, by the time of the December 2015 election, the PP had more or less continuously been shifting away from the ideological center, from a position of 2.37 in October 2011 to 2.76 in October 2015. The PSOE, on the other hand, had moved toward the center during that same period, from 1.33 to 1.1 points. Cs had experienced a rather wild shift from its first appearance in March 2010, when it was located 1.06 points to the right of the political center, increasing to 1.41 points in October 2012. Next, the party dropped to 0.12 points in October 2015. The reason for this massive shift may be attributed to changes in the perception of the party. Initially, the party was primarily known in Catalonia, where it was considered more right-wing due to its anti-nationalist and pro-Spanish discourse. As the party became more known in the rest of Spain, it may have shifted toward the center because opposing the more “radical” forms of Catalan nationalism and being generally pro-Spanish are not considered a very right-wing position. Subsequent cooperation with the PP and attacks on the PSOE may then once again have shifted Cs away from the center in 2015, when it reached 0.87 points. Podemos, on the other hand, became the party furthest from the ideological center, its perception as a far left party increasing from its first measure at 3.07 points in October 2014 to 3.2 points in October 2015.



(a) Ideological distance from the center

(b) Certainty based on electoral trends

Figure 19: Deviation from the center and certainty hypotheses discussion (2015)

As was discussed at length in section 5.3.1.1 on page 136, Cs deviation scores should be inverted because the party's organizational identity is located not to the left or the right, but at or near the center. Summarizing that previous

discussion, the reason for postulating a positive relationship between deviation from the center and specificity was that as a left (right) party deviates from the ideological center, it draws closer to its organizational or “true” identity and thus finds it easier to make specific proposals which reflect its ideology, rather than more vague and therefore also more generic statements. The inverse is true for a liberal centrist party, however, because its organizational identity is located at or near the ideological center. In order to avoid having to formulate a separate hypothesis for centrist parties when evaluating the supposedly positive relationship between deviation and specificity and to be able to show this relationship for all parties within one graphic, Cs deviation from the center score was thus simply inverted. As a consequence, in fig. 21a on page 315, showing the relationship between ideological deviation and specificity, Cs is found furthest from the ideological center.²⁵ Moreover, with more observations and two additional parties, the trends in the data become clearer. As is indicated by the slope of the black regression line, the overall relationship between deviation and specificity across time, parties and policy fields is indeed positive. However, when the data is analysed on a party by party basis for each policy field, as indicated by the coloured regression lines for the PP and PSOE, the relationship between deviation and specificity actually becomes negative, which is the opposite of what was hypothesized. The reason for this (only superficial) paradox is that political parties tend to move only within certain ranges of the ideological spectrum. Thus, when the data points are analysed without differentiating by party, the relationship is positive, but when looking at individual parties, it becomes clear that as these shift toward the center within their “ideological range”, they actually become more specific.²⁶ Concerning the testing of the relationship between deviation and specificity for 2015 only (shown by the cross-hairs), it becomes clear that the hypothesis cannot be accepted for that year. The PP is much less specific than the PSOE, but deviates much more from the political center than the socialists. Additionally, while Podemos is more specific than the PSOE, Cs is (slightly) less specific than Podemos although it deviates more from the center than the latter.

²⁵ It should be noted that this modification was not applied after but before analysing the data and is thus not a retroactive adjustment.

²⁶ This negative relationship is the “true” relationship between deviation from the center and specificity, which remains hidden when the party control variable is not taken into consideration.

9.8.3.2 Hypothesis 2: Party threat

As can be gleaned from fig. 20, the year 2015 saw an increase not only in the threat levels of both the PP and PSOE, but also exposed the two newcomer parties to comparatively high threat levels. As shown in fig. 20a, threat was particularly acute for the PSOE, increasing to 1.07 points, followed by Cs with a .93, Podemos with a .79 and the PP with a .46 point threat level. As can be seen from fig. 20b, the PSOE was now exposed to Podemos, the electorally much stronger “successor” to the IU, causing party pair threat to increase from the IU’s .11 point score in 2011 to Podemos’ .32 point score in 2015. This change must be attributed not to ideological threat, which fell slightly from .8 to .77 points, but to the increase in competitive threat, which rose from -.59 to -.03 points. Moreover, Cs was a much more ideologically proximate competitor to the PP to the right, posing a .78 as opposed to the PP’s .57 point ideological threat, although Cs competitive threat (-0.05) was lower than that of the PP (.2). The PSOE was thus exposed to a .38, .37 and .32 party pair threat emanating from the PP, Cs and Podemos respectively.

To the PP, shown in fig. 20c, the competitive threat emanating from the PSOE and Cs was negative, since the conservatives were leading in the polls, although the relative narrowing of the expected electoral advantage of the PP over the PSOE when compared to 2011 increased the overall competitive threat emanating from the latter from -.42 points to -.23 points. Cs, which was only slightly less electorally threatening to the PP than the PSOE, with -.24 points, was much more ideologically proximate to the PP than the PSOE, however, causing an ideological threat of .79 points and resulting in Cs producing an overall party pair threat of .28 points. As a result of these developments, the

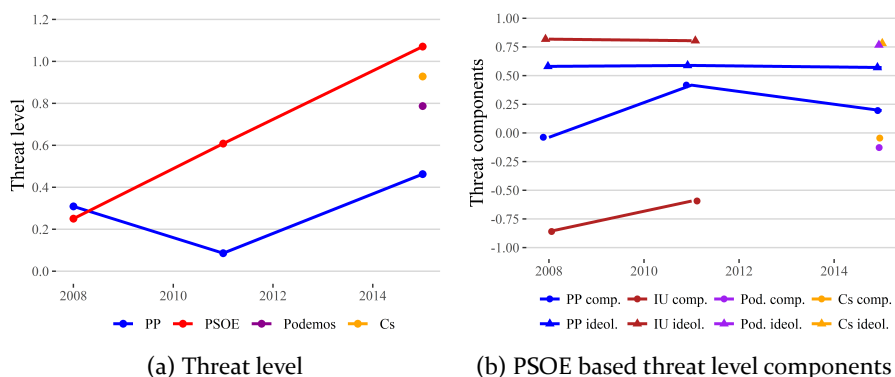


Figure 20: Threat hypothesis discussion (2015)

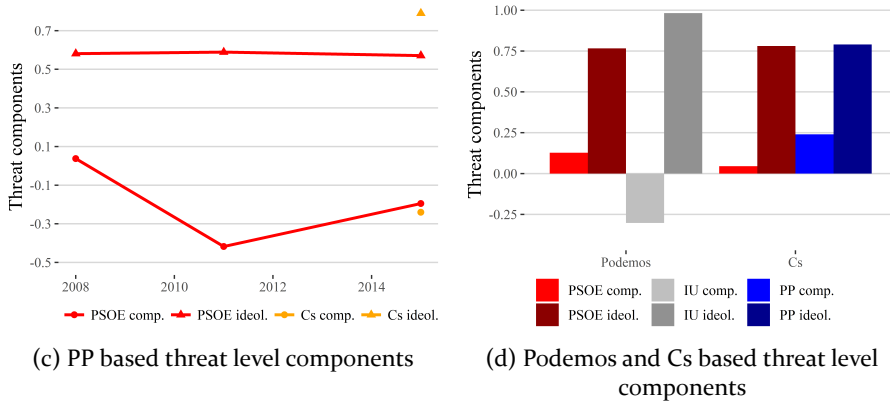
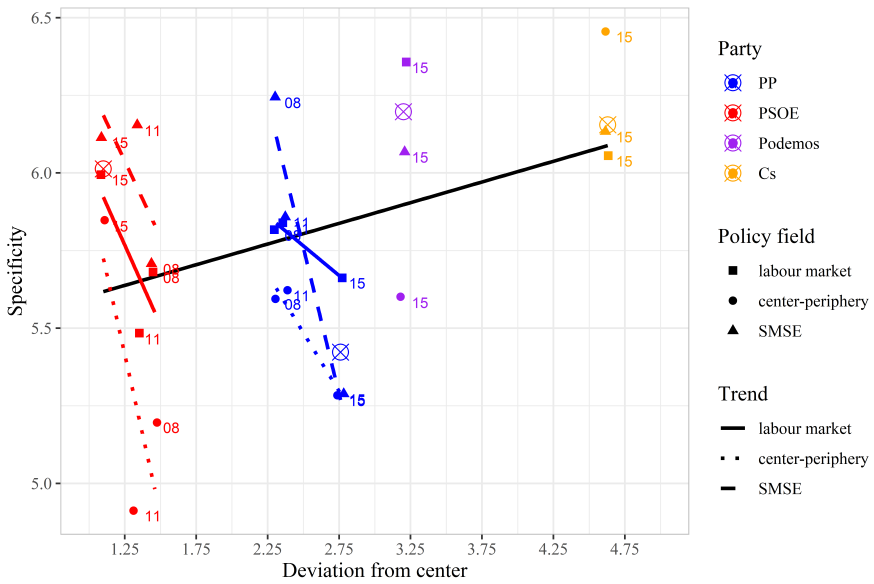


Figure 20: Threat hypothesis discussion (2015), cont.

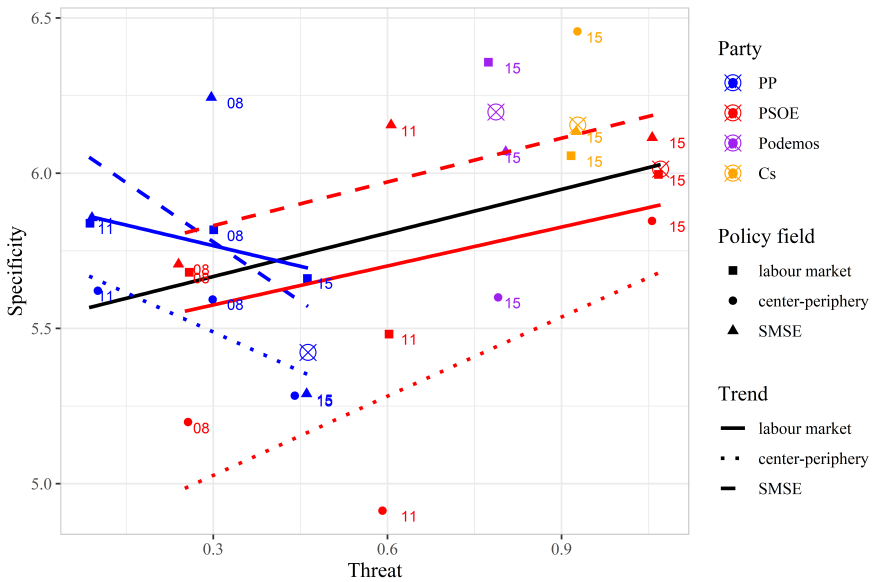
PP's overall threat level increased notably when compared to 2011, but was approximately half that of the PSOE, at .46 points.

Concerning the newcomer parties, shown in fig. 20d, Cs was also in an uncomfortable position. The party competed with the both electorally relatively strong and ideologically proximate PSOE, with .05 and .78 points respectively, to the left, resulting in a party pair threat of .41. Moreover, Cs faced off against the electorally even stronger and ideologically slightly nearer PP, with .24 and .79 points respectively, causing a party pair threat of .52. Cs overall party threat level thus totalled .93 points. Podemos too suffered from high competition, competing with the ideologically very proximate, almost identical IU, causing a .98 points ideological threat, but which also had much lower electoral expectation than Podemos, resulting in a -.3 point competition score, thus resulting in a .34 party pair threat. Moreover, Podemos rivalled the somewhat more ideologically distant, but electorally stronger PSOE, with .77 and .13 points respectively, which was thus exuding a .45 party pair threat. Podemos' overall threat level thus totalled .79 points. Comparing the four parties, the party which found itself in the most comfortable position was the PP, which was leading in the polls and protected on its right ideological flank by the absence of a strong competitor.

9.8 Analysis of the December 2015 national election and specificity



(a) Relationship between specificity and deviation from the center



(b) Relationship between specificity and threat

Figure 21: Relationship between specificity, deviation from the center and threat (2015)

As can be seen on fig. 21b, when viewed across time and by policy fields, indicated by the black regression line, a positive relationship between threat and

specificity exists. When looking at the data by party and policy field, however, the PP's data reveals a negative relationship in all three policy fields, while the PSOE's is positive. The across time data does not seem to bode well for the threat level hypothesis, an interpretation which is confirmed by considering the positions of the cross-hair symbols showing the overall specificity and party threat values for each party. The hypothesis of a positive relationship between these two variables must be rejected. While the PP is least threatened (with .46 points) and least specific (with 5.42 points), Podemos, Cs and the PSOE are (from left to right) successively more threatened but less specific, even though the differences between these parties are relatively small.

9.8.3.3 Hypothesis 3: Party certainty of victory

Between March 2012 and March 2015, seven elections took place in Spain, with the May 2014 EU election being an important turning point. The electoral contests in Andalusia and Asturias in March 2012, in Galicia and the Basque Country in October 2012 and in Catalonia in November 2012 confirmed the trends of the previous legislature, as shown in fig. 19b on page 311. The PSOE lost between 9 and 11.6 percent of the vote in Andalusia, Galicia and the Basque Country, falling to 39.9, 21.2 and 19.1 percent of the vote respectively. In addition to its second worst result ever in Andalusia, the PSOE also lost an additional 4.3 percent in Catalonia, falling to 14.6 percent of the vote, a performance which was abysmal compared to the period from 1984 to 2006, when the party's results had varied between 25.1 and 38.2 percent. The only barely good news came from Asturias, where an electoral repetition²⁷ permitted the PSOE to gain 1.8 percent of the vote, but the 32.6 percent total was still relatively bad when compared to the party's results in the past. Thanks to the IU, the PSOE was nonetheless able to recover the Asturian government and to form a coalition government in Andalusia under both José Antonio Griñán Martínez, successor to the long term Andalusian PSOE President Manuel María Chaves, who had governed from 1990 to 2009, and Griñán's successor Díaz, who had governed from 2013 to 2015. The PP's gains and losses in all these elections were below 2.5 percent of the vote, its biggest gains occurring in Andalusia (2.2 percent), where the party achieved its best results ever with 41 percent, while its largest decline (by 2.4 percent) to 11.7 percent took place in the Basque Country, where the party received its worst result since 1994 and the PNV returned to government. In Catalonia, where, as mentioned before, the CiU had replaced the left coalition government, the PP achieved

²⁷ The Asturian election was called by the AC President Álvarez-Cascos in the hope of increasing his relative majority, following the rejection of his party's budget by the regional parliament (Cuartas 2012, EFE 2012a).

its second best result ever with 13.2 percent. In Galicia, the PP continued to rule as it had done almost continuously since the return to democracy.²⁸

The May 2014 EU election marked the beginning of the end of the two-party dominance at all levels of Spanish politics. The biggest losers were the PP and PSOE, which declined by 14.8 and 15.8 percent to 26.7 and 23.6 percent of the vote respectively. To the PSOE, these had been the worst EU election results ever, while it had been the worst result for the PP since 1994. Aided by the proportional nature of the European election with a single country wide electoral district (Torreblanca 2015, p. 164), Cs and Podemos could both celebrate their national breakthroughs. Cs won 3.2 percent of the vote and two deputies, while Podemos won 8.2 percent of the vote and 5 deputies, permitting the former to join the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and the latter to join the European United Left-Nordic Green Left (EUL-NGL) parties. The Andalusian election which took place in March 2015²⁹ as well as the AC elections of May 2015 confirmed that Podemos and Cs were here to stay. In Andalusia, Cs and Podemos won 9.4 and 15.1 percent of the vote respectively, while the PSOE declined by another four percent to 35.9 percent and the PP by 13.9 percent to 27.1 percent. As has been mentioned before, the Andalusian election was of special significance to Cs, which managed to utterly defeat its greatest rival up to this point, the UPyD (Ellakuría 2015, p. 217). Whereas the latter had won 6.7 percent of the vote and four seats in the European election, thus outperforming Cs by some 500 thousand votes and two seats, in the Andalusian election Cs had won 370 thousand votes and five seats, while the UPyD had only been able to attract 77 thousand votes and had thus failed to gain representation in the regional parliament. From this point onward, Cs would outperform its major ideological rival up to this point in time, essentially rendering the UPyD irrelevant subsequently.

The May 2015 AC elections were the PP's equivalent to the PSOE's AC election fiasco of May 2011. In the Balearic Islands, Madrid, Murcia and Valencia, the conservatives lost between 19 and 23.7 percent of the vote, in another four ACs between 13.9 and 14.9 percent and in another three between 9.3 and 12.9 percent of the vote. In Navarre, the PP lost 3.5 percent. Only in Asturias did the PP make any gains at all (less than 0.2 percent). The PSOE, which had already suffered the wrath of its former voters before, experienced

²⁸ Concerning the regional government formation and electoral data sources consulted, please see footnote 61 on page 205.

²⁹ According to Iglesias, Díaz called early elections to ensure that the first electoral contest with Podemos would take place where the PSOE would be most resilient and had the best chances against its new rival (Iglesias 2015, p. 44).

further substantial but comparatively smaller declines of between 6.3 and 8.1 percent in the Balearic Islands, Castilla-La Mancha, Valencia and Aragon. In another five ACs, the party lost between 2.6 and 5.6 percent of the vote, in another three ACs less than 2.5 percent and, like the PP, the PSOE only gained decimals in one AC, Murcia (0.2 percent). Cs gained representation in ten ACs, achieving its best results, between 9.6 and 12.9 percent, in Aragon, Castile and León, La Rioja, Madrid, Valencia and Murcia and won between 4.4 and 7.3 percent in another four ACs. The party was unable to gain representation in Castilla-La Mancha, Canary Islands and Navarre. Podemos achieved its best results, between 18.8 and 21 percent, in Madrid, Asturias and Aragon, between 11.4 and 15.1 percent in another seven and between 8.1 and 9.9 percent in three ACs, thus winning representation in all participating ACs. The May 2015 AC elections were followed by the Catalan election in September that year, which was already described above and which ultimately strengthened especially the CUP and Cs and witnessed Podemos' breakthrough, while the PP and PSOE continued to decline there as well.³⁰

The massive redistribution of votes between the four parties and the much more substantial losses of the PP meant that both Podemos and Cs were presented with an opportunity to determine government formation outcomes in eleven ACs, including Andalusia (Rodon and Hierro 2016, p. 349). Nonetheless, both newcomers preferred not to form government coalitions, but to condition the PP and PSOE's political agenda by means of investiture pacts and parliamentary pressure instead. The reasons were of course political: both parties had run on the idea of bringing an end to the Spanish two-party system, both advocated a new way of doing politics and, perhaps even more importantly, the ultimate electoral contest, the national election at the end of the year, was only a few months away. Although Cs had attempted to project the image of being a party of the political center, it only supported the formation of a single PSOE government in Andalusia, led by Díaz, who belonged to the socialist party's right-wing. All other pacts were reached with the PP, procuring the liberals' favourable votes in Madrid (Europa Press 2015d) and in Murcia (Europa Press 2015c) and their abstention in Castile and León (Europa Press 2015a) and La Rioja (La Vanguardia 2015a). In return for its support, Cs made several demands, such as the withdrawal of politicians associated with corruption, forcing several resignations, that the PP take concrete measures to pre-empt future corruption, to increase transparency and to "revitalize" democracy, the latter by calling for regional electoral system reforms to increase proportionality, by implementing open lists, by limiting

³⁰ See section 9.6 on page 287 above.

the duration of mandates and by holding regional party primaries (Ellakuría 2015, pp. 254–58, Müller 2015, p. 164, Europa Press 2015d, Europa Press 2015c, EFE 2017, M. J. Gil 2017, Mateo 2015). Following the May 2015 AC election, the PP thus only ruled in the form of a single party majority government in Galicia and by means of minority governments supported by Cs in another four ACs, despite having been the most voted party in nine regions (Rodon and Hierro 2016, p. 348).

The PSOE had only been the most voted party in two ACs (Asturias and Extremadura), but its capacity to form alliances with other parties permitted the socialists a substantial expansion of regional power (Rodon and Hierro 2016, p. 350). The PSOE was able to recover its electoral strongholds in Castilla-La Mancha (V. Sánchez 2015) and Extremadura (Vigario 2015) as well as the more contested Balearic Islands (EFE 2015c) and Aragon (La Vanguardia 2015d) with the essential support of Podemos as well as, in the latter two cases, of regional parties. Moreover, an alliance with the strong regional party Compromís³¹ (Ok Diario 2019) and the favourable votes by Podemos permitted the PSOE to come to power in Valencia, which had been ruled by the PP since 1995. In Cantabria, the PSOE was the junior partner in a coalition with the PRC, facilitated by Podemos' abstention (Info Libre 2015). In Asturias, the PSOE formed a government with the votes of the IU in favour and the abstention of Podemos as well as Cs (EFE 2015b). In Canary Islands, the POSE formed a CC led coalition with other regional parties. Including Andalusia, the PSOE had thus been able to constitute governments in a subtotal of seven ACs and was a junior member of a government coalition in another two. As was the case with Cs in relation to the PP, Podemos made several demands in return for its support of the PSOE and which pursued a similar set of goals, from increasing transparency and democracy to fighting corruption, with an additional emphasis on social policies (Díez and Manetto 2015, Manetto 2015, ABC 2015). This left only three ACs which were ruled without the PP and the PSOE: the PNV ruled in the Basque Country; Navarre was now governed by a left-wing regional coalition including EH Bildu (Rioja Andueza 2015); lastly, Catalonia was governed by an ERC-CDC government with the CUP's support.

In the municipal level election, both the PP and PSOE dropped by three and eleven percent of the vote to 27.5 (22.7 thousand councillors) and 25.5 percent (20.9 thousand councillors) of the vote respectively. Cs won 6.7 percent of

³¹ The rise of this relatively new regional party was facilitated by corruption scandals, which had caused the PP's regional President Francisco Camps to resign after being charged, as well as the particularly acute Valencian banking system crisis, among others (Rodon and Hierro 2016, p. 351).

the vote and 1.5 thousand councillors, while Podemos' strategy for competing in the municipal election was to form so-called popular unity candidacies with local left groups and activists, which often included words like *Ganemos*, *Mareas* or *En Comú* (Let's Win, Waves, Together) in their names (Antentas 2016, p. 482, Rodon and Hierro 2016, pp. 345–6). This makes it more difficult to determine Podemos' share of the vote, not least because Podemos' importance in these popular candidacies³² varied substantially between different municipalities (Rodon and Hierro 2016, pp. 346–7). Either way, Podemos' strategy was highly successful in Madrid, Barcelona and Zaragoza. In the former, *Ahora Madrid* under the leadership of Manuela Carmena, a former judge, took the city government with PSOE support, ending more than 20 years of PP rule (A. I. Gracia and I. Gil 2015). In Barcelona, the office of mayor, which had passed from uninterrupted PSC rule to the CiU in 2011, was won by Ada Colau, founding member of the aforementioned Platform of Persons Affected by Mortgages (PAH), with the votes in favour of the ERC, PSC and the CUP, and Zaragoza was won by the coalition *Zaragoza en Común*. The PP also lost Valencia City to the regional party *Compromís*, supported in its bid for power by the PSOE and *València en Comú*. Lastly, the PSOE recovered Sevilla from the PP (Rodon and Hierro 2016, pp. 347–8, Agencias 2015, Clavero and E.P. 2015). Following the municipal election, the PP thus no longer ruled in any of Spain's five largest cities, the PSOE only in the third largest and leftist candidacies which included Podemos in Spain's largest two as well as its fifth largest cities.

Overall, while the electoral trend was very negative for the PP and Cs represented a serious political competitor, the conservative's gains in 2011, the fact that they had been the largest party in many ACs, that the PSOE too was threatened by a new ideological rival and that the socialists continued to experience electoral losses³³ created a rather mixed picture for the PP. Nonetheless, as can be seen from fig. 22 on the next page, the PP had continuously led by a fairly large margin in the polls in the run-up to the 2015 election. Moreover, the CIS 2015 pre-electoral survey (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2015) showed that the vast majority of people still considered the economy to be in bad shape, with only 3.8 percent considering the economic situation good to very good, whereas 26.3 percent considered it average, 38.4 bad and 30.7

³² Rodon and Hierro (2016, p. 346) argue that there were two motives for this decision: a lack of local structures and the aim to avoid politically complex and potentially damaging situations in the face of the upcoming national election.

³³ As shown in fig. 19b on page 311, the trend for the PSOE is positive because the size of the electoral losses is becoming smaller over time.

percent very bad.³⁴ Comparing the PP's government performance with that of the PSOE in opposition, only 13.4 and 7.1 percent of interviewees believed they had done a good or very good job respectively, while 28.2 and 37.2 percent believed they had done an average job, 28.7 and 36.6 percent believed they had done a bad job and 27.2 and eleven percent believed they had done a very bad job. The picture is thus once again mixed, since the PP led in the best and worst categories, while the PSOE led in the intermediary ones. Nonetheless, only 11.5 percent believed the PSOE would have done a better job, while 23.7 percent believed the socialists would have performed worse. In terms of average popularity on a scale from zero to ten, however, the PP clearly came in last. In order of popularity, Rivera (4.98 points) was followed by Sánchez (4.59 points), Iglesias (3.87 points) and Rajoy (3.31 points).

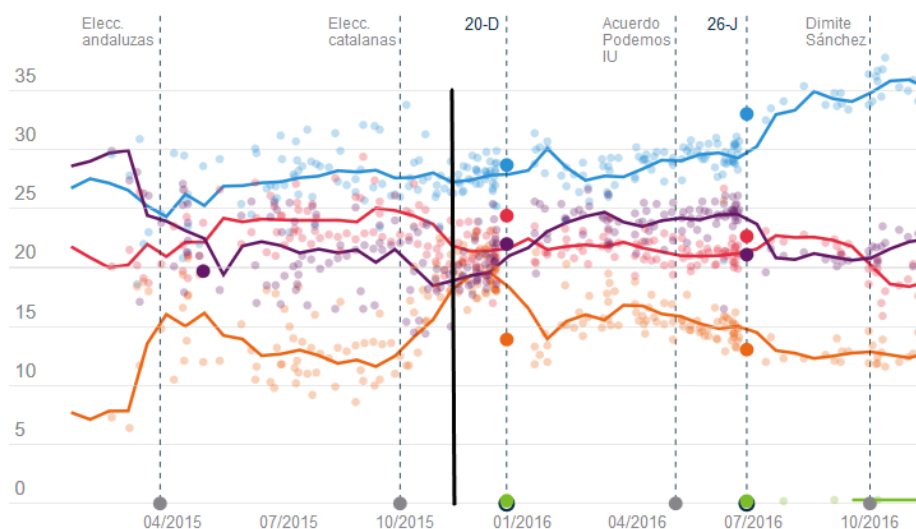


Figure 22: Electoral survey trends (2015-2016)

Colours: PP, blue; PSOE, red; Podemos, purple; Cs, orange. *Image source:* Garrido (2019)

Overall, the CIS predicted that the PSOE would lose the upcoming election with 20.8 percent, while the PP was expected to win with 28.6 percent and Cs as well as Podemos were expected to win 19 percent and 15.7 percent of the vote respectively. As can be seen in fig. 22, the low expected result of the PP can be considered an aberration from other survey results, a fact that is also reflected in the opinion of 52.4 percent of voters who believed that the PP would win

³⁴ The political situation was considered good to very good by four percent, average by 25.5, bad by 37.1 and very bad by 31.4 percent.

Table 7: Certainty and party specificity values compared (2015)

Parties	Variables	Years		
		2008	2011	2015
PP	Certainty	0	1	1
	Specificity	5.85	5.78	5.42
PSOE	Certainty	1	0	0
	Specificity	5.59	5.46	6.01
Cs	Certainty	NA	NA	0
	Specificity	NA	NA	6.16
Podemos	Certainty	NA	NA	0
	Specificity	NA	NA	6.2

the upcoming election, compared to only 13.5 percent who believed that the PSOE would win. Based on the CIS estimate and especially on other survey results, it is safe to say that the PP could be certain of its electoral victory, despite fielding a rather unpopular candidate and receiving a mixed, overall rather negative assessment by the voters. As can be seen from table 7, the hypothesis that a party that is certain that it will win the upcoming election is more specific is confirmed,³⁵ since the PP is by far the vaguest party overall, with 5.42 points, while the PSOE scores 6.01 and Podemos and Cs 6.2 and 6.16 points respectively. Across time, the results are also plausible, given that the PP's specificity drops substantially in 2015.³⁶

³⁵ For a summary of the results of all the election year based hypothesis tests conducted thus far, see table 10 on page 382.

³⁶ Given that the PSOE did not believe that it could win in 2011 or in 2015, its increase in specificity across time ought to be attributed to other factors or considered a delayed reaction to the change in certainty which took place in 2011.

10 The second Rajoy and first Sánchez administration and the 2019 election

During the second Rajoy administration, the accumulated effects of the end of the Spanish two-party system were to discharge in a tense political atmosphere, characterized by harsh competition over the Spanish electorate, Machiavellian negotiations, party internal power struggles, the short-lived declaration of Catalan independence, the fall of the conservative national government at the hands of Congress and the electoral success of the radically right party Vox. A clear sign of the unprecedented nature of this phase of Spanish politics was hard to miss: four national elections and six investiture votes, five of them failed, between 2015 and 2019, compared to eleven elections and thirteen investiture votes from 1979 to 2015, with only two failed investiture attempts (Jorge García 2020). Under the new competitive conditions brought about by Podemos' and Cs' political breakthroughs, accentuated further by that of Vox, the "traditional" Spanish parties found themselves under pressure as never before.

10.1 The 2015 national election results, electoral repetition and investiture

As can be seen in fig. 23a on page 325, the December 2015 national electoral results confirmed what the majority of surveys had predicted for most of the time in the run-up to the election: the PP was by far the largest party with 28.7 percent of the vote and 123 deputies, although it had lost 16.6 percent of the vote, achieving its worst result since 1993; the PSOE came in second with 22 percent of the vote, having lost another 7.2 percent and being reduced to 90 deputies, its worst result since the return of democracy; Podemos¹ had come close to achieving its aim of outperforming the PSOE, falling only some 333 thousand votes short by having received a rather impressive 20.7 percent and 69 deputies; Cs received 13.9 percent of the vote and 40 deputies. Despite the newcomer parties thus having achieved quite notable results, they had also somewhat fallen short of their own expectations: Podemos remained clearly below its heyday poll results and, despite the party's recovery from its electoral poll slump thanks to its associates in Catalonia (En Comú Podem) and Galicia

¹ Podemos ran both as a national party as well as with separate lists in Catalonia (En Comú Podem), Valencia (Podemos-Compromís) and Galicia (En Marea Podem).

(En Marea), had failed in its aim of an electoral *sorpasso* or out-performance of the PSOE; similarly, Cs surge in the polls shortly before December 2015 did not fully translate into its electoral results, a development attributed to a lack of organisational infrastructure, a small human resource pool and its low mobilization capacity (Antentas 2016, p. 484, Lancaster 2017, p. 928). The IU lost 759 thousand voters, or 3.3 percent of the vote, and 9 deputies, falling to a testimonial two seats and below five percent of the vote, thus losing the gains made in 2011. The UPyD had won 155 thousand votes, equivalent to 0.62 percent of the total. Among the nationalist parties, only the ERC managed to increase its share of the vote by 1.3 percent, winning one more than the CDC's eight deputies. The latter had received 2.2 percent of the vote. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, abstention fell only marginally from 31.1 to 30.3 percent of the vote. The joint share of the votes and seats by the PP and the PSOE's fell to 51.1 and 60.1 percent respectively.

The AC, municipal and national elections from May 2015 to 2016 revealed that Podemos' and Cs' voters were generally younger, better educated and more dissatisfied with the political situation as well as the state of the economy. While Podemos' voters viewed their personal economic situation negatively, Cs' voters generally did not; Podemos' voters were also generally more in favour of decentralization. Lastly, Podemos' appeal was much broader than that of Cs, stretching from the radical left to the political center, whereas Cs appeal was more confined to the latter (Lisi 2019, pp. 257–8, Marcos-Marne, Plaza-Colodro, and Frexburg 2020, pp. 13–15, Pavía, Bodoque, and J. Martín 2016, pp. 79–82, Rodon and Hierro 2016, p. 352, Teruel and Barrio 2016, pp. 14–18, Vidal 2018, pp. 275–7). Unsurprisingly, Cs drew primarily on former PP voters, while Podemos attracted especially former PSOE and IU ones (Rodon and Hierro 2016, p. 351). Despite the newcomer parties' claims of embodying novel political projects and their at least partial rejection of the typical LR divide, their breakthrough cannot be attributed to a change in the dimensionality of Spanish politics, which, from the perspective of the voter, continued to constitute a single left-right axis, with Podemos voters on the one end being more inclined to favour public services, multiculturalism, civil liberties and decentralization, while PP voters on the other end of the electoral spectrum favoured tax cuts and were less positively inclined toward multiculturalism, civil liberties and decentralization, with PSOE and Cs voters occupying intermediate positions (Vidal 2018, p. 273).

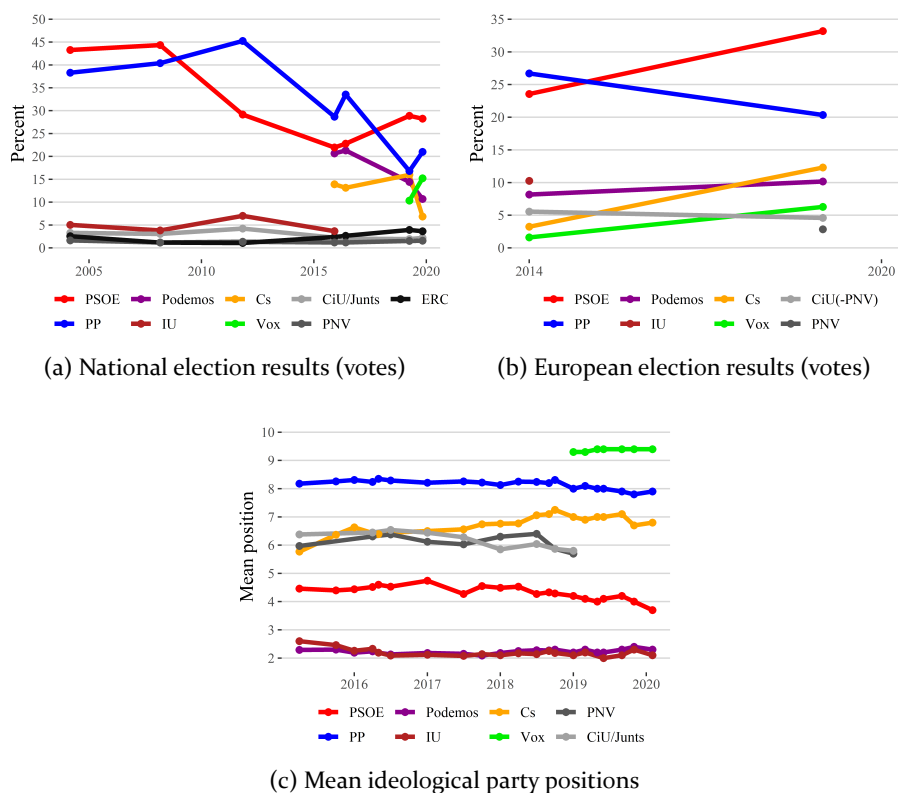


Figure 23: Party system developments (2015-2020)

As shown in table 8 on page 327, the potential government formation arithmetic² emerging from that election posed a serious, but not necessarily insurmountable, political challenge. Given the tension between the PP and the PSOE and especially Sánchez's outright rejection of a "great coalition" as it existed in Germany between the conservatives and the social democrats, an option that would have totalled 213 deputies was already discarded. Perhaps the politically easiest solution would have been a coalition between Cs and either the PP or PSOE, given Cs' center position, relatively moderate discourse and a relatively large general issue position overlap with both parties, given

² As mentioned before, thus far all Spanish national governments had been single party governments supported by a majority party or led by presidents who had been voted into office by means of investiture pacts with one or more smaller nationalist or regionalist parties. In the Spanish case, calling the subject of such negotiations "government formation" is thus somewhat of a misnomer, at least up to this point.

its liberal economics and affinity for social politics and equality. Both constellations would only amount to 163 (with the PP) and 130 deputies (with the PSOE) respectively, however, and including Cs in an alliance would make the additional support of any nationalist parties as well as Podemos very unlikely. Even if such a coalition had been facilitated by the PNV's abstention (seven seats)³ and perhaps also that of the rather flexible CC (one seat), even the larger PP-Cs combination would still have fallen five seats short of an absolute majority. A coalition between the POSE and Podemos was theoretically possible, since both were left parties and thus naturally had some programmatic commonalities, but would only sum 159 deputies. While the PSOE's powerful right wing and Podemos' radicalism would make such an alliance hard to sustain, it would be more capable of attracting nationalist parties, given that both had a more benign stance on decentralization and Spain's plurinational nature. The additional support of the ERC (nine), for instance, would push the total number of favourable votes (168) above the assured negative votes by the PP and Cs (163), but would require the additional favourable vote or abstention of the other political parties (19 seats). Of these, the increasingly confrontational CDC held eight seats and could, even with the abstention of the PNV in the second investiture vote, tip the balance against Sánchez's investiture (with 168 votes in favour and 171 against). In addition to the general difficulty of constructing such a temporary investiture alliance between the PSOE and Catalan parties agitating for the *dret a decidir* or outright independence, governing the country would require constant negotiations with them, thus likely alienating moderate PSOE voters, exposing the party to vicious attacks from the political right and causing enormous internal party tensions. The only other option was a "progressive" alliance between the PSOE, Cs and Podemos (199 seats), but this possibility seemed unlikely especially due to the latter two's economic and territorial issue positions and acrimonious relations,⁴ which seemed to substantially outweigh the possible overlap in areas such as democratization, electoral reform, transparency, research and development policies and a generally positive attitude of Cs toward a "modern" welfare

³ The CDC could not be expected to support such a coalition, given that Cs represented a major "home grown" political enemy to its new major project of rallying the Catalan population around the *dret a decidir*.

⁴ Podemos had repeatedly attacked Cs for supposedly being the PP's henchmen, for being a neoliberal party of big business with a greater interest in marketing and survey results than in "the people", while Cs had decried Podemos' radical political nature and willingness to work with Catalan secessionists.

Table 8: Different (in)formal coalition scenarios

Parties	Election		
	2015	2016	2019A
PSOE, PP	213	222	189
PP, Cs (& VOX)	163	169	123
PSOE, Podemos	159	156	165
PSOE, Podemos, Cs	199	188	222
PSOE, Podemos, ERC, PNV, CC (& Más País)	177	171	188
PNV, CC	7	6	8
CiU/ CDC/ PDeCAT/ Junts per Catalunya	8	8	7
EH Bildu (& CUP)	2	2	4

state.⁵ All in all, it should also be remembered that Rajoy's party was viewed as politically toxic by all other major contenders for power, given especially its track record of corruption and its imposition of austerity.

Explaining the ultimate failure of the investiture negotiations in terms of the absence of a "tradition" of national coalition governments is misleading, given that the pattern of single party governments had been the outcome of particular strategic and political circumstances rather than a matter of abstract principle or "habit". These circumstances included the hitherto clear dominance of the largest two parties; the availability of nationalist parties as a source of investiture votes and which preferred to profit from supporting national governments without compromising their regional political dominance, reliant at least in part on demonstrating their independence from the central state; lastly, the democratically desirable presence of at least one large opposition party. Perhaps the clearest sign that the absence of national level coalition formations should be described as a pattern rather than a "tradition" is the fact that regional and local level party coalitions have been a frequent occurrence in Spain even before 2015. Instead, the key cause which led to the failure of negotiations were in part ideological and in part of a strategic nature,

⁵ For a similar, but somewhat more unsystematic rendition of the government formation arithmetic, see Simón (2016, pp. 499, 511).

although the latter clearly played a very significant role. Concerning the PP, Rajoy's reiterated offer to form a coalition government with the PSOE could, on the one hand, be interpreted as an attempt to defend Spain's two-party system and political status quo from new political forces and the challenge emanating from Catalonia. On the other hand, the PSOE was clearly the only other party capable of forming an alternative government and its abstention in the case of a PP-Cs-PNV-CC alliance would be indispensable to Rajoy's investiture, given that all other parties were highly unlikely to render their active or passive support. Sánchez outright rejected enabling a PP led government and was willing to forge an alliance with Podemos and nationalist parties instead, thus coming under mounting internal party pressure. In the eyes of González, Rubalcaba, Zapatero and Díaz, such a government coalition would alienate moderate voters and make the PSOE hostage to Podemos' and nationalist parties' demands. The anxiety produced by Sánchez's intentions led the members of the PSOE's federal committee to pass a resolution in December, which determined that the POSE would vote against Rajoy's investiture and forbade negotiations with Podemos as well as nationalist parties as long as these had not renounced self-determination, separatism or the holding of referenda. Under these circumstances, Rajoy, as leader of the caretaker government and president of the most voted party, bolstered by Cs worse than expected electoral performance, was likely to profit from signalling openness to political alliances and letting the internal and external pressures on his major rivals, Sánchez and Cs, which had also rejected supporting the PP, play out. The PP continued to perform well in electoral surveys,⁶ converting the "worst case scenario" of an electoral repetition into a low risk or even potentially beneficial one. As a consequence, in an unprecedented move, Rajoy, as candidate of the most voted party, turned down the king's offer to attempt a government investiture (Cintora 2017, pp. 63–95).

Cs had propagated the image of being a centrist party in favour of making moderate changes to the SQ and had repeatedly pointed out that it would prioritize political stability, but one of its major electoral battle horses had been the fight against corruption and greater transparency and democracy, making the PP an unattractive coalition partner. Given Rajoy's unwillingness to take the lead and the PSOE's "no" to an alliance with Podemos and nationalist-secessionist parties, Sánchez attempted to bring Podemos and Cs, its new political rivals on both flanks, into a progressive alliance under his leadership. Informing the king of his desire to attempt to form government, Sánchez

⁶ See fig. 22 on page 321.

opened negotiations with both, but quickly came to an agreement with Cs.⁷ While Podemos refused to be sidelined in this manner during the negotiations with the PSOE, Cs refused to assent to any major changes to the agreed upon pact and the PSOE rejected Podemos' demands for a coalition government, a vice presidency and various ministries (Cintora 2017, pp. 157–202, Díez, Manetto, and Blas 2016, Pfeiffer 2016, p. 785). As the Podemos leadership had expected, its members subsequently rejected joining the PSOE-Cs pact with 88.2 percent (Pfeiffer 2016, p. 786). As a consequence of the breakdown of negotiations, Sánchez's investiture failed at the beginning of March 2016 with 130 votes by the POSE, Cs and Nuevas Canarias in favour in the first and, two days later, with one more additional favourable vote by CC, in the second round, with all other parties voting against (Marín and Agencias 2016). The political deadlock would have to be resolved by another election round. On the 3. of May 2016, Felipe VI convoked new elections for the 16. of June.

The run-up to the second round of national elections was dominated by the political parties' blame shifting concerning the failure of negotiations, Podemos' alliance with the IU, named Unidos Podemos (Podemos hereafter), with which Iglesias hoped to finally achieve the PSOE's *sorpasso*, and a general feeling of futility, given that no major changes in the election outcome was expected (Lancaster 2017, p. 931, Pfeiffer 2016, pp. 785–6). Despite its alliance with the IU and its anti-elite discourse, Podemos continued to try to evoke the image of being a transversal movement, while Cs continued to attempt to position itself at the political center (Pfeiffer 2016, p. 789). The most important outcome of the June 2016 election⁸ was that the PP gained some 700 thousand additional votes, increasing its share of the vote by 4.9 percent to 33.5 percent, and an additional 14 deputies, increasing to 137 seats. Podemos, which actually lost 125 thousand votes in absolute terms, gained 0.7 percent of the vote and two deputies, increasing to 21.3 percent and 71 deputies.⁹ The PSOE suffered a minor electoral setback, losing 101 thousand votes and five deputies, but

⁷ The Agreement for a Reformist and Progressive Government included increasing investment in research and development, partially undoing Rajoy's labour market reform, a balanced budget, tax increases for high earners and the aim to make Spain one of the top 10 countries in the Doing Business ranking, among others (Partido Socialista Obrero Español and Ciudadanos 2016).

⁸ For a more detailed treatment, see Lancaster (2017), Pfeiffer (2016) and Simón (2016).

⁹ Given the alliance with the IU, this result was nonetheless not very positive, since the IU had actually won 3.7 percent, or 927 thousand votes, on its own in 2015. The relatively poor performance of the Podemos led alliance can be attributed to shifts from Podemos' rejection of collaboration with the IU to forming an electoral alliance, from rejecting the left label to embracing it, from rejecting cooperation with the PSOE if it continued to be the largest party on the left to proposing a coalition government as well as a lack of mobilization of its

actually gained 0.83 percent of the vote, increasing to 22.8 percent. Cs was by far the biggest loser, with 373 thousand votes less, equivalent to 0.77 percent of the vote, falling to 13.2 percent, and losing eight deputies, falling to 32. The new post-electoral scenario was thus very similar, with only rather minor differences to the previous one, as shown in table 8 on page 327. Due to the gains made by the PP, however, the PP-Cs coalition only fell seven seats short of an absolute majority. The position of the PSOE and Podemos as a core alliance around which other parties could congeal became slightly more difficult, having fallen from 159 to 156 seats. The incompatibility of Podemos and Cs had shown that the PP was indispensable to government formation, causing Rajoy to pass to the offensive, accepting the king's offer to initiate investiture negotiations and postulating only two possible future scenarios: a PP government or another round of elections. The outcome of the second round of elections also caused a reassessment within the other political parties: Cs abandoned its outright rejection of a pact with the PP and offered to render its support if Rajoy could come up with the necessary votes; in the PSOE, the party's right wing considered it best to abstain in Rajoy's investiture, although Sánchez continued to insist that the PSOE would vote no and was intent on pursuing his progressive party alliance; in Podemos, the aim of achieving the *sorpasso* of the socialists was no longer considered realistic and was replaced by the project of a left coalition with the PSOE and nationalist parties (Cintora 2017, pp. 274–8, 289, 310–3, Lancaster 2017, pp. 929, 933–4, Pfeiffer 2016, p. 797, EFE 2016, Piña and Hernández 2016). Following Rajoy's acceptance of a number of demands by Cs as prerequisite to commence negotiations,¹⁰ both parties arrived at a 150 point agreement to secure Cs' vote in October.¹¹ Nonetheless, since Sánchez insisted on his refusal to abstain and no other party except CC was willing to come to Rajoy's aid, his investiture

electorate and internal party tensions caused, for example, by the negotiations over electoral lists (Antentas 2016, p. 485, Lisi 2019, p. 249).

¹⁰ These measures included the removal of politicians accused of corruption; the reform of the so-called *aforamiento*, which provides elected representatives with the right to be judged by the Spanish Supreme Court instead of an ordinary court of law if their parliamentary or political immunity is lifted; the prohibition of pardons for political corruption; an electoral reform to make elections more proportional and to introduce open lists; a two term presidential limit; lastly, the installation of an investigative commission in parliament to deal with the Bárcenas corruption case (El País 2016d).

¹¹ This agreement included the halting of the PP's education reform and the negotiation of a new education law based on political consensus as well as a reform of the aforementioned Gag Law, welfare state spending increases to pre-crisis levels, a host of measure to protect the most vulnerable segments of society, the renewed access to public health services for illegal immigrants and so forth (Caravajal 2016).

failed in September 2016 with 170 votes in favour and 180 votes against, with no abstentions, a result confirmed by the second investiture voting round two days later (Hernández 2016, El País 2016e). Nonetheless, there was some hope that the situation would change after the upcoming elections in the Basque Country and Galicia on the 25. of September, which could perhaps induce the PNV, with its five seats in Congress, to open up to negotiations and undermine Sánchez's leadership still further (Hernández 2016). In Galicia, the PP was able to gain one percent of the vote, reaching 48 percent, and was thus able to maintain its absolute majority, while Podemos won 19.3 percent of the vote and 14 seats and the PSOE declined by another 3.1 percent of the vote, coming in third with 18.1 percent. In the Basque Country, the PNV gained three percent of the vote, reaching 37.6 percent, and one additional deputy, totalling 28. Podemos experienced a substantial breakthrough with 14.9 percent of the vote and eleven seats, while the PP experienced moderate losses of 1.6 percent and one deputy, falling to 10.2 percent and nine seats, its worst result since 1994. The PSOE was the biggest loser once again, falling by 7.2 percent to twelve percent and by seven deputies to nine, its worst result to date. In both ACs, Cs had been unable to gain parliamentary representation.

These two significant electoral defeats and Sánchez's unwavering position concerning Rajoy's renewed investiture attempt, planned to take place at the end of October, made a third national election and a further decline of the socialists' electoral fortune a distinct possibility. Under these circumstances, the struggle over the control of the PSOE's future evolved towards a direct confrontation between *sanchistas* and *susanistas*. Already on the 12. of September, the PSOE president of Extremadura, Guillermo Fernández Vara, demanded that Sánchez convoke the federal committee to discuss the best manner to avoid a third round of elections. A significant number of PSOE leaders seconded this demand subsequently, including the Valencian President Joaquín Francisco Puig Ferrer, known as Ximo Puig, the president of Castilla-La Mancha, Emiliano García-Page Sánchez, and Díaz, among many others (Galán 2016). Under increasing political pressure and willing to accept the challenge, Sánchez announced his intention, on the 22. of September, to ask the federal committee, scheduled to meet on the 1. of October, for its support to form an alternative government including Podemos and regionalist and nationalist parties and that, if denied, he would convoke a party congress to hold primaries, in which he would run again for general secretary (El País 2016b, Galán 2016). Only a few days later, 17 of the 35 members of the party's

executive resigned from their posts,¹² seven of which were also members of Díaz's Andalusian federation (El País 2016c). This move was intended to trigger the automatic ceasing of the entire federal executive and its secretary general, an assumption that was based on a rather loose reading of the party statutes¹³ and which was rejected by Sánchez's allies, leading both sides to question the other's legitimacy, although the federal committee of the party was now forced to convoke an extraordinary congress to elect a new executive (Díez and J. Marcos 2016a, J. Marcos and Díez 2016). Attempts to convoke the Federal Ethics and Guarantees Commission to resolve the issue failed, given that the organ, with a majority of its members against Sánchez, could only be convoked by its chairwoman María Isabel Celaá Diéguez, who sided with the general secretary (Díez and J. Marcos 2016a).

Subsequently, that part of the executive committee which had not resigned decided to go ahead with the planned federal committee meeting (J. Marcos 2016c), at which Sánchez aimed to get approval to hold primaries on the 23. of October as well as a party congress at the beginning of December, a proposal which drew opposition from six of the seven socialist AC barons (Agencias 2016).¹⁴ The dramatic twelve hour long political showdown at the federal committee meeting between the two sides included vociferous discussions about the procedures to follow, episodes of screaming and tear shedding, the collection of signatures for a party internal motion of censure against Sánchez and, in its last act, a public vote in which Sánchez's bid for an extraordinary congress to elect a general secretary was rejected with 132 against and 107 in favour (Díez 2016, J. Marcos 2016b). Accepting his defeat, Sánchez resigned and the party leadership was assumed by a caretaker committee for the second time in the PSOE's history, the first having been triggered by Alumnia's resignation in 2000 (Díez 2016). On the 23. of October 2016, the PSOE's federal committee voted, with 139 votes in favour and 96 against, to abstain in the second round of Rajoy's upcoming investiture, a decision which also foreclosed the possibility of Sánchez attempting an immediate comeback in party primaries to select a new presidential candidate for a third round of national elections (Cadena SER 2016a). Accordingly, after failing in his

¹² Among those who resigned were the PSOE President Micaela Navarro Garzón, Ximo Puig and García-Page (El País 2016c).

¹³ To be more precise, the statute's articles on which this assumption was based referred to cases in which more than half the members of a regional executive committee resign, thereby giving the federal party executive the right to suspend the rest of that executive and, in a joint effort, establish a regional caretaker commission (J. Marcos and Díez 2016).

¹⁴ Nonetheless, eight regional general secretaries supported Sánchez. For more detail, see Alberola (2016).

first investiture attempt in September and with the only difference being the abstention of 68 PSOE deputies, Rajoy was invested president in the second investiture voting round at the end of October 2016 (El País 2016a, Cadena SER 2016b). Storm clouds were already gathering, however. Six hours before the investiture session, Sánchez renounced his parliamentary seat in order to avoid both breaking the party discipline and voting against his personal convictions. Moreover, he promised that he would travel through Spain to listen to those voices within the PSOE which had supposedly gone unheard and that he would attempt to win back his party, demanding that the caretaker commission set a date for a party congress to elect a new general secretary (Cinco Días 2016b). Moreover, 15 PSOE deputies – seven from the PSC – had broken the party discipline and voted against Rajoy, ignoring the instructions of the federal committee (El País 2016a, Díez and J. Marcos 2016b). Clearly, the power struggle within the PSOE was not over yet.

The prolonged period of uncertainty from the European election of 2014 to the second successful investiture of Rajoy had also caused internal tensions within the other national political parties. Cs was perhaps the least affected, since the string of victories under Rivera's leadership – frequently attacked for being too dominant, interfering in candidate selections, for placing independents on the top of electoral lists and for extinguishing internal dissent and debate (Ellakuría 2015, pp. 218–23) – prevented any serious leadership challenge from emerging. In the PP, the so-called Operation Medina aimed to bring Rajoy's leadership, considered the major obstacle to an agreement especially with Cs, but also potentially with the PSOE, to an end. The behind-the-scenes power struggle became evident when Soraya Sáenz de Santamaría, who had led various ministries and served as Rajoy's vice president from 2011, was accused of leaking the appearance of José Manuel Soria López, Rajoy's minister of industry and one of the instigators of Operation Medina, in the Panama Papers¹⁵ to the press. Subsequently, Rajoy removed the supposed conspirators from government and, after the 2016 national election, provided a new group of PP leaders, including Pablo Casado Blanco, with greater weight within the party (Cintora 2017, pp. 42, 45, 67, 171, 201, 204–5). The most intense infighting took place within Podemos, however, where the conflict over strategy between Iglesias and Errejón had crystallized around the former's desire for a pact with the IU, accompanied by a struggle between the *pablistas* and *errejonistas* in Madrid, Galicia, the Basque Country and Catalonia and which resurfaced following the 2016 election outcome, leading to the dismissal of Sergio Pascual,

¹⁵ The Panama Papers were a large number of documents containing information on secret offshore accounts and illegal financial activities of private individuals and companies, leaked to the media in 2016.

Errejón's right hand man, in March that year (Cintora 2017, pp. 61–2, 130–1, 190–3, 221–9, 240–42, 268–9, 334–5, Carvajal 2016).

10.2 Rajoy's second administration

Rajoy's second administration was comparatively short, lasting only from October 2016 to June 2018. His government found itself in minority in parliament, leading to a substantial fall in legislative output (Díez and Mateo 2017b). The battle over the parliamentary agenda began already prior to Rajoy's investiture. The Constitution and the congressional regulations permit the government to veto legislative initiatives when these entail spending increases. Having lost the majority on the board of the Congress of Deputies, its executive organ, however, the PSOE, Podemos and Cs rejected some of these vetoes, such as those targeting pension increases or the government's veto of the halting of the PP's education reform (Garea 2016b, Garea 2016a). Despite this opposition, the PP would continue to apply these vetos, affecting some 70 initiatives, alleging the need to control the budget deficit (Díez and Mateo 2017b, Garea 2016e).

Nonetheless, the PP's more cooperative attitude became clear in January 2017, when an agreement was reached, in the absence of Puigdemont, at the Conference of Presidents, which had not been convoked by the government since 2012, to reform the AC finance system in 2017 (Garea, Casqueiro, et al. 2017). In order to satisfy European stability commitments while increasing spending to realize the promises made to Cs in the investiture agreement (see footnote 11 on page 330) and to entice the PSOE and nationalist parties to cooperate (J. S. González 2016a), the government increased taxes, especially the company tax (J. S. González 2016b). Because Cs' seats in Congress were not sufficient to form parliamentary majorities, the PP's official parliamentary partner's influence was *de facto* smaller than that of the PSOE (Mateo 2016). Thus, the PP had already made overtures to the PSOE in the first parliamentary control session, in which Rajoy presented himself in Congress for the first time in more than a year, despite having led the country's caretaker government (Casqueiro, Junquera, and Mateo 2016). The most clear, but not the only example¹⁶ of the PSOE's influence was the subsequent eight percent minimum salary increase, the largest since 1986, tax increases, especially the aforementioned company tax, as well as a slightly larger deficit margin for the ACs in return for supporting the PP's 2016 and 2017 budgets (M. V. Gómez

¹⁶ See, for instance, J. Marcos (2016a).

and Díez 2016, Garea 2016d). Another key legislative partner was the PNV, to which the PP made various concessions.¹⁷

This more cooperative attitude was unable to prevent Congress from outvoting the PP and Cs when the opposition so desired. In February 2017, for example, the PP and Cs were outvoted when Congress approved, with all other parties in favour, the popular initiative to establish a minimum income of 426 Euro and for which the UGT and CC.OO. had collected more than 700 thousand signatures (Garea 2017c). In March 2017, for the first time since 1979, the government failed to receive congressional approval for its decree law to liberalize the longshoremen legislation, with the PNV voting in favour and Cs abstaining (Garea 2017d). In December, with the PP voting against and the abstention of Cs and the Partido Demócrata Europeo Catalán (PDeCAT), the successor party of the Catalan CDC, Congress formerly requested the derogation of the PP's labour market reform (Garea 2016c). The PP's education reform was partially suspended in 2016, following the request by several ACs to do so and a number of smaller as well as a general education sector strike in March 2017, which demanded the law's derogation and the end of education sector austerity, resulting in the suspension of several of the newly planned national exams (Álvarez 2016, Álvarez 2017, El País 2017c). Nonetheless, in May 2017, the PP obtained the PNV's support for its 2017 national budget in return for the PP's support of its Basque budget and substantial financial concessions, including massive investment in the Basque high speed train connection and a reduction of the *cupo*, a move criticized especially by Cs (Díez and Mateo 2017a, Gorospe and Garea 2017). Nonetheless, Cs as well as the PNV, CC and Nueva Canarias supported the PP budget, demonstrating Rajoy's capacity to govern successfully through compromise and negotiation (Díez and Mateo 2017b, Garea 2017e). At first, the PP's fortune did not extend to the 2018 budget,¹⁸ however, which aimed to increase state spending and included a reduction of the income tax for low-income groups – demanded by Cs – since the escalation of political tensions surrounding the Catalan crisis in September 2017 led the PNV to suspend negotiations (J. S. González 2017, Maqueda 2017b). By April 2018, however, the PP had come to an agreement with the PNV, the latter accepting the PP's position that the intervention in Catalonia would end as soon as the Catalan political parties had voted a new regional president into power. In return, the PP delayed the application of the

¹⁷ See, for example, Garea and Mateo (2016).

¹⁸ In March 2018, the country had reached its deficit objective of 3.1 percent of GDP for the first time since the outbreak of the 2008 economic and financial crisis (J. S. González and C. Pérez 2018).

pension reform's sustainability factor to 2023 and linked pension increases to inflation once again, giving in to pensioner protests – which had been most intense in the Basque Country – and the PNV's resultant political pressures (Alberola and M. V. Gómez 2018). The PDeCAT was no longer willing to cooperate on almost any issue (Díez and Mateo 2017b).

In the PSOE, important changes were afoot. In May 2017, the PSOE was set to elect its new general secretary. Three candidates ran for the party office, Sánchez choosing the slogan “*Sí es Sí*”, the inverse of his previous insistence that “*no es no*” concerning Rajoy's investiture. He promised to move the party to the left and to open it to post-electoral alliance with other parties including Podemos, while Díaz ran with the slogan “*100% PSOE*” and promised “*continuity*” (S. Ríos and Victoria Luna 2017). Although her candidacy was supported by González, Guerra, Zapatero, Rubalcaba and Chácon, among others, it soon became evident that Sánchez would be a serious challenger (Campos 2017, Luna 2017). With 50.2 percent of the vote, compared to Díaz's 39.9 and Patxi López's 9.9 percent, Sánchez – who came in first in all ACs except Andalusia and the Basque Country, thus also indirectly defeating those barons who had opposed his candidacy – was re-elected general secretary, stating that he would convert the PSOE into the referent of the progressive Spain, including those which had not voted for the party in the 2016 national election (Díez and J. Marcos 2017, L. Á. Sanz 2017). Following his re-election, Sánchez again emphasized his desire to construct an alternative majority consisting of Podemos and Cs in order to approve a motion of censure against the government, while discarding the formation of a government with secessionist nationalist parties and criticizing their discourse on political prisoners (*presos políticos*), which was also echoed by Podemos. Moreover, the new PSOE leadership announced that it intended to act as a responsible opposition (Juanma Romero 2017a, Málaga Hoy 2017, Juanma Romero 2017b). By November 2017, with the upcoming Catalan election ahead, the party barons demonstrated their unity and support for Sánchez as well as the PSC candidate Miquel Iceta during the party's political council and federal committee meetings, with the exception of Asturian AC President Javier Fernandez, who had assumed the consequences of Sánchez's victory and made way for the *sanchista* Adrián Barbón Rodríguez (Juanma Romero 2017c, Ok Diario 2017). In the coming months, many of those deputies which had broken the party discipline during Rajoy's ultimately successful 2016 investiture vote were awarded with various posts (Lamet 2020).

Two more events which marked Rajoy's second legislature – in addition to the events described in the next section – were a failed motion of censure

and the 2017 terrorist attacks. In June 2017, perhaps in response to Sánchez's proclaimed desire for a motion of censure, Iglesias decided to lead the charge, postulating himself as presidential candidate in the process. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Sánchez resisted the political pressure to vote in favour and determined that his party was to abstain (Díez 2017) in order to avoid a Podemos led government. The debate surrounding and accompanying the motion of censure once again exemplified the distrust between the PSOE and Podemos and the acrimony between the latter and Cs (Garea 2017b, Díez and Blas 2017, Garea 2017a). The motion of censure failed with only 82 votes in favour,¹⁹ coming, in addition to the initiating party, from the ERC, Compromís and EH Bildu, while the PSOE, PDeCAT and PNV abstained and all other parties voted against (Garea 2017b). The second event took place some two months later, on the 17th of August 2017, when Islamic terrorists raced a truck down the famous Rambla shopping mile in Barcelona, aiming to kill as many of the hundreds of citizens and tourists which found themselves on-site (Jesús García, Congostrina, et al. 2017). The following morning, a police control in Cambrils triggered the confrontation between five armed terrorists, equipped with mock explosive belts, and police, resulting in the group of attackers being shot dead (Jesús García, Piñol, and Güell 2017). In total, these two attacks caused 16 deaths and injured 131, many of them gravely (Suárez 2020).

10.3 Center-periphery conflict: fleeting independence and the December 2017 Catalan election

In Catalonia, following the September 2015 election and two failed investiture votes in November, the CDC had ceded to the CUP's demands to offer up a more convincing pro-independence candidate than Mas. As a consequence, in January 2016, Puigdemont was invested Catalan president with the votes in favour of the ERC, CDC and the CUP (L. B. García 2016). In an attempt to draw the CUP into an alliance, the ERC and CDC had already passed the aforementioned resolution which had proclaimed their will to pursue a unilateral rupture with the Spanish state, the so-called Unilateral Declaration of Independence (DUI), as well as to disobey the Constitutional Court and proclaim a time limit within which three laws ought to be passed to prepare for an independent state (Martínez 2016, pp. 205–6, Parlamento de

¹⁹ To be successful, a motion of censure requires an absolute majority of votes in favour of Congress.

Cataluña 2015).²⁰ In July 2017, a referendum law was registered in the Catalan parliament, ready to be passed shortly before the planned “referendum” in October in order to avoid the Constitutional Court’s intervention. Both the referendum law as well as the transitional law, which was intended to provide some basic institutional rules for the post-independence period, were ruled unconstitutional after their passage (D. Cordero 2017, Vázquez and Masreal 2017, L. B. García 2017). Moreover, the preparations for the “referendum” were accompanied by attempts of the national executive to prevent it, leading to the confiscation of voting urns, ballot papers, the sealing of potential voting centres, especially public schools, the blocking of various websites and the concentration of thousands of national police in Catalonia to stop the voting process. Despite warnings by the Constitutional Court, which had forbidden the “referendum” (Europa Press 2017), and the stationing of riot police, the Generalitat decided to go ahead with the “referendum”. On the first of October, some 2,300 voting centres opened, leading to attempts especially by the national police and the Guardia Civil to close at least some of these down. Employing force, including batons and numerous riot police charges, some 319 electoral colleges were closed, causing, according to the Generalitat, 844 individuals to require medical attention, although only two required hospitalization (Noguer 2017).²¹ Despite these obstacles, some 2.2 million people, 42 percent of the Catalan census, cast their vote, 90 percent of which favoured the creation of an independent Catalan state, although the semi-formal nature of the “referendum”, insufficient control mechanisms and the chaos and agitation caused by the police interventions cast doubts on the veracity of these figures (Baquero 2017, El País 2017b). More perhaps than the result of the “referendum”, the use of force employed by the national executive pushed Puigdemont to declare independence, greeted by the euphoria of a large crowd which had gathered outside the Parlament to observe the event, but which was followed only seconds later by profound disappointment when Puigdemont proceeded to suspend it. Despite its suspension, the secessionist parties’ representatives signed a juridically insignificant document thereafter, which had been neither registered in the Parlament nor voted, and which declared Catalan independence in written (Noguer and Baquero 2017).

The following day, the government initiated the procedure required in order for the central state to be able to intervene in an AC, as outlined in article 155

²⁰ These laws aimed to initiate a constituent process and to lay the foundations for the future independent Catalan social security and public finance systems (Martínez 2016, pp. 205–6, Parlamento de Cataluña 2015).

²¹ Also see El País (2017a) for a discussion of the number and nature of sustained injuries.

of the Spanish Constitution (Las Cortes 1978, art. 155.1), by sending a letter to Puigdemont which asked the president to answer, with a simple “yes” or “no”, whether he had declared independence, setting the deadline for the response to the 16. of October, and requesting him to state, by the 19. of October, whether he would rectify. Given that the first answer was ambiguous and the second one threatened that the Catalan parliament would vote on the DUI if article 155 was to be activated (Baquero and Díez 2017, R. P. d. León 2017, M. M. 2017), the government went ahead with the process of intervening in Catalonia. On the 27. of October 2017, the Senate achieved the required absolute majority with the votes of the PP, Cs, the PSOE and CC in favour and Podemos against, a move which had caused the Parliament to pre-emptively act on its threat and vote on the DUI that same day, with all opposition parties except Podemos’ Catalan confluence being absent (Domínguez and Alberola 2017, P. Ríos and Piñol 2017). Via article 155, the government was now authorized to issue a number of decrees to destitute the government; to assume the competencies of its ministries, which Rajoy transferred to their national pendants; to suppress several Catalan state institutions, including the Council of Public Diplomacy of Catalonia and the Catalan government’s foreign delegations – viewed as parastate or quasi-embassies by the central government; lastly, to set the date for a new election (Miguel and Díez 2017, La Razón 2017, EFE 2018), to be held on the 21. December 2017. The political and civil society leaders which had led or participated in the protests surrounding the referendum or had led it politically had meanwhile either been detained to await trial by the Constitutional Court or had fled the country to other European countries.

For the December 2017 election, Puigdemont – who had fled to Waterloo, Belgium – was able to pressures the more reticent sectors within the PDeCAT to accept the party electoral list Junts per Catalunya (Junts hereafter). The latter included a number of pro-independence candidates, including civil society activist and leaders, many of which were loyal to Puigdemont and his political strategy of maximizing the confrontation with the Spanish state. The ERC had successfully rejected Puigdemont’s attempt to pressure the party to join the list, thereby maintaining its independence. Despite the expectation that the ERC would win, Puigdemont’s involvement assured that Junts would come first in the pro-independence camp, demonstrating Puigdemont’s popularity among the Catalan electorate and solidifying his influence on Catalan politics from without (Lemmer 2019a, pp. 336–7). Nonetheless, compared to the CDC’s last results, Junts had lost 14 deputies and 168 thousand votes, standing at 948 thousand, 25.2 percent, and 34 out of 135 deputies. Moreover, its greatest rival, the ERC, had made substantial gains, winning an additional 438 thousand votes and another eleven seats, reaching a total of 935 thousand votes, 21.5

percent, and 32 deputies. Additionally, Junts had come in first among pro-independence parties, but was only the second most voted party list. The largest party was in fact Cs, which had won an additional 373 thousand votes (7.5 percent more) and eleven more deputies than in 2015, reaching a total of 1.1 million votes (25.5 percent) and 36 deputies (26.7 percent). The PSC was barely able to make gains, gaining one deputy and an additional 83 thousand votes, totalling 17 and 13.9 percent respectively, while the Catalan Podemos affiliated party Catalunya Si que es Pot lost 41 thousand votes and three seats, falling to 7.5 percent and eight deputies. The CUP and the PP were the most harshly punished parties, however. The CUP lost 143 thousand voters and six deputies, falling to 195 thousand votes, 4.5 percent, and four seats. The PP had only received 186 thousand votes, losing another 164 thousand, thus only reaching 4.3 percent and four deputies, having lost seven. Cs success and the PP's failure were caused at least in part by the perception that the public prosecutor had not acted impartially when it had ordered that those Catalan ministers of the Govern which had participated in the organization of the "referendum" and had not fled the country should, like Jordi Cuixart, president of Òmnium Cultural, and Jordi Sánchez, president of the National Catalan Assembly (ANC), be taken into custody (Mateo 2017). Also, Cs had projected a more inclusive discourse than the PP and had not been the party in central government when the police intervened to prevent the "referendum" (Mateo 2017), although Cs had clearly sided with the state's security forces.

Since the pro-independence parties held a majority of seats, however, Catalan government formation would ultimately fall to Junts, the largest party in the secessionist camp. From Belgium, Puigdemont promised he would return and aimed to establish himself as president in exile. After Puigdemont's investiture from Belgium was rejected by Roger Torrent (ERC), president of the Parlament, Torra was installed as Puigdemont's hand-picked "steward" president in May 2018 with the abstention of the CUP (Baquero 2018b, Lemmer 2019a, p. 337, Antena 3 2018). Despite Cs pressure to continue to apply article 155 and uncertainty over whether the political intervention in Catalonia should end if Torra were to appoint fugitive or arrested politicians and independence leaders to his government, the PP terminated its application in return for the PNV's votes in favour of the 2018 budget (Díez, Mateo, and Gálvez 2018, Gorospe and Alberola 2018).

10.4 Political evolution, Gürtel and the motion of censure

The passage of the 2018 budget in Congress in May 2018 seemed to signal that Rajoy had not, in spite of the unfolding of the Catalan crisis, lost his

capacity to govern. Nonetheless, the escalation of the Catalan conflict, the declaration of the DUI and the subsequent Catalan election led to a massive surge of Cs in electoral surveys. Between October 2016 and January 2018, Cs had increased from roughly 12.5 percent to 22 percent in the polls, overtaking the PP shortly after, while the latter declined from some 35 percent to almost 25 percent during that same period.²² At the same time, Rajoy increasingly seemed to suffer from a party internal loss of support, which he aimed to recover through a series of party conferences, a renovation of the party program and by challenging Cs on a number of issues (Díez and Mateo 2018b, Mateo 2018b). Rajoy was criticized for his strategic decision to set the date for the Catalan election so briefly after the failed Catalan referendum. Moreover, the PP's electoral misfortune increased tensions between the party's Secretary General María Dolores de Cospedal, who was attacked for her supposed lack of attention to party matters due to her additional role as minister of defence, and the government's Vice-President Sáenz de Santamaría, whose dialogue initiative to bring the pro-independence parties to the negotiating table to avoid the DUI had failed (Díez and Mateo 2018a). Both were positioning themselves as potential successors to Rajoy's party leadership.

Two further rather badly managed political events exposed the PP still further. In March, the PP had criticized civil society plans to hold a general strike in favour of women rights and gender equality on the International Women's Day, claiming the event was being usurped by Podemos to mobilize against the government. The massive turnout on the 8. of May, with hundreds of thousand of protesters participating in many of the biggest as well as medium sized and smaller Spanish cities, led the PP to perform a volte-face which included budgetary changes to increase parental leave by a week (M. V. Gómez and J. Marcos 2018, Mateo and Álvarez 2018). Moreover, in April 2018 María Cristina Cifuentes Cuencas, the PP's president of the Autonomous Community of Madrid, was accused of having obtained her Master's degree at the King Juan Carlos University without having fulfilled the necessary requirements. Rajoy decided to back her publicly, but when security camera footage showing Cifuentes' arrest when she was attempting to steal cosmetic products appeared in the media, she resigned from her post (Mateo 2018c, E. Sánchez 2018). By June 2018, the PP's popularity and electoral prospects were at least at a three year low.

At the same time, Podemos and the PSOE had been more or less equally popular since April 2015, with both parties fluctuating roughly between 20 and 25 percent of the vote, at times going into the lead and at times falling

²² See fig. 24 on the following page.

behind the other. Following a slump after Sánchez's resignation, however, the PSOE clearly took a lead after his return, gaining in percentages while Podemos continued to decline. By January 2018, the PSOE was located at roughly 22.5 percent, while Podemos was hovering below 17.5 percent of the vote.²³ Not only did Podemos decline in the polls, but many of its potential voters were also the most undecided and Iglesias had become the worst valued of all the major party leaders (Llaneras 2017). Given that Rajoy had portrayed the PP as the last bulkward against Podemos' left radicalism, it may not be a coincidence that the PP's popularity declined massively as Podemos' electoral expectations grew weaker (Amón 2018).

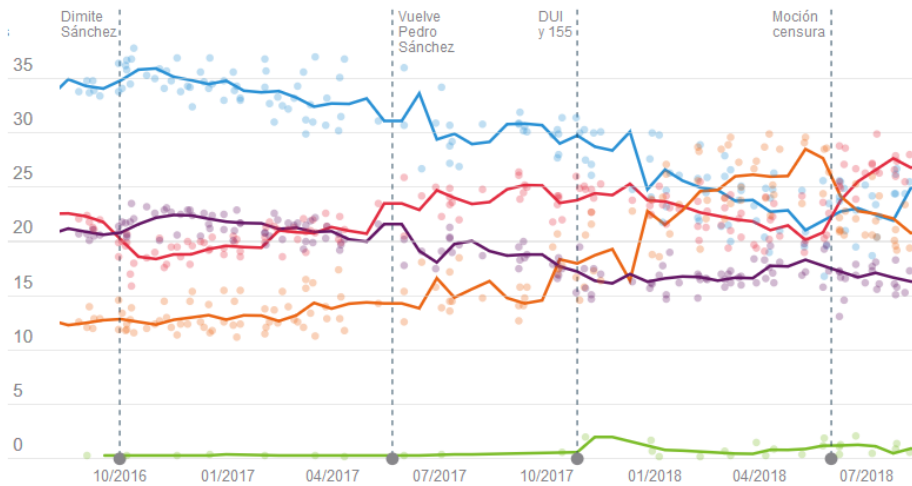


Figure 24: Electoral survey trends (2016-2018)

Colours: PP, blue; PSOE, red; Podemos, purple; Cs, orange; Vox, green. *Image source:* Garrido (2019)

During this period, the idea of building a congressional majority capable of bringing the Rajoy government to an end through a motion of censure had circulated already for some time. Podemos had already stated repeatedly that it would support Sánchez if he was willing to take the initiative. Thanks to the PP's mismanagement of the Catalan crisis, the Catalan parties too had begun to incline themselves toward voting in favour of such a motion (Torregrosa 2018) and, as a consequence, the political pressure on the PNV, without which the PP-Cs alliance would lose its majority, was rising steadily. The opportunity to register the motion of censure presented itself in May 2018, when the sentence

²³ See fig. 24.

in the Gürtel corruption case was made public. The ruling court had come to the conclusion that the PP had possessed an illicit party financing network (the so-called *caja B*) and that Rajoy's claim that he had been oblivious to the going-ons was not credible (López-Fonseca 2018). It being the first time that a judge had condemned a Spanish party for profiting from systematic corruption and that the PP preferred not to pronounce itself on the issue (Mateo 2018a), Sánchez registered the first ever successful and fourth overall motion of censure since 1978, which took place in June 2018. It received 180 votes in favour, including the PSOE, Podemos, the ERC, PDeCAT and PNV, 169 votes by the PP and Cs against and one abstention by the CC (Alberola 2018, Cruz 2018). The PNV, which had held the decisive number of votes in Congress, chose to interpret the fact that Cs was increasingly going on distance to the PP as a sign that the national government was politically spent and argued that their decision reflected the will of the majority of the Basque population (Cué and Gorospe 2018). The PDeCAT had also been divided between Puigdemont and his supporters, who wished to vote against the motion of censure to bring about the de facto breakdown of governability, and a more moderate sector around the party's General Secretary Marta Pascal Capdevila and its Speaker Carles Campuzano, who considered that a Sánchez led government could present the opportunity to escape from the political cul-de-sac that was the *procés* (Baquero 2018a, Lamelas 2018). Recent developments had permitted the political moderates to carry the day, although subsequent events would show that the motion of censure would be one of their last shows of strength.

The motion of censure was a turning point in Spanish politics for numerous reasons and although the evolution of subsequent election polls cannot be attributed solely to this event, they were indeed revealing of a change of perception among Spanish citizens. After an extended period of time in which the PSOE had been trailing substantially behind the PP and competed with Podemos over leadership in the left ideological spectrum, the motion of censure pushed the PSOE into the lead over all other Spanish parties, a trend that was to continue in the coming months. Cs, the party which had just recently outperformed the PP and had sided, as the only party, with the government by voting against the motion of censure, despite the party's central and often adamant fight against corruption, fell massively and rapidly in the polls. The liberal party's intention to avoid Sánchez's coming to power – aided by Catalan nationalists – and to pressure Rajoy into convoking an early election had clearly backfired (Piña 2018). The enormous dissatisfaction of more right-wing voters with these events – that the PP's poor governance had brought a PSOE led government, reliant on Podemos and Catalan secessionists, to power – would no doubt contribute to the electoral breakthrough of the

radical right-wing party Vox, which would further fragment the right political spectrum.

10.5 Sánchez's first administration and the emergence of Vox

Sánchez's first legislature commenced directly following the motion of censure in June 2018. In order to ensure governability, it was immanently necessary for him to focus his political efforts especially on reigning in the Catalan pro-independence parties and win their support for the 2019 budget. The nationalist Catalan parties were divided on whether they should support the new government or not. Sánchez had repeatedly emphasized that he would not concede to the holding of a Catalan referendum or exercise influence on the public prosecution in order to assure milder sentences for those independence leaders now facing trial on the counts of rebellion and sedition, among others (Rincón 2019). Nonetheless, Sánchez was willing to treat the Catalan conflict as a political and not just a juridical issue, ultimately meaning that while he would defend Spanish unity, he was open to make other kinds of concessions to appease the conflict. This potential escape route was not unappealing to the more moderate nationalists, given that the Spanish state had clearly shown where the limits of its tolerance lay and that it had not been possible to break with the system which was about to punish those which had worked against it. To the radical nationalists, however, Sánchez's cooperative attitude, limited by the confines of the 1978 Constitution, was ultimately unsatisfactory and even represented a threat to their cause, because it could potentially sway supporters of independence to accept his gestures of reconciliation and thus weaken the pro-independence camp (Lemmer 2019a, p. 334). Common interests and shared symbolisms included, "for example, an end to austerity as well as the resuscitation of the historic memory policies, including the...moving of the body of Francisco Franco" (Lemmer 2019a, p. 334).

Overall, the ERC appeared much more united and began to act more moderately, stating that it wished to prioritize the needs of the Catalan society over independence until support for the latter had increased to a level which would permit its realization, while the PDeCAT was much more susceptible to the radical influence of Puigdemont, whose strategy of maximal confrontation permitted him to remain in the political spotlight even from Belgian "exile" and who had a very personal interest in discrediting the very state which was aiming to detain and prosecute him. Moreover, in addition to the Catalan public opinion, a number of other actors exerted pressure on the more

moderate political actors and sectors, which included the ANC and Òmnium Cultural, the so-called Comitès de Defensa de la República (CDRs), President Torra as well as the anarchist CUP. This cocktail of political interests and rivalries, centred on a highly emotional and for some even traumatic issue, led to a climate in which moderation was quickly decried as betrayal, making a change of course from confrontation to cooperation a complex exercise which always ran the risk of losing support of important segments of the Catalan public (Lemmer 2019a, pp. 334, 336–339). Whether Sánchez's willingness to make concessions, limited as it was to financial matters and symbolic gestures (Lemmer 2019a, pp. 342–3), would be enough to assure a stable legislature would become apparent sooner rather than later.

In the PP, the battle for Rajoy's succession commenced in July 2018. At the beginning of that month, during the first round of the primary election for party leadership, Pablo Casado unexpectedly beat Cospedal to second place by some eight percent of the vote, receiving 34 percent, while Santamaría came in first with 37 percent (Menéndez 2018). Refusing to integrate himself into his rival's list and receiving the support of Cospedal, Casado and Santamaría squared off against each other in the runoff election at the end of the month. While Casado propagated a turn of the party to the right and emphasized his affection for Aznar, Santamaría was considered close to Rajoy and essentially a candidate of continuity. Casado had been fostered by Esperanza Aguirre y Gil de Biedma, former president of the Madrid Community and minister under Aznar as well as one of the figureheads of the PP's neo-conservative wing. He had questioned denoting same-sex unions with the word "marriage", had taken a conservative stance on gender politics and had criticized the PSOE's Historic Memory Law in the past. Now, he promised to convoke a congress on the party's principles and values as well as to return to the 1985 abortion law, stating the need to defend conservative positions on life and the family, to reinforce the Constitution and to declare pro-independence parties illegal (Casqueiro 2018). With 57.2 against 42 percent, Casado defeated Santamaría (Casqueiro 2018), triggering a small rally in election polls.²⁴

The PP's turn to the right came too late, however, to prevent its most right-wing electorate from turning toward the radically right-wing Vox. Especially from the 1982 national election, the AP/PP had been able to cover the entire right-wing ideological spectrum and was able to avoid the emergence of threatening challengers especially to its right. This ability stemmed from its monopolization of traditional positions of the Spanish democratic political right, namely: its defence of the pacted transition, the Spanish Constitution and the

²⁴ See fig. 29 on page 377.

institution of the monarchy; its accompanying relative silence on the illegitimacy and crimes committed by the Franco regime; its opposition to further decentralization, concessions to nationalist parties and the defence of the Spanish language especially in education; its emphasis on law and order, with a particularly virulent and never-ending obsession with ETA terrorism; lastly, its defence of conservative values, as exemplified by its opposition to same sex marriage, more “extreme” positions on gender equality and feminism, its rejection of the liberalisation of abortion or its support for state funding for private, catholic run schools (Lemmer 2019b, p. 18). Moreover, as described above, the PP had not only criticized, but also actively mobilized and participated in protests against many PSOE policies, employing a virulent and corrosive political style. While these elements were appealing to right-wing voters, Spanish unity and the PP’s economically liberal policies appealed to the political center as well. Under Rajoy, however, the far right had become increasingly disillusioned with the PP. Despite the clearly right-wing nature of Rajoy’s policies, his political style and appearance were much less aggressive than that of his predecessor. Perhaps more importantly, it was under Rajoy that a series of important PP corruption scandals came to light, supposedly involving even the president himself; it was under Rajoy that the center-right vote was fractured through the emergence of Cs, thus weakening the political right as a whole; it was under Rajoy that the Catalan crisis escalated and it was Rajoy who, as opposed to Cs, was eager to end the central state’s intervention in that AC; it had been Rajoy who had repeatedly advocated a great coalition with the PSOE, a party which would condition the PP’s policies from 2016; it was Rajoy who had made a governance pact with Cs, a party that was ideologically at odds with the conservatives especially on the AL value dimension; it was the PP which, from 2016, had become dependent on and cooperated with nationalist parties like the PNV, ready to make substantial concessions. Perhaps worst of all, Rajoy’s arguably poor response to these developments had permitted the formation of a Sánchez led government, seemingly converting the oft repeated spectre of a PSOE-Podemos-secessionist-party alliance ready to abolish the monarchy and terminate Spain’s territorial integrity into reality.

Up to this point in time, Spain had been considered exceptional precisely due to the country’s relative immunity to radically right parties. Although numerous other radically right Spanish parties had existed before, the electorally most successful of these had been the Fuerza Nueva in 1979, when it won 2.1 percent of the vote (Sanjuan and Goetzenberger 2020, p. 914). In addition to the existence and history of the AP/PP, the identification of Spanish nationalist symbols and the extreme right with the Franco regime, comparatively lower Spanish national pride and greater pro-European sentiments as well as

relatively lower levels of xenophobia – although subject to important fluctuations – and anti-globalization sentiments in the population may have been important factors in preventing their rise (González-Enríquez 2017). Another was of course the electoral system, which punishes national parties with a relatively small share of the vote. Whatever the causes of the PP's hard won dominance of the right-wing spectrum, whether it was the party's particular history, its issue positions, opposition strategy, societal and institutional factors or a combination of these, Rajoy's governance from 2011 seems to have corroded their effect.

Vox, its name meaning “voice” in Latin,²⁵ had been founded by several right-wing politicians in December 2013, first and foremost among them Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca, former PP president in Catalonia and vice president of the European Parliament, and Santiago Abascal Conde, the PP's former Basque regional secretary (A. I. Gracia 2014). Following the party's poor performance during its first electoral undertaking, the 2014 European election, in which Vidal-Quadras narrowly failed to win the party's only seat, the latter abandoned the new formation, thereby permitting Abascal to take over, an event which shifted the party to more radical positions (Ferreira 2019, pp. 76–7, Rubio-Pueyo 2019, pp. 7–8). Abascal, who had emerged out of the same neoconservative PP milieu as Casado, spearheaded by Aguirre and Aznar and with important links to the US Republican Party (Rubio-Pueyo 2019, pp. 8–10), had sent a public letter to Rajoy a few months before Vox's foundation, in which he explained the reasons for abandoning the PP. Emphasizing especially the party's weak stance on ETA, Abascal proceeded to list his other political grievances: “the undignified treatment of the victims of terrorism and their protests, the dumbfounded and astonished attitude toward the separatist leader challenge, the clumsy decision to join in on the disorder brought about by the wave of statue reforms...the abandonment of the defence of the common language in education...the extraordinary and unique political position of the party in Catalonia and the Basque Country, the consolidation of Zapatero's ideological legislation due to inaction...fiscal pressure...corruption [etc.]” (Pardio 2020).

The party's foundational manifest argued that the organization's creation had been motivated by political corruption, the loss of confidence in political representatives, a general feeling of impunity and because “the constitutional state has degenerated into a party state” (Vox 2019b, pp. 2–3). “A reduced group of co-opted and oligarchic party leaders control the state at their whim. The

²⁵ The name implies that the party gives a voice to people whose opinions are repressed by the progressive and pluralist discourse of the political left (Rubio-Pueyo 2019, pp. 12–13).

division of powers...is seriously damaged. The politicization of the judiciary is scandalous" (Vox 2019b, p. 3). In the document, the government and political parties are attacked for ignoring and "degrading" the Constitution, working with those who wish to "liquidate national unity" (Vox 2019b, p. 3). The State of Autonomies did not tame but accentuate the centrifugal tensions which have pushed Spain to the "verge of disintegration. Our autonomous state is politically ungovernable and financially unsustainable" (Vox 2019b, p. 3). This state of affairs leads to a series of reform proposals targeting the affected institutions. Concerning the State of Autonomies, the party reaffirms "[the] indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation and the attribution of national sovereignty to the entire Spanish people" (Vox 2019b, p. 4) and postulates, between the lines, a unitary state,²⁶ a proposal made explicit, for instance, in its subsequent electoral programs. Its economic policy ideas favour the market economy, a balanced budget and free initiative, the state being reduced to a "watchman of the rules of the game and guarantor of the juridical security of the economic and social operators", while the tax system "should not ever reach confiscatory levels which inhibit saving and investment and discourage work and effort" (Vox 2019b, p. 5). Thus, despite the duality of its populist discourse, which favours small companies, its actual policy proposals are clearly advantageous to big business (Urbán 2019, p. 92). Similarly, although the party calls for energy self-sufficiency and re-industrialization, Vox does not advocate protectionism (Rubio-Pueyo 2019, p. 11). Welfare state services are to be at least partially privatized: "The solidarity ought not to be monopolized by the state, which should create the legal and fiscal framework which facilitates and stimulates that society itself contributes actively to it" (Vox 2019b, p. 5). Not only does the party desire a "responsible and morally healthy society", the party even infuses its economics with morality, claiming, with a strong dosage of optimism bordering on the fantastic, that "if the moral conceptions that inspire us are weak, we will never manage to return to a state of material growth. Effort, perseverance, cohesion, altruism, the striving for excellence, the recognition of merit, honesty and patriotism are what creates jobs and brings prosperity" (Vox 2019b). Its values of "individual liberty" and the rule of law are supplemented by the need to protect the family as a basic institutions (Vox 2019b, pp. 4-5).

Going beyond the reach of its foundational manifest, Vox postulates a pre-constitutional Spanish national identity, rooted in the family and Christianity and combined with a belief in the "unrestricted popular sovereignty of the

²⁶ The document states: "A unitary state can be as democratic as a composed state...Vox proposes a strong and efficient state [which is] administratively decentralized" (Vox 2019b, pp. 4-5).

ethno-cultural nation as the locus of freedom" (Gould 2019, p. 13). The party thus propagates a hyper-nationalism which focuses excessively on medieval and early modern Spanish history and the Spanish language, accompanied by a hostility toward the "other", which is constituted especially by (criminal) immigrants and followers of Islam, threats that must be dealt with by means of maximum harshness. Overall, the party pursues a "more traditional, patriarchal and homogeneous" (Lemmer 2019b, p. 24) society. These attitudes also lead the party to aspire to give Spain a greater role in the world and to prioritize its national interest in international affairs by aiming to abandon multilateralism and calling for a Europe of nation states rather than an ever closer union (Lemmer 2019b, p. 25). Compared to other international radical right parties and movements, Vox has clear affinities especially to the Polish Law and Justice (PiS) party, Brazil's Jair Messias Bolsonaro or the US Republican Party rather than Marion Anne Perrine Le Pen or Matteo Salvini, leading Vox to join the Alliance of Conservatives and Reformist Europeans (ACRE) – with ties to the US Republicans – and the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) in the European parliament (Urbán 2019, pp. 87, 90–1).

Casado's victory at the PP primaries in July boosted the party's popularity temporarily, but from then until the Andalusian election of December that year, Vox, which had thus far always scored below 2.5 percent of the vote in polls, continued to increase until it reached almost five percent.²⁷ That electoral contest proved to be a point of inflection for Vox. Although the party had won some seats at the municipal level, its participation in the European and AC elections of 2014 as well as the national elections in 2015 and 2016 had not been successful.²⁸ Despite the massive corruption scandals affecting the PP and its still recent policies of austerity, the Andalusian PSOE did not manage to slow its precipitous decline, losing another 7.46 percent of the vote, falling to 27.95 percent and 33 out of 109 seats. The PP met a similar fate, declining by another 6 percent to 20.75 percent of the vote and 26 seats. Cs managed to come in third with a rather spectacular result, almost doubling its share of the vote to 18.27 percent and increasing its seats from 9 to 21. Adelante Andalucía, an alliance between Podemos, the IU and others, came in fourth with 16.18 percent of the vote and 17 seats. VOX received 10.97 percent of the votes, some 396 thousand in absolute terms, and 12 seats.

²⁷ See fig. 29 on page 377.

²⁸ Please see footnote 61 on page 205 for the data source.

Vox's stance on immigration, Spanish unity and centralization may have been the causes for the party's success (El País 2018). Both the issues of Catalan independence and the concern over immigration, by which the large coastal AC was affected intensely during this period, had spiked just prior to its breakthrough (Dennison and M. Mendes 2019, p. 9). The party had also been especially successful in municipalities which had a comparatively large share of immigrants,²⁹ as well as in which voters had medium to high incomes and had previously voted especially for the PP (Llaneras and Andrino 2018, Llaneras, Galán, and Andrino 2018, Lemmer 2019b, p. 20, Llaneras 2018). Lastly, not so much regional politics, but dissatisfaction with the national executive as well as the desire to reduce AC competencies were important issues in determining vote choice. Two thirds of Vox voters were former PP and Cs voters (Turnbull-Dugarte 2019, pp. 4–7).

Instead of opting for the possible strategy of isolating Vox, Casado advocated the formation of a right-wing alliance with Cs and Vox, despite the at least theoretically incompatible nature of the latter two parties. The Andalusian arrangement, consisting of a formal government coalition between the PP and Cs and supported from parliament by Vox, was propagated by Casado as a blueprint for possible future pacts (Lemmer 2019b, p. 20). By doing so, Casado tried to convert an obviously highly problematic development for the conservatives into an outwardly more “positive” image of the PP as hegemonic leader of a right-wing coalition.

Meanwhile, the PSOE government's negotiations with the nationalist Catalan parties had become focused on the format of a round table that was intended to resolve the Catalan crisis politically. When Sánchez agreed to one of the key nationalists' demands, namely that a rapporteur should be present at the negotiating table, Casado and Rivera chose to interpret this concession as an implicit recognition of bilateral, quasi-international relations between the Catalan and Spanish governments, accusing the president of being willing to terminate Spanish unity in return for assuring his continuity in government. To exemplify their patriotic resistance, the PP and Cs called for a massive protest at the Columbus Square in Barcelona, which was joined by Vox. The announcement by the ERC and PDeCAT that they would vote against the budget – the government's concession had evidently come too late – and the pressure exerted by the right-wing opposition through the organization of the

²⁹ Nonetheless, the role of immigration in Vox's success is somewhat contested. Turnbull-Dugarte (2019, p. 7) find that immigration was not a statistically significant factor in determining vote choice, while Sanjuan and Goetzenberger (2020, p. 917) make the opposite case on a more qualitative basis (i.e. by arguing that there is a correlation).

Columbus Square protests caused the government to break off negotiations and to call for a new election for April 2019. The Columbus Square protests, to occur shortly after these events, resulted in the so-called Columbus photo, in which a visibly uncomfortable Rivera was photographed with Casado and Abascal onstage. The photo was utilized by the left as a symbol for the possible collusion of the radical right with the PP and Cs, arguing that all three parties were fundamentally identical and a threat to a progressive and plurinational Spain (Lemmer 2019a, pp. 343–4).

10.6 Analysis of the April 2019 national election and specificity

10.6.1 Electoral campaign and electoral programs

In a sense, the April 2019 electoral campaign was simply a continuance of the political tensions and crude political discourse which had begun to take hold of Spanish politics especially from the 2000s and which had intensified time and again through the successive crises and political developments described above. Aggravated once again by Casado's takeover of the PP leadership and the rise of Vox, Cs was also pulled toward the right in an attempt to out-compete the PP. The two most important televised campaign debates, which included Sánchez, Casado, Iglesias and Rivera and excluded Vox, took place on the 22. and 23. of April. During the campaign and these debates, the PP and Cs attacked the PSOE on the issue of Catalonia, especially by pointing out Sánchez's parliamentary reliance on Catalan parties and the possibility that Sánchez would, if president, grant the secessionist leaders who were standing trial pardons. Both parties also demanded the renewed application of article 155 to remove Torra, who had come to power as a consequence of a democratic election, from office. Rivera, in his bid to beat the PP, also attacked the PP several times, such as on the topic of corruption, abortion, or euthanasia, which caused the PP to signal its "disappointment" with Cs, which, according to the conservatives, ought to focus on presenting a united front against Sánchez instead and began to retaliate. Despite this rivalry, however, both right-wing parties focused their attacks also to a large extent on the PSOE, while Podemos focused mostly on its social policy proposals for "the people", behaved more moderately to prepare for a possible coalition with the PSOE and demanded that the socialists promise not to pact with Cs after the election. Sánchez tried not to attack Cs excessively and did not initially dismiss the possibility of an alliance, although Cs' aggressive tone eventually led Sánchez to reject this possibility half-heartedly. As was the

case with Cs, the PSOE was also silent on Podemos. Given the salience of the Catalan conflict and the attacks from the right, Sánchez openly rejected the possibility of agreeing to a Catalan referendum, emphasized his commitment to the Spanish Constitution and unity and even stated that he would not hesitate to make use of article 155 if necessary. Nonetheless, Sánchez's tone was overall decidedly moderate, at least when compared to the aggressive rhetoric emanating from the right-wing parties. Instead of retaliating to the attacks from the right, Sánchez mainly limited himself to emphasizing the threat of a possible right-wing coalition including Vox. The ERC signalled its openness to cooperate with the PSOE, provided the government was willing to commit itself to a new round table. Vox's strategy consisted mostly of making highly provocative statements, including attacks on the media, Islam, immigrants and the "progressive dictatorship", while trying to avoid being pinned down on the specifics of its very brief program. The political tension was further fuelled by the indecisiveness of the electorate, which was at a record high of 41 percent and made the jostling for votes all the more enticing (Blas and Junquera 2019, Cué 2019b, Cué 2019a, Figuls 2019, M. González 2019a, M. González 2019b, Junquera 2019b, Junquera 2019a, J. Marcos 2019a, J. Marcos 2019bA, Marcos 2019, J. Marcos 2019c, El País 2019e, El País 2019b, Santaaulalia 2019, El País 2019a, El País 2019d, El País 2019f, Pfeiffer and Werz 2020, p. 146, Piñol 2019).³⁰

Concerning the April 2019 electoral programs, the PSOE's 300 page long document, entitled "Make it happen", perhaps in reference to its request that it be given a large relative majority to be able to govern with greater ease, opens with an introduction. The rest of the document is structured into seven chapters with various subsections (as well as an appendix containing the Agenda 2030's sustainable development objectives). The first chapter deals with economic issue positions, directed "toward a just and durable prosperity" (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 4), and is followed by two chapters concerned with the welfare state, the first aiming to consolidate its basic pillars (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 5) and the second aiming to extend rights (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 6). This is followed by a chapter concerned with various topics, entitled "New citizen rights in a digital society, in a cohesive territory and with renovated democratic institutions" (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 7). Chapter five focuses on "[k]nowledge as guarantee of equity and progress", chapter six on "[f]eminism, equal treatment and diversity" and chapter seven is concerned with foreign policy. Its large

³⁰ The description of the 2019 electoral campaign is a summary of the above cited media coverage.

introduction commences by pointing out the complexity of a globalized world, the importance of the upcoming elections, especially the European one, and emphasizes the actions already taken by the PSOE in government, including the dismantling of austerity and the restrictions which had been imposed by the PP on the population's rights and liberties. Since its 39. party congress, the PSOE is "the alternative to right populists and the involution they propagate and has the objective to construct an alternative to neoliberalism as dominant economic and social paradigm" (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 18). The socialists also aim to put a stop to the "increasing concentration of wealth to the disadvantage of the middle and working classes" (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 20). New about the PSOE is especially its "radical defence of gender equality" (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 21), environmental sustainability and democratic regeneration, the targeting especially of corruption and fraud and the protection of the general interest against economic powers (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 21). A number of particular challenges and processes are identified as being of particular importance in this sense (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, pp. 18–19): inequality and poverty, women rights, climate change, digitalization and robotics, the growing number of people above the age of 65 and the need to focus on dependency politics, the disaffection especially of young citizens, new global risks and, lastly, migratory flows (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, pp. 16–17). At the same time, the party portrays itself as the party of continuity (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 15) and moderation in the face of the competition between Cs, Vox and the PP, which has left the political center abandoned (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 20). "[R]eformism, dialogue and moderation have always been compatible with ambitious and profoundly transforming proposals and these have always been basic elements of social democracy" (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 20). Thus, the party emphasizes its will to "act with a great dosage of pragmatism" (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 20), thus being as much a party of the left as it is of the center (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 21). Great emphasis is also placed on the PSOE's will to make advances in the realization of the Agenda 2030 (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 23). The introduction concludes by summarizing the POSE's proposals still further: "a stable economy based on knowledge and innovation, which incorporates the ecological and digital transitions and which generates quality employment and dignified salaries; the reconstruction and extension of the welfare state...; the regeneration of our democratic institutions, which requires, among others, the eradication...of gender based inequalities" (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 24).

The PP's 102 page program, entitled "Assured value",³¹ commences with a section focusing on "strengthening the nation", followed by a section entitled "A fiscal revolution for economic growth and competitiveness". These are followed by sections, in that order, on the economy in general; on education; on the "well-being society" (as opposed to the welfare state); on family and social policies, directed at the equality of opportunities; on "more opportunities", including topics such as mobility, infrastructure and culture; on sustainability, which includes environmental issues as well as agriculture, water and the rural environment; on "[a] better democracy", including the judiciary and transparency; lastly, on foreign policy.

The document's introduction does not leave the reader waiting for the party's virulent discourse: "The next elections will be decisive to Spain. The motion of censure against the PP government provoked a change which has made president he who has demonstrated that he has no project other than to pact with populists and secessionists, putting the unity and equality of all Spaniards at risk only to assure his ability to exercise power...we have denounced his politics of humiliating concessions, such as the acceptance of a rapporteur...with determination. We have led a responsible opposition, close to the citizens and based on the continued proposals to improve the welfare of the Spaniards" (Partido Popular 2019, p. 6). Already in its fourth paragraph, the party offers tax cuts as the best way to boost employment and thus strengthen the welfare state and proposes, shortly thereafter, that the solution to the pension system's lack of sustainability is that families must be enabled to have children without their professional careers being affected (Partido Popular 2019, p. 6). Other issues which are mentioned earlier on include the right of families to choose their children's education, rural Spain, the digital transformation and secure borders against immigrants (Partido Popular 2019, p. 6). Lastly, the PP points out that the spirit of cooperation and compromise which has characterized the democratic transition is put at risk by a government which "has renounced peaceful coexistence (*concordia*) in order to impose a falsified vision of history, trying to portray Spain as an imperfect democracy. A government which has opted to open old debates in order to provoke new divisions" (Partido Popular 2019, p. 7). In international politics, the PSOE is attacked for being silent on the authoritarian nature of countries like Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua (Partido Popular 2019, pp. 7, 11). Lastly, the PP elaborates on the AC state, pointing out its successes but also the need "to strengthen the [central] state's structuring capacity (*capacidad vertebradora*) to assure the liberty and equality of all Spaniards. More Spain is not less but better decentralization" (Partido

³¹ "Valor seguro" in Spanish.

Popular 2019, p. 7). Subsequently, the party elaborates on its “principles”: “Spain is a nation of free and equal citizens”, requiring the “deactivation” of peripheral nationalisms and the propagation of Spanish nationalism (Partido Popular 2019, p. 9); the defence of individual liberty (Partido Popular 2019, p. 9); a free market economy (Partido Popular 2019, p. 10) with a clear neoliberal vocation; the *Rechtsstaat* (Partido Popular 2019, p. 10); national security and international leadership (Partido Popular 2019, p. 11). The PP’s somewhat contradictory nature – intending to appear both clearly moderate and right-wing – is perhaps best captured by the PP’s curious understanding of the principle of individual liberty: “Liberty emancipates persons from the collectivist eagerness of the left, which aims to divide individuals as a function of their gender, age, race, religion or sexual orientation. We are citizens of a nation, not the sum of unconnected minorities nor a catalogue of labels. The family is the natural environment in which individuals grow and develop” (Partido Popular 2019, p. 9).

Podemos’ “Program for a new country: make history”³² is 105 pages long. Following the introduction, its first chapter is concerned with the green economy and the new industrials model, the second concerns feminism and the welfare state (the “care economy”) and the third chapter deals with digitalization and the new economy. Thereafter follow a series of chapters, all commenced by the word “guarantees”, concerning democracy and citizenship, labour justice and pensions, social justice, fiscal justice and, lastly, territorial justice. The electoral program’s introduction is reduced to one page, which commences as follows: “For the April 28. election, there are three options: any of Aznar’s three parties (PP, Ciudadanos and Vox, which are basically the same), the PSOE or Podemos. Aznar’s trio wants to take us 40 years back into the past concerning civil liberties and women rights and has the same economic program: increase fiscal privileges for large corporations and great fortunes and continue thrashing the working people. As is to be expected, this generates fear. Faced with this fear, the PSOE offers a most conservative reaction: to maintain what is, to not advance as a country. Every time that one has to confront the electric companies, the banks or vulture funds to defend the rights of the people, the PSOE’s knees start to tremble. The third option...[is] Podemos, which, before the fear which the Columbus trio instils, puts the hopes of the pensioners, the 8-M [movement] and of the youth, who are worried about climate change, on the table and converts these into the ambition to construct a better country” (Podemos 2019, p. 5). Putting “the people” at the center of its politics, Podemos attacks the “media spokesperson of the powerful and

³² “[L]a historia escribes tú” in the original.

their parliamentary extensions” for propagating the message that change is not possible. Podemos is presented as an outsider unconditioned by personal ties to big business and its interests, and concludes by reminding the reader “that history is not written by the media, property of the banks, nor talk show participants, nor the sewers,³³ nor surveys. History is written by you” (Podemos 2019, p. 5). A possible hint that the program is somewhat more moderate – perhaps, as previously mentioned, motivated by the possibility of a future coalition with the PSOE – is pointed out on the following page, which states that the program is a mere summary and that, to get a holistic view of its intentions, “we direct you to our electoral program of 2016 (the proposals of which continue to be valid) as well as the laws and parliamentary initiatives which we have presented in the last three years” (Podemos 2019, p. 6).

Cs 25 page electoral program, entitled “Our commitment with the Spanish people” (*los Españoles*), does not contain an introduction. It is structured into 14 chapters. The first chapter, entitled “The Spain of free and equal citizens”, concerns, in its first subsection, Spanish unity, and, in its second, a constitutional reform, followed by proposals for an electoral law and AC finance reforms. The second chapter concerns corruption and includes critical statements on political privileges and the Spanish two party system. The next chapter concerns the economy and competitiveness, followed by chapter four on a labour market reform to put an end to precariousness, which commences by emphasising the party’s focus on the self-employed and entrepreneurs (Ciudadanos 2015, pp. 7–8). Chapter five, eight and nine concern the welfare state, commencing with education, followed by public health and, lastly, pensions, dependency and disability, while chapter seven is concerned with the family and chapter six with tourism, culture and sports. Climate change is mentioned only in chapter ten.

Like C’s, Vox’s electoral program, entitled “100 measures for a vibrant Spain” (Vox 2019a), is only 25 pages long, but it is more akin in appearance to a slideshow with more or less elaborate bullet points than a typical electoral program. It is thus much shorter than Cs’ in terms of content. The first section is entitled “Spain, unity and sovereignty”, the second concerns the electoral system and transparency (containing three bullet points), followed by immigration as well as defence, security and borders. Other parties do not

³³ The “state’s sewers” is an expression related to illegal attempts to cover up political corruption through the clandestine activities of police commissioner José Manuel Villarejo (El País 2020). More generally, the expression is used to criticize the collusion between state security personnel and politicians to cover up their illicit activities or discredit political rivals in smear campaigns.

provide the issue of migration their own major chapter or section heading, but include it in other sections like like rights (Podemos, PSOE), global challenges (PP), or security and defence (Cs). The next section concerns the economy and resources, followed by health, education and culture, life and family, liberties and justice, Europe and international politics. While most sections are two to three pages long, a full page containing some five numbered, relatively short paragraphs, by far the most extensive section concerns the economy, with five pages. The shortest section, of half a page, concerns the electoral system and transparency, followed by a one page section on health.

Given that the April 2019 election is the last one to be analysed, its results will now be described here.³⁴ The PSOE was the clear winner. The party increased its share of the vote by 6.1 percent to 28.9 percent and from 85 to 123 deputies, gains which were accompanied by the losses of Podemos, which fell by 6.9 to 14.4 percent and by 29 to 42 seats. The PP, on the other hand, fell by 16.7 percent and 71 seats to 16.8 percent and 66 seats, accompanied by the increase of Cs by 2.8 percent and 25 deputies to 16 percent and 57 deputies, as well as Vox's entry into Congress with 10.3 percent and 24 deputies. As had already been the case in 2016, the ERC increased its share of the vote by 1.3 to 3.9 percent and its seats from from nine to 15, more than doubling those of Junts. The latter experienced very slight decimal losses, winning 1.9 percent of the vote and losing one deputy, falling to seven. The PNV's results remained almost unchanged. Thus, although EH Bildu was able to form a parliamentary group for the first time (Pfeiffer and Werz 2020, p. 159), having won five seats, the majority of voters had decided to vote for the most moderate parties in the right, left and secessionist party groups, a sign that the constant confrontation promoted by the more radical parties did not seem to have the desired effect. The PSOE benefited especially from former abstainers and Podemos voters, while the vast majority of former PP voters defected to Vox and Cs, but there were also noteworthy vote changes between Cs and the PSOE, although these largely evened out (Pfeiffer and Werz 2020, p. 149). Moreover, the PSOE had, for the first time since 1993, won an absolute majority in the Senate (Pfeiffer and Werz 2020, p. 150). Failed government formation negotiations would lead to another national election in November, which was followed by the first Spanish national coalition government since 1977 between the PSOE and Podemos. As was feared by some, this government coalition was reliant not only on the PNV, but also on the ERC and EH Bildu, the latter two parties

³⁴ Up to now, each case study chapter which analyses the specificity of electoral programs for a given year has commenced by discussing the electoral results of the previous national election. Since this is the last such chapter, the 2019 election outcome is discussed here, however.

being included especially at the behest of Podemos. A more detailed rendition of these developments, however, belongs to another chapter in another book.

10.6.2 Specificity and policy field IP discussion

10.6.2.1 Specificity

As becomes visible from fig. 25a on the facing page, compared to 2015 a number of noticeable changes have taken place in the distribution of issue positions. All parties reduced their number of issue positions by between 34 (Podemos) and 280 (Cs), thus falling within a similar range of total issue positions between 147 (PP) and 177 (PSOE), with the exception of Vox, which offers only 47 issue positions. Given that Vox is a numeric outlier, the other parties will be discussed first, without including Vox in the comparison.

Regarding the overall distribution of issue positions, Podemos and Cs are very similar, with the exception of a clear difference in IPs (60 versus 49 respectively). As becomes visible especially from fig. 25b, the PSOE is comparatively vague, offering the largest number of issue positions in all vague categories. The total number of SQ type issue positions is eleven for the PSOE and ranges from one to three for the other three parties. The total number of GIPs and GIPLs are 20 for the PSOE, thirteen for the PP, nine for Podemos and seven for Cs. The PSOE proposes 85 VIPs, by far the largest amount, with the other three parties stating almost the same amount of VIPs, ranging between 63 and 68.³⁵ The PSOE also offers most VIPLs, namely 40, followed by the PP with 25, Cs with 14 and Podemos with thirteen VIPLs. Not only does the PSOE offer the largest number of rather vague issue positions, but it also offers – for the first time – the fewest specific ones in absolute terms, namely 20 IPs and one IPL, which is little even when compared to the PP's 38 IPs and five IPLs. Moreover, both traditional parties clearly offer less specific issue positions than Podemos and Cs, the latter two providing 60 and 49 IPs and thirteen and 14 IPLs respectively.

³⁵ The PP offered 63, Cs 67 and Podemos 68 VIPs.

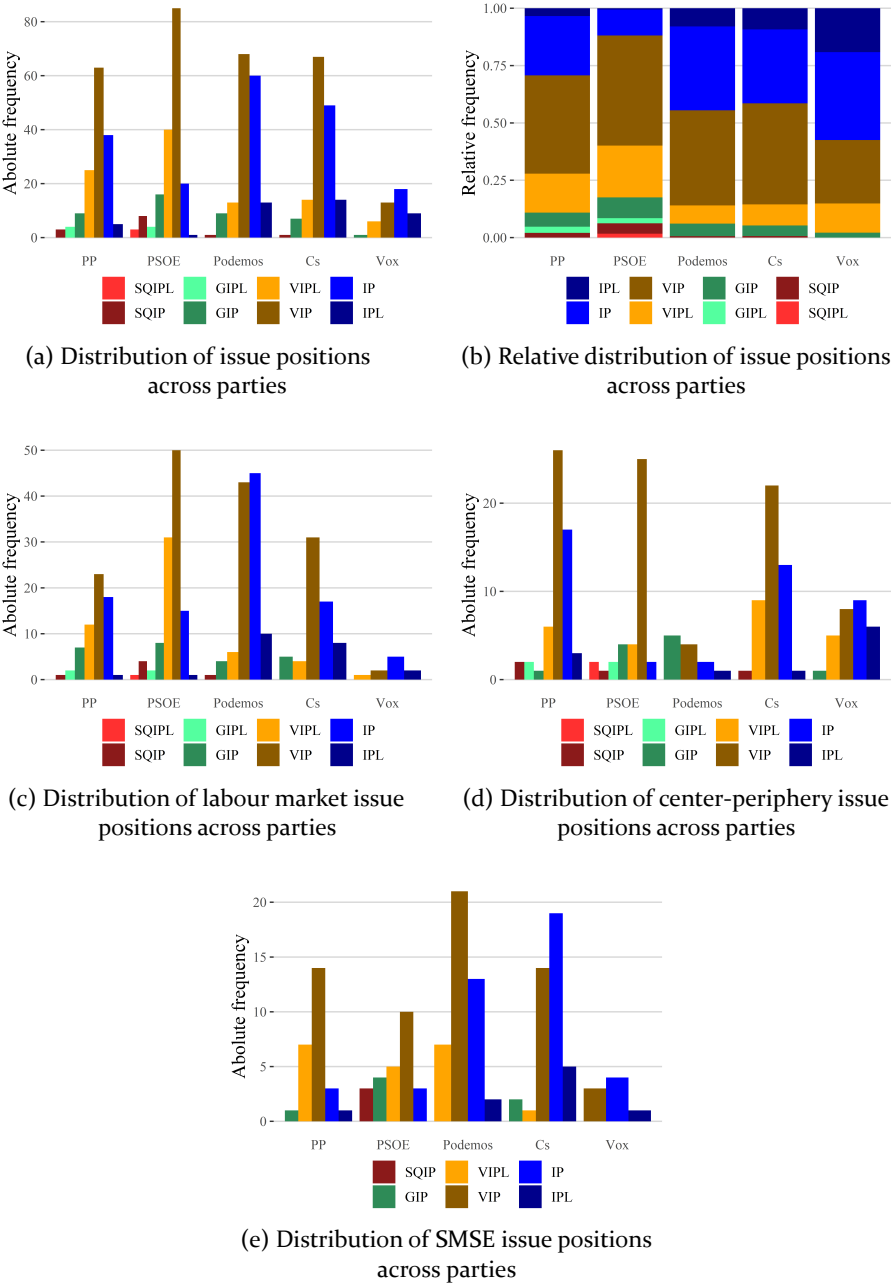


Figure 25: Specificity (2019)

Vox does not offer any SQ type issue positions, similar to the other two newcomers in 2015, almost no GIPs (one) and is the only party for which the number of IPs (18) exceed its number of VIPs (thirteen) and its number of IPLs (nine) exceed its number of VIPLs (six). In terms of the absolute numbers of IPs, Vox is most similar to the PSOE, in terms of IPLs it outdoes the PP, but does not reach Cs' or Podemos' level. In relative terms, however, as shown in fig. 25b, Vox (6.6 points) is the most specific of all parties, followed by Podemos (6.31 points) and Cs (6.3 points), which have almost identical scores, the PP (5.87 points) and finally the PSOE (5.38 points).

Notwithstanding some important differences, the parties' respective overall issue position distributions are reflected in their labour market issue position distributions, which are shown in fig. 25c. Perhaps the most stark difference is the scarcity of Vox's issue positions in this policy field. While most parties dedicate a clear majority of their issue positions to the labour market compared to the center-periphery policy field, the ratio of center-periphery to labour market issue positions for Vox is one to 0.34.³⁶ In terms of percentages, Vox dedicates 61.7 percent of its issue positions to the center-periphery policy field and only 21.3 percent to the labour market. The least specific party in the labour market is once again the PSOE (5.49), followed by the PP (5.75), Cs (6.29), Podemos (6.43) and Vox (6.8).

In the center-periphery policy field, shown in fig. 25d, the issue position distribution for the different parties is quite distinct from their overall distribution. The PP offers the largest number of VIPs (26), similar to the number offered by the PSOE (25) and Cs (22), while Vox (eight) and Podemos (four) offer by far the smallest amount. The PP also offers the largest number of IPs (17), with Cs coming in second with some distance (thirteen) and is followed, again with a clear difference by Vox (nine), while the PSOE and Podemos offer the least number of IPs, two each. Moreover, the PP offers the second largest number of IPLs (three), where the party is clearly overtaken by Vox (six), but far ahead of Podemos and Cs (with one each) as well as the PSOE (with none). In the vaguer categories, Podemos offers no, Cs 14 and all other parties offer between four and six VIPLs. Except for Cs, which lacks any GIP and GIPL issue positions, and Podemos and Vox, which offer no GIPLs, the number of GIPs and GIPLs vary between one and two and one and four respectively.

³⁶ The center-periphery to labour market issue position ratios for the other parties is one to 1.12 for the PP, one to 1.41 for Cs, one to 2.8 for the PSOE and one to 9.08 for Podemos.

The center-periphery issue position distributions of the different parties are odd indeed when compared to the overall issue position distributions of each party, as may be illustrated by a series of brief remarks. The PSOE's issue positions are concentrated, with 62.5 percent, mostly in the VIP category and its distribution is thus remarkable for the scarcity of other issue positions. Podemos offers a very low number of total issue positions (twelve), much less than even Vox, which are, additionally, curiously distributed. Podemos provides no issue positions for four issue position type categories and its number of issue positions declines as one moves from the less to the more specific categories. Podemos is also the only party which offers no VIPLs whatsoever. Cs lacks any GIP and GIPL issue positions, which usually involve emphasizing cooperation, almost like Vox. At the same time, however, Cs offers the largest number of VIPLs and the second largest number of IPs (but only one IPL). Lastly, as was the case in the labour market policy field, Vox once again offers comparatively few issue positions (29), but still many more than Podemos' twelve. Moreover, Vox once again offers more IPs (nine) than VIPs (eight) and more IPLs (six) than VIPLs (five), making it by far the most specific party in relative terms. Even in absolute terms, however, Vox offers by far the most IPLs (six compared to the next largest number of three by the PP) and the third largest number of IPs (nine), much more than the ones offered by the PSOE and Podemos. Overall then, the least specific party in the center-periphery policy field is once again the PSOE (5.25 points), followed by Podemos (5.5 points), the PP (6.02 points), Cs (6.04 points) and Vox (6.48 points).

In the SMSE policy field, shown in fig. 25e, the issue position distributions of the two left parties seem to reflect the labour market distributions more than the center-periphery ones, while Cs' seems more similar to the center-periphery policy field and both the PP and Vox once again have quite distinct distribution profiles across the different graphics. The least specific party in the SMSE policy field is the PSOE (5.12 points), followed by the PP (5.85 points), Podemos (6.23), Cs (6.59) and Vox (6.75).

When compared to 2015, it becomes evident especially that the PSOE has become much vaguer, while the PP has become much more specific. The PSOE may have become vaguer because of the reduced threat experienced by the party as well as its anticipated victory (see below) and in order to facilitate possible post-electoral negotiations with Podemos. This fall in specificity is especially noticeable in the labour market policy field. The PP may have become more specific both in absolute and relative terms because it had distanced itself from the center, thus drawing close to its organizational

ideology and because the party was anticipating stiff competition not only from Cs, which had proven itself more than capable of presenting a serious threat to the PP, but also from Vox. Cs had become somewhat vaguer, possibly because the party distanced itself from the center, thus dropping some of its centrist reform proposals in an attempt to vie for right-wing voters, less specificity thus ironically representing a way to respond to the additional party pair threat caused by the emergence of the radical right-wing Vox. Since this fall in specificity occurs especially in the labour market policy field, it may be expected that the party has dropped some of its more “left-wing” pro-welfare state positions. The comparatively large number of specific center-periphery field IPs offered by the PP may indicate an attempt to avoid that right-wing voters defect to Vox, which also offered a relatively large amount of specific positions in that policy field. A reading of the IPs offered by all these parties in the labour market and center-periphery policy field may provide more evidence for these interpretations.

10.6.2.2 Labour market IPs

As mentioned above, the PSOE reduced its specific issue positions in the labour market policy field substantially. The socialist promised to increase the minimum salary to 60 percent of the average Spanish salary (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 32); to reduce the number of labour contracts to three, a permanent, a temporary and an educational contract (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 35); to limit the period of successive internships by a single person and to establish a maximum ratio of scholarships and internships to regular employees for companies (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 115). The party also promised to increase fines to assure compliance with gender based salary gap legislation (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 235); to increase inspections and hire more inspectors (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 252); to increase spending on as well as the benefits and services related to the implementation of the dependency law (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, pp. 123–4); to provide a new definition of work related diseases as those which come into being in or are aggravated by the workplace, especially muscular-skeletal disorders which affect especially women (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 236); lastly, to ratify the ILO’s Treaty 189 (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 236). Although the PSOE thus still offered some important measures in 2019, these have become much more limited in scope and scarcer in nature.

The PP too offered relatively few issue positions in the labour market policy field. These included the introduction of the so-called Austrian backpack

(*mochilla austriaca*) system, which provides an individualized capitalization fund to which each employee contributes throughout his working life and which can be accessed in case of unemployment, geographic mobility, training activities and retirement (Partido Popular 2019, p. 26). The party also promised to toughen fines for companies using temporary contracts without due cause (Partido Popular 2019, p. 26); to limit the use of successive temporary contracts (Partido Popular 2019, p. 26); lastly, to provide social security related tax incentives for the implementation of health related good practices (Partido Popular 2019, p. 26).

Concerning equality, the PP aimed to increase female labour market participation to the European average (Partido Popular 2019, p. 27); to provide fiscal incentives for hiring women after maternity; to provide certificates for companies which enable family and work-life conciliation; to make the existence of equality plans a criteria in the awarding of public tenders (Partido Popular 2019, p. 49). In order to improve the functioning of the labour market, the conservatives proposed to push the National Employment System's digitalization and to boost new technology related training opportunities (Partido Popular 2019, p. 26). Moreover, the party proposed to create a smartphone application to provide the (un)employed with information about possible training and education opportunities, permitting them to choose between different offers by using vouchers (Partido Popular 2019, p. 27); to make information about the impact of active labour market policies public (Partido Popular 2019, p. 27); to eliminate the income tax for those who have reached the pension age but wished to continue to work (Partido Popular 2019, p. 27); to increase the quota reserved for disabled persons in employment; to offer public subsidies to adjust workplaces to different disabilities and to provide fiscal incentives for the hire of disabled persons (Partido Popular 2019, p. 51). Overall, these issue positions once again reflect the PP's proclivity to focus on uncontroversial policy proposals, tax incentives, technological modernization as well as on individual merit, as is reflected in the desired adoption of the Austrian backpack system.

Podemos, which offered by far the largest number of issue positions, once again proposed the derogation of Zapatero and Rajoy's labour market reforms (Podemos 2019, p. 66); to increase the minimum salary, this time immediately to 1,000 Euro and then to 1,200 Euro until the end of the legislature (Podemos 2019, p. 69); to reduce the working week to 34 hours, seven hours daily from Monday to Thursday and six hours on Fridays, without any accompanying fall in salaries (Podemos 2019, p. 27).

Concerning equality, Podemos proposed equal and non-transferable parental leave, which was extended to cases of adoption or family placement, without any salary reductions. Irrespective of the sex and type of family, both parents should be given 16 weeks immediately, subsequently increasing that number by two weeks every year until reaching 24 weeks for each, until the end of the legislature (Podemos 2019, p. 28). The party also offered a definition of the gender based salary gap, defining it quantitatively as a salary difference greater than 20 percent, and demanded that any differences greater than that would have to be justifiable in some way before a court. Big companies would have to carry out audits and would be fined if they did not fulfil these requirements (Podemos 2019, p. 28). Last but not least, the party aimed to provide universal and free preschool education for children between zero and three years once parental leave had been exhausted, thereby supposedly creating 100,000 jobs (Podemos 2019, p. 27).

Concerning precariousness, Podemos aimed to eliminate all temporary contracts except one, intended to compensate for unforeseen changes in productivity or for organisationally caused shortfalls, such as temporary replacement due to workplace injuries (Podemos 2019, p. 65). Moreover, the party aimed to limit the duration of temporary contracts to between one and six months, after which it would automatically be converted to a permanent contract. The latter would also occur if the same position was covered by a succession of temporary contracts employing different individuals. Employees hired and then fired based on fraudulent temporary contracts would have to be rehired as permanent employees; companies hiring an excessive amount of temporary employees would have to pay higher social security contributions and the party aimed to carry out more inspections targeting particularly precarious sectors which employ especially women (Podemos 2019, p. 66). “External” internships would have to include a study plan and be clearly educational in nature, guided by professionals and paid at least in terms of the minimum salary, with maximally a 5 hour working days (Podemos 2019, p. 67). Persons would be considered employed, rather than self-employed, if they had one major source of income, and the company benefiting from such a fraudulent arrangement would be obliged to permanently hire the supposedly self-employed individual. Moreover, the company would have to retroactively pay all those contributions that would have been made had this modality been used from the very beginning (Podemos 2019, p. 68). Part-time employment would require the definition of a stable work schedule and extra hours would be considered as such and paid accordingly (Podemos 2019, p. 67). In general, companies would have to register extra hours and pay for them, making the respective data available to the employees (Podemos 2019, p. 67). The party also aimed to

limit sub-contracting to specialized services unrelated to the main activity of the given company and, when justified, the sub-contacted employees would be hired under the same conditions as those who were working for the parent company (Podemos 2019, p. 66). A particular example was offered in relation to this measure, namely the so-called *kellies*, or hotel cleaning staff, which would have to be hired directly by the hotel and would, moreover, be given the option of early retirement due to the physically straining nature of their jobs. The party aimed, moreover, to create a seal of quality tourism which was to be awarded when tourist establishments make an effort to respect the rights of their workers (Podemos 2019, p. 70).

Concerning unemployment protection, the party promised that all the unemployment benefits that an employee had not made use of would accrue in his or her name (Podemos 2019, p. 69); that those younger than 30 years would only have to fulfil half the contributory time period demanded of those older than 30 years of age in order to access unemployment benefits, moreover increasing the benefit's duration from one-third to half the time worked (Podemos 2019, p. 70). Housekeepers were to be integrated in the general social security system, with equal rights and full unemployment protection (Podemos 2019, p. 70). Regarding unions, the party promised to re-establish the prevalence of collective agreements at the sectoral, provincial, autonomous or state level over the company level (Podemos 2019, p. 69) and that company groups would have to form a single unit during collective negotiations (Podemos 2019, p. 69). Another promise was to revive the so-called *ultraactividad* of collective agreements, which assures that when these agreements expire, the norms fixed within them continue to apply until a new collective agreement is negotiated (Podemos 2019, p. 69). Lastly, the party once again promised to ratify the ILO's Treaty 189 (Podemos 2019, p. 28).

Cs labour market issue positions became much less elaborate and focused almost exclusively on work-life conciliation and equality issues. The party promised to offer a kindergarten cheque to universalize education for zero to three year olds and to increase the overall number of available spots; to increase and equalize maternity and paternity leave to 16 weeks for each parent and, once both have made complete use of their rights, to extend each by an additional two weeks, thus totalling 36; to reduce the companies' social security contributions by 100 percent during periods of pregnancy related temporary incapacitation as well as during maternity and paternity leave; to offer an annual amount of 1,200 Euro social security contribution discounts for two years for women which are hired after childbirth; to make working hours more flexible in order to accommodate child or family related

issues, permitting employees to accumulate reductions into full working days;³⁷ to eliminate the employees' contributions due for the thereby reduced working hours; to establish a number of hours which are reserved for personal matters; to permit employees to convert their holidays into off time to attend to their own matters during a normal working week; to provide the right of all employees with family responsibilities to work from a distance, provided that their activity and job permits it (Ciudadanos 2019, p. 14), among others. The reduction in labour market issue positions thus clearly reflects Cs' rightward shift. The party's major and very costly social-democratic or more welfare state oriented proposals were dropped, while the issue positions related to childrearing and family life were clearly favoured.

Vox, which provided the smallest number of issue positions, promised a ten percent reduction in social security contributions for the indefinite hire of unemployed Spanish citizens as long as unemployment was above eight percent; to eliminate social security contributions for two years for companies hiring persons younger than 24 years of age (Vox 2019a, p. 12); to treat pregnancy related ailments which would require taking work leave as maternity leave, with zero cost to the company (Vox 2019a, p. 18); to increase maternity leave to 180 days and 360 days in case of the birth of a child with disabilities (Vox 2019a, p. 19); to support those unemployed who are older than 50 years of age as well as the long-term unemployed by means of a 20 percent reduction in companies' social security contributions for indefinite hires (Vox 2019a, p. 12). These issue positions, although few in number, show either a major preference for social security rebates as incentives to influence the hiring behaviour of companies, reflecting Vox's implicit hostility toward the welfare state, or are directly related to the family and maternity, which, as mentioned above, plays a special role in Vox's political ideology.

10.6.2.3 Center-periphery IPs

The PSOE barely made any specific proposals at all in the center-periphery policy field. These included making the convocation of the Conference of Presidents obligatory (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 149) and inserting an article in the Constitution that all competencies not attributed to the central state were to be competencies of the ACs (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 2019, p. 150).

³⁷ This measure may be understood as the possibility to take one or several holidays, permitting employees to spread the equivalent free time across several working days in order to reduce their respective daily working hours and thus being able to free up time for family related concerns.

The PP's 2019 center-periphery proposals showed a much greater hostility toward further decentralization. The conservatives proposed to increase the resources available to central government delegations in the different ACs (Partido Popular 2019, p. 13); to approve a moratorium to halt further competency transfers (Partido Popular 2019, p. 14); to reform the penal code to declare convoking an illegal referendum a crime; to reform the executive's power to pardon, by prohibiting its application in case of rebellion or sedition (Partido Popular 2019, p. 14); to outlaw political parties promoting violence; to reform the law on party financing in order to avoid that those political parties which work against the unity and general interest of the nation do not receive public funds (Partido Popular 2019, p. 15); lastly, to increase the infrastructure available to the state's security forces (Partido Popular 2019, p. 14).

On the symbolic plane, the PP proposed a law of national symbols in order to aggravate the punishment of state authorities which negate their duties to exhibit the national flag on all official buildings or to portray the image of the head of state (Partido Popular 2019, p. 14) as well as to approve a legislative initiative which guaranteed the compliance with the requirement to swear on the Spanish Constitution upon being elected to a representative or public office, prohibiting any variation or modification of the process which could be intended to circumvent its intended significance (Partido Popular 2019, p. 15).

Concerning the Spanish language, the PP aimed to guarantee the use of Spanish in all public communications realized anywhere in the country, with only those administrative acts which were at least also published in Spanish having official character, including punishments for transgressions;³⁸ to make it obligatory that signs, boards and labels were always at least in Spanish; finally, to assure that nobody could be fined or otherwise sanctioned for using the Spanish language (Partido Popular 2019, p. 15). Last but not least, the party proposed derogating the Historic Memory Law and replacing it with the so-called Concord Law³⁹ (Partido Popular 2019, p. 15), the content of which was not specified further. The PP could thus be said to have clearly shifted to the right and to have abandoned the much more neutral tone of its 2015 center-periphery proposals, which may clearly be interpreted as a reaction to the developments in Catalonia, competition with Cs and the emergence of Vox.

Like the PSOE, Podemos offered few specific center-periphery issue positions. The party promised to reform the territorial finance system by basing it on

³⁸ This issue position may refer to sentences by regional courts, municipal fines and the like.

³⁹ "Ley de Concordia" in the original.

income floors rather than spending ceilings in order to assure public services provision, to increase the financing of all ACs due to the fiscal austerity measures suffered in the past and to reduce the inequality between the different Spanish regions (Podemos 2019, p. 103). Podemos also supported the holding of a pacted referendum, defending the “recalibration” of Catalonia’s relation with or, more literally, its place within Spain. Lastly, the party proposed to transform the Senate into a true chamber of territorial representation by providing a list of functions, including the power to name Constitutional Court judges (Podemos 2019, p. 104).

Compared to 2015, Cs has also become somewhat less specific and more aggressive concerning the center-periphery policy field. The party called for the immediate application of article 155 to Catalonia (Ciudadanos 2019, p. 1); promised that no state funds could in any way contribute to separatist activities (Ciudadanos 2019, p. 1); aimed to assure that politicians which had fled the country would automatically lose office, would be unable to run in elections and could not benefit, directly or indirectly, from public resources or funds (Ciudadanos 2019, p. 1); wished to determine the distribution of competencies between the central state and ACs, eliminating the possibility of competency transfers (Ciudadanos 2019, p. 2). Concerning the Basque Country, Cs proposed to abolish the fourth transitory provision permitting that Navarre could be “annexed” by the Basque Country (Ciudadanos 2019, p. 2) and to replace the non-transparent process of determining the Basque *cupo* by an official methodology provided by the Independent Fiscal Responsibility Authority (Ciudadanos 2019, p. 3). Cs also proposed the introduction of a three percent national electoral threshold (Ciudadanos 2019, p. 3)⁴⁰ and to improve the electoral system’s proportionality (Ciudadanos 2019, p. 3); to introduce a non-optional (*asignatura troncal*) and graded school subject on the Spanish Constitution; to strengthen the High Inspection of the State to guarantee that education and textbooks were not contrary to the nature of the Constitution, promising to publish its reports (Ciudadanos 2019, p. 2). Lastly, without providing further details, Cs once again proposed the reform of the Senate and, if unable to do so, to abolish it entirely (Ciudadanos 2019, p. 2). By 2019, Cs thus seems to have abandoned its reformist character in favour of a more reactionary attitude concerning non-Spanish nationalisms.

Vox, as the most right-wing Spanish party, proposed suspending Catalan autonomy until all pro-independence leaders had been meted out the civil

⁴⁰ See section 9.8.2.3 on page 309 for a comment on the potential impact of such a measure.

and penal consequences of their actions (Vox 2019a, p. 2);⁴¹ the outlawing of parties and civil society organizations aiming to terminate the territorial unity of the nation and its sovereignty (Vox 2019a, p. 2); to increase the punishment for offences and insults to Spain as a country and its state symbols and emblems (Vox 2019a, p. 2); to abolish the requirement to know a co-official language to accede to public offices in ACs (Vox 2019a, p. 2). Its frontal attack on the powers of ACs is encapsulated in its proposals to centralize the control over all security forces (Vox 2019a, p. 2); to transform the AC state into a unitary one, with one government and one parliament; to re-centralize the competencies in the areas of education, health, security and the judiciary (Vox 2019a, p. 3); to derogate the Historic Memory Law (Vox 2019a, p. 3); to suppress the special status of the Basque and Navarren finance regimes and to integrate them into the common one (Vox 2019a, p. 3); to drastically reduce “political spending” by abolishing AC televisions, the various Spanish Ombudsmen, meteorological agencies and the like (Vox 2019a, p. 9). The controversy surrounding the Catalan agitation for independence thus clearly seems to have favoured the formulation of specific issue positions aiming to reinforce the central state as well as its institutions and symbols, while the political left tried to skirt this policy field as much as possible.

10.6.3 Hypotheses discussion

10.6.3.1 Hypothesis 1: Deviation from the ideological center

As can be seen in fig. 26a on the following page, between the December 2015 and April 2019 elections, Vox had joined the ideological surveys, becoming the most politically radical party to date. In March 2019, the party was located at 3.8 points from the center, the perception varying little thereafter and locating the party at 3.9 points. Podemos, on the other hand, was moving in a somewhat erratic arch, commencing at 3.2 points in October 2015, peaking at 3.41 points in October 2017 and declining back to 3.2 points in March 2019. The PP’s evolution from October 2015, at 2.76 points, to January 2018, when the party reached its lowest value of 2.63 points, was similarly spasmodic. Thereafter, the PP once again shifted to the right, increasing to 2.81 points by October 2018, its second highest value since December 2015 and as high as its value in January 2016. By March 2019, its position had drawn closer to the center once again, the party scoring its lowest value of 2.6 points since July 2012. The PP’s more moderate position coincided with the appearance of Vox

⁴¹ This is an implicit reference to Puigdemont and several other former Catalan ministers which had fled to various European countries.

in the survey, which seems to have been more important to the public than Casado's rightward course when determining the PP's ideological location. The PSOE, after being located at 1.1 points in October 2015, actually moved closer to the center until January 2017, falling to 0.76 points, its lowest value since December 1994. After no clear tendency, with the values fluctuating around one, after April 2018 the party remained clearly above a one point distance to the center, increasing to 1.4 points by March 2019. Nonetheless, compared to the period before 2011, this value is clearly not an outlier.⁴² The increasing political polarization, the motion of censure and negotiations with Catalan secessionist parties may all have contributed to this leftward shift. Cs experienced a similar distancing from the center, increasing from a location of 0.87 points in October 2015, after experiencing a minor trough, to one point in January 2017 and to 1.75 points in October 2018. The most dramatic increase in the party's distance to the center occurred between July and October 2017, the period during which the Catalan conflict was heading full steam toward the "referendum", from 1.06 to 1.24, and from April to July 2018, the period during which Rajoy's government was terminated by the motion of censure, when the party shifted from 1.27 to 1.56 points. This may reflect its rightward shift to compete with the PP as well as its increasingly acrimonious relations with the left and Catalan parties. In the run-up to the 2019 election in March, the party dropped back down to 1.4 points, a moderation that may be attributed, as was the case for the PP, to the political emergence of Vox.

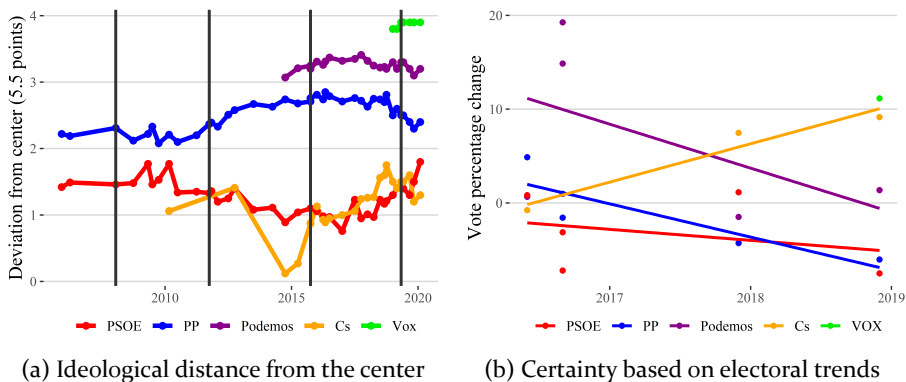


Figure 26: Certainty based on electoral trends and deviation from the center hypotheses discussion (2019)

⁴² With the exception of July 1978, until 1989 and from December 2005 until March 2010, the PSOE had remained above that value continuously.

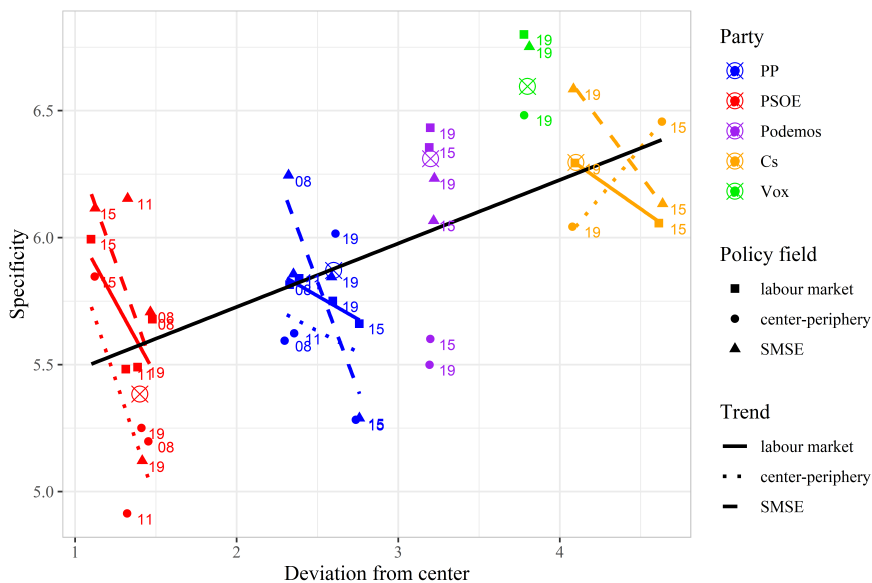
As shown in fig. 27a on the next page, the pattern of an overall positive relationship between specificity and deviation from the center, shown by the black regression line, and a party and policy field based negative relationship between the two variables, shown by the coloured regression lines, is once again confirmed by the data. There are four exceptions to this trend, although three can be attributed to Podemos, which registers changes in specificity despite basically identical deviation values. A variable other than deviation from the center thus seems to be driving Podemos' change in specificity in 2019.⁴³ The fourth exception is Cs, for which the relationship between specificity and deviation is positive in the center-periphery policy field. This exception may have a qualitative explanation. Keeping in mind that the party's deviation scores have been inverted, Cs actually becomes less specific as it shifts away from the center. If one considers that Cs, although decried as "fascist" in Catalonia, actually made a series of fairly moderate center-periphery policy proposals in 2015, thus arguably reflecting its Catalan origin and anti-nationalist but liberal principles, it makes sense that as the party deviates from the center, it also becomes less specific in the center-periphery policy field. Nonetheless, based on the concept of a party's organizational identity, which supposedly causes the party to become more specific as it draws nearer, Cs' scores were inverted and as such the relationship between specificity and deviation actually conforms to the hypothesized positive relationship, but breaks the empirical pattern of a negative one when controlling for party.⁴⁴

Concerning the postulated positive relationship between deviation from the center and specificity in 2019, shown in fig. 27a by the cross-hair symbols, only Cs (6.3) breaks the pattern by being slightly less specific than Podemos (6.31) and much less specific than Vox (6.6).⁴⁵ All parties except Cs thus confirm the expected relationship and the hypothesized positive relationship between deviation and specificity is thus accepted for 2019.

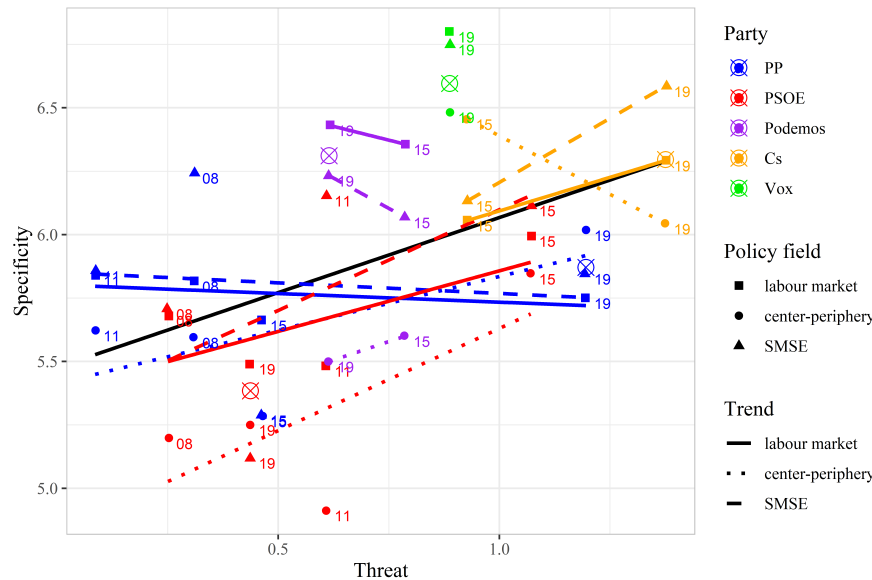
⁴³ Technically speaking, the data only includes two far left and right parties, Podemos and Vox. It is possible that such parties are by definition less mobile ideologically and that their behaviour regarding specificity is thus not conditioned by deviation from the ideological center. This is mere speculation, however, given there are only three cases, two for Podemos and only one for Vox, the latter thus not permitting a party based interpretation across time.

⁴⁴ It should be noted that if scores had not been inverted, the other two policy field trends for Cs would break the observed empirical pattern and affirm the original hypothesis. Either way, the contrary trends may be associated with Cs' liberal ideology, since the latter may combine more right-wing liberal economics with more left-wing civil rights liberalism.

⁴⁵ The PSOE's average specificity was 5.38 points, the PP's 5.87 points.



(a) Relationship between specificity and deviation from the center



(b) Relationship between specificity and threat

Figure 27: Relationship between specificity, deviation from the center and threat (2019)

10.6.3.2 Hypothesis 2: Party threat

A glance at fig. 28a shows substantial shifts in the threat levels of all four parties, with the fifth party, Vox, making its first appearance that year. The most substantial changes were experienced by the PSOE and PP, the least significant one by Podemos. In 2019, for the PSOE, the most threatened party both in 2011 and 2015, the decline in threat improved the party's position markedly, as can be seen in fig. 28b. One reason for this change are the PSOE's electoral prospects, which improved while those of the PP (-.33 competitive threat) and Cs (-.42 comp. threat) declined due to Vox's emergence. Another was Cs ideological shift to the right (while the PP's ideological threat remained almost identical at .56), thus increasing Cs ideological distance to the PSOE and the ideological threat falling from .78 to .69. As a consequence, the party pair threat to which the PSOE was exposed by the PP and Cs fell from .38 and .37 to .12 and .14 points respectively. At the same time, Podemos' electoral prospects were also in decline, competitive threat falling from -.13 to -.43 points, despite a slight increase in ideological threat from .77 to .8, causing the party pair based threat emitted by Podemos to decline from .32 to .19 points. In total, the PSOE's threat level thus fell from 1.07 in 2015 to .44 points in 2019. Podemos, shown in fig. 28d, was also able to improve its situation. The total threat level exuded by Podemos' only rival, the PSOE, increased from .45 to .62 points, but Podemos had also forged an alliance with the IU in 2016 and thus rid itself of an ideologically proximate competitor, which had been the cause of a .34 point party pair threat in 2015.

On the political right, the situation was becoming more complex, as shown in fig. 28c, fig. 28e and fig. 28f. To both the PP and Cs, the PSOE's recovery and

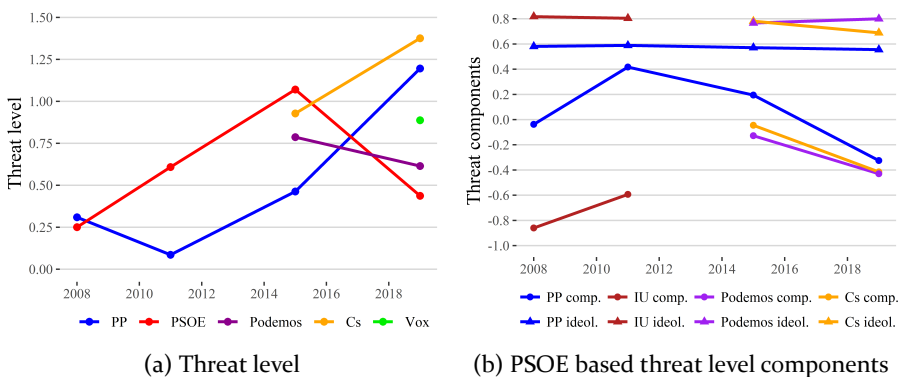


Figure 28: Threat hypothesis discussion (2019)

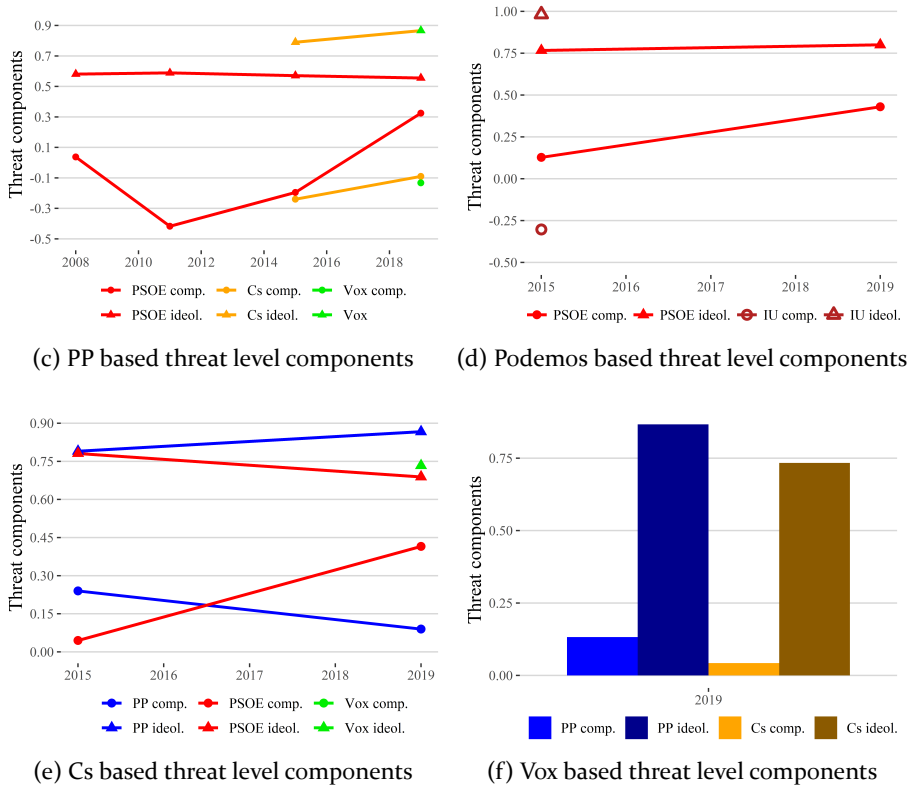


Figure 28: Threat hypothesis discussion (2019), cont.

the emergence of Vox as well as the ideological approximation of the PP by Cs pushed up the latter two parties' threat levels. Concerning the PP, shown in fig. 28c, the ideological distance to the PSOE had reduced ideological threat very marginally from .57 to .56 points, but the electoral threat exuded by the party increased from -.2 to .33 points. Moreover, Cs ideological approximation (increasing ideological threat from .79 to .87 points) and Vox's equidistant ideological position to the right (.87 points) increased the PP's threat level substantially. Moreover, Cs relative gains in expected electoral results when compared to the PP increased the electoral competition caused by Cs from -.24 to -.09 points. The only significant ameliorating factor for the PP were the poor electoral prospects of Vox (with a competitive threat of -.13 points). The sum of the party pair threat caused by the PSOE with .44, Vox with .37 and Cs with .39 points meant that the PP's overall threat level shot through the roof in 2019, reaching 1.2 points.

For Cs, however, electorally weaker and ideologically closer to the PSOE than the PP (although more distant to Vox), the situation was worse. The PP posed a .48 threat level,⁴⁶ the PSOE a .55 threat level⁴⁷ and Vox a .35 threat level,⁴⁸ summing 1.36 points. Vox was also in a highly competitive, but comparatively much lower threat situation, with the PP exuding a .5 and Cs a .39 threat level,⁴⁹ thus totalling .89 points.

Considering the relationship between threat and specificity, shown in fig. 27b on page 372, it can be seen that the overall trend is still positive across policy fields and time, as indicated by the black regression line. When this relationship is analysed by also taking each party into consideration separately, shown by the coloured regression lines, no clear trend emerges. Podemos and the PP contradict the expectation of a positive relationship in two policy fields each and Cs in one. Regarding the postulated positive relationship between threat and average party specificity in 2019, shown by the cross-hair symbols, Podemos is both more threatened and more specific than the PSOE and the same applies to Vox when compared to both the PSOE and Podemos. However, the PP is more threatened but less specific than both the far left and right parties, while Cs is roughly as specific as Podemos and less specific than Vox, but much more threatened than both. As a consequence, the hypothesis of a positive relationship between threat and specificity must be rejected for 2019.

10.6.3.3 Hypothesis 3: Party certainty of victory

As shown in fig. 26b on page 370, a comparatively small number of electoral contests took place from the December 2015 to the April 2019 national elections. Three of these – the national June 2016 as well as the Galician and Basque September 2016 elections – took place before Rajoy's investiture at the end of October 2016. The Catalan election of December 2017 took place before and the December 2018 Andalusian election took place after the June 2018 motion of censure. Given that these elections have all been discussed above due to their political significance, their results will only be summarized very briefly below.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ideological threat: .87; competitive threat: .09.

⁴⁷ Ideological threat: .69; competitive threat: .42.

⁴⁸ Ideological threat: .73; competitive threat: -.04.

⁴⁹ Cs, ideological threat of .73 and competitive threat of .04.; PP, ideological threat of .87, competitive threat of .13.

⁵⁰ Concerning the electoral data sources consulted, please see footnote 61 on page 205. For the post-2015 period, the information on government formation was taken from the respective

In the June 2016 national election, the PP gained an additional 4.9 percent of the vote, increasing to 33.5 percent, while Podemos had made slight gains of 0.7 percent, increasing to 21.3 percent, while the PSOE gained and Cs lost 0.8 percent of the vote, the former increasing to 22.8 percent while the latter declined to 13.2 percent. The Galician election further strengthened the PP, which was able to gain one additional percent of the vote, reaching 48 percent and thus being able to maintain its absolute majority, while Podemos won 19.3 percent of the vote and the PSOE declined by another 3.1 percent of the vote, coming in third with 18.1 percent. In the Basque Country, the PNV gained three percent of the vote, reaching 37.6 percent, Podemos experienced a substantial breakthrough, with 14.9 percent of the vote, and the PP experienced moderate losses of 1.6 percent, falling to 10.2 percent. The PSOE was the biggest loser once again, falling by 7.2 percent to 11.9 percent of the vote. In both of the latter ACs, Cs did not win parliamentary representation. By the time of the December 2017 Catalan election, however, the PSC finally managed to make slight gains after a prolonged period of socialist electoral decline, increasing its share of the vote from by 1.1 percent to 13.9 percent, while the Catalan Podemos alliance lost 1.5 percent, falling to 7.5 percent. The PP was harshly punished for its handling of the Catalan crisis, declining by 4.3 to 4.3 percent. Nonetheless, the Andalusian election one year thereafter, in which Vox made its first significant electoral debut with 11.1 percent of the vote, brought the PSOE another sizeable decline of 7.5 percent, falling to 28.4 percent. The PP too suffered a setback, falling by six percent to 21.1 percent of the vote, while Cs increased by 9.2 percent to a total of 18.6 percent and Podemos increased its share of the vote by 1.4 percent, to a total of 16.4 percent. Thus, except for Cs, all electoral trends, shown by the coloured regression lines, were negative during this period, although Podemos' decline was only relative, since the party was still capable of making small gains in Catalonia. Since both the PSOE and PP suffered electorally, non-national election result trends are of little help in indicating whether either the PP or PSOE could be sure of electoral victory in 2019.

cited sources, since it had not been made available by Observatorio de los Gobiernos de Coalición en España (2018) at the time of writing. Because the Valencian election coincided with the April 2019 national one, the former must also be excluded when determining certainty.

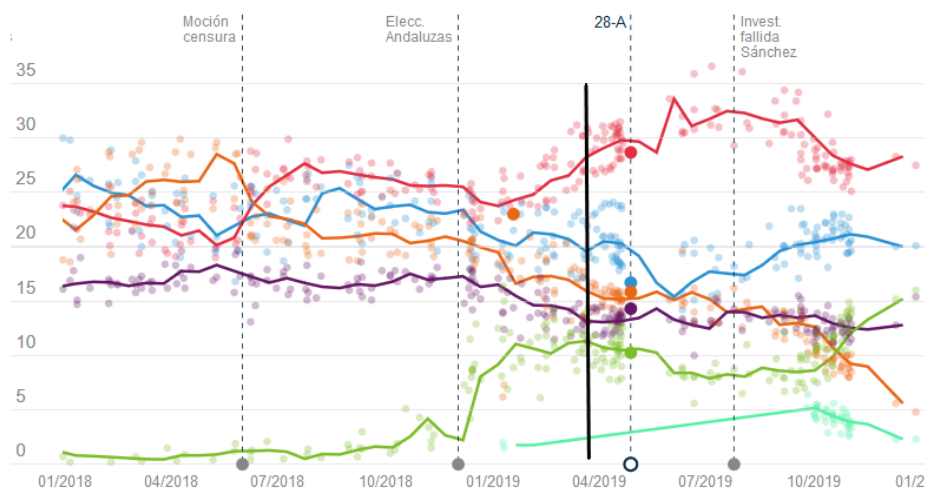


Figure 29: Electoral survey trends (2018-2019)

Colours: PP, blue; PSOE, red; Podemos, purple; Cs, orange; Vox, green. *Image source: Garrido (2019)*

Concerning the 2019 pre-electoral survey (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2019), the party performance of the PP and PSOE were the most highly valued, with 9.8 and 10.9 percent considering the parties to do a good or very good job, 24.9 and 34.9 percent considering their performance average and 58.4 and 47.3 percent believing that they had done a bad to very bad job, with the PSOE thus clearly leading in the average and the PP in the worst categories. Podemos and Cs did much worse, scoring 6.5 and 8.2, 24.8 and 29.6 as well as 57.7 and 50.4 percent in the respective categories.⁵¹ The political situation was considered good to very good by 3.1, average by 26.6, bad by 35.8 and very bad by 32.4 percent of the interviewees, roughly the same as at the end of 2015. Concerning the state of the economy, 4.9 percent considered it good to very good, 37.3 percent considered it average, 33.9 percent bad and 22.8 percent very bad, an assessment likely to be related to the current, although still recent, PSOE government. Especially the average and bad categories gained in percentage points, while the very bad category's percentage share shrunk when compared to 2015. Among the major parties' presidential candidates, Sánchez was favoured by 28.8 percent, Rivera by 13.2 percent, Casado by 10.9, Iglesias by 6.2 and Abascal by 3.6 percent. The popularity of all candidates was quite poor, but here too Sánchez clearly scored highest, with 4.1 points,

⁵¹ As a new party, data on Vox was not as yet provided.

compared to Rivera's 3.7, Casado's 3.3, Iglesias's 3.1 and Abascal's 2.6 points on a ten point approval scale. Not only was the PSOE thus leading in these two questions, but Cs' candidate was more popular and favoured by a larger percentage of people than Casado. In terms of the general expectation of victory, 20.9 percent believed that the PP would win the upcoming election, while almost double that percentage, 40.8 percent, believed that the PSOE would carry the day. In terms of the expected percentage of the vote, the CIS predicted that the PSOE would win 30.2 percent, thus being clearly in the lead over the PP's predicted 17.3, Cs' 13.6, Podemos' thirteen and Vox's 11.9 percent. In general, it was clear that the right-wing parties were unlikely to achieve a joint absolute or even a functional minority government (because no nationalist party was likely to directly support a Vox supported PP-Cs government). Moreover, the PSOE's advantage over the PP is also clearly reflected in fig. 29 on the preceding page, which shows that the PSOE led consistently and by a large margin in other electoral surveys as well, indicating that the party could be certain of victory.

As can be seen in table 9 on the next page, the assumption that a party that is certain of victory is less specific than parties that are not seems confirmed when considering specificity scores across time. In 2019, the PSOE was vaguer than in 2015, when the PP's victory seemed certain, and actually registers its lowest specificity score of all the elections that have been analysed. Similarly, the PP actually increased in specificity when compared to 2015. As was the case before, Cs and Podemos are more specific than both the PP and PSOE, with a score of 6.3 and 6.31 points respectively, while Vox scores, as was mentioned before, 6.6 points. For 2019 specifically, the hypothesis that the party which is sure of victory is vaguer than other parties, shown by the cross-hair symbols, is fulfilled, with the PSOE's 5.38 point specificity score being less than that of the other major contender for government, namely the PP, with a 5.87 point score.⁵²

⁵² For a summary of all the results of the election year based hypothesis tests conducted thus far, see the following chapter.

Table 9: Certainty and party specificity values compared (2019)

Parties	Variables	Years			
		2008	2011	2015	2019
PP	Certainty	0	1	1	0
	Specificity	5.85	5.78	5.42	5.87
PSOE	Certainty	1	0	0	1
	Specificity	5.59	5.46	6.01	5.38
Cs	Certainty	NA	NA	0	0
	Specificity	NA	NA	6.16	6.3
Podemos	Certainty	NA	NA	0	0
	Specificity	NA	NA	6.2	6.31
Vox	Certainty	NA	NA	NA	0
	Specificity	NA	NA	NA	6.6

11 Reflection and statistical model test of hypotheses

The previous chapters have analysed the relationship between specificity and three independent variables, which were assumed to have an influence on the degree to which a party commits itself to changing the SQ in the future, in three particular policy fields. Various motives have led to the selection of these policy fields for further study. Concerning the labour market and center-periphery policy fields, it was argued that these could to some extent be viewed as representative of the economic LR and value based AL dimensions respectively and may thus reflect parties' behaviour in policy fields which are similarly related to these dimensions. As was shown above, however, the labour market policy field included a relatively large number of issue positions which are more or less directly related to equality, thus also being linked to some extent to the LA political dimension and possibly diluting its representativeness as an LR economic policy field. Similarly, one may question the representativeness of the center-periphery policy field for the AL dimension, albeit for different reasons. It is likely that left Spanish parties are more specific in other AL related policy fields than in the center-periphery one, given its highly sensitive nature. Right-wing Spanish parties do not have this problem in the center-periphery policy field, since they generally advocate a strong central state, but especially the more far right parties may shy away from making specific proposals which "disadvantage" particular societal groups in other AL type policy fields, which would make them an easy target for political critique and potentially even the judiciary. Lastly, the SMSE policy field was assumed to be less controversial than the other two policy fields and to thus be able to serve as an example of the kinds of policy fields which are perhaps less conflictual in nature. Based on the (rough) comparisons of the SMSE issue position distributions to other policy fields, this assumption may need to be revised. Not only does the SMSE policy field seem to have a life of its own, in the sense of showing drastic changes across time and between parties, thus suggesting that it is not treated as mere issue position stuffing, but it is also quite often rather similar to the politically much more controversial labour market policy field. As such, it is possible that the SMSE policy field is more conflictual than expected, or that there is no relationship between a given policy field's specificity and the degree to which it is politically controversial.

The three aforementioned hypotheses were tested for each of the four election years for which specificity was analysed. As was argued before, it would be

Table 10: Hypotheses confirmation (C) and rejection (R) summary

Hypothesis	Year				Final result
	2008	2011	2015	2019	
Deviation (pos.)	C	C	R	C	C
Threat (pos.)	C	R	R	R	R
Certainty (neg.)	C	R	C	C	C

unrealistic to expect that a given hypothesis is always confirmed, given that there may be many additional factors influencing a party's specificity at a given point in time. For that reason, it was stated in section 5.4 that in order for the various hypotheses to be accepted, these must be confirmed in three-quarters of the observations of a given year in at least three-quarters of the years which were analysed. Table 10, which provides a summary of the confirmed (C) and rejected (R) hypotheses, shows that the hypothesis of a negative relationship between a party's certainty that it will win the upcoming election and its specificity was confirmed in all years except 2011. The hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between deviation from the ideological center and specificity was also confirmed in three out of four cases, with 2015 being the exception.¹ The hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between a party's threat level and its specificity was only confirmed for 2008 and was rejected for all other years, the threat hypothesis thus having to be rejected overall. That a party's threat level, determined by its ideological proximity to other parties and its own electoral expectations relative to those of its rivals, seems to have no impact on a party's specificity may be viewed as surprising. The reason for this unexpected result may simply be that a party's leadership determines the degree of commitment to making changes to the SQ primarily in terms of the other two variables for which the hypotheses were confirmed, namely in terms of certainty as well as its ideological position. Since ideological party positions also factor into the determination of threat, that deviation from the center seems to matter but threat does not implies that it is more important to a party whether it is being viewed as being more left or right than whether it can be easily distinguished from its potential rivals.

¹ That the relationship between these two variables actually seems to be negative when taking the party control variable and changes across time into consideration is a finding that will be dealt with below. Here, only the year based and mostly qualitatively analysed case study hypotheses are discussed.

A separate discussion of hypotheses, as was conducted in the preceding chapters, is useful to give insights into the plausibility of the evolution of the various independent variables and can reveal trends and patterns in the data, which were discussed at length above. The problem of “testing” the three hypotheses separately is that one can expect each of their respective independent variables to exert an influence on a given observation’s specificity at the same moment in time. In order to be able to attribute the total variance observed in the data to the different independent variables, it is thus necessary to carry out a somewhat more sophisticated, albeit simple statistical analysis.² In order to avoid wrongfully accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis, it is desirable that the sample on which statistical inference is based is of a certain size. In order to boost the number of observations and be able to include the policy fields as control variables, the unit of observation on which the subsequent multivariate models are based is a given party’s specificity at the policy field level, resulting in an overall sample size of 39.³ Given the small sample size and that the degrees of freedom decline by one for every additional independent and dummy variable in the model, a number of adjustments to the multivariate linear regression model were made subsequently to reduce the number of variables. In order to provide a clearer overview of this process, the discussion below commences with the full model, from which non-significant variables were dropped subsequently. The most important results of the various statistical models are recorded in table 11 on page 385 below. The full model information can be viewed in appendix G on page 453.

The full statistical model included the deviation from the ideological center, threat and certainty of victory variables as well as two control variables, policy field and party. In the full model, the coefficient of the deviation from the center variable is $-.51$, thus contradicting the hypothesized positive relationship between the two variables. As a party deviates by one additional unit from the ideological center, specificity thus in fact decreases by $-.51$. Substantively, this decline in specificity is large and the variable is nearly significant (at $p=.085$).⁴

² See section 5.3.3 on page 145 for a brief discussion on the issue of treating ordinal as metric data.

³ These observations are the sum of multiplying each party’s number of electoral participations by the three analysed policy fields and summing the products. The PP and PSOE participated in four elections each (totalling 24 observations), Cs and Podemos participated in two elections each (totalling twelve observations) and Vox participated in one election (totalling three observations).

⁴ It should be noted that the three hypotheses to be tested were directional, whereas the t-tests of the variables in the data output are two-sided. As a consequence, the p values shown in the p values (two-sided) column of the table should be divided by two to obtain the

The threat coefficient is slightly positive, so that for every one unit increase in threat, specificity increases by .058. Unsurprisingly, based on the preceding discussion, the p-value is very large (.75) and the zero hypothesis that no relationship exists between threat and specificity is thus accepted. Certainty has a (substantively) small to medium sized effect on specificity, specificity decreasing – as hypothesised – by -.20 ($p = .182$) as a party becomes certain that it will win the upcoming election.

Concerning the control variables, while there is no statistically significant difference between the SMSE policy field and the labour market concerning specificity, there is a statistically significant difference ($p=.004$) between the former and the center-periphery policy field. Based on the policy field issue distribution discussions in the preceding chapters, this should not come as a surprise. The same can be said for the significant differences between the different political parties when compared to the PSOE.⁵ Unsurprisingly, the difference in specificity is smallest between the PSOE and PP, increasing by .76 ($p=.04$). This difference increases to 1.29 when the PSOE is compared to Podemos, to 2.09 concerning Cs and to 2.23 regarding Vox. The full model thus reflects the conclusions drawn from the more qualitative election year based analysis concerning policy field and party differences quite well. Overall, the full statistical model explains 66.41 percent of the total variance in specificity (adjusted R-squared), a reasonable amount, and is highly significant (at the $p=0.001$ level).

Given that the party threat coefficient in the full model was almost zero and that it was the least significant of all variables, the latter was dropped in model two, leading to slight improvements reflected especially in the near significant p-values of the deviation from the center (.0825) and certainty variables (.054).⁶ Adjusted R-squared also increased slightly to .67 and the p-value, already below the .001 level, improved further. Nonetheless, the model still included eight independent variables, since the two control variables party and policy field produce $n-1$ dummy variables each (being four and two respectively). As a rule of thumb, the ratio of estimators to the number of observations should be roughly one to ten, however. Moreover, the second

p-values for the actual hypothesis tests. If the sign of the coefficient confirms the hypothesis, the p-value is equivalent to that number. If not, the p-value must be subtracted from one. Unless otherwise stated, the p-values discussed in this chapter and shown in table 11 on the facing page and appendix G on page 453 resulted from two-sided significance tests.

⁵ Since the PSOE was vaguest on average, it was chosen as the baseline category against which the other parties were compared.

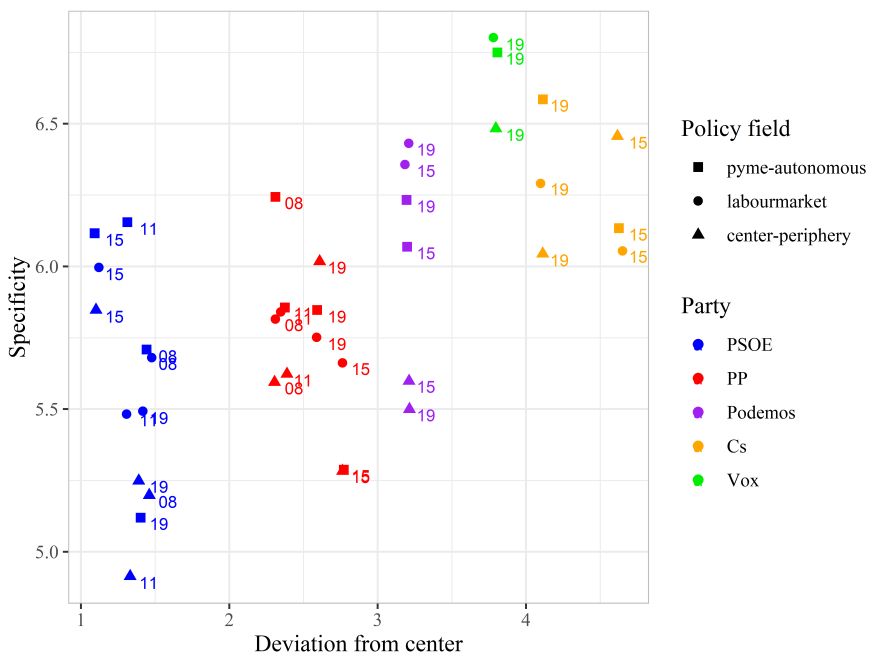
⁶ See footnote 4.

Table 11: Statistical models overview

<i>Variables</i>	Full model			Second model			Third model			Fourth model		
	Coeff.	P values		Coeff.	P values		Coeff.	P values		Coeff.	P values	
threat	0.06	0.754		NA	NA		NA	NA		NA	NA	
devFromCenter	-0.51	0.085		-0.50	0.083		-0.57	0.034*		-0.57	0.036*	
certainty	-0.20	0.182		-0.23	0.054		-0.16	0.087		-0.16	0.09	
Control variables												
labourMarket	-0.03	0.743		-0.03	0.739		NA	NA		-0.03	0.728	
center-periphery	-0.33	0.004**		-0.33	0.003**		-0.31	p<.001***		-0.33	0.002**	
PP	0.76	0.041*		0.75	0.039*		NA	NA		NA	NA	
Podemos	1.29	0.032*		1.27	0.031*		NA	NA		NA	NA	
Cs	2.09	0.03*		2.09	0.025*		NA	NA		NA	NA	
Vox	2.23	0.006**		2.22	0.005**		NA	NA		NA	NA	
Adj. R ²	0.6641			0.6742			0.3745			0.3584		
Model sig.	p<.001***			p<.001***			p<.001***			p<.001***		

model was accompanied by high multicollinearity between the party control variable and deviation from the center, probably since parties tend to move within particular ranges on the ideological scale. In order to drop the party control variable, thereby at least partially addressing the former and solving the latter problem, the data was split into subsets for each party and the averages for specificity, certainty and deviation from the center calculated for each. The values of the respective party averages were then subtracted from the values from which they were calculated, thus centring the distribution of each variable for each party on zero.⁷ The result of this transformation, which removes party based differences, can be seen in fig. 30 for the specificity and deviation from the center variables.⁸

The above adjustment thus permitted both dropping the four dummy variables associated with the party control variable and to deal with multicollinearity.

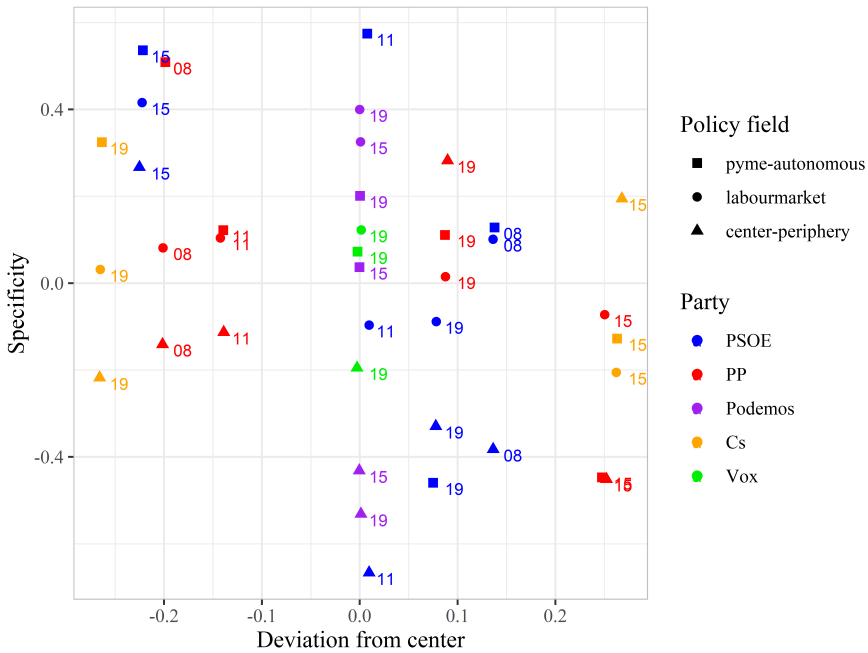


(a) Plot prior to adjustment for party differences

Figure 30: Deviation from center and specificity by policy field and party across time

⁷ This transformation does not impact on the distribution of the values (i.e. the differences between them) of each subset of the data because all values of each party are subtracted from their own mean value.

⁸ Since certainty is a dichotomous variable, no adjustment was made to it.



(b) Plot post adjustment for party differences

Figure 30: Deviation from center and specificity by policy field and party across time, cont.

Moreover, given that the difference between the SMSE and the labour market policy fields was small (-0.034) and non-significant ($p = .743$), whereas there was a clear and significant difference between the SMSE and the center-periphery policy field (-0.33 , $p = .004$) in the full model, the policy field control variable was recoded, merging the labour market and SMSE policy fields into one, in order to control for the difference between these two policy fields (together) and the center-periphery policy field. This recoding thus permitted the dropping of another dummy variable. Nonetheless, the resultant third statistical model, which included only three independent variables for a sample of 39 observations, suffered from the problem of heteroscedacity, as is reflected in the p-value of the Breusch-Pagan test ($p = .049$). This problem disappeared, however, when the merger of the labour market and SMSE control variables was undone and each was once again included separately. Given that this fourth model also fulfilled all other model expectations, model four

was the best model for the sample and data at hand and will now be discussed in more detail.⁹

Compared especially to the second model, the fourth model is noteworthy for its substantial drop in adjusted R-squared, from a high .674 to a relatively low .358. In other words, the fourth model is only capable of accounting for 35.8 percent of the variance observed. The only difference between the two models is the exclusion of the party dummy variables and the centring of the respective variables on their party based averages. As a consequence, there are two possible explanations for the drop in the adjusted R-squared. Firstly, a decrease in the adjusted R-squared may be interpreted as a loss of the model's explanatory power due to the centring of the respective variables on zero in order to remove some but not all party based differences, which are subsequently no longer taken into account. In other words, parties may behave differently above and beyond only moving within particular ideological ranges and removing the party control variable eliminates the possibility of picking up on these differences. Nonetheless, it was necessary to remove the party control variable (and its four associated dummy variables) in order to improve the variable to observation ratio and to deal with multicollinearity. Secondly, the fall in the adjusted R-squared may be attributed to an improvement of the model, which has a much better ratio of variables to observations (four to 38 as opposed to eight to 38) and fulfils all major statistical expectations.¹⁰ Either

⁹ The preceding and subsequent discussion makes mention of p-values time and again. At a conceptual level, it should be noted that there are two ways to interpret p-values. The perhaps most intuitive and common understanding is that a significant coefficient permits researchers to assume that the relationship between the two variables found in the sample reflects the relationship between these two variables in the population. To be more precise, a significant coefficient permits one to reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between two variables in the population. Given that the data analysis was restricted to one country within a specific time interval and to only particular policy fields, it would obviously be erroneous to suppose that significant coefficients permit inferring from the sample to the general population of electoral programs in the world or even in Spain. Another way to interpret significance values, however, is to view them as an assessment of the quality of the statistical analysis, insofar as even if no general population exists, significance values reveal the extent to which the size of the calculated coefficient can be considered meaningful in relation to the variance in the sample data and the sample size. It is in the latter sense that significance is to be interpreted below.

¹⁰ Although the data was not ideal, the Shapiro-Wilk, Durbin-Watson and Breusch-Pagan tests were non-significant, the VIF and ACF values were reasonably small. There were no outliers, but Cs' 2015 center-periphery deviation had high leverage and the PSOE's center-periphery deviation for 2011 had high leverage and cook's distance values. Given the small sample size, it was decided not to exclude these values. For some of the graphical representations of these assumption tests and diagnostics, see appendix G on page 453.

way, since the latter model clearly fulfils the given statistical requirements, it will be discussed in greater detail below.

The fourth model shows that, as a party deviates by one unit from the political center, its specificity declines by $-.57$, which is a substantively large and statistically significant decrease ($p=0.036$). Had the hypothesis supposed a negative relationship between deviation and specificity, its corresponding null hypothesis would have been rejected, which is an in and of itself positive finding. Since the expected relationship was positive, however, the null hypothesis must be accepted.¹¹ In other words, the data provides no evidence for a positive relationship between deviation from the center and specificity, but it does provide evidence for a positive one. Moreover, when a party becomes certain that it will win the upcoming election, its specificity decreases by $-.16$, which is a small but substantively nonetheless clear effect, considering that average party specificity undergoes relatively small changes between elections. When the two-sided t-test's p-value is adjusted to account for the directional nature of the hypothesis, its results are statistically significant ($p=.046$).¹² The coefficients for the labour market dummy variable is very small (-0.03) and non-significant, meaning that there is little to no difference between the labour market and the SMSE policy field. This result suggests that it was wrong to either consider the SMSE policy field a less "ideologically charged" and thus a more uncontroversial policy field, or that the extent of political controversy has no impact on specificity. There is, however, a relatively large and statistically significant difference ($p = 0.001$, one-sided) between the SMSE and the center-periphery policy fields. When a given political party addresses the center-periphery as opposed to the SMSE policy field, specificity declines by a negative -0.33 points. As was mentioned previously, the highly significant ($p<0.001$) model explains 35.8 percent of the variance, which, considering the small sample size and the inclusion of only two rather simple explanatory variables, deviation from the center and certainty, may still be considered satisfactory. A larger sample and the inclusion of further explanatory variables would probably be able to significantly improve the model's explanatory power.

In conclusion, provided that one is willing to accept treating ordinal specificity data as metric and provided that one is willing to be lenient with the data analysis process chosen above, driven by the need to deal with small sample

¹¹ See footnote 4 on page 384.

¹² See footnote 11.

size and violated model assumptions,¹³ one may conclude that hypothesis one, which postulated a positive relationship between deviation and specificity, ought to be discarded, although a substantively large negative and statistically significant relationship does exist; that the second hypothesis concerning a positive relationship between threat and specificity ought to be discarded, because the former has only a minor and non-significant impact on the latter; lastly, that hypothesis three about the positive relationship between certainty and specificity is supported by the statistical analysis, although its effect is relatively small.

¹³ It should be noted that the author has conducted this analysis to the best of his knowledge, but that he is not a statistician and that this analysis should be viewed as tentative, preliminary and limited.

12 Conclusion

This dissertation has attempted to develop a new approach to analysing party competition, based on the extent to which parties commit themselves to changing the SQ by means of more or less specific issue positions. The specificity space model was inspired by the seminal work of Downs (1957), which motivated a vast amount of political science research and gave key impulses to the development of a priori and inductive spatial models as well as issue ownership and mandate theory research. The different spatial models that were developed subsequently had to solve the problems of how to translate policies into degrees of “leftness” and “rightness” and how to deal with a supposed scarcity of more specific policy proposals. The CMP’s saliency approach tried to resolve these issues through a recourse to a theoretical distinction between valence and issue positions, which had been made with a great deal of impact by Stokes (1963). According to the latter, valence issues “merely involve the linking of the parties with some condition that is positively or negatively valued by the electorate”, while position issues were defined as “government actions [selected] from a set of alternatives” (Stokes 1963, p. 373). Additionally, the distinction made by Stokes (1963) considered that valence issues are uni-positional, in the sense that parties generally agree on what is positively or negatively valued, while the selection from a set of alternatives implies various possible policy stances, as was discussed in chapter 2. Based on Stokes (1963), valence issues were subsequently often assumed to be both vague, in the sense of a party either taking an affirming or opposing stand, and consensual, while position issues were assumed to be both conflictual and more specific. As was argued above, however, it is in fact also possible for a party to adopt vague but conflicting or specific but consensual stands on an issue. In order to bridge the gap between Downs (1957), who focused almost exclusively on specific policies, and the CMP, which abandoned all concerns with the content of electoral programs in favour of quasi-sentence counting, this thesis centred its attention on the specificity dimension of issue positions. Creating a method to determine the specificity of electoral program statements would permit one to both develop a filter to extract information deemed specific from electoral programs as well as to analyse how parties employ specificity in their electoral pursuits. Focusing only on specificity also meant ignoring the concept of the ideological “leftness” and “rightness” of electoral program statements, an estimate ultimately deemed either impractical when made at the ordinal level, or inevitably subjective and contingent on time and place when made at the metric level. Discarding

the concern with degrees of “leftness” and “rightness” also meant that the conflictual or consensual nature of issue positions would not be analysed.¹

Although the specificity space model is based on a limited set of premises and assumptions, it has no ambition to be considered a theory, which it is clearly not. Additionally, it was not claimed that specificity should or could serve as an indicator for the ideological position of parties, nor should the hypotheses which were formulated to investigate the relationship between specificity and other variables be understood to form part of the specificity model. The model merely offers a new lens through which party competition could be viewed, namely that of specificity, and the thesis provided a preliminary analysis of whether and how some potential variables of interest relate to it.

One of the most problematic aspects of the model is no doubt the assumption that this space is metric in nature, or, to be more precise, that the specificity data generated by an application of the method provided was treated as metric. This problem was taken into consideration by, firstly, problematizing it, secondly, by analysing the data not only in terms of (metrically based) average specificity values and a multivariate analysis, but also by discussing ordinal issue position frequency distributions and the actually extracted specific issue positions. As was pointed out above, although methodologically doubtful and statistically problematic, treating ordinal as metric data is common practice. That this is the case is simply a reflection of one of the key challenges of social science research, namely how to translate or relate abstract – but for that reason no less “real” – phenomena into empirically measurable manifestations. Doing so often requires acknowledging but ultimately ignoring at least some methodological concerns. Faced with the choice of taking risks and potentially opening new avenues or following the rule book and thus foreclosing some potentially innovative approaches, each researcher must decide – always in relation to the particular question pursued and the method at hand – which path ought to be followed. That social science is not natural science can hardly serve as a justification for questionable methodological decisions, but it should be kept in mind when these are passed judgement on.

It is somewhat ironic that the greatest (somewhat indirect) contribution to the development of the method of electoral program analysis provided here comes from Pomper and Lederman (1980),² given that they did not aim and

¹ This aspect was addressed indirectly, however, by discussing the specific issue positions mentioned by parties in their electoral programs.

² As was mentioned previously, the author only discovered Pomper and Lederman (1980) once the method was already fully developed, but that does not mean that their work should

in fact pre-emptively refute the claim that they were attempting to provide some kind of spatial model. Nonetheless, Pomper and Lederman (1980) are no doubt the authors which have studied electoral program statements and their content the most closely. Although much of what they say is “intuitively” understandable, the diffuse and abstract nature of the coding instructions they provide to distinguish between more and less specific issue positions makes their application rather too challenging. The real contribution of this thesis is not the specificity model itself, but the coder manual,³ which goes beyond the level of abstraction in Pomper and Lederman (1980) and identifies the different kinds of measures and objectives or informational items a party can offer on what it wishes to do in the future. Based on various arguments, these informational items were then sorted into the different issue position type categories based on their specificity, or the extent to which a party commits itself to changing the SQ. Perhaps equally important regarding the method of electoral program analysis was the development of an approach to deconstruct electoral program statements into its different elements and to reconstitute issue positions from these through the application of the X-by-Y rule. Thus, an issue position was generally defined as consisting maximally of one verb, mean, PC and target element each as well as any number of ancillary elements. It is the hope of the author that other researchers will resort to the coder manual as an analytical toolkit, make it their own and apply it in their own research endeavours.

The electoral program analysis method was developed, as mentioned previously, based on subjective reasons, although this subjectivity declined somewhat as particular parts of the method, derived inductively from electoral programs, began to stabilize. The method may certainly be criticized for its great complexity. Nonetheless, although perhaps difficult to absorb at a single stroke, its rules are in fact quite simple and can be applied rather quickly to electoral program text. The clearest proof that the method is manageable in practice is its rather comprehensive summary into the three coder manual summary sheets found in the appendix.⁴ The most nuanced part of the method in fact concerns the detailed exposition of the different kinds of VIP and IP issue positions, found in the coder manual in tabular form.⁵ Moreover,

not be treated as if it had been read beforehand, since walking in someone else's footsteps needs to be acknowledged, whether one was aware of doing so or not.

³ The coder manual can be found in appendix A on page 397.

⁴ See appendix A on page 397.

⁵ These tables were not added to the summary sheets since they are already presented in a condensed manner. The tables can be found in table 13 on page 415 and table 14 on page 418.

as was pointed out several times before, the deconstruction of electoral program statements into its elements and the reconstitution of issue positions from these is something that happens, so to speak, in the mind of the coder. What is ultimately coded are issue positions and the creation of the list rule further facilitates the speediness of the coding process.

In the second part of the dissertation, three hypotheses were investigated in a detailed case study of Spanish party competition, viewed through the specificity lens, for the 2008, 2011, 2015 and April 2019 elections. Given that the vast majority of time was dedicated to developing the method for analysing electoral programs, the case study was limited to only these elections, the major national parties as well as three policy fields, the labour market, center-periphery and SMSE policy fields. The specificity data generated by this electoral program analysis and the hypotheses through which it was analysed were interpreted by situating them within the context of the political system and developments which took place during that time period in Spain. The hypotheses which were tested were that, firstly, the further a party deviates from the political center, the more specific it becomes; secondly, that the more threatened a party becomes by other parties, the more specific it will be; thirdly, that a party which is certain of victory will be vaguer than other parties. As was discussed at length in the preceding chapters, both the more qualitative and the more quantitative analyses came to the same conclusions: the first hypothesis, postulating a positive relationship between deviation from the center and specificity, was not supported, since the relationship is actually negative (and, if that hypothesis had been tested for, statistically significant); no evidence whatsoever was found to support the second hypothesis concerning party threat; the hypothesis that parties which are certain of victory are less specific than other parties was supported by the data. Perhaps the most interesting of these results is the relationship between deviation from the political center and specificity, given that the former is closely related to political ideology. Although the overall relationship between deviation from the center and specificity is positive, it actually became negative when controlling for different parties, given that they tended to move only within certain intervals along the LR axis. In other words, parties actually tend to become more specific as they draw closer to the ideological center.

Perhaps more important than whether the aforementioned hypotheses were confirmed or not, the case study demonstrated that the generated specificity data renders itself to qualitative interpretation, or, in other words, possesses face validity. In this regard, a great many insights may be pointed out. In general, left-wing parties and Cs offer many more specific issue positions in

the labour market than the PP, which seems to prefer to hide its neoliberal agenda, unlikely to be looked upon favourably in a country where many suffer from precarious employment and low income. Left-wing Spanish parties avoid specificity in the center-periphery policy field, perhaps because their more benign stance on nationalist vindications makes them an easy target for right-wing attacks, given a widespread support for Spanish unity among the population as a whole. Moreover, Cs and Vox, born in no small part out of the center-periphery conflict, are by far the most specific in that policy field. Newcomer parties were clearly much more specific than Spain's "traditional" parties and provided the least number of SQ type issue positions. Concerning more specific results, for example, the PSOE was at its vaguest in 2019, sure of victory and in anticipation of some form of political pact or coalition with Podemos,⁶ and at its most specific in 2015, when Podemos aimed for nothing less but the – only narrowly missed – *sorpasso* of the socialists. The PP was least specific in 2015, having led by a very clear margin in the electoral surveys for months, and most specific in 2019, faced with the growth of Cs and the irruption of Vox. Moreover, specific issue positions are clearly ideological in content, as their discussion has shown, an excellent example being the rightward course of Cs and the PP between 2015 and 2019, which was also clearly reflected in the center-periphery and, in the former's case, also the labour market issue positions.

Despite the pleasing nature of these findings, one should be wary of these results not only because specificity was treated as a metric variable, but also due to the small number of observations on which they are based. It is entirely possible that these results are coincidental, that an extension of the period of investigation into the past and present would yield completely different results, that these relationships do not hold for other countries and that confounding variables which have not been taken into consideration distort the analysis. Nonetheless, an effort was made to deal with the small-N nature of the statistical analysis and, given the very real possibility of not generating any meaningfully interpretable results at all, these findings, contingent as they may be, came as a positive surprise.

There are a great many limitations to this dissertation, many of which ought to be addressed in future research. Among the most important is to test the reliability of the method provided by training coders and testing their results; to adjust the method if reliability is unsatisfactory; to generate more specificity data, for more countries, elections, policy fields and parties; to

⁶ Podemos remained rather unresponsiveness to the possibility of a coalition with the PSOE in terms of specificity, possibly reflecting a characteristic of far left and right-wing parties.

investigate the relationship between specificity and a host of other variables of potential interest; last but not least, to employ more sophisticated and perhaps adequate statistical analyses of the data. This is by no means a trivial list; quite the opposite is the case. Had the problem to be solved been simpler and the development of the method not taken such a vast amount of time, some of these lacunas would certainly have been addressed. Nonetheless, the preceding chapters have attempted to make new inroads into uncharted territory and should, at the very least, be viewed as having provided a potential stepping stone for other research endeavours. Given that the passage of time renders most innovations in the social sciences mere relics of the past, that is perhaps all any researcher can ultimately aspire to achieve.

Appendix

A **Coder manual**

This coder manual provides the instructions to extract political parties' issue positions from electoral program text. Issue positions propose a future mean with which the party wishes to make changes to the status quo (SQ). The SQ is the sum of laws (including the constitution), rules and policies in force at a given point in time. Policies include general rule-making by the executive as well as instructions given by the government to its agents, such as ministries. There are different types of issue positions, which differ on the extent to which they are either more or less specific about the means a party wishes to adopt in the future. Issue positions are extracted from electoral program text by breaking the latter down sentence by sentence into its different elements and then applying the X-by-Y rule to them in order to determine the number and type of resultant issue positions. The coder manual is structured as follows: The first section briefly elaborates on some fundamental coding principles. The following section deals with text structures, focusing on how the text contained within one document can be broken down in order to facilitate further analysis of its content, and provides the necessary terminology for the subsequent discussion of the method. The text units dealt with in this section are headings, paragraphs, natural sentences and statements as well as – in a preliminary manner – issue positions and elements. The next section deals in great detail with the key elements of which issue positions consist. The first subsection deals with the three key elements which determine how many issue positions a given text contains, namely Positive Consequences (PCs), targets and verb elements. The second subsection focuses on that element which determines the issue position type and thus its specificity, namely the mean. Having explained what issue positions and their most important elements are, the subsequent section presents the rules which are required to extract these issue positions from relevant text. Thereafter, a fundamental distinction is made between relevant text, which contains issue positions, and irrelevant text, which does not. The last two sections elaborate on the so-called ancillary elements, which impact neither on the number nor the type of issue positions found in electoral program text, and provide a set of adjudication rules which aim to resolve potentially contradictory coding outcomes. Given the dense amount of information provided on these pages, bullet points will often provide summaries of the most important concepts and rules at the end of the different sections. Furthermore, much of the information provided is

interrelated, so that it is inevitable that at times the reader will be confronted with concepts that are explained at a later stage.¹ In such cases, references to the respective sections or tables are provided.

A.1 General coding principles

This section will briefly describe some key coding principles to be applied during the coding process.

A.1.1 Personal knowledge and political dispositions

The coder should try not to let him- or herself be influenced by knowledge about the political party concerned, or his or her personal political disposition when coding.

A.1.2 Explicitness

The application of all coding rules must be triggered by the given text explicitly. In other words, the coder should not follow his or her “gut feeling” or “intuition” about what can be considered more or less specific when coding, but must make each judgement based on particular rules. Some rules leave more room for interpretation than others, but even such interpretation must occur within the general rule framework laid out here.

A.1.3 Honest parties

It should be assumed that parties are honest in the sense that they do not explicitly state lies. They may, however, wish to present information in a way that makes their issue positions seem more specific than they really are.

A.1.4 Multiple rule application

Once the X-by-Y rule has been applied (see appendix A.4.1 on page 431 below), each resultant mean can only constitute a single type of issue position. Therefore, when several different coding rules could be applied to a mean, the resultant mean type and therefore its issue position type should be the same. If this is not the case, the coder must consult the adjudication rules provided in appendix A.7.

¹ This inconvenience is outweighed by the benefit of dealing with each topic in its entirety in turn.

A.2 Text structure and units of analysis

Electoral program text consists of different textual units. These will now be defined and discussed in turn, commencing with a discussion of headings, after which the other textual units will be discussed in turn, from the biggest to the smallest one.

A.2.1 Headings

- Headings consist of one or a few lines of text in a different format, such as font size, to most of the text in an electoral program and are usually set apart from the rest of the text by more space, above or below it, than that which is found between two lines of text within a paragraph
- Headings are, with image or graphics captions and headers and footers, the only text elements not to be coded in electoral programs
- Truncated sentences² are coded as normal sentences, not as headings
- *Exceptions/ reasons for caution*
 - When almost every paragraph has its own heading, these headings are considered truncated sentences (see appendix A.4.4 on page 437)

A.2.2 Paragraphs

- Paragraphs are blocks of texts separated from one another by blank lines, first line paragraph indents, complete indentation vis-à-vis other blocks of text in the document³ or trailing off sentences. Trailing off sentences are sentences which simply end somewhere on a line and a new line commences directly below it
- Major bullet points (as opposed to sub-bullet points), which are recognizable by bullet point symbols or numbering, are also considered paragraphs
- Sub-bullet points follow on a bullet point and are presented in such a way as to indicate that they elaborate on the preceding major bullet point

² Truncated sentences are incomplete sentences or phrases that occur at the beginning of paragraphs and provide a brief summary statement of what the rest of the paragraph is about. See appendix A.4.4 on page 437.

³ In the latter case, such paragraphs can be thought of as major bullet points without the corresponding bullet point symbol.

(indicated, for example, by further line indents, a change in the bullet point symbol or numbering, a change in font size etc.). The sub-bullet points following a major bullet are treated, together with the major bullet point, as a single paragraph. The same applies to sub-sub-bullet points etc.

- Paragraphs within bullet points do not count as paragraphs
- The amount of text that a paragraph or bullet point is made up of does not matter (i.e. it is possible to have a single short sentence constitute a paragraph)

A.2.3 Sentences

- Sentences are “natural sentences”, meaning that they start after and end with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark
- They need not be grammatically complete to be considered a sentence
- If a sentence is not terminated by any punctuation mark, it is assumed to be terminated by a full stop
- Colons and semi-colons do not split text within a paragraph into separate sentences
- A single sentence may in turn consist of several issue positions. It is quite common for a single sentence to consist of three or more issue positions
- With very few exceptions⁴, issue positions are coded on a sentence by sentence basis. In other words, each sentence is deconstructed into its elements and these are then reassembled into the number and type of issue positions contained within it

A.2.4 Statements

- A statement may either be equivalent to a given sentence, or form a part thereof
- Statements may consist of any number of elements or issue positions
- A statement has no other defining criteria

⁴ These exceptions are the “Creation of a new/ changes to existing website”, the “Competencies/ functions” and the “Definitions to be made into law/ orient policy/ serve as basis for agreement” kind of means. See table 14 on page 418.

Table 12: Summary of important text unit terminology

Name	Characteristic
Paragraph	Equivalent to the common sense definition of the term A major bullet point is also a paragraph
Sentence	Natural sentence, ended by full stop, exclamation or question mark
Statement	Equivalent to or part of a sentence
Issue position	A party's proposal of a future mean to change the SQ Consists of different elements
Elements	Constitute issue positions Key elements: determine type and number of issue positions Ancillary elements: do not determine type and number of issue positions

A.2.5 Issue positions, elements and the verb element

As was mentioned above, coders proceed by coding sentence by sentence to identify a party's issue positions. Issue positions are defined as the future means a party wishes to pursue or implement in order to make changes to the SQ. The following rules apply in general to the coding of means:

- A party does not need to be the grammatical subject of a sentence in order to be able to consider that it is the party which is proposing a future mean
 - A party may use its own name, or words such as “we”, “the party”, “our country” or the third person (among others) to express its desire to pursue or implement future means
 - Even if a statement does not mention the party at all, it may be considered an issue position proposed by the party. For example, “The labour unions must realize that the minimum salary should not be increased” should be read as “The party will make the labour unions realize that the minimum salary should not be increased”
- Means concern the future

- Given that what is being analysed are electoral programs, what is of interest are those means that the party wants to realize in the coming legislature
 - By default, it is assumed that all means concern the coming legislature, but at times a party may mention that this is not the case explicitly (such as by mentioning a point in time clearly outside of that of the coming legislature)
 - When the electoral program makes use of the expressions “short term”, “medium term” and “long term” without defining what they mean, it is assumed that the short and medium term or a combination thereof (e.g. short to medium term) refer to the coming legislature
 - The use of the expression long term or its combination with the expressions short or medium term (e.g. medium to long-term) are considered irrelevant text, which is coded as such and from which no issue positions are to be extracted⁵
- Means consist of measures and objectives
 - Measure: a particular action the party wants to carry out (such as to increase taxes) or something the party wishes to implement (such as a reform)
 - Objective: a particular goal the party wants to pursue (such as to reduce unemployment)
 - The difference between the two is whether a party could directly do what it says it wishes to do (provided it was in government and had an absolute majority in parliament), or whether this would require other measures. For example, a party can directly reduce taxes by passing a law, but it cannot directly reduce unemployment by passing a law. Rather than stating the party’s wish to reach some desirable future state, measures thus provide information about the concrete steps the party will be taking to reach it

⁵ See section 4.4 on page 108 on irrelevant text.

A.3 Issue positions and key elements

Issue positions consist of different elements. A single issue position consists maximally of one verb element, one mean, one PC,⁶ one target and one or more ancillary elements. The element called the mean determines the issue position type. The possible types of issue positions, from the vaguest to the most specific, are General Issue Positions (GIP), Vague Issue Positions (VIPs) and Issue Positions (IPs). Another type of issue position is the Status Quo Issue Position (SQIP), which is different from all other types insofar as it aims to sustain the current SQ, instead of wanting to make changes to it. The verb, PC and target elements determine the number of issue positions which result from their relation to a particular mean. For example, “We will reduce long-term unemployment (PC) by improving our active labour market policies (VIP mean) especially for the long-term unemployed persons above 45 years of age (target)” is one issue position. As opposed to the group of elements which determine the number and type of issue positions, called key elements, ancillary elements do not influence issue position type or their number. Several ancillary elements may thus form part of a single issue position. Minimally, a single issue position consists of a verb and a mean element.

A.3.1 Positive consequences (PCs)

Political parties may often wish to emphasize the PC of a given mean. A PC is the desired result of implementing a particular measure or achieving a particular objective. Since means consist of measures and objectives and PCs are something the party wishes to achieve, (almost) identical statements can be considered either PCs or means. This is illustrated by the following two examples: “We will increase the efficiency of our active labour market policies” (mean); “We will hire more public servants (mean) to increase the efficiency of our active labour market policies (PC).” The difference between a PC and an mean is only that the statement in which the former appears indicates that the PC is considered the positive outcome of a particular mean.

- PCs are linked to means by words such as “in order to”, “to”, or “by”
- In order to find out whether a particular part of a statement is a PC or not, ask yourself: “Is the given statement presented as the PC of the party successfully implementing some measure or reaching some objective?”

⁶ See appendix A.4.1 on page 431.

Exceptions/ reasons for caution

- A particular kind of mean,⁷ the “Competencies/ functions” mean, may mistakenly be considered a PC. When an institution is assigned a new function, the carrying out of this function may be misread as a PC of the process of assigning that same function. In the example, “This new secretariat will have the purpose of increasing efficiency”, the creation of the secretariat may erroneously be understood to lead to the PC of an increase in efficiency. See the “Competencies/ functions” mean, table 14 on page 418.

A.3.2 Targets

Targets are those particular groups of people, institutions, agents, actors or systems at whom or which means are directed.

- More formally, targets consist of:
 - Collectives: clearly distinguishable groups of people for or against whom a change to the SQ is being proposed
 - One collective may be defined by several characteristics, such as “unemployed individuals without previous work experience above 25 years of age”
 - Institutions: consist of a body of related rules, formulated by laws and policies, and which carry out particular functions. Do not possess agency (e.g. labour market)
 - Agents: particular governmental institutions or public offices which are bound to follow the instructions of the government (e.g. ministry of labour)
 - Systems: form a significant part or extension of an institution or agent and, in order to be considered as such, must require a substantial amount of additional resources (human or financial) to function

⁷ Please note that a distinction is made in this document between the kind of a mean and the type of a mean. The former refers to the generic nature of the action the party wishes to execute or the aim it wishes to pursue, such as eliminating a policy. Depending on the information provided in relation to such generic actions or aims, the mean becomes of a particular type, which in turn determines issue position type. For example, if a statement promising to eliminate a particular policy makes it clear which policy will be affected, that particular kind of mean is considered of the IP type. If not, it is of the VIP type. The criteria which determine the issue position type are listed below for each kind of mean.

- When a coder encounters the word “system”, it must be made sure that what is called a system can be considered as such in these terms. The correct use of this terminology is relevant when applying the criteria for categorizing issue positions (see table 14 on page 418)
- Actors: particular organizations run by civil society or a public office or an institution which is not officially bound to follow government instructions (such as NGOs, labour unions, judges etc.). An actor must thus be induced to heed the government’s wishes, such as by offering material incentives, greater participation, a change in legislation etc. Actors possess agency
- Access criteria: particular criteria mentioned in conjunction with a mean and which have to be fulfilled in order for a target to be able to benefit from the given measure. Since such access criteria indirectly identify the particular target(s) at whom or which a mean is aimed, access criteria are also considered targets
- When targets are mentioned in the plural, they are considered as a single target (e.g. trade unions), but when they are mentioned individually, they are each considered as separate targets (e.g. “the Communist Trade Union and the Socialist Trade Union”)

Exceptions/ reasons for caution

- When two collectives are mentioned in order to avoid textual discrimination, such as between men and women, these are not considered separate collectives. For example, the phrase “male and female labourers” is not considered to contain two collectives, but one (labourers)⁸
- Also see the exceptions discussed in appendix A.4.4 on page 436, some of which apply to targets

A.3.3 Verb elements

The verb element consists of one or several verbs which form a part of the statement of a party’s mean, appearing at the beginning of that statement. It names the verb(s) describing the action(s) that will be performed as an intricate part of the execution or pursuit of that mean. For example, in the

⁸ This issue arises especially in languages in which articles and noun endings indicate gender, which is not the case in English.

statement “We must reform the labour market”, “must reform” is the verb element.

Not every verb that appears in electoral program text is a verb element, however. Based on the carefully worded definition of a verb element at the beginning of this subsection, in the example “We must prevent those that do not want to work from receiving unemployment benefits”, the verb “to do”, “to want” and “to receive” do not form part of any verb element. The party proposes to prevent something, the verb element being “must prevent”.

Moreover, not every appearance of nearby verbs which appear to form part of a mean constitute a single verb element, since several verb elements may be stated directly after one another before stating the related mean(s). For instance, the statement “We must increase and professionalise retraining opportunities” contains two verb elements, “must increase” and “must professionalise”. That both are separate verb elements becomes evident by trying to make them into one. In this case, “must increase professionalise” does not work because the mean is not to increase professionalism, but to increase as well as to professionalise something. Normally, when several verb elements are related to one mean, they must be linked to one another with a conjunction (in this case “and”) or comma etcetera. Such a group of verb elements is called a verb par group.

Identifying the verb element is easy if, firstly, one keeps in mind that the verb element forms the first part of the statement of a given mean and, secondly, one is aware of the different kinds of means which exist (see appendix A.3.4 on the next page).

In order to help the coder in the coding process, a number of word groups were identified. These word groups contain verbs which are likely to occur in the verb elements of particular types of issue positions. The emphasis must be placed on “likely” for various reasons. Firstly, there may be many words that do not belong to any word group at all. Secondly, the word groups are not exhaustive, meaning that many words that may belong to a given word group are not explicitly included. Therefore, any close synonym of the words found in a given word group can be considered to form a part of that word group as well. What holds these word groups together is the basic message their usage is intended to convey. In any case, word groups may only be indicative of, but never determine, the position type of a statement,⁹ something that is

⁹ One word group, the necessity word group, not only signals, but actually determines whether text is relevant and should be coded further, or irrelevant, in which case it should not be coded further, as will be discussed in more detail in section 4.4 on page 108.

referred to as signalling. Word groups will be provided in different sections throughout this manual for the different types of issue positions.

To summarize:

- Verb elements form the first part of the statement of a mean
- If two such verbs are linked by “and” or commas, they do not form a single verb element, but separate verb elements
- Verb elements may consist of several verbs which may come from different word groups
- Word groups may indicate the given issue position type

A.3.4 Means

This subsection discusses the different types of means, which are the only elements which determine a given issue position’s type. From the lowest to the highest commitment to changing the SQ, the different types of issue positions are Status Quo Issue Positions (SQIPs), General Issue Positions (GIP), Vague Issue Positions (VIPs) and Issue Positions (IPs). Since SQIPs actually aim to sustain the current SQ, while all other issue positions also increase in specificity as they increase in commitment, SQIPs will be presented last. Before commencing, the form of a mean will be discussed briefly.

The form of a mean The form of a mean is the legal form or organisational “format” in which a mean is presented, for example as a particular reform, plan, law, incentive etc. The form of a mean has no influence on the resultant issue position type. “We will fight unemployment” is considered as specific as the statement “We will implement our Plan Against Unemployment”. While the form of a mean does not matter in and of itself, such as the mention of the word “plan” above, the name given to these forms may contain information that impacts on the number of issue positions. For example, the statement “We will implement the Training and Education Plan” shows that the party is concerned with two topics, training and education and should, in accordance with the X-by-Y rule, be broken up into two issue positions. The X-by-Y rule will be discussed in detail below.¹⁰ The point that is being made here is simply that when the form of a mean contains additional information beyond the form itself, the X-by-Y rule must also be applied to it. This is only the case, however, when that information is not stated in a similar or identical fashion subsequently in the same sentence. For example, “Our employment boost

¹⁰ See appendix A.4.1 on page 431.

plan aims to reduce unemployment” should be read simply as “We aim to reduce unemployment”.

In summary, concerning the form of a mean, note the following:

- The form of a mean consists of words like reform, plan or program
- The form of a mean has no impact on the type of issue position
- The form of the mean may impact on the number of issue positions when it contains additional information, in which case the X-by-Y rule is applied to it (see below)

Exceptions/ reasons for caution

- Pacts, agreements etc. are not forms of a mean, but indicate a GIP

GIP means GIP means either call for more cooperation or are so vague as to be completely ambivalent about the future measure a party wants to implement.

GIP statements include the promises:

- To provide “sufficient” or an unknown amount of resources in a context in which it is ambivalent whether this means an increase or a decrease
- To make two things equal to one another, leaving it unclear which is to be made similar to the other (or if both are to be made partially like the other) and/ or in which ways
- To consider two or more alternatives or alternative means, even if voicing a particular preference for one as long as the other is not unambiguously rejected. The two (or more) options which are given count as one GIP (but the X-by-Y rule is applied to the elements of the rest of the statement)
 - If the statement reads “The party will do X and Y or W”, then X and Y is one GIP and X and W another
- To assess, research or study something or a target to then formulate a specific plan or assessment in the future to achieve something
 - Excludes: assessment of individual human beings (but not the study of whole collectives) in order to offer them a specific service/ plan; making existing information accessible or public (see table 14 on page 418)

- To reassess something in the future and/ or make adjustments to it, based on that assessment
- To formulate or make a pact, an agreement etc. with targets
- To increase (or decrease) or call for (the end of) unity, consensus, cooperation, consultations, or negotiations between different targets (including possibly, but not necessarily, the party itself, different government ministries etc.)
 - This includes statements like “Within the context of the social dialogue [negotiations between labour unions, employer organisations and the government concerning the labour market], we will promote X and Y”. The example consists of two GIPs, one concerning X and the other Y
- To consult with or ask targets for their input
- To do something in collaboration with targets
 - Excludes merely proposing something to them (see table 13 on page 415)
- To hold a public debate, or to debate a topic to determine ones position
- To make a statement the substantive content of which is unclear even after having researched its possible meaning (which should occur very rarely)

Exceptions/ reasons for caution

- When an increase in consensus, cooperation etc. between different targets is presented as the PC of a mean, they are not coded as GIPs, but as PCs
 - For example, to make more intensive use of rules, organizations, or institutions which already exist in order to increase cooperation or consensus
 - For example, a mean which is implement in order to
 - improve the representation of some target or targets
 - actively involve a target in something
- The following are not GIPs, with the (most likely) alternatives shown in brackets

- The “mere” proposing of a mean to others, i.e. only informing them of it (VIP)
- When the party proposes to hold a conference (VIP/ IP)
- When a place or institution is declared a place to meet, cooperate, negotiate etc. (VIP)
- When a GIP type mean is assigned or transferred as a permanent function or competency to an actor or agent, in which case it is treated like a function/ competency (VIP/ IP)
- When it is promised to guide or accompany somebody or something in some process (ancillary element)

The cooperation word group

- Message: desire for collaboration and agreement
- Includes: consensus, participation, implicate, cooperation, collaboration, agreement, pact, consultation, coordination
- Excludes: propose, integration, relation, public-private cooperation/ enterprise, loyalty (which implies subordination)

VIP and IP means As mentioned before, means consist of objectives and measures. While the vast majority of objectives are vague, measures appear either as vaguer VIP means or more specific IP means. The two most common types of VIP objectives are those in which the party promises to do something positive, such as to increase efficiency, transparency, sustainability, or equality, or to tackle something problematic, like corruption, poverty, pollution, crime and discrimination. Whether a particular mean is considered specific rather than vague depends on whether it fulfils specific criteria which require that some particular information is provided.

It is likely that the list of VIPs and IPs presented below is not exhaustive. In case that it becomes necessary to categorize a mean that has not been listed in this subsection, but which should most likely fall into the VIP or IP category, one should consider whether the measure is sufficiently specific in order to be implemented more or less as stated in the electoral program, or whether the objective is specific enough to determine whether the given party has followed through on its promise. If that is the case, the mean ought to be considered specific. If not, the mean ought to be considered vague. Concerning measures, the addition of the phrase “more or less” refers to the obvious fact that

institutional and organizational realities are, in the vast majority of cases, too complex and interrelated to permit directly implementing a measure based on a single or a handful of sentences. Therefore, the question is whether a measure is sufficiently specific in order to be implement more or less as stated in the electoral program, provided it is accompanied by a framework of additional measures which are conducive to its direct implementation.

The word group for VIP and IP means is very large, since a great many verbs can be used to state future means. The elaboration on the word group below thus aims to provide only some examples. Insofar as they have not been included, the verbs listed in the “Kind of mean” column of the subsequent tables also belong to this group.

The action word group

- Message: which action the party will perform to implement a mean
- Includes: promote, propose, implement, reform, change, eliminate, create, increase, decrease
- Excludes: words in other word groups

The rest of this subsection will discuss the content of the two subsequent tables. Table 13 on page 415 provides a summary of means which are always considered VIPs if stated on their own, or PCs when presented as the result of another mean. This distinguishes them from other means, which may be either IPs or VIPs and which are presented in the subsequent table 14 on page 418. Concerning especially the second table, please note the following:

- Table columns
 - The first column shows the different kinds of means
 - If a mean fits the description of a particular kind of mean and fulfils the criteria listed in the Criteria column, it is an IP mean. If not, it is considered a VIP mean, unless stated otherwise¹¹
- Concerning the criteria to distinguish different kinds of means, please note the following:
 - When various criteria stated in the Criteria column are connected by the word “and”, both (or, if a list, all) conditions must be fulfilled

¹¹ Some kinds of means that do not fulfil the IP type criteria may then be considered GIPs or SQIPs.

- When they are connected by the word “or”, at least one condition must be fulfilled for the mean to be considered of the IP type
- If the criteria column poses a question, denoted by “Q”, it must be answered in the affirmative or the asked for information be provided in order for the mean to be considered of the IP type
- The criteria column also includes particular terminology, which may at times give instructions about how a particular mean is to be treated
 - Actors, agents, systems: This terminology was already discussed in appendix A.3.2 on page 404 and must be paid attention to when applying the mean type criteria
 - Actors are not bound by government instructions (labour unions, judges etc.)
 - Agents are bound by government instructions (ministry of labour, civil servants)
 - When the term system is used, it should not be accepted at face value. In order for something to be considered a system, it must form a significant part or extension of an institution or agent and, in order to be considered as such, must require a substantial amount of additional resources (human or financial) to function. This term is important when considering whether rules from the IFOS section should be applied to a given statement or not
 - Ancillary element: Information which does not impact on the type or number of issue positions and simply forms part of the given issue position(s) in relation to which it appears
 - (No) number required: When a number is required, the mean should specify what it wants to do numerically (e.g. “We will decrease personal income taxes for the highest income groups by 2 percent”). If no number is required, it is sufficient to talk about increases or decreases
 - Unspecific amount made dependent on specific variable: The specific variable must be stated explicitly and be of an empirical nature (i.e. directly measurable, like household income or GDP as opposed to household well-being or economic improvement) as well as metric or ordinal with at least three categories. The latter criteria aims to distinguish these variables at least to some degree

from the mere mention of targets. For example, when household size is said to determine the amount of social security payments received by the unemployed, household size is considered a specific variable. If an unknown amount of social security payments is targeted at the unemployed above age 45, the latter is a nominal variable (either unemployed and above the age of 45 or not) and the issue position thus considered unspecific

- (Quasi-)numerical: This means that either a number is provided or a numerical standard could be obtained based on the information provided. Thus, for example, “We want to reduce our long-term employment rate to those of the other major European economies” is not quasi-numerical, since it is not known which “major European economies” serve as a standard, whereas “We want to reduce our long-term unemployment rate to that of the three largest Eurozone economies” is considered specific
- Names suffice: It is not necessary that something needs to be identified by anything other than its denomination, but may also be made identifiable by its content or characteristics
- Max. 1 IP/VIP: Normally, each occurrence of a mean always leads to the constitution of one issue position (or more, due to the application of the X-by-Y rule). The Max. 1 IP/VIP rule, however, limits the number of issue positions which can result from the repeated mention of the same kind of mean within one sentence to maximally one VIP or IP. For example, the “Duration/ time limits/ intervals of measure” considers the mention of a “particular time period, minimum, [or] maximum” an IP type mean. The statement “The program will provide funding for one year (mean one) and will, pending performance assessment, be extended on a trimonthly basis (mean two)” contains two such means. Given the maximum IP/ VIP restriction for this kind of mean, both mentions are only equivalent to one IP mean instead of two, however. If the example had contained one or several IP means and one or several VIP means of the same kind, the result would have been one VIP and one IP issue position
- Applied across sentences: Except for three means,¹² coding takes place at the sentence level. Applying a rule across sentences means that it can be applied across a number of consecutive sentences

¹² See footnote 4 on page 400.

or paragraphs and that all the means of the given kind are then coded as one single issue position

- Table sections
 - Given the large number of means listed in table 14 on page 418, the table was subdivided into different sections
 - Note that all measures listed under the table's first section entitled "Resources: new, increase, decrease (no number required)" must always state whether resources are new, or are being increased or decreased in order for a measure to be considered an IP. They also do not require the mention of particular numbers in order to be considered of the IP type
 - The section entitled IFOS is named after the first letters of the words institutions, funds, organizations and systems

Table 13: VIP means

Kind of mean	Comment
Reform/ reorganize an institution/ organization/ law/ rule etc.	
Reduce/ increase size of organization/ institution	May not state how this affects its resources (see table 14 on page 418)
Create/ elaborate/ formulate a new law/ rule/ policy/ incentive/ institution/ organisation/ system/ body of public servants	
Offer/ propose programs or plans	Excludes: offering education or training programs or plans (see table 14 on page 418)
Guarantee law/ right/ service	Guaranteee should always be read as “to promise” or “to propose”
Provide/ develop/ apply new policies/ laws (to complement an already existing policy/ law/ right)	
Increase/ strengthen/ provide policies for a particular right or rights	
Deepen a process, policy etc.	
Apply laws/ policies/ rules that already exists	
Expand/ deepen/ broaden access/ service/ policy	Exclude: expanding measures to new collectives/ areas
Offer help/ support to somebody/ sth., enable sb./ sth. to do sth.	

Continued on next page

Table 13 – continued

Kind of mean	Comment
Promote/ increase/ strengthen/ reinforce/ improve efficiency, efficacy, transparency, compatibility, sustainability, accessibility (incl. universalization), equality, opportunity, freedom, or anything more specific (e.g. type of contract)	
Reduce/ fight/ tackle waste, conflict, corruption, poverty, pollution, crime, discrimination, illegal immigration, or sth. more specific (e.g. type of contract)	
Increase/ decrease participation of target in processes, institutions etc.	
Modernize/ simplify sth.	Excludes: modernization of technology (see table 14 on page 418)
Universalize/ eliminate sth.	Unless numerically specified (i.e. 0 or 100 per cent, see table 14 on page 418)
Flexibilize/ extend/ reduce timetables/ schedules etc.	Excludes: when particular times etc. are mentioned
Implement/ strengthen/ reinforce etc. some general “organizational” principle	Example: federalism, co-responsibility, equality, progressive tax system

Continued on next page

Table 13 – continued

Kind of mean	Comment
Call on actor to assume particular position/ take particular action ¹³	Excludes: when the party calls for cooperation between different actors and/ or targets (see GIPs)

¹³ This kind of mean can only be a VIP because if it were mentioned in relation to a measure, it would become a PC.

Table 14: IP and alternative types of means

Kind of mean	Criteria and instructions
<i>Resources: new, increase, decrease (no number required)</i>	
State spending	Must mention at least policy field concerned
State debt	
Investment, personnel/ public servants, materials, machines	Must mention at least policy field concerned. Includes: modernization of technology. Excludes: modernization in general (see table 13 on page 415)
Minimum salaries, minimum income, pensions	
Tariffs, taxes, co-responsibility ¹⁴	Must be clear which tariffs/ taxes are being spoken about. Includes increase in tax participation by target ¹⁵ etc.
Tax incentives	Must be clear what they are awarded for, mention of specific tax not necessary
Tax discounts/ deductions	Must be clear what they are awarded for, mention of specific tax not necessary
<i>Continued on next page</i>	

¹⁴ Co-responsibility refers to a concept from the center-periphery policy field, according to which regional governments are given a greater share in regional tax levying and managing their own resources.

¹⁵ Tax participation refers to a concept from the center-periphery policy field, which permits regional states to retain tax revenue levied in their territory.

Table 14 – continued

Kind of mean	Criteria and instructions
Subsidization, scholarships, social security payments	Some detail on target, what it is being awarded for, linked to, or in which context they are provided is necessary
Provide more money	Must be stated explicitly what the money is provided for (incl. entire policy field)
Promise of reward	Type of reward (public recognition, increase in resources etc.) specified; no numbers needed
State from which source a measure will be funded/ paid for	Name suffices
Reversion of spending cuts/ increases	Since it is a reversion, it must be specified from which particular time period these cuts originate
Cost reduction, something being free of charge	Must be clear which cost is reduced/ what is to be free of charge. If directly offered by government or its agents, IP; if offered by actors, Q: How will it be assured that it will be free of charge? If not answered, VIP
<i>Specific directly executable action by the party, or its agents</i>	
Vote a particular way	Must be clear which particular law/ treaty/ resolution etc. the vote is about. Excludes: if this action aims to prevent changes to the SQ (see SQIP)

Continued on next page

Table 14 – continued

Kind of mean	Criteria and instructions
Organize public protest/ mobilize targets	Excludes: if this action aims to prevent changes to the SQ (see SQIP)
Give preferential treatment in a process based on some activity carried out by the target	Process and activity must be clear, mention of specific preferential treatment not necessary
Fire somebody or group from public office	Name(s) suffice(s)
Instruct particular agent to take measure	Agent clearly identified and task(s) clear (incl. in/decreasing rate of particular activity); does not matter how the agent will execute the task
Conduct inspections/ audits	Conduct inspections to determine whether legal norms/ standards are being complied with. Must be clear which general legal norms/ standards/ policy areas these inspections are concerned with
Make proposal to hold a conference	The general topic of the conference and which targets or foreign states etc. are invited must be stated
“Digitalize” some administrative/ public process	Clear which process is being digitalized
Make report/ particular information public/ accessible to sb./ sth.	The general topic of the information must be stated. If actor is asked to do so, see directly below.

Continued on next page

Table 14 – continued

Kind of mean	Criteria and instructions
<i>Information, personalized assessment and education</i>	
Actor to make report/ particular information public/ accessible to sb./ sth.	The general topic of the information must be stated. Q: How will it be assured that actors do so? If not answered, VIP. If answered and making report etc. public is not a PC, it is treated as ancillary element to the issue position stating how the actor will be motivated to do so
Creation of a new/ changes to existing website/ registry	Purpose(s) of website (change) clear (e.g. to provide particular information/ access etc.). Applied across sentences/ paragraphs. Max. 1 IP/ VIP
Conduct public awareness/ informational campaign	The general topic(s) of the campaign must be stated. Excludes: campaigns aiming to prevent changes to the SQ (see SQIP measures)
Offer of public educational or training program/ plan	The collective at which it is directed must be stated
Offer of public education or training	Must be made clear how this new offer is to be realized, or what it consists of, or which institution/ agent will offer it
Offer of non-public educational or training program/ plan	Q: How will it be assured that actors do so? Includes: part education, part on the job learning/ training systems/ programs etc., where company input is concerned

Continued on next page

Table 14 – continued

Kind of mean	Criteria and instructions
Make certificate/ award/ seal handed out for doing something one way and not another	For example, environmental label, seal of excellence. Max. 1 IP
Assessment of individual human beings in order to offer them a specific service/ plan	Excludes: study of human being as collectives (see GIP). Max. 1 IP
IFOS	
Competencies/ functions	Mention of more than one vague competency/ function of new agent; if the agent already exists, only functions that are being replaced/ added/ eliminated/ transferred count; includes GIP and SQIP type positions and conditions for accessing funds. Applied across sentences/ paragraphs. Max. 1 IP for all VIP type functions. If a function is of the IP type, it is coded as a separate IP
Organizational structure/ power distribution	Concerns internal structures, procedures or relations between targets (e.g. actors involved, voting distribution and procedure etc.). Q: Is it clear when the organizational structure/ procedure or power distribution is being violated?
Continued on next page	

Table 14 – continued

Kind of mean	Criteria and instructions
Elimination	Q: Is it clear what is being eliminated? Name of what is being eliminated suffices. Excludes: Elimination and creation of replacement as substitute (see directly below)
Substitution/ replacement	Q: Is it clear what is being substituted by what? Names suffice
<i>Rates, time periods, events triggering actions, numerical goals, rewards</i>	
Increase/ decrease amounts, quantities, rates, durations, time limits, time something takes etc.	No number needed. Applies if “Resources” section does not apply. Excludes: age of collectives, max. period of years of coming legislature (e.g. “in the next four years”), from beginning to end
Amounts/ rates	Mention of one of the following, with number required: particular increase, decrease, minimum, maximum, range (both numbers coded as one), rate (number required for each), or unspecific amount (i.e. no number required) as a function of another specific metric variable, or an ordinal variable with at least three categories (e.g. household income, number of household members, time period unemployed etc). Includes: change of existing amounts/ rates limit. Excludes: event triggering action, introduction of new numerical limit (see below)

Continued on next page

Table 14 – continued

Kind of mean	Criteria and instructions
Duration/ time intervals/ number of times	Mention of one of the following, with number required: particular time period, increase, decrease, minimum, maximum, range (both numbers coded as one), or as a function of another specific metric variable, or an ordinal variable with at least three categories. Includes: change of existing time limit. Excludes: event triggering action, introduction of new time limit (see below)
Flexibilize/ extend timetables/ schedules etc.	Number required (see just above)
Event triggering action	Statements of the type: “We will do y until/ when/ if x happens”; must be clear when event can be considered to have occurred (e.g. “the unemployment rate falls below 5 percent”). Event triggering action and the action itself are coded independently of one another

Continued on next page

Table 14 – continued

Kind of mean	Criteria and instructions
(Quasi-)Numerical goals	The end goal is numerical or quasi-numerical or its achievement is falsifiable based on provided criteria. Excludes: absolutes (eliminate, universalize etc.), unless stated numerically (0 percent, 100 percent); statements of goals as points of departure (e.g. “to reduce current employment”, which states the point of departure because it refers to the current unemployment rate, a number that could be looked up) instead of as end goals (e.g. “to reduce employment to below 5 percent”), which is a quasi-numerical goal
<i>Punish, prohibit, make obligatory, extend measure, make targets equal</i>	
Punishment	Establish, abolish, increase, or decrease punishment for particular action; no numbers needed
Prohibition	Must be clear what is no longer permitted and, if applicable, to what extent
Make sth. that was voluntary obligatory or vice versa	Q: Is it clear what is being made obligatory/ voluntary? Excludes: The statement that something is, from the start, voluntary or obligatory
Putting a new limit on something	Must be clear what will be limited (e.g. time period, quantity, repetitions etc.) and statement should (indirectly) suggest that no limit currently exists; no numbers required
<i>Continued on next page</i>	

Table 14 – continued

Kind of mean	Criteria and instructions
Extending/ curtailing the reach of existing measure	Measure must be identified. Specific new targets or areas that the measure is extended to or removed from must be stated. Q: Is it clear when the measure has been extended/ curtailed?
Rules/ criteria to be made into law, policy etc.	Must be specific enough to be applied within broader framework of rules; Q: Is it clear when the rule is being broken, or the criteria not fulfilled? May only be applied if statement could not be categorized using other criteria related to other kinds of means. Excludes: access criteria (see targets)
Provision of new evaluation or performance criteria	Must at least state two or more criteria, need not be specific. Max. 1 IP/ VIP
Make sth. or sb. equal to another	Must be clear who/ what is made equal to whom/ what and in which respect ¹⁶ . Q: Can the existence of equality in the specific area be assessed directly? Otherwise GIP. Excludes: equality of men and women, assumption that women will be made equal to men (in which area/ policy field must still be specified)
<i>Role models, definitions, textual fusions/ changes, elimination of laws/ policies</i>	
<i>Continued on next page</i>	

¹⁶ If A and B are to be made equal, is A to be made like B or B to be made like A?

Table 14 – continued

Kind of mean	Criteria and instructions
Role models	Role models or examples are used to describe particular measures. At least one particular country/ (non-)state actor/ agent who does or has the “thing” to be emulated is identified; if group is identified, must be clear what is included (default assumption: “Europe”/ “European” means all EU countries) or enough information is provided to determine this. If various role models are mentioned in one sentence, they are treated as one. If the mean in relation to which the role model is mentioned would be an IP without it, the role model is an ancillary element. If it would be a VIP, the statement, including the role model reference, becomes an IP. If several role models are linked by “or”, GIP Fully stated definition; need not be comprehensive/ detailed. Excludes: to define sth. as a right. Applied across paragraphs. Max. 1 VIP/IP At least either input or output identified; incl. stating types or their number left after reorganization (e.g. “move paragraph 1 of law A to law B”, “reduce number of tax regulations to 50”, “separate/ connect legal figure A from/ with B”); if IFOS is concerned, code as function/ competency if possible (see IFOS section). Max. 1 IP

Continued on next page

Table 14 – continued

Kind of mean	Criteria and instructions
Insert/ change/ add text into/ of/ to constitution/ law	Concerns literal change/ edit of a text. Must be clear what textual change will be, but need not be stated verbatim. Excludes: when a measure (as opposed to text) is to be introduced into or by means of a law (as opposed to text) etc. Max. 1 VIP/ IP.
Elimination of existing legislation/ policies, reinstatement of previous legislation/ policies	What is to be eliminated/ reinstated can be unambiguously identified
<i>Rights and international politics</i>	
Provide/ recognize a new right for individuals/ targets	The particular right must be named, or its content stated; must be legally established as a right, not just be considered a right (default assumption); no details on implementation necessary
Signing/ ratification of entire treaty	Treaty must be identified
Fulfilment of international treaty/ international organization's membership obligations	Particular part of treaty or obligations to be fulfilled must be identified, wholesale mention is insufficient
Joining/ participating in at least partially institutionalized international initiatives/ processes etc.	Group/ conference/ format must be identified

SQIP means SQIP means support the current SQ or aim to carry out one of a particular predefined set of actions (see below) to defend it. The definition of the SQ – as the sum of laws, policies, rules and institutions in place at a given point in time – clearly excludes more abstract interpretations of the term, such as, for example, “power relations” existing in actual society or the economy. As a consequence, any new law or policy, or changes to existing ones, even if their ultimate aim is to support, for instance, the interests of an entrenched economic elite, is considered to be making changes to the SQ. It should thus not come as a surprise that SQIP measures are relatively scarce. Nonetheless, vaguer statements which oppose change or defend what is given without stating any specific measure may be more common.

SQIPs are also somewhat exceptional since they appear most frequently as marginal references, or so-called side note statements, accompanying other measures. For example, “We will initiate a comprehensive labour market reform (VIP), without affecting those labour market policies left to the unions and employer organisations to negotiate (SQIP).”

SQIPs include:

- Opposition to change or the defence of what is given (principles, rules of the game, constitutions etc.)
- To continue/ culminate/ complete a process already started
- Carrying out one of the following actions in opposition to changes to the SQ:
 - To vote a particular way
 - To mobilize the population or societal actors
 - To launch a (media/ an informational) campaign
- That which is explicitly left unchanged when a particular mean that changes the SQ is proposed (side note statement). This includes the second part of expressions such as:
 - Doing X without affecting/ causing Y
 - Doing X in line with Y
 - Doing X while respecting Y’s competencies

- Excludes: Doing X, taking into consideration Y, provided that X was not designed particularly for Y (i.e. Y is not also the target of that mean)¹⁷
- A quasi-numerical or numerical goal¹⁸ which maintains the current SQ (e.g. “We will not increase the personal income tax”)

Exceptions/ reasons for caution

Given their emphasis on leaving the SQ unchanged, SQIPs exclude statements which:

- Aim to make changes to the SQ to slow down or prevent particular changes (in which case one is dealing with a VIP or an IP)
- Talk about the party’s own unchanged positions, beliefs, convictions etc. The focus is on defending the institutional SQ, not the party’s “status quo”
- Side note statements do not impact on the number of issue positions found outside of it, i.e. in the broader statements in reference to which they are the side note statements¹⁹

The vindication word group

- Message: The status quo should remain unchanged, because it is good as it is
- Includes: Oppose or resist change, defend, guarantee, preserve or (re-)affirm the SQ
- Excludes: reiterate, (re-)affirming the own party’s position

A.4 Issue position coding

There are a number of additional rules that need to be taken into consideration when coding:

- Issue positions, not elements, are coded

¹⁷ See appendix A.6 on page 443.

¹⁸ See table 14 on page 418 for a discussion of the quasi-numerical or numerical goal.

¹⁹ See appendix A.4.1 on the facing page.

- All types of issue positions may consist of a verb element, a mean, a target and one or several ancillary element
- GIPs, VIPs and SQIPs are also coded with their PCs
- IPs are recorded without their PCs
- IPs cannot be PCs and PCs cannot also be IPs. When a PC could be considered an IP in terms of its informational content, it is considered an IP
- If an IP mean is stated within a sentence with some other mean or its accompanying PC(s), that IP mean is coded as an IP with the rest of its elements and in accordance with the X-by-Y rule. The rest of the statement, containing the IP's accompanying PC(s), is coded as if the IP mean had never formed a part of it. Thus, for example, an IP mean's PC is coded as a VIP, GIP, or SQIP, since the (former) PC is no longer considered to be the consequence of the IP mean

Sometimes a given text may give the impression that an issue position's elements have been spread across several sentences. Given that coding proceeds on a sentence by sentence basis, an additional set of rules are required to deal with such circumstances.

- If targets are mentioned in a separate sentence from the mean which concerns them, each target is coded as a separate VIP (e.g. "Especially the long-term unemployed" is a VIP)
- If a PC is stated in a separate sentence apart from the mean of which it is the PC (e.g. "We will do so in order to reduce unemployment"), it is coded as a VIP, GIP, or SQIP, depending on its content
- If an ancillary element is found in a separate sentence from the issue position to which it belongs, it is coded as irrelevant text
- If coding an IP leaves behind a sentence consisting only of a short statement which, on its own, makes no or little sense and does not include an issue position, it is coded as part of that IP or as irrelevant text

A.4.1 The X-by-Y rule and the chain rule

Sentences which occur in electoral program text will often not contain only a single issue position, since a given sentence may contain any combination of various verb elements, means, PCs and targets, although an issue position

may maximally contain one element of each type. In order to address this problem, the X-by-Y rule permits one to constitute the number and types of issue positions based on the key elements found in a given statement. As the name of the X-by-Y rule suggests, the content of a given sentence leads to the “multiplication” of some of its elements with others in order to result in the absolute number of issue positions of the various types found within it. The application of the X-by-Y rule requires an understanding of two kinds of relations between elements as well as the concept of links:

- Relations of causality
 - A relation of causality exists when a mean causes a PC
 - Relations of causality can only occur between means and PCs
- Relations of parity
 - Parity means that two (or more) elements are presented side-by-side, usually connected by words such as “and” (e.g. “We will fight inequality and increase the minimum salary”)
 - Elements that are related to one another in terms of parity form a par group
 - These occur between:
 - A group of any types of means
 - A group of the same type of key elements (excluding means), if they are related to the same mean or par group of means

Having presented these two kinds of relations between elements, the following bullet list shows a number of examples in which the the X-by-Y rule is applied to statements with par groups.

- Several means may be introduced by one verb element
 - “We need to make the labour market more efficient and flexible” contains two issue positions: “We need to make the labour market more efficient” and “We need to make the labour market more flexible”
- A single mean is introduced by two (or more) verb elements
 - “We will increase and streamline investment in infrastructure” contains two issue positions: “We will increase investment in

infrastructure” and “We will streamline investment in infrastructure”

- Several means are introduced by several verb elements
 - “We will increase and streamline investment in infrastructure and education” consists of four issue positions, to increase investment in infrastructure and to streamline it as well as to increase investment in education and to streamline it
- One or several means are introduced by one or several verb elements aimed at one or several targets
 - “We will increase the maximum period of unemployment benefit coverage for the unemployed above 55 years of age and single mothers with children younger than 3 years of age” consists of two issue positions, to increase the period of coverage for those above 55 years of age and to increase the period of coverage for those mothers with children younger than 3 years of age
- One or several means are introduced by one or several verb elements which have more than one PC
 - “We will pass a reform package that will increase efficiency, transparency and sustainability” consists of three issue positions, to increase efficiency, to increase transparency and to increase sustainability

The above examples can be condensed into one concise rule: the number of issue positions within a single sentence is equal to the sum of the result of multiplying the number of verb elements, PCs and targets which are related to the same mean or par group of means all with one another.

The coder should, however, be reminded of two aspects previously mentioned when applying the X-by-Y rule:

- Since PCs do not form part of IPs, when various PCs are related to one another on a par and to an IP mean or IP par group, the IP means are not multiplied by the number of PCs, but only by the other related key elements (and the PCs are coded as if they had never been causally related to IPs)
- The X-by-Y rule is also applied to the form of a mean when it contains additional information, as outlined in section appendix A.3.4 on

page 407. Thus, for example, “the anti-poverty and discrimination plan” contains two means, to fight poverty and to fight discrimination

While the statements in the above examples are – like the majority of electoral program statements – unambiguous, there are statements which are not so easy to interpret, mainly for two reasons. Firstly, it is possible for words such as “in order to” and “by”, which signal the possible relations between means, to be omitted, obscuring whether the different elements are related in terms of parity or causality. For example, “We need to increase spending, (by) decreasing tax exemptions and consolidating the budget”. This problem can be solved by:

- Trying to insert the words “by” and “in order to” and considering whether the sentence makes sense and is grammatically correct. If so, the relation is causal
- If several elements are separated only by commas, consider whether some verbs are in the present and others in the present continuous (or the -ing) form. In the example stated in the previous paragraph, the form changes from “to increase” to “decreasing” and “consolidating”

Secondly, the relation of causality has so far been limited to two elements or par groups (of IP means and PCs). Sometimes, however, more than two such elements or par groups may be causally related to one another. For example, “In order to increase the efficiency of our active labour market policies, we will implement a reform to ensure a smooth transition from unemployment to employment.” How are the three elements in this statement related causally? A vague measure, the implementation of a reform, can be identified, but how are an increase in efficiency and the smooth transition from unemployment to employment related to that measure and each other? Is the “smooth transition” not the PC of an “increase in efficiency”? Should, in this case, the “increase in efficiency” be considered both the PC of the “implement a reform” measure and the mean of the “smooth transition” PC? Moreover, while this example still permits a logical discernment of a chain of causality between the different elements, there are situations in which this is no longer possible. When faced with these kinds of statements, it is not the the X-by-Y rule, but the chain rule which is applied.

- The chain rule is applied only after IP means have been coded and when, of the remaining elements, more than two mean and PC elements (or their par groups) are linked to one another causally within a given sentence

- Statements which link more than two mean or PC elements or par groups consisting of means or PCs causally form a chain
- Each individual mean or PC element (which is not related to another element on par) and mean or PC par group of these causally related elements forms a link of that chain
- Each element in each link is combined with each element in all other links into unordered pairs of elements²⁰
- Each of these unordered pairs is coded as a VIP (because it is assumed not to be possible to know which element is a mean or a PC and thus how the information should be coded)²¹
- The resultant statement is coded accordingly

The statement “[a.] In order to increase the efficiency of our active labour market policies, [b.] we will implement a reform [c.] to ensure a smooth transition from unemployment to employment” thus consist of three VIPs, each consisting of the elements (a, b), (a, c), (b, c).

Exceptions/ reasons for caution

- The coder must take the various exceptions stated in appendix A.3.2 on page 405 and appendix A.4.4 on the next page into consideration when determining the number of issue positions found in a sentence
- Fixed expressions which consists of two parts linked by “and” or apostrophes ought not to be split, such as:
 - work-life balance
 - supply and demand
 - park and ride
 - personal, family and work life conciliation (or similar combinations like work-life balance etc.)
 - small and medium sized enterprises

²⁰ In unordered pairs, it does not matter which item appears first. For example, the pair of elements (a, b) is equivalent to (b, a).

²¹ Moreover, because of the application of the list rule (see below), such chains thus always form VIPLs.

A.4.2 The list rule

- The list rule is applied once the type and number of issue positions in a sentence have been determined. When three or more issue positions of the same type occur within one sentence, they are coded together as a list
- The type of list depends on the type of issue position which occurs three or more times within the same sentence. Accordingly, these lists (abbreviated to the letter “L”) are SQIPLs, GIPLs, VIPLs and IPLs
- Not least due to the application of the X-by-Y rule, VIPLs are likely to occur quite frequently
- It does not matter in which order the different types of issue positions appear in the sentence, only that three or more issue positions of a given type appear in it. For example, a sentence consisting, in that order, of a VIP, IP, VIP, GIP and VIP contains one VIP list, one GIP and one IP

A.4.3 The repetition rule

- If different sentences within a paragraph are restated in their entirety without almost any difference (i.e. they provide the same information and are at the most only partially paraphrased), the repeating sentence(s) (i.e. not its first appearance) are coded as repetition
- Text coded as repetition is irrelevant, but must be coded as repetition
- Given these very restrictive rules on which kind of sentence can be considered as repetition of another sentence (i.e. not items of information, but entire sentences), it occurs rather infrequently and is easy to identify
- Truncated sentences,²² when their content is also repeated in the paragraphs they introduce, are also coded as repetition

A.4.4 Special expression rules

There are a number of rules which are triggered by specific words or phrases, which are otherwise difficult to code. The first set of rules has an impact especially on the number of targets and means, the second set of rules concerns truncated and introductory sentences.

²² See below.

Concerning targets and means

- When two or more targets or means are mentioned who or which are supposed to be made equal or unequal to one another in some way, to be connected or related, or are called upon to negotiate, cooperate, or coordinate some activity with one another, they are considered as groups of unordered pairs,²³ with each pair being a single target or mean. The reason is that, for example, if A, B and C are called upon to increase their cooperation with one another, A and B, B and C as well as A and C are asked to cooperate with one another
- When a target or mean is picked out of a group of targets or means with words like “for example” and “such as” or is cited with words like “especially”, “including”, “in particular” etc., only those emphasized targets or means count and the others are treated as ancillary elements.²⁴ For example, the statement “We need to help the unemployed, especially the long-term unemployed”, only has one target, the long-term unemployed
- The expression “all except X” (e.g. “We will overhaul the entire tax system, except for the personal income tax”) is dealt with as follow: The mean to which the expression is related is coded so that the “all except X” expression is treated as a single target (mean), meaning that “all” and “X” are considered one and the same thing. Moreover, since X is not affected, it is coded as an SQIP
- The expressions “others” or “the rest”, including what the “others” are or “the rest” is, are considered ancillary elements²⁵
- For the expression “will do X, not/ instead of/ as opposed to Y”, doing X and not doing Y each count as separate issue positions

Concerning truncated and introductory statements

- Truncated sentences
 - Truncated sentences are incomplete sentences or phrases that occur at the beginning of paragraphs. This distinguishes them from headings, which are separated by line breaks from paragraphs

²³ See footnote 20 on page 435.

²⁴ Ancillary elements do not influence the number and type of issue positions. See appendix A.6 on page 443.

²⁵ See appendix A.6 on page 443.

- They are often in bold font and followed by a colon, functioning as a brief summary statement of what the rest of the paragraph is about
- Truncated sentences are coded as if they were sentences
- If a subsequent statement contained in the paragraph repeats the text included in the truncated sentence, the truncated sentence is coded as repetition
- When an electoral program provides headings for almost every paragraph, these headings are considered truncated sentences instead and the rules applying to truncated sentences apply to these headings
- Introductory sentences
 - Introductory sentences link a number of subsequently stated means to a problem or topic which was previously stated or described. For example, “In order to deal with this problem, we will implement the following measures”
 - They may occur in a paragraph of their own or at the beginning or end of a paragraph or bullet point and usually end with a colon
 - Introductory sentences are coded as irrelevant text if they are basically synonymous to the following statement and provide no additional information to it: “For that reason/ In order to deal with this problem [poverty, inequality etc.], we propose/ will implement the following”.
 - If they do provide additional information, that information is coded and the introductory sentence becomes an ancillary element (see below)

A.5 Relevant and irrelevant text

The coding rules laid out above should not be applied to all the text contained in electoral programs. Instead, a distinction is made between relevant and irrelevant text, with the former containing issue positions and requiring further analysis, whereas the latter does not contain issue positions and is discarded. Although it appears last in the manual, given that it is necessary to first understand what issue positions are, the distinction between relevant and irrelevant text is the first coding decision a coder makes.

Irrelevant text can be identified by considering the substantive content of a statement. Irrelevant text includes, firstly, statements which do not contain means but other kinds of information:

- Background information
 - Explanations of concepts intended as background information for the reader (i.e. neither to be made into law nor to orient policies as definitions)
 - Descriptive information about the current state of the world, a particular policy field etc.
 - Problems that exist in the world, challenges which are posed by these problems, or challenges in general
 - Statements that something is inevitable, unavoidable, indispensable, a general prerequisite or requirement, without direct relation to a mean
- Feelings, emotions, “personality traits”, attitudes (e.g. trust), values, beliefs (in a metaphysical sense), convictions of the party, constitution, or country
 - The aim is to present the party in a favourable light and/ or personify it as the holder of a desirable set of moral values and/ or personality traits
- Statements that the party has knowledge, understanding, a perception of, a particular perspective on a problem, or knows, understands, considers or recognizes something, or believes something advisable, or expects that something will happen
- The assigning of responsibility or blame, comments about deficient measures of the past
- References to other passages/ sections of the electoral program
 - When such references are accompanied by the mention of the means being referred to, the information provided there is to be coded. The reference is not to be followed, however
- Introductory statements (see appendix A.4.4 on page 437), if they are basically synonymous to the following statement and provide no additional information to it: “For that reason/ In order to deal with this

problem [poverty, inequality etc.], we propose/ pursue/ will implement the following (means)”

Secondly, statements that do not contain *future* means:

- Text in the past tense
 - If a statement relates the present and the past tense, the entire statement is considered irrelevant
 - This includes statements in which the party relates the past to its future means, or which point out a continuity of beliefs, convictions, policy etc. For example:
 - “We have always supported the expansion of the welfare state”
 - “Already back then we said that we need to expand the welfare state”
- Descriptions of measures already passed and/ or implemented in the past, but which are formulated in the present tense
 - By default, one should expect things past to be expressed in the past tense. If the text indicates that this assumption does not seem to apply to a particular statement, the given text is considered irrelevant
- Descriptions of what the party is doing “right now” (instead of what it wants to do in the future)
- Statements of measures to be realized after the end of the coming legislature or in the long term (see also appendix A.2.5 on page 401)

Thirdly, there are a number of types of statements which seem to be located somewhere between means and irrelevant text and which may be cause for uncertainty especially when they appear alongside other kinds of irrelevant statements. Of these, those which emphasize that something will be done by the party, that something is urgent, a top priority or will be done literally as one of the first things in the coming legislature, general statements of support or opposition toward some mean as well as statements that the party considers that something is necessary to do, must or should happen are all considered relevant kinds of statements. Two types of statements which are considered irrelevant are those which state that the party *may* – as opposed to *will* – do or pursue something as well as statements which only underline the importance of something or somebody. Regarding the latter, while one

may expect that the party considers everything it addresses in its electoral program important and stating this explicitly is essentially redundant, the party cannot declare everything a priority, thus revealing those aspect of the SQ it considers especially in need of change. To aid in the distinction between relevant and irrelevant text concerning these kinds of statements, four verb groups were identified, which signal²⁶ relevant text when they appear as part of a verb element. These are:

- *The will word group*
 - Message: That the party clearly intends to pursue an issue position in the future
 - Includes: The future tense of the verb to do, dedicated, committed, objective
- *The priority word group*
 - Message: That something is urgent, a top priority, or will be done literally as one of the first things in the coming legislature
 - Excludes: inevitable, unavoidable, indispensable, a general pre-requisite or requirement
 - Statements that only underscore the importance of something are considered irrelevant. When something has priority, it is assumed that it is not only important to the party, but also higher up on the agenda than other means
 - Generic statements like “From the beginning of the legislature, we will work hard to...”
 - Statements of a sequence of steps, including the first one, which form part of a single mean, or of a series of means executed at an unknown point in time. If something is a priority, it is on top of the agenda of all means, not a subset thereof
- *The support-opposition word group*
 - Verbs of support for or opposition to a particular mean are also considered relevant text

²⁶ As was mentioned in appendix A.3.3 on page 405, signalling means that word groups may be indicative of, but do not determine, issue position type. In this case, word groups signal whether text is relevant or irrelevant.

- Includes: support, oppose, strengthen, weaken

Lastly, as opposed to these other word groups, there is one word group which not only signals, but actually determines whether a given statement is relevant or not, namely the necessity word group. When a verb belonging to this word group appears as part of a verb element, that statement is relevant.

- *The necessity word group*

- Message: That something is necessary to do, must or should happen
- Includes: must, have to, should, need to, be obliged to, want, demands, that one has a duty to fulfil etc.
- Excludes:
 - to require, to aspire, inevitable, unavoidable, indispensable, a general prerequisite or requirement
 - Words belonging to the can word group

In addition to these word groups, which signal or, in the case of the necessity word group, determine relevant text, two word groups also signal irrelevant text.

- *The can word group*

- Message: That the party may consider to do or pursue something
- Includes: can, may, could, would etc.

- *The importance word group*

- Message: That the party considers something (or somebody) important
- Includes: important, crucial, fundamental, a prerequisite
- Excludes: statements of priority (see appendix A.5 on the preceding page), access criteria

Table 15 on the next page shows some examples of the types of expressions or words which do and do not signal relevant text discussed above.

Table 15: Irrelevant and relevant text word group verb examples

Irrelevant text	Relevant text
require, can, may, could, would, the necessity, the demand, the need, the obligation, the requirement	objective, goal, must, have to, should, need to, be obliged to, want, demands, duty to take action, support, oppose

A.6 Ancillary elements

Ancillary elements, which have been mentioned various times above, do not impact on the number or type of issue positions found in electoral program text and simply form a part of whatever element, issue position or irrelevant text in relation to which they are stated. One must nonetheless be aware of their existence in order to avoid mistaking them for other elements. While some statements become ancillary elements under particular circumstances,²⁷ others are always considered ancillary elements. The latter often either state the obvious or describe how something is done as if they were an adjective or adverb.

Those ancillary elements which state the obvious or which are so closely related to a mean that they do not merit being considered an issue position on their own, include:

- The statement of problems, like poverty, crime, pollution etc.
- That a given rule must be followed by the target at which it is aimed
- That a target can only benefit from a measure if it actually does what is demanded of it in order to benefit from that measure
- That something is voluntary or obligatory
 - This applies where the associated mean is new or no change has taken place. When something that has been obligatory becomes voluntary or vice versa, then this is a VIP/ IP (see table 14 on page 418)
- That something will be done using all available information

²⁷ These particular circumstances are specified by the criteria which determine the issue position type.

- That something or somebody will be guided through or accompanied in some process
- That somebody will be receiving personalized and/ or individualized attention

Additionally, there is what may be called procedural information:

- Proposing something within/ as part of a larger multi-annual or broader plan, framework etc.
- Doing X step by step, gradually, sequentially, launching pilots first
- Doing X continuously, steadily
- Doing X immediately, slowly, fast
- Doing X cooperatively, systematically, without hesitation, in the most detailed/ comprehensive way possible

Moreover, there are a number of ancillary elements, denoted Y in the following examples, which describe the manner in which a measure is carried out, often in relation to some motive, such as:

- Doing X, which was inspired by Y
- Doing X, taking into consideration Y, provided that X was not designed particularly for Y (i.e. Y is not also the target of that mean)
- Doing X in terms of Y. For example, to carry out a reform in terms of a proposal that has been made, without details on the content of that proposal being mentioned. (If details of that proposal were mentioned, these would count as details on the reform and would be coded as measures accordingly.)

Lastly, a number of particular expression are considered ancillary elements:

- Statements akin to “In addition to these means”
 - If the statement reads “In addition to X, Y and Z” and these were stated recently above, X, Y and Z are treated as ancillary elements. Otherwise, they are treated as means/ targets
- The expression vice versa (and its hypothetical or stated result, the inversion of the relation between two things)
- The expressions “others” or “the rest”, including what the “others” are or “the rest” is. For example, “the other income groups”

- Introductory sentences become ancillary elements when they contain additional information to a statement like “For that reason/ In order to deal with this problem [poverty, inequality etc.], we propose/ will implement the following”. That additional information becomes the mean

Exceptions/ reasons for caution

When a party states that it will do something without affecting something or somebody else, this is considered an SQIP

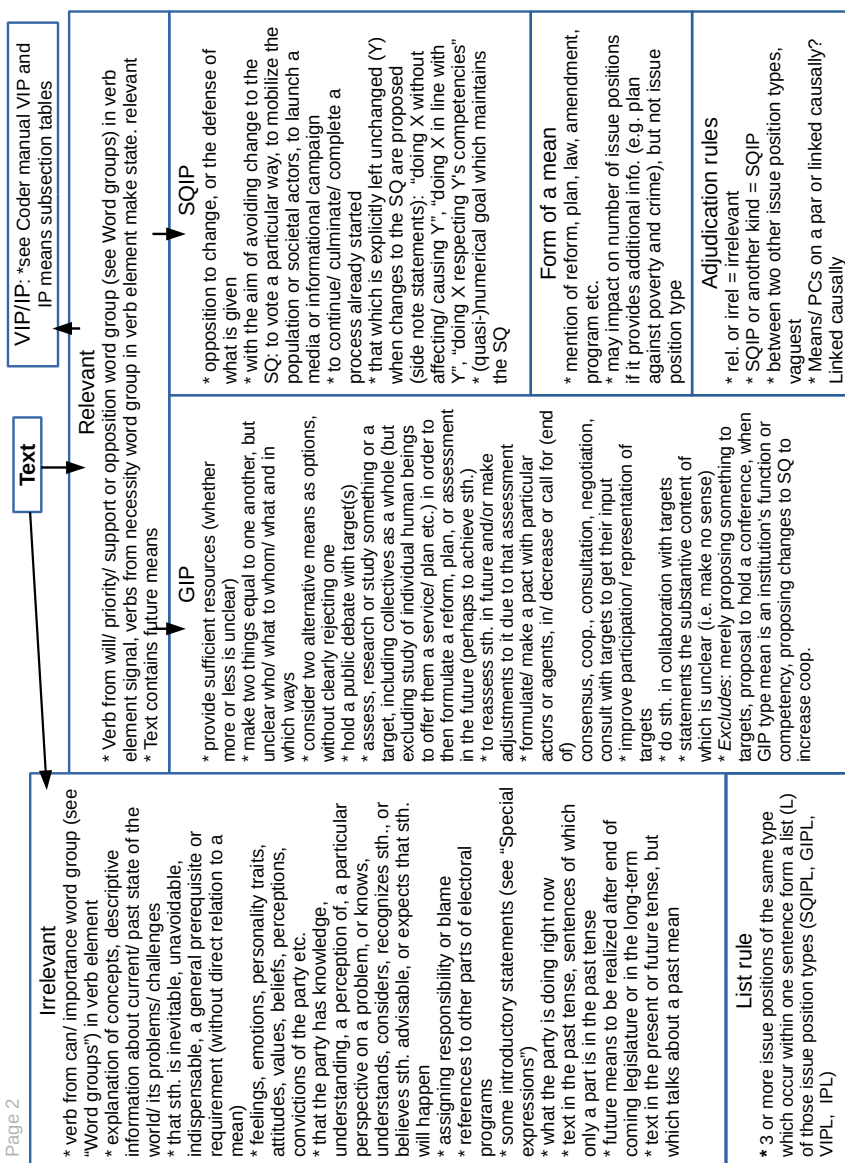
A.7 Adjudication rules

These rules ought to be applied when the application of several rules leads to contradictory results, such as text being considered both relevant and irrelevant, or the same statement being categorized as two different types of issues positions:

- When there is uncertainty about whether text is either relevant or irrelevant, it is considered irrelevant
- When there is uncertainty about whether text is either an ancillary element or not, it is considered an ancillary element
- When there is uncertainty about whether a statement is a SQIP or another type of position, it is considered a SQIP
- When there is uncertainty about whether a statement is of one issue position type or another (excluding SQIPs), it is of the vaguer type
- When there is uncertainty about whether two or more means or PCs are on par or linked causally, it should be assumed that they are linked causally

B Coder manual summary sheets

Page 1	Apply at sentence level: * sentence ended by full stop, "?" and " * not ended by ", ":", "!" or "..." (unless paragraph end)			
issue position = verb element + mean + target + positive consequence (PC) + ancillary element	Verb element * One or several verbs which name the action that will be performed by the party as an intricate part of the execution or pursuit of a mean * May consist of verbs from different word groups, which signal the type of mean * Several verb elements may be separated by "and" or commas Target element * what or whom the mean is aimed at; counts as one if mentioned in the plural * actor: not subject to gov. instructions, e.g. civil society organization, judges * agent: subject to gov. instructions (ministry, public office) * collective: clearly distinguishable groups of people (one collective may be identified by various characteristics) * access criteria: such as to a fund or welfare benefit * system: significant part of/ extending institution/ agent; must require a substantial amount of additional resources (human or financial) to function * Exception: "double mention" to avoid sexual discrimination; see "Special expressions" (Summary page 3)	PC element * the positive outcome of a mean: "mean in order to PC", "achieve PC by mean" etc. * since the PC is caused by the mean, they are related causally * forms part of SQIP, GIP and VIP * if stated in combination with IP, PC coded as if IP had never been part of sentence (i.e. as SQIP, GIP and VIP), unless PC is required by criteria of particular kind of mean (see "VIP/IP") * if a PC contains information which would categorize it as an IP if not presented as the consequence of some mean, it is coded as an IP Mean element * future measure or objective the party wants to carry out * means determine issue position type * different types of means: SQIP, GIP, VIP, IP mean * for categorizing issue mean types, see next page	X-by-Y rule * relations of parity: between any type of means, or between any other key elements of the same type which are related to the same mean ("and" etc.). Form par groups * relations of causality: only between means and PCs ("in order to", "by") * number of issue positions is equal to the result of multiplying the (par group) mean(s) with each of its related (par group) key elements * SQIP side note statements do not impact on number of issue positions in rest of statement * Excludes: work-life balance, supply and demand, park and ride, personal, family and work life conciliation, small and medium sized enterprises Chain rule * chain: when 3 or more means/mean par groups and PCs/PC par groups are causally related to one another (excluding IPs, which are coded first) * link: each individual element (not related to another element on par) and par group in a chain * Each element in each link is combined with each element in all other links * Chains are always coded as VIPLs * Excludes: same as X-by-Y rule	Left over elements * if an element appears on its own in a sentence: target(s) = VIP(s), PC = SQIP/GIP/VIP, ancillary element = irrel. * if extracting IP leaves behind nonsensical statement = irrelevant text



Word groups * Cooperation (GIP): consensus, participation, implicate, cooperation, collaboration, agreement, pact, consultation, coordination <i>Excludes:</i> propose, integration, relation, public-private cooperation/enterprise, loyalty etc. * Action (VIP/IP): propose, promote, elaborate, implement, reform, change, eliminate, create, increase etc. * Vindication (SQIP): oppose or resist change, defend, guarantee, preserve or (re-)affirm SQ * Will (relevant): future tense of "to do" or some equivalent, dedicated, committed, objective * Necessity (rel.): must, have to, should, need to, be obliged to, the party wants to, demands, has a duty to fulfill <i>Excludes:</i> to require, to aspire, to want, inevitable, unavoidable, indispensable, a general prerequisite or requirement * Priority (rel.): something is urgent, a top priority, or will be done literally as one of the first things in the coming legislature * Support-opposition (rel.): support, oppose, strengthen, weaken * Importance (irrel.): important, crucial, fundamental, a prerequisite <i>Excludes:</i> statements of priority, access criteria * Can (irrel.): can, may, could, would	Special expressions * targets/means made (un)equal, called upon to negotiate, cooperate, coordinate = unordered pairs * when target/mean is picked out of group of targets/means with "for example", "such as", "especially", "including", "in particular", the other targets = ancillary elements * "all except X": expression treated as one target/mean; related mean is also coded as SQIP * "will do X, not/instead of as opposed to Y": X and Y separate issue positions * targets/means designated with "others"/ "the rest" = ancillary elements * Truncated sentences: incomplete sentences occurring at beginning of and providing summary of paragraph. Coded as if sentence, unless content is repeated, in which case coded as repetition * Introductory sentences: link means to a problem/topic/mean discussed before. If more or less the same as "in order to deal with X, we will do the following", coded as irrelevant text. If it contains add. info., coded and intro. sentence part = ancillary element	Ancillary elements * problems (if mentioned as part of mean) * that a rule must be followed, that to benefit from measure, one must do what is asked of one, that sth. is done the way it should be done * sth. is voluntary or obligatory (new mean/ no change, otherwise VIP/IP) * sth. will be done using all available info. * sth./ sb. is guide through/ accompanied in some process, receives personalized and/ or individualized attention * doing x step by step, gradually, launching pilots, continuously, immediately, fast, cooperatively, systematically * doing X: which was inspired by Y, taking into consideration Y (when Y is not also the target of the mean), doing X (e.g. reform) in terms of Y (e.g. plan), X being complementary * "others"/ "the rest" * "vice versa" (and the hypothetical or stated results of this expression) * "in addition to (X and Y)", when X and Y were mentioned just before

C CIS surveys consulted for political parties' ideological position data

All surveys which were consulted for parties' ideological positions can be accessed on the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (2020) website. The surveys are identified by particular numbers. These are listed below.

Study numbers: 1157, 1237, 1346, 1430, 1461, 1492, 1517, 1541, 1695, 1725, 1740, 1788, 1842, 1906, 1967, 2061, 1157, 1237, 1346, 1430, 1461, 1492, 1517, 1541, 1695, 1725, 1740, 1788, 1842, 1906, 1967, 2061, 2083, 2127, 2183, 2210, 2286, 2350, 2382, 2455, 2567, 2588, 2610, 2640, 2750, 2775, 2807, 2799, 2815, 2829, 2843, 2885, 2915, 2930, 2951, 2956, 2993, 3021, 3041, 3080, 3114, 3134, 3145, 3164, 3183, 3203, 3219, 3226, 3238, 1157, 1237, 1346, 1430, 1461, 1492, 1517, 1541, 1695, 1725, 1740, 1788, 1842, 1906, 1967, 2061, 2083, 2127, 2183, 2210, 2286, 2350, 2382, 2455, 2567, 2588, 2610, 2640, 2750, 2775, 2807, 2799, 2815, 2829, 2843, 2885, 2915, 2930, 2951, 2956, 2993, 3021, 3041, 3080, 3114, 3134, 3145, 3164, 3183, 3203, 3219, 3226, 3238, 2829, 2956, 3041, 3080, 3114, 3134, 3145, 3164, 3183, 3203, 3219, 3226, 3238, 3041, 3080, 3114, 3134, 3145, 3164, 3183, 3203, 3219, 3226, 3238, 3238, 1157, 1237, 1346, 1430, 1461, 1492, 1517, 1541, 1695, 1725, 1740, 1788, 1842, 1906, 1967, 2061, 2083, 2127, 2183, 2210, 2286, 2350, 2382, 2455, 2567, 2588, 2610, 2640, 2750, 2775, 2807, 2799, 2815, 2829, 2843, 2885, 2915, 2930, 2951, 2956, 2993, 3021, 3041, 3080, 3114, 3134, 3145, 3164, 3183, 3203, 3219, 3226, 3238, 1157, 1237, 1346, 1430, 1461, 1541, 1695, 1725, 1740, 1788, 1842, 1906, 2061, 2083, 2127, 2183, 2210, 2286, 2350, 2382, 2455, 2567, 2610, 2640, 2750, 2775, 2807, 2799, 2815, 2829, 2885, 2915, 2930, 2951, 2956, 2993, 3021, 3041, 3080, 3114, 3134, 3145, 3164, 3183, 3203, 3219, 3226, 3238.

D Sources on electoral results

The electoral data for European, national and municipal elections were all obtained from Ministerio del Interior (2020). The electoral results for the different ACs were drawn from various sources, given that no one source provided all necessary information. Congreso de los Diputados (2019) and El País (2015) were used most frequently to complete missing data. Additionally, the following sources were consulted:

- **Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura, Galicia, Madrid, La Rioja:** Junta Electoral Central (2020)

- **Andalusia:** Junta de Andalucía (2020); 2018 elections over this website: El País (2019c)
- **Aragon:** Gobierno de Aragón (2020)
- **Asturias:** Junta General del Principado de Asturias (2020)
- **Balearic Islands:** Junta Electoral de les Illes Balears (2020)
- **Basque Country:** Departamento de Seguridad (2020)
- **Canary Islands:** Junta Electoral Central (2020); for 1983 M. R. Sánchez (1987); for 1987 and 1991 (Congreso de los Diputados 2019); for 2007-19 El País (2015)
- **Cantabria:** Parlamento de Cantabria (2020)
- **Castile and León:** Junta de Castilla y León (2020)
- **Catalonia:** Departament de Polítiques Digitals i Administració Pública (2020); for 2017 (Generalitat de Catalunya 2020)
- **Galicia:** Junta Electoral Central (2020); for 1981 Congreso de los Diputados (2019)
- **Murcia:** Congreso de los Diputados (2019)
- **Navarre:** Parlamento de Navarra (2020)
- **Valencia:** Corts Valencianes (2020)

E Additional rules for assigning electoral program text to particular policy fields

- Those electoral program sections with headings which clearly make reference to the respective policy field were analysed in their entirety, excluding (i.e. not coding) a number of topics from a predefined list (stated in section 5.3.4 on page 148).
- For some predefined topics considered to form an important part of a policy field, those sections of an electoral program which can be expected to contain particular issue positions concerning that policy field were also searched. However, not every reference to the policy field in such sections automatically qualified as an issue position. It was required that the given statement concern itself to a reasonable extent with the given policy field. For example, concerning the labour market policy field, if

the statement “We will implement policies that boost the social, political and workplace integration of the handicapped” was found outside of the labour market policy field section, the brief mention of “workplace integration” was not considered sufficient to merit coding it.

- When a section outside of the major section dealing with the labour market contained a large majority of issue positions belonging to that policy field, the irrelevant text that may have been stated at the beginning of that section was also coded as irrelevant text. When this was not the case, irrelevant text introducing such a section was not coded as irrelevant text.
- Given that political parties may include an issue position in a policy field and later restate it in a different context, the positions which appeared outside of the major sections were checked for repetition. Under these particular circumstances, the strict rule for identifying repetition was eased somewhat to avoid an artificial inflation of issue positions.

F Table containing coded electoral program pages

Table 16: Coded electoral program pages

Party	Year	PagesSection	PolicyArea
PP	2008	95, 111, 123, 204, 210, 254, 280-4, 287	SMSE
PP	2008	32-41, 119	center-periphery
PP	2008	128-137, 165-8, 172-3, 178-9, 184, 188-9, 296	labour market
PSOE	2008	22, 28, 46-8, 77, 105-6, 116, 126-8, 130, 156, 159-160, 162, 166, 170, 178-9, 188-90, 293-4	SMSE
PSOE	2008	109-11, 265-270	center-periphery
PSOE	2008	21-36, 50-52, 69-70, 79-81, 88, 93, 217-221	labour market
PP	2011	39-41, 49, 62, 96	SMSE
PP	2011	31-2, 157-9	Center-Periphery

Continued on next page

Table 16 – continued

Party	Year	PagesSection	PolicyArea
PP	2011	36-8, 108-9, 116, 118-9, 122	labour market
PSOE	2011	22-3, 67-8, 72	SMSE
PSOE	2011	19, 123-5	center-periphery
PSOE	2011	52-62, 65-7, 95-6, 99-101, 107	labour market
Ciudadanos	2015	47, 52-7, 65, 98, 109, 119-20, 181, 269, 277-8, 280-1, 291, 300, 329, 335	SMSE
Ciudadanos	2015	11-9	center-periphery
Ciudadanos	2015	21-8, 31-40, 42, 46, 176-8, 181-2, 189, 190-1, 196-9, 206-8	Labour market
Podemos	2015	25, 34, 47-8, 51-53, 227	SMSE
Podemos	2015	45, 159, 188-90	center-periphery
Podemos	2015	57, 58, 61-9, 117, 122, 125-7, 131	labour market
PP	2015	17, 24-27, 30-1, 33-4, 42, 54, 77, 91, 126, 186-7, 190-1, 212	SMSE
PP	2015	80-83, 139-43	center-periphery
PP	2015	18-23, 94-5, 110, 120-1	labour market
PSOE	2015	13, 24, 46, 65, 88, 94, 100, 102, 105-13, 115-6, 118, 121, 134, 158-9, 168, 196, 244	SMSE
PSOE	2015	166, 270-1	center-periphery
PSOE	2015	119-27, 189, 191-2, 215, 218, 222	labour market
Ciudadanos	2019	4-8, 8-9, 20, 24	SMSE
Ciudadanos	2019	1-3	center-periphery
Ciudadanos	2019	14-5, 18	labour market
Podemos	2019	15, 33-4, 37-42, 68, 75, 94, 96	SMSE
Podemos	2019	101, 103-104	center-periphery
Podemos	2019	27-8, 65-70, 73-4	labour market
PP	2019	20, 22-3, 25, 28, 96, 98-9	SMSE

Continued on next page

Table 16 – continued

Party	Year	PagesSection	PolicyArea
PP	2019	13-5, 18	center-periphery
PP	2019	26-7, 49, 51, 54	labour market
PSOE	2019	31, 34-5, 37, 39, 48-50, 89, 110-1, 174, 213, 217, 222, 275, 285	SMSE
PSOE	2019	31-2, 148-53	center-periphery
PSOE	2019	32-41, 115, 123-5, 233-8, 252, 262	labour market
VOX	2019	10, 12	SMSE
VOX	2019	2-3, 9	center-periphery
VOX	2019	12, 18-9	labour market

G Statistical models

Residuals:

Min	1Q	Median	3Q	Max
-0.55680	-0.15060	0.01801	0.16185	0.55053

Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)	
(Intercept)	6.43827	0.39283	16.389	3.35e-16	***
threat	0.05800	0.18303	0.317	0.75359	
devFromCenter	-0.50626	0.28390	-1.783	0.08502	.
certainty	-0.20410	0.14916	-1.368	0.18171	
policyArealabourmarket	-0.03449	0.10413	-0.331	0.74287	
policyAreacenter-periphery	-0.33040	0.10413	-3.173	0.00356	**
partyPP	0.76151	0.35513	2.144	0.04052	*
partyPodemos	1.29415	0.57605	2.247	0.03245	*
partyCs	2.08731	0.89721	2.326	0.02719	*
partyVox	2.23326	0.74791	2.986	0.00569	**

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 0.2655 on 29 degrees of freedom
 Multiple R-squared: 0.7437, Adjusted R-squared: 0.6641
 F-statistic: 9.349 on 9 and 29 DF, p-value: 1.688e-06

Figure 31: Statistical model 1

```

Residuals:
    Min       1Q   Median       3Q      Max
-0.57036 -0.14619  0.01394  0.15620  0.53630

Coefficients:
                Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept)      6.48085    0.36356   17.826 < 2e-16 ***
devFromCenter    -0.50154    0.27923   -1.796  0.08254 .
certainty        -0.23311    0.11599   -2.010  0.05354 .
policyAreaLabourMarket -0.03449  0.10256   -0.336  0.73900
policyAreaCenter-periphery -0.33040  0.10256   -3.222  0.00306 **
partyPP           0.75136    0.34834    2.157  0.03915 *
partyPodemos      1.27712    0.56487    2.261  0.03118 *
partyCs           2.09092    0.88359    2.366  0.02462 *
partyVox          2.22421    0.73607    3.022  0.00510 **
---
Signif. codes:  0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 0.2615 on 30 degrees of freedom
Multiple R-squared:  0.7428,    Adjusted R-squared:  0.6742
F-statistic: 10.83 on 8 and 30 DF,  p-value: 5.095e-07

```

Figure 32: Statistical model 2

```

Residuals:
    Min       1Q   Median       3Q      Max
-0.50262 -0.15828  0.01106  0.15326  0.50514

Coefficients:
                Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept)      0.15371    0.05606    2.742  0.009557 **
devFromCenterAdj -0.57009    0.25797   -2.210  0.033748 *
certainty        -0.16031    0.09107   -1.760  0.087104 .
policyAreaAdj    -0.31316    0.08409   -3.724  0.000688 ***
---
Signif. codes:  0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 0.2476 on 35 degrees of freedom
Multiple R-squared:  0.4239,    Adjusted R-squared:  0.3745
F-statistic: 8.583 on 3 and 35 DF,  p-value: 0.0002095

```

Figure 33: Statistical model 3

Residuals:

	Min	1Q	Median	3Q	Max
	-0.5026	-0.1583	0.0024	0.1705	0.5051

Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)	
(Intercept)	0.17096	0.07511	2.276	0.02925	*
devFromCenterAdj	-0.57009	0.26127	-2.182	0.03611	*
certainty	-0.16031	0.09223	-1.738	0.09125	.
policyArealabourmarket	-0.03449	0.09834	-0.351	0.72797	
policyAreacenter-periphery	-0.33040	0.09834	-3.360	0.00194	**

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 0.2507 on 34 degrees of freedom

Multiple R-squared: 0.4259, Adjusted R-squared: 0.3584

F-statistic: 6.307 on 4 and 34 DF, p-value: 0.0006582

Figure 34: Statistical model 4

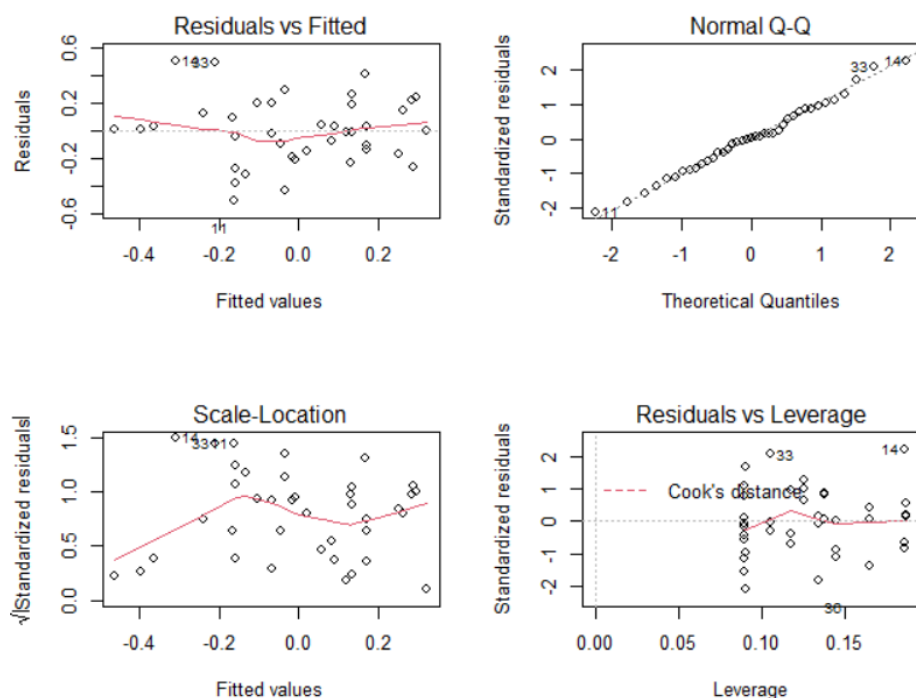


Figure 35: Model 4, graphical assumptions check

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This title provides an alternative model and method for extracting issue positions from political parties' electoral programs, pioneered especially by the earlier works of the mandate theory as well as the saliency approach to locating parties in political space. The simple spatial model consists of a status quo at its center. The more specific political parties' electoral promises, as stated in their electoral programs, the more these political parties deviate from that status quo. Based on this model, a method was developed in order to extract issue positions from electoral programs and to categorize them according to their specificity. An application of this model and method to the electoral programs of the major national Spanish parties from 2008 to 2019 and the analysis of this data provides some first tentative evidence that the method works and is capable of producing interesting insights into how parties adapt their behavior to changing strategic circumstances.

