

PhD Politics

# Unlikely, yet true

*The impact of external shocks on party  
decision-making and electoral outcomes*

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*Dedication:*

*To family, friends, and love.*

*For my brother - together against the world, forever*

*For the family whose love is my strength, wherever I am*

*For the laughter of hyenas cutting through the night*

*For the friends I should have lost by thirty - but never did*

*For the quiet embrace of loving souls*

*To everyone who is reading this, take a moment to raise your glass:*

*May your family give you steady ground to stand on,*

*your friends give you the strength to rise again,*

*and love be the force that drives you toward what lies above and beyond*

## **Abstract**

This dissertation investigates how national political parties adapt to external shocks and how these adaptations shape competition and electoral outcomes. It develops and applies novel text-based methods to estimate party positions and salience, combining manifesto and parliamentary speech data across European countries from 2001 to 2019.

The first part introduces a machine-learning pipeline that classifies and scales immigration-related text in party manifestos to estimate issue-specific positions. By integrating supervised classifiers and scaling models such as Wordfish and Wordscores, it produces a new dataset of 165 party positions across eight countries, validated against expert benchmarks. This approach offers a transparent and replicable method for generating low-cost, high-coverage positional data.

The second part examines how the 2008 financial crisis and the 2015 refugee crisis affected parties' positional adaptation. Using manifesto-based estimates, it shows that crises prompt limited positional change, challenging expectations that the magnitude of adaptation is systematically driven by party-system fragmentation or incumbency. Adaptation follows structural rather than ideological patterns, with larger governing parties more constrained than small challengers.

The third part analyses how the refugee crisis reshaped parliamentary debate and issue salience using ParLEE data. It finds a sharp, system-wide increase in immigration salience after 2015, independent of inflow levels and similar across government and opposition.

The final part connects adaptation to electoral outcomes. Using speech-based positional estimates for seventeen countries, it shows that neither positional shifts nor salience changes predict electoral gains after a shock. Instead, large parties are disproportionately punished, while smaller challengers benefit.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that crises reallocate political attention more than they alter ideological space. They highlight how structural constraints and accountability pressures shape party behaviour in uncertain times, providing a comparative framework for studying political adaptation under crisis conditions.

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## *Introduction: The Crises-Crisis*

European party competition in the past two decades has been shaped by a multitude of external shocks. Economic, environmental, a pandemic and geopolitical shocks led to a continued era of crises, which enduringly shaped the political landscape across Europe. Crises matter for parties because they reshape party preferences, that is, voters' issue priorities, evaluations of competence, and willingness to reward or punish parties. When sudden shocks reorder what citizens care about and how they attribute responsibility, the familiar links between party offers and voter choices can loosen. In such moments, representation and accountability hinge on whether parties can recalibrate what they emphasise and where they stand, and on whether voters perceive these adjustments as credible.

Studying how crises affect party preferences therefore provides the necessary backdrop for explaining parties' strategic moves and for evaluating the electoral consequences that follow. These shocks not only create crises but also redirect political attention and reorder issue hierarchies. Studying how parties respond to such shocks and how voters' preferences shift in their aftermath is crucial because accountability depends on whether citizens can clearly link party behaviour to outcomes in turbulent times. If crises alter issue salience and voter concerns, the capacity of parties to maintain representation, and of voters to reward or punish them, may be fundamentally different from "normal" times. This dissertation focusses on two distinct crises: the 2008 financial crisis and the 2015 refugee crisis, which marked the beginning of a period of crises in the 21st century. In the following chapters, I treat external shocks as the initial triggers of lasting phases of crisis politics that cause increasing uncertainty and pressing urgency (Boin et al. 2005). These periods redirect attention, reorder issue hierarchies (Kingdon 1995; Birkland 1997, 1998) and introduce shifts in political agendas (Baumgartner & Jones 1993). The overlap of these phases also fits broader concepts that are recently gaining more and more attention: the idea of polycrisis or permanent

emergency, in which disruptions reinforce each other and blur the boundary between exceptional and routine politics (Tooze 2022; Agamben 2005).

It is worth clarifying why these particular events provide a compelling comparative test. The 2008 financial crisis originated in the collapse of global credit markets and rippled through European economies, resulting in recessions, bank failures and austerity programmes. It raised questions about fiscal responsibility, social justice and the sustainability of the Eurozone. The 2015 refugee crisis, by contrast, was triggered by conflicts in Syria and the wider Middle East; it brought humanitarian considerations to the fore but was quickly reframed in many national debates as a matter of border security, cultural identity and integration (Goodman et al. 2017). Both events were exogenous to national party systems, yet each touched on distinct issue dimensions, economic redistribution and cultural diversity, that had been politicised long before. Comparing them allows me to ask whether parties respond differently when a structural shock activates different cleavages, and whether the sequence of crises creates compounding or cross-cutting pressures.

While individual crises have attracted scholarly attention, there is limited comparative work examining how political parties adjust their strategies when confronted with successive shocks across different national contexts. Existing studies typically focus on a single country or a single crisis period. This dissertation addresses that gap by adopting a cross-national research design that compares party responses to two major crises and by developing validated text-as-data measures that allow for systematic, comparable analyses of party positions and issue salience. The aim is not only to describe how parties move but also to understand how such movements translate into patterns of accountability and representation under conditions of uncertainty. By combining cross-national analyses with innovative measurement, the thesis demonstrates how party competition is shaped by shared patterns and national specificities and how these dynamics matter for democracies across Europe.

Because shocks have the potential to redirect political attention and alter patterns of accountability, the implication concerns accountability and

representation. Traditional concepts of party competition state that political parties adapt along two central dimensions, positions and issue emphasis, with strategies constrained by individual reputation, office and institutions. I follow existing research that treats emphasis strategies and positional strategies as complementary rather than exclusive under changing salience (Budge & Farlie 1983; Abou-Chadi et al. 2020; Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2020) and that links party choices to the evolving party-system agenda (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2010). Shocks that reset existing agendas may alter voters' capacity to attribute responsibility and sanction incumbents, with the effect depending on context and clarity (Powell & Whitten 1993; Anderson 2000).

Against this background, the guiding research question that structures the dissertation emerges:

*How do national political parties adapt their policy positions and issue agenda in response to the 2008 financial crisis and the 2015 refugee crisis, and what are the consequences of these adaptation mechanisms for subsequent electoral performance?*

In addressing this question, the thesis fills an important gap in comparative politics. Via cross-national analyses of party competition during crises with innovative text-as-data methods, it shows how crisis-driven agenda shifts affect representation and accountability. This contribution speaks directly to debates about how voters assign responsibility and how parties respond to exogenous shocks when their strategic options are constrained. By examining two successive crises across multiple Western European countries, the dissertation demonstrates how party competition is shaped both by shared patterns and by national specificities. The comparative perspective allows me to separate individual responses from structural dynamics, making the results relevant for scholars of European politics and crisis governance.

## **Shocking theory**

To frame the investigation, I draw on complementary strands of theory. The structural approach conceives of party competition as anchored in long-term social conflicts and holds that exogenous shocks activate or deactivate these latent divisions (Kriesi et al. 2015; Kriesi & Hutter 2019). From this perspective, crises matter because they reprioritise issues already embedded in society, their impact depends on how deeply those issues are rooted. The strategic approach, by contrast, emphasises parties' agency in choosing which issues to emphasise and how to position themselves relative to rivals (Budge & Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996). Parties are office-seeking actors who "ride the wave" of public attention when it suits them (Ansolabehere & Iyengar 1994; Wagner & Meyer 2014) but must also respect the constraints of issue ownership and competence. The analysis that follows synthesises these approaches: shocks amplify existing conflicts and open windows of opportunity, but parties' responses are shaped by electoral incentives, ideological legacies and institutional contexts.

The overarching research question sets the stage for a coherent research design. I examine it with attention both to the roles parties occupy and to features of the party system that shape their strategic room for change and adaptation. Each chapter has its own research question and a specific set of hypotheses formulated to address it. While each chapter can be read independently, together they form a coherent design in which successive analyses build upon one another to address the overarching research question from distinct but complementary perspectives. The theoretical lens developed here treats crises as exogenous "focusing events" that inject high uncertainty into politics, shift collective attention and accelerate existing lines of party competition rather than creating entirely new ones. Shocks such as the 2008 financial crisis and the 2015 refugee crisis reweight the agenda by elevating crisis-linked issues and widening their frames (e.g., humanitarian vs. security in the refugee case), which amplifies salience more than it transforms underlying ideology (Baumgartner & Jones 1993; Kingdon 2003; Hall 1993; Habermas 1975; Goodman et al. 2017). These effects play out against a dual structure–strategy backdrop: long-run social conflicts and existing

polarisation set the terrain (Kriesi et al. 2015; Kriesi & Hutter 2019), while parties make strategic choices within it. Importantly, immigration and economic conflict long pre-dated the shocks and were already politically charged (Spoon & Klüver 2015; Häusermann & Kriesi 2015). Sequences of crises matter as well: shocks can compound, but their politicising force is exogenous to parties and not “fully controlled by actors” (Browne et al. 1984; Rovny & Whitefield 2019).

Parties are assumed to be office-seeking and responsive, adapting through two connected channels, position-taking and issue emphasis, and are often “riding the wave” of what voters and media already debate to appear concerned and informed (Strøm 1990; Abou-Chadi et al. 2020; Ansolabehere & Iyengar 1994; Wagner & Meyer 2014). Saliency is therefore partly endogenous to party competition (issue ownership and competence cues) but, under shocks, also pushed exogenously by events. Parties engage even on issues they do not own to influence framing (Budge & Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Walgrave et al. 2011; Aalberg et al. 2012). Context, party-system fragmentation, coalition calculus and incumbency condition these choices, yet crisis-time saliency responses by government and opposition can converge when policy entrepreneurs and public attention jointly move the agenda (Budge 1994; de Vries & Hobolt 2015; van de Wardt et al. 2014; Giger & Klüver 2012). Pre-crisis positions and reputations still constrain how far parties can shift without credibility costs, so adaptation tends to clarify or sharpen stances more than it overhauls them. Applied to the 2015 refugee crisis, uncertainty and threat perceptions help explain why immigration saliency surged even while mass attitudes stayed broadly stable, limiting how much positional change alone can move votes (Scoones & Stirling 2020; Arora & Glover 2017; Da Col & Humphrey 2012; Hogg et al. 2013; Kruglanski et al. 2006; Allport 1954; McLaren 2002; Stockemer et al. 2019; Mader & Schoen 2019). Pre-existing associative issue ownership by the radical right on immigration gave these parties a structural advantage as saliency rose, pressuring mainstream, especially moderate-right, parties to emphasise or reposition within ideological and coalition constraints (Walgrave et al. 2011; Essletzbichler et al. 2018; Greven 2016; Abou-Chadi 2016; de Vries & Hobolt 2015; Sides 2006; Klüver & Sagarzazu 2016). At the same time,

responsibility attributions in crises often penalise incumbents and, by extension, mainstream parties more generally, complicating any electoral pay-off from adaptation (Cox & Katz 1996; Van Spanje 2011; Hjermitsev 2020; Hobolt & Tilley 2016; Calca & Gros 2019). In short, the theory expects shocks to exogenously raise salience and narrow parties' strategic room for adaptation. Parties respond on both channels, but electoral fortunes hinge on ownership and accountability conditions more than on sheer directional shifts.

### **Chapter overview: Assessing a decade of crises**

After introducing the theoretical context, the remaining part of the introduction describes the following chapters of this dissertation, demonstrating how each part builds upon the last. The opening chapter conducts an extensive literature review that maps existing and emerging theoretical frameworks on external shocks and crises. It addresses scholarship on party adaptation and decision-making, demonstrating how these mechanisms are altered under the uncertainty introduced by crises. The chapter situates the dissertation within research traditions that span spatial competition, issue salience and agenda-setting, framing and meaning-making, issue ownership and wave-riding, economic voting and competence politics, organisational adaptation and institutional constraints. By synthesising research on economic voting (Kinder & Kiewiet 1981; Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier 2000), ethnic threat (McLaren 2002), social identity and uncertainty (Hogg et al. 2013), it clarifies distinctions between external shocks, crises and focusing events, and introduces the notions of polycrisis and permanent emergency. It defines the two margins of party strategy, policy positions and issue emphasis, and explains how role distinctions, such as mainstream versus challenger parties and government versus opposition, condition strategic responses. Throughout, it identifies the gaps this dissertation addresses by synthesising insights from economic, sociocultural and agenda-setting perspectives, pointing to the need for cross-national, comparative research on how parties adapt to successive crises.

The second chapter lays out the measurement strategy that underpins the analysis and becomes the central data source for the empirical chapters. It details the development

of a classification approach, designed to extract immigration and integration content from party manifestos. The chapter emphasizes that measurement innovation is a necessary precondition for a comparative approach: without comparable data across languages and election cycles, cross-national analyses of crisis adaptation would be impossible. The outcome is a transparent, uncertainty-aware dataset of immigration positions covering elections across Austria, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the UK (Denmark and Italy being excluded due to coverage constraints). By the end of the chapter, I provide the foundation for the following chapter: a reliable and validated measurement of specific party positions for subsequent analyses to assess party strategies in times of crisis.

Chapter 3 focuses on positional adaptation. Building on the manifesto-derived immigration positions, it is further complemented by economic positions generated by using topic-specific corpora from CMP categories. The chapter assembles a dataset of 290 party positions and 165 positional shifts across seven countries over roughly two decades, covering both economic and immigration dimensions. Its research questions ask whether pre-crisis conditions, specifically, party-system fragmentation, government or opposition status, and prior positional shifts, shape how parties adjust their positions after a crisis.

Empirically, Chapter 3 finds that repositioning is modest. During the financial crisis, positional movement is limited and often statistically indistinguishable from zero. This suggests that parties' economic positions were relatively stable, offering little support for hypotheses that high fragmentation or government status would prompt larger shifts. Regarding the refugee crisis, the analysis challenges the expectation that prior trajectories strictly condition subsequent moves: the hypothesis that parties with higher pre-crisis volatility would shift less in response to the shock could not be confirmed.

Furthermore, the structural impact of party system fragmentation was found to be statistically insignificant, indicating that the number of parliamentary competitors does not automatically dictate adaptation magnitude. Government versus opposition differences also remain unsystematic. Government parties do not move more than opposition parties, challenging a common assumption in the literature. Together,

these results suggest that while shock characteristics are relevant, standard structural predictors like fragmentation and government status play a more limited role than assumed. It concludes that positional adaptation during crises is minimal and highly complex, aligning with research that stresses organisational and contextual constraints on programmatic change (Sommer-Topcu 2009; De Vries & Vis 2013; Bremer 2018; Rovny & Whitefield 2019), but highlighting the difficulty of predicting specific adaptation patterns based solely on pre-existing competition metrics.

Chapter 4 turns to the second dimension of party strategy: issue-emphasis. Recognising that crises may redirect attention more than they shift positions, this chapter measures immigration salience in parliamentary debate. The chapter includes both major and minor parties and accounts for right-wing parties via party family classification. The core hypotheses propose that the 2015 refugee crisis increases immigration salience (H1), that governing and opposition parties respond similarly (H2), and that pre-2015 economic conditions shape subsequent salience responses (H3a/b).

The findings in Chapter 4 reveal a sharp post-2015 increase in parliamentary attention to immigration across parties and chambers, consistent with a focusing effect of the refugee crisis. This increase is not primarily explained by the magnitude of refugee inflows and does not differ systematically between governing and opposition parties. Right-wing parties tend to emphasise immigration more overall, but all parties raise salience after the shock, underscoring that crises can reorder agendas across roles and families.

Pre-2015, higher GDP growth is associated with higher salience, aligning with an ‘issue crowding-out’ perspective where prosperity allows room for secondary debates. However, post-2014, this logic fundamentally shifts: higher unemployment correlates with heightened attention, suggesting a transition to a ‘grievance’ mechanism where economic hardship amplifies the controversy surrounding the shock. While macroeconomic factors shape the context, they do not fully explain the salience surge, which remains mainly shock-driven.

The chapter interprets these patterns through the lens of agenda setting and focusing events (Baumgartner & Jones 1993; Kingdon 1995). It notes that media and framing dynamics, highlighted in various studies (Greussing & Boomgaarden 2017; Harteveld et al. 2018; Hutter & Kriesi 2021; Dennison & Geddes 2018), likely play a role in amplifying salience during the refugee crisis. It concludes that exogenous shocks can reset agendas across party roles and systems, challenging assumptions that incumbents or specific families drive agenda change.

Chapter five analyses the electoral consequences of parties' adaptation mechanisms. It aligns the text-derived measures of positions and salience with vote-share changes across elections in 17 countries, compiling a dataset that merges the ParlEE-based positions with vote-share data. The outcome variable, electoral success, is defined as the change in a party's vote share between one election and the next. The chapter asks whether positional shifts on immigration matter for electoral success (H1a), whether increased immigration salience yields gains (H1b), whether larger or mainstream parties suffer greater vote losses after the shock (H2), and whether adaptation matters less for right-wing parties (H3).

The results in Chapter 5 support H1a: positional shifts on immigration do not predict vote-share changes. This indicates that voters do not respond strongly to modest programmatic adjustments. Conversely, H1b is not supported; rather than increasing vote shares, heightened immigration salience after 2014 correlates with lower vote shares on average. H2 is confirmed: larger mainstream and incumbent parties are disproportionately punished during crises, whereas smaller parties tend to benefit. These patterns suggest that accountability dynamics intensify in turbulent times; voters may sanction incumbents or large parties regardless of their adaptation strategies. H3 receives mixed support: right-wing parties do not exhibit consistent gains from adaptation; one specification shows a weakly significant interaction between salience and the shock, but small sample size limits confidence. The chapter discusses how these findings fit with issue ownership and campaign strategy research (Petrocik 1996; Wagner & Meyer 2014; Spoon & Klüver 2015; Johnston & Sprong 2023). It also connects the results to retrospective voting theories, emphasising that crises can alter accountability perceptions. The chapter cautions that measurement limitations, particularly the reliance on parliamentary speech to gauge positions, and

sample constraints may prevent generalisation. Still, it argues that the findings underscore the complex relationship between crisis adaptation, voter evaluation and party size.

The concluding synthesis weaves together the empirical insights from chapters three through five and articulates the dissertation's broader contributions. Across the analyses, three patterns recur. First, large-scale repositioning is scarce. Chapter 3 shows that positional shifts are limited and often lack statistical significance, especially around the financial crisis. During the refugee crisis, prior trajectories and fragmentation shape subsequent change, but government–opposition differences are not systematic. Second, crises catalyse reallocation of attention. Chapter 4 documents a clear post-2015 rise in immigration salience across parties and chambers, largely unrelated to refugee inflow magnitude and similar for governments and oppositions. Third, the electoral pay-offs of adaptation are asymmetrical. Chapter 5 demonstrates that positional shifts do not systematically affect vote shares, whereas salience increases may reduce vote shares, particularly for larger parties. Voters appear more responsive to shifts in attention than to incremental programmatic adjustments, and they may punish incumbents and large parties regardless of adaptation choices.

In light of these patterns, the dissertation makes three substantive contributions. First, it offers a novel cross-national analysis of how pre-crisis party-system conditions shape adaptation to shocks. It shows that fragmentation matters for adaptation during the refugee crisis but not the economic crisis, that government status has little systematic effect, and that prior shifts do not constrain subsequent change. These findings qualify claims that parties with a history of movement are more likely to adjust (Calca & Gross 2019) and suggest that adaptation in crises follows a distinct logic from normal times. Second, it shifts attention from positions to emphasis. By developing one of the first systematic measures of immigration salience across European parties and chambers, it demonstrates that shocks themselves, rather than their national severity, drive salience increases, and that governments and oppositions respond in parallel. This challenges assumptions that incumbents react more swiftly or strongly to external shocks and enriches literature on party responsiveness and politicisation. Third, it examines the electoral consequences of adaptation. It finds that positional shifts do not significantly affect vote shares, while

salience changes also fail to yield gains. Instead, pre-existing salience, party size and incumbency status determine electoral fortunes, and large mainstream and incumbent parties are punished disproportionately. These outcomes complicate standard accounts of issue ownership and wave-riding by showing that emphasis alone does not guarantee success in crisis contexts.

Collectively, these contributions demonstrate how crises reorder party agendas without inducing broad programmatic convergence or divergence. They reveal that voters may be more responsive to shifts in attention than to modest positional adjustments and highlight the importance of pre-crisis conditions, shock characteristics and party size in shaping electoral fortunes. The dissertation thus advances the study of party competition in crisis settings by demonstrating that adaptation is more visible in shifts of attention than in programmatic repositioning, that systemic and role-based conditions shape responses in contingent ways, and that electoral outcomes depend less on short-term strategic choices than on pre-existing conditions. Beyond its empirical findings, the thesis speaks to broader debates about democratic resilience in turbulent times. It underscores that parties' responsiveness to external shocks is conditioned by institutional arrangements and historical trajectories, which has implications for understanding accountability and representation. Methodologically, it highlights the value of text-as-data approaches for measuring party positions and emphasis, showing that transparent, uncertainty-aware methods can yield robust comparative insights. Substantively, it contributes to theories of spatial competition, agenda-setting and electoral accountability, extending them into the domain of crisis politics. By focusing on the 2008 financial crisis and the 2015 refugee crisis, it demonstrates that different types of shocks can produce distinct but overlapping patterns of adaptation, and it shows how comparative research across countries and crises can untangle the interplay between structural and strategic factors in shaping party behaviour.

## ***Chapter 1: Literature Review - Party Competition in Times of Crises***

In recent decades, scholars of comparative politics have increasingly focused on the changing nature of crises and their impact on party competition. The early 21st century has been marked by an almost continuous sequence of crises that have reshaped the political environment in which parties operate. From the global financial crisis of 2008 and the Eurozone debt crisis to the 2015 refugee crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the war in Ukraine, political systems have been subjected to a series of exogenous shocks. These events, while differing in origin, duration, and severity, share a fundamental characteristic: they confront existing political structures with heightened levels of uncertainty and stress. As a result, political parties increasingly operate not under routine policy conditions, but within what may be called the logic of crisis politics.

Classical models of party behavior, most notably those developed by Downs (1957) and Sartori (1976), were formulated under the assumption of relatively stable systems. Today's environment, however, is marked by volatility, fragmentation, and the erosion of traditional political alignments. External shocks change issue hierarchies, pressuring parties to adjust both their substantive positions and the emphasis they place on different issues (Budge & Farlie, 1983; Abou-Chadi et al., 2020). Crises are by definition unpredictable and transformative: they compress time horizons, elevate public expectations, and often restructure the strategic incentives available to political actors. Importantly, these are not isolated or anomalous events and can be described as a period of polycrisis (Tooze, 2022) or permanent emergency (Agamben, 2005), which is characterized by overlapping and reinforcing disruptions. Multiple external shocks, e.g. economic, migratory, environmental, occur simultaneously or in rapid succession, creating what Tooze (2022) describes as a situation where individual crises cannot be understood in isolation. The polycrisis concept goes beyond the simple accumulation of shocks; it signals a structural transformation where the boundaries between economic, social, and ecological domains become less strict. The polycrisis perspective highlights mutual

reinforcement across domains: feedback loops connect economic, social, geopolitical, and environmental stresses, producing cross-domain interactions that amplify disruptions.

Crises also differ along critical dimensions: their origin (natural vs. man-made), onset (sudden vs. creeping), visibility, and political impact. For example, the 2001 terrorist attacks and the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster prompted immediate and highly visible responses, whereas the climate crisis advances gradually, allowing for political adjustment. The 2008 financial crisis emerged from the private sector yet demanded public and political intervention, raising questions about regulatory oversight and moral hazard. Research suggests that endogenous crises (those rooted in domestic decisions) tend to generate more public blame directed at incumbents than exogenous ones (Shaver, 1985; Powell & Whitten, 1993). Accordingly, parties may externalize blame, advocate reforms, or minimize the crisis, depending on ideological orientation, constituency pressures, and international obligations. For analytical clarity, this dissertation distinguishes between external shocks, crises, and focusing events.

An external shock refers to a sudden, exogenous disruption beyond the immediate control of domestic political actors (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993). External shocks trigger immediate reactions but still allow for relatively clear attribution of cause and responsibility.

A crisis follows an external shock and conveys the institutional and political condition of heightened uncertainty, urgency, and contestation (see Boin et al., 2005). While an external shock can be the triggering event, the crisis describes the longer-term state in which political actors face new problems and distributional conflicts.

A focusing event is a distinct occurrence that captures and redirects political attention, frequently acting as a trigger for shifts in issue salience or policy change (Kingdon, 2003). Such events, often external shocks or crises, can concentrate political and/or public attention on a particular issue or topic.

Events such as the 2008 financial collapse and the 2015 refugee crisis clarify these dynamics. They did not merely serve as contextual background but were formative

forces that reshaped what was politically salient, legitimate, and electorally advantageous. As Hall (1993) argued, crises “create the perfect preconditions for paradigm change” by opening up discursive and political space to challenge established policy frameworks and institutional norms. In such moments, political parties face a dual challenge: to appear responsive to public sentiment, while positioning themselves strategically within a rapidly shifting competitive field.

## **1. Theoretical Foundations of Party Competition**

### **1.1 Spatial Competition and Positional Politics**

Anthony Downs’ (1957) spatial model of party competition has long served as a foundation of electoral theory. In this model, political parties are rational actors seeking to maximize votes by positioning themselves along a policy continuum, typically left to right, in alignment with voter preferences. Under conditions of systemic stability, this leads to convergence around the median voter. The model has since been elaborated to incorporate multiple policy dimensions, asymmetric information, and voter heterogeneity, but the basic logic remains influential for many scholars and theories. However, crisis conditions follow different assumptions. Volatility in public opinion, the emergence of new issues, and shifting voter identities complicate the strategic decision-making processes. Empirical studies demonstrate both the continued relevance and limitations of spatial adjustment. Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009) show that parties do respond to voter shifts, but that changes are incremental and often constrained by historical reputations. Ahlquist et al. (2020) argue that globalization and economic shocks create new cleavages, such as cosmopolitanism versus protectionism, that are not easily captured on the traditional left–right axis.

Crisis-induced volatility disrupts the spatial logic in two main ways. First, new issues may not fit within the dominant ideological spectrum. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, parties were confronted with complex trade-offs between public health and individual liberty. Second, parties may alter not just their positions, but the very issues they prioritize. This challenges the spatial assumption that party behavior is best explained by positional proximity to voter preferences.

## 1.2 Issue Saliency, Space and Agenda Setting

The issue-saliency perspective, introduced by Budge and Farlie (1983), offers an alternative approach. It suggests that parties compete less by shifting positions and more by emphasizing issues that are advantageous to them, a strategy often linked to “issue ownership.” In this view, even ideologically stable parties can remain electorally viable by adapting their focus. Theories of agenda dynamics further refine this perspective. Baumgartner and Jones (1993) argue that political agendas experience long periods of stability, punctuated by sudden shifts triggered by focusing events. Such events allow previously marginal issues to dominate political discourse. In this chapter, I treat positional and saliency logics as complementary under crisis: shocks reorder what is talked about, and parties then decide how and where to move.

Recognizing the limitations of both purely positional and saliency-based models, scholars have developed hybrid approaches. Abou-Chadi (2020) argues that parties engage in simultaneous positional and saliency adaptation depending on the intensity of competition and the nature of a topic. During periods of heightened volatility, parties may adjust both their ideological stance and the prominence of particular issues to better align with voter expectations. Beyond repositioning, parties frequently engage in saliency manipulation, adjusting which issues are emphasized or downplayed. This allows parties to highlight their strengths and deflect attention from vulnerabilities. In crises, saliency control becomes especially strategic, as the public agenda is in flux and voters are more attentive. Here, Budge and Farlie (1983) argue that parties selectively stress issues expected to resonate with target constituencies.

Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2010) further introduce the notion of the party system agenda, shifting the focus from individual party strategies to the aggregated issue agenda of the political system. Parties frequently choose to emphasize different issues rather than all talking about the same issue. This means the party system agenda, essentially the set of issues receiving attention from parties in parliament or in campaigns, can be dispersed across multiple topics, each pushed by different parties. Opposition parties often drive their attention to issues they own, while

governing parties tend to prioritize a set of issues related to their policy agenda or areas where they have ownership. The government often avoids engaging in opposition-defined issues, preferring to keep the spotlight on its own performance in other domains. However, Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2010) also note conditions under which an issue can penetrate across the partisan divide. If an issue becomes electorally potent, due to public opinion shifts or external events, even parties that did not originally emphasize it may be forced to respond. This is how an issue moves from being a single party's talking point to becoming part of the broader party system agenda. The concept of the party system agenda thus ties together individual strategies and systemic outcomes: it is the emergent pattern resulting from each party's strategic choices as crises tend to trigger sharp, often temporary surges in the visibility of specific issues, which parties then fold into their agendas and communication strategies (Gessler & Hunger, 2022; Boydston et al., 2014; Vliegthart et al., 2016).

### 1.3 Issue Framing

Entman's (1993) framing theory adds that how issues are presented, the language, causal attributions, and proposed solutions, significantly shapes public interpretation. In the context of crisis politics, framing becomes a crucial strategic tool. Boin and 't Hart (2021) emphasize that during crises, party leaders engage in "meaning-making" activities. Their rhetorical leadership seeks not only to propose solutions but also to shape the interpretation of events. This aligns with research on political framing in times of uncertainty, suggesting that narrative control can be as electorally significant as substantive policy proposals. Goodman et al. (2017) trace how the 2015 refugee crisis was initially framed in humanitarian terms, then shifted toward a securitized immigration narrative following terrorist attacks. Dennison & Geddes (2018) demonstrate that right-wing parties already associated with immigration were best positioned to capitalize on this salience shift. And environmental parties, for instance, framed COVID-19 recovery plans in terms of ecological sustainability, advocating for green stimulus packages, while conservative parties emphasized law and order when pandemic-related protests arose. Following Entman (1993), framing links problem definition, causal attribution, and remedies; in crises, this meaning-making becomes a core leadership task.

#### 1.4 Between Issue Ownership and Riding the Wave

Issue ownership theory posits that parties highlight issues on which they have established credibility and a perceived advantage with voters, thereby “owning” those issues in the public’s perception (Petrocik, 1996). At its core, issue ownership means that some parties are trusted by voters on certain issues due to long-term reputation, history, or experience. Petrocik argued that parties and candidates strategically emphasize the issues they “own”. That is, issues on which they are viewed as more competent or credible than their rivals. While developed within the US dual-party context, this insight built on earlier “saliency” theories (Budge & Farlie, 1983) which similarly argued that parties compete by emphasizing favorable issues rather than directly confronting opponents’ strengths.

In some cases, parties cannot ignore issues that are top-of-mind for voters (e.g. a focusing event or crisis). This is where the alternative approach, “riding the wave”, comes into play as a contrasting or complementary strategy. The concept of “riding the wave” in issue competition describes a strategy almost opposite to issue ownership: parties align their emphasis with the current public agenda, even if those issues are traditionally “owned” by other parties. Instead of changing what voters care about, parties adopting a riding-the-wave strategy change their own priorities to match voters’ concerns. For example, if immigration or climate change suddenly dominate public debate, a party might decide to also prioritize that issue in its campaign, not because it has owned it historically, but because it’s what voters are most concerned about at the moment. Riding the wave can be especially attractive to catch-all or incumbent parties that must appear responsive to public needs. While issue ownership suggests divergence in party agendas, riding the wave leads to convergence, with multiple parties emphasizing the same popular issue (even if it means contesting on issues “owned” by another party). An example is the post-2008 financial crisis period, when virtually all parties, left or right, felt compelled to focus on economic stability and jobs, regardless of which party traditionally owned economic competence. Similarly, when terrorism spikes as a public concern, even parties not traditionally associated with national security might amplify their security policies to ride that issue’s wave. In sum, riding the wave underscores the role of the external context (public issue agenda) in shaping party strategies, whereas issue

ownership underscores internal strengths and brand identity. Modern campaigns often blend both approaches: parties foreground their owned issues but also address headline issues of the day, seeking a balance between agenda-setting and agenda-reacting.

### 1.5 Economic Voting in Party Competition

Economic voting means that voters judge incumbents by how the economy is doing: they tend to reward them under good and punish them under less favorable economic conditions. These judgments are mainly retrospective and are among the strongest predictors of election results (Kinder & Kiewiet, 1981; Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2000; Nadeau & Lewis-Beck, 2001; Duch & Stevenson, 2008). The effect is larger when responsibility is clear and weaker under coalitions or multi-level governance, where accountability is harder to assign (Powell & Whitten, 1993; Anderson, 2000). For party competition, the economy acts as a cross-cutting valence criterion, a competence signal that matters regardless of ideology. Even parties that “own” other issues must engage it, and crises often push parties to emphasize economic competence over ideological proximity (Duch & Stevenson, 2008; Powell & Whitten, 1993).

Crises also introduce cleavages that cut across the left–right divide. Economic shocks can force parties to bridge conflicting constituencies (Ahlquist et al., 2020). At the same time, the rise of a transnational cleavage pitting cosmopolitan against nationalist orientations has grown in importance (Hooghe & Marks, 2018). As a result, party competition in crises becomes more multidimensional, requiring both positional shifts and changes in how parties frame their narratives.

### 1.6. Punctuated Equilibrium Theory

While Issue Ownership and Economic Voting theories explain the stability of party competition well, they struggle to account for sudden and radical shifts. This is where Punctuated Equilibrium Theory offers an explanatory framework. Baumgartner and Jones (1993) argue that political systems are generally characterized by long periods of stasis or incrementalism. This stability is not accidental but structurally caused by institutional friction and the cognitive limits of

decision-makers. Political actors behave as serial processors. They cannot attend to all issues at once and tend to ignore new signals for as long as possible. Consequently, resistance to change builds up until the pressure becomes overwhelming.

When a new issue finally captures macro-political attention, this friction gives way to positive feedback loops. The result is a punctuation. This refers to a sudden burst of rapid change that breaks the previous equilibrium. Baumgartner et al. (2006) demonstrate that this specific rhythm of stability followed by change applies across different political systems. In the context of this thesis, I treat the financial and refugee crises as such punctuation points. These external shocks disrupt the normal friction of the party system described in the previous sections. They force parties to overcome their usual resistance and adapt their positions rapidly. This perspective bridges the gap between the stability of normal politics and the volatility of crisis adaptation discussed in the next chapter.

## **2. Crisis politics following External Shocks and Focusing Events**

### **2.1 Polycrisis, Permanent Emergency, and Focusing Events**

Boin et al. (2005) define crises as events characterized by high threat, urgency, and uncertainty-conditions that strain institutional capacity and force rapid decision-making. Birkland (1997) introduces the notion of “focusing events”, sudden, attention-grabbing occurrences that elevate particular issues on the public and political agenda. Kingdon’s (1995) multiple streams framework similarly emphasizes that windows of opportunity for policy change often emerge when problems, solutions, and political conditions align, frequently triggered by such events. Here shocks act as triggers, crises describe the resulting condition, and focusing events serve as attention catalysts. Crisis politics conceptualizes crises as disruptions that challenge the status quo, provoke public anxiety, and open opportunities for political change.

Recent literature suggests that many contemporary crises cannot be clearly separated but are part of an overlapping matrix. The concept of polycrisis has become increasingly prominent in contemporary political science as scholars attempt to make

sense of the intensifying overlap of systemic disruptions. First introduced into mainstream discourse by Tooze (2022), polycrisis refers not merely to the co-occurrence of multiple crises, but to their mutual reinforcement, unpredictable interactions, and cumulative systemic overload. For example, the 2008 financial crisis did not merely cause economic distress, it exposed structural inequalities, eroded institutional trust, and contributed to the rise of populist challengers. The 2015 refugee crisis overlapped with ongoing debates about European integration and austerity, while the COVID-19 pandemic intersected with rising geopolitical tensions and environmental challenges. In contrast to sequential or isolated crises, polycrises are characterized by complex feedback loops between economic instability, political fragmentation, environmental breakdown, and social dislocation.

This multiplicity complicates causal inference and blurs the boundary between crisis and normal politics. Agamben's (2005) concept of the "state of exception" captures the way in which emergency politics can become normalized. In a polycrisis environment, the distinction between temporary emergency and structural transformation becomes increasingly ambiguous. For political parties, crises-conditions dramatically increase the uncertainty of strategic environments. Classical issue competition models, whether spatial (Downs, 1957), saliency-based (Budge & Farlie, 1983), or hybrid (Petrocik, 1996), presume a relatively stable issue hierarchy. Crises destabilize this structure by collapsing temporal and thematic boundaries between crises: economic responses may ignite political distrust, while migration policies intersect with welfare stress and geopolitical fragmentation. Consequently, parties are not simply reactive but must construct coherent strategies under informational complexity and reputational risk.

This cognitive and institutional overload poses critical limits to party adaptation. As Diamond (2024) and Lawrence et al. (2024) argue, the perception of polycrisis creates a narrative vacuum: parties struggle to maintain agenda control, internal cohesion, and message clarity. The 2009 financial crisis and the 2015 refugee crisis, though analytically distinct, revealed how intertwined social and political shocks render binary policy positions ineffective. Instead, parties must simultaneously manage risk communication, policy coordination, and justification, while under pressure from both mainstream competitors and populist challengers.

## 2.2 Crisis Characteristics and Political Consequences

Crises differ across several analytically relevant dimensions: origin (domestic vs. international), scope (single vs. multi-issue), duration (short-term vs. long-term), and visibility. These attributes shape public perception and party responses. Ahlquist et al. (2020) argue that international economic shocks are more likely to be externalized, while domestic failures invite greater blame attribution. Similarly, 't Hart and Boin's work (2001) differentiates fast- vs. slow-burning crisis and later work conceptualizes creeping crises, long-incubating threats such as climate change that unfold gradually but generate sustained political pressure (Boin et al., 2020).

The political salience of a crisis depends on media coverage, elite framing, and public resonance. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic gained immediate attention due to vivid visual cues, overwhelmed hospitals, global lockdowns, that transcended ideological boundaries in the early stages. Conversely, the refugee crisis triggered polarized narratives: humanitarian versus security-driven frames dominated different partisan and national contexts. In each case, parties were compelled to take positions, assign blame, and propose solutions, yet the nature of the crisis conditioned which strategies were viable.

## 2.3 Strategic Uncertainty and Party Behavior

At the heart of crisis politics lies strategic uncertainty. While public preferences are relatively stable and predictable in normal times, crises introduce volatility, confusion, and conflicting signals, undermining the traditional feedback loop between party positioning and public opinion (Adams & Somer-Topcu, 2009). This uncertainty has two main implications. First, voter preferences become more volatile and harder to anticipate. Second, parties may engage in imitating behavior to avoid isolation, often converging in their strategies, a pattern Tavits (2007) describes as herding. Faced with unpredictability, parties tend to prioritize risk avoidance over ideological clarity (Jensen & Lee, 2017). These dynamics challenge the foundational assumption in electoral competition theory that parties should responsively adapt to voter preferences (Wagner & Meyer, 2014). If voter signals are inconsistent or unclear, how should parties respond?

This dissertation adopts an extended perspective, suggesting that party behavior under crisis conditions is shaped not only by public signals but also by institutional constraints, historical commitments, and short-term survival strategies. One common strategy is “riding the wave” (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1994), whereby parties emphasize issues that dominate media and public discourse. Doing so can enhance their perceived responsiveness and relevance, even if they do not traditionally “own” these issues (Wagner & Meyer, 2014). Moreover, engaging with salient issues may allow parties to shape public framing and contest dominant narratives (Aalberg et al., 2012). However, party responsiveness is not uniform. Spoon and Klüver (2015) show that party reactions depend on the degree of voter polarization, particularly on issues like immigration that were already divisive before the crisis. In contrast, recent work suggests that whether green and radical-left parties increase emphasis during high-salience periods is conditional, they broaden under some contexts (e.g., high public salience, economic threat) but face trade-offs due to finite manifesto space and the costs of moving beyond owned issues (Spoon & Williams, 2021)

### **3. Case Studies of Crisis Events**

#### **3.1 The Refugee Crisis of 2015**

The refugee influx of 2015 serves as a paradigmatic focusing event that reshaped the nature of party competition across Europe. Unexpected numbers of people fleeing conflict zones in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan sought asylum, placing unprecedented strain on national reception systems and political institutions. Although the origins of the crisis were international, its domestic implications were immediate and deeply polarizing.

Right-wing populist parties, such as the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany or the National Rally in France, seized the opportunity to amplify anti-immigration rhetoric, framing the crisis as a threat to national identity, public order, and social cohesion. Their message resonated especially among voters who felt culturally or economically marginalized. In contrast, mainstream conservative parties, such as Germany’s CDU/CSU, faced internal divisions between

humanitarian-oriented and restrictionist factions. Social democratic parties were similarly caught between their progressive ideals and fears of losing working-class voters to the radical right. Liberal and Green parties generally emphasized humanitarian obligations and European solidarity but often lacked the electoral leverage to steer public discourse. This divergence in party responses highlights how crises not only shift salience but also expose or deepen ideological and strategic tensions within party systems. Hooghe and Marks (2018) argue that the refugee crisis catalyzed a new cleavage in European politics, cosmopolitanism versus nationalism, cutting across traditional left–right lines. Dennison and Geddes (2018) show that immigration remained a dominant issue long after 2015, especially in countries where right-wing challengers successfully claimed ownership over the topic. Across multiple cases, parties adopting hardline positions gained electoral ground during high-salience migration shocks, while competitors who failed to offer clear alternatives fared worse (Halla et al., 2017; Edo et al., 2019).

As Dalton et al. (2017) caution, short-term volatility does not necessarily imply long-term realignment. Whether the refugee crisis constitutes a critical juncture with lasting systemic effects remains debated. What is clear, however, is that it reconfigured issue hierarchies, affected coalition dynamics, and expanded the strategic decision-making of challenger parties.

### 3.2 The Financial Crisis of 2008

The 2008 global financial crisis also represents a major exogenous shock with transformative implications for party competition. Originating in the collapse of the U.S. subprime mortgage market, the crisis quickly escalated into a systemic failure that spread across banking sectors and sovereign debt markets worldwide. In Europe, its effects were compounded by the structural vulnerabilities of the Eurozone, triggering fiscal austerity, mass unemployment, and political instability. The political fallout was severe. Mainstream center-left parties, often in government when the crisis erupted, were disproportionately blamed for perceived regulatory negligence and mismanagement. In countries like Spain, Greece, and Ireland, incumbent social democrats suffered dramatic electoral losses. Center-right parties initially benefited

by presenting themselves as fiscally responsible alternatives, yet their endorsement of austerity measures soon exposed them to backlash.

The crisis opened political space for new actors. Parties such as Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain rose rapidly by framing the crisis as a consequence of neoliberal orthodoxy and elite failure. These movements rejected centrist consensus and mobilized disenchanted voters through anti-austerity platforms. Simultaneously, far-right parties capitalized on economic grievances by linking them to broader anti-establishment narratives, even if immigration was not yet the central issue.

Scholars have emphasized the long-term effects of the financial crisis on political systems. Ahlquist et al. (2020) and Hernández & Kriesi (2016) show that economic insecurity contributed to realignment processes, undermining traditional class-based voting and fuelling support for both left- and right-wing populism. The crisis also revealed the inadequacy of spatial competition models, as new cleavages, such as open vs. closed societies, began to supplant the standard economic dimension.

Like the refugee crisis, the financial crash of 2008 challenged party identities, altered voter expectations, and expanded the strategic repertoire of political competition under stress. Together, these two cases illustrate how crises vary in character yet converge in their capacity to disrupt and reshape the logic of party competition.

#### **4. Party Adaptation Mechanisms**

##### **4.1 Positional Realignment: Policy Repositioning and Ideological Shifts**

Positional realignment refers to parties adjusting policy stances to track shifting voter preferences or to differentiate from rivals. Such shifts can occur on economic, cultural, or institutional dimensions. Mainstream parties, especially those in government, often pursue strategic convergence, aligning with perceived public sentiment while trying not to abandon core commitments. After the 2008 financial crisis, for example, several center-left parties adopted more fiscally conservative stances to signal competence. By contrast, radical right parties frequently opt for niche differentiation, offering ideologically purer alternatives to attract protest voters. Abou-Chadi et al. (2020) show that radical parties are more ideologically volatile and view crises as opportunities to redefine the issue space, whereas Adams and Somer-

Topcu (2009) warn that abrupt shifts can undermine credibility, particularly for parties with long-standing reputational anchors.

Recent work links these choices to agenda breadth and party status. Greene (2016) finds that parties calibrate how wide their campaign agendas are to role and context: incumbents typically broaden to defend records, while opposition parties narrow to high-yield domains. Favorable economic conditions further encourage incumbents to streamline around strengths. Internal composition also matters. Greene and O'Brien (2016) show that greater female representation is associated with increased emphasis on social and equality issues in party platforms, suggesting that actor constellations can redirect attention without wholesale program change. Media dynamics filter these emphases: Greene and Lühiste (2018) demonstrate that news coverage can amplify gendered priorities, shaping how voters perceive parties' issue profiles.

Institutional and reputational constraints limit how far parties can move. Coalition agreements restrict policy flexibility. Electoral systems shape incentives, proportional rules accommodate ideological diversity, while majoritarian rules encourage convergence. Parties with cross-pressured constituencies (e.g., center-left parties balancing cosmopolitan urbanites and socially conservative workers) face especially hard trade-offs. Timing also matters: during acute crises parties may prioritize short-term survival, whereas when elections are distant, they can pursue more sustained repositioning.

#### 4.2 Salience Shifting and Framing Strategies

Beyond repositioning, parties frequently engage in salience manipulation, adjusting which issues are emphasized or downplayed. This allows parties to highlight their strengths and deflect attention from vulnerabilities. In crises, salience control becomes especially strategic, as the public agenda is in flux and voters are more attentive.

Environmental parties, for instance, framed COVID-19 recovery plans in terms of ecological sustainability, advocating for green stimulus packages. Conservative parties emphasized law and order when pandemic-related protests arose. Budge and Farlie (1983) argue that parties selectively stress issues expected to resonate with

target constituencies. Entman's (1993) framing theory further suggests that issue emphasis entails problem definition, causal attribution, and proposed remedies, all of which shape public interpretation.

Crisis situations often invite interpretive contestation. During the Eurozone debt crisis, some parties framed austerity as fiscal responsibility, while others portrayed it as externally imposed injustice. In the refugee crisis, humanitarian and securitarian frames competed across party lines. The strategic success of a party's framing depends on its coherence, media resonance, and alignment with voter predispositions. Baum and Potter (2015) show that media coverage of foreign policy crises significantly affects public opinion, highlighting the indirect routes through which party framing influences outcomes.

Digital media intensifies framing competition. Social media platforms allow for rapid message dissemination but also foster fragmentation and echo chambers. While this enables agile communication, it risks narrowing outreach to ideological subgroups and reinforcing polarization.

#### 4.3 Organizational and Resource Adaptation

Crises can prompt changes not only in party rhetoric or positions but also in internal structures and capacities. Organizational adaptation includes the establishment of crisis task forces, shifts in campaign resource allocation, or the creation of specialized roles for monitoring public opinion. Well-resourced parties are better equipped to adapt. They can commission polls, hire communication experts, and adjust strategy swiftly. Smaller parties rely more on volunteer networks and grassroots mobilization. While digital tools can reduce costs and increase outreach, disparities in technical capacity and infrastructure persist.

Ahlquist et al. (2020) note that transnational crises demand expertise in supranational policy arenas, skills that not all parties possess. Moreover, crises can exacerbate internal divisions. Intra-party conflicts over appropriate responses may erupt, especially when ideological factions interpret crises differently. Leadership struggles, factional realignments, or even splinters may ensue. The challenge lies in maintaining internal cohesion while projecting external clarity. Despite its

importance, organizational adaptation remains underexplored compared to issue-, and position-based strategies. Future research should investigate how internal party dynamics shape the effectiveness and direction of crisis response.

#### 4.4 Intra-party Logics of Issue Attention

Issue emphasis is also the outcome of intra-party bargaining. Factional actors seek to channel organisational resources toward their priority domains, with influence roughly proportional to bargaining power (Ceron, 2019). Party conferences and delegate arenas function as transmission belts: faction-sponsored motions better predict which topics enter manifestos than leadership speeches, indicating that internal coalitions can steer salience even under strong leaders (Ceron & Greene, 2019). Leaders may override factional pushes to preserve coherence or widen appeal, but doing so entails trade-offs in internal unity. The upshot is that crisis-time salience shifts reflect not only external pressures, but also within-party contests over which issues should occupy scarce agenda space (Ceron, 2019; Ceron & Greene, 2019).

### **5. Impacts on Party Competition and Polarization**

Party adaptation during crises can have far-reaching consequences for the structure and intensity of political competition. Some parties are electorally rewarded for clear, consistent, and timely crisis responses, while others suffer losses due to perceived indecisiveness or inconsistency. Crises create both threats and opportunities: they can catalyze party renewal or accelerate decline.

During the refugee crisis, parties perceived as competent and coherent on migration attracted new voters, whereas those seen as divided or passive lost ground (Lutz, 2016; Fumarola, 2021). Similarly, in the wake of the Eurozone crisis, anti-austerity parties gained traction in Southern Europe, while traditional center-left parties suffered severe electoral erosion. These developments reflect what Mair (2013) has described as the “hollowing of Western democracy,” where mainstream parties struggle to maintain credibility amid growing demands and reduced steering capacity.

Crises can also fuel political polarization. Hooghe and Marks (2018) argue that new cultural and sovereignty-related cleavages increasingly structure party systems, especially in Europe. The refugee crisis amplified these divisions, as did the politicization of COVID-19 containment measures. When crises become moralized and identity-laden, issue compromise becomes harder, and the competitive space more antagonistic.

### 5.1 Voter Volatility and Participation

Crises often heighten voter volatility by disrupting party–voter linkages (Fieldhouse et al., 2020; Hernández & Kriesi, 2016). Sudden shifts in issue salience, emotional responses, and heightened uncertainty can erode partisan loyalty, making electorates more fluid and unpredictable. Crises often accelerate longer-term trends of partisan dealignment (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000) and structural transformations—such as the decline of mainstream parties and the rise of cultural conflict (Inglehart, 1990; Hooghe & Marks, 2018). These dynamics frequently benefit challenger- and populist parties, who can channel disaffection into protest voting or abstention, particularly when they present themselves as anti-system alternatives. However, the capacity to convert discontent into lasting support depends on organizational strength, message coherence, and charismatic leadership.

At the same time, crises do not uniformly destabilize political alignments. Research on affective polarization suggests that strong partisan identities can also inhibit switching behavior, anchoring voters to their prior preferences even under pressure (Iyengar et al., 2019). Similarly, the effects of crises on voter turnout are mixed. In some contexts, crises mobilize participation—especially when framed as existential or high-stakes, while in others, disillusionment or logistical barriers reduce engagement, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, institutional context plays a critical role: while proportional electoral systems tend to amplify volatility by lowering entry barriers for new parties, majoritarian systems often cushion dominant actors, shaping both the incentives for voter defection and the strategic responses of political elites.

## 6. Structural and Systemic Perspectives

### 6.1 Institutional Constraints and Strategic Options

Party responses to crises are not shaped solely by ideology or voter demand, they are also deeply conditioned by institutional frameworks. Electoral systems, government types, and veto structures all influence the strategic room for maneuvering available to political actors.

In majoritarian systems, where vote-to-seat translation is less proportional, parties tend to avoid ideological fragmentation and converge toward the median voter. In contrast, proportional representation (PR) systems allow for greater diversity and accommodate challenger parties more easily. This has implications for crisis responsiveness: PR systems may facilitate innovation, while majoritarian systems reward moderation and stability. The impact of electoral thresholds and coalition dynamics is similarly significant. In multi-party systems, parties must consider not only voters but also potential allies and government formation prospects.

Coalition governance adds another layer of complexity. Parties in coalition must negotiate crisis responses within fragile alliances, limiting unilateral repositioning. Moreover, the presence of strong institutional veto players, such as constitutional courts, second chambers, or independent central banks, can constrain the policy space and frustrate adaptation strategies, especially during high-stakes crises like financial bailouts or pandemic measures.

### 6.2 Mainstream vs. Challenger Party Response

One of Spoon and Klüver's (2019) key contributions is to show that niche parties (e.g., issue-focused actors) double down on a narrow set of owned issues, while mainstream parties are more likely to shift their emphasis in response to public opinion or competitors. Because niche parties derive identity and votes from a specific issue or ideology, they keep that issue at the center to maintain ownership. Big tents, by contrast, have incentives to ride waves, amplifying whichever issues can attract the most voters at a given moment. Spoon and Klüver (2019) also find that when an issue becomes more salient, large parties often increase their attention to it, especially when competitors gain ground. The result is a dynamic interplay:

mainstream parties try to co-opt salient issues raised by niche or opposition parties to protect vote share but must avoid diluting their brand.

Rather than focusing only on the left–right spectrum, recent work emphasizes party system position, mainstream versus challenger, as a key driver of crisis responses. This distinction highlights institutional embeddedness, access to executive power, and ties to the status quo. Mainstream parties, typically anchored in state institutions, stress procedural continuity, institutional legitimacy, and the containment of volatility. Their crisis strategy leans on technocratic competence, cross-party cooperation, and appeals to responsibility. Challenger parties, including populist, anti-establishment, and niche actors, tend to frame crises as products of elite failure, corruption, or systemic dysfunction. They use crises to delegitimize incumbents, disrupt consensus politics, and promote radical or anti-system solutions (Kollberg, 2024).

These contrasts sharpen under crisis conditions, when institutional trust erodes and issue salience is in flux. Challengers often deploy emotionally charged, simplified narratives that channel blame and draw clear moral lines between “the people” and “the elite.” Mainstream parties rely more on proceduralism, cautious framing, and appeals to stability-strategies that can seem ill-suited to a crisis atmosphere but aim to preserve continuity. Voter responses differ by party type: among challenger-party supporters, cue effects hinge on perceived party competence; among mainstream-party supporters, both identity and competence matter (Torcal et al., 2024).

Importantly, the boundary between mainstream and challenger is porous. Parties can switch roles across issues or over an electoral cycle. A party may use challenger rhetoric on cultural questions while advancing technocratic solutions on economic policy, or the reverse. In crises, such hybridization becomes a strategic resource: populist actors may advocate direct democracy while engaging in institutionalized policymaking, and mainstream actors may adopt outsider rhetoric to signal responsiveness. These blurred lines complicate assumptions about ideological coherence and challenge static models of party competition, calling for dynamic, context-sensitive accounts that consider party position and the evolving constraints and opportunities of multi-dimensional crises.

### 6.2.1 Government versus Opposition

Spoon and Klüver's work (2019) extends the study of issue competition into multi-party systems, providing a contemporary perspective on how parties strategize in more complex electoral environments. In multi-party politics, parties range from large mainstream ones to smaller niche parties, and they often form coalitions. Spoon and Klüver examine how these factors influence whether parties emphasize owned issues or ride the wave of public salience. Their research highlights that party strategy is conditional on party size, ideology, and whether the party is in government or opposition.

Their work also underscores the role of government vs. opposition status. Parties in government cannot completely ignore highly salient problems of the day, they are held accountable for addressing them. Thus, government parties frequently have to ride the wave of issues that arise (for example, responding to a sudden crisis or policy problem) even if those issues are not their traditional strengths. However, Spoon and Klüver note that government parties will still emphasize aspects of those issues that align with their competence. On the other side, opposition parties have more freedom to choose what to talk about. Often, opposition parties will strategically hammer the government on issues where the government's performance is weak, which tends to coincide with issues the opposition party "owns" or has greater credibility on. This aligns with classic issue ownership logic, adapted to a parliamentary context: opposition parties elevate their own issues to challenge the incumbents, while incumbents may try either to neutralize those issues or to shift attention elsewhere.

Government parties, in particular, are forced to react because retrospective voting theory posits that they must fear being voted out of office if voters hold them responsible for unsatisfying conditions (Calca & Gross, 2019; Ahlquist et al., 2020). However, the costs of coalition governance further exacerbate this challenge for government parties. Research on the cost of coalitions (Van Spanje, 2011; Hjermitsev, 2020) shows that coalition partners are often collectively punished at the polls, as voters struggle to attribute responsibility accurately among multiple governing parties. Coalition governments can face compounded blame due to the

perception of inefficiency, divided responsibility, or failure to effectively manage crises.

At the same time, the literature on incumbency advantage (e.g., Cox & Katz, 1996) suggests that incumbents may retain some resilience, particularly in systems where individual incumbents or parties can leverage institutional advantages, established networks, or voter loyalty. Nevertheless, this advantage may be insufficient to offset the broader "punishment" dynamics described above. Retrospective voting is likely crisis-sensitive, and external shocks like the refugee crisis undermine traditional incumbency advantages by intensifying voter dissatisfaction. Moreover, these dynamics extend beyond government parties to all mainstream parties, whether they are in government or opposition. Mainstream parties are generally perceived as being part of the status quo and, as such, are held responsible for unsatisfactory conditions (Hobolt & Tilley, 2016).

### 6.3 Multilevel Governance and Europeanization

Modern crises increasingly unfold in a multilevel governance context. National governments are embedded in regional, supranational, and global institutional frameworks that shape crisis responses. The European Union (EU), in particular, plays a pivotal role in shaping the boundaries of national action during crises. The Eurozone debt crisis revealed the tension between EU fiscal rules and domestic political pressures. Similarly, the refugee crisis exposed divergent burden-sharing preferences among member states. Hooghe and Marks (2018) argue that such tensions have elevated the "transnational cleavage" in European politics, as parties are forced to take positions on sovereignty, integration, and identity. Europeanization also affects issue salience. Parties may strategically emphasize or downplay the EU's role, depending on their ideological orientation and national context. Eurosceptic parties often use EU involvement as a scapegoat, while pro-European parties attempt to frame supranational cooperation as a necessity.

### 6.4 Feedback and Long-Term Effects

Crisis responses generate feedback effects that shape future competition. Pierson's (2004) concept of policy feedback highlights how crisis-driven decisions alter

institutional incentives, voter expectations, and resource distributions. For instance, the institutionalization of emergency powers during the COVID-19 pandemic may recalibrate the executive–legislative balance beyond the immediate crisis.

Some crises lead to permanent system change; others fade into the background. Distinguishing between these outcomes is an important research task. Path dependency plays a role: once new institutions, norms, or policies are in place, reversal becomes difficult. Furthermore, the memory of crisis, both among elites and voters, can persist, influencing future behavior and framing choices.

At the party system level, crises may produce durable fragmentation, new cleavage structures, or ideological reconfiguration. Alternatively, they may merely accelerate pre-existing trends without fundamentally altering the competitive landscape. Understanding these long-term dynamics requires a systemic perspective that goes beyond vote shares to examine institutional trajectories and cultural shifts.

## **7. Additional Perspectives and Contradictions**

### **7.1 Crises as Stabilizing Forces**

Crises often heighten electoral risks for incumbent parties, as retrospective voting models suggest that voters primarily assess governments based on perceived performance (Fiorina, 1981). Economic downturns, migration surges, or public health emergencies frequently generate widespread dissatisfaction, increasing the likelihood that incumbents are punished at the ballot box, even when they attempt strategic adaptation (Ahlquist et al., 2020). Yet, crises do not uniformly undermine incumbents. Under certain conditions, they may instead reinforce the status quo. The “rally-round-the-flag” effect (Mueller, 1970) describes a temporary surge in public support for leaders during moments of external shock. A similar short-term “rally” dynamic was evident early in the COVID-19 pandemic, when many governments experienced temporary approval and vote-intention bumps (Bol, et al., 2021; Eggers & Harding, 2022). Such stabilizing effects are often mediated by elite cues and media framing, which can help consolidate public opinion in times of uncertainty (Baum & Potter, 2015). However, their durability is contingent upon perceived competence, crisis severity, and the presence of credible political alternatives. Poor

management or inconsistent messaging can quickly erode initial gains, illustrating that the same crisis may yield divergent political outcomes depending on context and framing. These dynamics raise important questions about when and how incumbents can leverage crisis narratives to mitigate electoral backlash. A related concern is the notion of a continuing ‘state of exception’ or permanent emergency (Agamben 2005), which I consider here in the context of emergency politics.

## 7.2 Reinforcement of Pre-existing Cleavages

Crises may also deepen rather than displace existing divides. Rather than creating new alignments, they can exacerbate cultural, economic, or institutional cleavages already embedded in party systems. Classic cleavage theory (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967) argues that enduring social divides, class, religion, urban/rural, structure vote blocks. More recent work (Kriesi et al., 2008) argues that the new integration–demarcation cleavage overlays, rather than displaces, older lines of conflict. In crises, parties typically mobilize along these familiar divides, entrenching pre-existing patterns instead of forging entirely new alignments. The 2015 refugee crisis, for example, sharpened the integration–demarcation dimension in Western Europe—often mapped onto GAL–TAN, rather than creating a novel axis (Hutter & Kriesi, 2019, 2022). The financial crisis reinforced socio-economic inequalities that had long existed, giving rise to intensified left–right polarization in some contexts.

This suggests a need for analytical caution: not all crisis effects are novel or transformative. Some may merely accelerate existing dynamics or expose tensions that were already present but less politically salient.

## 7.3 Stability and Crises

Despite heightened volatility, not all voters constantly recalibrate their preferences. Cognitive biases, limited information, and ideological heuristics anchor political behavior. Fiorina et al. (2010) argue that elite polarization does not always translate into mass polarization. Many voters remain ambivalent, disengaged, or inertial even in turbulent contexts. This points to limits in the crisis–response–realignment sequence often assumed in the literature. Structural inertia, informational asymmetries, and behavioral path dependency may dampen the transformative

potential of crises. As Kreuder-Sonnen & White (2022) and White (2019) argue, crises function as both threats and opportunities, offering justification for swift policy responses but also carrying long-term risks to democratic accountability and legitimacy.

Emergency politics involves not just institutional changes but discursive framing. They further emphasize, that party and executive actors play a central role in defining the scope, duration, and legitimation of emergency measures, framing departures from normal rules as necessary and (often) temporary. Mainstream actors tend to justify emergencies in technocratic, time-limited terms, while challengers frequently contest the legitimacy of such constraints or demand more radical breaks from procedure (Rauh, 2022; Moffitt, 2015). These tensions are amplified under polycrisis, where multiple emergencies overlap, making boundaries between exception and normality increasingly blurry.

The literature suggests that democratic resilience under crisis depends not only on institutional safeguards but on political communication. Parties must walk a narrow line between effective governance and the preservation of deliberative legitimacy. Failing to do so risks undermining public trust or empowering authoritarian backsliding under the guise of necessity.

## **Summary**

The literature reviewed in this chapter illustrates that crises fundamentally reshape the competitive dynamics of party politics. They disrupt established routines, elevate new issues, and place extraordinary demands on parties to adapt quickly, strategically, rhetorically, and organizationally. Yet party responses vary widely depending on ideological orientation, institutional context, organizational resources, and the nature of the crisis itself. Crises affect not only which issues are salient, but also how parties frame them, whether they adjust their positions, and how they mobilize supporters. Some crises create opportunities for new actors, while others reinforce dominant parties. Strategic adaptation can yield electoral rewards or lead to punishment, depending on coherence, credibility, and timing.

Crises often operate across governance levels and policy arenas. A health emergency like COVID-19 mobilizes actors at the municipal, regional, national, and supranational level. This generates coordination challenges, blame-shifting dynamics, and competing narratives. Parties must adapt not only to public expectations, but also to institutional constraints and intergovernmental bargaining. Understanding party responses thus requires attention to vertical and horizontal complexity. Crisis politics unfolds in a layered system, where party strategies are shaped by jurisdictional overlaps, policy interdependence, and institutional ambiguity.

Theoretically, crises challenge foundational assumptions in spatial and salience-based models of party competition. They introduce uncertainty, disrupt feedback loops, and force parties to navigate ambiguity under intense pressure. At the systemic level, repeated crises may generate long-term feedback effects that transform party systems, institutional configurations, and political culture. While recent literature has made major strides in theorizing party behavior during crises, several limitations remain. First, many studies adopt a top-down perspective, focusing on elite framing, electoral strategies, and issue salience. These risks overlooking intra-party dynamics such as leadership contestation, organizational bottlenecks, and internal dissent, all of which shape how crisis responses are formulated and implemented.

Second, there is a tendency to treat voters as passive recipients of elite cues. Yet, as research in political psychology suggests, crises generate emotional, cognitive, and informational overloads that alter how individuals process political information (Entman, 1993; Boin et al., 2005). Voters may resort to identity frames, or distrust-based disengagement, complicating the link between party messages and electoral responses.

Third, much of the literature models crises as discrete events. Crisis conditions challenge this framework by introducing cross-domain interdependence and structural ambiguity. The analytical unit shifts from isolated episodes to continuous uncertainty, requiring models that integrate feedback loops, temporal layering, and adaptive learning. Future research would benefit from mixed-method designs combining longitudinal surveys, elite interviews, and discourse network analysis to capture this complexity.

In sum, political competition under crises defies linear models of party adaptation. It demands a turn toward multidimensional, dynamic, and complexity-sensitive frameworks—capable of grasping the shifting logics of issue ownership, legitimacy, and democratic practice under strain. Ultimately, crises are not exogenous shocks that temporarily interrupt politics, they are increasingly central to it. Understanding how parties navigate this environment is essential for grasping the future of democratic contestation.

Understanding how electoral consequences vary across party types, adaptation strategies, and crisis contexts is critical for evaluating whether crises merely trigger short-term volatility or foster lasting realignments. This dissertation builds on this literature by systematically examining the interaction between adaptation mechanisms and electoral outcomes across multiple crisis types.

## ***Chapter 2: Manifesting a crisis - A novel approach to generate topic-specific party positions before and throughout the 2015 refugee crisis based on election manifestos of national parties***

### **Introduction**

Quantitative text analysis has become a recognized field of research and successfully established itself in political science over the last decade. The adoption and implementation of these methods allows scholars to generate valuable information based on the increasingly available textual data collections in politics and further enables to evaluate topics of interest across time and space. Especially, the application of supervised and unsupervised scaling methods introduced a new perspective to identify party positions on different issues or assessing levels of ideology. In relation to the spatial measurement of ideology and positions, the general unidimensional left-right ideological perspective of political parties has often been criticized and adapted (Jahn, 2011), where different scholars called for a more differentiated perspective on party positions. And applying automated textual analysis methods on aggregated text corpora or whole party manifestos has proven to generate mixed results, often relating to the varying length of texts across countries, or the underlying dimensionality of textual data included (Hjorth et. al. 2015). Operationalizing national party manifestos in the issue-specific context of the refugee crisis of 2015, I argue that these textual resources offer the potential to describe and reflect the strategic decisions of political parties in reaction to the crisis for several reasons.

Frist, I further argue, the refugee crisis of 2015 impacted the political dimension by temporarily contesting or even replacing pre-existing dominant issues, therefore changing the current state of party competition. The majority of political parties are office-seeking (Strøm 1990), a potential exclusion from the ongoing political competition by neglecting this issue may affect their opportunity to aspire to or stay in office, due to potential changes in the public perception regarding their responsiveness (Wagner & Meyer 2014). Following, political parties will have to develop different mechanisms of adaption in response to the crisis following the

shock. As political parties respond to increasing saliency of an issue caused by an exogenous shock by increasing their issue emphasis, these parties will also position or reposition themselves. Spatial theory states that political parties adjust their position in response to the public and to other parties (Adams & Somer-Topcu 2009). A recent study of Hutter and Kriesi (2021) shows that immigration-issues played a major role in several European countries, even before the crisis and Spoon and Klüver (2015) provide evidence, that these issues have been polarized before the event of the refugee crisis. The pre-existing positions of political parties will therefore influence the decision-making processes in response to this event. At the same time the external refugee shock offered the opportunity for parties to take position or reposition themselves, since it “creates the perfect preconditions for paradigm change, as outlined by Hall (1993), because the uncertainty opens up windows of opportunity, during which ideas can serve as explanations of what went wrong, and how to fix it” (Bremer 2018: 25). As each crisis is a rarely occurring and unique event, that can destabilize both the existing order and citizens longstanding beliefs (Habermas 1975), parties make their decisions under conditions of insecurity, due to changing public perceptions of the event and potential positional shifts of competitors.

Consequently, I assume that these uncertain, yet strategic decisions will be reflected in the national parties’ manifestos as one of the most important tools of communication between political parties and the public. After the evaluation of different existing estimates of party positions, I follow Klemmensen et al (2007) in their conclusion, that national party manifestos based on the CMP (Comparative Manifesto Project) provide one of the most reliable data sources to evaluate topic-specific party positions retrospectively across time and space. Related positional estimates have been collected by scholars before in different national and international projects (the most prominent among them being the Chapel Hill Expert Survey). But concerning existing gaps in the data and the temporal development of issues, these estimates are too general to evaluate them impact of the event-specific issue, especially in relation to the temporal development of the issue concerning its development of a topic-specific language. As governments across Europe have seen the refugee crisis of 2015 at the beginning in terms of human rights, whereas the

public mass grew increasingly concerned about cultural aspects of national cohesion or security as the crisis continued (Matlary 2018; Goodman et al. 2017), the unique and changing framing of a crisis will affect several sub-issues, as it continues, which can only be identified to a limited extent relying on existing methods.

To address this challenge, I develop a novel approach, applying different text classifiers based on pre-existing codings of the CMP in order to identify relevant text passages, therefore lowering the underlying dimensionality of the text resources. Afterwards I conduct supervised and unsupervised text scaling analysis to generate the respective one-dimensional party positions, which allows me to estimate topic-specific party positions across different countries in Europe. This approach resulted in a novel validated dataset of topic-specific party positions. After the exclusion of uncertain estimates, it covers 165 party positions across 8 countries from 2005-2019.

The following paper is structured as follows: First, I describe the data selection process via classification followed by the application of supervised and unsupervised scaling methods to estimate the respective party positions. Internal and external tests for robustness will be conducted at different stages of the estimation process, which will be discussed in the results section. Last, I will address the advantages and disadvantages of this approach.

### **Manifestos as Structured Text Evidence**

The initial refugee crisis of 2015 affected most European countries and was often framed as a European crisis. Therefore, the interest of this project encompassed parties and countries across Europe. I chose a relatively large timeframe in order to account for the different election cycles and make sure that at least one election before and one election after 2015 was included. In relation to Spoon and Klüver (2015) who describe existing polarization mechanisms on immigration before the crisis, this would allow to include a larger number of elections, to account for these developments. The result was a timeframe from 2005-2019, where the end of 2019 marks the beginning of the ongoing covid-crisis. Due to the underlying requirements of the methodological aspects of this approach, the number of countries, their parties and their respective manifestos was largely reduced based on the available methods and data. First, the preprocessing steps (addressed below) of the statistical software

used (R, quanteda package) limited the available languages and scripts. Second, the majority of manifestos had to be written in the same language across the whole country and non-monolingual manifestos disqualified the party for the analysis. Third, the national party manifestos must be available for the chosen timeframe of observation (for a summary see APPENDIX A). And last, only parties which had a vote- or seat share of more than 5% at one point in the chosen timeframe were included, excluding protest- and niche parties. The resulting initial population of this dataset are 10 countries: Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy (excluding one German speaking party), Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (from 2015 onwards).

After identifying the country population for this approach, the next step was to identify the immigration and integration- relevant text passages across party manifestos, which will be used as input data for different text classification methods. The underlying logic of this approach was to identify these passages and a specific set of passages which are not related to immigration issues, in order to train the classifiers on this binary information (what is relevant and what is unrelated). This will allow to expand the classification process to the remaining proportion of the manifestos to detect previously unidentified passages, which have been mentioned in relation to other issues and contexts.

Following this simple logic, I utilized categories that have been operationalized by previous studies to generate immigration and integration positions (see Alfonso & Fonseca, 2012). The categories that directly address the relevant issues: Immigration positive/negative, Multiculturalism positive/negative and Immigration Integration/Assimilation. Afterwards I identified categories that do not address immigration issues via a keyword search in various European languages via google translate, those include topics from agriculture, political corruption, free market economy, to political authority and more (For an Overview over the included categories see APPENDIX B.1 & B.2). The goal of this broad range of topics and categories was to provide a profound basis for the classifier to identify what is not immigration and integration relevant, while training a stricter perspective on the issue of interest.

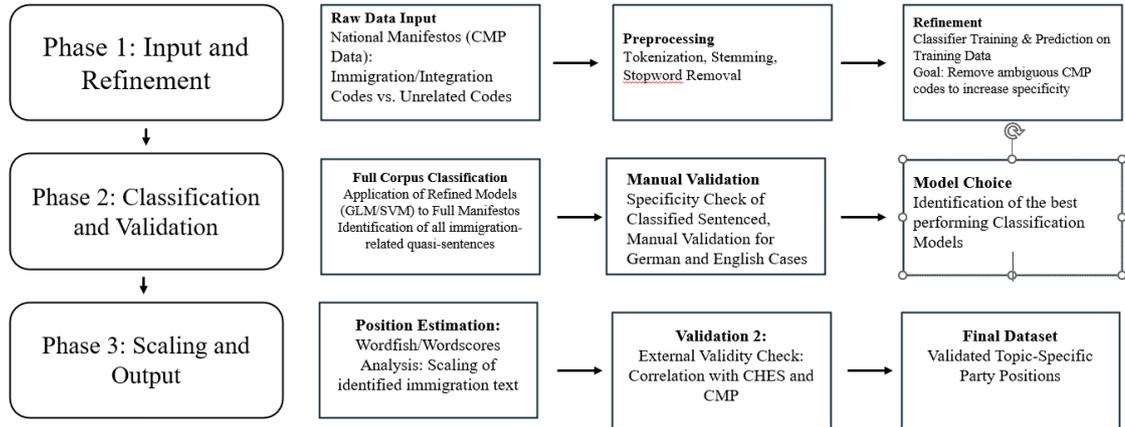


Figure 1: Workflow of the estimation process. In the first phase, the training data (CMP codes) is 'refined' by training and predicting the classifier on itself to filter out ambiguous or context-dependent sentences. In the second phase, these refined models identify relevant text passages across the entire corpus. Finally, the positions are estimated using Wordfish scaling and validated against external benchmarks (CHES).

Last, I generated a large, but very unbalanced corpus document, including the textual data (Table 1), which also limited the number of qualified classifiers for this approach (further discussion below).

Table 1: Number of quasi-sentences in country-manifestos 2005-2019

Country	Immigration-Integration	Un-related
Total		
Austria	987	12339
Germany	1103	20323
United Kingdom	503	9284

In order to verify that the identified observations based on the CMP categories were accurate, a manual verification for the selected countries in English and German was conducted. The manual examination of the coded sentences across different years and countries indicated, that several quasi-sentences, which contained references to integration- or immigration have been assigned codes outside the respective categories. On the other hand, there are quasi-sentences included that are, taken individually, not directly related to the selected topic. The reason for the allocation of these codes can be found in the coding instructions of the CMP (Volkens, 2002). First, a quasi-sentence may address more than one category, where the instructions are quite clear:

“For all other cases in which more than one category seems to apply, the coder has to decide what the most important concern of the argument is since one, and only one, category has to be chosen for each argument.” (Volkens, 2002: 12)

That means if immigration policies are mentioned in the same argument as, for example, concerns about national security, the coder may decide that the latter may be the more appropriate coding. While the argument is still coded correctly, that means at the same time, that it cannot be identified based on the core codings for integration and immigration issues.

Addressing seemingly unrelated quasi-sentences (if observed individually by observation, whereas each quasi-sentence represents one observation) the instructions for unclear statements are:

“Many of these problems may be solved by taking the context of the ambiguous quasi-sentence into account. Coders should first of all take into account the following sentences because the first (quasi-) sentence may be part of an argument which is explicated in the next sentences.” (Volkens, 2002: 13)

Based on these instructions it becomes clear that some statements are contextual. But text-scaling methods will not be able to account for the context of a quasi-sentence (as an observation) if it has previously been detached from the contextual sentence or even paragraph. Therefore, these sentences would potentially bias the following methods to generate party positions and should be excluded as part of this approach.

Summarizing the challenges of identifying the relevant textual data concerning the following classification approach include 1) reducing sentences which are, when observed individually, not related to immigration- or integration measures and 2) the extension of the classification approach to the remaining parts of each manifesto.

### **Cleaning, Tokenising, and Structuring the Input:**

The preprocessing of the data included the following steps: splitting hyphens (due to the gendered nature of some languages), remove punctuations, numbers, and symbols; setting all letters to lowercase letters, removing stop words of the respective language, and stemming the words.

In relation to the challenges above, I decided on an unusual classification approach: In a first step I trained the training set on itself, assuming that the included data would allow the classifier to “refine” itself, making it more specific. This process results in an overfitting of the classifier on the training data, but since I will generate a separate model for each country and assume a high level of homogeneity within the underlying data (concerning the text structure), as well as the simple fact that existing categorized sentences across the chosen timeframe and across all parties are included, this approach will allow to specify the training set. As a result of the high number of observations included, the necessity of a high computational power and an increasing amount of time to run the calculations arose, which was especially challenging throughout the parameter-tuning of the individual models. The final parameters were chosen based on the data, which made it necessary to increase iterations to run the model (due to limited ram), while reducing the number of folds and the cutoff for faster training. (GLM: folds: 10, cutoff: 1e-6, max. iterations: 1e4; SVM: folds: 10, repetitions: 5) These parameters have been generalized across all countries in order to allow comparability. For the GLM I used a logistic (e.g., binomial / logit) model for binary classification and the SVM has been conducted using the SVM Linear Kernel model, also in relation to the binary and unbalanced nature of the data and the chosen approach. I applied the classifiers as unigrams and bigrams, before comparing the generated “refined” training set.

Table 2: Training set: Number of quasi-sentences after classification per country

CMP-Obs.	GLM	GLM Bigram	SVM	SVM Bigram
Austria	616	605	699	772
Germany	534	588	780	889
UK	235	266	352	396

The results above describe the number of identified topic-relevant observations after the first classification procedures. Overall, all the classifiers reduced the number of included observations, which were manually validated in the next step. The results indicate that unspecified and context-specific sentences were successfully excluded, leading to a more specified training set, but also reducing the included observations, leading to an even more unbalanced training set. In the next step, the newly generated training sets were applied to the whole dataset via different classification methods, including the original and different combinations of the training sets, resulting in 12 different classification estimates for each country.

After the identification of the relevant observations via the classification analysis, it was necessary to manually validate the results. Due to the revision of the training data, descriptive assessment of the accuracy via a confusion matrix would not have shown the effectiveness of this approach. Considering the effective utilization of time-resources, I decided to limit the manual-validation to the topical immigration and integration variable. Therefore, I accepted the possibility of potentially unidentified observations within the corpus, while being able to assess the specificity (true positives & false positives) of the classification models. Due to the assumed large number of non-related quasi-sentences, a model with a strong preference for these would show on average a high performance (especially for the UK and Germany), therefore the validation of the specificity in this approach was preferred over sensitivity. For a more detailed description of the manual validation approach see Appendix C.

Classifying Relevance: GLM and SVM Variants:

The results of the combination of the different classification methods provided similarly promising results overall. Table 3 describes the aggregated results

(Appendix D includes the results per country), whereas the Classification column describes the variation used (for example Bigram GLM-SVM = GLM classification of the textual data, including bigrams, where the original training set was refined by SVM classification).

*Table 3: Aggregated performance estimates of the classification methods:*

Classification Method	Specificity	Sensibility	Accuracy
Bigram GLM-GLM	87,47	55,87	71,67
Bigram GLM-None	79,52	70,27	74,90
Bigram GLM-SVM	82,72	61,78	72,25
Bigram SVM-GLM	79,30	69,85	74,58
Bigram SVM-None	72,062	78,83	75,48
Bigram SVM-SVM	69,40	79,41	74,40
Unigram GLM-GLM	85,54	56,56	71,05
Unigram GLM-None	79,82	65,18	72,50
Unigram GLM-SVM	79,01	70,53	74,77
Unigram SVM-GLM	81,49	64,20	72,84
Unigram SVM-None	74,24	75,08	74,66
Unigram SVM-SVM	72,01	74,19	73,10

Specificity hereby describes the true positive rate, in relation to the manual validation. (A value of 79, means that 79% of the observation classified as topic relevant, were manually confirmed). Sensitivity describes the number of observations detected in the dataset of all manually validated sentences, which were identified by at least one classifier in percent. Whereas the Accuracy is the simple mean of specificity and sensibility. The results indicate an aggregated good performance across the three countries, the accuracy varying between 71,05 - 75,48 %. They provide a good example to demonstrate the trade-off of different classification methods, where for example SVMs usually show a higher detection rate, but a lower specificity.

As these performance estimates indicate, the classifiers identified different numbers of observations, which also affects the numbers of parties represented in the dataset

(Appendix A). Italy and Portugal have a very low number of original CMP categories, therefore the GLMGLM bigram classification could not identify any texts. Since this particular method is rather specifying by reducing the number of included text passages, it reduced itself to 0 observations in the application of the classification models. A similar issue can be observed for France, where the number of observations based on the CMP codings relatively low.

Consequently, the results raise the question: Which text classification method should be used to identify relevant text passages to estimate the respective party positions?

### **From Classified Text to Policy Space:**

To find the answer to the question one has to take into account the underlying logic of the next estimation steps:

Wordfish: “This is a statistical scaling model that allows policy positions of texts to be estimated on a predefined policy dimension simply by drawing on word frequencies in texts without relying on reference documents. The documents used for the analysis need to be encyclopaedic statements of the actors’ policy positions on a single dimension.” (Klüver, 2009: 538) To apply the Wordfish approach introduced by Slapin and Proksch (2008) it is necessary to generate a word matrix before, which can be done via different R packages. But this method has also some specific implications. First, since it automatically generates the scores, it is necessary to choose the included text passages carefully, since unrelated text passages could lead to results, that evaluate the dimension of these. This issue should be solved by including only the relevant codings based on the CMP. Another issue is addressed by Hjorth et al. (2015), who mention that different language specific properties lead to potentially biased results. They show based on the analysis of German and Danish manifestos, that the German language used in manifestos is more ideologically loaded than the Danish language, leading to stronger positional results. Therefore, specific language properties may pose a challenge. Last, the length of text is also relevant to some extent, but Proksch et al. (2011) have shown that Wordfish could place Japanese political party correctly, despite relatively short manifestos.

Wordscores: This technique, developed by Michael Laver, Kenneth Benoit and John Garry (Laver et al., 2003) treats words in a specific text as data, assuming that the relative frequency of words provides information on the political positions of the underlying text. “The Wordscores procedure then generates a list of words from chosen reference texts, based on the relative occurrence of each word across and within texts, given the set of reference scores. Point estimates on the original policy dimension are then generated for virgin texts, computed as the mean of the scores of the words in the virgin text, weighted by their relative frequencies within those texts” (Klemmensen et al., 2007: 748). Literature mentions two specific preconditions when applying this method, in order to generate valid scores based on texts. The first concerns the length of text. Especially in relation to the previously mentioned reduction of texts based on immigration related CMP codings, this may pose a specific challenge. Klemmensen et al. (2007) mention that the “analysis of party positions has shown that short documents are especially prone to generate erroneous or unreliable scores.” One advantage of this approach is, that it is possible to generate confidence intervals for the generated results. I include the transformation procedure based von Martin and Vanberg (2007), which relies on only two reference scores and operationalize the most extreme position of the last available election year based on the CHES to identify reference documents to conduct this analysis. This has the advantage to ensure that the similar documents and formal language will be used and by including the most recent election I can account for potential discursive developments in previous years. For the verification of the estimates to the CHES, the reference positions will be excluded. Since the CHES trend-file (1999-2019) does not provide party positions for Norway, these reference scores were applied based on the 2014 & 2019 surveys, which included Norway. (See Appendix E for a full description)

As already described above, both methods have requirements in relation to the length and the specified nature of the text for an estimation of the positions. The option to decide on the most specified classifier pose the option that the estimated scores would be most accurate, while it may include the risk to exclude relevant information due to the lack the reduced amount of textual data. Contrary including the classifier with the sensitivity, may include unspecified text passages, which can bias the results

of positional estimates. Following these considerations, the most rational choice is to extend the analysis further, by including the classifier with the highest specificity, the highest sensitivity and one classifier that shows the best weighted average between sensibility and specificity and compare the estimation outcomes. Therefore, generating the scores based on the Bigram-GLM-GLM, Bigram-SVM-NONE and the Unigram-GLM-SVM (which shows the highest accuracy next to the Bigram SVM NONE, which has the highest sensitivity).

The number of included parties was reduced before applying the sentiment analysis in order to exclude protest- and niche-parties, assuming that their party-manifestos could bias the estimation process. Consequently, a minimum of 5% vote- or seat-share in the parliament at one included election was chosen as a relatively low, yet efficient threshold of inclusion criteria.

### **Testing Consistency and External Validity:**

In order to assess the internal validity of the generated estimates, I compared each generated estimate using pairwise correlations for Wordfish and Wordscores estimates, which are more detailed and less forgiving than Spearman rank correlations. Assuming that the classification process was successful, I expect that the generated scores between the different classified texts show a relatively high positive correlation, since similar underlying texts are used for the estimation process. The scores are further extended by including the baseline estimate based on the reference categories of CMP codes (without classification) and Chapel Hill expert survey estimates (CHES), the latter will be used as a further benchmark for external validation. Due to the respective gaps in the CHES data, only 163 of 208 estimation points over the selected timeframe across the generated set of party positions can be matched. The CHES-data was operationalized by including the average score of immigration and multiculturalism party positions, which should correspond with the topical estimates. Table 4 describes the available and matched CHES scores by election year and parties to externally validate the generated estimates. (For the UK, transcribed and coded election manifestos are only available from 2015 onwards)

Table 4: Available elections and parties per country included in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey

Country	Election years	Number of Parties	Matched Parties
Austria	2006,2008,2013, 2019	5,5,4,4	5,5,4,4
Denmark	2005,2007,2011,2019	7,7,8,8	7,6,6,7
France	2012,2017	9,6	3,3
Germany	2005,2009,2013,2017	5,5,7,6	5,5,6,6
Italy	2008,2012,2018	4,8,4	2,2,3
Netherlands	2006,2010,2012,2017	8,10,11,11	7,7,7,7
Norway	2013, 2017	8,9	6,6
Portugal	2005,2011,2019	1,3,4	1,3,3
Sweden	2006,2010,2014,2018	7,8,8,8	7,8,8,8
United Kingdom	2019	5	4

Based on the textual data identified by the different classifiers the number of included parties for each method vary between 185 (Bigram GLM GLM) and 205 (Unigram GLM SVM and Bigram SVM None) where unclassified CMP estimates were generated for 193 positions.

Table 5: Aggregated Pairwise correlation of Wordfish estimates and CHES scores

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.902***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.848***	0.898***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.763***	0.786***	0.789***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.695***	0.583***	0.528***	0.533***	1.000

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Table 6: Aggregated Pairwise correlation of Wordscores estimates (excluding reference scores) and CHES scores

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.908***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.833***	0.891***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.748***	0.747***	0.831***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.415***	0.427***	0.442***	0.321***	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Table 5 and 6 describe the aggregated correlations of all generated estimates for available party manifestos and CHES-estimates across 10 included countries and 15 years. It is necessary to mention that the reference scores used for the Wordscore estimates were excluded to avoid self-confirming estimates and bias the correlation. The significance of the correlation estimates indicates a low probability that the estimated party positions are independent from each other and in relation to the baseline estimates of the CMP and the CHES estimates. One can observe two important aspects of the generated scores. First, the positional estimates based on the textual data identified by the classification approaches show a high cross-correlation. And second, the estimates based on the textual data generated by text classification, show overall consistent and significant correlations in relation to the CHES estimates. Appendix F & G include the country-wise correlations, describing individual differences.

The individual observation of each country point towards two cases. The case of Italy, where the number of observations based on the CMP codings was relatively low especially in relation to the number of included parties, where it was possible to generate scores, but the cross-correlation with the CHES scores indicates that the classification approaches were unable to identify any further meaningful text passages. Compared to the estimates of France and Portugal, these cases show, that initially low amounts of training-data were able to identify further related quasi-sentences that correspond with the CHES estimates. These results allow the conclusion that Italian party manifestos neglect immigration and integration issues, whereas other countries mentioned them relating to other issues, that have been

differently coded by the CMP. And second, observing the estimates for Denmark, the internal consistency is relatively high, yet the results describe large differences to the expert estimates, which may be due to individual linguistic properties or characteristics of the respective party system.

Based on these results, it was decided to exclude two countries, Denmark and Italy, since internal and external validity could not be ensured. Following the described methodological requirements in the previous section, it is assumed that the minimum length of the included textual data was not met for Italy, which led to potentially unreliable estimates, legitimizing this decision, whereas the case of Denmark remains unresolved. Table 7 & 8 now describe the aggregated correlation estimates after the exclusion of the mentioned countries.

*Table 7: Aggregated Pairwise correlation of Wordfish estimates and CHES scores, excluding Denmark and Italy*

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.912***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.877***	0.917***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.752***	0.805***	0.799***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.749***	0.698***	0.638***	0.627***	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

*Table 8: Pairwise correlations: Aggregated Wordscores estimates and CHES scores, excluding Denmark and Italy*

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.898***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.847***	0.899***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.739***	0.746***	0.824***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.406***	0.437***	0.397***	0.335***	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

The values of the Wordfish model now indicate a high internal validity across the included countries and elections. The relatively lower values of the CMP baseline estimates indicate that the inclusion of previously different coded text passages leads in turn to different yet strongly associated values within the dataset. The CHES estimates show overall a high association with the generated estimates based on the Wordfish approach. As observable in the individual country correlations, the CHES scores are per country moderate to highly correlated and significant. The implications for these results will be addressed in the next section.

The Wordscores estimates show compared to the Wordfish estimates a much lower correlation, even for countries with relatively high amounts of textual data. One explanation for these results is the logic of the Wordscores model, which uses the word frequencies of the reference documents. This leads to a high loss of information in the pre-specified textual data. As MV scaling was implemented, only two reference texts were selected, reducing the underlying data for those estimates. For example, for Austria more than 2000 of 2600 features (unique words) were not used for the estimation, leading to large loss of information.

#### Further Robustness Tests

Hjorth et. al. (2015) provide two possible explanations for the low corresponding results generated by unsupervised analysis. First, they mention, as already addressed in relation to the description of the methods, that the length of the textual data may be one reason for the country specific differences in the estimates compared to the CHES scores. To account for their assumption, I included further wordcount variables to control for the length of the included textual data. The first variable counts the words of each party manifesto for each election, the second variable includes the number of unique words used. To verify that the required text length is given, I conducted a further validation of the estimates, including weighted party positions for the Wordfish estimates by the wordcount. This measurement is similar to a saliency weighted party position, assuming that saliency can be measured by number of words in the quasi-sentences addressing a topic in party manifestos in relation to other parties.

$$(x)^{ij} = \left( \frac{n_{ij}}{\max_i n_i} \right) * \text{pos}^{ij}$$

The formula above is used to calculate the weighted values per party per election year, whereas  $n$  is the wordcount per country, “ $i$ ” describes the respective party and “ $j$ ” describes the election year. Assuming that the length of text has an influence on the validity of the party positions, the weighted scores should produce significantly different results than the original Wordfish scores.

*Table 9: Aggregated Pairwise correlation of Wordfish estimates weighted by wordcount per national election, and CHES scores excluding Denmark and Italy*

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) weightedglmglm	1.000				
(2) weightedglmsvm	0.926***	1.000			
(3) weightedsvmnone	0.893***	0.923***	1.000		
(4) weightedCMP	0.662***	0.699***	0.736***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.649***	0.616***	0.578***	0.565***	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

The estimates are very similar, yet lower than the original Wordfish estimates, indicating that the respective length of the texts has an influence. Additional linear regressions including the CHES scores, the generated estimates and their respective wordcount allow the conclusion that the respective wordcount has only a minor influence on the relationship of the scores (see Appendix H.1). It can therefore be argued that overall, the minimum requirement of text length is met, rejecting it as a significant bias for the estimation process.

As a second reason the authors state that ideological loading of the underlying text will affect the outcomes of the estimation process. Since Wordfish relies on frequencies, the ideological loading refers to the calculated association of a specific word with the general dimension based on these frequencies (Diaf et al. 2022). In order to test the basic assumption of the relative frequencies, I argue that a similar weighted measure as above including the count of unique words, should therefore

produce again differing correlation estimates with the CHES scores, if the assumption holds true.

*Table 10: Aggregated Pairwise correlation of Wordfish estimates weighted by unique words and CHES scores*

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) weightedglmglm	1.000				
(2) weightedglmsvm	0.925***	1.000			
(3) weightedsvmnone	0.889***	0.929***	1.000		
(4) weightedCMP	0.692***	0.733***	0.760***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.672***	0.631***	0.588***	0.590***	1.000

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

The weighted scores generated on the unique wordcount show lower, yet very similar correlations to the original texts. Again, linear regression including the generated estimates and the respective unique wordcount were conducted, supporting the argument (see Appendix H.2). Therefore, also the second concern of Hjorth et. al. (2015) can be rejected in relation to the conducted analyses. It can now be concluded that the different correlation estimates included do not derive from the text length or the ideological loading (as measured by the number of unique words), but rather describe the topic specific developments in relation to immigration and integration positions of national parties.

Following the assessment of robustness, I assemble a dataset, including the overall best performing Wordfish estimates of the different classifiers (See Appendix I). Whereas Austria and Germany perform best with the BIGRAM SVM NONE -, Portugal and France with the UNIGRAM GLM SVM – and the remaining countries with the BIGRAM GLM GLM classifier.

Table 11: Aggregated Pairwise correlation of Wordfish estimates including the best performing Classifier, excluding Denmark and Italy

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) Party Positions	1.000		
(2) CMP	0.764***	1.000	
(3) Chesvar	0.759***	0.627***	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Comparing the best-performing estimates to the reduced aggregated model (Table 11), one can see that the scores correlate slightly better, therefore improving the estimates.

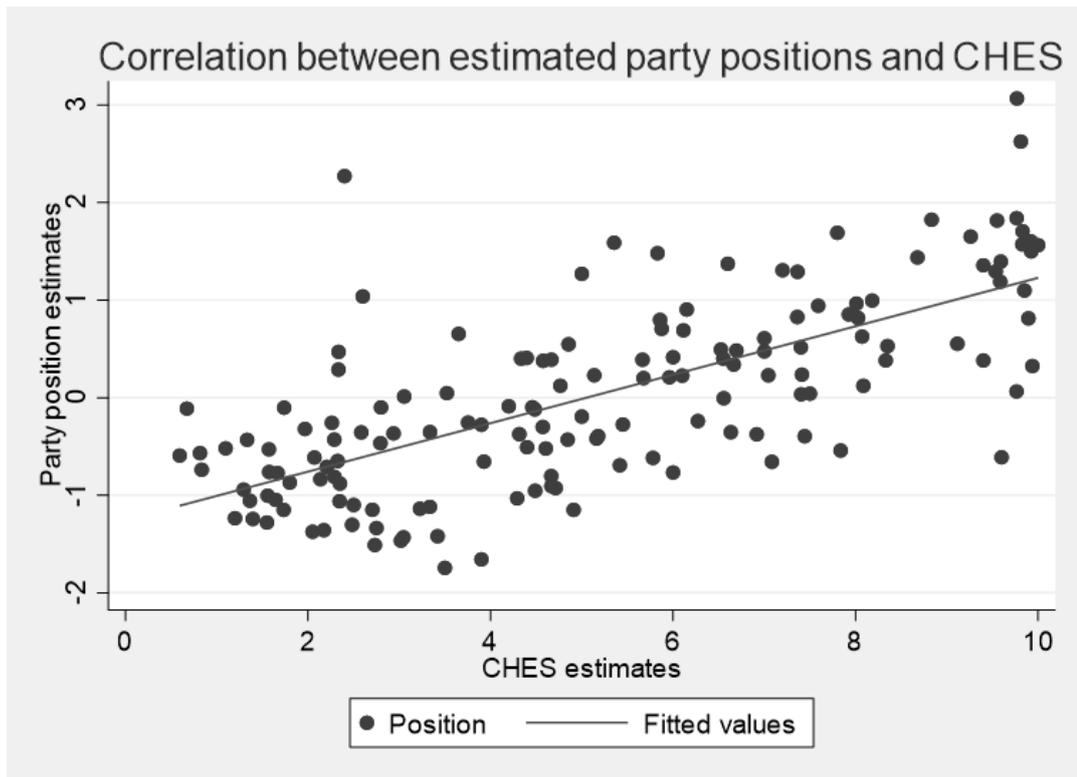


Figure 2: Correlation Party Position estimates to CHES

The generated estimates correspond well with the original CMP and the CHES scores, indicating that the party positions represent a related measure. As the goal of this project is to describe the new topical dimension of immigration and integration, the deviation between the generated values is assumed to be originated by the extension of the topical dimension compared to existing measures.

### **Constructing a Reliable Immigration Position Measure:**

The goal of this study was to generate a novel dataset of issue specific national party positions, based on textual data of party manifestos utilizing text classification methods and automated sentiment analysis.

The initial text classification process can be regarded as successful, the different approaches show different strengths in relation to the underlying methods. While the SVMs generally extend the textual data, with lesser accuracy, GLMs relatively reduced the data with higher accuracy. Even the combination of both classifiers provides robust results concerning the average accuracy and case detection across the textual data. The question, which classifier should be used can only be answered addressing the length and quality to the underlying textual data. The overall performance of the included classification models is higher than expected and allows the conclusion that text classification is a valid method to identify topical text passages in party manifestos. For future research I recommend that analyses with high amounts of training data profit from classification methods with higher accuracy and potentially reducing character, whereas extending or mixed approaches may be preferred for more unbalanced datasets and lesser training data.

In relation to the scaling models, it becomes apparent that the Wordfish estimates clearly outperform the Wordscores models for two reasons. As the text is very specified, but short, any further reduction of the features included lead to a massive information loss. As described above, the application of the MV transformation of the Wordscores model neglects around 70% of the information generated. As other score transformations were tested, I can argue, that these also neglect a large, but reduced proportion of the identified information. For future research, I suggest utilizing an aggregated exogenous corpus, that addresses the endogenous features of the selected topic. Studies could for example include aggregated manifestos of the

European Parliament elections as reference documents in order to account for discourse developments over time. On a general note, the individual examination of the country-specific estimates indicates that a Wordscores model prefers text-extending (SVM or mixed) classifiers over specialisation, which is comprehensible in relation to the logic and potential limitations of reference texts.

Concerning the Wordfish model, the overall performance, as well as the correlation between the different underlying text data sets show robust and valid results.

Addressing the generated scores, I argue that the Bigram-GLM-GLM generated textual data, in combination with the Wordfish scaling model provide the most valid estimates for party positions when considering a generalized approach. To generate the most accurate estimates, it may be necessary to compare different classification approaches. As this project is aimed to develop a novel dataset and is not limited to rely on a single approach, the estimates were chosen on the best overall (internally and externally) performance and aggregated to a novel dataset. (See Appendix I: National party positions based on the best performing classifier)

Addressing the external validation via the CHES scores, we can observe moderate differences on a country level. As Hjorth et al. (2015) describe different reasons for those differences, a close analysis of the underlying data seems to reject their assumptions as reasons for biased results. First, I argue that the developed variable of Immigration and Integration is only partially captured by the combination of the selected CHES and CMP variables included, which explains variation between the different scores.

A further explanation is that party manifestos and expert surveys measure different aspects of the political reality, resulting in the described differences. It is plausible that party communications on an aggregated national level follows some specific rules. First, I assume that parties try to appeal to a broad electorate, therefore moderating their positions within their manifestos. Second, as Netjes and Binnema (2007) have described before, there is a difference between what parties say and what parties do. Therefore, a difference between existing scores and the novel estimates based on party manifestos may reflect the political reality and should be regarded rather as complementary aspects of this dimension.

To address the potential scope of this novel approach, future studies may try to extend the underlying logic to different political texts for validation. Similar, the inclusion of different issues topics may offer another potential extension of this approach.

### ***Chapter 3: Of Shocks, Crises and Shifts - Positional adaptation mechanisms of political parties in times of crises***

Introduction:

Following the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, most European countries experienced different crises, which had severe impacts on their respective party systems. Whereas external shocks and crises were often described as unique or (at least) rare events, the last decade can be characterized by a mode of crisis transitioning. A crisis provides an environment of high uncertainty, which consequently hold risks and opportunities for individual parties regarding future coalition negotiations (Budge 1994). And it creates an environment of low information, consequently affecting the general communication mechanisms of political actors. In the absence of a generalized theory of adaptation mechanisms in response to external shocks, the consequences of external shocks on political parties and their communication and competition strategies remains however widely unclear. I argue that a crisis following an external shock may interfere with the reciprocal adaptation between public opinion and party positions. The importance of crises has been addressed by existing research, that emphasizes that during periods following the initial events of a crisis, existing power relations in party systems have been affected by transformation processes (e.g., Essletzbichler et al. 2018; Greven 2016). Yet, previous approaches towards an understanding of adaptation mechanisms in times of crises widely target the individual impact of a crisis as unique events, whereas a comparative perspective from a cross-national perspective has not been developed yet.

To approach this challenge, I compare the global financial crisis following the events of 2007 and the refugee crisis of 2015, a consequence of the Syrian war, as relatively recent examples, which affected societies as well as their institutions. On basis of the outlined hypotheses below, this chapter aims to answer the question: “To what extent does the pre-existing state of party competition influence decision-making processes of individual parties in response to a crisis?”. Both included cases of crises impacted the political dimension by increasing the salience of the respective affected issue dimension or even replacing pre-existing dominant issues, therefore changing the current state of party competition. As the majority of political parties are office-

seeking (Strøm 1990), a potential exclusion from the ongoing political competition by neglecting these issues may affect their opportunity to aspire to or stay in office, due to potential changes in the public perception regarding their responsiveness (Wagner & Meyer 2014). Hence, political parties will have to develop different mechanisms of adaptation in response to a crisis following an external shock. When political parties respond to increasing saliency of a crisis by increasing their issue emphasis, these parties will often also position or reposition themselves.<sup>1</sup> Here spatial theory states that political parties adjust their position in response to public opinion and to other parties (Adams & Somer-Topcu 2009).<sup>2</sup> Pre-existing positions of political parties will therefore influence the decision-making processes in response to this event. Each crisis offered the opportunity for parties to take position or reposition themselves, since it “creates the perfect preconditions for paradigm change, as outlined by Hall (1993), because the uncertainty opens up windows of opportunity, during which ideas can serve as explanations of what went wrong, and how to fix it” (Bremer 2018: 25). As each crisis is a rarely occurring and unique event, that can destabilize both the existing order and citizens’ longstanding beliefs (Habermas 1975), parties make their decisions under conditions of insecurity, due to changing public perceptions of the event and potential positional shifts of competitors.

Following these arguments, I develop a set of hypotheses drawing on existing studies of party positioning and the scarce literature on crisis management, arguing that the pre-existing state of party competition may limit or enhance these decision-making processes in times of crises. Addressing the potential influence of party system fragmentation, I emphasize that electoral success offers political actors a reference point for potential competitors on similar positions, as well as indicators for potential coalition partners. I measure this power distribution as the effective number of

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<sup>1</sup> While it is possible, to strengthen the emphasis of pre-existing positions and remain unmoving, it seems plausible that parties which increase their saliency also differentiate or extend their issue content, which would most likely lead to positional adaptation in a unidimensional space. This holds especially true in relation text analysis approaches, which rely on relational word frequencies.

<sup>2</sup> An additional study of Adams et. al. (2009) emphasizes that center and right-wing parties respond to economic conditions and the public opinion, while the left seems irresponsive to these factors during the late 20th century. However, they acknowledge “several interesting recent examples of ideological flexibility on the part of the left” (Adams et. al. 2009: 632), which could point toward revised adaptation strategies of the left.

parliamentary parties. I further argue that the position, whether a party is currently in government or opposition, and future coalition ambitions additionally influence the respective decision-making process of parties (Budge 1994; Calca & Gros, 2019; van de Wardt et. al. 2014).

To generate topical party positions<sup>3</sup> capturing the specific impact of the economic crisis, I apply unsupervised scaling methods (Wordfish) to selected proportions of election manifestos based on the initial codings of the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP). For the development of immigration and integration positional estimates, I generated a novel approach, applying different text classifiers based on pre-existing codings of the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) in order to identify relevant text passages, therefore lowering the underlying dimensionality of the text resources. Afterwards I once more conduct unsupervised text scaling analysis to generate the respective one-dimensional party positions, which allows me to estimate topic-specific party positions across different countries in Europe. This approach resulted in a novel validated dataset of immigration and integration-specific party positions. Both estimation procedures were validated utilizing gold standard topical expert benchmark estimates and existing gaps in the data were filled by applying multiple imputations. Drawing upon a subsample of this dataset, including absolute positional shifts, I apply fixed effects panel regressions focusing on the underlying process of adaptation mechanisms. The results indicate that a higher level of party system fragmentation leads to stronger consecutive positional adaptations in response to the refugee crisis and in a comparative perspective and highlight the unique character of each crisis. In contrast to my expectations based on existing literature, neither the previous shifts, nor the governmental status have significant influence in both cases of crises individually and collectively as the results lend only limited support for the stated hypotheses.

To my knowledge, this is the first comparative study that approaches to compare two crises which affect different issue dimensions. The adaptation mechanisms of individual parties in response to external shocks is important for theoretical and

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<sup>3</sup> In contrast to issue positions, I rely on hereby on topics which consist of multiple issues, arguing that external shocks and crises affect more than one dimension. A more detailed perspective can be found in the data generation section.

empirical reasons. External shocks were long described as rare events, causing a shift of attention of the public and institutional actors towards specific issues, highlighting broad policy weaknesses, or tipping the balance of power among policy participants (Rovny & Whitefield 2019, Andraka-Christou 2015). Studying the underlying patterns of positional adaptation is important to understand past, present and future developments in the light of previous and emerging crises. In addition, the novel approach of data generation and validation lends support for the inclusion of text to approaches within political science and further development of these approaches within the field.

### **When Context Constrains Change:**

The determinants of decisions:

To assess the impact of the crises in consequence to external shocks on the positional decision-making processes of national parties across Europe, it is important to emphasize existing approaches describing the drivers of party competition. Existing research on the impact of the Great Recession and the Euro crisis in Western Europe distinguishes between a structural and strategic approach of party competition in times of crisis, since they should be regarded as complementary, rather than competing, perspectives (Kriesi et al., 2015). The structural approach describes that “new issues and dimensions of party competition emerge exogenously from social conflicts which are the product of long-term social change” (Kriesi & Hutter 2019:5). It is further important to account for the specific conditions created by a crisis. Exogenous shocks, focusing events and crises have been emphasized for their focusing character, causing a shift of attention of the public and institutional actors towards specific issues, highlighting broad policy weaknesses, or tipping the balance of power among policy participants (Andraka-Christou 2015). Further, they are assumed to be catalysts for policy changes (Baumgartner & Jones 1993; Kingdon 2003). By conceptualizing the events following 2008 and 2015 as focussing events or crises, it becomes apparent that specific implications apply for these periods. Due to the catalysing and focussing character of a crisis with respect to its type and severity, I argue that the dimensional development of party competition is accelerated.

In contrast to the structural approach, the strategic approach emphasizes new issues and dimensions as endogenous results of decision-making processes (Kriesi et al. 2015). Concerning the topical focus of each crisis on the respective underlying issue dimension, it is necessary to address that the approached crises specific issues are not “new” within European party politics. Economic topics have been salient within European party competition before the economic crisis and various studies provide support, that economic conditions influence parties’ positioning (Hellwig 2012; Bevan & Greene 2016, 2018). For the case of the refugee crisis, Spoon & Klüver (2015) provide evidence, that also immigration-issues have gained increasing attention and have been polarized before the event of the refugee crisis in multiple countries across Europe. Additionally, a study of Häusermann & Kriesi (2015) has shown that in countries that were affected to a lesser extent by the financial crisis, immigration issues have played an increasing role in party competition.

Combing these described approaches, one can follow, that the prior developments of increasing saliency and polarization within the issue-specific dimensional space (e.g. economic and immigration topics), can be regarded as the result of strategic decisions and long-term structural changes. The topical evolution of the crisis may have been driven by the initial effects of each crisis, but the differentiated mediation and perception of subsequent consequences and different national effects led to an expansion of the initial issue to other issue categories or dimensions. These consequent developments regarding the potential extension of the topical range to other issues can be seen as a consequence of accelerated structural progress and the framing efforts of political actors. The characterization and combination of strategic and structural processes as complementary aspects will be reflected in the following theoretical discussion and the empirical analysis, therefore accounting for strategic and structural factors, which influence the decision-making processes. Following this argument, I propose that prior individual party positions on crisis-specific topics, as well as the preexisting conditions of the party system will influence the decision-making processes of parties in response to this crisis.

Fragmented decisions:

Various scholars have investigated the measurement and evaluation of the level of fragmentation and polarization, which are regarded as one of the most established indicators for party systemic evolution. I argue that the previous electoral success of individual parties relative to the success of other parties influences their decision-making processes in response to a crisis. As a crisis opens new ground for party competition, since parties will campaign on controversial issues (Damore 2005), they will adapt their individual position, to present themselves as responsive to the public (Ansolabehere & Iyengar 1994). The majority of political parties are office-seeking (Strøm 1990), therefore a potential exclusion from the ongoing political competition by neglecting this issue may affect their opportunity to aspire to or stay in office, due to potential changes in the public perception regarding their responsiveness (Wagner & Meyer 2014). But as they position themselves in relation to other parties, their decision will be impacted by potential coalition partners and their decision to challenge existing governmental parties on this new ground. Therefore, the level of fragmentation of a party system in a previous election may serve political parties as an indicator for potential future coalition choices, where they will try to adapt their position to gain access to the government.

As the fragmentation of the party system is an indicator for the distribution of vote shares (or seat distribution within the parliament) among the included parties in previous elections, it may serve as a relational indicator of party success on a party systemic level, encompassing not only individual success, but also the competitive state of the system. Addressing the consequences for future elections after a focussing event or crisis, I assume that different positions on economic and immigration and integration issues have been taken before they became increasingly salient in the upcoming election. Hence, I argue that a consequence of a more fragmented party system would be stronger positional adaptations, since vote shares are more equally distributed among competitors. The reason for this adaptation lies in the potential gains of shifting position in a fragmented party system, whereas a concentration of parties around specific positions may lead to a redistribution of vote-shares towards a party or a group of aligned parties in the election following the crisis, further restructuring the state of party competition. This would also impose

major risks for their success, if the parties decide to compete on similar positions. If the fragmentation of a party system is relatively low, it is an indicator that one or a small number of parties hold the relative majority of vote shares.

From this perspective, crises would offer competing parties two options. First, they may have the option to shift their position in the direction of the dominating party. Especially in multi-party systems where an absolute majority of vote-shares has become a relatively rare occurring phenomenon, they bring themselves as potential coalition partners in position, if they adjust their positions towards a successful competitor to enter the government. If multiple parties follow this strategic decision, I expect that the distance between party positions will be reduced to previously successful competitors.

On the other hand, a low fragmentation in times of crisis may offer weaker a competitor the incentive to develop a distinct position to distinguish themselves from other competitors and challenge the dominant party (De Vries & Hobolt 2012). In response to the crisis, political parties have sufficient time, to evaluate the position of other parties to offer a “relevant” alternative. As these arguments describe, established political parties will have a strong incentive to adapt their position in response to the crisis, but a more fragmented system may offer higher rewards in response to positional adaption, while lower fragmentation may lead to a shift of a relatively smaller number of parties towards a successful competitor. To test these theoretical arguments, I formulate the first hypotheses:

H1: A higher level of party system fragmentation in the election before the event of the crisis will increase the strength of individual shifts in response to the crisis.

#### Government and opposition

Following existing approaches, the position of a party imposes specific structural constraints on its ability to adapt. This applies regardless of whether the party is in government or opposition (Budge 1994; van de Wardt et al. 2014). Government parties face the "responsiveness trap". While they are held directly responsible for crisis management (Calca & Gros 2019), their room for maneuver is severely limited. Coalition agreements act as institutional veto points. Additionally, the need

to maintain cabinet stability often prevents rapid positional shifts. Furthermore, Schumacher et al. (2013) demonstrate that leadership-dominated parties are less responsive to environmental incentives than activist-dominated opposition parties.

In contrast, opposition parties are unconstrained by coalition commitments and executive responsibility. They possess the strategic flexibility to exploit the crisis by repositioning themselves. Additionally, they can aim to capture dissatisfied voters or challenge the government's competence. Without the burden of implementing immediate policy responses, opposition parties can use the crisis as a window of opportunity for programmatic renewal. Therefore, I expect the constraints of office to limit the magnitude of adaptation for incumbents compared to their challengers.

H2: Opposition parties will shift their position on average more than parties which are currently in government in response to the crisis.

#### The Limits of consecutive Adaptation

Finally, a party's recent history of adaptation conditions its response to a new shock. If a party has already undertaken significant positional shifts in the previous election, its capacity for further movement is constrained by reputational costs. Tavits (2007) argues that parties must balance responsiveness with credibility. Frequent and large-scale shifts expose them to accusations of opportunism or "flip-flopping."

In the context of a crisis, this creates a path dependency. Parties that were positionally stable in the past have a credibility advantage that allows them to make a significant move when a shock hits. However, parties that have already shifted significantly in the preceding election face a limiting point. This might be because they anticipated the crisis or due to internal changes. Further large movements would undermine their core identity and signal instability to the electorate. Therefore, I argue that high previous volatility acts as a limiting influence on current adaptation.

H3: The greater the shift in issue position in the election before the crisis, the smaller are the shifts in response to the crisis.

In summary, I argue that a party system fragmentation, the governmental status of a party and their individual previous shifts influence consecutive positional shifts.

## Building Issue-Specific Position Series

Existing positional estimates on different issue dimensions have been generated and collected by scholars in different national and international projects. But concerning relevant gaps in existing data due to data-generation cycles, reelections and in relation to the temporal development of a topic-specific language, existing data is insufficient to evaluate the impact and evolution of event-specific issue space. To address this challenge, I utilize in a first step national party-manifestos across Europe as the source of information for the strategic decisions, which are expected to be reflected in the national parties' manifestos as one of the most important tools of communication between political parties and the public. After the evaluation of different existing data sources of party positions, I follow Volkens et al (2021) in their conclusion that national party manifestos provide a reliable and accessible data source to evaluate topic-specific party positions retrospectively across time and space. To account for the impact of each of the included crises on the respective issue dimension, I choose a relatively large timeframe to account for different national election cycles including at least one election before and one election after the initial events of 2007 (economic crisis) & 2015 (refugee crisis) was included. I operationalize existing manual codings of the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) to identify respective issue-relevant text passages. I find that a manual evaluation of a random sample of coded quasi-sentences was widely accurate for economic topics, but the assigned codings for immigration-issues indicated that several quasi-sentences which contained references to integration or immigration have been assigned codes outside the respective categories<sup>4</sup>. Further, I observed quasi-sentences included that are taken individually as text-units, not directly related to the selected topic.

To address these problems and identify the relevant text for the refugee crisis, I developed a classification approach, applying different text classifiers based on pre-existing codings of the CMP in order to isolate relevant text passages, therefore lowering the underlying dimensionality of the text resources to evaluate the impact of the refugee crisis. In the next step I conducted an unsupervised text scaling

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix A-I for a more detailed perspective and examples.

method (Wordfish) to generate the respective one-dimensional party positions for each crisis (Slapin & Proksch 2008). The validation of the generated estimates was done by pairwise correlating the novel scores and available Chapel Hill expert survey estimates (CHES) on the respective topical issue dimension. This approach allowed me to extend the available estimates of the CHES and CMP databases and create an extensive and validated intersection based on the novel data. Due to a relatively large number of digitally unavailable party manifestos and in relation to the high similarity of the generated positions with the expert estimates, the positional estimates were further extended by multiple imputation, based on available CHES estimates (King et al. 2001). Appendix J offers a more detailed perspective on the data generation and validation process of the economic issue positions, whereas Appendix A-I addresses the classification and estimation process of the immigration & integration variable.

### **Modelling Party Shifts**

The extensive data generation approach resulted overall in a relatively rich dataset covering 290 party positions, consequently including 165 positional shifts from national elections in 7 countries across 22 years in Europe. The dataset includes only parties with a vote share of at least 5% in the respective election. This threshold ensures data availability and comparability of manifestos, excluding niche actors with limited programmatic documentation. This process allows for a substantially more comprehensive test of the primary hypotheses than previous data would have allowed. Individual shifts on economic policy positions are covered from 2001-2014 and immigration positions from 2011-2019. Tables 12 & 13 provide a descriptive overview of the measured policy shifts per country and election year for each included crisis. In contrast to the general left-right dimension, I expect the topical variables to be more specified in capturing the respective impacts, since it will not be biased by simultaneous shifts in different underlying issue categories.

Table 12: Number of included economic party policy shifts per election year and country.

Country	Election years									
	2005	2006	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Austria		4	4					4		12
Germany							5			5
Netherlands	4			4				4		12
Norway					6		7			13
Portugal				6				5		11
Sweden	4			4		5				13
UK					7				7	14
Total	11	4	4	14	16	5	12	13	7	86

Table 13: Number of included immigration and integration party policy shifts per election year and country.

Country	Election years								
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2017	2018	2019	Total
Austria			4			4		5	13
France						5			5
Germany			4			5			9
Netherlands		7				7			14
Norway			6			6			12
Portugal	1				2			4	7
Sweden				7			8		15
UK						3		4	7
Total	1	7	14	7	2	30	8	13	82

In this analysis, I employ the absolute change in party positions as the dependent variable to measure policy volatility. Following Somer-Topcu (2009), I operationalize adaptation as the magnitude of change ( $|Position_t - Position_{(t-1)}|$ ) rather than its direction. This choice is theoretically grounded in the nature of external shocks as disrupting forces. My primary research interest lies in the intensity of adaptation. I aim to measure the extent to which crises force parties to adapt their established positions.

A directional measure would mask opposing strategies and distort the systemic impact of the crisis. For instance, if a crisis polarizes the electorate, a left-wing party might move further left while a right-wing party moves further right. A directional mean would suggest zero aggregate change or stability. In contrast, the absolute measure correctly identifies this as a period of high instability and intense party repositioning. By focusing on absolute shifts, this study captures the true degree of systemic volatility triggered by the shock independent of the ideological starting points of individual parties.

Furthermore, employing directional shifts would require specific assumptions about the strategic goals of different party families. For example, right-wing parties might be expected to move further right on immigration while left-wing parties might move left or towards the center. Analyzing such divergent strategies would require splitting the sample by ideology. This would significantly reduce the statistical power of the analysis. More importantly, it would obscure the aggregate systemic effect of the crisis. My research question asks whether shocks trigger adaptation in general. It does not focus on whether they trigger a specific ideological turn. Therefore, the absolute magnitude remains the most valid indicator to capture the volatility described in the theoretical framework.

Figure 4 visualizes the absolute positional shifts of political parties regarding economic policy between 2005 and 2014. The data reveals a high degree of heterogeneity in how national party systems processed the Great Recession, ranging from acute destabilization to consolidation.

The most compelling evidence for shock-induced adaptation is observed in Portugal. While the 2009 election showed mixed signals, the 2011 election, coinciding with the sovereign debt crisis and the intervention of the Troika, marks a sharp, systemic increase in positional volatility. Multiple parties exhibit upward trajectories, indicating that the external constraint forced a significant programmatic reorientation across the spectrum.

A similar, albeit more differentiated pattern is visible in Germany. Here, positional volatility peaks around the 2009 federal election. The data reveals a clear divergence in strategies: The SPD shows the strongest adaptive response to the crisis, recording

the highest absolute shift in the system. In contrast, the market-liberal FDP and the conservative CDU remain largely static at the bottom of the scale, suggesting a "steady hand" strategy. The Greens occupy a middle ground (approx. 0.35), reflecting only moderate programmatic adjustments.

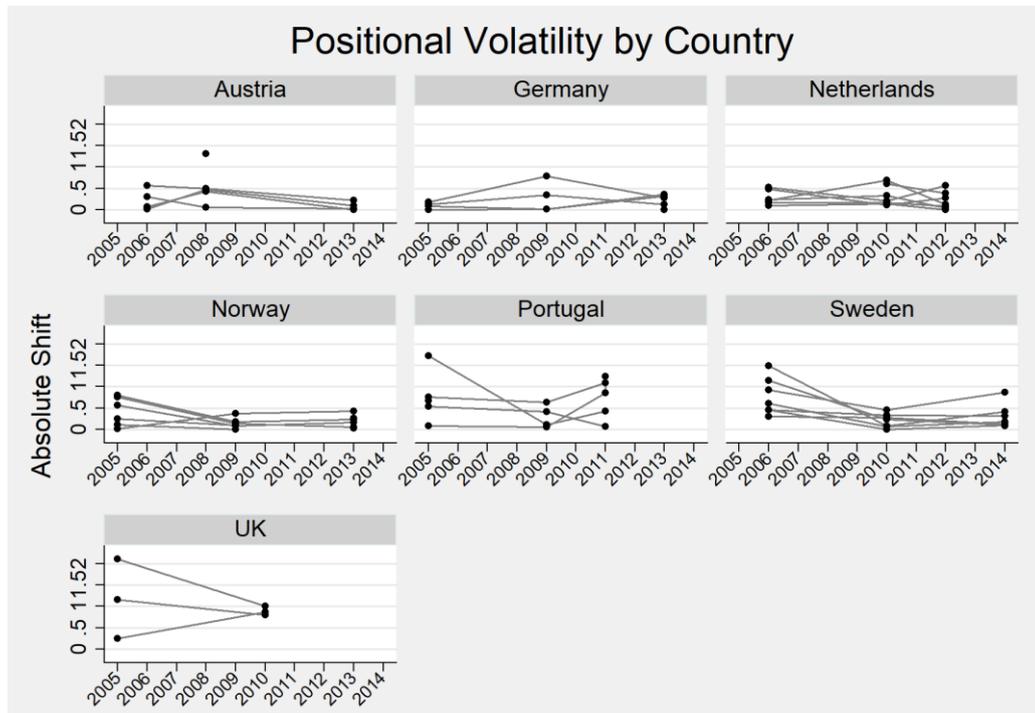


Figure 4: Positional Volatility during the Economic Crisis per Country based on absolute shifts

In contrast to the Eurozone periphery, the Northern European cases display a counter-intuitive trend. In Norway and Sweden, the onset of the crisis (2008–2010) correlates with a decrease in positional volatility. In Sweden, the broad spread of shifts seen in 2006 converges into a tighter, more stable range by 2010. Similarly, the UK shows its highest volatility in the pre-crisis election of 2005, followed by a marked stabilization in 2010. This indicates that in these systems, the strategic response to the economic shock was not radical repositioning, but rather a "freezing" of established positions.

The analysis also highlights significant outlier behavior within countries. In Austria, while the general trend is moderate, we observe a distinct outlier in the 2008

election: the BZÖ (Alliance for the Future of Austria) deviates sharply from the cluster, recording an absolute shift significantly higher than its competitors. This mirrors the pattern in the Netherlands, where the volatility in 2010 is largely driven by specific actors, most notably the PVV and the Socialist Party (SP), who show atypically strong adaptation compared to the rest of the system. This suggests that volatility in these multiparty systems is often asymmetric, driven by challengers or specific ideological wings rather than a uniform movement of all parties.

In summary, the economic crisis did not trigger a universal increase in policy volatility. Instead, the effect appears conditional: countries under severe external pressure (like Portugal) responded with intense adaptation, while in other contexts (Germany, Netherlands), the volatility was driven by specific parties (SPD, PVV, SP) rather than the system as a whole.

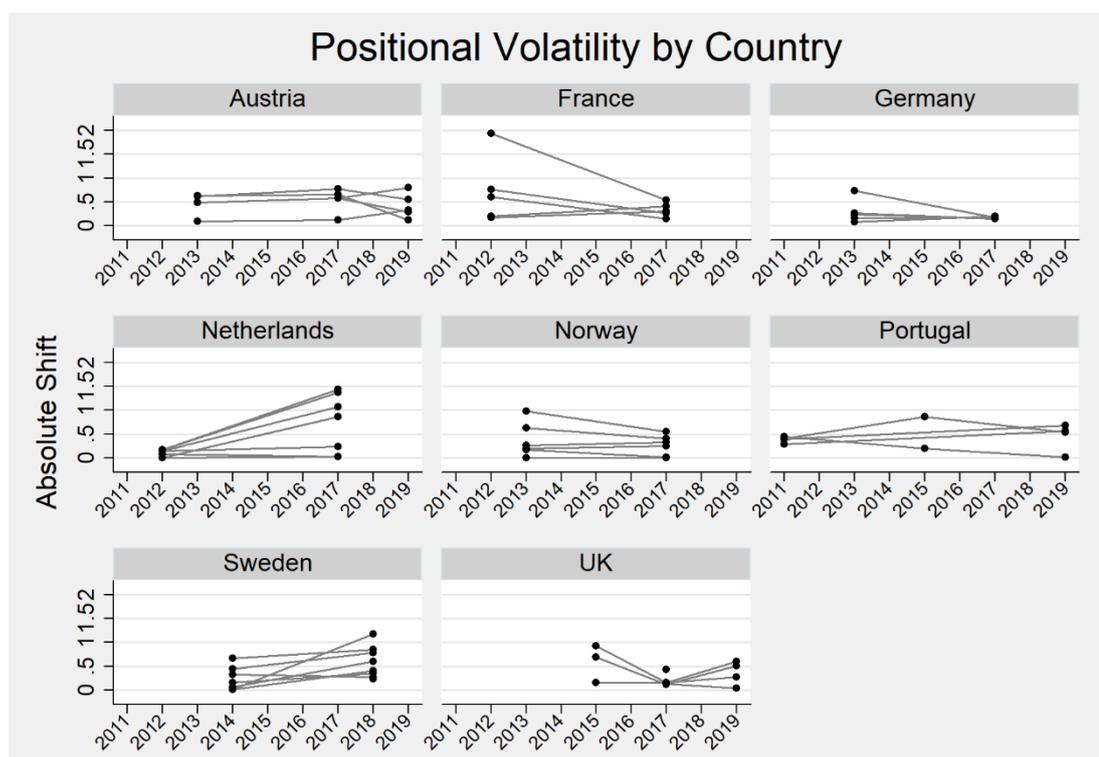


Figure 5: Positional Volatility during the Refugee Crisis per Country based on absolute shifts

Figure 5 displays the absolute positional shifts of parties regarding immigration and integration policies during the observation period (2011–2019). The small multiples reveal distinct national trajectories.

The most striking evidence for crisis-induced adaptation is visible in the Netherlands and Sweden. In the Netherlands, the 2012 election was characterized by programmatic stillness. The 2017 election marks a systemic rupture: almost all actors drastically increase their positional adjustments, creating a "fan-shaped" dispersion. A similar trend is observable in Sweden (comparing 2014 to 2018). While the system as a whole exhibits increased volatility, the Christian Democrats (KD) stand out as the primary driver of this instability. The graph shows the KD "leapfrogging" other parties: shifting from a position of relative stability in 2014 to recording the highest absolute shift in the entire system in 2018, indicating a radical strategic reorientation. Facing the risk of falling below the 4% threshold, the KD fundamentally altered its strategy under Ebba Busch by adopting a much stricter stance on migration. This aligns with the 'Survival Strategies' theory, where policy shifts are driven by the necessity of parliamentary survival.

In contrast to the volatility in the Netherlands, Germany presents a counter-intuitive finding. Despite the intensity of the 2015 refugee crisis, the positional volatility of German parties remains remarkably low and stable between the 2013 and 2017 elections. The graphical evidence suggests that established actors did not react to the shock with drastic programmatic overhauls, but rather maintained their course. In Austria, the pattern differs slightly: we observe a "persistence of volatility." The magnitude of shifts was already elevated in the 2013 cycle and continues at a similar level in 2017. Parties that were already adapting their positions continued this trend, suggesting a path-dependent reaction rather than a sudden new shock effect.

Interestingly, France presents a deviant case. The data shows its highest level of volatility in the 2012 election cycle, followed by a sharp decrease in 2017. This suggests that for French parties, the major programmatic contests regarding integration occurred prior to the 2015 crisis. Similarly, the UK displays relatively high volatility in 2015, which decreases in the subsequent 2017 election.

Overall, the visual evidence paints a nuanced picture. While the refugee crisis triggered immediate, system-wide instability in the Netherlands and Sweden, other major affected countries like Germany displayed remarkable positional resistance, suggesting that the political battle might have been fought on other dimensions (e.g., salience) rather than through positional shifts.

A lagged version of the dependent variable is included to account for shifts prior to the crisis, which will also account for serial correlation. I further include two central independent variables to account for the severity of the crisis. In response to the economic crisis most countries experienced a decline in the gross domestic product (GDP) (LeDuc and Pammett 2013), therefore I include the mean difference of *GDP growth* between elections supplied by the World bank database. To account for the specific developments during the crisis, the difference in GDP growth will describe the *economic* crisis variable.

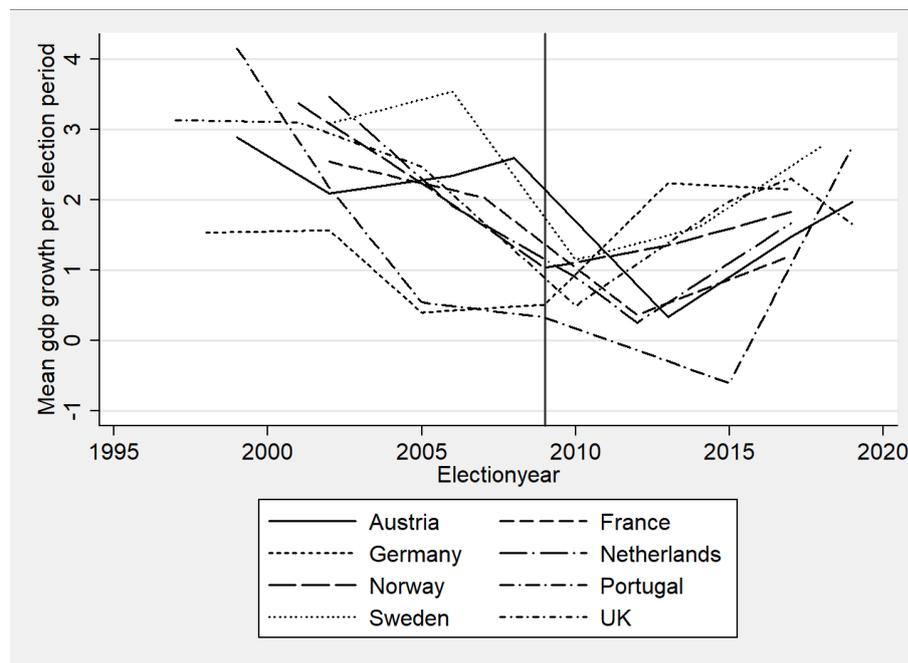


Figure 6: Mean GDP growth per election period per country, Data: Worldbank

For the refugee crisis, the central independent variable of interest will describe the varying impact of the refugee inflows per country per capita. It is hereby important to account to for the crisis in relation to previous developments. In previous years, immigration discussions often focussed on the number of asylum seekers per country, whereas the refugee crisis led to a shift towards refugees. The distinction between these two categories of immigrants is:

“An asylum-seeker is therefore an individual who says he/she is a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been definitely evaluated. in countries with individualized procedures, an asylum-seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he/she has submitted it. Not every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every refugee is initially an asylum-seeker “(UNHCR 2011).

In relation to the development of the crisis, where organizational institutions were overwhelmed by the number of arriving refugees, it seems plausible, to generate the indicator based on the number of asylum applications and the number of refugees, since the process to grant refugee status takes time, which again varies by countries and to their institutions. Based on these considerations I generated an indicator of increasing/decreasing inflow of *foreign population per capita* (per 1000 inhabitants) for each respective country in relation to the last election period. Similar to the economic crisis, increasing inflows per capita (per 1000 inhabitants) after 2015 are included as the *refugee* variable, to account for the severity of the crisis.

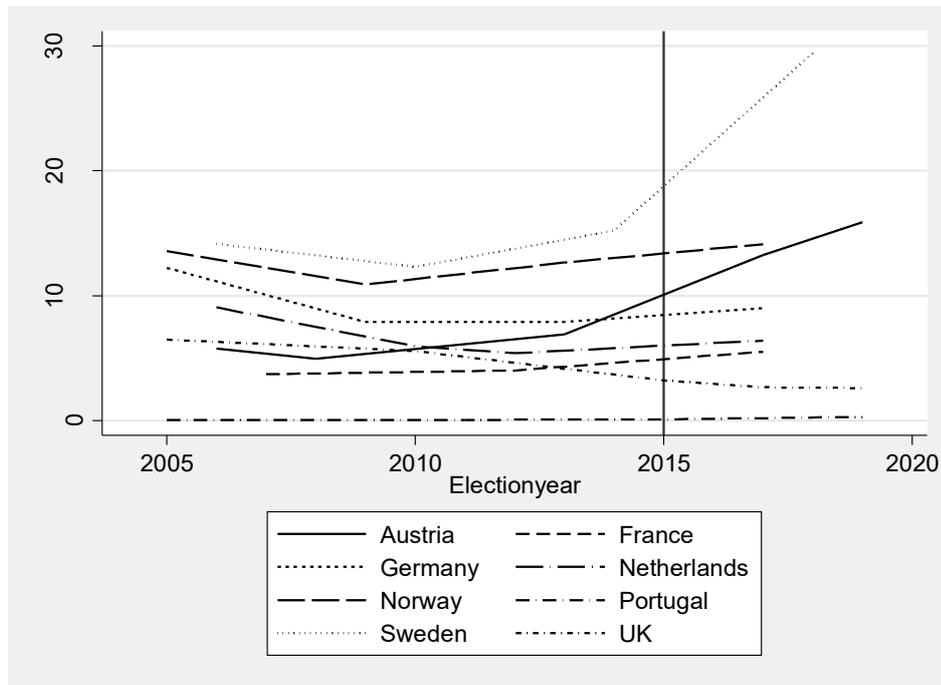


Figure 7: Mean inflow of foreign people per election period per country, Data: Worldbank

Concerning the underlying theoretical framework, the next independent variable of interest is the fragmentation of the party system. To account for the competitive structure of the parliament, I employ the Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties (ENPP). Following the recommendations of the examiners, I deviate from calculating fragmentation based on raw vote shares. This is because raw vote shares can be distorted by electoral thresholds and disproportional vote-to-seat translation. Instead, I rely on the established measure based on seat shares provided by Gallagher (2023). This indicator more accurately reflects the actual distribution of legislative power and the strategic landscape for coalition formation.

The ENPP is defined as:

$$N = \frac{1}{\sum s_i^2}$$

where  $s_i$  is the share of seats of the  $i$ -th party in parliament. Unlike vote-based measures, the ENPP has a natural lower bound of 1, which represents a single-party parliament. A higher value indicates a more fragmented parliament with power dispersed among multiple actors.

Country	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Austria		3.38		4.24					4.59	
Germany	4.05				4.83				3.51	
Netherlands		5.54				6.74		5.70		
Norway	4.56				4.07				4.39	
Portugal	2.56				3.13		2.93			
Sweden		4.15				4.54				4.99
UK	2.46					2.57				

Table 14: Effective number of parties at the parliamentary level based on Gallagher (2023) during the economic crisis period

Country	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Austria			4.59				3.60		3.94
France		2.83					3.00		
Germany			3.51				5.58		
Netherlands		5.70					8.12		
Norway			4.39				4.95		
Portugal	2.93				2.86				2.87
Sweden				4.99				5.63	
UK					2.54		2.48		2.39

Table 15: Effective number of parties at the parliamentary level based on Gallagher (2023) during the refugee crisis period

The lagged dummy variable “*government*” describes whether a party has been in government or opposition during the election (e.g. the previous legislative period). For the purposes of this analysis, these variables will also be interacted with the *economic and refugee* variable to account for the severity of each crisis. Addressing the models for the refugee crisis, I include the economic variable as a control variable in relation to the theoretical considerations of section 1, where countries that are affected to a lesser extent by the economic crisis, previously competed on immigration and integration issues. To analyse the effects prior and in response to the crises, I conduct two sets (one for each crisis) of fixed effects panel regression including country clusters, to account for country-specific heterogeneity. For the full model, including both crises, I generated the dummy variable *shock* which accounts

for the presence of the crisis, but not for the individual severity due to the different scaling of the respective *economic* and *refugee* variable.

### Small Shifts, Mixed Effects Across Crises:

I present the results of the outlined regression framework in Table 16 and 17. Table 16 displays the results of the economic crisis. Model 1 describes the baseline model, without crisis specific interactions, model 2-4 include the individual crisis specific variable and model 5 is the full model. The central independent variable as the indicator for the severity of the crisis is the “economic” variable measured by the varying degree of GDP growth. In the models regarding the economic crisis (Table 16), parliamentary fragmentation displays a positive but statistically insignificant coefficient across all specifications. While the direction suggests that higher fragmentation might correlate with slightly higher shifts, the lack of significance means I cannot reject the null hypothesis.

Table 16: Analysis of parties' positional adaptations in response to the economic crisis

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Absolute shift (lag1)	-.157 (.134)	-.261 (.218)	-.158 (.134)	-.115 (.133)	-.22 (.252)
Fragmentation (lag1)	.001 (.019)	.008 (.018)	.008 (.035)	.011 (.026)	.006 (.035)
Economic (GDP growth)	.09*** (.016)	.051 (.05)	.203 (.244)	.023 (.037)	-.202 (.464)
Government Party(lag1)	.011 (.084)	.014 (.081)	.012 (.084)	-.159 (.153)	-.154 (.152)
Absolute shift (lag1) *economic		.109 (.102)			.111 (.139)
Fragmentation (lag1)*economic			-.016 (.035)		.026 (.058)
Government party(lag1)* economic				.176 (.109)	.173 (.112)
Constant	.311** (.128)	.323* (.147)	.285 (.17)	.316** (.132)	.357 (.215)
Observations	86	86	86	86	77
R <sup>2</sup>	.114	.127	.115	.159	.171

Standard errors are in parentheses

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

Note: Dependent variable is the absolute change of parties' economic positions comparing the positions before and after the external shock. Standard errors clustered by countries are shown in

Similarly, none of the parameters regarding the governmental status was able to establish a significant relationship within the population of the analysis. However, the negative sign in Model 5 aligns with the expectation that government parties shift less. Due to the lack of significance, I cannot confirm any of the stated hypothesis for the economic crisis. The results are further supported by a set of Wald tests for the joint significance of the coefficients for the included interactions, where no significance was established on relevant confidence intervals. Addressing consecutive shifts in response to the effects of the crisis, the direction of the results seems to support stated hypotheses 2. These results indicate that the adaptation mechanisms in response to a crisis, could vary from party competition processes under “normal” conditions, yet again no significance could be established. Except for the governmental status, the coefficients are widely constant across all included models, lending support for the robustness of the estimation process.

Table 17 addresses the refugee crisis. In contrast to the economic crisis, the coefficient for previous shifts is negative and significant across most models. This indicates that parties that shifted previously are constrained in their current adaptation. Regarding fragmentation, the new seat-based Gallagher measure displays a negative coefficient in Model 3 and 5. Unlike previous vote-based estimates, this relationship is not statistically significant. This suggests that the fragmentation of the system does not systematically drive the magnitude of positional shifts in response to the refugee shock when accounting for effective parliamentary power. Interestingly, Model 5 shows a weakly significant negative effect for government parties. This lends some support to Hypothesis 2, which states that government parties are more constrained and shift less than opposition parties.

Table 17: Analysis of parties' positional adaptations to the refugee crisis

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Absolute shift (lag1)	-.255*** (.059)	-.108 (.151)	-.18* (.083)	-.245*** (.058)	-.094 (.191)
Fragmentation (lag1)	-.067 (.182)	-.089 (.201)	-.34 (.275)	-.074 (.189)	-.35 (.294)
Refugee (Foreign inflow)	.008 (.014)	.01 (.014)	-.596 (.336)	.003 (.013)	-.583 (.325)
Economic (GDP growth)	.044 (.1)	.042 (.105)	.01 (.079)	.041 (.103)	.007 (.085)
Government Party(lag1)	.027 (.053)	.023 (.049)	-.032 (.052)	-.071 (.08)	-.117* (.06)
Absolute shift (lag1)* *refugee		-.012 (.011)			-.006 (.011)
Fragmentation (lag1)* refugee			.077 (.043)		.075 (.041)
Government party(lag1)* refugee				.012 (.008)	.011* (.006)
Constant	.609 (.716)	.675 (.784)	1.883 (1.194)	.666 (.753)	1.935 (1.255)
Observations	82	82	82	82	82
R <sup>2</sup>	.247	.255	.339	.258	.351

*Note: Dependent variable is the absolute change of parties' immigration and integration positions comparing the positions before and after the external shock. Standard errors clustered by countries are shown in parentheses. Significance levels*

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

In summary, these findings indicate that Hypothesis 2, that opposition parties will shift their position on average more than government parties, can be rejected; it rather seems that the governmental position of individual parties influences their positional adaptation mechanisms differently in both included cases. Hypothesis 3, the larger a shift in the parties' issue positions before the crisis, the smaller are the shifts in response to the crisis is supported in the full model but rejected for individual crisis models. It is possible that political parties preempt these events and that external shocks are not as unexpected, as expected, but may be anticipated as the results of previous developments. In summary, the findings indicate that the presence of a crisis alone, without controlling for severity, influences consecutive shifts.

Table 18: Analysis of parties' positional adaptations to both crises

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Absolute shift (lag1)	-.221** (.065)	-.06 (.125)	-.22** (.063)	-.223** (.067)	.143 (.202)
Fragmentation (lag1)	-.023 (.074)	-.005 (.086)	-.025 (.083)	-.029 (.078)	-.055 (.075)
Increase of foreign inflow per Capita	.001 (.01)	.01 (.011)	.001 (.011)	0 (.01)	.004 (.011)
GDP growth	.078 (.045)	.067 (.053)	.077 (.043)	.078 (.045)	.052 (.042)
Government Party(lag1)	.004 (.076)	-.022 (.072)	.006 (.081)	-.046 (.112)	-.104 (.126)
Absolute shift (lag1) * shock		-.297* (.132)			-.625* (.275)
Fragmentation (lag1)*shock			.002 (.011)		.036 (.02)
Government party(lag1)* shock				.068 (.126)	.113 (.131)
Constant	.431 (.297)	.328 (.328)	.437 (.311)	.469 (.325)	.401 (.247)
Observations	168	168	168	168	168
R <sup>2</sup>	.17	.247	.171	.174	.345

*Note: Dependent variable is the absolute change of parties' positions on economic, and immigration and integration comparing the positions before and after the external shock. Standard errors clustered by countries are shown in parentheses. Significance levels*

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

The statistical results can be contextualized by looking at specific cases. For example, during the refugee crisis, mainstream conservative parties in affected countries showed significant positional volatility. A prominent example is the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP). They shifted towards restrictive positions to counter right-wing challengers. In contrast, government parties in broad coalitions often showed constrained movement. This reflects the inertial forces captured in Hypothesis 2. These individual trajectories underscore the tension between the

external pressure to adapt and the internal constraints of credibility and office holding.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I evaluate whether the pre-existing state of party competition and previous decisions influence the adaptational mechanisms of parties in response to a crisis. I argue that events such as the economic and refugee crisis encompass risks as well as opportunities (Bremer 2018). The first analysis of the novel dataset of issue-specific party positions before and in response to different crises provide insight into the underlying mechanisms of issue adaptation. While the empirical results provide mixed results, they constitute one of the first comparative perspectives on mechanisms of adaptation in response to a crisis and the strategic decision-making processes under “normal” conditions.

First, the analysis utilized the Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties (ENPP) regarding the structural context. This measure captures the true competitive constraints within legislatures. The results regarding party system fragmentation do not support Hypothesis 1. I argued that fragmentation increases competitive pressure. However, the empirical analysis using the robust Gallagher index shows no significant relationship between the number of parliamentary parties and the magnitude of positional shifts in either crisis. This implies that the structural composition of parliament might be less decisive for crisis adaptation than the severity of the shock itself or the individual history of a party.

Due to the exclusion of parties with a vote-share lower than 5% at any given point during each crisis, the analysis includes many large or mainstream parties. As a result of this assumption, the included economic variable (GDP growth) for the economic crisis has been salient even before the crisis, leading, where parties would more and regularly adjust their position on these topics. Hence, the pre-existing state of party competition before the crisis would influence adaptation mechanisms more for the economic issue, than issues that became more salient following a crisis like the refugee crisis. Future studies could evaluate the influence of issue saliency on these adaptation mechanisms to test these considerations.

The results for the economic crises may also be caused by a relatively low number of observations, where further research could benefit from an extended country (and party) sample. Another explanation for these results could be that higher party system fragmentation leads in turn to a fragmentation of legislative power within national parliaments. This could consequently impede approaches of crisis resolution within the parliament if political actors propose differentiated actions in response to a crisis (Funke et al. 2015). As a higher distribution of legislative power as well as varying or even contradicting approaches could result in a potential grid lock, the inability to enforce legislative action within the parliament, political parties may react by adapting or clarifying their respective positions accordingly. These adaptations will be reflected within their manifestos by varying emphasis of the issue, which will be further influenced by potential framing efforts. As the underlying positional estimates are essentially based on word frequencies within these party programs, the underlying mechanisms of positional adaptation may not reflect the direct consequences of party system fragmentation.

Government status, whether a party is currently in government or opposition, does not significantly impact the decision-making processes before and in response to a crisis. These results are also reflected in the aggregated results. A potential explanation for these responses could be that parties within the government did not adjust their positions but rather remained on their pre-existing position in response to the refugee crisis. Especially, if they had a strong pro or anti-immigration positions before the crisis, a strong positional shift in response could lead to a loss of credibility (Tavits 2007). Since the unidimensional ideological space is limited, a party that has been positioned on the far end of the spectrum has less space to move available than other parties aligned in the center (Andrews and Money, 2009). On the other hand, I have to point again towards the relatively small sample size, whereas an extended dataset could support a more comprehensive assessment. In addition, Budge (1994) addressed, that parties' ideologies rarely 'leapfrog' each other in the policy space<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, the potential space for shifts within a less dispersed issue dimension could be reduced. I also want to mention the possibility that political

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<sup>5</sup> Though Adams & Merrill (2006) state that minor parties tend to leapfrog major competitors in their office-seeking ambitions.

parties adjusted their mode of adaptation mechanisms due to their experiences during the earlier economic crisis. A study focusing on the effects of adaptation mechanisms on party success could shed further light on this question.

Last, I have to reject my last hypothesis, that a higher topical shift before the crisis will lead to smaller shifts in response to the crisis. The results are robust across the different crises and controlling for the severity of shocks, as well as the presence of a crisis. Following Tavits (2007) I expected that consequent shifts from one election to another could result in considerations of credibility by the electorate or other competitors. It seems that mechanisms of adaptation in response to a crisis follow to some extent the different “rules”, even between different types of crises. The aggregated results point towards adaptation mechanisms in response to a crisis, regardless of severity. Due to the periodic nature of election cycles a causal link could not be established. It is possible that adaptation mechanisms affect the outcome of a crisis in this setting, rather than the other way around.

My results contradict the findings of Calca & Gross (2019), who have previously emphasized based on expert survey data, that parties which have shifted their position before tend to shift their positions following a crisis more than other parties. It is possible that the temporal difference of election cycles included in my dataset, in contrast to their expert survey data explains the varying results from short-term to mid-term adaptation<sup>6</sup>. Still, these results in line with existing research tend to support the unique character of decision-making processes in times of crises. It needs to be further emphasized that no assessment of the direction of these positional shifts was made. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct further research to evaluate whether parties’ reverse previous positional adaptations, or if a crisis may accelerate previous trends, as argued in my theoretical framework.

At this point I want to address the limitations of this approach. Due to the relatively small number of included parties, it may be possible that the underlying population may be too small to allow significant estimates. Therefore, I argue that research including a larger number of observations is necessary in order to account for these

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<sup>6</sup> That would also explain additional variation in the validation approaches of the different data sources.

indicators. Additional limitations include the country sample, where similar developments and constant control variables across countries may invite selection bias, due to the limited availability of the underlying textual data for the generation of positional estimates. One potential approach for future research may encompass further synthesis of different available positional data to extend the dataset. Due to the relatively high correlation of my estimates and existing estimates based on expert-surveys, it may be possible to account for potential variation, while allowing an integration, therefore overcoming weaknesses due to textual availability and simultaneously closing gaps, due to sample collection cycles.

This research is the first of many steps to evaluate the impact of different crises on the strategic decision-making processes of national actors as part of my PhD thesis. As several authors have previously emphasized, positional shifts display only on side of adaption mechanisms in response to a shock. Following this first empirical data on a small subsample, I will extend my analysis further and overcome the gaps described by my novel dataset. The next step is to include additional measures, which also account for different developments regarding issue saliency and consequently addressing the question, whether there are determinants of party success in response to this crisis. The development of this research could offer the opportunity to evaluate the specific effects of more contemporary crises, like the covid pandemic or the Ukrainian war and would allow contrast and compare these within existing and currently emerging research on different types of crises.

## ***Chapter 4: Shocking importance? The varying degrees of saliency in response to the 2015 refugee crisis.***

### **Introduction:**

The general concept of issue competition states, that parties are competing against each other not only on the positions on issues, but also try to emphasize specific issues, for which they are known to be competent and may constitute themselves as problem solvers (Budge & Farlie, 1983). As parties try to increase the publicly perceived saliency of an issue, they also compete with other parties for the ownership of an issue by taking a specific position (Petrocik, 1996; Budge et al., 2001; Abou-Chadi, 2014). Following this approach, the general mechanisms of issue saliency lie within party competition itself, whereas parties have the ability to decide, which topics they emphasize (Budge and Farlie, 1983). But the dynamics of event-related issue saliency have been rarely addressed by scientific literature, especially in relation to external shocks. I define external shocks as unforeseen and uncontrollable events that exert either direct or indirect impacts on a country's society. While each external shock is a unique occurrence, I argue that they share a common characteristic: the creation of an environment marked by high uncertainty. While the inflow of refugees itself may be a gradual process, the political crisis is often triggered by specific, high-impact 'focusing events' (e.g., tragic accidents or sudden border closures) that puncture the equilibrium and demand immediate parliamentary attention, thereby acting as a shock. This shared uncertainty may, in turn, establish a comparable framework for the adaptation mechanisms employed by political parties. In the conclusion of the previous chapter 1, I addressed that, the politicization of issues should be regarded as an important factor of party adaptation mechanisms in response to unexpected events. One of the main impacts of an external shock regards this politicization of specific issues attributed to the crisis following an external shock, where politicization means that specific issues are brought into the focus of political action, increasing their saliency (Palonen et al. 2019). In contrast to the general dynamics of party competition, this politicization is exogenous since it is caused by an external event and its consequences forces parties to shift their focus of attention towards it. The topical dimension of these politicized issues (e.g. environmental, economic, immigration...), which are brought into the centre of

attention following an external shock should be connected to the initial event and its particular consequences in the following period.

Over the last decades, several specific events have shown similar developments, more recently especially Europe experienced the global financial crisis (2007), the Fukushima crisis (2011), the refugee crisis (2015) and until today the ongoing covid-crisis (2019). All those crises have been the results of external shocks, which influenced the public and the political discourse, as well as the topical focus of party competition. While the global financial crisis was originated within and affected the primary economic dimension and therefore did not shift the focus of political attention to non-economic issues, other external shocks which led to a crisis did.

Drawing upon existing literature on party competition, I will elaborate the potential consequences of external refugee shocks and try to answer the question: What are the effects of the exogenous politization of refugee issues for national party competition? In the following parts I will focus on theory on issue competition and external shocks to give answer to the raised question, starting with issue-saliency theory. The following theoretical framework addresses the case of the 2015 European refugee crisis to contribute to the recently growing body of literature evaluating and assessing the impact of external shocks on party competition. In contrast to the previous chapter, I shift my focus from party manifestos towards parliamentary debates within legislative chambers across Europe. Drawing upon all releases of PARLEE dataset (Sylvester et al., 2022, 2023, 2024) I develop a measure of issue saliency based on proportional wordcounts over 10 years and 18 countries. This approach allows to overcome some of the described limitations of chapter 1.

Especially the existence of gaps due to election cycles in party manifestos is not present within this type of data and allows a more sophisticated analysis while extending the underlying sample. The results show that the saliency of shock specific issues increases in response to the external shock, but there is no significance difference in the adaptation dynamic between government and opposition parties.

Further, I was unable to generate a link of the of the precedent economic crisis as a driver for subsequent adaptation mechanisms, as stronger lingering economic effects do not increase the issue importance of immigration and integration issues in response to the refugee crisis. These finding highlight the unique character of the

2015 refugee shock in contrast to general modes of party competition and provide a framework for future studies, therefore contributing to the small, yet growing, body of literature addressing the impact of external shock and crises. In the next section I describe my theoretical arguments with regard to the results of chapter 1. Afterwards I present the underlying dataset and my novel data generation approach. The empirical results are described in the next section, followed by the discussion and implications of these results.

This paper makes a significant contribution to the study of issue saliency in political discourse by introducing a novel dataset derived from parliamentary speeches, addressing a critical gap in existing data that has limited comparative analysis across multiple countries. By leveraging this innovative dataset, the study examines the factors shaping the salience of refugee-related issues, offering a unique empirical lens that extends beyond traditional measures such as media coverage or policy documents. In line with Abou-Chadi (2016), my findings challenge conventional assumptions, demonstrating that the number of refugees alone does not significantly influence saliency. In addition to increasing levels of immigration, the presence, rather than the magnitude of a crisis drives attention to refugee issues in parliamentary debates. A crisis hereby describes the period following an external shock, where the effects of the shock take effect and persist for a duration. Furthermore, the paper tests a set of hypotheses about the conditions under which these issues gain prominence, offering robust insights into the dynamics of political attention. This research not only enriches theoretical understanding of issue saliency but also provides a methodological advance by showcasing the value of parliamentary speech data in cross-national studies.

### **Focusing Events and Party-System Agendas:**

The idea of exogenous salience:

The general mechanisms of issue-saliency state that the emphasis of specific issues by political parties is driven by different strategic approaches. Existing research found evidence that the saliency of issues is largely driven by either public concerns, which political parties want to address or by political issues, which parties hold

ownership over and try to convey to the public or other political actors (Wagner & Meyer, 2014). The varying degree of issue emphasis is therefore a central aspect of communication and competition strategies between political parties and the electorate. At the core of these communication strategies lies the exchange of information through different channels and based on different levels of information. One of my central arguments is that an external shock creates an environment of low information and high uncertainty, consequently affecting the general communication mechanisms of political actors. In the absence of a generalized theory of adaptation mechanisms in response to external shocks, the consequences of external shocks on political parties and their communication and competition strategies remains however widely unclear. Fundamentally, an external shock leads to the politization of specific shock-related issues (Palonen et al. 2019).

For the case of an external refugee-shock, this means these immigration issues move to the centre of political and public interest, increasing their salience (Dennison & Geddes, 2018; Gianfreda, 2018). Due to the focussing character of a shock and the following period of crisis, I propose that both, the public and political focus of attention is shifted simultaneously, due to the public perception of the unexpected event and the political pressure to react to actual or potential consequences. Consequently, there occurs a general topical shift as reaction to the refugee-shock, which leads to an increasing saliency of immigration issues in relation to other issues, which therefore become less salient. Previous research by Wagner & Meyer (2014) examines party strategies in multiparty systems. The option to adapt their own issue-saliency in response to increased external saliency is described as the “riding the wave” approach (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994), which captures a party’s incentive to “talk about those issues that are currently debated and discussed by voters and in the media” (Wagner & Meyer 2014: 1020). This approach holds several potential advantages for parties. For one, they refer to Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1994: 337) who note, ‘By advertising on the major issues of the day, candidates are more likely to be seen as concerned, responsive, and informed’. Further they emphasize, that even if parties are forced to talk about specific issues, which they do not hold ownership over, it poses the option to influence the framing of the issue in the public debate by engaging in the political competition (Aalberg et al. 2012,

Wagner & Meyer 2014). A study by Spoon and Klüver (2015) highlights that political parties adjust their responses to public policy preferences based on the degree of voter polarization. The authors underscore that topics related to immigration and integration have been polarized even prior to the crisis, which may further explain the responsiveness of parties to increased public saliency on these issues. Conversely, an analysis by Spoon and Williams (2022), which examines party manifestos, indicates that green and radical-left parties do not necessarily intensify their discussion of immigration issues in response to heightened public saliency. One possible explanation for this finding is that immigration-related issues are already highly salient in party manifestos. Given the limited space available in manifestos, further emphasis on these topics may be constrained

Political parties do also have the option to disregard these issues, rather than engaging with them. Yet, for the case of an external refugee shock, it seems plausible that parties rather seize the opportunity than neglecting these issues, presenting themselves responsive since the public and medial saliency of the issue has increased.

Consequently, I expect that the shock magnitude overrides standard 'issue ownership' strategies. While parties would typically demobilize issues that favor their rivals, the external shock forces a generalized saliency increase across the spectrum, compelling even reluctant parties to address the issue to demonstrate responsiveness. As already mentioned above, there exists only a small, yet growing body of literature that addresses the effects of external shocks on competition and communication strategies of political parties. Therefore, the question remains whether there are differences adaptation mechanisms between parties and across countries. The rule set of external shocks, if existent, remain unclear, even under the stated expectations of increasing saliency, one should expect differences in the degree and mode of adaptation in relation to affectedness and institutional settings.

From focus to saliency:

The topical focus of the European refugee crisis addressed immigration and integration issues due to increasing numbers of refugees. These issues were not “new” within European party politics. Spoon & Klüver (2015) provide evidence, that

immigration-issues have gained increasing attention and have been polarized before the event of the external shock in multiple countries across Europe. Additionally, a study of Häusermann & Kriesi (2015) has shown that immigration issues have played an increasing role in party competition in Europe prior to the shock.

Exogenous shocks, focusing events and crises have been emphasized for their focusing character, causing a shift of attention of the public and institutional actors towards specific issues, highlighting broad policy weaknesses, or tipping the balance of power among policy participants (Andraka-Christou 2015). Further, they are assumed to be catalysts for policy changes (Baumgartner & Jones 1993; Kingdon 2003). Characterising that the events of 2015 as a focussing event or exogenous shock, further supports the importance of the exogenously originated saliency.

Addressing the fact, that immigration issues have played a role within European party politics before, one should be able to observe a significant increase of saliency following the events of 2015. Additionally, in response to increasing and temporary uncontrolled refugee-inflows in some countries, the crisis-specific issues were extended as national party politics grew increasingly concerned about humanitarian versus issues of national security (Goodman et al. 2017). The extension of the topical scope of the shock-specific issue in turn would further lead to increasing saliency as potentially affected dimensions might move into the focus of attention. Summarizing my arguments, I formulate the first hypothesis:

H1: The overall saliency of immigration-issues of political parties will significantly increase in response to the 2015 refugee shock due to its focussing character.

The dynamics of responsiveness

Responsiveness of political parties is not limited to the electorate or the media. The communication between political parties is an important aspect of issue saliency. Regardless of the chosen communication channel, most parties react to the decision-making of other competitors in election systems. From a theoretical and generalized perspective, this leads to an action-reaction effect once set in motion. I addressed the potential role of government and opposition parties in Chapter 1, where I concluded that positional adaptation mechanisms of governmental or opposition parties do not follow a uniform logic following an external shock. Assuming that there is not

significant difference in the adaptation mechanisms of these party types, I want to extend my previous approach and test whether the same dynamics apply for of issue saliency. In Chapter 1 I followed existing research by Calca & Gros (2019) and argued, that in response to an external shock, government parties are expected to react faster than opposition parties by taking a position, since they will be held responsible for potential consequences. Whereas opposition parties have the option to wait for government parties to react and position themselves strategically in response (Calca & Gros 2019). They are unconstrained by existing coalitions and have therefore more flexibility to position themselves if they are not limited by their party ideology. The logic of my previous argument could not be empirically confirmed in relation to the positional adaptation mechanisms within election manifestos. As mentioned in the conclusion, the option persists, that the acceleration of any processes in consequence of an external shock might be one reason for these results. Further, Giger and Klüver (2012) demonstrated that focusing events, such as the Fukushima disaster, can generate significant public attention, yet policy change depends on the coordinated efforts of policy entrepreneurs, including both interest groups and political parties, to effectively mobilize public support. Under such conditions, decision-makers adjust policies to align with heightened public and entrepreneurial attention, aiming to secure reelection. Importantly, their findings suggest that governmental parties do not respond differently from opposition parties in this process. Furthermore, the institutional nature of parliamentary debate fosters this convergence. Unlike in manifestos, where parties can selectively ignore topics, the parliamentary arena imposes an executive burden' on the government to legislate on the crisis (e.g., funding, border management). This, in turn, creates a 'scrutiny imperative' for the opposition. Since the government is forced to act, the opposition is forced to debate these actions, leaving neither side the option of strategic silence.

Building on these insights, I reformulate my argument to posit that if policy entrepreneurs respond to public attention and governments adapt their policies accordingly, both governmental and opposition parties should increase their issue saliency simultaneously in response to an external shock. Accordingly, I propose the following hypothesis:

H2: There is no significant difference between opposition and governmental parties in their response to the effects of the 2015 external shock on political parties' issue saliency regarding immigration issues.

The lasting effects of a crisis

External shocks were long described as rare events, causing a shift of attention of the public and institutional actors towards specific issues, highlighting broad policy weaknesses, or tipping the balance of power among policy participants (Rovny & Whitefield 2019, Andraka-Christou 2015). The literature refers to these external shocks as exogenous events that are 'not fully controlled by actors' (Browne et al., 1984: 180). I describe external shocks as uncontrolled and unanticipated events, which have either direct or indirect impact on the society of a country. Though external shocks are unique events, I argued that they all create an environment of high uncertainty. This uncertainty as a common ground may in turn generate a comparable ruleset for the adaptation mechanisms of political parties. However, adaptation is constrained by the finite nature of the parliamentary agenda.

Theoretically, this can be understood through the lens of 'issue crowding-out' (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen, 2010). In countries where the economic shock of 2008 left deep scars (e.g., high unemployment, austerity), economic issues act as a dominant cleavage that occupies the available agenda space, effectively suppressing the rise of 'second-dimension' issues like immigration. Conversely, in contexts of economic stability, the agenda capacity is less constrained, allowing cultural and migration-related issues to gain salience more readily. Additionally, I want to draw attention towards the relevance of past events and decisions-making processes in response previous uncertainties. The importance of this effect becomes more apparent if one considers recent developments across Europe. While this case study is limited to the effect of the 2015 external shock, the aim of this study is to provide a first step toward the understanding the logic of response mechanisms to external shocks and their impact on decision-making processes and communication channels of political parties.

It is not far-fetched to characterise the 21<sup>st</sup> century as crises driven. The duration of crises varies, but I argue that the effects of previous crises need to be accounted for to understand consecutive adaptation mechanisms. As each shock creates and is caused by unique conditions, one must consider the sequence of crises to account for the shifting emphasis of issue importance. For the event of the 2015 shock, a study of Häusermann & Kriesi (2015) has shown that in countries, that were affected to a lesser extent by the financial crisis, immigration issues have played an increasing role in party competition. As a consequence, this comparative case study accounts for these previous developments. If immigration issues played a larger role in countries which were affected by the economic crisis following the economic shock of 2007, then we should observe a significant increase of immigration issues prior to the crisis in lesser affected countries and a larger effect and a catch-up effect in countries which were stronger effects following a crisis. My last set of hypotheses is therefore:

H3a: Prior to the 2015 refugee shock, the saliency of immigration issues is lower in countries that were more severely affected by the economic crisis.

H3b: Following the 2015 refugee shock, the saliency of immigration issues is higher in countries that were less severely affected by the economic crisis.

From party manifestos into the parliament:

Most existing studies draw upon expert survey or manifesto data to estimate the position or saliency related mechanisms of political parties. An extensive body of literature discusses the advantages and disadvantages of these established data sources, where I want to emphasize one common feature of these established data sources. Most of these data sources produce gaps either between election periods or survey waves. As addressed in the conclusion of Chapter 1, these gaps within the data may omit important short term adaptation mechanisms in response to an external shock, either because a crisis was regarded as resolved or there occurred a topical shift to more pressing issues. A smaller but growing body of literature utilizes parties' social media data, such as posts and interactions on platforms like Twitter or Facebook, to analyze party communication strategies and issue saliency. While this approach helps address gaps in existing datasets, it also presents challenges due to the increasing number of social media platforms and the difficulty of collecting

comparable data across countries and over longer timeframes. Additionally, social media data can reflect a mix of campaign messaging, public engagement efforts, or general statements not necessarily tied to strategic objectives, making its interpretation complex. As such, this approach lies outside the scope of this project. Other approaches include the utilization of traditional media sources, which would also exceed available resources in relation to the cross-national character of this study. As a result of these considerations this study seeks to overcome existing limitations by utilising parliamentary speeches as a data source. Following Proksch, Slapin (2015), I argue that parliamentary speech data provides several advantages in contrast to the manifesto data used in the previous chapter and compared to other data sources. First, parliamentary speeches capture the real-time saliency of issues as they are debated, reflecting the political agenda's immediate priorities. This makes speeches highly responsive to current events and shifts in public concerns, especially for events like external shocks. They further provide a granular view of specific issues discussed in detail. MPs may focus on local concerns, policy nuances, or emerging topics. In contrast to manifestos, they are produced regularly throughout the legislative term, allowing for continuous analysis of issue saliency, whereas party manifestos are released only once per election cycle. Additionally, parliamentary speeches represent a wider array of voices, including opposition parties, individual MPs, and even minority groups or opposition within parties in relation to emerging issues in consequence, this will also lead to a broadened rhetorical dimension, which may be a consequence of intensity and urgency of stated issues, especially in a polarized environment and with respect to inter- and intra-party agreement. However, studies have shown that parliamentary debates are characterized by partisan control of the legislative agenda (Cox and McCubbins 2005). Government parties often possess greater agenda-setting power in parliament and can shape the legislative agenda according to their own policy preferences (Döring 1995). In relation to the word-frequency based measures of saliency, I expect those to draw a more distinct picture for the development of a crisis. Last, I want to emphasize the indication of political strategy, which is of central interest for the theoretical framework of hypothesis 2. Proksch and Slapin (2014) describe parliamentary speeches as primary used to communicate to voters, but also as a tool to communicate policy positions

within the party and to other parties. Legislative speeches therefore indicate reactive saliency, showing how parties and MPs respond to opponents, public opinion, or events. In contrast party manifestos reflect proactive saliency, emphasizing pre-planned priorities that might not align with the unfolding political landscape.

### **From Speeches to Saliency:**

To test the hypotheses, I draw upon parliamentary speech data to generate a measure of issue saliency and combine it with data addressing the severity of the refugee crisis and the preceding economic crisis. I include all released versions of the ParLEE plenary speeches datasets, covering full-text speeches of 18 legislative chambers across Europe from 2009-2019 (Sylvester et al., 2022, 2023, 2024). Slovenia was excluded hereby, because the data on legislative speeches is only available until 2016. Since the external shock was characterized by increasing number of refugee inflows, I develop a measure of issue saliency within the given chambers, estimated by the relative proportion of words on pre-coded immigration issues to all words issued per year per party. To my knowledge, there is only little to no existing work approaching an estimation of issue saliency based on parliamentary speeches in a national (Johnston & Sprong, 2023), or an internationally comparative perspective (Bäck & Debus, 2016; Ivanusch, 2024; Sylvester et al. 2024). One potential reason for the neglect of this approach is that full datasets of plenary speeches have only become available recently, where the collection of full-text speeches has previously been a time-consuming and tedious process. Ivanusch (2024) categorises these communication channels according to three central factors, the level of 1) mediation, 2) centralisation and 3) pre-structuring. With regard to parliamentary debates, he describes them as pre-structured, as agendas are predetermined and semi-centralised with regard to the control of party leaders over the content of speeches given. This relatively simple approach relies on two assumptions. First, as mentioned in relation to Ivanusch (2024), daily agendas within parliamentary contexts are predetermined. That means, that if the number of agendas on a specific topic increase, the overall saliency, measured by word counts, of the given topic increases, because they set the initial frame for the consequent verbal interaction. Even if the parliamentary arena remains party dominated, other factors like crises and public opinion influence the agenda setting. In response to a crisis and public concern, the number of agendas on

the crisis-specific topic will increase. Therefore, one can describe the agenda setting as a pre-structured framing for any subsequent discussion. Second, the individual contributions of parliamentary members within the set agendas vary in the number of words (the number and length of statements or questions). I assume that speakers will spend more words on issues which they consider as more important. Though individual contributions of parliamentary members within the set agenda may diverge from the initial frame, the advantage of the ParLEE data set is that the data set is split to the sentence level and coded accordingly. Consequently, any expressions within and outside agendas as well as any verbal action are accounted for. One advantage of this approach is that the aggregation per party and year allows to control for the number of words spent on immigration topics in relation to other topics also controls to some extent for the number of speakers in the parliament. Further, by including the original untranslated transcripts of the legislative chambers, I can control for language specific differences in word variety and grammar.

The initial dataset generated based on this approach covered unique 226 parties across 18 countries and 10 years aggregated per year. Additional party data on the governmental status, vote share and the number of seats in legislative chambers was merged utilizing the ParlGov (Döring & Manow 2023) dataset. Parties which could not be uniquely matched between the datasets were either manually added or excluded if no clear match could be identified. This reduced the number of observations to 1122 cases over the chosen timeframe. Figures 1 & 2 provide an overview of the varying mean emphasis of issue saliency on immigration issues per country over the chosen timeframe of observation. Overall, one can observe different patterns across the development of mean issue saliency in the included countries. Especially before the refugee shock, most of the countries have shown a decline or consistently low emphasis of immigration issues. Further, there is a general increase in response in 2015, but even after the initial shock, the saliency remained in most countries at a relatively high level. Whether or not these developments are directly related to increasing inflows of refugees and asylum applicants is subject to the empirical analysis in the next section. It is worth emphasizing the varying saliency prior to the crisis, which may be result of the consequences of the economic crisis, as addressed in the theoretical section

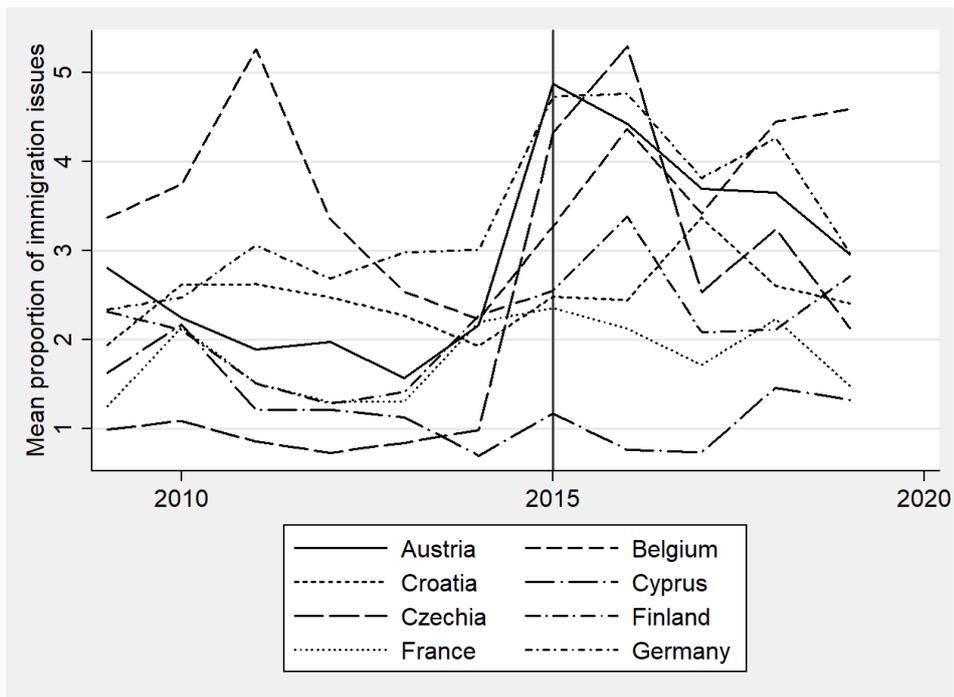


Figure 8: Mean proportion of immigration issues in national parliaments based on word frequencies per year per country

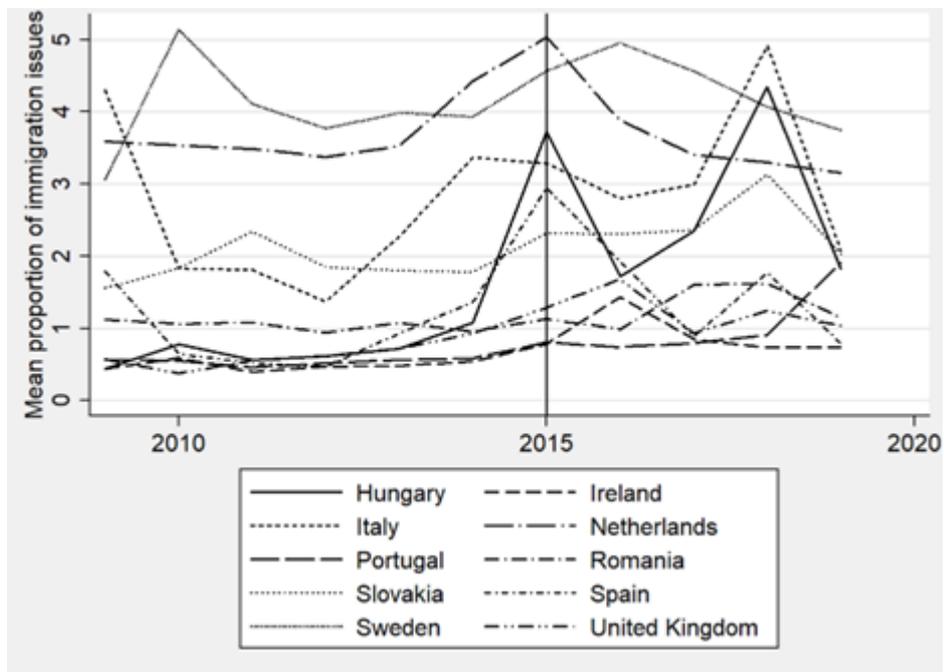
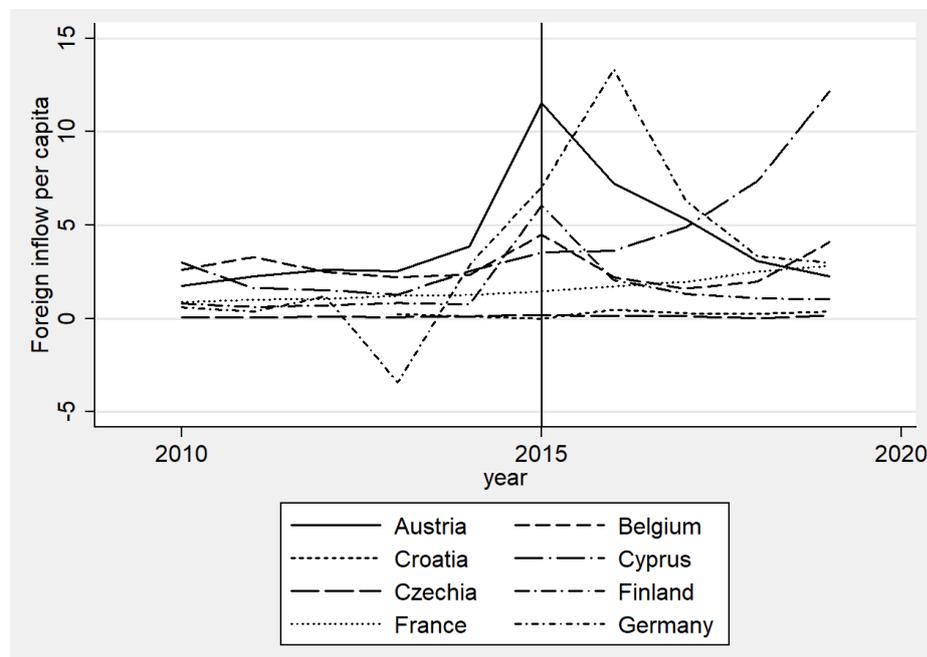


Figure 9: Mean proportion of immigration issues in national parliaments based on word frequencies per year per country

To account for the varying effects of the refugee crisis, I follow the approach of chapter 1. In contrast to this part, I adapted the refugee variable of foreign population per capita (per 1000 inhabitants) on an annual basis, instead of accounting for election cycles (for Croatia the number of refugees provided by Eurostat are available from 2014 onwards). Figures 3 & 4 display these numbers, overall, we can observe a relatively large increase in most countries in 2015. It seems that the initial increase prior to 2015 in many countries (Figure 1 & 2) is driven by other factors than directly increasing numbers of refugees and asylum applicants.

Figure 10: Mean inflow of foreign people per year per country, Data: Worldbank



Except for Germany and Cyprus, one can also observe a drastic decline in these numbers following 2015, therefore the varying emphasis of these issues afterwards might be the consequence of other factors. A more detailed perspective is described in the next section.

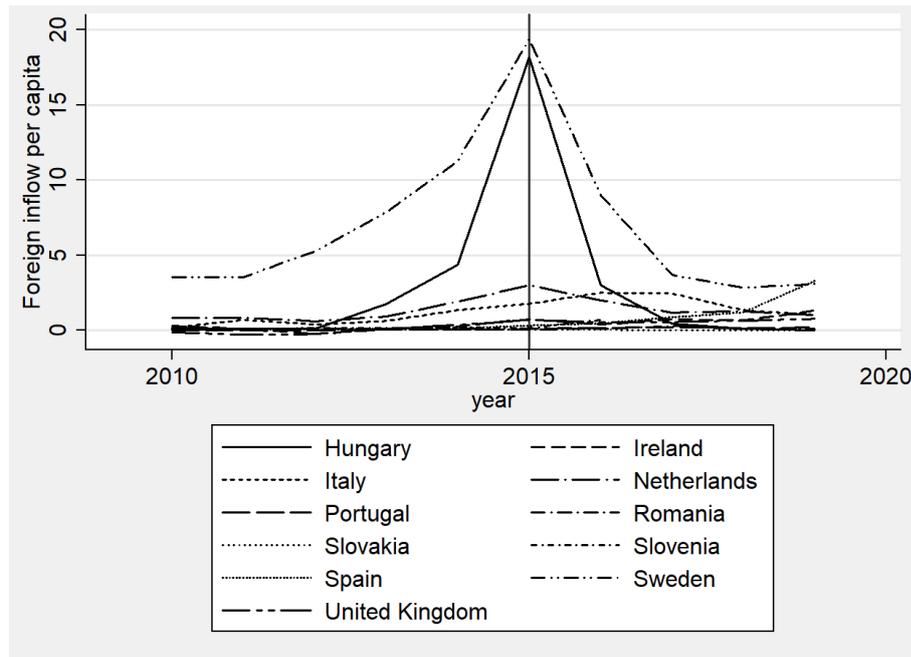


Figure 11: Mean inflow of foreign people per year per country, Data: Worldbank

To control for potentially lasting effects of the prior economic crisis I include annual GDP growth and unemployment rates (further robustness tests are carried out including inflation rates). In addition, I generated the variable *shock* which is a binary coded dummy variable to account for the lasting effects and developments following the 2015 shock. One additional change with regard to chapter 1 is that I rather include small parties, but control for party size. Small parties are hereby parties that did not reach more than 5% vote share in any given election in the chosen time frame.

Table 19 presents the descriptive statistics for the variables included in the final regression models (N=965). The data demonstrates substantial variation across the key economic indicators, which is crucial for testing the mechanisms hypothesized in H3. Specifically, GDP growth ranges from -6.55% to 24.48%, and unemployment rates vary between 2.02% and 26.09%, providing a robust basis for analyzing the impact of economic context. The variable for refugee inflow reflects net movements, ranging from -3.42 (indicating a net outflow in specific cases, e.g., Germany) to a

maximum of 19.37. Furthermore, the sample covers the full spectrum of party competition, though 75% of observations come from established ('large') parties.

*Table 19: Summary statistics of the regression variables.*

	Count	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Issue Saliency (Log)	965	0.62	0.74	-2.00	2.74
Large Party (Dummy)	965	0.75	0.43	0.00	1.00
GDP Growth (%)	965	2.05	2.69	-6.55	24.48
Unemployment Rate (%)	965	8.37	4.40	2.02	26.09
Post-Shock Period (Dummy)	965	0.57	0.49	0.00	1.00
Refugee Inflow (per capita)	965	2.06	3.15	-3.42	19.37

As highlighted by Gessler and Hunger (2021), right-wing parties have demonstrated the most significant increase in attention to immigration issues. To assess whether this pattern extends to all parties, I include an additional control for right-wing parties in the analysis. The classification of right-wing parties is based on Rooduijn et al. (2017) and further refined using the family classifications provided by the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP).

To analyze the dynamic relationship between the saliency of immigration issues and increasing numbers of refugee inflows, I employed a general error correction model (ECM) within a regression framework (Granger & Newbold 1974). This approach allows for the simultaneous estimation of short-term dynamics and long-term equilibrium relationships, addressing the time series properties of the data. Prior to estimating the ECM I conducted Fisher-type Unit root tests (including and excluding time-trends) to account for the data structure (unbalanced, panel data with gaps). The test supports the non-stationarity of the data and indicates cointegration. Due to the data structure, specific tests for cointegration were not carried out (either because the number of observations was too low, or because of gaps in the data) and the application of data interpolation was rejected after careful consideration. The initial

test results support the inclusion of general error correction framework within the regression, which allows me to account for the analysis of shock dynamics, including fixed effects and country clusters to account for data heterogeneity. The results are presented below and support the robustness of the estimated coefficients. In addition, fixed effects regression models were carried out separately for the period prior and after the external shock to address hypotheses 3a & 3b, where I evaluate the potentially lasting effects of the economic crisis.

### **Parallel Responses Beyond Inflow Size**

The following section will address the results of the analysis of parties' varying issue salience on immigration issue in response to the external shock of 2015 and with regard to governmental status and the effects of the preceded economic shock and its lasting influence on the economic performance of different countries. Table 1 presents the results of the analysis concerning the first hypothesis. In general, I wanted to evaluate the effect of an environment of uncertainty on policy makers and their decision making. Arguing that the focussing character of an external shock on political parties is a crucial element, model 1 & 2 and 3 & 4 of table 1 include different variable to account for potential influences. Model 1 and 2 include the number of foreign inflows per 1000 inhabitants, which is an indicator for the proportional affectedness of different countries, assuming that a larger number of refugees and asylum seekers is more visible in countries with lesser inhabitants.

Model 3 & 4 in contrast include the absolute number of refugees and asylum seekers (by 10.000) in each country. As the refugee crisis was described as a European crisis, political parties might be more concerned by absolute numbers, for example provided by the media, rather than the individual level of inflows. Both models include the dummy variable *shock*, coded as 1 for the years following 2014, to facilitate a comparison between general trends and developments specific to the shock. The interaction of the *shock* variable with other predictors allows to examine whether the effects of the inflow are stronger after the shock or whether the impact of the shock itself varies depending on the size of the inflow. Furthermore, I account for the potential residual effects of the preceding economic crisis, a topic that will be

examined in greater detail in the subsequent section, as well as the impact of party size.

Table 20: Analysis of parties' proportional issue saliency in response to the external shock

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	LogSaliency	LogSaliency	LogSaliency	LogSaliency
Party size	-.094 (.074)	-.093 (.075)	-.1 (.077)	-.101 (.076)
RRP	.352*** (.034)	.351*** (.034)	.357*** (.035)	.358*** (.036)
GDP growth	.004 (.006)	.004 (.006)	.003 (.006)	.003 (.006)
Unemployment rate	-.031* (.017)	-.031* (.017)	-.032* (.017)	-.032* (.016)
Shock	.408*** (.074)	.386*** (.068)	.369*** (.067)	.38*** (.075)
Foreign inflow per capita	.001 (.002)	-.002 (.003)		
Foreign inflow*shock		.004 (.004)		
Absolute foreign inflow			.015 (.015)	.019 (.022)
Absolute foreign inflow*shock				-.005 (.019)
Constant	-.01 (.056)	-.01 (.056)	-.004 (.058)	-.004 (.058)
Observations	965	965	965	965
R-squared	.11	.112	.116	.116

*Note: Dependent variable is the Log proportion of issue saliency within national parliamentary discussions on immigration issues in relation to all issues addressed per year. Standard errors clustered by countries are shown in parentheses. Significance levels*

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

In both instances, the analysis reveals that the dummy variable representing the presence and consequences of a shock yields robust and highly significant estimates,

surpassing the explanatory power of other included variables. The coefficients of the control variables in the first model remain stable, underscoring the reliability of the estimation. Notably, the insignificant values observed for per capita inflow in Models 1 and 2 underscore the critical role of the external shock in heightening issue saliency. While it is evident that right-wing parties significantly increase their saliency more than other parties, it can also be observed that all parties raise their saliency. Gessler and Hunger (2021) attribute this to a contagion effect, where mainstream parties respond to the heightened saliency of right-wing parties and media coverage. Due to the annual aggregation of the data, this effect cannot be definitively demonstrated but serves as a plausible explanation for these results. These findings lend strong support to Hypothesis 1: the salience of immigration issues for political parties increased significantly in response to the 2015 refugee shock. I follow that, this increased saliency is driven by its agenda-setting potential in a context of heightened uncertainty.

Model 1 suggest that this variable significantly influences the decision-making processes of national political parties. As illustrated in Figures 3 and 4, the graphs indicate varying levels of foreign inflows over time, corresponding to the temporal patterns of the external shock 2015 and the consecutive crisis, where inflow numbers tend to decline (except for Germany and Cyprus). To capture these variations in affectedness and the corresponding adaptive responses, this variable is used as a proxy for the crisis's effects. Additionally, the exclusion of the shock dummy variable mitigates concerns about autocorrelation, given its high correlation with GDP growth. This correlation is likely attributable to the continued economic recovery following the prior financial crisis. A robustness check, which excluded GDP growth while reintroducing the shock dummy variable, confirmed the stability of the results, showing no substantive changes. Building on the fixed-effects regression framework outlined in the previous section, I extend the analysis by including an indicator for the governmental status of political parties. To investigate differential adaptation mechanisms in response to governmental status (Hypothesis 2), I incorporate interaction terms between these variables. The result of the second panel-regression framework is displayed in table 2. Model 1 provides the baseline model, whereas

model 2 includes the interaction to account for the effects of shock specific developments and its outcomes and model 4 presents the full model.

*Table 21: Analysis of parties' proportional issue saliency in response to increasing foreign inflows*

	(1)	(2)
	LogSaliency	LogSaliency
Foreign inflow per capita	.031** (.015)	.029* (.014)
Cabinet party	.078 (.046)	.068 (.047)
GDP growth	.011* (.006)	.011* (.006)
Unemployment rate	-.041** (.015)	-.041** (.015)
Party size	-.118 (.131)	-.12 (.131)
Cabinet party * Foreign inflow		.005 (.005)
Constant	-.01 (.006)	-.01 (.006)
Observations	945	945
R-squared	.055	.055

*Note: Dependent variable is the Log proportion of issue saliency within national parliamentary discussions on immigration issues in relation to all issues addressed. Standard errors clustered by countries are shown in parentheses.*

*Significance levels*

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

Regarding the second hypothesis, that there is no significant difference between government and opposition parties in their responses to the effects of a shock, the results across all estimated models largely support this claim. While the estimates are positive, they are not statistically significant (with the exception of Model 3), suggesting a potential but inconclusive link between governmental status and

increased saliency. Moreover, the coefficients and standard errors of the interaction term do not indicate heightened saliency or responsiveness among government parties as foreign inflow numbers increase. These findings align with the hypothesis, indicating that there is no substantial difference in the adaptive behavior of political parties based on their governmental status in response to rising foreign inflows.

Last, I want to draw attention to the economic performance of countries and their responsiveness to the refugee shock. The estimates of models 1 & 2 indicate that higher GDP growth and lesser unemployment rates, as indicators for economic performance, overall lead to higher saliency on immigration issues.

*Table 22 Analysis of parties' proportional issue saliency before (1) and after (2) the external shock*

	(1)	(2)
	Before 2015	After 2014
	LogSaliency	LogSaliency
Foreign inflow per capita	.013	.012**
	(.019)	(.005)
Cabinet party	.045	.075
	(.045)	(.054)
GDP growth	.03*	0
	(.016)	(.005)
Unemployment rate	-.031	.039**
	(.027)	(.016)
Party size	.001	-.004
	(.178)	(.142)
Constant	.634**	.447***
	(.279)	(.153)
Observations	526	573
R-squared	.078	.059

*Note: Dependent variable is the Log proportion of issue saliency within national parliamentary discussions on immigration issues in relation to all issues addressed. Standard errors clustered by countries are shown in parentheses. Significance levels*

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

To directly address hypothesis 3a and 3b, I proceed to test whether there is a significant difference between countries economic performance prior and after the crisis using fixed effects regression models. As discussed above, the economic crisis primarily resulted in declining GDP growth; however, unemployment rates are included in the analysis as an additional control variable. A pairwise correlation analysis between GDP growth and unemployment rates revealed relatively low coefficients (0.17), minimizing concerns about autocorrelation.

The findings regarding Model 1 (pre-crisis) align with the theoretical expectation of 'issue crowding-out' (H3a). Higher GDP growth prior to the external shock is significantly associated with greater saliency of immigration issues (.03\*). This confirms that in times of economic stability, parliamentary agendas possess the capacity to address 'secondary' dimensions like immigration. Conversely, in economically strained contexts, these issues appear to be crowded out by economic concerns.

Model 2 (post-crisis), however, reveals a fundamental shift in this logic. Here, GDP growth loses significance, while higher unemployment rates become a significant driver of immigration salience (.039\*\*). This leads to the rejection of H3b in its strict crowding-out sense. Instead of economic hardship continuing to suppress the issue, the combination of the refugee shock and high unemployment appears to amplify salience. This suggests that once the external shock hits, the logic changes from 'crowding-out' to a 'grievance' or 'scapegoating' mechanism, where migration is debated more intensely in economically struggling contexts."

Again, I carried out a set of robustness tests in to further verify the estimated results. The results remain constant across different levels of confidence and for different measures of economic performance (i.e. inflation rates). Summarized, the results of my analysis support hypotheses 1, 2, and 3a. While H3b is rejected, the results provide crucial insight into how the interaction between economic conditions and issue salience transforms under the pressure of an external shock. The lasting effects of the previous shock do not influence further decision-making processes of political parties in response to the consecutive refugee shock.

## **Discussion:**

The aim of the second chapter of my dissertation was to evaluate the impact of the external refugee shock of 2015 on the issue saliency of national parties across Europe. My central argument is that the environment of uncertainty created by an external shock, the governmental status of individual parties as well as the potentially lingering effect of the preceded economic shock influence the adaptation mechanisms of national parties across Europe. The results of my analysis contribute to the growing body of literature evaluating the impact of external shocks and crises. Utilizing the Parlee dataset, I generated a measure of issue saliency within 18 legislative chambers for 213 national parties across 19 years and was able to identify patterns across the issue-related adaptation mechanisms of national parties.

My first argument addressed the politization of issues in response to an external shock. Following Palonen et al. (2019) I reasoned that immigration related issues will increase in response to a shock. Existing literature (Dennison & Geddes, 2018; Gianfreda, 2018), has shown that immigration issues moved to the centre of political and public interest in response to the shock. Consequently, I followed Wagner & Meyer (2014), that parties have an incentive to talk about those issues that are currently debated and discussed in the public and the media. While I cannot specifically test whether parties responded directly to the public and the media or rather to the event itself, the origin of this exogenous saliency remains outside of the political arena. The results of the empirical analysis do confirm my first hypothesis, the basic assumption, that the overall saliency will increase in response to an external shock. Across different model specific, I was able to show that parties do respond stronger to the external shock itself, than the outcomes or individual affectedness of a country. Though one of my central arguments encompasses the environment of uncertainty created by a shock, I cannot directly address it via an estimation process. One potential possibility could be to generate a variance-based measure of uncertainty itself (quasi uncertainty estimates of uncertainty) or point towards the relatively low level of explained variance in the model, which indicate that there are additional factors which influence the issue saliency of national parties. In order to address the logic of responsiveness and the level of uncertainty, it would be necessary to further break down the data on a daily or weekly basis. Due to the

unavailability of the required data on these levels, this approach lies outside the scope of this project, even more so concerning the cross-national nature of the analysis.

My second hypothesis addressed the institutional dynamics of responsiveness. In contrast to Chapter 1, where manifesto positions allowed for strategic divergence, the parliamentary arena imposed convergent constraints. The results support H2, finding no significant difference between government and opposition parties. This validates the theoretical argument of 'institutional lock-in' discussed in the theory section: The external shock created an 'executive burden' for the government to legislate, which simultaneously triggered a 'scrutiny imperative' for the opposition. Unlike in 'normal' competition, where opposition parties might strategically ignore government-owned issues, the shock magnitude and legislative necessity forced both sides to engage with the topic simultaneously.

The final set of hypotheses examined the lingering impact of the preceding economic crisis. By confirming H3a, the analysis demonstrated that prior to the shock, the 'crowding-out' mechanism was intact: countries with better economic performance (and thus less economic pressure) dedicated more parliamentary attention to immigration. However, the rejection of H3b highlights a critical disruption caused by the shock. The positive correlation between unemployment and post-shock salience suggests that the refugee crisis broke the crowding-out logic. In a high-uncertainty environment, economic distress no longer suppressed migration debates but appears to have amplified them. This indicates a structural shift where economic pressure acts as a catalyst rather than a constraint for the politicization of migration, highlighting the need for future research to explicitly model the interaction between concurrent crisis dimensions.

I believe that the results of this novel approach, utilizing the Parlee dataset to generate a measure of issue saliency and analysing the effects of the 2015 external shocks provided novel insight into the dynamics of adaptation mechanisms of national parties and contribute to the contemporary literature of shocks and crises by emphasizing the unique characteristics which frame the decision-making processes of parties across Europe.

## ***Chapter 5: The winner takes it all? An analysis of adaptation mechanisms of political parties and their influence on party success in response to the 2015 external shock.***

### **Introduction:**

Existing theory on party adaptation mechanisms emphasizes that party positions and issue saliency are complementary aspects and should therefore be connected (Abou-Chadi et al., 2020). This dissertation addresses how parties adapt to external shocks and how these adaptations influence their electoral success. In the first chapter, I examined the positional adaptation mechanisms of parties based on their manifestos in response to external shocks. In the second chapter, I investigated how the 2015 refugee crisis shaped national parties' immigration issue saliency, using parliamentary speeches across Europe. This final chapter synthesizes these insights to answer the overarching question:

*How do individual parties' adaptation mechanisms in response to an external shock influence party success?*

However, analyzing these mechanisms requires acknowledging their theoretical interdependence. As Abou-Chadi et al. (2020) suggest, position and salience are not isolated strategies but complementary tools in party competition. A party that shifts its position to a new location on the ideological spectrum must strategically decide whether to emphasize this change (increasing salience) or to downplay it. Despite this linkage, this chapter tests their effects as distinct independent variables to empirically disentangle whether voters reward the content of a policy change (position) or the signal of prioritization (salience). While the literature on party success during crises remains relatively sparse, this study develops a theoretical framework emphasizing the consequences of adaptation mechanisms for national political parties. I argue that issue saliency, as a signal of a party's responsiveness to the electorate, positively influences electoral success. In contrast, positional shifts, especially in an environment of uncertainty where public opinion remains stable (Stockmeyer et al., 2019; Mader & Schoen, 2019) and event framing is in motion (Goodman et al., 2017), do not have the same effect. Furthermore, I explore whether

mainstream and government parties are disproportionately penalized for crises due to voter attribution of responsibility (Calca & Gross, 2019). Finally, I examine whether the success of right-wing parties, which has been increasing across Europe (Essletzbichler et al., 2018; Greven, 2016), is driven by their adaptation mechanisms.

To evaluate these questions, I extend insights from prior chapters. The analysis focuses on how party adaptation mechanisms influence party competition and electoral outcomes during crises using the case of the 2015 refugee crisis. Using the PARLEE dataset (Sylvester et al., 2022, 2023, 2024), I generate immigration position estimates for over 10 years and across 17 countries, employing Multiple Correspondence Analysis. This issue-specific approach improves upon the often-criticized general left-right measures (Adams et al., 2019), providing a more nuanced understanding of party competition and policy shifts.

The dataset generated complements the work in Chapter 1 by extending the underlying population from 7 to 19 countries, enabling a more robust analysis. The immigration position estimates generated through Multiple Correspondence Analysis align well with existing measures of party positions, though some variation is observed. This expanded dataset allows for a more comprehensive evaluation of how parties' issue saliency and positional shifts influence their electoral performance in the aftermath of an external shock.

The results indicate that adaptation mechanisms, whether positional shifts or changes in issue saliency, do not significantly influence parties' electoral success following an external shock. Instead, larger parties are held accountable for developments following the shock, leading to significant vote losses. Finally, I find mixed evidence regarding the influence of adaptation mechanisms on the success of right-wing parties. These findings contribute to the broader literature on party competition and voter behavior during crises, emphasizing the role of unique events in shaping electoral outcomes.

## **Why Attention Beats Position:**

### Uncertain Adaptation:

In the previous chapters of this dissertation, I evaluated the adaptation mechanisms of political parties following a crisis. One of my central questions concerns the uncertainty created by a crisis and how it affects political decision-making processes of national parties. While I argue that a crisis following an external shock may interfere with the reciprocal adaptation between public opinion and party positions, I want to test this argument in the following work. The goal of this chapter is therefore to evaluate the electoral success of these adaptation mechanisms of political parties and answer the question: Did the crisis following the external shock of 2015 reward more responsive political parties by increasing their success in the consecutive election and what are the determinants of success in a cross-national perspective?

Before I address the potential determinants of electoral success in response to a crisis, it is important to emphasize why and how the public could be concerned and/or affected by the crisis following an external shock. Habermas (1975) describes a crisis as a rarely occurring event, that can destabilize both the existing order and citizens' longstanding beliefs. The events of 2015 caused such a crisis in several states across Europe. They challenged especially areas of governance, border control and unregulated migration to EU member states (Trauner, 2016), which were regarded as rather stable and secure before these events. As resulting challenges for institutional structures are perceived by the public, they create specific areas of uncertainty on an individual and collective level.

These "uncertainties are not experienced in the same way by different people. Knowledge about the present and perspectives on the future are all constructed in particular contexts. Depending on one's situation, uncertainties may be embraced as an opportunity or encountered as a source of dread, fear and anxiety" (Scoones & Stirling, 2020: 4). The consequences of these uncertainties generate differentiated perspectives, since uncertainty influences our actions, social images, as well as impacting our lives and politics (Arora & Glover, 2017). Further, these uncertainties differ with respect to cultures, identities, and historical experiences. (Da Col & Humphrey, 2012). While the perceptions of uncertainty are generally seen as an

individual experience and mostly subject to psychological approaches, specific events like shocks are assumed to be able to extend those to a collective experience, therefore affecting parts, or a society as a whole. Different characters of uncertainty may vary according to the type of shock (e.g. economic, environmental, war,..). An external refugee shock is assumed to be particularly determined mostly by cultural and related extent economic aspects.

In connection to existing literature, ethnic threat theory (McLaren, 2002) provides a possible answer to the question of how the electorate may react to this type of shock. First, an increasing number of refugees may be perceived as a threat to the national culture or lifestyle. Since most refugees were of different cultures (faith, language, traditions) they are perceived as a possible threat to their own culture as part of the collective and individual identity. Further, economic aspects, especially with regard to the prior economic crisis, may pose another reason for increasing uncertainty. Specific goods, like employment, housing or social assistance are contested, where a larger group of refugees will be regarded as additional competitors on the labor market or in relation to welfare aspects. Last, the fear of a growing danger of terrorism affects the individual perception, which grew more important in the months following a crisis of 2015, where terrorist acts have taken place across Europe, which were initially addressed in connection to previously uncontrolled refugee inflows. The character of the uncertainty following this shock is therefore perceived in connection with risks, rather than opportunities for individual actors. In reaction to these developments, uncertainty theory suggests that individuals try to avoid or reduce uncertainties, rather than embracing them. This is regarded as a common response to uncertainty, instability, and complexity, that follows a societal transformation (Hogg et. al., 2013). Uncertainty avoidance can be expressed in different ways, Gründl & Aichholzer (2020: 643) describe “the development of an exclusive identity, higher preference for a closed and homogeneous ingroup, and possible derogation of outgroups”, as the most common reactions to growing uncertainties and risks within a globalized environment. These mechanisms may have impact on the social identity of an individual and collective, since uncertainty-identity theory states that, “social-category-based self-conceptualization, ingroup preference, and inclusive-exclusive intergroup attitudes are motivated by uncertainty

reduction” (Gründl & Aichholzer, 2020: 643), which influence heightened group centrism (Kruglanski et. al., 2006).

Following the arguments of these approaches, it becomes apparent that the refugee shock could impose a substantial impact on people’s identity and attitudes toward refugees, since “nativist, especially anti-immigrant, sentiments serve as a mental reduction of societal complexity by applying (prejudiced) abstractions of social outgroups (Allport, 1954)” (Gründl & Aichholzer, 2020: 644). However, against these expectations, previous research by Stockemer et al. (2019) has shown that attitudes toward immigrants remained rather stable in response to the shock. An additional case study by Mader and Schoen (2019) investigated Germany during a similar period. In line with Stockemer et al. (2019), their study supported stable immigration attitudes but emphasized the absence of a representative sample of the population.

Another aspect is addressed by Goodman et al. (2017), who highlight an ongoing discursive change regarding the framing of refugees. While the crisis was initially framed as an immigration crisis, it shifted to a refugee crisis as the severity of the humanitarian aspects came to the fore but was reframed as an immigration crisis following the first terrorist attacks across Europe. While these studies emphasize the relatively stable nature of attitudes toward immigrants throughout the framing of the crisis, the question arises of how political parties positioned themselves strategically during this period.

As Spoon and Klüver (2015) argue, “political parties devote particular attention to polarized issues when these are salient to clearly spell out their issue-specific positions, to unambiguously transmit their policy preferences to voters and to distinguish themselves from competitors” (Spoon & Klüver, 2015: 359). In seeking to distinguish themselves from competitors, parties may adjust their positions, potentially shifting them to reflect perceived voter concerns. Similarly, changes in the salience of an issue may lead parties to adapt their positions (Abou-Chadi et al., 2020). Previous studies have shown that parties’ salience and positional strategies often depend on the public salience of issues and voter issue priorities (Sides, 2006; Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016). In the context of the refugee shock, political parties

might be expected to adopt more pronounced positions on immigration issues to capitalize on heightened public attention.

Moreover, literature on election campaigns argues that “riding the wave,” i.e., campaigning on issues that dominate the news cycle, provides politicians with an immediate opportunity to appear concerned and responsive (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994). However, the relatively stable character of attitudes toward immigrants as emphasized in the studies above suggests that positional adaptations by political parties may not necessarily lead to increased electoral success. Stable public attitudes limit the scope for parties to shift voter preferences through issue emphasis or reframing.

Theoretically, the limited electoral success of positional shifts can be explained by a 'credibility gap' that emerges during external shocks. Standard spatial theory assumes voters reward parties moving closer to their preferences (Downs, 1957). However, in a high-uncertainty environment, sudden positional shifts by mainstream parties are often perceived as opportunistic rather than sincere. For example, if a centre-left party abruptly adopts a strict anti-immigration stance to counter a radical right challenger, voters may view this as a tactical flip-flop rather than a genuine policy conviction. As Mudde (2007) argues, such accommodation often legitimizes the issue ownership of the challenger rather than benefiting the accommodator. Consequently, positional adaptations lack the necessary credibility to significantly impact vote shares.

H1a: Positional shifts on immigration issues do not significantly increase the electoral success of national parties following the external refugee shock.

In contrast, saliency serves as a clearer, less ambiguous signal of responsiveness. By dedicating parliamentary time to the crisis, a party demonstrates it is addressing voter concerns without necessarily compromising its core ideological principles. For instance, a Green party might maintain its pro-immigration position but significantly increase the salience of 'integration management' or 'humanitarian aid'. This signals to voters that the party is active and responsive to the crisis, avoiding the credibility costs associated with positional U-turns. Therefore, increasing saliency acts as a

positive signal of competence and responsiveness that voters are more likely to reward.

H1b: Increased saliency on immigration issues does significantly increase the electoral success of national parties following the external refugee shock.

Punishing the establishment:

In addition to the individual responsiveness of political parties, I argue that party size and whether they are regarded as large or mainstream parties will affect their success as well. One common pattern among party positions in the face of an external shock is that there is no clearly distinguishable pattern between opposition and government parties' reactions or the direction of their shifts. While government parties tend to change their policy positions on average more than the opposition, they are often punished depending on the severity of the shock and its consequences (Calca and Gros, 2019). It seems "still unclear if incumbents lost votes because they adapted to the external shock by changing their ... policy positions, because of not adapting enough, or by moving in the 'wrong' direction" (Calca and Gros, 2019: 561).

Government parties, in particular, are forced to react because retrospective voting theory posits that they must fear being voted out of office if voters hold them responsible for unsatisfying conditions (Calca and Gros, 2019; Ahlquist et al., 2020). However, the costs of coalition governance further exacerbate this challenge for government parties. Research on the cost of coalitions (Van Spanje, 2011; Hjermitsev, 2020) shows that coalition partners are often collectively punished at the polls, as voters struggle to attribute responsibility accurately among multiple governing parties. Coalition governments can face compounded blame due to the perception of inefficiency, divided responsibility, or failure to effectively manage crises.

At the same time, the literature on incumbency advantage (e.g., Cox and Katz, 1996) suggests that incumbents may retain some resilience, particularly in systems where individual incumbents or parties can leverage institutional advantages, established networks, or voter loyalty. Nevertheless, this advantage may be insufficient to offset the broader "punishment" dynamics described above. Retrospective voting is likely

crisis-sensitive, and external shocks like the refugee crisis undermine traditional incumbency advantages by intensifying voter dissatisfaction. Moreover, these dynamics extend beyond government parties to all mainstream parties, whether they are in government or opposition. Mainstream parties are generally perceived as being part of the status quo and, as such, are held responsible for unsatisfactory conditions (Hobolt and Tilley, 2016). Hobolt and Tilley (2016: 972) hypothesize that “voters negatively affected by the crisis ... will punish mainstream parties and turn to challenger parties instead.” While the refugee crisis and its outcomes might affect voters less directly than an economic crisis, I hypothesize that these dynamics apply here as well.

The perception of a crisis as an uncontrolled or mismanaged event leads voters to hold established parties responsible for the conditions, even if those conditions are outside of policymakers’ control. Indeed, “European policy-makers appear to be damned if they do act and damned if they do not” (Hodson and Quaglia, 2009: 495). This “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” dilemma applies particularly to coalition governments, where internal disagreements or mixed signals further erode public trust.

Following these arguments, individual adaptation mechanisms of national mainstream parties—whether by increasing saliency or shifting their positions—should not reduce the “punishing” effects of a crisis. The inevitable electoral decline of mainstream parties following an external shock, therefore, occurs regardless of their adaptation efforts.

H2: There is a significant negative relationship between party size and vote shares following the election after the external shock.

Learning to fly? The rise of the right wing:

The arguments of the last section provide a possible explanation on the rise of niche parties across Europe across the last decades in relation to external shocks. In general, mainstream parties, whether in opposition or in government, tend to be cautious about mobilizing around new issues or adopting extreme positions, as such strategies can complicate coalition-building efforts necessary to enter government

(de Vries & Hobolt, 2015; Van de Wardt et al., 2014). However, whether this dynamic applies to immigration issues is debatable, given that immigration has been a recurring theme in party competition prior to the 2015 refugee crisis.

Existing research suggests that, during the crisis period, many governing parties adjusted their political positions, while radical right parties gained substantial influence across Europe (e.g., Essletzbichler et al., 2018; Greven, 2016). These developments suggest a dual causal mechanism. First, the immigration shock of 2015 heightened public salience of immigration, prompting mainstream parties, especially those of the moderate right, to shift their positions toward a cultural protectionist profile. This was aimed at addressing changing public priorities and capturing the attention of left-authoritarian voters (Abou-Chadi, 2016). Second, the growing electoral success of radical right parties created additional pressure for mainstream parties to compete on the immigration issue, either by emphasizing it more prominently or by repositioning themselves to appeal to the same voter base. These shifts in party strategies must also be understood in the context of ideological constraints. While the political right may have been better positioned to address the increasing public salience of immigration issues, the extent to which parties adjusted their stances depended on their ideological flexibility and pre-existing focus on these issues. Thus, the interaction between the crisis itself and the electoral gains of radical right parties created a feedback loop, reinforcing the centrality of immigration in party competition across Europe.

Before the crisis, right-wing parties had already established themselves as issue owners over key topics, particularly immigration, while other parties attempted to challenge these positions with varying degrees of success. Drawing on Walgrave et al. (2011), I argue that right-wing parties secured associative issue ownership on these issues through a sustained focus on them over time. Associative issue ownership fosters a stable and automatic connection in voters' minds between certain parties and specific issues, particularly for valence issues where salience further enhances its influence on voting behavior. This dynamic likely gave right-wing parties a lasting advantage during the refugee crisis. Whether the success of right-wing parties across Europe can be seen as a result of their pre-existing or varying degree of saliency, their position or whether they were the winners of the punishing

effects for mainstream parties remains to be answered. Even though some right-wing parties across Europe rose to mainstream parties even prior to the crisis, I would expect these parties to be the “winners” of the external shock and the following crisis. As these parties had already relatively high issue emphasis and relatively extreme position on these issues, their adaptation mechanisms should be weaker than other parties (assuming that the ideological space is limited). Consequently, these arguments would indicate that the party type, whether a party is a right-wing party or not would have significant influence on their following success, while their adaptation mechanisms should be less important than those of other parties.

H3: The success of right-wing parties following the external shock compared to other types of parties is less influenced by their adaptation mechanisms.

### **Votes, Positions, and Emphasis:**

Measuring party success:

The central dependent variable for the stated hypotheses is party success. Thus, I compare the varying degrees of parties’ electoral success from 2009-2019 across 17 countries to account for previous developments and the period following the external shock of 2015. As electoral success should be regarded as a relational measure, I compare the relative increase/decrease of vote shares of individual parties from election (t) to the consecutive election (t+1). The original data on electoral success (vote shares) was drawn from the ParlGov dataset (Döring & Manow 2023). As I utilize parliamentary textual data to generate measures of adaptation mechanisms and responsiveness, only political parties which are present in national parliaments are included in the dataset. Due to the dynamics of party competition, the underlying sample of political parties varies based on a party’s ability to enter the parliament in 2 consecutive elections. The utilization of the ParlGov dataset also allows to include (most) re-elections in the included country sample. Further, I include the vote shares of the preceding election (t-1) in order to account and control for previous party success.

## Variation in Electoral Outcomes by Country

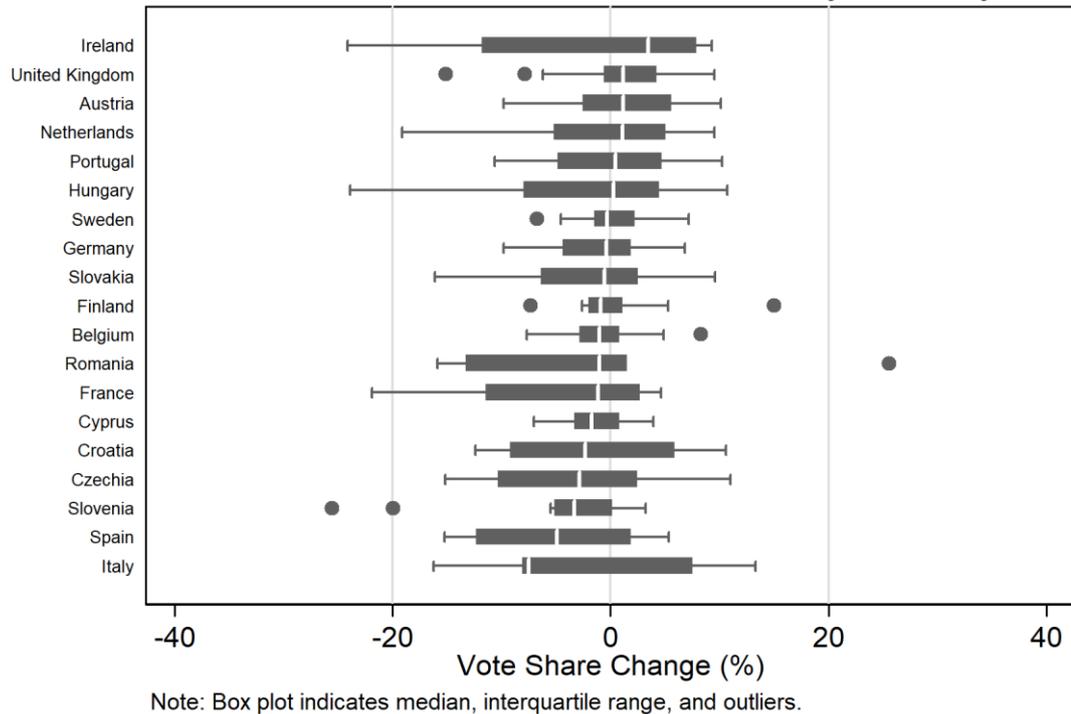


Figure 12: Boxplot of Variation in Electoral Outcomes per Country, Data: ParlGov

Figure 12 illustrates the variation in the dependent variable vote share change across the 18 included countries. As the box plots demonstrate, there is substantial heterogeneity in electoral outcomes following the external shock. While the median vote share change in many countries hovers around zero (indicating that on average, gains and losses balance out within party systems), the interquartile ranges reveal significant volatility. Countries like Ireland, Italy, and France exhibit particularly wide spreads, indicating major shifts in the political landscape. In contrast, systems like Belgium or Finland show more stability but still contain relevant outliers. This cross-national variation provides a robust basis for analyzing whether party adaptation strategies can explain these diverging electoral fortunes.

From the parliament to positions:

To extend and harmonize the data, I follow the logic of chapter 2 and utilize parliamentary speech data to generate a measure of issue position. Again, I include all released versions of the ParlEE plenary speeches datasets, covering full-text speeches of 18 legislative chambers across Europe from 2009-2019 (Sylvester et al.,

2022, 2023, 2024). Slovenia was excluded hereby, because the data on legislative speeches is only available until 2016. A discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of the utilization of this data source in relation to other established sources can further be found in the data description of Chapter 2.

In contrast to the evaluation of issue saliency based on parliamentary data, there exists a relatively rich body of research addressing the generation and validation of positional estimates. Proksch and Slapin (2008, 2010) applied Wordfish models to parliamentary in the European Parliament and Schwarz, Traber and Benoit (2017) utilized this approach to generate party positions in the national context. Based on the original research of Slapin and Proksch, Lauderdale and Herzog developed their Wordshoal model in the parliamentary context. Other approaches include the inclusion of Word embeddings (Rheault & Cochrane, 2020). Initially I adapted these existing approaches and followed the initial logic of Chapter 1, where I applied Wordfish model to estimate party positions on immigration issues over time and across the included countries. The novel dataset was generated on an annual basis and validated by matching a subset of available annual data points to the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, as well as the manifesto data, generated in the first chapter. Initially this cross-validation approach displayed only a low correlation. In a next step I applied the Wordshoal model to the data, which again provided similar results. These initial results led me to reevaluate the underlying textual data. Essentially, both of these approaches rely on weighted word frequencies based on different distributions. The evaluation of individual word weights for English and German speaking countries revealed that the applied methods captured in some cases the underlying dimensionality of speeches, discussions and votes for legislative decisions, rather than a unidimensional positional space for immigration issues. This led to some extent to the generation of a unidimensional distribution of government/opposition and agreement/disagreement positions. Additional approaches including Wordfish approaches did not converge in most cases, whereas necessary reference texts for Wordscores could not be identified in this context.

After studying the literature on the positional evaluation based on parliamentary textual data, I came to the conclusion that the underlying structure of the included data deviates from existing approaches. First, I included parliamentary debates and

speeches, whereas existing literature relies often solely on speeches, which can be regarded as more structured and formalized. Second, the included timeframe of the underlying data exceeds existing approaches as well as the number of included parties. In response to these challenges, I decided to apply Multiple Correspondence Analysis to the data (Lowe 2007). In general, this method allows to evaluate a measure of correspondence between rows and columns. Applied to textual data, it allows to scale documents, in this context parliamentary textual data by party and year on multiple dimensions, similar to a principal component analysis.

Following Roux and Rouanet (1998) I treated this method as an explorative approach to evaluate the underlying dimensionality of data. I extended the dimensional space to a second dimension and generated positional estimates for both dimensions, where I again used a matched subset, which was correlated to the CHES estimates by the year of evaluation and the most recent election year. Afterwards, I generated the dataset based on the dimension, which displayed the highest and positive correlation. The results of this approach indicate that the underlying dimensionality of these very large amounts of textual data was consequently reduced to immigration issues (See Appendix Oa-Ob for a detailed overview over the best fitting individual correlation of immigration estimates and included parties per country). While the results led to the exclusion of Portugal due to very low and conflicting results, the remaining matched positional estimates resulted in an average correlation by country of 0,536 (ranging from 0,39 (Slovakia) to 0,77 (UK)). With respect to the structure of the underlying textual data, the character of the compared dataset, as well as the large time frame included, the results of the estimation process can be regarded as successful.

To assess the validity of the parliamentary positions in contrast to the manifesto positions of Chapter 1 measures, I conducted a cross-validation analysis with the established manifesto-based estimates used in Chapter 3. It is important to note that due to the differing structures of the datasets, the direct matching process resulted in a restricted sample of 109 comparable observations.

Despite this limited sample size, the results demonstrate a robust alignment between the two data sources, yielding an overall average Pearson correlation coefficient of  $r$

= 0.54. Disaggregating the results by country reveals substantial variation in this relationship, ranging from a very strong correlation in Sweden (r = 0.92) to a weaker association in France (r = 0.26) (see Appendix Oc for full table). This pattern confirms that while both text-as-data approaches capture the same underlying ideological dimension regarding immigration, they also reflect the distinct strategic incentives of their respective arenas—with parliamentary speeches offering a more immediate and fluid measure compared to the static nature of election manifestos.

Similar to the measurement of issue saliency, I include the mean absolute positional shift between election (t) and the year before the election (t-1) to account for individual election cycles and their respective campaigns.

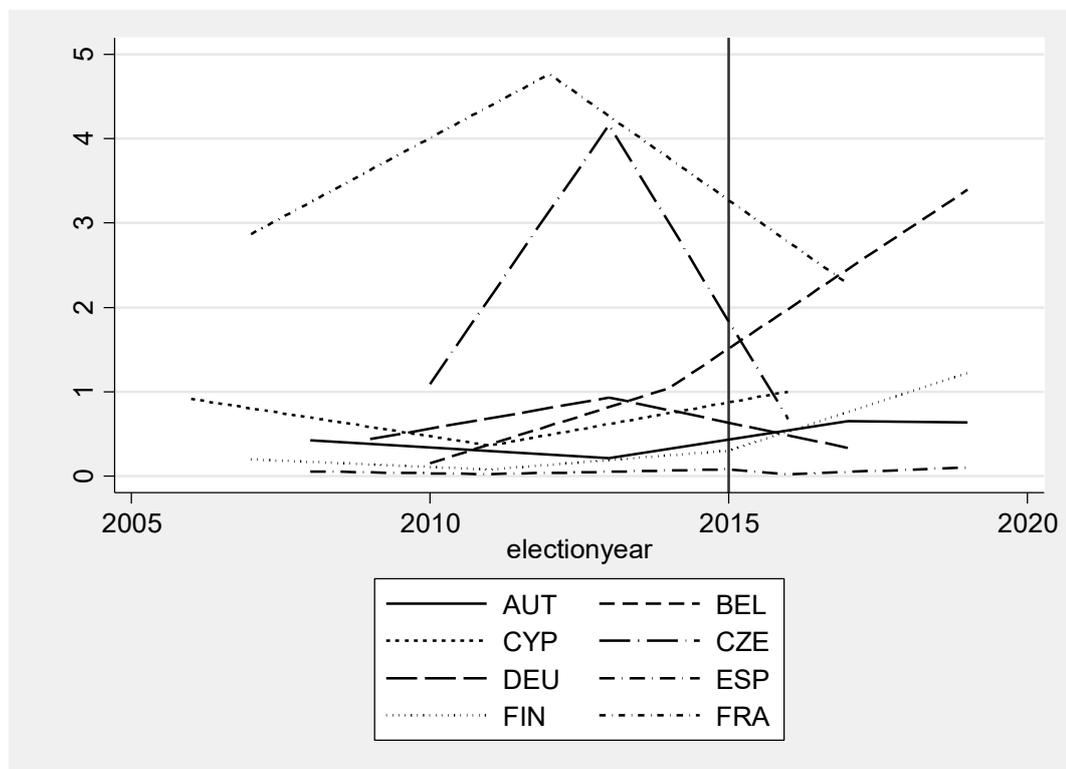


Figure 13: Mean absolute positional shift per year per country

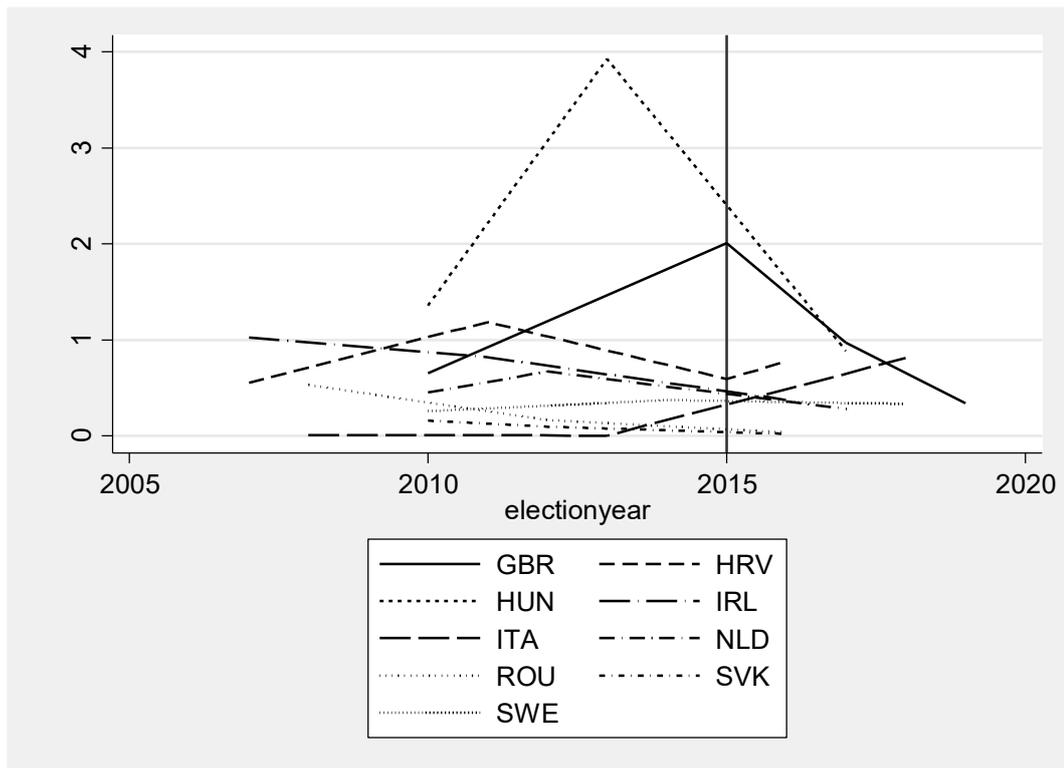


Figure 14: Mean absolute positional shift per year per country

Figures 13 and 14 illustrate the development of mean absolute positional shifts across the included countries over the observation period. The graphs reveal substantial heterogeneity in both the magnitude and timing of party repositioning. Crucially, the data indicates that significant volatility in several party systems (e.g., Hungary, Czechia) predates the 2015 external shock. This suggests that transformation processes regarding immigration positions were already set in motion before the acute crisis occurred, rather than being solely triggered by the event itself. While some political systems exhibit relative stability (e.g., Belgium, Romania), others experience drastic shifts leading up to the crisis. This observed variation in timing and intensity validates the necessity of a comparative approach that accounts for both reactive and pre-existing dynamics.

Saliency and word counts:

To include a measurement of saliency, I utilize the generated estimates from chapter 4 as an independent variable. This measurement represents the proportion of words

on immigration issues in national parliaments in relation to all words issued. Due to the structure of the ParLEE data set, which is coded on a sentence level, I can account for any expressions across all agendas. As addressed in the previous chapter, this approach also allows to control for the number of speakers, since the measures are aggregated on a party level. While the original data was generated on an annual basis, I now need to adapt the estimated data according to the stated election cycles in the last section. The measurement of immigration issue saliency will therefore reflect the varying emphasis between elections. One potential drawback of this approach is the loss of information on short-term adaptation mechanisms, occurring and receding between elections. On the other hand, since I am utilizing the varying vote shares of elections as a measure of party success, it seems questionable whether these short-term responses are rewarded more than lasting adaptations on party's saliency. Due to the temporal dynamics of electoral cycles, this approach allows to control for persistent adaptation mechanisms and short-term effects depending on the temporal difference between the shock and the consecutive election (see Appendix Ob for an overview of the country estimates).

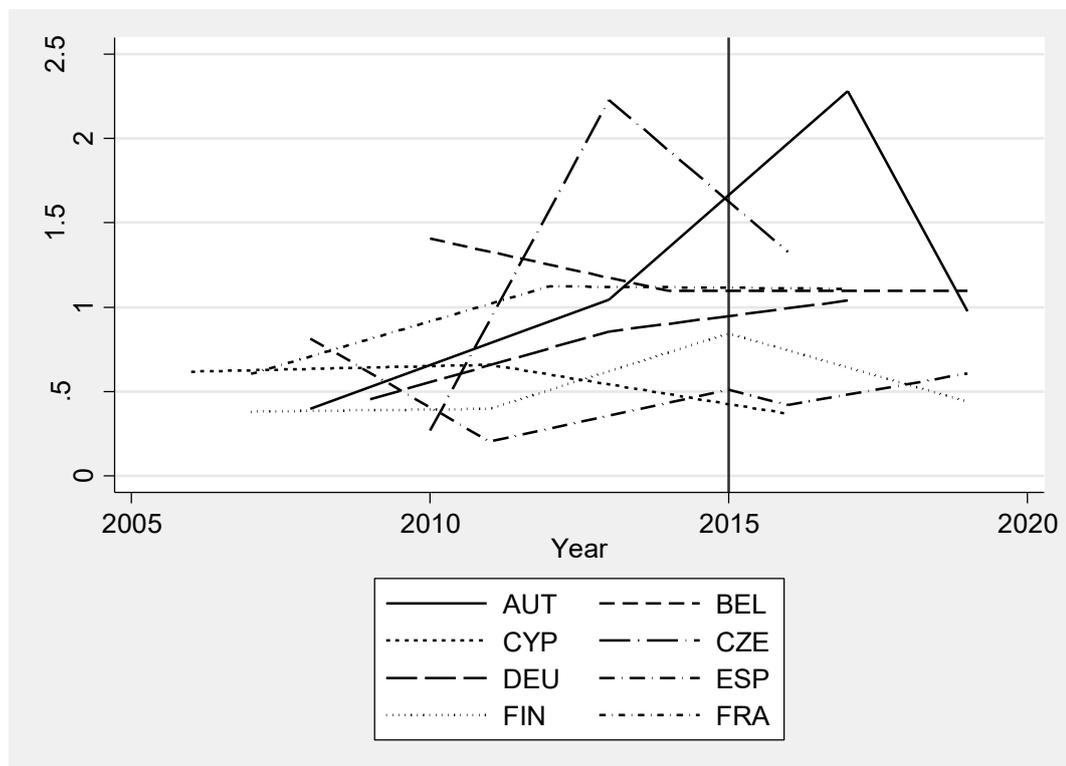


Figure 15: Mean proportional difference in saliency per year per country

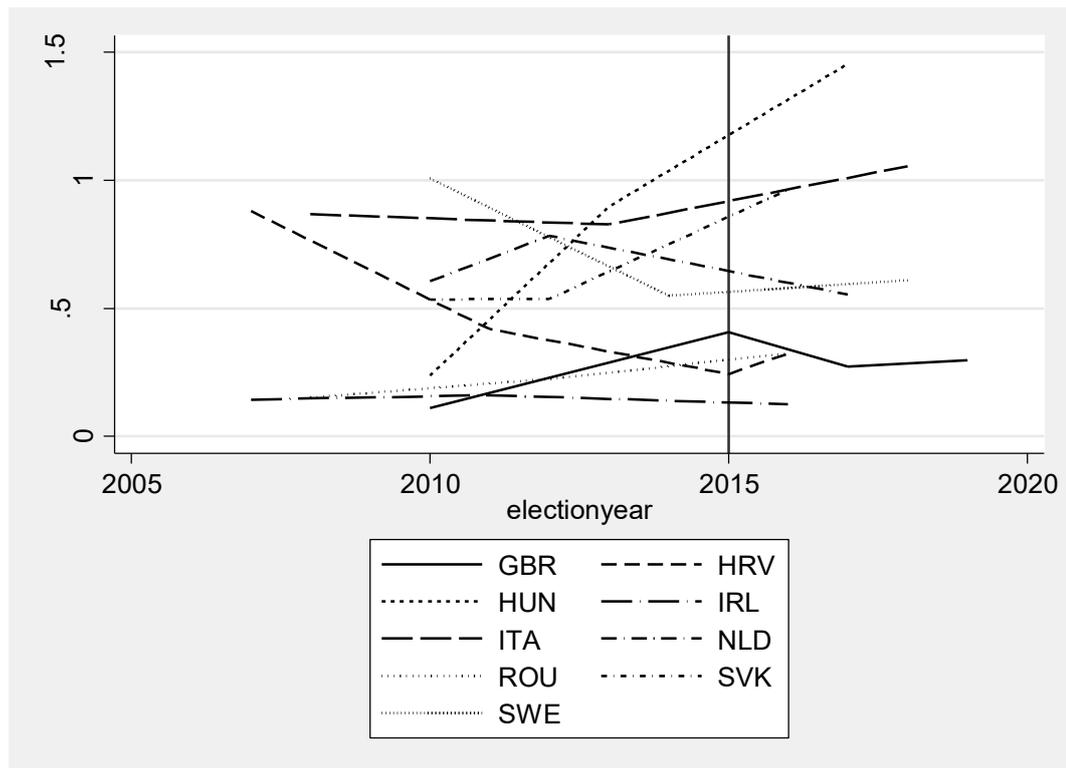


Figure 16: Mean proportional difference in saliency per year per country

Figures 15 and 16 depict the mean proportional changes in issue saliency across the observed election cycles. As with positional shifts, the data highlights significant cross-national variation, with some countries exhibiting sharp increases in issue emphasis (e.g., Hungary, Austria) while others remain relatively stable.

However, a key distinction from the analysis in Chapter 4 can be observed: To align the independent variable with the dependent variable (electoral outcomes), the parliamentary data here is aggregated to election cycles rather than analyzed on an annual basis. This necessary methodological step inevitably results in a loss of temporal granularity as observable in contrast to the data of Chapter 4. Short-term spikes in saliency that occur and recede between elections are attenuated in this view. This smoothing effect is particularly evident in cases like the Netherlands, which displays a relatively constant trend in this aggregated format, potentially masking shorter-term fluctuations. While this represents a limitation regarding the detection of

immediate interim reactions, this aggregation strategy is essential to answer the research question regarding the cumulative influence of adaptation strategies on final election results.

While theoretical accounts suggest that positional shifts and saliency changes might be interrelated strategies (Abou-Chadi et al., 2020), empirical checks reveal substantial cross-national heterogeneity in their relationship. The correlation between absolute positional shifts and changes in issue saliency ranges from high positive values in specific contexts (e.g., Czechia:  $r = 0.92$ ) to weak or negative associations in others (e.g., Germany:  $r = -0.23$ ; France:  $r = -0.07$ ). This variation confirms that these adaptation mechanisms are distinct strategic choices rather than a single uniform response, justifying their separate inclusion in the regression models to disentangle their independent electoral effects (see Appendix Oc for full correlation table).

Modelling strategy:

The relationship between the stated dependent and independent variables is analyzed using a series of fixed-effects panel regression models, incorporating country clusters to account for country-specific heterogeneity. This approach is applied to test the first two sets of hypotheses. To differentiate the effects of adaptation strategies before and after the crisis, the analysis is divided into two models: Model 1 evaluates the effects prior to the crisis (before 2015), while Model 2 focuses on the post-crisis period.

For models 3-5, a dummy variable is included to represent the period following the external shock, enabling a contrast between event-specific developments. This dummy variable is also utilized in interaction terms to assess the influence of the central independent variables. Unlike Chapters 1 and 2, the severity of the refugee crisis is not captured through measures of additional immigration inflows. Instead, this analysis focuses on the external shock itself, arguing that the uncertainty generated by the shock is the primary driver of party adaptation mechanisms. Additional control variables in the analysis of the first set of hypotheses include a lagged variable for governmental status and a lagged version of absolute vote share.

For the second set of hypotheses, I control for party size by excluding the governmental status variable and replacing lagged vote shares with dummy variables for parties exceeding 10% and 15% vote share thresholds. This allows for the evaluation of whether larger parties experience different patterns of electoral success.

The results from Chapters 1 and 2 indicate that economic performance (measured by unemployment rates or GDP growth) is significantly correlated with the adaptation mechanisms of political parties on immigration issues. Although these economic variables could act as potential confounding factors by influencing both party adaptation and voter preferences, their inclusion raised concerns about multicollinearity. To address this, models were assessed both with and without the economic performance variables. As detailed in Appendix P, the results remain robust across all specifications, suggesting that the findings are not affected by the inclusion of these variables.

For the third hypothesis, a dummy variable for right-wing parties was generated using the codings provided by the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES). Given the relatively small sample size of right-wing parties, separate pooled OLS regressions with country clusters were employed to analyze this hypothesis. Additional robustness tests were conducted to ensure the validity of the results, including assessments for collinearity among regressors, heteroskedasticity, and variable variation.

#### **Adaptation Without Reward:**

Table 23 summarizes the results for the first set of hypotheses (H1a and H1b), with Model 1 capturing the period prior to 2015 and Model 2 focusing on the period after 2014. Across both periods, the analysis highlights a significant and substantial vote loss for the included parties, with the magnitude of this loss intensifying after the external shock. Specifically, the coefficient for the lagged vote share indicates a significant negative relationship with electoral success, at -0.904 ( $p < 0.01$ ) prior to 2015 and -1.204 ( $p < 0.01$ ) post-2014. These results suggest that vote share losses were distributed across competing parties, given the dataset's focus on parties already represented in national parliaments.

Table 23: Analysis of parties' electoral success in relation to their adaptation mechanisms prior (1) and after (2) the external shock

	(1)	(2)
	Vote share gains/losses	Vote share gains/losses
Absolute positional shift	-2.145 (1.452)	.489 (.317)
Changes in proportional Saliency	-.077 (.05)	-.076** (.034)
Governmental status lag	-2.179 (1.448)	-1.781* (.85)
Vote-share lag	-.904*** (.161)	-1.204*** (.217)
Unemployment rates	.01 (.146)	-.274 (.187)
GDP growth	-.3 (.289)	2.132 (1.315)
Constant	16.725*** (2.04)	17.126*** (1.629)
Observations	112	107
R-squared	.782	.719

*Note: Dependent variable is the relative change of parties' vote-shares before and after the external shock.*

*Standard errors clustered by countries are shown in parentheses. Significance levels \*\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*  $p < .1$*

The central independent variable, measuring absolute positional shifts irrespective of direction, captures both the magnitude of single shifts and overall volatility over time. In Model 1, the coefficient suggests a negative but insignificant effect of positional shifts on vote share before 2015 (-2.145), while in Model 2, the effect turns positive (0.489) but remains statistically insignificant. This supports Hypothesis 1a, which posits that positional shifts do not significantly influence electoral success.

Regarding the influence of saliency on electoral outcomes (Hypothesis 1b), the results indicate a mixed picture. Changes in proportional saliency show no

significant relationship before 2015 (-0.077), but post-2014, the coefficient is negative and statistically significant at the 5% level (-0.076,  $p < 0.05$ ). This suggests that increased emphasis on saliency may have been counterproductive in the aftermath of the external shock, potentially reflecting voter fatigue or skepticism toward intensified messaging on immigration issues. For Hypothesis 1b, which posited that increasing saliency would result in higher vote shares, the results consequently fail to provide support.

Control variables further clarify the dynamics. The lagged governmental status variable reveals a negative and significant effect only post-2014 (-1.781,  $p < 0.1$ ), indicating that incumbency may have contributed to vote losses during this period. Economic indicators, including unemployment rates and GDP growth, show no consistent or significant effects on vote shares. Notably, GDP growth turns positive after 2014 (2.132), but the large standard error suggests this result should be interpreted with caution.

Taken together, the findings suggest that neither positional shifts nor changes in saliency consistently influence electoral performance. These results align with the hypothesis that external shocks, such as the refugee crisis, create an environment where other factors—such as party type or crisis framing—play a more decisive role in shaping electoral outcomes.

Table 24 presents the results for the second set of hypotheses, evaluating the role of party size in shaping electoral outcomes before and after the external shock. Model 1 assesses the effects for parties with vote shares above 10%, while Model 2 examines parties with vote shares above 15%. Due to concerns about multicollinearity, the governmental status and lagged vote share variables were excluded from these models, as they overlap conceptually with the dummy variable for party size.

Table 24: Analysis of parties' electoral success in relation to their size and adaptation mechanisms in response to the external shock

	(1)	(2)
	Vote share gains/losses	Vote share gains/losses
External shock	2.495*** (.599)	1.977** (.774)
Absolute positional shift	-.211 (.797)	-.021 (.763)
Absolute positional shift*Shock	-.265 (.697)	-.288 (.607)
Saliency Difference	-1.103 (.735)	-1.379* (.747)
Saliency Diff*Shock	.492 (.716)	.629 (.857)
Large party (10%)	-1.922* (1.049)	
Large party (10%)#Shock	-6.293*** (1.439)	
Large party (15%)		-1.12 (.816)
Large party (15%)#Shock		-5.991*** (2.026)
Constant	1.111 (1.071)	.281 (.836)
Observations	226	226
R-squared	.135	.107

*Dependent variable is the relative change of vote share*

*Standard errors are in parentheses \*\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*  $p < .1$*

The results strongly support the hypothesis that larger parties experienced greater electoral losses following the external shock. The interaction terms for party size and the external shock are highly significant in both models (-6.293,  $p < 0.01$  in Model 1 and -5.991,  $p < 0.01$  in Model 2), suggesting that larger parties were disproportionately punished in the wake of the crisis. Conversely, smaller parties appear to have benefitted, as evidenced by the significant positive coefficients for the

external shock variable, These results highlight a clear redistribution of vote shares from larger to smaller parties during the post-shock period.

Although the coefficients for adaptation mechanisms, including absolute positional shifts and saliency differences, remain insignificant across all models, the negative coefficients for saliency differences in both models (-1.103/-1.379) indicate a potential trend that merits further exploration. Interestingly, the interaction terms for saliency differences and the external shock are positive but insignificant, suggesting that the saliency adaptation mechanisms did not have a consistent influence on vote share gains or losses during this period.

Overall, these findings confirm Hypothesis 2, demonstrating that larger parties faced significant electoral losses as a consequence of the external shock, even when controlling for their adaptation strategies. The results also suggest that the external shock created an opportunity for smaller parties to capture a greater share of the electorate, regardless of their positional or saliency-based adaptation efforts.

Figure 17 provides additional support for these results, describing the predicted influence of previous vote shares on electoral success prior and after the shock in order to assess, whether large parties, which hold a larger proportion of vote shares receive less electoral support in elections following the 2015 crisis. The graph indicates that even prior to the external shock of 2015, parties which held a higher amount of vote shares at election  $t$ , lost electoral support in the consecutive election. This trend is slightly stronger for the period after the 2015 election.

The last table 25 describes the results of the OLS regression with country fixed effects for right wing parties. Again, interactions for the specific effects of the external shock are included. Model 1 is the baseline model, whereas model 2 analyses the influence of the varying changes of saliency of their success, model 3 evaluates the positional adaptation and model 4 describes the full model. Overall, results are similar to the results of table 1 for the adaptation mechanisms of right-wing parties, with one substantial difference.

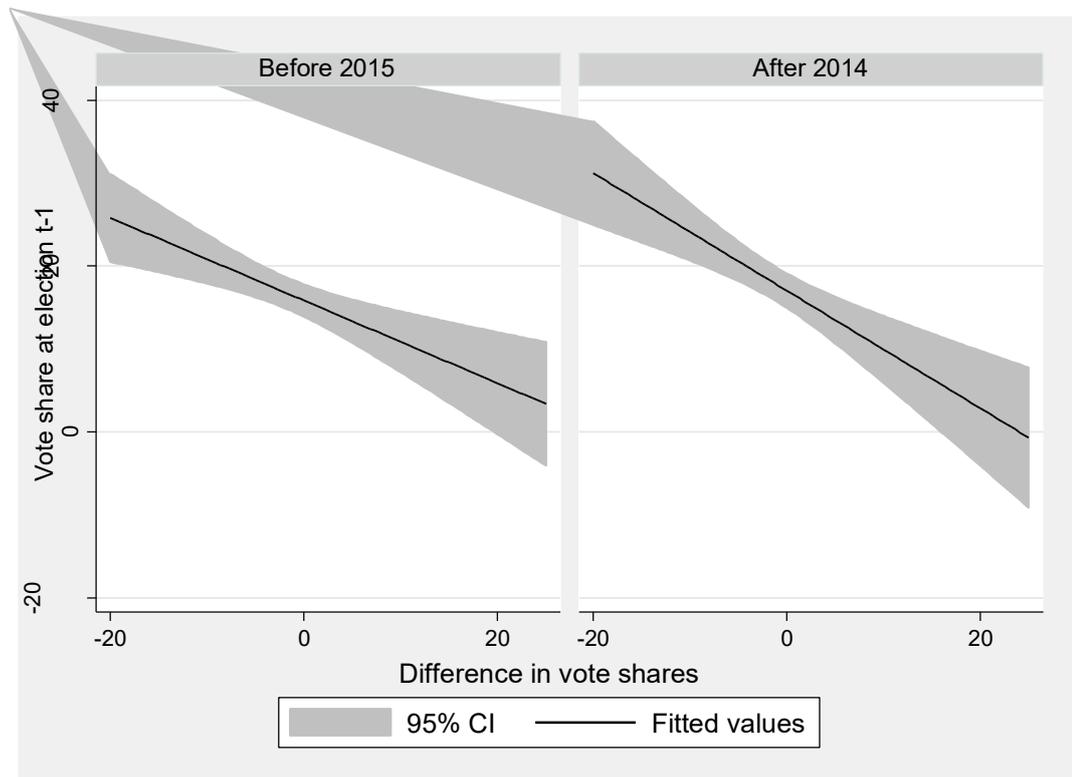


Figure 17: Predicted values of parties' vote shares ( $t$ ) in relation to previous vote shares ( $t-1$ )

The coefficient for the external shock variable indicates a positive, though insignificant, relationship across all models. While the relatively small sample size of included right-wing parties likely contributes to this insignificance, it also suggests that additional factors may drive the success of these parties following the refugee crisis. Scholars such as Hutter and Kriesi (2022) have highlighted the role of other parties' adaptation mechanisms in shaping these outcomes.

Hypothesis 3, which posits that the adaptation mechanisms of right-wing parties do not significantly influence their electoral success, finds partial support in the data. Across the models, there is no consistent evidence that positional shifts or saliency adaptations directly correlate with vote share gains. However, Model 2 reveals a significant interaction between saliency differences and the external shock variable ( $p < 0.1$ ), suggesting that increasing saliency after the crisis may have had some influence on electoral outcomes.

Table 25: Analyses of electoral success in relation to adaptation mechanisms of right-wing parties

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Vote share gains/losses	Vote share gains/losses	Vote share gains/losses	Vote share gains/losses
External shock	1.659 (1.934)	1.609 (1.956)	.849 (2.507)	.889 (2.613)
Saliency Difference	.768 (.679)	-1.345* (.646)		-1.394* (.709)
Saliency Diff#shock		2.098* (1.127)		1.789 (1.227)
Vote-share lag	-.149 (.101)	-.163 (.099)	-.158 (.108)	-.141 (.109)
Absolute positional shift	.768 (.679)		-.21 (1.596)	.213 (1.557)
Absolute positional shift#shock			1.294 (2.035)	.858 (1.988)
Constant	-.139 (1.845)	1.195 (1.65)	1.048 (1.91)	.612 (2.011)
Observations	54	54	54	54
R-squared	.154	.164	.151	.187

Note: Dependent variable is the absolute change of parties' economic positions comparing the positions before and after the external shock. Standard errors clustered by countries are shown in parentheses. Significance levels \*\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*  $p < .1$

The findings in Model 3 and Model 4 are less conclusive. The large number of coefficients relative to the small sample size likely diminishes statistical power, making it challenging to establish significant relationships. Notably, the coefficient for the interaction between absolute positional shifts and the shock variable remains positive but insignificant, further underscoring the complexity of this relationship.

Taken together, while the results suggest that the adaptation mechanisms of right-wing parties have limited influence on their electoral success, the degree of

uncertainty, particularly in light of the small sample size, cannot be ignored. Further research with a larger dataset is necessary to provide a more definitive answer to these questions.

### **Discussion:**

In this final chapter of my dissertation, I evaluated the influence of the 2015 external refugee shock on the success of political parties. My aim was to evaluate whether adaptation mechanisms of parties have an influence on their success, whether they are doomed regardless of their actions and reactions in response to the shock. The generation of the underlying dataset based on parliamentary data across 17 countries, allowed a new and extended perspective on the saliency and positional shifts on individual parties within the parliaments across Europe. Based on the validation of the generated data, I was able to provide support for the inclusion and utilisation of the PARLEE dataset and the potential advantages of text as data approaches as an additional tool for researchers, beyond traditional and established datasets. Especially with respect to the difference between party manifestos, expert surveys and spoken textual data, the correlations of the generated estimates surpassed my initial expectations. The empirical results and insight gained on this analysis, allow to extend existing literature on external shocks, but at the same time they raise some new questions and invite further research.

My first set of hypotheses regarded the individual adaptation of positional shifts and saliency, arguing that electoral success in and following an environment of uncertainty is rather driven by the latter. Following existing studies on relatively stable attitudes towards immigration issues, I emphasized that positional shifts would not be a driver for party success, rather in relation to increasing public and medial importance, parties' approaches to increase their saliency would allow parties to present themselves as responsive. Here I found support for my first hypothesis concerning the positional shifts but had to reject the influence of increasing saliency. The extension of my arguments revealed that the pre-existing saliency had a significant influence on the success of individual parliamentary parties, rather than their adaptation. Whether some parties saw the event coming or were already

concerned by increasing immigration inflows lies outside of the scope of this project, but the results indicate that some parties were already better positioned than others prior to the crisis. In addition, the constant and significant effects of higher previous vote shares and governmental status point towards the lasting effects of the previous economic crisis. Similar to the conclusion of chapter 1, these results point toward the importance of the pre-existing state of party competition for consecutive analysis. Especially in relation to the developments of the last years, I can only emphasize that future research should take an extensive perspective for the evaluation of shock and crisis specific research.

The second hypothesis was informed by existing literature on the economic crisis, particularly the argument put forth by Hodson and Quaglia (2009: 495), which posits that “European policymakers appear to be damned if they do act and damned if they do not.” This hypothesis sought to evaluate whether larger, mainstream parties can mitigate the adverse electoral effects of a crisis. My analysis supports the hypothesis that the size of a party negatively influences its electoral success, with voters appearing to hold mainstream parties accountable for the circumstances surrounding an external shock, such as the refugee crisis. Additionally, literature on incumbency advantages (e.g., Cox & Katz, 1996) suggests that incumbents may display some degree of resilience. However, the findings of this study present conflicting results in the context of an external shock, as government parties experienced notable vote losses, as detailed in the results of the first regression model above. I still want to address the possibility that the preceding economic crisis had a lasting effect on public opinion and that these results might not be regarded as consecutive, but rather than a lasting effect that persisted from one crisis to the next. I cannot definitely answer the question whether or not that is the case and if there are potential implications for future studies addressing external shocks.

To illustrate this statistical finding qualitatively, the case of Germany serves as a pertinent example backed by the empirical data. As the descriptive statistics reveal, the main governing party (CDU) reacted to the pressure of the crisis with an intense adaptation of its communication strategy. While maintaining a relatively stable positional course (absolute shift of only 0.03), the party nearly tripled its issue saliency from 6.90 in 2013 to 18.39 in 2017. Yet, these signals of responsiveness

failed to translate into electoral rewards. Instead, the party suffered a substantial vote share loss of 7.3 percentage points (falling from 34.1% to 26.8%). In contrast, the challenger party (AfD), which dominated the discourse with the highest issue saliency in the sample (24.55), successfully entered the parliament with 12.6% of the vote. This empirical case underscores the core finding of Model 2: increasing issue saliency alone is insufficient for mainstream parties to counteract the punishment mechanism during external shocks.

Sweden offers a complementary perspective on positional adaptation. Here, the main center-right party, the Moderates (M), engaged in a substantial positional shift, increasing their mean absolute position change from 0.01 in 2014 to 0.37 in 2018. However, this strategic repositioning proved equally ineffective; the party lost 3.5 percentage points (dropping from 23.33% to 19.84%). In contrast, the challenger Sweden Democrats (SD) capitalized on the crisis by drastically expanding their issue saliency, which more than tripled from 9.46 to 31.01—the highest saliency recorded in the sample. Consequently, SD increased their vote share by 4.7 percentage points (12.86% to 17.53%). Together, these cases underscore the core finding that for mainstream parties, neither increased saliency (Germany) nor positional shifts (Sweden) are sufficient to counteract the electoral costs of an external shock. (See Appendix Q)

Turning to the success of right-wing parties in response to the refugee crisis, the analysis yielded mixed results, preventing confirmation of my hypothesis. As previously argued, it seems plausible that right-wing parties gained vote shares due to their traditionally high saliency on immigration issues. On the other hand, some right-wing parties, having risen from challengers to mainstream status following the economic crisis, could suffer vote losses, as suggested by the findings in the second analysis. This dynamic indicates that party success or decline is contingent not only on saliency but also on the evolving perceptions of party roles and responsibilities. These observations underscore the importance of further research, particularly with a larger sample size that includes more right-wing parties, to refine these conclusions.

Moreover, this analysis highlights the necessity of examining the direction of positional shifts in greater depth. Whether parties shift toward restrictive or inclusive

positions on immigration, for example, likely shapes their electoral outcomes differently. Similarly, future research should differentiate between party types, such as left-wing, right-wing, and centrist parties, to assess how these dynamics vary across ideological and strategic contexts.

In sum, this chapter provided answers to some of my research questions but also raised new ones, inviting further exploration. Future studies could extend these findings to other crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the impact of recent geopolitical conflicts within and beyond Europe. Additionally, greater attention to the directional nature of positional shifts and the role of party type could deepen our understanding of party adaptation and voter responses during times of crisis.

## *Rethinking Adaptation in Times of Crisis*

This concluding chapter brings together the findings of the preceding chapters and sets them in the wider debates on party competition, crisis politics, and democratic representation. The dissertation began with a simple but important question: how do national political parties adapt their programmes and agendas when faced with external shocks, and what does this imply for accountability and representation in a period of overlapping crises? By comparing the 2008 financial crisis with the 2015 refugee crisis and viewing both through the lens of my external-shock framework, the study aimed to capture not only the immediate effects of single events but also the cumulative dynamics that arise when crises interact. The motivation was both empirical and analytical. Empirically, much of the existing work treats crises as idiosyncratic episodes and relies on single-country cases or descriptive accounts. Crises can blur responsibility and weaken democratic accountability. This chapter reflects on the theoretical and methodological contributions, summarises the substantive findings, notes limitations, and outlines directions for future research.

The literature review placed the dissertation within three overlapping literatures: agenda-setting and focusing events, spatial models of party competition, and the politics of crises. Following agenda-setting scholars who treat shocks as exogenous focusing events that reorder issue hierarchies (Kingdon 1995; Baumgartner & Jones 1993; Birkland 1997), the project conceptualised crises as periods when attention is pulled away from normal routines towards urgent concerns. Because crises generate uncertainty and reduce information, they can unsettle the usual feedback between parties and voters and constrain strategy. The theoretical framework distinguished between structural drivers rooted in long-term social conflicts (Kriesi et al. 2015; Kriesi & Hutter 2019) and strategic drivers stemming from parties' positional and salience choices (Budge & Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2010). I proposed that crises do not necessarily produce large repositioning but reweight agendas, and that the scope for change depends on pre-crisis features such as fragmentation and incumbency. Analytically, the framework highlighted a tension

between responsiveness and accountability when responsibility is hard to attribute (Powell & Whitten 1993).

The analysis also relied on the ideas of polycrisis and permanent emergency (Tooze 2022; Agamben 2005). Rather than treating the financial and refugee crises as isolated shocks, the dissertation viewed them as successive waves that can interact, overlap, and compound one another. This lens underscores how one crisis reshapes the context in which another is interpreted and addressed. A key claim was that the politicising force of a shock is exogenous to parties (no actor controls its onset or salience), while the translation of the shock into political conflict depends on existing ideological and organisational structures. This view helped make sense of the empirical results: adaptation mechanisms vary across crises, yet some cross-cutting patterns appear.

A central contribution lies in the methodological work. The study combined supervised classification with unsupervised scaling to create issue-specific measures of party positions from election manifestos. Building on Comparative Manifesto Project categories (and the Complementary Agendas Project), Chapter 2 showed how generalised linear models and support vector machines can identify immigration- and integration-related sentences in multilingual texts. By reducing dimensionality and focusing on ideologically loaded content, the approach produced a corpus that was then scaled using Wordfish and Wordscores. The resulting dataset of 166 positions across eight countries (2005–2019) filled gaps in expert surveys and manual coding and improved temporal and cross-national comparability. The method emphasised uncertainty through internal and external validation, weighting diagnostics, sensitivity checks, and multiple imputation for missing data.

Subsequent chapters extended the measurement to parliamentary speech. Using the ParlEE corpus (Sylvester et al. 2024), Chapter 4 generated proportional word counts for immigration topics across 18 chambers and used them to estimate issue salience over time. This avoided gaps created by election cycles and allowed a dynamic view of how salience responds to exogenous events. Chapter 5 then derived immigration positions from speeches using multiple correspondence analysis, providing an alternative and complementary measure to manifesto-based scales. Together, these

tools offer a template for measuring topic-specific party behaviour across time, countries, and institutions. The dissertation therefore contributes substantively and methodologically by showing how text can be used to study comparative party politics.

Each empirical chapter examined a different part of party adaptation: positions, salience, and electoral outcomes. Taken together, they show that crises matter for party behaviour, but in different ways.

Positions and strategic responses (Chapter 3). The analysis of manifesto-derived positions found no widespread programme shifts in either crisis. Changes were modest and often statistically indistinguishable from zero. Crucially, the findings challenge standard assumptions about structural drivers. Contrary to initial expectations, party-system fragmentation did not act as a systematic driver of adaptation magnitude, and the hypothesis that high pre-crisis volatility (prior shifts) would constrain subsequent adaptation could not be confirmed. Government status similarly showed no systematic effect. These results warn against deterministic expectations of convergence or divergence in crisis periods, suggesting instead that positional adaptation is a highly complex process where standard predictors like fragmentation and government status play a more limited role than often assumed.

Issue salience and exogenous focusing (Chapter 4). Parliamentary debates saw a clear increase in immigration salience after the 2015 refugee shock across many legislatures. This rise is not primarily explained by inflow magnitude; the shock itself drives the effect. However, a key finding concerns the shifting role of economic conditions. While pre-crisis patterns aligned with an ‘issue crowding-out’ logic (where economic growth allowed space for immigration debates), the post-shock period revealed a fundamental shift towards a ‘grievance’ mechanism: higher unemployment became a significant driver of increased immigration salience. This suggests that once a crisis hits, economic hardship no longer suppresses the issue but amplifies it. Tracking salience in real time shows that exogenous politicisation can pull parties towards the same agenda, but the economic context determines the intensity of this focus.

Electoral consequences and accountability (Chapter 5). Using speech-derived positions and salience (ParLEE) across 17 countries, the analysis found little support for the claim that positional shifts or increases in issue salience help parties electorally after a shock. If anything, parties that raised immigration salience after 2014 tended to lose votes. Larger, mainstream, and incumbent parties were punished more than smaller ones. Right-wing parties did not consistently gain from their adaptation; where positive associations appear, they are weak and limited by sample size. Whether through increased salience or positional shifts, mainstream parties struggled to mitigate electoral losses. Overall, there is an asymmetry between responsiveness and reward: parties may adapt, but voters do not necessarily respond with support when attitudes are stable and responsibility is unclear.

Taken together, the chapters show a common pattern: attention moves first, positions, if at all, only at the margins, and voters remain hard to convince.

Several themes emerge from the comparison. Crises shift attention more than they shift ideological space. The refugee shock raised immigration salience sharply, while positions were broadly stable. Adaptation is shaped by structural features of party systems. Fragmentation, incumbency, and party size condition both responses and consequences, with large governing parties punished more than small challengers. Effects are issue-specific: economic and refugee shocks differ, reflecting the nature of the underlying conflict. The findings speak to accountability in crisis politics: voters may penalise incumbents for events outside their control and do not reward rhetorical responsiveness, which raises questions about how responsibility can be fairly allocated when shocks disrupt governance.

Addressing the limitations of this dissertation, the results travel best to advanced parliamentary systems with established programmatic competition, visible government–opposition structures, and stable traditions of manifesto and speech production. These are contexts where immigration is electorally salient, where parties communicate through programmatic text, and where voters can attribute responsibility with some confidence. The inferences are therefore strongest for Western Europe in the post-2000 period, where institutional continuity and data coverage align. They extend less cleanly to cases with high party turnover, weak programmatic legacies, or low-information environments that blur the link between

elite discourse and voter perception. In such systems, manifestos play a smaller role, legislative debate is less systematic, and adaptation may take more strategic or personalised forms. The findings should thus be read as bounded generalisations: they capture how parties in structured parliamentary arenas adjust to crisis pressures, but they do not imply that similar mechanisms hold in presidential, majoritarian, or unconsolidated settings.

When I first proposed this project, in the pre-COVID period, I was told that exogenous shocks were rare and too narrow a basis for a research agenda. The years since have not supported that view. I make no claim to foresight, but the succession and overlap of crises underline the core argument of this dissertation: shocks are not peripheral anomalies; they are recurring forces in contemporary party competition. The empirical chapters should be read as an initial map of a terrain that has since grown, not as a retrospective on an exceptional moment.

Beyond the empirical results, the dissertation engages with theoretical questions about representation and crisis management. In uncertain times, citizens look to parties to explain, propose, and manage risk. Yet the findings here suggest that incentives to adapt are constrained by the very conditions that demand responsiveness: ideological commitments, coalition arithmetic, and party-system structure. Voters do not necessarily recognise or reward adaptive strategies when responsibility is hard to attribute. This gap can feed disillusionment and support for anti-system actors. The polycrisis perspective, which has gained increasing attention, implies that such pressures will recur, making it essential to understand how institutions and actors can sustain accountability under strain. While this study focused on party competition, related dynamics likely shape executives, bureaucracies, and media.

In addition to the immediate findings, the results carry broader implications. They suggest that party competition under crisis conditions is defined less by ideological movement than by control of attention. Adaptation is primarily communicative: parties adjust what they highlight, not necessarily what they believe. This has consequences for accountability. When shocks dominate public debate, governments face compressed responsibility while challengers gain visibility.

The findings also demonstrate the analytical value of text-based measurement. Integrating manifesto and parliamentary data makes it possible to track communication across arenas and over time, offering a replicable framework for studying party adaptation in other settings. More broadly, the results underline that attention itself is a resource in political competition—one that can shift faster than positions and shape how representation works under strain.

The analysis is constrained by data availability and coverage. Manifestos and speeches are unevenly distributed across countries and years, which excludes smaller or short-lived parties and may bias results toward established actors. The measures rely on text and capture communication rather than preference formation. They trace what parties say, not necessarily what they intend to do. Indicators of crisis exposure, such as GDP change or refugee inflows, are proxies for more complex experiences and cannot capture variation in perception or media framing.

The focus on parliamentary democracies with accessible text data limits generalisability beyond Western Europe. Systems with weak programmatic competition or opaque communication channels may behave differently. Language coverage is incomplete, since the manifesto classifier and speech corpora could not include all multilingual or low-resource contexts. The empirical focus on two crises provides analytical depth but leaves other shocks, such as environmental or pandemic crises, for future work.

Real-time opinion and media data were not included, so the feedback between party communication and public response remains untested. Organisational and resource-based strategies—candidate selection, coalition formation, campaign spending—were also outside scope. The analyses operate at the party-year level, which abstracts from internal dissent and short-term dynamics. The models identify consistent associations but cannot establish causality.

These limits define rather than weaken the argument. The results show how parties adjust their public communication under crisis conditions, within the boundaries of the data, coverage, and institutional settings studied.

There are also clear next steps. Theoretically, it would be useful to study how different crises interact when they occur together or in quick succession, and whether parties learn across shocks. Methodologically, the approach can be extended to other issues (climate, security, welfare) and linked to time-series models that allow feedback between opinion, media salience, and party behaviour; qualitative content analysis could identify frames and narratives that accompany the quantitative measures. At the electoral level, more granular data on competence and responsibility could clarify why adaptation does not translate into gains; experiments could probe whether emphasising certain issues or shifts changes vote intentions under different information conditions. Extending beyond Western Europe would test how far these patterns travel.

For parties, the results warn against reading short-run salience spikes as a mandate for wholesale programme change. Communication can move faster than positions, and voters may not reward visible activity when responsibility is unclear. For researchers, it is useful to separate attention from stance and to model accountability as context-dependent.

This dissertation set out to understand how political parties navigate turbulent times. By combining theory on agenda-setting and crisis politics with text-based measurement, it offers one of the first cross-national, cross-crisis examinations of party adaptation across positions, salience, and electoral outcomes. The evidence shows that crises are powerful agenda setters but weak ideological disruptors, that structural contexts constrain strategy, and that voters do not necessarily reward adaptation. As crises proliferate in an interconnected world, these dynamics matter for scholars and practitioners alike. The study contributes to work on the politics of the polycrisis and provides a foundation for future research. By showing how parties adjust to shocks and where those adjustments meet their limits, it speaks to democratic resilience and the tension between responsiveness and accountability in uncertain times.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A: Included countries, elections and parties

	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Min Parties included</b>	<b>Max Parties included</b>	<b>Elections</b>
Austria	Included	5	6	5
Belgium	Excluded due to multilingual manifestos			
Denmark	Included	6	10	5
Finland	Excluded due to multilingual manifestos			
France	Included	10	10	2
Germany	Included	5	7	4
Hungary	Excluded due to multilingual manifestos			
Ireland	Excluded due to multilingual manifestos			
	Included, one year adapted via language filter	4	10	3
Italy				
Luxembourg	Excluded due to multilingual manifestos			
Netherlands	Included	10	13	4
Norway	Included	7	9	4
Portugal	Included	2	10	4
Spain	Excluded due to multilingual manifestos			
Sweden	Included	7	8	4
Switzerland	Excluded due to multilingual manifestos			
United Kingdom	Included	9	11	3
<b>Overall</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>94</b>
				<b>38</b>

Appendix B.1: Immigration relevant categories CMP

Immigration/Integration		CMP Category	
Included categories		National Way of Life: Immigration: Negative	
		National Way of Life: Immigration: Positive	
601.2		National Way of Life: Immigration: Positive	before version 5 of the CMP
602.2		National Way of Life: Immigration: Positive	
607		Multiculturalism: Positive	before version 5 of the CMP
607.1		Multiculturalism General: Positive	
607.2		Multiculturalism: Immigrants Diversity	before version 5 of the CMP
608		Multiculturalism: Negative	
608.1		Multiculturalism General: Negative	before version 5 of the CMP
608.2		Multiculturalism: Immigrants Assimilation	

Appendix B.2: Non-related categories included

Unrelated categories	
303	Governmental and Administrative Efficiency
304	Political Corruption
401	Free Market Economy
405	Corporatism/Mixed Economy
409	Keynesian Demand Management
411	Technology and Infrastructure: Positive
412	Controlled Economy
414	Economic Orthodoxy
501	Environmental Protection
502	Culture: Positive
503	Equality: Positive
506	Education Expansion
702	Labour Groups: Negative
703	Agriculture and Farmers: Positive
704	Middle Class and Professional Groups
706	Non-economic Demographic Groups
305.4	Transition: Pre-Democratic Elites: Positive
305.5	Transition: Pre-Democratic Elites: Negative
305.6	Transition: Rehabilitation and Compensation
416.1	Anti-Growth Economy: Positive
703.1	Agriculture and Farmers: Positive
703.2	Agriculture and Farmers: Negative

## Appendix C: Validation Process

While it may be clear which observations should be included within the integration-immigration corpus, the process of the validation has proven that it this was not always the case. For the case of Austria and Germany, several sentences addressed integration in general, but as some other sentences indicated, integration may also be mentioned in relation to people with disabilities or gendered aspects, where general statements are difficult to categorize. In relation to the coding, I decided to include only these sentences with any mentions of immigration, multiculturalism, or internationalism (as the inclusion of different cultures was an important issue following the 2015 crisis) were stated in the same quasi-sentence, otherwise to exclude them. Further, several mentions concerning the integration of minority groups like Roma/Sinti were detected by the classification but excluded. General sentences relating to diversity have also been excluded, due to their unspecific character.

For the UK different, yet similar issues arose. First, the national and subnational issue of the Welsh integration was positively classified by several approaches. Especially cultural aspects of the Welsh language and culture, also coded in relation to integration by the original CMP codings have led to the inclusion of these national issues. Another specific challenge has been brought up in relation to the Northern Ireland and Ireland as part of the EU. Where one could argue that these would indeed be international migration or integration issues. But, again, I decided to aim for the most specific approach, therefore excluding them. As a result, I have to add that some mentions of immigration may be targeted towards the Irish population, which were evaluated detached from the context, as quasi-sentences. Last, Brexit posed an additional issue. Often mentioned in relation to student- or high-skilled worker visas it was sometimes impossible to evaluate which population group was target of these sentences. After some struggle, I decided to include them, since these issues did target international immigration and could affect EU and Non-EU nationals, as well as refugees.

These examples in the table below show that even manual validation of the binary (and therefore simple) classification process is not always straightforward and poses some challenges, even assuming that an “expert” is involved. The fact, that some

classifiers identified these issues, may be an indicator, that the classification models are working, but may also be improved.

Austria	Example	Comment	Decision
	sowie Integration ermöglichen und vorantreiben.	Unspecified integration	included
	Gastarbeiter haben die Aufenthaltserlaubnis zu verlieren, wenn sie über längere Zeiträume oder wiederholt arbeitslos sind und daher den Sozialstaat gefährden.	Temporary immigration for work	excluded
	Beschäftigungsbewilligungen für ausländisches Pflegepersonal sind befristet nur so lange zu erteilen, bis der Bedarf durch österreichisches Pflegepersonal gedeckt werden kann.	Care sector	excluded
	Die Sonderrechte türkischer Staatsbürger sind umgehend aufzuheben.	Issue came up in relation to the Syrian development, double nationality and extremism	included
	und die Integration von Schülerinnen und Schülern durch geeignete Maßnahmen im Unterrichtswesen.	Integration in education relevant issue	included
	vor allem durch bundesweit einheitliche Durchführungsvorschriften im Bereich des Deutschunterrichts	references to national language included, as part to generalized integration	included

	In Bereichen, in denen Arbeitskräftemangel herrscht (Gesundheits- und Pflegebereich, Erntehelfer, etc.), darf nicht gleich nach einer Öffnung des Arbeitsmarktes für Ausländer verlangt werden.	General work, not a specific sector	excluded
	Die Diversität soll auch stärker als Chance wahrgenommen werden:	Diversity in relation to integration	included
	Saisonbeschäftigungen sollen die Ausnahme bilden.	Seasonal work	excluded
	Sport als Schlüssel für Integration stärker nutzen.	too general, could apply to every issue	excluded
	Niemand in unserem Land darf seinen Kindern, ob aus ideologischen Gründen oder aus Desinteresse, die Chance auf Bildung verwehren.	general ideology	excluded
	Die FPÖ bekennt sich dazu, die Heimat, die autochthone Bevölkerung und damit die österreichische Leitkultur zu schützen.	national culture	included
Germany			
	Wir treten für die Freiheit der christlichen, jüdischen, islamischen und anderer Religionen ein, sowie für die Freiheit, keine Religion zu haben.	Tolerance in relation to diversity included on general arguments	included
	Deshalb fordern wir Kultur- und Bildungsinstitutionen der Sinti und Roma sowie der sorbischen, dänischen und friesischen Minderheit gleichberechtigt finanziell zu fördern.	reference to specific groups	excluded
	Wir werden Deutschland attraktiv machen für ausländische Studierende und Menschen, die in Deutschland eine berufliche Ausbildung	general immigration	included

	absolvieren oder sich bei uns beruflich nachqualifizieren möchten.	for education	
	Türkische Staatsangehörige und ihre Familienangehörigen, die in Deutschland leben, haben aufgrund des Assoziationsabkommens zwischen der Türkei und der heutigen EU Rechte, die denen von UnionsbürgerInnen nahekommen.	double citizenship discussion	excluded
	Wer hier lebt, soll hier wählen!	general voting rights	excluded
	Besonders dankbar sind wir für das Wiedererstarken jüdischen Lebens in Deutschland – auch durch die Zuwanderung zahlreicher neuer Gemeindemitglieder aus der früheren Sowjetunion.	specific groups	excluded
	Allein in Afrika werden bis 2020 voraussichtlich 250 Millionen Menschen unter Wassermangel leiden.	african countries	excluded
UK			
	Greens recognise that cultural diversity is as vital as ecological biodiversity in maintaining and enriching a healthy and fair society.	catch all phrase	excluded
	We would promote and protect this cultural diversity at a grassroots level with the promotion of community radio, television, live arts, etc. in both the Welsh and English languages.	Welsh-subnational	excluded
	Foreign students contribute hugely to our education system, both financially and in terms of the wider perspectives they bring.	foreign students	included
	The implementation of an Acht Gaelige as agreed to promote the Irish language and safeguards the rights of Irish speakers.	Gaelic-subnational	excluded
	Any controls must respect the following principles: Mutual legal obligations within the EU on freedom of movement.	Brexit and EU	included

	and close seven of the UK's nine detention centres.	relevant	included
	Simply put, identity matters.	Identity as part of nationalism	included

#### Appendix D: Manually validated classifier performance per country

AT			Related	Unrelated	Classified	Verified	Specifity	Sensibility	ACC
Bigram	GLM	GLM	124	880	1004	1305	87,6494024	67,4329502	77,5411763
Bigram	GLM	None	207	978	1185	1305	82,5316456	74,9425287	78,7370872
Bigram	GLM	SVM	204	1001	1205	1305	83,0705394	76,7049808	79,8877601
Bigram	SVM	GLM	244	995	1239	1305	80,306699	76,2452107	78,2759548
Bigram	SVM	None	365	1065	1430	1305	74,4755245	81,6091954	78,0423599
Bigram	SVM	SVM	428	1054	1482	1305	71,120108	80,7662835	75,9431957
Unigram	GLM	GLM	171	963	1134	1305	84,9206349	73,7931034	79,3568692
Unigram	GLM	None	257	998	1255	1305	79,5219124	76,4750958	77,9985041
Unigram	GLM	SVM	238	1017	1255	1305	81,0358566	77,9310345	79,4834455
Unigram	SVM	GLM	181	960	1141	1305	84,1367222	73,5632184	78,8499703
Unigram	SVM	None	310	1039	1349	1305	77,0200148	79,6168582	78,3184365
Unigram	SVM	SVM	344	1016	1360	1305	74,7058824	77,8544061	76,2801442

UK			Related	Unrelated	Classified	Verified	Specifity	Sensibility	ACC
Bigram	GLM	GLM	61	470	531	817	88,5122411	57,5275398	73,0198904
Bigram	GLM	None	209	611	820	817	74,5121951	74,7858017	74,6489984
Bigram	GLM	SVM	91	432	523	817	82,6003824	52,876377	67,7383797
Bigram	SVM	GLM	173	562	735	817	76,462585	68,7882497	72,6254174
Bigram	SVM	None	288	638	926	817	68,8984881	78,0905753	73,4945317
Bigram	SVM	SVM	334	647	981	817	65,9531091	79,1921665	72,5726378
Unigram	GLM	GLM	75	490	565	817	86,7256637	59,9755202	73,350592
Unigram	GLM	None	128	482	610	817	79,0163934	58,996328	69,0063607
Unigram	GLM	SVM	184	567	751	817	75,4993342	69,4002448	72,4497895

Unigram	SVM	GLM	120	502	622	817	80,7073955	61,4443084	71,075852
Unigram	SVM	None	251	610	861	817	70,8478513	74,6634027	72,755627
Unigram	SVM	SVM	286	599	885	817	67,6836158	73,3170135	70,5003146

GER			Related	Unrelated	Classified	Verified	Specificity	Sensibility	ACC
Bigram	GLM	GLM	107	671	778	1573	86,2467866	42,6573427	64,4520646
Bigram	GLM	None	218	961	1179	1573	81,509754	61,093452	71,301603
Bigram	GLM	SVM	186	877	1063	1573	82,5023518	55,7533376	69,1278447
Bigram	SVM	GLM	236	1015	1251	1573	81,1350919	64,5263827	72,8307373
Bigram	SVM	None	451	1208	1659	1573	72,8149488	76,7959313	74,8054401
Bigram	SVM	SVM	500	1231	1731	1573	71,1149624	78,2581055	74,686534
Unigram	GLM	GLM	100	565	665	1573	84,962406	35,9186268	60,4405164
Unigram	GLM	None	223	945	1168	1573	80,9075342	60,0762873	70,4919108
Unigram	GLM	SVM	245	1011	1256	1573	80,4936306	64,2720915	72,3828611
Unigram	SVM	GLM	232	906	1138	1573	79,6133568	57,5969485	68,6051526
Unigram	SVM	None	375	1116	1491	1573	74,8490946	70,9472346	72,8981646
Unigram	SVM	SVM	402	1123	1525	1573	73,6393443	71,3922441	72,5157942

Appendix E: Reference documents for Wordscores models:

Country	Partyid / year	+	-
Sweden	11110_201809		neg
	11710_201809	pos	
Norway	12221_201709		neg
	12951_201709	pos	
Denmark	13410_201906		neg
	13720_201906	pos	
Netherlands	22110_201703		neg
	22722_201703	pos	
France	31320_201706/31240_201706		neg
	31720_201706	pos	
Italy	32440_201803		neg
	32720_201803	pos	
Portugal	35211_201910		neg

	35313_201910	pos	
Germany	41113_201709		neg
	41953_201709	pos	
Austria	42110_201909		neg
	42420_201909	pos	
United Kingdom	51902_201912		neg
	51620_201912	pos	

## Appendix F: Wordfish estimates per country

### Wordfish:

#### Pairwise correlations: Austria

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.993***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.978***	0.985***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.965***	0.973***	0.968***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.851***	0.883***	0.921***	0.859***	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

#### Pairwise correlations: Denmark

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.855***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.709***	0.803***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.819***	0.715***	0.750***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.474**	0.195	0.141	0.093	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

#### Pairwise correlations: France

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
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(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.562	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.785**	0.729**	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.496	0.816**	0.611*	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.692	0.808*	0.641	0.552	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

#### Pairwise correlations: Germany

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.977***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.968***	0.987***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.948***	0.933***	0.933***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.755***	0.778***	0.786***	0.744***	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

#### Pairwise correlations: Italy

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM					
(2) UnigramGLMSVM		1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone		0.890***	1.000		
(4) CMP		0.558	0.715	1.000	
(5) CHES		0.141	0.165	0.992*	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

#### Pairwise correlations: Netherlands

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.818***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.624***	0.927***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.521***	0.696***	0.696***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.796***	0.598***	0.391**	0.629***	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Pairwise correlations: Norway**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.911***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.931***	0.922***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.791***	0.765***	0.807***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.686**	0.682**	0.560*	0.684**	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Pairwise correlations: Portugal**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM					
(2) UnigramGLMSVM		1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone		0.715***	1.000		
(4) CMP		0.762**	0.921***	1.000	
(5) CHES		0.866**	0.632	0.358	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Pairwise correlations: Sweden**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.945***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.894***	0.899***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.769***	0.820***	0.792***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.775***	0.752***	0.711***	0.572***	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Pairwise correlations: United Kingdom**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.990***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.984***	0.968***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.541**	0.580**	0.519*	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.792	0.789	0.835	0.926*	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Appendix G: Wordscores (excluding ref values) per country

**Pairwise correlations: Austria**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.954***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.896***	0.948***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.776***	0.854***	0.869***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.481*	0.507**	0.696***	0.538**	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Pairwise correlations: Denmark**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.968***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.744***	0.779***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.822***	0.788***	0.851***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.443**	0.450**	0.474**	0.312	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Pairwise correlations: France**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.629	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.618	0.998***	1.000		
(4) CMP					
(5) CHES	0.843	0.867	0.836	-0.765	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Pairwise correlations: Germany**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.267	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.191	0.946***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.337	0.677***	0.711***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.309	0.748***	0.794***	0.545**	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Pairwise correlations: Italy**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM		1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone		0.950**	1.000		
(4) CMP					
(5) CHES		-0.198	0.636		1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Pairwise correlations: Netherlands**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.988***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.941***	0.957***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.590***	0.589***	0.616***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.546***	0.575***	0.614***	0.614***	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Pairwise correlations: Norway**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.957***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.973***	0.986***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.887***	0.888***	0.901***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.684**	0.703**	0.686**	0.656**	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Pairwise correlations: Portugal**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM		1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone		0.803***	1.000		
(4) CMP		0.656*	0.937***	1.000	
(5) CHES		0.844*	0.872*	0.794	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Pairwise correlations: Sweden**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.928***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.664***	0.721***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.449**	0.423**	0.565***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.702***	0.686***	0.568***	0.422**	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Pairwise correlations: United Kingdom**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) BigramGLMGLM	1.000				
(2) UnigramGLMSVM	0.949***	1.000			
(3) BigramSVMNone	0.883***	0.897***	1.000		
(4) CMP	0.836***	0.847***	0.886***	1.000	
(5) CHES	0.872	0.686	0.610	0.557	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Appendix H.1: Linear regression coefficients including wordcount

**Linear regression**

CHES	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
BigramGLMGLM	1.985	.167	11.85	0	1.654	2.316	***
Wordcount	.001	.001	1.70	.091	0	.002	*
Constant	4.916	.232	21.20	0	4.458	5.375	***
Mean dependent var		5.256	SD dependent var			2.755	
R-squared		0.494	Number of obs			147	
F-test		70.236	Prob > F			0.000	
Akaike crit. (AIC)		620.045	Bayesian crit. (BIC)			629.017	

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

**Linear regression**

CHES	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
UnigramGLMSVM	1.683	.185	9.12	0	1.319	2.048	***
Wordcount	0	0	1.09	.279	0	.001	
Constant	5.071	.242	20.93	0	4.593	5.55	***
Mean dependent var		5.277	SD dependent var			2.753	
R-squared		0.345	Number of obs			161	
F-test		41.616	Prob > F			0.000	
Akaike crit. (AIC)		719.834	Bayesian crit. (BIC)			729.079	

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

**Linear regression**

CHES	Coef.	St.Err.	t- value	p- value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
BigramSVMNone	1.509	.192	7.85	0	1.129	1.889	***
Wordcount	0	0	0.70	.483	0	.001	
Constant	5.095	.258	19.75	0	4.585	5.604	***
Mean dependent var		5.277	SD dependent var			2.753	
R-squared		0.281	Number of obs			161	
F-test		30.843	Prob > F			0.000	
Akaike crit. (AIC)		734.897	Bayesian crit. (BIC)			744.141	

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

**Linear regression**

CHES	Coef.	St.Err.	t- value	p- value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
CMP	1.521	.2	7.62	0	1.127	1.915	***
Wordcount	0	.001	0.72	.473	-.001	.001	
Constant	5.096	.253	20.16	0	4.596	5.595	***
Mean dependent var		5.312	SD dependent var			2.747	
R-squared		0.287	Number of obs			149	
F-test		29.325	Prob > F			0.000	
Akaike crit. (AIC)		678.684	Bayesian crit. (BIC)			687.696	

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

Appendix H.2: Linear regression coefficients including count of unique words

**Linear regression**

CHES	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf Interval]	Sig
BigramGLMGLM	1.985	.168	11.84	0	1.653 2.316	***
Unique-Count	.002	.001	1.67	.097	0	.004 *
Constant	4.858	.261	18.64	0	4.343 5.373	***
Mean dependent var		5.256	SD dependent var		2.755	
R-squared		0.493	Number of obs		147	
F-test		70.127	Prob > F		0.000	
Akaike crit. (AIC)		620.158	Bayesian crit. (BIC)		629.129	

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

**Linear regression**

CHES	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf Interval]	Sig
UnigramGLMSVM	1.685	.184	9.14	0	1.321 2.049	***
Unique-Count	.001	.001	1.19	.236	-.001	.003
Constant	5.002	.274	18.27	0	4.461 5.543	***
Mean dependent var		5.277	SD dependent var		2.753	
R-squared		0.346	Number of obs		161	
F-test		41.797	Prob > F		0.000	
Akaike crit. (AIC)		719.593	Bayesian crit. (BIC)		728.837	

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

**Linear regression**

CHES	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
BigramSVMNone	1.515	.192	7.89	0	1.136	1.895	***
Unique-Count	.001	.001	0.93	.352	-.001	.002	
Constant	5.009	.293	17.12	0	4.431	5.588	***
Mean dependent var		5.277	SD dependent var			2.753	
R-squared		0.283	Number of obs			161	
F-test		31.105	Prob > F			0.000	
Akaike crit. (AIC)		734.514	Bayesian crit. (BIC)			743.759	

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

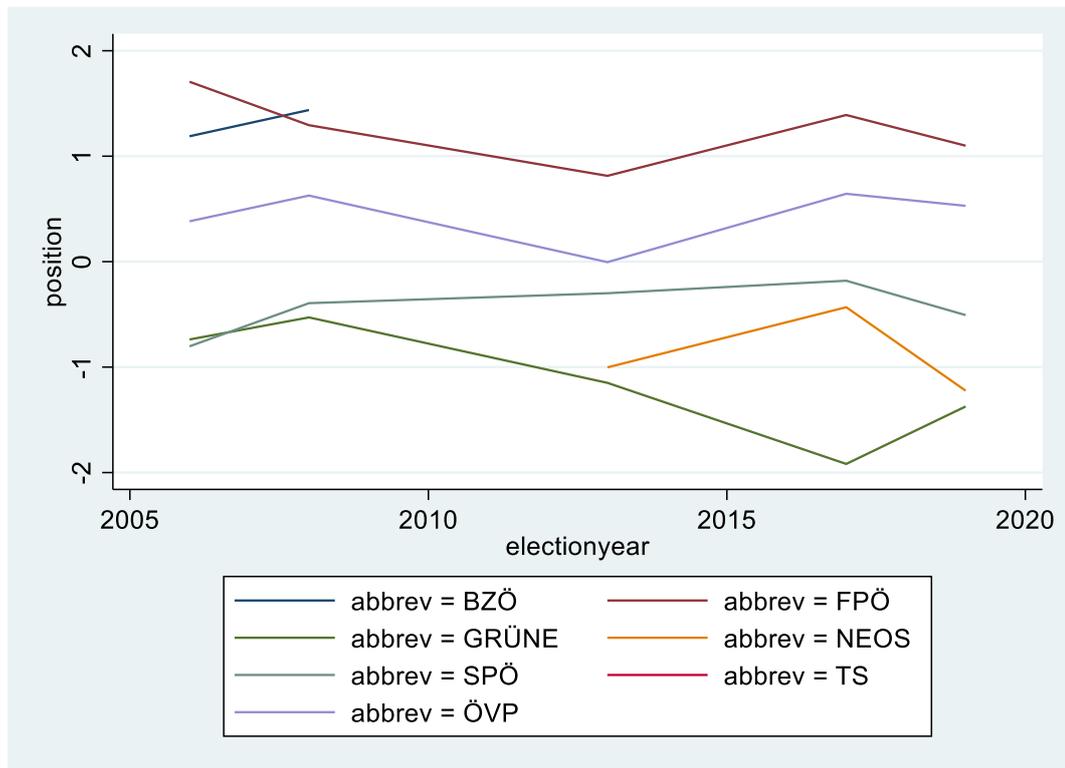
**Linear regression**

CHES	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
CMP	1.521	.199	7.64	0	1.128	1.915	***
Unique-Count	.001	.001	1.12	.264	-.001	.003	
Constant	4.978	.285	17.48	0	4.415	5.54	***
Mean dependent var		5.312	SD dependent var			2.747	
R-squared		0.290	Number of obs			149	
F-test		29.843	Prob > F			0.000	
Akaike crit. (AIC)		677.932	Bayesian crit. (BIC)			686.944	

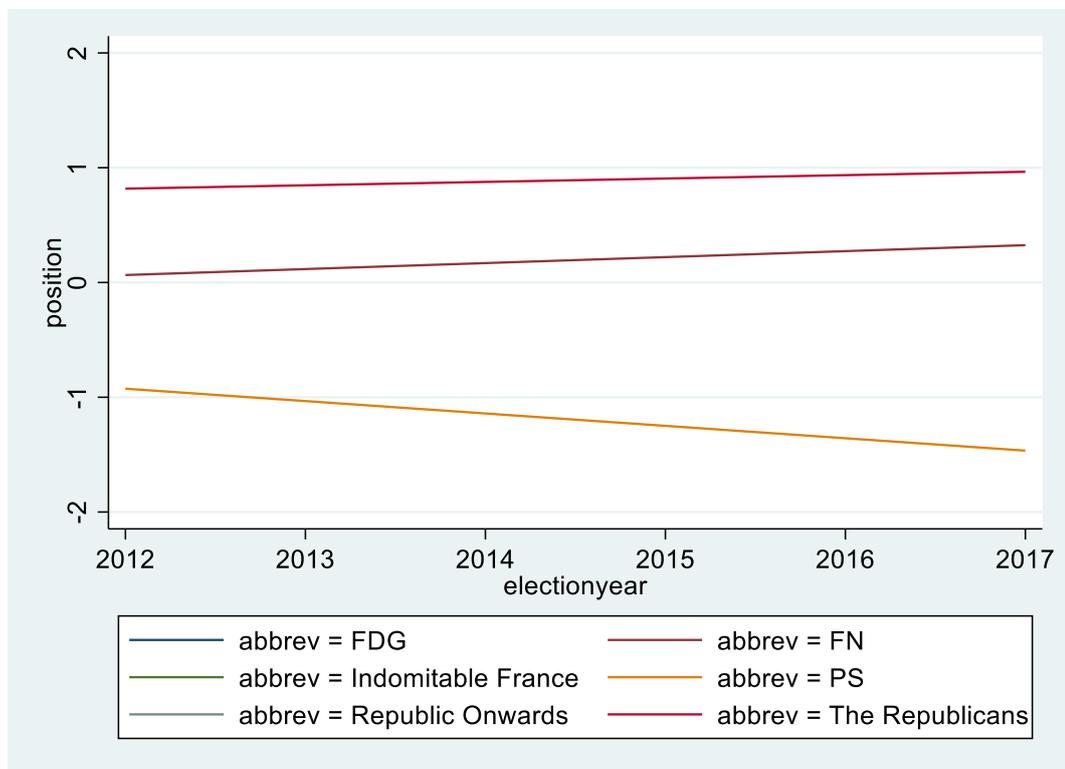
\*\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*  $p < .1$

Appendix I: Party positions based on Wordfish-Bigram-SVM-None

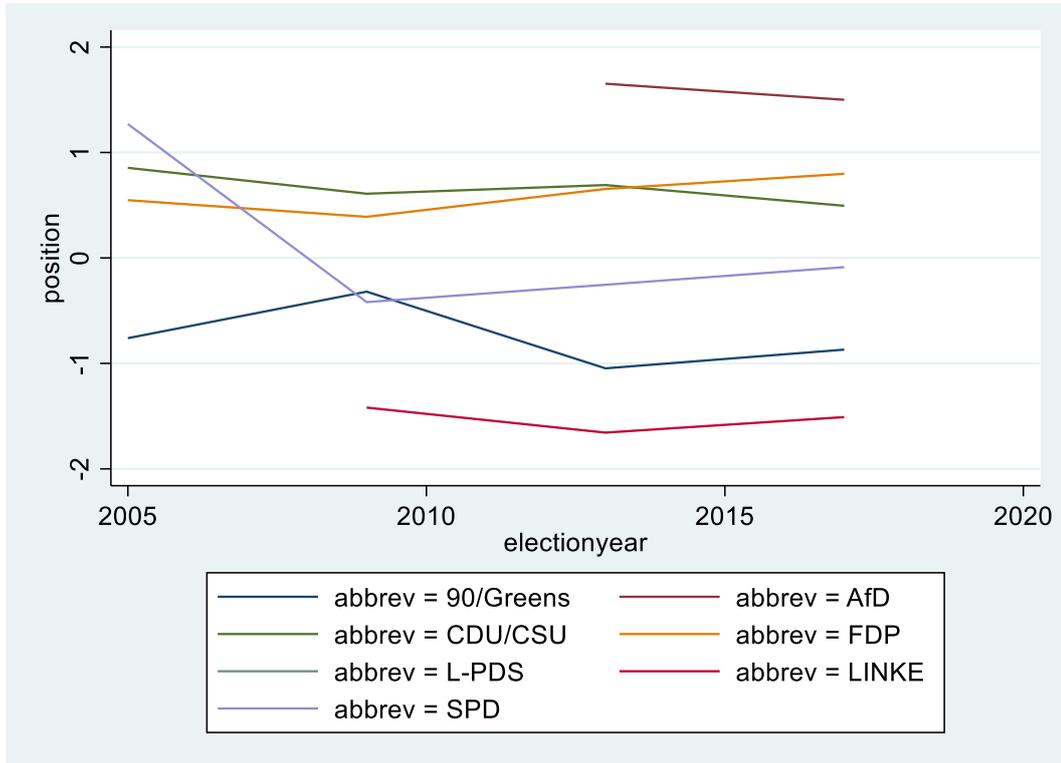
Austria:



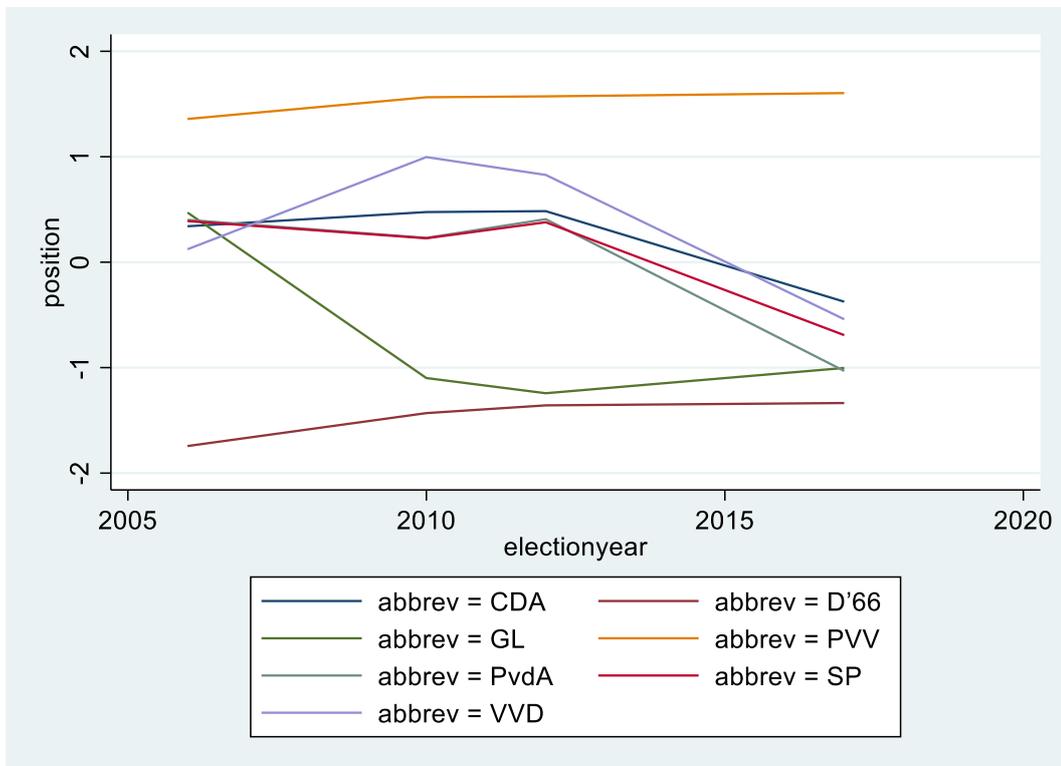
France:



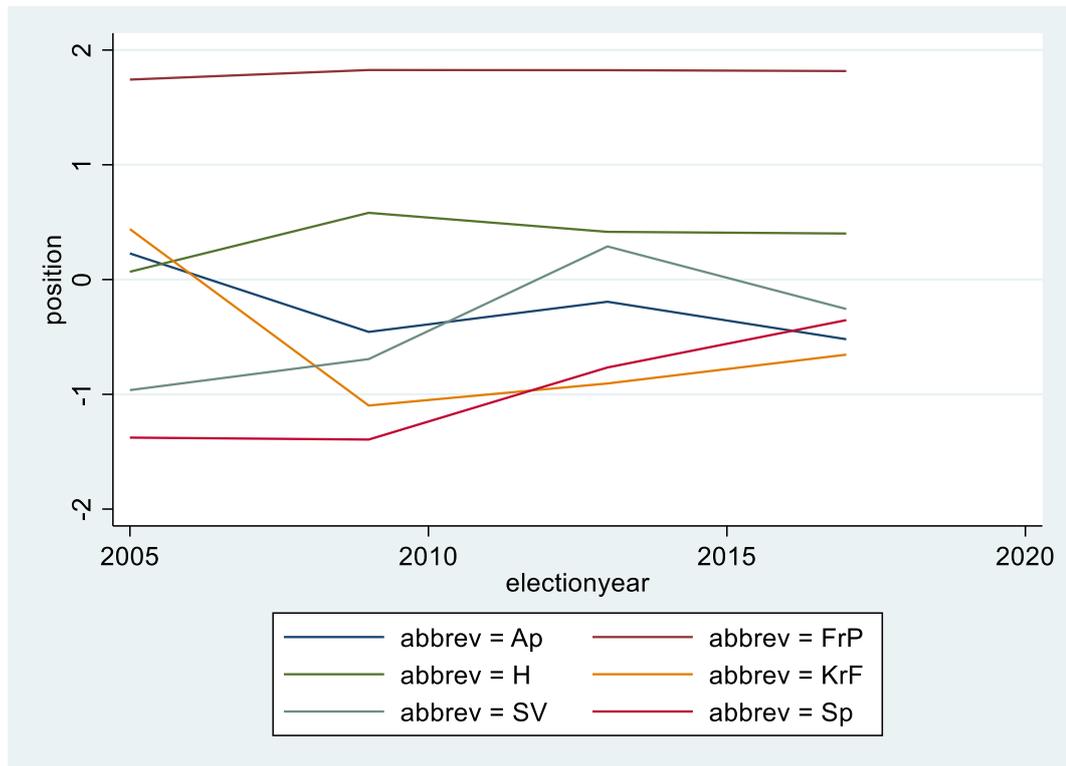
Germany:



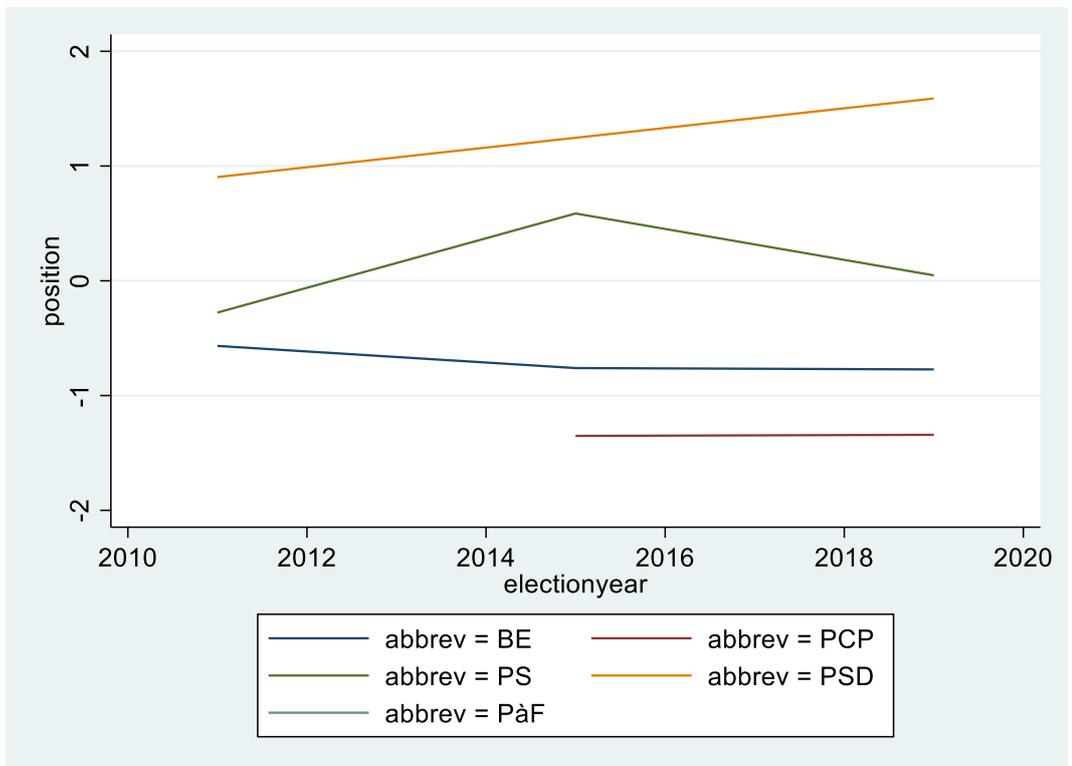
Netherlands:



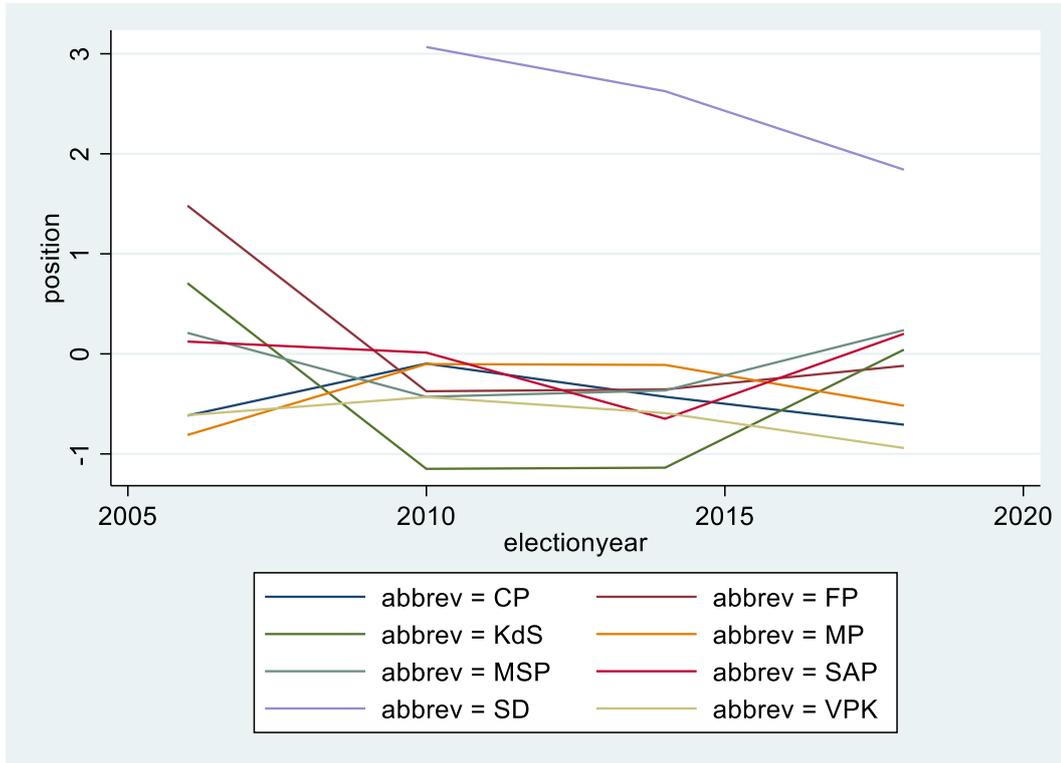
Norway:



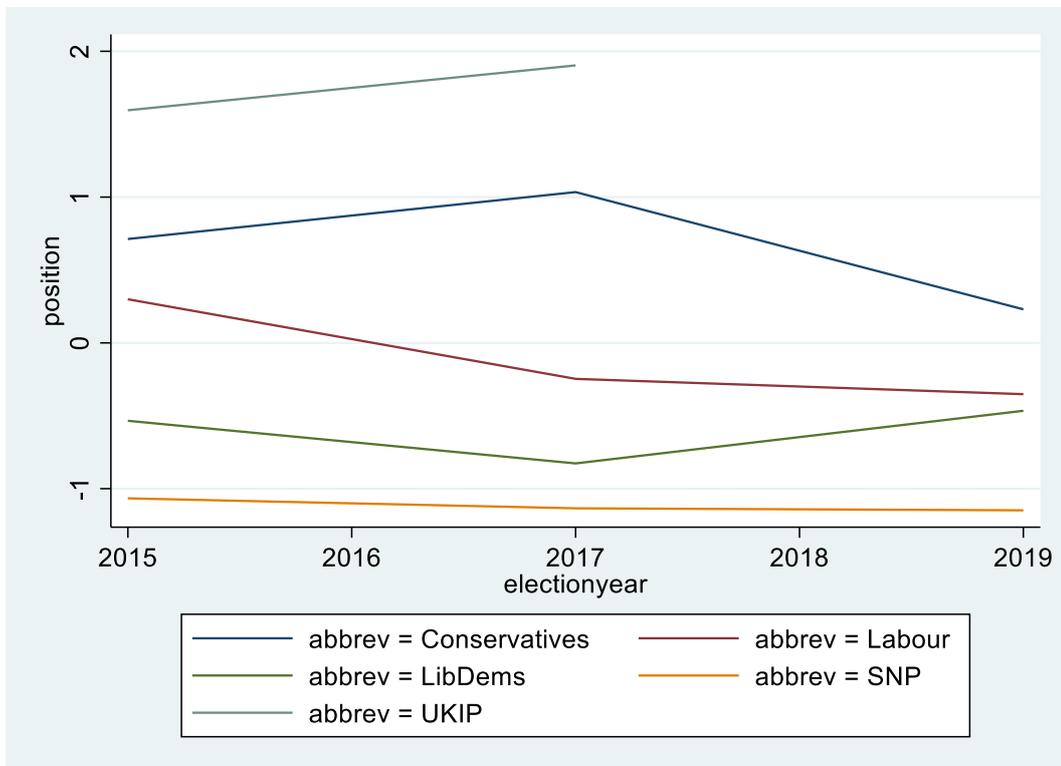
Portugal:



Sweden:



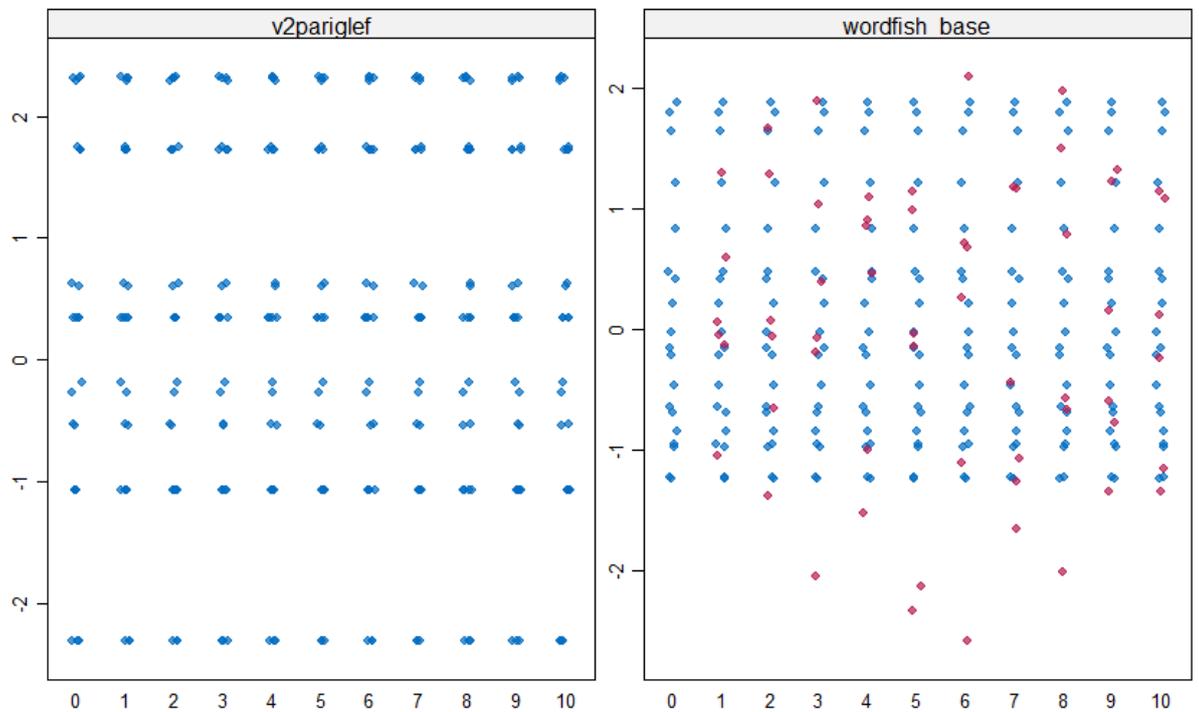
United Kingdom:



## Appendix J: Data generation economic positions:

In order to generate the topic specific positional estimates for the economic crisis, I drew upon the manually coded documents, provided by the Manifesto Project. The generation of the economic dimension corresponds widely with existing work which operationalized the CMP data for this purpose (see Hooghe et al, 2010; Ivaldi, 2015). While previous research often utilized the included categories to construct economic issue positions based on the assignment of these issue categories to assumed left or right issues, as well as the weighted frequency of the included textual units, I deviate from this procedure. Building upon the identified relevant textual data, I aim to generate the topical corpus and apply unsupervised scaling methods to generate unidimensional positional estimates. The textual data was accessed via the `manifestoR` package for Rstudio. A relatively large timeframe from 1997 to 2015 of party manifestos was included, to ensure that at least two elections prior and one election after the economic crisis were covered and to account for different election cycles across the chosen country sample. Afterwards the included textual data based on the selected issue categories was preprocessed, before applying Wordfish models to each country-specific corpus to generate party positions across time. The preprocessing steps include: splitting of hyphens, removing numbers, punctuation and symbols. Removing stopwords, wordstemming and a minimum doc freq of 3. The resulting results were pairwise correlated with existing matched expert survey estimates. (The Chapel hill expert survey estimates were used for all countries except Norway, here we used V-dem dataset). The generated correlation estimates were overall relatively high, given the varying nature of the underlying datasets. While I can conclude, that the specified nature of the text was able to produce valid estimates using unsupervised scaling methods, I need to address the limitations of my initial approach. Summarizing I was able to calculate 156 positional estimates across 16 years and 8 countries, but due to the absence of many party manifestos for smaller parties, as well some election periods for countries that have been added later or where annotated party manifestos are not available yet in digitalized form, the gaps in the data are quite large for some countries. In response to these observable gaps, there were a number of options available to overcome this limitation. For example, the application of a classifier, that could be trained on the available textual resources

and the manual addition of missing party manifestos across the chosen timeframe. Or the inclusion of crowd-coding methods, as well as the inclusion of other sources of secondary data. After careful consideration of these options in relation to my available resources, I rejected these options. Concerning the relatively high correlations of the generated positions based on the CMP and the expert surveys, I decided to extend the dataset based on multiple imputation. For this approach the MICE package for R-studio using bayesian linear regression was used. I applied 500 iterations across 10 models. The resulting estimates were evaluated based on a) the original correlation (which should remain as constant as possible) and b) the distribution of outliers, whereas the initial scale of the unidimensional space should only be extended in relation to the corresponding expert estimates.



*Figure 3: Imputation process of Norway based on the V2 Dataset*

Figure 4 displays an example of the underlying imputation process on the example of Norway. Imputation 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 produce estimates outside the existing scale, leading to an initial exclusion. The final decision was made based on the original

correlations of the initially generated estimates and the V2 dataset. Imputation 9 displayed the most similar correlation (0.914) estimates to the original (0.927).

The following table describes the included issue categories used to generate a topic specific corpus for economic positions.

Issue category (CMP)	Description
per401	Free Market Economy
per402	Incentives: Positive
per403	Market Regulation
per404	Economic Planning
per405	Corporatism/Mixed Economy
per406	Protectionism: Positive
per407	Protectionism: Negative
per408	Economic Goals
per409	Keynesian Demand Management
per410	Economic Growth: Positive
per412	Controlled Economy
per413	Nationalisation
per414	Economic Orthodoxy
per415	Marxist Analysis
per416	Anti-Growth Economy: Positive
per503	Equality: Positive
per504	Welfare State Expansion
per505	Welfare State Limitation
per701	Labour Groups: Positive
per702	Labour Groups: Negative

Based on these codings, I applied Wordfish models for the monolingual countries of Austria, Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway and Portugal. The initial positional estimates were pairwise correlated with CHES estimates in

order to validate my approach. Due to the unavailability of data for Norway, the V-dem dataset and the included economic variables were used for validation. The table below includes a summary of the pairwise correlations per country.

Country name	Pairwise correlation results
Austria	0.8312
Germany	0.7847
Netherlands	0.9195
Norway	0.9098
Portugal	0.7827
Sweden	0.9488
United Kingdom	0.9402
Overall	0.8606

The results describe very high correlations of the generated estimates based on the Wordfish approach and expert estimates. Due to the high relationship, I applied multiple imputations to extend the initial dataset, which was limited due to the non-availability of coded manifestos for some parties across the chosen timeframe. For this approach the MICE package for R-studio using baysian linear regression was used. I included 500 iterations across 10 models. The resulting estimates were evaluated based on the original correlation (which should remain as constant as possible) and the distribution of outliers, whereas the initial distribution should also not be affected. Based on this approach I was able to extend the initial 101 party positions based on party manifestos to 143.

## Appendix Chapter 4:

### APPENDIX K:

Table 1 of the Appendix displays the results of the pairwise correlation estimates of the saliency estimates generated based on the first release of the Parlee data with CHES values for available years. In my first approach I varied the included parliamentary data from original, to the exclusion of EU issues and preprocessed the data. The variance in the generated estimates based on the adjusted textual data is relatively low, while I observed differences, especially for Ireland and Portugal, to the CHES estimates. The main reason for these differences is assumed to be the different underlying data sources. On the other hand, the high correlation for other countries does invite further research.

Table 1: Crosscorrelation of Data Generation Approach and CHES

	BE	GE	FR	IR	UK	PR	AT	HU	type	data	lag
1	0.624	0.001	0.630	-0.031	0.739	-0.632	0.451	0.873	count	original	none
2	0.733	0.688	0.423	-0.452	-0.204	-0.457	-0.004	0.736	prop	original	none
3	0.399	0.119	0.300	-0.156	0.593	-0.292	0.524	0.744	count	orig	lag1
4	0.674	0.453	-0.253	-0.690	-0.166	0.152	-0.136	0.352	prop	orig	lag1
5	0.624	-0.002	0.627	-0.017	0.728	-0.604	0.417	0.861	count	non-eu	none
6	0.750	0.688	0.434	-0.414	-0.233	-0.391	-0.038	0.683	prop	non-eu	none
7	0.397	0.120	0.308	-0.116	0.584	-0.325	0.520	0.730	count	non-eu	lag1
8	0.701	0.458	-0.256	-0.621	-0.167	0.157	-0.128	0.285	prop	non-eu	lag1
9	0.641	0.034	0.631	-0.035	0.729	-0.623	0.438	0.873	count	origpreproc	none
10	0.733	0.741	0.426	-0.453	-0.215	-0.435	-0.004	0.740	prop	origpreproc	none
11	0.410	0.137	0.297	-0.157	0.580	-0.301	0.514	0.746	count	origpreproc	lag1
12	0.676	0.456	-0.266	-0.687	-0.179	0.129	-0.115	0.342	prop	origpreproc	lag1
13	0.637	0.031	0.629	-0.020	0.717	-0.597	0.404	0.865	count	non-eupreproc	none
14	0.748	0.741	0.437	-0.424	-0.243	-0.381	-0.037	0.682	prop	non-eupreproc	none
15	0.402	0.140	0.305	-0.114	0.571	-0.338	0.515	0.733	count	non-eupreproc	lag1
16	0.703	0.464	-0.269	-0.615	-0.183	0.121	-0.098	0.278	prop	non-eupreproc	lag1

Appendix L:

Fixed effects regression framework without general error correction model inclusion:

	(1)	(2)
	log_prop	log_prop
Party size	.005 (.093)	.005 (.098)
GDP growth	.015 (.012)	.017 (.012)
Unemploymentrate	-.019 (.017)	-.021 (.017)
Shock	.27*** (.088)	.246** (.091)
Foreign inflow per capita	.039* (.019)	
Foreign inflow*shock	-.024 (.021)	
Absolute foreign inflow		.005 (.009)
Absolute foreign inflow*shock		-.003 (.009)
Constant	.551*** (.175)	.604*** (.177)
Observations	1122	1122
R-squared	.198	.188

*Standard errors are in parentheses*

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

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	log_prop	log_prop	log_prop	log_prop
Foreign inflow per capita	.026*	.022	.083***	.081***
	(.015)	(.014)	(.028)	(.026)
Cabinet party	.013	-.013	.009	-.003
	(.038)	(.037)	(.035)	(.037)
GDP growth	.026*	.026*	.043***	.042***
	(.014)	(.014)	(.013)	(.013)
Unemployment rate	-.046**	-.046**	-.045**	-.045**
	(.019)	(.019)	(.019)	(.019)
Party size	-.026	-.028	-.025	-.026
	(.098)	(.099)	(.091)	(.091)
Cabinet party * Foreign inflow		.012		.006
		(.007)		(.005)
GDP growth * Foreign inflow			-.016**	-.016**
			(.007)	(.007)
Constant	.901***	.911***	.818***	.824***
	(.166)	(.167)	(.152)	(.152)
Observations	1099	1099	1099	1099
R-squared	.144	.145	.178	.178

*Standard errors are in parentheses*

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

#### Appendix M: RWP per country

##### Right-wing Parties: Austria

RWP			
	BZÖ	FPÖ	Total
1	5	11	16
Total	5	11	16

**Right-wing Parties: Belgium**

RWP		
	Vlaams Belang	Total
1	11	11
Total	11	11

**Right-wing Parties: Croatia**

RWP		
	HSP	Total
1	3	3
Total	3	3

**Right-wing Parties: Cyprus**

RWP		
	ELAM	Total
1	4	4
Total	4	4

**Right-wing Parties: Czechia**

RWP			
	SPD	Úsvit	Total
1	6	5	11
Total	6	5	11

**Right-wing Parties: Finland**

RWP		
	PS	Total

1	11	11
Total	11	11

### Right-wing Parties: France

RWP		
	MR	Total
1	4	4
Total	4	4

### Right-wing Parties: Germany

RWP		
	AfD	Total
1	3	3
Total	3	3

### Right-wing Parties: Hungary

RWP		
	Jobbik	Total
1	11	11
Total	11	11

### Right-wing Parties: Ireland

RWP		
	LEGA-LN	Total
1	11	11
Total	11	11

**Right-wing Parties: Italy**

RWP			
	FvD	PVV	Total
1	3	11	14
Total	3	11	14

**Right-wing Parties: Netherlands**

RWP		
	BE	Total
1	10	10
Total	10	10

**Right-wing Parties: Portugal**

RWP				
	LSN	SNS	SR	Total
1	5	10	4	19
Total	5	10	4	19

**Right-wing Parties: Romania**

RWP		
	Vox	Total
1	1	1
Total	1	1

### Right-wing Parties: Slovakia

RWP		
	SD	Total
1	10	10
Total	10	10

### Right-wing Parties: Slovenia

RWP		
	UKI	Total
	P	
1	2	2
Total	2	2

### Appendix N: Included parties

#### Included Parties per Year: Austria

	year											Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
BZÖ	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
FPÖ	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Grüne	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
JETZT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
LIF	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
NEOS	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
SPÖ	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
STRONACH	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	6
ÖVP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Total	5	5	5	6	7	7	6	6	7	6	6	66

#### Included Parties per Year: Belgium

	year											Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
CD&V	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Ecolo-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11

Groen												
FDF	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	7
LDD	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	7
MLD	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
MR	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
N-VA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Open Vld	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
PS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
PVDA-PTB	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Vlaams Belang	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
cdH	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
sp.a	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Total	11	11	12	12	11	12	11	10	10	10	11	121

Included Parties per Year: Croatia

	year											Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
BM 365	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
DC	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
HDSSB	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
HDZ	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
HNS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
HRAST	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	7
HSLs	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	5
HSP	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
HSS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
HSU	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
IDS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
IDS, PGS, RI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
Laburisti	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	7
MOST	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
Novi val	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
PH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
Reformisti	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3
SDSS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
SNAGA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Å½ivi zid	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
Total	10	11	10	10	10	12	12	17	14	15	15	136

Included Parties per Year: Cyprus

	year											Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
AKEL	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Citizens Alliance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4

DIKO	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
DISY	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
EDEK	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
ELAM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
EVROKO	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	8
Environmentalists	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Solidarity	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
Total	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	9	8	8	8	75

Included Parties per Year: Czechia

	year											Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
ANO	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
2011												
CSSD	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
KDU- CSL	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
KSCM	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
ODS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
PirÄti	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
SPD	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	6
STAN	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
SZ	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
TOP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
09												
VV	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Úsvit	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	5
Total	6	7	6	6	10	8	9	9	10	9	9	89

Included Parties per Year: Finland

	year											Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
KD	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Kesk	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Kok	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
PS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
RKP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
SDP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
VIHR	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Vas	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
liik	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	9	89

Included Parties per Year: France

	year											Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
EELV	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	9
FDG	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	7
FI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
GE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
LAREM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
LC	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5
LR	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	10
MODEM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
MR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
PCF	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	7
PRG	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
PS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
UDI	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Total	8	8	8	7	7	6	6	5	11	11	9	86

Included Parties per Year: Germany

	year											Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
AfD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
CDU	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
CSU	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
FDP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	10
GRUENE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
PDS/LINKE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
SPD	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Total	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	7	7	7	68

Included Parties per Year: Hungary

	year											Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
DK	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	5
Együtt	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	4
Fidesz	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Jobbik	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
KDNP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
LMP	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
MDF	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
MSZP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Párbeszéd	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	6
SZDSZ	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
független	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Total	7	7	6	7	7	6	9	9	8	9	8	83

Included Parties per Year: Ireland

	year											
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Anti-Austerity	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Alliance - People Before Profit												
Fianna Fail	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Fine Gael	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Green Party	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	7
Labour Party	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Progressive Democrats	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Sinn Fain	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Social Democrats	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	5
Socialist Party	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	5
Solidarity - People Before Profit	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Workers and Unemployed Action	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>78</b>

Included Parties per Year: Italy

	year											
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
CD	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	6
CI-SC	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
CP	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	7
FDI	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
FI	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
IDV	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
LEGA-LN	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
LEU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
M5S	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
PD	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
PDL	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	9
PLI	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
SEL-SI	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>94</b>

Included Parties per Year: Netherlands

	year											
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
50PLUS	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
CDA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11

CU	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
D66	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
DENK	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
FvD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
GL	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
PVV	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
PvdA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
PvdD	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
SGP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
SP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
VVD	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Total	10	10	10	11	11	12	12	12	13	13	13	127

Included Parties per Year: Portugal

	year											Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
BE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
CDS-PP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
CH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
IL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
L	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
PAN	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	5
PCP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
PEV	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
PS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
PSD	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Total	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	7	7	10	74

Included Parties per Year: Romania

	year											Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
ALDE	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
PD-L	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	8
PMP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
PNL	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
PP-DD	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	4
PSD	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
UDMR	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
USR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
Total	4	4	4	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	60

## Included Parties per Year: Slovakia

	year											Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
HZDS	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	10
KDH	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	9
LSNS	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	5
MOST - HĀ?D	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
OLaNO	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
SDKĀ? - DS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
SIET	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
SMER - SD	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
SMK	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	7
SNS	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
SR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
SaS	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Total	8	9	9	9	8	10	9	11	11	10	10	104

## Included Parties per Year: Slovenia

	year									Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016		
DL	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	4	
DeSUS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	
LDS	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	
Levica	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	
NSi	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	
PS	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	
SD	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	
SDS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	
SLS	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	6	
SMC	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	
SNS	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	
ZaAB	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	
Zares	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	
Total	7	7	10	7	7	10	8	7	63	

## Included Parties per Year: Spain

	year											Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
Amaiur	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	6
BNG	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	9
CCa-PNC-NC	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
CDC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
CiU	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	9
Compromís	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Compromís	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
Podemos-EUPV												
Cs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
DL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
EAJ-PNV	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
EH Bildu	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
ERC	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
EUiA	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	6
Equo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
FAC	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	6
Geroa Bai	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
IU	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	10
JxCat-Junts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
PP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
PSOE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
UP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
UPN	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	10
UPyD	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	7
Vox	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	11	11	12	14	14	14	14	18	19	17	17	161

## Included Parties per Year: Sweden

	year											Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
C	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
KD	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
L	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
M	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
MP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
S	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
SD	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
V	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Total	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	88

Included Parties per Year: United

	year											Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
APNI	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	4
Con	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
DUP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
GPEW	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Lab	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
LibDem	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
PlaidCymru	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
SDLP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	10
SNP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
UKIP	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
UUP	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
Total	7	8	9	8	9	10	10	9	9	7	9	95

## Appendix O

a) Correlation of the results of the Multiple Correspondence Analysis to CHES scores

### Tabulation of Correlation to CHES

Country.Code	Electionyears	Percent
AUT	4	61,57
BEL	4	49,85
CYP	3	59,4
CZE	4	51,2
DEU	3	42,25
ESP	5	40,63
FIN	4	56,05
FRA	3	42,12
GBR	5	77,07
HRV	4	64,23
HUN	4	44,51
IRL	3	59,59
ITA	3	60,15
NLD	4	45,55
PRT	4	0,06
ROU	3	45,64
SVK	4	38,51
SVN	3	89,01
SWE	4	73,43
Total	71	

Included parties per country:

**Included parties in AUT**

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
BZO	1	5.56	5.56
FPO	3	16.67	22.22
Gruene	3	16.67	38.89
NEOS	3	16.67	55.56
OVP	3	16.67	72.22
SPO	3	16.67	88.89
TS	2	11.11	100.00
Total	18	100.00	

**Included parties in BEL**

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
AGL-Gr	3	10.71	10.71
CVP CD&V	3	10.71	21.43
NA	9	32.14	53.57
PA-PTB	1	3.57	57.14
PS	3	10.71	67.86
PSC-CDH	3	10.71	78.57
PVV VLD	3	10.71	89.29
SP	3	10.71	100.00
Total	28	100.00	

**Included parties in CYP**

	Freq.	Percen	Cum.
		t	
AKEL	2	25.00	25.00
DIKO	2	25.00	50.00
DISY	2	25.00	75.00
NA	2	25.00	100.00
Total	8	100.00	

**Included parties in CZE**

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
ANO	2	8.70	8.70
CSSD	3	13.04	21.74
KDU-CSL	3	13.04	34.78
KSCM	3	13.04	47.83
NA	1	4.35	52.17
ODS	3	13.04	65.22
STAN	3	13.04	78.26
TOP09	3	13.04	91.30
VV	2	8.70	100.00
Total	23	100.00	

**Included parties in DEU**

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
AfD	1	5.26	5.26
B90/Gru	3	15.79	21.05
CDU	3	15.79	36.84
CSU	3	15.79	52.63
FDP	3	15.79	68.42
NA	3	15.79	84.21

SPD	3	15.79	100.00
Total	19	100.00	

#### Included parties in ESP

	Freq.	Percen	Cum.
		t	
AP-P	4	30.77	30.77
Cs	2	15.38	46.15
P	2	15.38	61.54
PSOE	4	30.77	92.31
Vox	1	7.69	100.00
Total	13	100.00	

#### Included parties in FIN

	Freq.	Percen	Cum.
		t	
KD	3	14.29	14.29
KESK	3	14.29	28.57
KOK	3	14.29	42.86
NA	3	14.29	57.14
SP P	3	14.29	71.43
SSDP	3	14.29	85.71
VIHR	3	14.29	100.00
Total	21	100.00	

**Included parties in FRA**

	Freq.	Percen	Cum.
		t	
FI	1	12.50	12.50
NA	1	12.50	25.00
PCF	1	12.50	37.50
PS	2	25.00	62.50
REM	1	12.50	75.00
UMP LR	1	12.50	87.50
V	1	12.50	100.00
Total	8	100.00	

**Included parties in GBR**

	Freq.	Percen	Cum.
		t	
Con	4	30.77	30.77
Lab	4	30.77	61.54
NA	4	30.77	92.31
UKIP	1	7.69	100.00
Total	13	100.00	

**Included parties in HRV**

	Freq.	Percen	Cum.
		t	
HDZ	3	27.27	27.27
HNS-LD	3	27.27	54.55
HSS	3	27.27	81.82
Most	1	9.09	90.91
ZiZi	1	9.09	100.00
Total	11	100.00	

**Included parties in HUN**

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Fi+KDNP	3	25.00	25.00
Jobbik	3	25.00	50.00
LMP	3	25.00	75.00
MSZP	3	25.00	100.00
Total	12	100.00	

**Included parties in IRL**

	Freq.	Percen	Cum.
		t	
FF	2	25.00	25.00
FG	2	25.00	50.00
Lab	2	25.00	75.00
SF	2	25.00	100.00
Total	8	100.00	

**Included parties in ITA**

	Freq.	Percen	Cum.
		t	
FI-PdL	2	25.00	25.00
LN	2	25.00	50.00
M5S	2	25.00	75.00
PD	2	25.00	100.00
Total	8	100.00	

**Included parties in NLD**

	Freq.	Percen	Cum.
		t	
CDA	3	14.29	14.29
D66	3	14.29	28.57
GL	3	14.29	42.86
PVV	3	14.29	57.14
PvdA	3	14.29	71.43
SP	3	14.29	85.71
VVD	3	14.29	100.00
Total	21	100.00	

**Included parties in PRT**

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
NA	3	30.00	30.00
PLR ALDE	1	10.00	40.00
PMP	1	10.00	50.00
PNL	2	20.00	70.00
PP-DD	1	10.00	80.00
UDMR	2	20.00	100.00
Total	10	100.00	

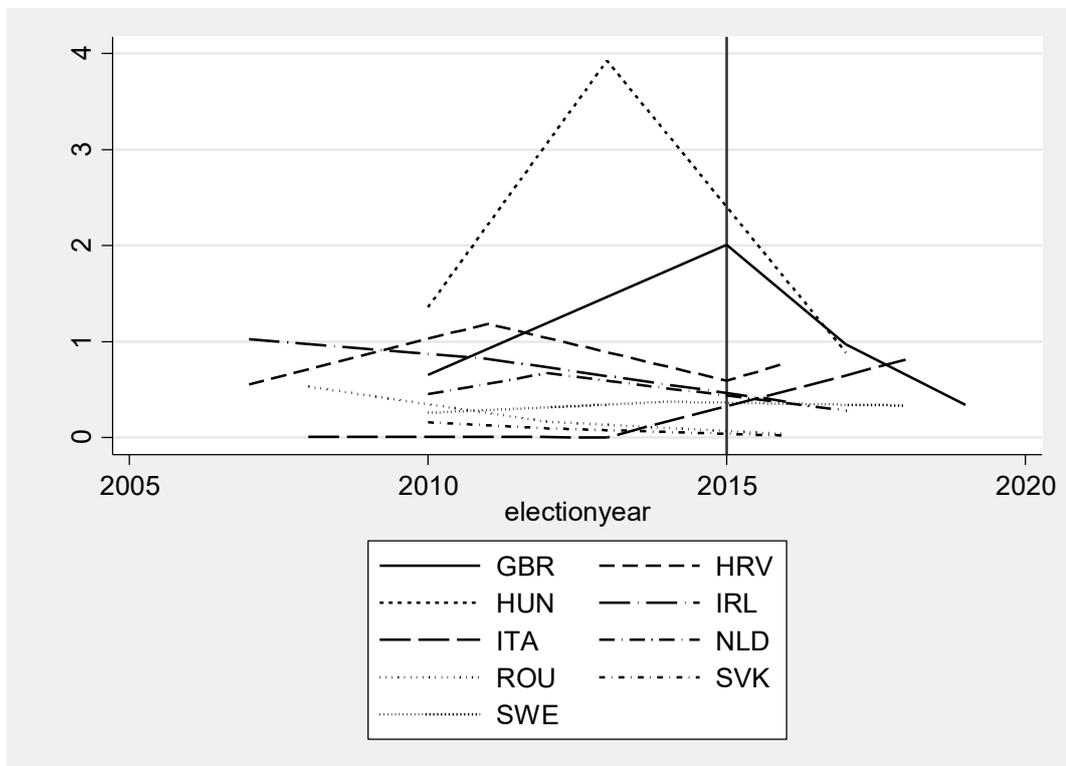
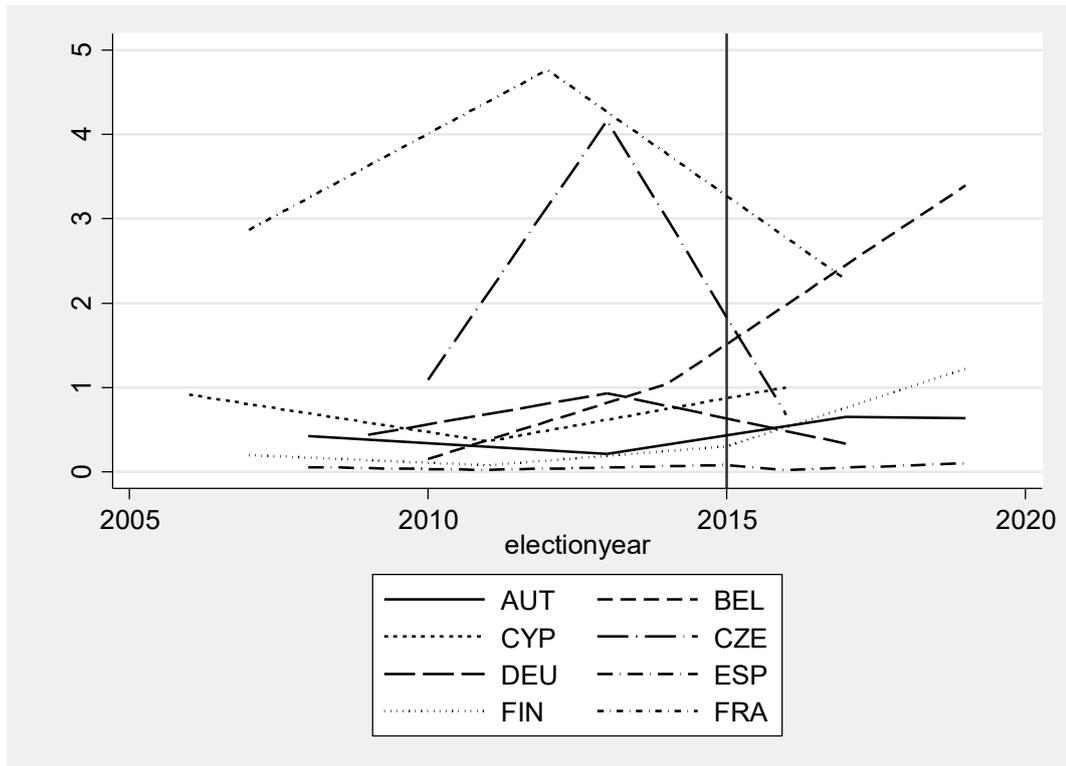
**Included parties in ROU**

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
HZDS	3	10.71	10.71
KDH	3	10.71	21.43
LsNS	1	3.57	25.00
MH	3	10.71	35.71
MK	2	7.14	42.86
OLaNO	3	10.71	53.57
SDKU-DS	3	10.71	64.29
SNS	3	10.71	75.00
SR	1	3.57	78.57
SaS	3	10.71	89.29
Smer	3	10.71	100.00
Total	28	100.00	

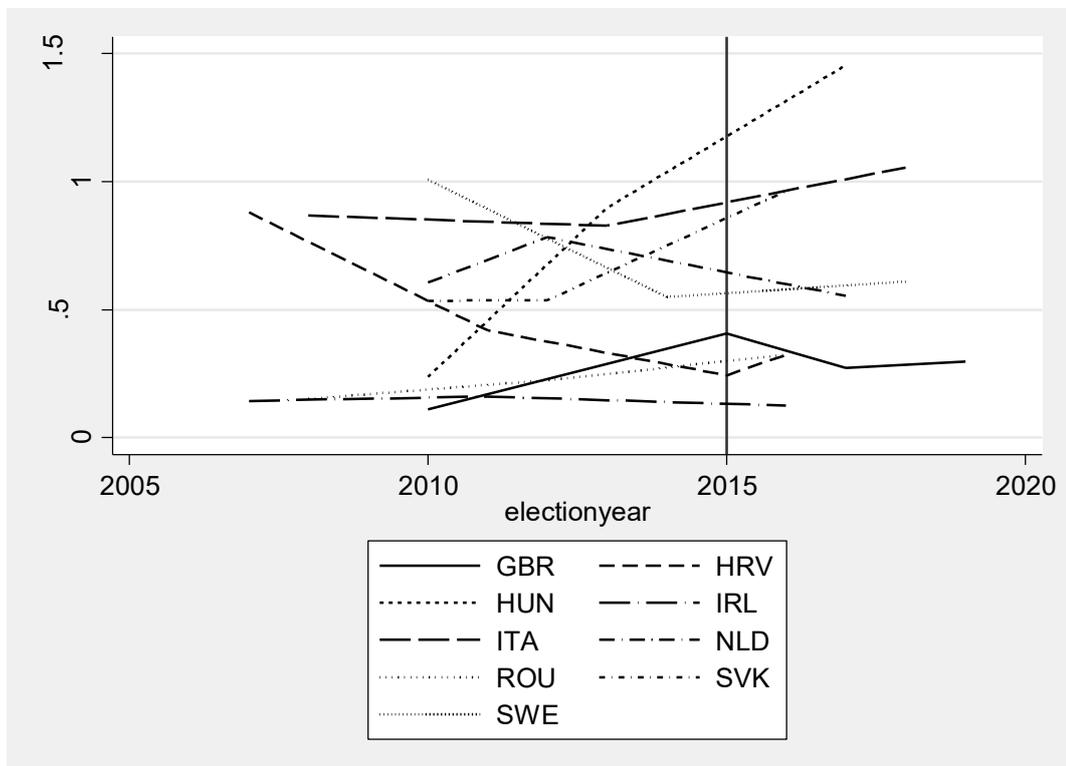
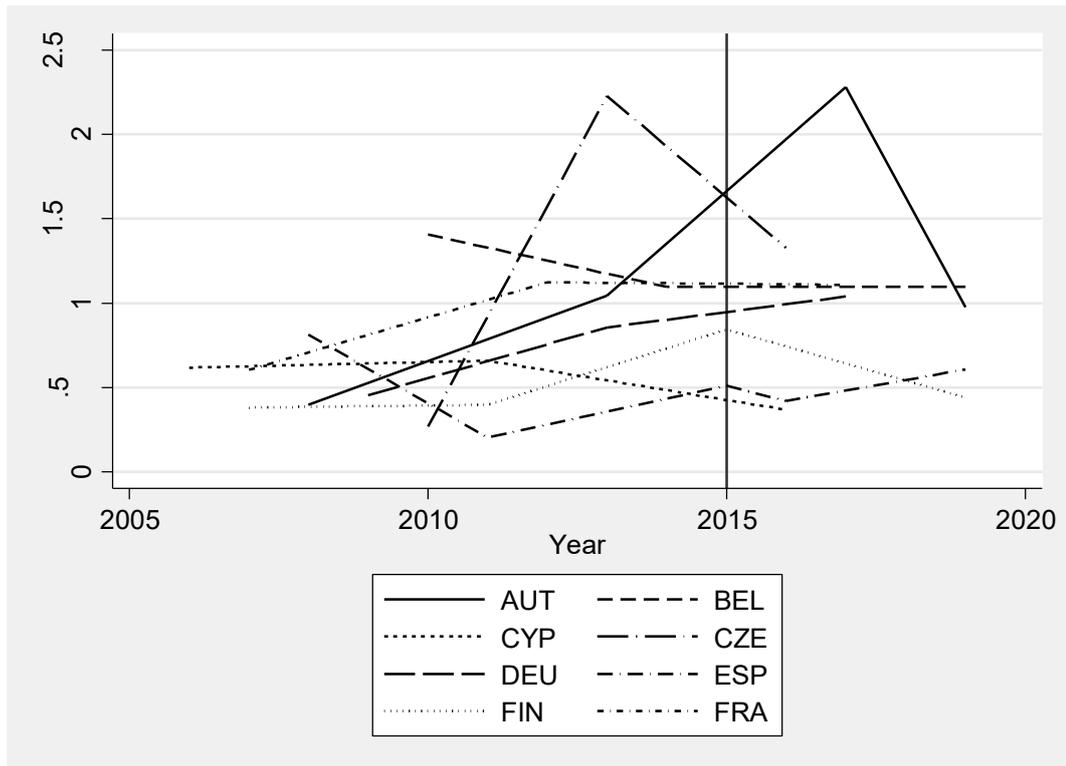
**Included parties in SVK**

	Freq.	Percen	Cum.
		t	
C	3	13.04	13.04
FP	2	8.70	21.74
KD	3	13.04	34.78
M	3	13.04	47.83
MP	3	13.04	60.87
SAP	3	13.04	73.91
SD	3	13.04	86.96
V	3	13.04	100.00
Total	23	100.00	

b) Results of the absolute positional shifts by election year and country



b) Results of the relative proportional issue saliency by election year and country



c)

country	corr_manifesto_speech
Austria	0,669249177
France	0,262744933
Germany	0,461845577
Netherlands	0,349121839
Portugal	0,293097556
Sweden	0,920814455
UK	0,657982111

Country	Correlation (r)
Austria	0.32
Belgium	0.07
Croatia	-0.29
Cyprus	0.41
Czechia	0.92
Finland	-0.12
France	-0.07
Germany	-0.23
Hungary	0.11
Ireland	0.15
Italy	-0.24
Netherlands	0.70
Portugal	-0.29
Romania	-0.29
Slovakia	0.37
Slovenia	0.04
Spain	0.23

Sweden	0.09
United Kingdom	0.81

#### Appendix P Robustness tests:

Regression results with exchanged economic controls:

	(1)	(2)
	vote_diff	vote_diff
Position Change	-2.267 (1.447)	.533* (.285)
Proportional Saliency	-.431 (.487)	-2.238 (1.375)
Government_lag	-1.95 (1.6)	-1.409 (1.262)
Vote-share_lag	-.895*** (.153)	-1.197*** (.193)
GDP growth	-.276 (.233)	1.394* (.778)
Constant	17.373*** (2.848)	21.932*** (4.471)
Observations	112	107
R-squared	.78	.727

*Standard errors are in parentheses*

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

	(1)	(2)
	Vote share gains/losses	Vote share gains/losses
Absolute positional shift	-2.295 (1.446)	.416 (.275)
Saliency Proportion	-.488 (.46)	-1.814 (1.306)
Governemtnal status lag	-1.906 (1.55)	-1.143 (1.033)
Vote-share lag	-.893*** (.16)	-1.171*** (.164)
Unemployment rates	.11 (.191)	.058 (.344)
Constant	15.991*** (2.292)	23.637*** (5.014)
Observations	112	107
R-squared	.779	.718

*Standard errors are in parentheses*

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

Regression table 2 including economic controls:

	(1)	(2)
	vote_diff	vote_diff
External Shock	1.771*	1.114
	(.88)	(1.064)
Positional Shift	-.215	-.021
	(.772)	(.735)
Shift*shock	-.264	-.286
	(.665)	(.575)
Saliency Difference	-1.258	-1.562*
	(.731)	(.752)
Saliency Proportion	.573	.728
	(.714)	(.831)
Size 10%	-1.783	
	(1.1)	
Shock* Size 10%	-6.632***	
	(1.359)	
GDP growth	.377	.413
	(.503)	(.464)
Unemployment rates	-.205	-.257
	(.335)	(.315)
Size 15%		-.958
		(.772)
Shock* Size 15%		-6.445***
		(1.964)
Constant	2.282	1.865
	(3.355)	(3.264)
Observations	226	226
R-squared	.14	.114

*Standard errors are in parentheses*

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

## APPENDIX Q:

party	electi~r	vote_s~e	pos_abs	a_sal
GRUENE	2013	8.4	.413474	5.22894
GRUENE	2017	8.9	.0603638	10.23168
PDS/LINKE	2013	8.6	.3358047	5.710812
PDS/LINKE	2017	9.2	.0267852	11.40149
SPD	2013	25.7	.3290974	6.175505
SPD	2017	20.5	.1399368	12.20316
FDP	2013	4.8	.2087476	15.0553
FDP	2017	10.7	.3067412	13.41864
CDU	2017	26.8	.0306431	18.38522
CDU	2013	34.1	.3962938	6.89724
CSU	2017	6.2	.0592192	19.51426
CSU	2013	7.4	.5470126	7.090389
AfD	2017	12.6	.3089776	24.54671

party	electi~r	vote_s~e	pos_abs	a_sal
MP	2014	6.89	.1227368	7.54464
MP	2018	4.41	.0242608	13.78088
V	2014	5.72	.0076894	13.66985
V	2018	8	.0893492	15.53351
S	2014	31.01	.037025	17.67028
S	2018	28.26	.1076073	14.36467
L	2018	5.49	.0654126	19.35873
KD	2018	6.32	.0177779	15.58889
KD	2014	4.57	.0566054	19.74708
C	2018	8.61	.0285825	11.122
C	2014	6.11	.0046551	8.196792
M	2014	23.33	.0109917	13.81216
M	2018	19.84	.3667287	10.42603
SD	2018	17.53	.3754184	31.0107
SD	2014	12.86	.4966184	9.463942