

Political Parties in a Comparative Perspective

Session 7: Preference Aggregation and Articulation

Mirko Wegemann

Universität Münster
Institut für Politikwissenschaft

26 November 2025

Plan for today

This week, we'll talk about parties' programmatic portfolio

- through which dimensions can we observe preference aggregation?
- through which channels do parties articulate their programmes?
- how can we understand change in issue articulation?

Brainstorming on questions for next week

Next week, **Thomas Paal** and **Julia Dickfer** will visit us.



(a) Thomas Paal



(b) Julia Dickfer

They will give an input on the role of (1) election administrators, (2) community politics and (3) political parties in local politics. Let's prepare some questions.

Brainstorming on questions for next week

1	2	3	4
Ole Niklas	Kyro Joan	Kim Noah	Aida
Jordi	Richárd	Jan Niklas	Madalena
Luís	Anastasia-Evgenia	Ava Eleonora	Nils Wilhlem Louis
Kennedi	Pietro Marco Aurelio	Sophie	Fabian Frank
Robin	Paul	Lena	Clara Deirdre
Tetiana	Fedor Benedikt Georg Otto	Melanie	Carolin Fiona
Vincent Leonardo	Mark Hyeon	Lotta	Maximilian
Parichehr	Lilli	Pia Charlotta	Bjarne Lars
Gustav	Frieda Maja	Frederike	Finn
Ada	Mahmoud	Tiffany Maria	Bennet Mattheo
Nico			

Brainstorming on questions for next week

Election administration	Community politics	Politics	Parties and local politics
...
...
...

<https://flinga.fi/s/FBPCTKN>

Last session?

As always, what was your main take-away from last week's session?

Implications of candidate selection

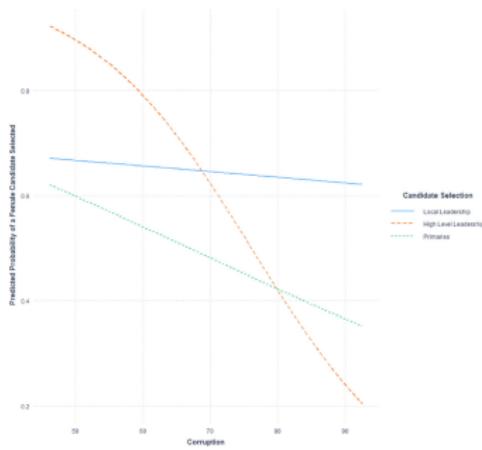


Figure: Corruption, candidate selection and women's representation in Italy (Schwenk 2022, p. 8)

What does Schwenk (2022) do? What does she find? [Ada, Lena, Maximilian, Sophie, Vincent?]

Dimensions of aggregation

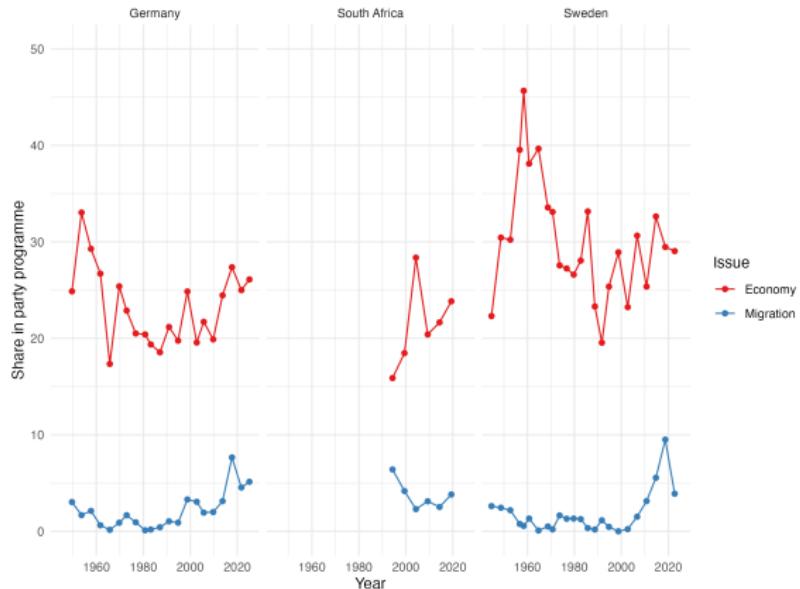


Figure: What does the graph show? Source: Manifesto Project, own visualization

Dimensions of aggregation

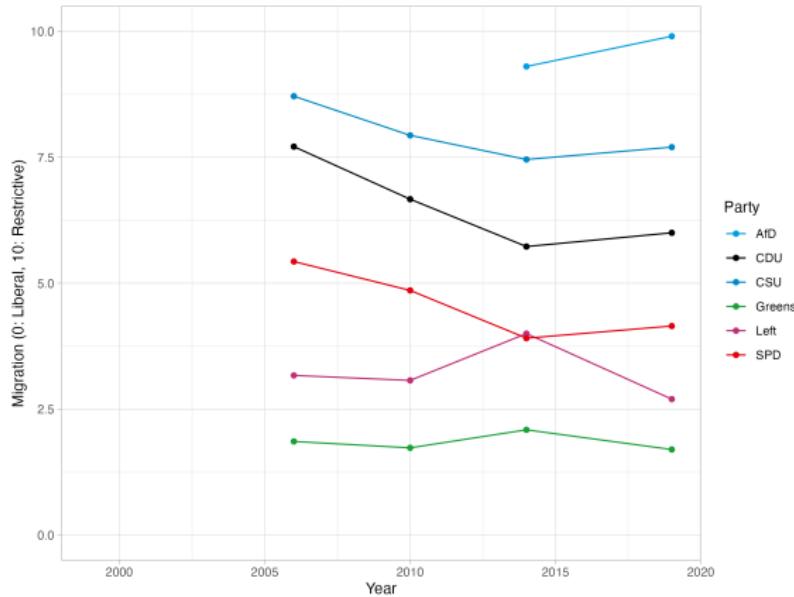


Figure: What does the graph show? Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey, own visualization

Dimensions of aggregation

Commonly, in party politics, scholars differentiate between two attributes of issue competition

1. **Salience**: how often parties talk about an issue (Budge and Farlie 1983; Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2019)
 2. **Positioning**: which positions they have on the issue (Downs 1957)

The communicator

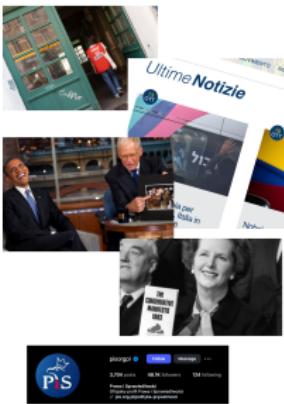


Figure: Channels of communication (Sources: Law and Justice on Instagram, door-to-door campaigning by Die Linke, manifesto presented by Thatcher 1983, press releases by Fratelli d'Italia)

Any other channels of communication?

Approaching an article from its introduction

There are four paragraphs in the introduction (+ a structural paragraph in the end). Each group reads their paragraph and tries to extract information on the summary structure. Be aware, most paragraphs only relate to 1-2 aspects of the summary.

- **Relevance, Gap and Question:**
- **Main Argument:**
- **Data and Method:**
- **Results:**
- **Implications:**

Relevance, Gap and Question

- relevance: (party) politics is about the discussion of political issues
 - gap: no theory on how issues arise
 - RQ: 'When are new issues put on the agenda?'

Argument: On the concept of issue entrepreneurship

What does issue entrepreneurship mean?

Argument: On the concept of issue entrepreneurship

“Issue entrepreneurship refers to a strategy by which parties mobilize issues that have been largely ignored in party competition and adopt a policy position on the issue that is substantially different from the mainstream status quo”

Argument: Conditions of issue entrepreneurship

Which parties are most likely to employ issue entrepreneurship?

Argument: Conditions of issue entrepreneurship

A losers' strategy:

- parties compete for public attention
- if they do not succeed with the existing issue agenda, they need to change it
- propose issues which have been largely ignored by other parties
- so, it's parties which...
 1. have never been in coalitions before
 2. lost in the prior elections
 3. have extreme positions on the main dimension of party competition

Argument: When do parties gain from entrepreneurship?

Issues should fulfil two criteria, they should:

1. not divide the party internally (party supporters should have similar preferences)
 2. find strong support in the general electorate (party position should be close to mean voter)

Data

Hobolt and Vries (2015) need different types of data, which?

Data

Data on:

1. party positions:

- *Chapel Hill Expert Survey* (expert assessments of parties' salience and position on an issue)
 - focus on EU integration
 - temporal span: 1984-2006; 14 Western European countries
 - **Dependent variable:** issue entrepreneurship defined as $\text{salience} * \text{Euroskeptic position}$ (the higher the value, the more a party acts as an issue entrepreneur)

2. Independent variables

- *government experience* (currently in government, previously in government, never in government)

Data

- *distance to median party position on established dimension of party competition* (more left or right than average party in a system)
 - *electoral defeat*: loss of votes compared to prior election
 - *congruence between party and voters*: distance between party position and mean voter position (measured by Eurobarometer)
 - *degree of intra-party dissent on issue*: measured by expert assessments from CHES

Method

It's a regression framework (we simplify here)

- Dependent variable: Issue entrepreneurship
 - Independent variables in two main models (Model 1: loser variables; model 2: winning issues)
 - they include so-called control variables (variables which may affect both the independent variables and the dependent variable)
 - party size
 - average EU support
 - country variables
 - **Question by Lena:** To what extent can the results of the study show that political defeats are actually the trigger for parties to mobilize new issues and not the other way around?

Results

	Model I: Political losers	
	Coefficient	PCSE
Intercept	-0.60	0.27**
Party size	-0.09	0.01***
EU support	-0.02	0.07
Political loser components		
No government experience	1.33	0.11***
Government experience (opposition)	0.01	0.05
Distance to mean party (LR)	0.19	0.02***
Electoral defeat	0.04	0.00***
Winning issue		
Distance to mean voter (EU)	—	—
Internal dissent (EU)	—	—
Political loser index (LR)	—	—
Political loser × dissent	—	—
N (observations, groups)	2,690,160	

Figure: Under which conditions do losers engage with new issues? (Hobolt and Vries 2015)

Results

	Model 2: Winning issues	
	Coefficient	PCSE
Intercept	8.53	0.46***
Party size	-0.05	0.01***
EU support	-2.14	0.14***
Political loser components		
No government experience	—	—
Government experience (opposition)	—	—
Distance to mean party (LR)	—	—
Electoral defeat	—	—
Winning issue		
Distance to mean voter (EU)	-2.87	0.10***
Internal dissent (EU)	-0.31	0.07***
Political loser index (LR)	—	—
Political loser × dissent	—	—
N (observations, groups)	2,535, 164	

Figure: Does the winning potential matter for issue entrepreneurship? (Hobolt and Vries 2015)

Implications

Potential implications:

- Parties' issue portfolio is dynamic
 - A neglected issue from today might be relevant tomorrow
 - While elections are often about winners, losers are important for understanding party competition

Question by Pia: How sustainable is issue entrepreneurship as a strategy for parties that repeatedly perform poorly?

Summary: Hoboldt and de Vries (2015)

- **Relevance, Gap and Question:** Under which conditions do parties put neglected issues on the agenda?
 - **Main Argument:** Losers bring those issues on the agenda on which they are united and share the average citizens position.
 - **Data and Method:** Regression framework with cross-sectional time-series data (1984-2006, 14 Western European democracies)
 - **Results:** Parties which lost in prior elections, have never been in a government and have outlier positions engage with issues they can agree on internally and are accepted in the broader population.
 - **Implications:** Issue competition is dynamic.

To prepare for the week after next one...

- Next week, no readings but the visit by Thomas Paal and Julia Dickfer
- Please attend and participate, this is a rare chance of getting insights from a practitioners' perspective
- The week after: Mobilization and Competition
- **Main reading (10 December)**
 1. Krause W, Cohen D, and Abou-Chadi T (2023) Does Accommodation Work? Mainstream Party Strategies and the Success of Radical Right Parties. *Political Science Research and Methods* 11 (1), 172–179. ISSN: 2049-8470, 2049-8489. DOI: [10.1017/psrm.2022.8](https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2022.8)

To prepare for the week after next one...

- Essay task on **Hjorth F and Larsen MV (2022) When Does Accommodation Work? Electoral Effects of Mainstream Left Position Taking on Immigration.** *British Journal of Political Science* 52 (2), 949–957. ISSN: 0007-1234, 1469-2112. DOI: 10.1017/S0007123420000563

Thank you for your attention!
Any further questions?

Literature

-  **Budge I and Farlie D (1983)** *Explaining and Predicting Elections: Issue Effects and Party Strategies in Twenty-Three Democracies*. Taylor & Francis, 1983.
 -  **Downs A (1957)** *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York : Harper and Brothers, 1957. 334 pp.
 -  **Green-Pedersen C and Otjes S (2019)** A Hot Topic? Immigration on the Agenda in Western Europe. *Party Politics* 25 (3), 424–434.
 -  **Hazan RY and Rahat G (2010)** *Democracy within Parties*. Oxford University Press, 2010.
 -  **Hjorth F and Larsen MV (2022)** When Does Accommodation Work? Electoral Effects of Mainstream Left Position Taking on Immigration. *British Journal of Political Science* 52 (2), 949–957.

Literature

-  **Hobolt SB and Vries CE (2015)** Issue Entrepreneurship and Multiparty Competition. *Comparative Political Studies* 48 (9), 1159–1185.
-  **Krause W, Cohen D, and Abou-Chadi T (2023)** Does Accommodation Work? Mainstream Party Strategies and the Success of Radical Right Parties. *Political Science Research and Methods* 11 (1), 172–179.
-  **Schwenk J (2022)** Candidate Selection and Female Representation in the Context of High Corruption: The Case of Italy's 2014 Mayor Elections. *Electoral Studies* 79, 102500.
-  **Vries CE and Hobolt SB (2020)** *Political Entrepreneurs: The Rise of Challenger Parties in Europe*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020. 314 pp.

Addendum: Three examples of large-scale issue entrepreneurship

Vries and Hobolt (2020) describe three waves of challenger parties who, among others, are more likely to follow issue entrepreneurship

- the social democratic wave (1890-1920)
 - the new-libertarian left wave (1970-1990)
 - the populist radical right wave (1980-2010)