<p style="text-align:center;">**Project III**</p>

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How did the ideological landscape in Ireland change with the Global Financial Crisis of 2007?

Introduction

The Irish party system became fragmented and polarised significantly after the global financial crisis in 2007. The political landscape in Ireland has changed after that recession. Historically, dominant centrist parties Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have lost their ground to more ideologically distinct parties particularly Sinn Féin, and several other new parties and independent representatives. Policy considerations have been the most important factor influencing in voting pattern in Irish elections that rose dramatically in the wake of the economic crisis. Consequently, the support of Fianna Fail declined, while Sinn Fain gains big popularity (Timothy, 2020). Against this backdrop, in this essay, that how the political-ideological landscape in Ireland has changed with the economic crisis in 2007-2008 will be analyzed using statistical text data of Irish political parties' election manifestos. Wordsroce algorithm scales methodology will be used to analyze the question.

```
suppressWarnings(
  suppressMessages({
    library(tm)
    library(NLP)
    library(rio)
    library(austin)
    library(ggplot2)
    library(wordcloud)
    library(knitr)
    library(pander)
    library(dplyr)
  }))
```

data

The data used for this project are the manifestos from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. These data are the statistical text data from the Comparative Manifesto Project website. The Manifesto Project analyses parties' election manifestos in order to study parties' policy preferences (https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/). This project data consists of manifestos of all the political parties in Ireland from 1961 until 2016. The text data is used for statistical analysis to look at word frequencies that are used in particular manifestos by particular parties. This helps to

estimate the ideological position of Irish political parties based on their word use in their manifestos.

The abbreviations for the party names are used for the purpose of better readability.

```r
data <- import("http://www.joselkink.net/files/data/manifestos.Rdata")

info <- data %>% select(-text)

party.abbreviations <- c(
    "United Left Alliance" = "ULA",
    "Green Party" = "GP",
    "Workers' Party" = "WP",
    "Democratic Left Party" = "DLP",
    "Socialist Party" = "SP",
    "People Before Profit Alliance" = "PBP",
    "Anti-Austerity Alliance" = "AAA",
    "Workers and Unemployment Action" = "WUA",
    "Labour Party" = "Lab",
    "Social Democrats" = "SD",
    "Progressive Democrats" = "PD",
    "Family of the Irish" = "FG",
    "Soldiers of Destiny" = "FF",
    "We Ourselves" = "SF",
    "Independent Alliance" = "IA"
)

info$abbreviation <- party.abbreviations[info$partyname]

corpus <- VCorpus(VectorSource(data$text))
names(corpus) <- paste(info$abbreviation, info$year, month.abb[info$month])

corpus <- tm_map(corpus, content_transformer(tolower))
corpus <- tm_map(corpus, removeWords, stopwords("english"))
corpus <- tm_map(corpus, removeWords, c("must", "will", "can", "make"))
corpus <- tm_map(corpus, stemDocument)
corpus <- tm_map(corpus, removeWords, c("fine", "fianna", "gael", "labour", "sinn", "fein", "fail", "democrat", "progress", "parti"))
corpus <- tm_map(corpus, removePunctuation)
corpus <- tm_map(corpus, removeNumbers)

dtm <- DocumentTermMatrix(corpus)
dtm <- removeSparseTerms(dtm, sparse = 0.4)

dtmMatrix <- as.matrix(dtm)
dtmMatrixRelative <- dtmMatrix / rowSums(dtmMatrix)
```

```
tdmMatrix <- t(dtmMatrix)
tdmMatrixRelative <- tdmMatrix / rowSums(tdmMatrix)

ndocs <- nrow(dtmMatrix)
nterms <- ncol(dtmMatrix)
```

Background

Generally, Irish party politics are broadly centrist. There have never been any extreme left or extreme right political parties in Ireland like many other countries. Coakley and Gallagher argue that in the beginning, there were very few socio-economic divisions in Irish politics. The split that afterward was created by elites and persists to the present day (Coakley & Gallagher, 2017). However, the most successful political parties in Irish politics so far have been technically center-right parties Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. These two center-right parties have dominated Irish politics almost since the foundation of the Republic of Ireland. From 1932 to 2011 the Irish party system was predictable and stable, which was dominated by three parties with the two main parties Fianna Fail, and Fine Gael, and one smaller party that had been the Labour. The Fianna Fail has been one of the most stable dominant party systems In Irish political history followed by Fine Gael and Labour. Over the period of 1932 to 2007 the Fianna Fail party, which won 49 percent of all Dáil seats at generals election followed by the Fine Gael 31 percent and the Labour with 10 percent (Coakley & Gallagher, 2017). Ideologically the Fianna Fail and the Fine Gael parties are hard to distinguish. They both sit with center-right parties in Europe. Labour is a left-leaning party in Irish politics. However, the global financial crisis of 2007 has changed the Irish political-ideological landscape. It is seen in the 2011 general election. The defeat for Fianna Fail in the 2011 general election was a transformative moment in Irish politics and fundamentally transformed the Irish Party system (Kirby and Murphy, 2011). The financial crises had hugely challenged Fianna Fail's politics and policies.

The left-wing rising party Sinn Fein strongly unionist tends to be an ideologically opposing party to those nationalist center-right dominant parties. Ironically, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are the two stem from the Sinn Fein party which split in the early 1920s over the Anglo-Irish treaty. Being a leftist Sinn Fein party tends to favor higher taxes on big multinational firms to pay for welfare, better public services, and some state involvement in the economy. Whereas Fianna Fail on the other hand has been evolving as a neo-liberal and supports lower taxation and favors market solutions (Maillot, 2005). Even though Fianna Fail was a predominant party throughout the history of Irish Politics the financial crises of 2007 put it into a precarious position for further election. This was a significant opportunity for the rising Sinn Fein party to gain more attention from Irish voters and to win more seats in the 2011 elections. The spectrum of political ideologies of these competing two parties the Fianna Fail and the Sinn Fein will be visualized below in the graph based on their 2011 election manifestos.

Methodology

The word scores methodology is used to study the ideological positions of the Irish political parties and their changes. The words rose algorithm scale is a set of texts on one-dimensional space based on a set of reference texts. Here an extreme left and an extreme right manifestos are used for a set of reference texts. For the extreme left, a score of -100 is given to Sinn Fein and
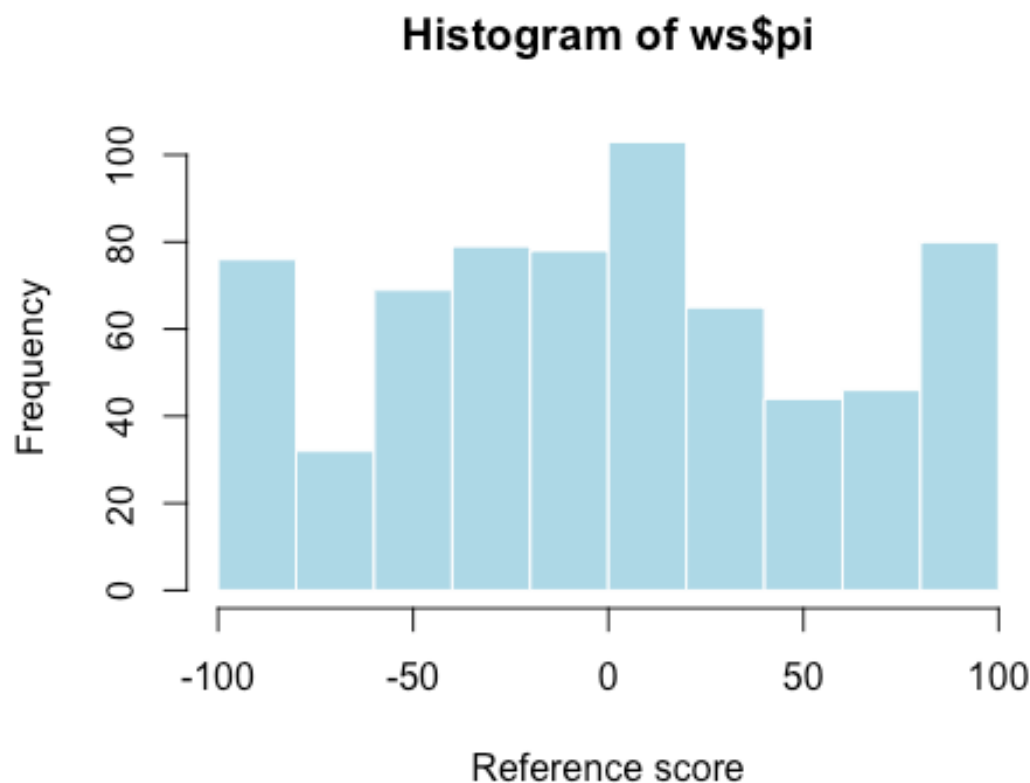
for the extreme right, a score of +100 is given to the Fianna Fail. Then further below all the other manifestos of all parties will be placed on these two references. This will allow us to see how all parties' manifestos are placed on that left-right scores over the years based on their similarity or dissimilarity with the given two references that are the 2011 election manifestos of Sinn Fein and Fianna Fail parties. In Ireland, it is not as straightforward as in some other countries to decide which parties are the most right or which parties are the most left. However, here we use the 2011 manifestos of the Sinn Fein party and Fianna Fail party as the left and right extremes, respectively.

```
reference.scores <- c(-100, 100)

reference.index <- which(names(corpus) %in% c("SF 2011 Feb", "FF 2011 Feb"))

ws <- classic.wordscores(as.wfm(tdmMatrix[, reference.index]), reference.scores)

hist(ws$pi, col = "light blue", border = 0, xlab = "Reference score")
```


Histogram of ws$pi

In the graph above, the set of reference scores are the 2011 manifestos of Sinn Fein on the left and Fianna Fail on the right. The score of -100 is unique to the 2011 Sinn Fein, while those with a score of +100 are unique to the Fianna Fail manifestos. The scores in between mean that those terms are shared between the two manifestos. The scores are calculated based on the words used frequencies in the manifestos. The graph shows that there is a bulk of terms with high

frequencies at both extreme ends and also there are even bigger blocks displayed in the middle of the scale. The scores on the extreme ends represent dissimilarity in words used in the documents. This tells us that there were a significant amount of different offers had been offered to voters by these two different parties. However, the blocks in the middle shown in the graph are similar words that were used by both parties in their documents. This tells us that these two parties' 2011 manifestos were also significantly similar. According to this, it can be said that regardless of the ideological differences of these two parties, there are still huge similarities in their policy advocacy.

A brief analysis of differences between the two parties Fianna Fail and Sinn Fein based on the 2011 manifesto using 20 most dissimilar terms used by each party below.

```
pander(sort(ws$pi[, "Score"], decreasing = TRUE)[1:20])
```

Table continues below

abus	adequ	affect	afford	applic	basic	call	caus	change	choic
100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table continues below

citi	community	compens	consist	context	crimin	disabl	discrimin
100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

drug	earli
100	100

```
pander(sort(ws$pi[, "Score"], decreasing = FALSE)[1:20])
```

Table continues below

abl	accept	advanc	agriculture	almost	amend	arrang	aspect
-100	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100

Table continues below

built	burden	challeng	commerci	consum	countries	date	design
-100	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100

detail	dublin	effort	emphasi
-100	-100	-100	-100

In the tables above the most dissimilar 20, each term used by these two parties that distinguished them is displayed. The 20 of the words with the highest scores and 20 with the lowest scores are being calculated. The highest scores of 20 words are from the right-wing Fianna Fail's
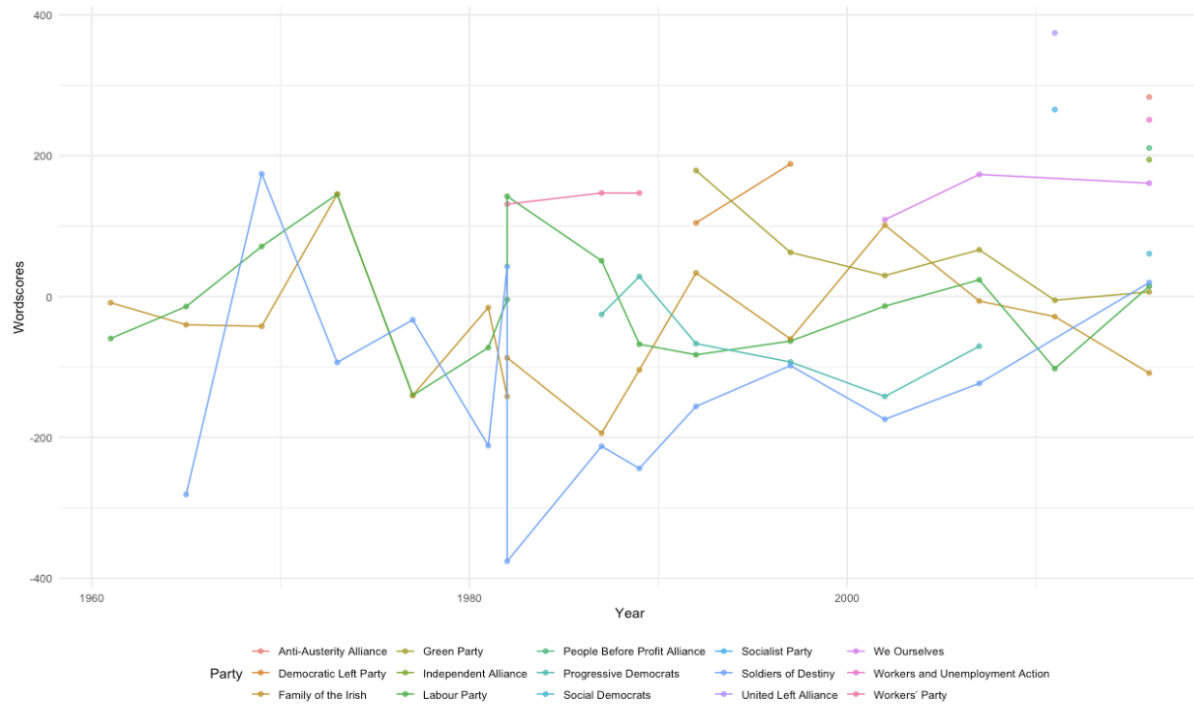
manifesto, which is scored +100. The lowest scores of 20 words are from the left-wing Sinn Fein's manifesto which is scored -100. These scores again are based on the frequency of the words used in the documents. Fianna Fail tended to be the party of small farmers and the lower middle and working class. But the gradual close connection with banking and the building industry led the party towards neo-liberalism. However, compared to Fine Gael, Fianna Fail favors more state intervention in its economic policy (Puirseil,2016). The 2011 election was very different from the previous election for this party as it was in a very vulnerable position. Therefore it would have to bring big changes in its manifesto to compete against opposition parties not only the alike parties but significantly the ideologically opposing and rising party Sinn Fein. The most 20 dissimilar words used by Fianna Fail and Sinn Fein below could tell a bigger story. For instance, the words used by Fianna Fail such as adequate, afford, application, compensation, choice, call, basic, early could emphasize the policies of overcoming the economic crises. Likewise, community, citizens, drug, discrimination these words are people-centric. Whereas, terms used by Sinn Fein such as commercial, consumer, countries, burden, advance, agriculture are very related to economy, which is not usual for Sinn Fein. Other terms such as accept, amend, detail, challenge, built, design, aspect, able, arrange, date are sound more populist. Even though Fianna Fail was known to be a small farmers' party, it does not mention agriculture in this manifesto.

Until the economic crash in 2007, the Irish party system was stable and predictable dominated by three parties. The Economic crash was followed by a period of rapid economic growth so-called the Celtic Tiger period from the mid-1990s to 2008. This period of the boom was fuelled by favorable interest rates and money lending policies by banks. This, however, left the economy highly vulnerable to the financial crisis of 2007-2008. This led to a harsh austerity program, cutting public sector pay, seeking to encourage early retirement. The opposition parties were able to lay the blame on successive Fianna Fail governments leading to a historic election in 2011 that fundamentally transformed the party system. Fianna Fain's share of the vote dropped from 42 percent to 17 but the rivals parties Fine Gael and Labour their combined share of the vote increased from 77 percent to 55 percent. This allowed these two parties to form a stable government with a big parliamentary majority (Coakley and Gallagher, 2017). The support of these three traditional parties further dropped in the 2016 and 2020 general elections. Coakley and Gallagher argue that this traditional party system was shaken by three new developments. The First was the rise of Sinn Fein. Second, the emergence of new radical left parties. The third, the growing support for independent deputies (Coakley and Gallagher, 2017).

The evolution of political parties over time in Ireland and their ideological spectrum:

```
scores <- predict(ws, newdata = as.wfm(tdmMatrix[, -reference.index]))

ggplot(mapping = aes(y = scores$Rescaled, x = info$year[-reference.index], color = info$partyn
ame[-reference.index])) +
  geom_point(alpha = .7) +
  geom_line()+
  labs(x = "Year", y = "Wordscores") +
  guides(col = guide_legend(title = "Party")) +
  theme_minimal() +
  theme(legend.position = "bottom")
```

The graph above shows the evolution of political parties from 1961 to 2016 in Ireland and their ideological positions. The political positions are placed based on their election manifestos, which is calculated based on a set of reference text of the 2011 manifesto of Fianna Fail and Sinn Fein parties. The graph perfectly depicts the unbroken dominant Irish political parties Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, and Labour party. They were the major Irish political parties for decades until the present. However, these major parties have been facing new challenges since particularly the financial crash by the emergence of radical left parties. Fianna Fail always had a remarkable capacity to attract support from different sections of Irish society. The party was sometimes known as a catch-all party policy meaning it tends to have a populist attitude (Costello, 2017). This attitude of Fianna Fail is perfectly depicted in the graph above. Even though it is a radical right party from its origin it tends to swing back and forth around the center-right and center-left to attract all kinds of voters. Whereas center-right Fine Gael and left-leaning Labour always tended to be close together even sometimes shared similar ideologies. During the boom period the 1990s to 2008, even parties of the left Labour advocated tax cuts rather than competing to challenge the neo-liberal consensus. But the economic recession of 2007 threatened to shatter this consensus. However, these three parties seem to have very similar policies as there were no other competing parties until 1982. The Irish party system has become significantly fragmented and polarized lately as policy competition came to play a vital role in elections (Costello, 2017).

Conclusion

The Sinn Fain has been gradually growing its strength beating Labour into the third position in 2016 and has gained the most popular vote in 2020. Even though Sinn Fain was historically the oldest party in Ireland however, the graph above it emerges only from the 2000s. The level of fragmentation of power and effects between the parties can be seen in the outcomes of recent elections. Many parties have emerged and disappeared in the Irish political system before but the

number of parties has steadily increased since the 1980s and doubled in 2016. The radical left parties emerged between 1980 and 1990 their origins lying in the socialist tradition and taking shape as the Anti-Austerity Alliance, People Before Profit, Democratic Left, Green. After the economic crisis, the more left parties such as Social Democrats, Socialist Party, United Left Alliance, Workers Party, Workers, and Union emerged between 2000 and 2016. The level of fragmentation and the nature and direction of competition between parties would increase the level of volatility of the Irish voters that could further change the Irish party system.

To sum up, the Irish party system was predictable and stable, which was dominated by three parties with the two main center-right parties Fianna Fail, and Fine Gael, and one smaller left-leaning party Labour. This stability was aided by the Irish political culture of pervasive populism. The global financial crisis of 2007 has changed this Irish political-ideological landscape as the Irish political parties' distinctiveness lies only in the nature of the conflict. The most dramatic consequence of the economic crisis was the party collapse in the support for Fianna Fail in the 2011 election. Even though this economic crisis threatened to tear down the party system but it seems that it only shifted the voters' preference to Fine Gail and Labour in the immediate 2011 election. However, in more recent years the rise in numbers of radically left groups and parties challenge the traditional party system in Ireland. In this essay, the political ideologies changes after the 2007 crisis are analyzed using the Irish party manifesto from 1961 to 2016.

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data

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