On the Distinctiveness of Party Families

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Abstract

The concept of party families has been a useful tool for the comparison and analysis of party systems in European democracies. Central to the concept is that parties maintain an identity as member in one of the "familles spirituelles" due to their heritage from the great ideological movements of the 19th and early 20th century. It is often presumed that in a post-ideological age, party families may become obsolete. But whether this empirically is the case remains an open question. This paper examines the political distinctiveness of party families in European politics after 1945. Using a novel approach at analyzing party manifesto data it overcomes the restrictions imposed on the such analysis by the assumption of one or two ideological "super-issue" dimensions. As a consequence it is possible to establish the distinction e.g. between party families such as the christian democrats and the conservatives, which often are lumped together into a single category of "center-right" parties.

1 Introduction

Party families are a common notion used to describe party competition in Europe, a notion that is one of the "standard items" on the comparative politics of Europe and on party politics (see e.g. Newton and van Deth 2005; Mény and Knapp 1998; Bale 2008; Gallagher et al. 1997). These party families are usually linked to the ideological currents of the 19th and early 20th century and/or to fundamental social, political or ideological cleavages of the past and the present. The concept of party families appears as a "qualitative" one in that the assignment to a party of a membership in one of the families is often a matter of informed, reflected scholarly judgment, but also in so far as party membership as a variable is a "qualitative", that is, categorical one. Quantitative analyses of party competition usually focus on the political or ideological positions of parties, envisaged as variable positions in a one- or multi-dimensional Euclidean space (Hinich and Munger 1997; Shepsle and Bonchek 1997: see e.g.). Here, ideology is often interpreted as phenomenon that reduces the space of political competition to a one-dimensional one (Downs 1957) or as a device used by the voter to predict the policy positions of parties they are uncertain about (Hinich and Pollard 1981). Hence there is a conceptual tension between this perspective and the perspective of qualitative distinctive and persistent party families.

The present paper is concerned with the question to what degree the two perspectives on parties, as members of qualitatively distinct party families and as actors taking quantitatively varying positions in political spaces, can be reconciled. More specifically, it asks whether and what degree parties from different party families differ systematically in terms of the positions that they take in their electoral platforms and whether and to what degree such differences are persistent. The analyses of this paper are based on a latent state-space model of political positions expressed in political texts (Elff 2013) applied to data from the Comparative Manifestos Project, the major source on coded electoral platforms of parties in modern democracies (Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006; Volkens et al. 2010).

The next section discusses the concepts of ideology and of party families and how they are related. It is followed by a summary of the central ideas of the method employed in this paper.

Another section discusses the application of this method to the question about the distinctiveness of party families to data on electoral platforms of parties from Western Europe. The paper concludes with a summary and discussion of the findings.

2 Ideologies and Party Families

Phil Converse once called the concept of ideology "muddied" by the all too diverse uses of the term. But the variety of usage and its vagueness does not make a term useless as a means of communication, as these properties are exhibited by many terms used in everyday conversation (Converse 1964). And even if there is no single definition that would capture *all* of the diverse uses of the term "ideology", there is one that very well describes its meaning for the analysis of party competition: Downs' definition of ideology as a description (Downs speaks of a "verbal image") of the good society and the means to attain it (Downs 1957). This notion of ideology is well suited to statements about a party espousing a communist, conservative, liberal or national ideology. But there is a conceptual tension between Downs" definition of ideology and its use in his *Economic Theory of Democracy*. Obviously intent on eliminating all non-instrumental motives from the assumptions underlying his theory of party competition, he insists that ideologies are but a means to attract votes by more efficiently communicating what parties' policies imply for voters' well-being. The idea is that ideologies enable voters to avoid the costs of evaluating all the particular policies that parties or candidates may propose (or would have to propose if "ideological signals" were unavailable), because voters can infer from the stated objectives of parties and candidates with regards to society what the intended outcome of their actions are, whatever policies they choose to realize them in particular. But this idea presupposes some considerable powers of deduction on the part of the voters. And even if ideological thinking in the 1970s was more widespread than found by Converse in the 1950s (Nie and Andersen 1974), it seems undeniable that it is a mark of particular political sophistication to use ideological concepts to form one's political opinions and that these concepts can hardly compensate for a lack of awareness of politics and policies.

Nevertheless Downs was already aware that ideological positions, even if they are mere instruments, are not entirely disposable. If voters are to rationally entrust a party or candidate with the supreme power in the land, they should be able to count on something more than that the thus empowered know to say what voters want to hear. So parties and candidates need to cultivate a reputation of responsibility to maintain their credibility. If one takes this argument to its end, this means that even if politicians are motivated only by the perks of office, they nevertheless have to behave as if they were truly committed to some political goals beyond office (a point expanded on by Alesina (1988) and Hinich and Munger (1994)). However for this to work, a substantial proportion or even a majority of politicians has not only to show sincere commitment to political goals but to act upon it. Otherwise, if all commitment to political goals was a mere façade and everybody new it, nobody would have the opportunity to actually learn what a sincere commitment to a political goal is.

An aspect of Downs' view of the role of ideology in party competition that turned out to be much more influential is the idea that ideologies reduce the dimensionality of the political space. It is a well known problem for the formal theory of voting and party competition that in multidimensional settings, spatial models of competition do not lead to a stable equilibrium (McKelvey 1979). But if positions in a multi-dimensional political space are essentially restricted to a one-dimensional ideological dimension so that position with regards to any particular issue dimension are just projections from the one-dimensional ideological space into a one- or multi-dimensional issue space (Hinich and Pollard 1981), then the conditions for the existence of an equilibrium may be satisfied. Yet both an equilibrium and the "chaos" that is the implication of the absence of an equilibrium require that parties or candidates are to some degree free to maneuver in the political space. But if the maneuverability is restricted by the imperative of maintaining a reputation of responsibility if not by sincere commitments to political goals (Alesina 1988; Hinich and Munger 1994), then an equilibrium in an essentially uni-dimensional political space is not the only state of affairs that can bring about some level of political stability.

The notion of a single all-encompassing ideological dimension, often associated with labels such as "left" and "right" or "liberal" and "conservative" for the opposite directions of this dimension, has spread beyond the sub-discipline of formal modeling of competition for votes. To ask respondents where on a left-right scale they would place themselves and the major parties in an election has become a standard set of items in election study surveys. And quite often one finds empirical analysis of voting behavior and opinion formation where the left-right self-placement of voters is given the role of a dependent or of an independent variable. Additionally, when the Comparative Manifesto had compiled and published the data on parties emphases of policy goals in their electoral platforms there was little discussion whether they could or should be employed to locate parties on an overarching left-right dimension, but rather how this could achieved (Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006; Gabel and Huber 2000).

If political ideologies are descriptions of a good society and the means to attain it, then they are not likely to be invented easily. If one takes the history of ideas seriously, ideologies are created by political thinkers who try to integrate moral intuitions into a more or less coherent system of ideas (Hinich and Munger 1994). These are then picked up by intellectual circles who believe that these systems help them make sense of the social and political world or by movements and activists that find that these ideas help to clarify the justification of their political cause. Thinkers that are, in a broad sense, conservatively inclined, may built on moral intuitions that guide and justify existing or traditional patterns of social behavior, and their systems of ideas are likely to be attractive to members of the social and political elite of the time. Thinkers that are, in a broad sense, more progressively inclined, may built on moral intuitions that lie behind social grievances and feelings of dissatisfaction with the political and social status quo. Naturally, such systems of ideas tend to be more attractive to people who are not members of the elite, but nevertheless have personal or political ambition, or by leaders of social movements that react to developments or state of affairs in society they deem undesirable. The the choice by political activists that a particular ideology is to guide their political demands and intended policies may be a matter of genuine conviction or merely self-serving, as a justification of privileges already enjoyed (that would be the "Marxist" explanation

of such a choice) or as a bet on future rewards that come from political success (that would be a "Downsian" explanation), but the motives of such a choice may be difficult to disentangle if activists can appear credible only if they act as "true believers".

A consequence of this nature of political ideologies means that their number usually is limited. Another reason why the number of political ideologies is limited is that an ideology will be picked up by a number of activists if it is sufficiently well known. The publicity of an ideology may depend on its intellectual coherence, its match with the interests of social and political elites or movements challenging the establishment, or sheer happenstance. Nevertheless this means that even if there is a proliferation of old or new political ideas to choose from, there will only be a few of them that gain widespread political influence. Further, if political activists and parties have to maintain credibility, they cannot just pick up any new political idea. Political ideas appear in need to be adapted to changing social and political circumstances – goals may turn out to be unattainable or even to be undesirable, means may turn out the be infeasible or as not leading to the desired goals – but such adaptations can only be gradual, lest the impression arises that one completely abrogates goals one has held most dearly before. This would be tantamount to saying that "I no longer believe what I once asserted and tried hard to persuade you was moral and good" (Hinich and Munger 1994: 75). It is therefore understandable why one find a limited number of "ideological currents" in the history of ideas, which form, if not persistent systems, then at least lineages of goals and policy demands.

In the political history of Europe, the notion of ideology is associated with a variety of "isms" or ideological currents (Heywood 2003), and these ideological currents can quite well be described in terms of their notion of a good society and the chief means to attain it. Communism could be characterized by the utopian idea of a radically egalitarian society that can only be realized by a revolutionary change of existing capitalist societies. Social democracy could be characterized by a similar idea of a fundamentally egalitarian society, but that can best be achieved by reforms within the framework of democratic politics. Classical liberalism could be characterized by the emphasis of the freedom of the individual, which could be best realized by minimal state intervention and unrestrained markets. In the 19th century, liberals may have disagreed whether a revolutionary

path or a reformist path would be the better one to overcome the then common pre-democratic regimes, but once liberal democracy became the principle of government, classical liberals would usually see their constitutional ambitions fulfilled. Traditional conservatives could be characterized by an emphasis of traditional social and political authority and institutions and in the 19th century as defenders of the social and political status quo. After the establishment of modern democracies some of these conservatives would openly or clandestinely oppose it (as it happened in the Weimar Republic). More modern conservatives who accepted democracy would still try to maintain or reinvigorate traditional patterns of social life, such as traditional gender roles and a strong role, depending on the national context, respectively of an established Protestant or of the Catholic church in education and public life.

Yet these ideological currents cannot be reduced simply to positions on an abstract left-right dimension. It is well known that "left" and "right" as political terms emerged from a seating arrangement in the 19th century French parliament, where parliamentary groups (not yet genuine parties) ordered themselves on the constitutional issue of secular republic versus ancién regime-style monarchy. And it may be that, based on the French model, similar seating arrangements emerged in other countries (but thorough discussion of this is beyond the scope of this paper). But then the arrangement of parties on a left-right axis is perhaps not much more than a mere convention that reflects the principal line of contention in a particular country at a particular time, so that for example the left-right axis in contemporary Israel is a different one from that of contemporary Britain. Further, while in most 20th century European political systems one would put anarchist and communist parties to the left extreme and fascist or authoritarian nationalist parties to the right extreme of the axis, it is not easy to identify this axis with a general, overarching principle. Principal distinctions such as individualism vs. collectivism or communism vs. capitalism have been suggested as fundamental for the left-right axis. In the interwar period, parties of these two extremes regarded each other in countries like Austria, Germany, Italy, and Spain, and perhaps elsewhere, as fundamental opponents, if not mortal enemies. Yet even the most right-wing parties of the interwar period were neither the most individualist nor the most pro-capitalist ones, but instead embraced

notions of a corporate society with mutual obligations of factory owners and workers under the direction of a strong national state (however these mutual obligations tended to be strongly tilted in favor of the owners) (Heywood 2003).

It is not uncommon in the literature on party politics in Europe to group parties into party families (see e.g. Newton and van Deth 2005; Mény and Knapp 1998; Bale 2008; Gallagher et al. 1997; Ware 1996). Here one usually distinguishes between (roughly in the order of their historical emergence) (1) liberal parties, (2) conservative parties, (3) social democratic parties, (4) communist parties, (5) ethnic and regional parties, (6) agrarian parties, (7) christian democratic parties, (8) left-socialist parties, (9) green parties. In more recent literature there is a discussion whether there is another, new party family the (10) Right-wing populist parties (von Beyme 1985; Ware 1996). For many of the long-existing, large (in terms of membership and electoral success), and well-known parties a classification into one of these party families seems to be a matter of course and one finds little disagreement in the literature in this regard (Smith 1989; Gallagher et al. 1997; Lane and Ersson 1994; Lane et al. 1997). Nevertheless it is not always clear on what criteria the classification of a party should be based (Mair and Mudde 1998).

For a party to be liberal party, a conservative party, a social democratic party, or a communist party, the criterion is apparently clear: If a party can be traced back to one of the great ideological currents of the 19th and early 20th century and/or if its party constitution and electoral platforms contain ideas derived from these currents as central elements, then it can be grouped into the appropriate party family. Quite often the membership of the party is not just an aspect of scholarly description, but an element of the party's self-conception. Thus many parties take the label of one of the ideological currents as part of their name, such as the Conservative Party of the UK or the SPD (where this stands for "Social Democratic Party of Germany" in German).[1] Furthermore, some of these parties take pride in their heritage from the movements of the 19th century and celebrate past events and leaders of their precursors or strive to create and maintain links with like-minded

[1]The name of the party may be a symptom of its ideological orientation in this sense, but one that can be misleading in some instances: For example, while parties usually classed as liberal have names that include an epithet like "liberal", "liberal democrat", "freedom" or "free democrat" (if there name is translated into English), but Haider's FPÖ in Austria or Zhirinovsky's the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia are rather radical right-wing parties.

parties of other countries and are members of international party federations of a particular political "couleur". The Socialist International is perhaps the most well-known one, but with the Liberal International there is at least another good example. And of course, with the establishment of the Parliament of the EU party groups along the lines of party families emerged in the European Parliament as did the so-called Euro-Parties, party federations to coordinate and organize the campaigns for EP elections (Mair and Mudde 1998).

The criterion of origin in an ideological current is not without problems. Once and again parties from different party families merged to form a new one, as in the case of the French UDF. On other occasions, parties of a new family emerged as splinters from other parties, as in the case of the Communist Party of Germany, which was created in 1918 from a fusion of a left-wing splinter of the SPD and the Spartacist League. Finally parties may change their ideological orientation and identity to such a degree that a change in the its assigned party family membership seems necessary. An example for this is the Italian Democratic Party of the Left which emerged from a re-orientation and re-branding of the Communist Party of Italy (PCI). While the latter would normally be classed as a communist party (though a moderate one) the former seems to fit better into the family of social democratic parties.

There are however certain groups of parties that are not readily traced back to the ideological currents of the 19th and early 20th century, but rather to some sectoral social movements. These are the parties that are usually grouped into the family of agrarian parties and into the family of ethnic/regional parties. One could also argue that christian and confessional parties are not so much a an embodiment of an ideological current than of particular social groups: Catholics in Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, and orthodox Protestants in the Netherlands and in Scandinavia (Madeley 1991).

While the defining property of ethnic/regional party seems straightforward, a quest of regional and/or cultural autonomy, this party grouping is not fully unproblematic, because they tend to have various ideological commitments beyond the issue of autonomy. The family of agrarian parties has its main manifestation in Scandinavia and its members are, beyond their rural base, characterized

by a quite peculiar combination of policy orientations. They were the main allies of social democrats building the Scandinavian welfare state but at the same time they were supporters of more traditional ways of life. In more recent decades they reacted to the numeric decline of the rural segment of the electorate by re-branding themselves as "center parties". While confessional and christian parties seem more like an embodiment of reactions to the secularism of the liberal elites in catholic countries or later to the social process of secularization in European than an embodiment of a particular ideological current, they nevertheless tend to be characterized by a set of ideas about the "good society" in this case one in which the role of the church and of traditional family patterns are preserved. In this way, christian democracy can be seen as a variant of conservatism. What differentiates christian democratic parties from contemporary conservative parties is that they tend to emphasize more the religious aspect of the traditional social order and less the economic and political one that is more prevalent in Scandinavian and British conservatives.

The families of the left-socialist and of the green parties are both of relatively recent origin, they emerged during and after the protest movements of the 1960s. For this reason they are occasionally grouped together into a family of "left-libertarian" parties (Kitschelt 1988). Yet left-socialist parties, as they can be found in Scandinavia and in the Netherlands differ from Green parties by a explicit ideas of radical change towards an overcoming of capitalism and can be seen as a variety of socialism more radical than social democracy, but in contrast to communism opposed to the leading role of the Soviet Union. The Green parties are sometimes perceived as environmentalist single-issue parties. Yet in several cases they are the culmination of various political movements of the 1970s and 1980s, including the feminist, pacifist, and anti-nuclear movements and by integrating the views of these movements can be said to have a more or less clear political-ideological profile (Poguntke 1987). The last mentioned party family, of the right-wing populist party is perhaps on the one hand clearly delineated from other parties by clear anti-immigrant and often authoritarian positions. Yet the identity of this party family is not beyond debate: it is still a subject of contention to what degree they are just a radical version of conservatism with a stronger nationalist component or a newer

manifestation of the far-right that was the ideological background of the fascist and Nazi regime in the 1920s to 1940s (von Beyme 1988; Mudde 1996; Van der Brug and Fennema 2003).

For most of the party families, the membership of a party in them can hardly decided without reference to the party's ideology, manifested in the political positions it takes in its party constitution and/or electoral platforms. The absence of clear and unambiguous criteria that are independent from ideology creates of course problems for an empirical analysis of the programmatic distinctiveness of the party families, if not to say that such an empirical analysis becomes partly circular. Take for example the case of the Italian Democratic Party of the Left (PDS). The decision to class this party as a communist party based on its heritage from the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) may lead to a different finding with regards to the distinction between the families of the communist parties and of social democratic parties than the decision to class it as a social democratic party based on its current political orientation. However consequential such a decision may become for the findings, it will be even more problematic if the political-ideological change of the PCI was a gradual and that the size of of this change was only ratified by its renaming as PDS. Such consequences of a different classification of parties are not just measurement error, they are consequences of the fact that there is no "true" classification of the party in this case.

That the membership of a party in a party family is not always well-defined in some cases does not mean that it is futile or redundant to try to describe or analyze the programmatic distinctiveness of party families. It is not futile, because with regards to the most of the major parties in West European democracies there is a consensus into which party family to put them. It is not redundant, because usually the classification of a party into a party family is a matter of judgment, even if the party's origin or the party's ideology is used as a criterion, and not so much a matter of measurement. A description or analysis of the average programmatic characteristics of a party family or its development may not satisfy methodological perfectionists, but it may still be informative.

While it may be implausible to assume that there is an overarching left-right axis that exercises some sort of causal influence in structuring parties' ideologies, this does not make spatial analysis of parties' political positions meaningless. Spatial models are indeed valuable tools for the description

and analysis of political situations and dynamics in that they allow to give a quantitative interpretation of statements about the similarity or dissimilarity of political demands, issue positions, or policies. However the above argument suggests that one should not prejudice the analysis of parties' ideologies by simply assuming an overarching left-right axis. If parties' political positions are, at least to some degree, constrained by their past positions (to maintain credibility), and if the number of original positions is limited, because there is only a moderate number of different ideological currents form which a party's ideology originates and which it continues to embody, one can expect parties belonging to the same party family to take positions in political spaces more or less close to one another, however multi-dimensional the spaces may be. Simply put, ideologies are not so much expressed in positions on an abstract left-right dimension, but in a grouping of the positions of parties from the same ideological family in particular political spaces.

3 Data and Methods

If the aim is the reconstruction of political positions of parties from several countries and over a longer period of time, the data provided by the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP) currently are the only choice to base it on (Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006; Volkens et al. 2010). The Comparative Manifestos Project has collected electoral platforms from numerous countries – at first mainly western democracies, but expanding to eastern Europe and non-European countries later – covering the whole period from 1945 to 2010 and in one country, the United States, even going back until 1920. These platforms then have been coded in terms of the relative frequencies of quasi-sentences referring to 56 different policy goals.

The fact that coding is based on the emphasis of policy goals seems to fit well to the idea that the platforms express the ideologies of the parties. Originally however, the principal investigators had something different in mind. At the beginning, the coding scheme employed by the the Manifesto Research Group, the precursor of CMP, was based on the "valency and saliency" theory of party competition: Parties compete by emphasizing issues on which they can claim ownership

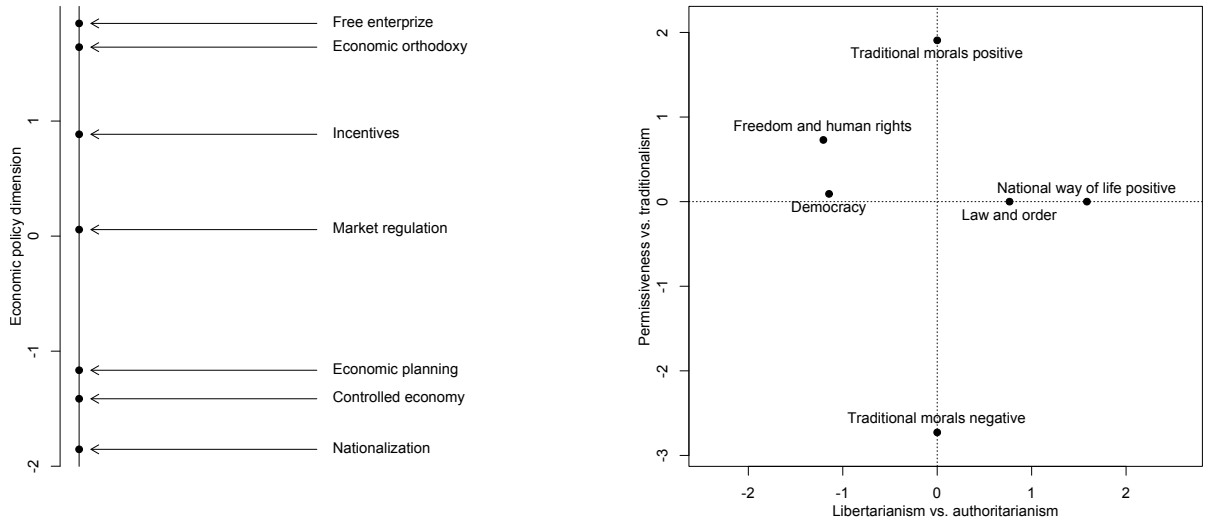
and de-emphasize issues where their competitors can claim ownership (Budge and Farlie 1983; Budge et al. 1987; Budge 2001). Behind this lies the idea that most political issues or topics are rather uncontroversial "valence issues" and party only differ in terms of the acquired reputation of competently addressing them. However, this view is not the only one consistent with their stated finding that electoral platforms mostly show positive references to policy goals and rarely negative ones. Firstly, this result is perhaps less an aspect of the substantial format of competition than a feature of political rhetoric: It seems better to state what one is in favor of, to attract voters, than to state one is against, lest to repel potential voters. Secondly, if electoral platforms express parties' ideologies, then one should find references to the goals that may define or be implied by their respective vision of a "good society". Indeed not all the policy goals are non-confrontative valence issues: For example, among the goals for economic policy used as coding categories by the CMP are "Free enterprise", one the one hand, and "Nationalization" (of companies) and "Controlled economy", on the other. While all of these categories refer to positive statements of policy goals, they hardly can be interpreted as uncontroversial ones, since one cannot have it both ways, a state exercising a control over the economy and a freedom of businesses to pursue their own economic goals. However, these contrasting objectives very well reflect different ideologies, socialist and communist ideologies on the one hand, and market-liberalism on the other.

The CMP data cover emphasises of a wide variety of policy goals in electoral platforms. And these policy goals can be grouped into a number of policy areas or policy spaces, the space of economic policy being only one of them. Nevertheless, the idea of an overarching left-right dimension has guided much of the use of these data. The investigators of the CMP have even facilitated such a use by constructing a general "RiLe" Index, which is constructed by collapsing a subset of the 56 policy goals into a broad category of "leftist" goals and into another broad category of "rightist" goals and to compute scores by subtracting the total emphasis of "leftist" goals from the total emphasis of "rightist" goals (Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006; Lowe et al. 2011). As I have argued elsewhere (Elff 2013), this way of constructing position indexes from CMP data, even if applied to particular policy domains, does not do justice to the peculiar structure of the data, which

are consisting of counts. Also such indexes do not make use of the information about by which parties the electoral platforms are published and in which order. To address these issues I developed a latent state-space model political positions expressed in political texts and this model is used in this paper to reconstruct the policy positions of political parties, which then are used to describe and analyze the political distinctiveness of party families. Since the construction of this model and the estimation of its parameters are already published in Elff (2013) I refrain from discussing in detail this model and the derived method of reconstructing political positions based on it and give only a short summary of its principles.

In the model on which the analyses of this paper are based both the electoral platforms of the parties and the policy objectives that are more or less emphasized in the platforms are located in a common policy space. That is, parties take a position in the policy space by virtue of the location of their electoral platform relative to the policy objectives that characterize the policy space. The closer the position of a party is to a particular policy objective, other things being equal, the higher is the expected value of the number of quasi-sentences that refer that objective relative to the references of the other objectives that belong to the same policy domain. In addition, the model allows the positions of the parties to change from election to election, so that the positions that they take with their electoral platforms form an auto-regressive time series for each party. It should be noted that the model allows for several policy domains covered in an electoral platform, so that parties pick positions in several policy spaces at the same time. The emphasis given to a policy objective then not only reflects the position of a party in the respective policy domain, which is expressed in the emphasis *relative* to the other policy objectives in the same domain, but also the salience of the policy domain as a whole. For example, if the domain of economic policy becomes more salient because economic policies get more pressing, a party will give more room to this domain in its electoral platform whatever its position is in this domain (Laver 2001).

Ideally the analysis should cover as many policy domains as can be distinguished with the help of the CMP data. But due to space limitations of this paper (and the limited time available to me for research), the attention in the following section is restricted to two policy domains:



(a) Economic policy space

(b) Social/moral policy space

Figure 1: Location of policy objectives in policy spaces. The numerical estimates are available in Elff (2013).

the domain of economic policies and the domain of social/moral policies. The following CMP categories are considered as representing the domain of economic policy: "Nationalization" (of major companies), "Controlled economy", "Economic planning", "Market regulation", "Incentives", "Econmic Orthodoxy", and "Free enterprize". The left-hand diagram in Figure 1 gives a graphical representation of the estimated locations of the policy objectives in this policy space. For the space of social/moral policies the following CMP categories are used: "Democracy", "Freedom and human rights", "Law and order", "National way of life positive", "Traditional morals positive", and "Traditional morals negative". This policy space is assumed to be two-dimensional and its axes are interpreted as a "authoritarian/libertarian" and a "traditionalist/permissive" one and the locations of the policy objectives in this space are illustrated by the right-hand diagram in Figure 1.

Once the parameters of the latent state-space model are estimated one can obtain predictions about the positions that parties take with their electoral platforms in the form of empirical Bayes posterior distributions. The role of point estimators of these positions can then be played by the

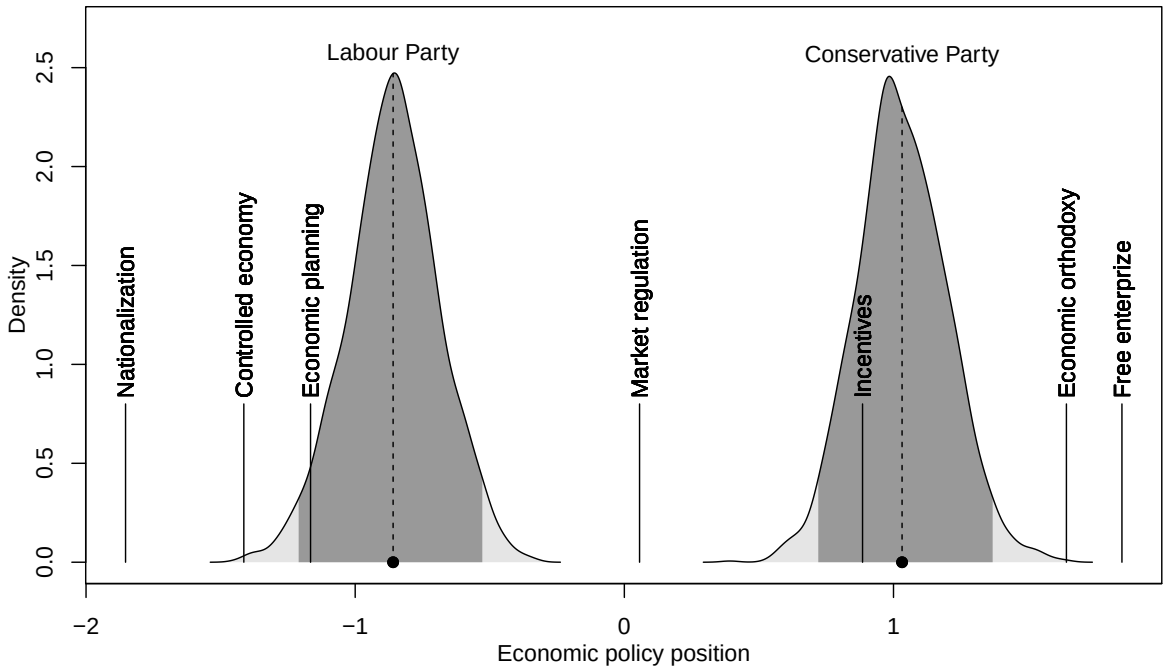


Figure 2: Positions of the Labour Party and the Conservative Party of the UK in 1964: Empirical Bayes posterior distributions. The lines and light gray areas represent the posterior densities, the dark gray areas represent 95 per cent credibility intervals and the dots represent posterior means. The means and posterior densities are estimated by kernel methods based on 2,000 simulations from the posterior distribution of the two parties' positions.

means of these posteriors. As an illustration, Figure 2 shows the posterior distributions of the positions of the Labour Party and the Conservative Party of the UK in 1964.

4 The Political Development of Party Families in Western Europe 1945–2010

In the following it will be examined whether and to what degree the party families are politically distinct in terms of their electoral platforms and whether these differences are persistent or show patterns of systematic change. The data basis is, as previously stated, the Comparative Manifestos

Project. The analysis is restricted to parties from Western Europe and among them to only those party where the membership in one of the party families is more or less clear. The analysis is restricted to Western Europe, because here one can assume a relatively uninterrupted continuity of parties and party systems that may have allowed the parties to maintain their heritage in the ideological currents of the 19th and early 20th century, whereas in Eastern Europe the party systems may be still in flux, while the relation of parties outside of Europe to the ideological currents is an open question in its own right, which however may demand a different kind of analysis. The restriction on parties that are "easily" classified into one of the party families is motivated by the desire to avoid the result being degraded by parties that are ambiguous in their membership to certain party families. For example, the Irish parties Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are not included into the analysis, because it is hard to decide whether they are conservative or christian/confessional, and the Italian PDS is not included, because it is difficult to decide whether it is (still) a communist party or (already) a social democratic party.

The first question to be answered if one wants to examine the political distinctiveness of party families in the domains of economic policy and social/moral policy is whether their average positions are distinguishable at all. This question is to some degree answered by Table 1, which shows how the variance among positions taken by electoral platforms are distributed between the three levels: (1) the variation among positions taken by the same party at different points in time (2) the variation among party's mean positions that belong to the same party family and (3) the variation between the mean position of parties from different party families. More precisely, the table shows the posterior mean of this apportioning and the limits of 95 per cent empirical Bayes credibility intervals. The quantities shown in the table are computed 2,000 simulated values from the posterior distribution of the positions taken by the parties with their electoral platforms. For positions both in the spaces of economic policies and of social/moral policies, about one third of the variance among positions taken in electoral platforms is variation among the positions of the same party, about another third of the variance is variation between positions of different parties in the same party family, and about a last third of the variance is located between party families. With

Table 1: Proportion of Variance at different levels of positions taken by West European parties in electoral platforms, posterior means and 2.5 and 97.5 percentiles, based on 2,000 simulations from the posterior distribution of parties positions taken in their electoral platforms.

	Absolute			Percentage		
	Post.mean	2.5%	97.5%	Post.mean	2.5%	97.5%
Economic policy space						
Within parties	0.298	0.279	0.317	29.3	27.8	30.9
Within party families	0.282	0.260	0.306	27.8	26.1	29.7
Between party families	0.435	0.409	0.462	42.9	40.9	44.8
Social/moral policy space						
Within parties	0.804	0.739	0.875	35.1	32.9	37.3
Within party families	0.646	0.582	0.719	28.2	26.1	30.5
Between party families	0.838	0.771	0.902	36.6	34.4	38.7

respect to positions in the economic policy space the relative variation between party families is, with just above one third, a bit larger the relative variation between party families in the social/moral policy space, which is just below one third.

The variation between party families is not overwhelming, there is at least as much variation at the lower levels, between parties of the same party family, and among the positions of the same party, but systematic differences between party families do exist. Therefore it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the variation between party families. The "profile" of the party families is illustrated by figure 3. For each of the party families, the diagram shows its its respective average position on the one axis of the economic policy space and on the two axes of the space of social/moral policies, the authoritarian/libertarian and the traditionalist/permissive axis. To facilitate the comparison of parties' positions on these three axes, the coordinate values on the axis are all standardized to an average of zero and unit standard deviation. The dots in the diagrams represent the average position of electoral platforms of the parties from the respective families, the gray areas connect quartiles of the distribution of these positions and the solid horizontal lines connect the 2.5 and 97.5 percent quantiles, so that they cover 95 per cent of the distribution of the positions of the platforms.

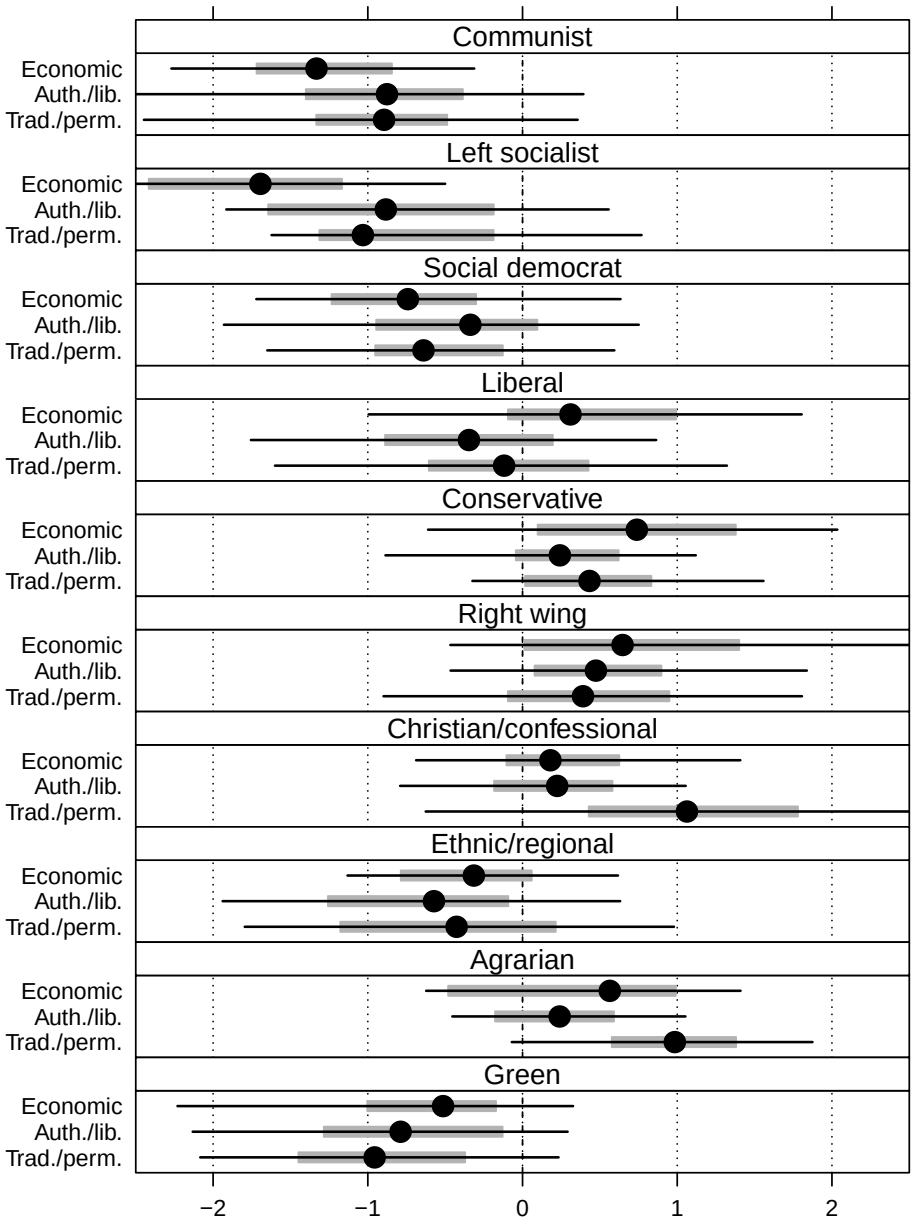


Figure 3: Positions space of electoral platforms of West European parties in different party families on the axis of the economic policy and the two axes of the social/moral policy space (the authoritarian/libertarian and the traditionalist/permissive axis). Means, 2.5, 25, 75, and 97.5-quantiles of parties posterior mean positions.

With regards to the "ideological" party families of the communist, left-socialist, social democratic, liberal, conservative, and right-wing populist parties it appears that they are more polarized on the single dimension of the economic policy space than on any of the social/moral dimension. Further, for five of these party families one can state that whenever it their positions are concentrated on the state-intervention side of the economic policy axis they also tend to be on the libertarian and the permissive side of the two axes of the social/moral policy space, and whenever they are positioned on the market-liberal side of the economic policy axis they also tend to be positioned on the authoritarian and on the traditionalist sides of the respective axes of the social/moral policy space. While this pattern seems to support the idea of an overarching ideological left-right dimension, it is already broken by one of the "ideological" party families, the family of the liberal parties: Consistent with the ideas of classical liberalism, they tend to support more market-liberal positions, but at the same time more libertarian and, to a somewhat lesser degree, permissive positions in the space of social/moral policies.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, the conception of a single dominant ideological left-right dimension has been challenged by authors who posit the existence of a second ideological dimension that pits libertarian against authoritarian ideas and values. Very often the emergence of the "New Social Movements" in the 1960s and 1970s and the emergence of green parties in the 1970s and 1980s are pointed to as evidence for this second ideological dimension. Yet if one looks at the positions taken by members of the green party family, this evidence seems less clear. Green parties tend not only to position themselves on the libertarian and permissive directions in the social/moral policy space, but also on the state-interventionist side in the economic policy space, if only less clearly so than the other "classical left" party families of the communists, left-socialists, and social democrats. Apparently it is rather the ambivalent tendency of the liberal parties that brings the existence of more than one "ideological dimension" to the surface.

In the present paper it is proposed to substitute the conception of two ideological dimensions by a conception of multiple policy spaces in which parties take positions, guided by their ideologies. Thus it is distinguished here between a space of economic policies, a space of social/moral policies,

and other policy spaces not discussed in the current paper. The recent two-dimensional conception of ideology could be reconciled with the single dimension of the economic policy space and, if this policy space were one-dimensional, with a single dimension of the social/moral policy space. However, in this paper the space of social/moral policies is envisaged to be two dimensional. The idea behind this is that there may be two "rights" in the social/moral policy space, a traditionalist (and religious) one and a authoritarian (and nationalist-conservative) one. This is to capture historical antagonisms conservative nation-builders and supra-nationally oriented catholic parties, such as that between the catholic Zentrumspartei and the protestant and national-conservative DNVP of pre-Nazi Germany, which is one of the possible systems of alliances and oppositions discussed by Lipset and Rokkan (Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

A two-dimensional conception of the space of social/moral policies appears useful with respect to the positions of the christian/confessional and the agrarian party families. The positions of christian/confessional parties on the axis of the economic policy space are comparable with those of the liberal parties, while the positions on the authoritarian/libertarian axis are comparable with those of the conservative party family. However, they clearly stand out in terms of their positions on the traditionalist/permissive axis of the space of social/moral policies. The agrarian parties are the only party family with similarly traditionalist positions, however in terms of their positions on the economic policy and authoritarian/libertarian axes they resemble the conservative party family. Thus one could argue that the distinction between an authoritarian/libertarian and a traditionalist/permissive axis in the space of social/moral policies is needed to characterize the specifics of these two party families.

Ethnic/regional parties appear to be moderately in favor of state-intervention to the economy and to favor libertarian and permissive positions in the domain of social/moral policies. That they are one of the most libertarian party families in this regard is not surprising if one takes into account that regional or ethnic autonomy can naturally be justified by an emphasis of freedom and democratic self-determination and usually is contrary to the maintenance of existing state authority. The positions of members of the green party family appear to be among the most radical on both

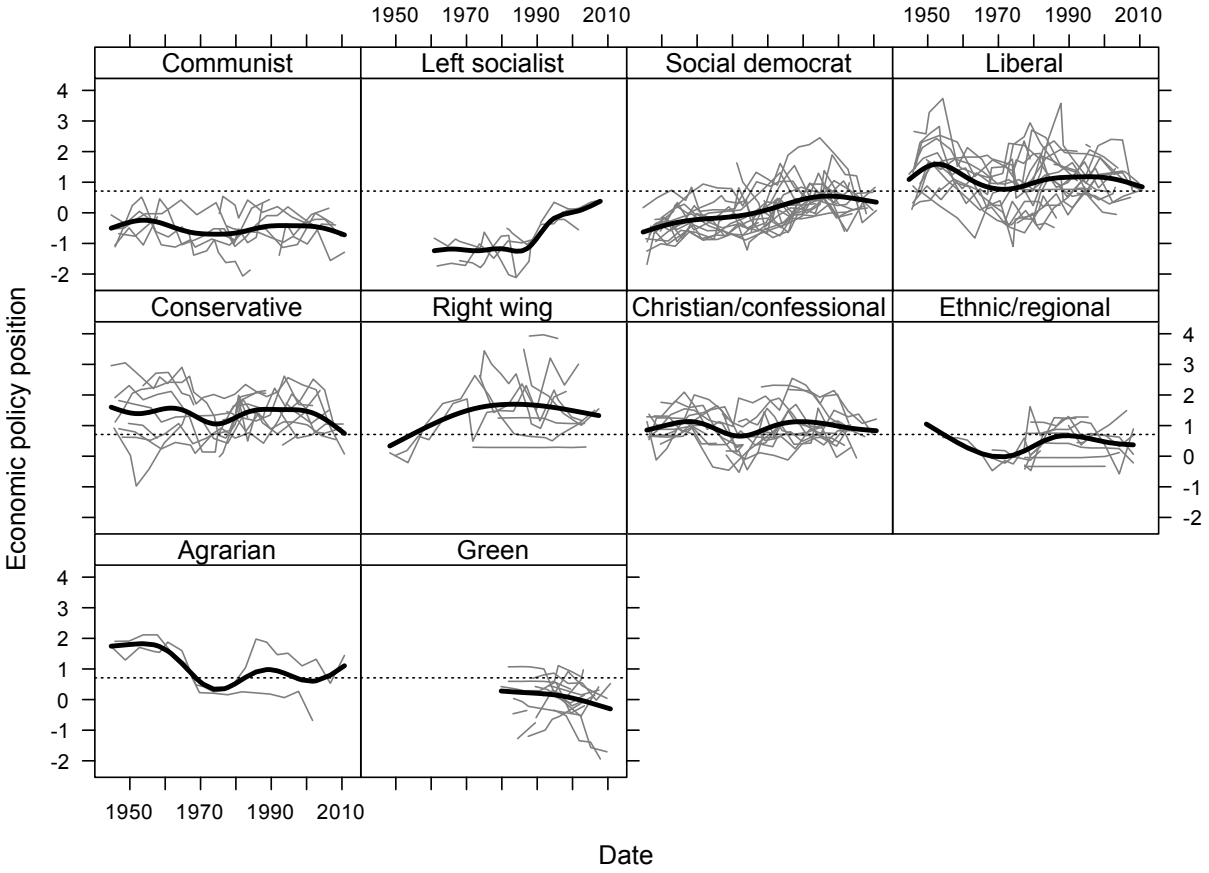


Figure 4: Development of parties' positions and party family averages on the axis of the economic policy space by party family. The parties' positions are represented by their posterior means. The average positions of the party families are smoothed using smoothing splines with automatic selection of the smoothing parameter by generalized cross-validation. Note that the diagrams use, in contrast to Figure 3 the original, non-standardized coordinates on the axis.

axes on the social/moral policy space, but they are no more state-interventionist than the social democratic parties.

Table 1 and Figure 3 do not prevent the impression that, while it may be possible to work out the characteristic average positions of parties from different party families, there is a considerable amount of variation below the level of party families. The variation below the level of parties also suggest that there is a considerable over-time change in parties positions. This leads to the question

about the nature of these changes. Are they just asystematic fluctuations or do they exhibit patterns of convergence or divergence within party families or, more interestingly, between party families?

The individual trajectories of West European parties as well as the general trends of the average positions of party families in the space of economic policies are illustrated by Figure 4. The gray lines in the diagrams connect the positions taken by the parties' individual electoral platforms, while the thick gray curves represent smoothing-spline fits of the party families average position by time.

Figure 4 shows that there are some systematic movements in some of the party families. While the communist, liberal, and christian/confessional party families more or less maintain their respective average positions on economic policy, the ethnic/regional party family shows some trendless fluctuations. Two parties of "the Left", the left-socialist and social democratic parties, show a clear movement away from state-interventionist positions to the center, that is, the all-party average of positions in this political space. It appears that this is not just an effect of the end of state-socialism as a "visible" system-option after the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, but a process that has started early on, already in the 1950s. An end-of-Cold-War effect seems rather to be at work at the positions of the left-socialist parties. The conservative party family maintains its position throughout most of the period of observation, but at its end shows a clear movement to the center. There are only two party families that show a (slightly) centrifugal tendency: the right-wing populist parties move towards more market-liberal positions, whereas the green party family move somewhat to more "leftist" state-intervention positions.

The political significance of the change of the positions of social democratic parties cannot be overstated. Social democracy, once the political force representing the working class and purporting a gradual and democratic path to a post-capitalist economy and society has lost much of its political distinctiveness in terms of economic policy over the post-war decades and by the 1990s overlaps in terms of economic policy from the liberal and christian/confessional parties. Against the backdrop of such a finding it is hardly surprising to find a decline in class voting in Western Europe (Evans et al. 1999; Elff 2009).

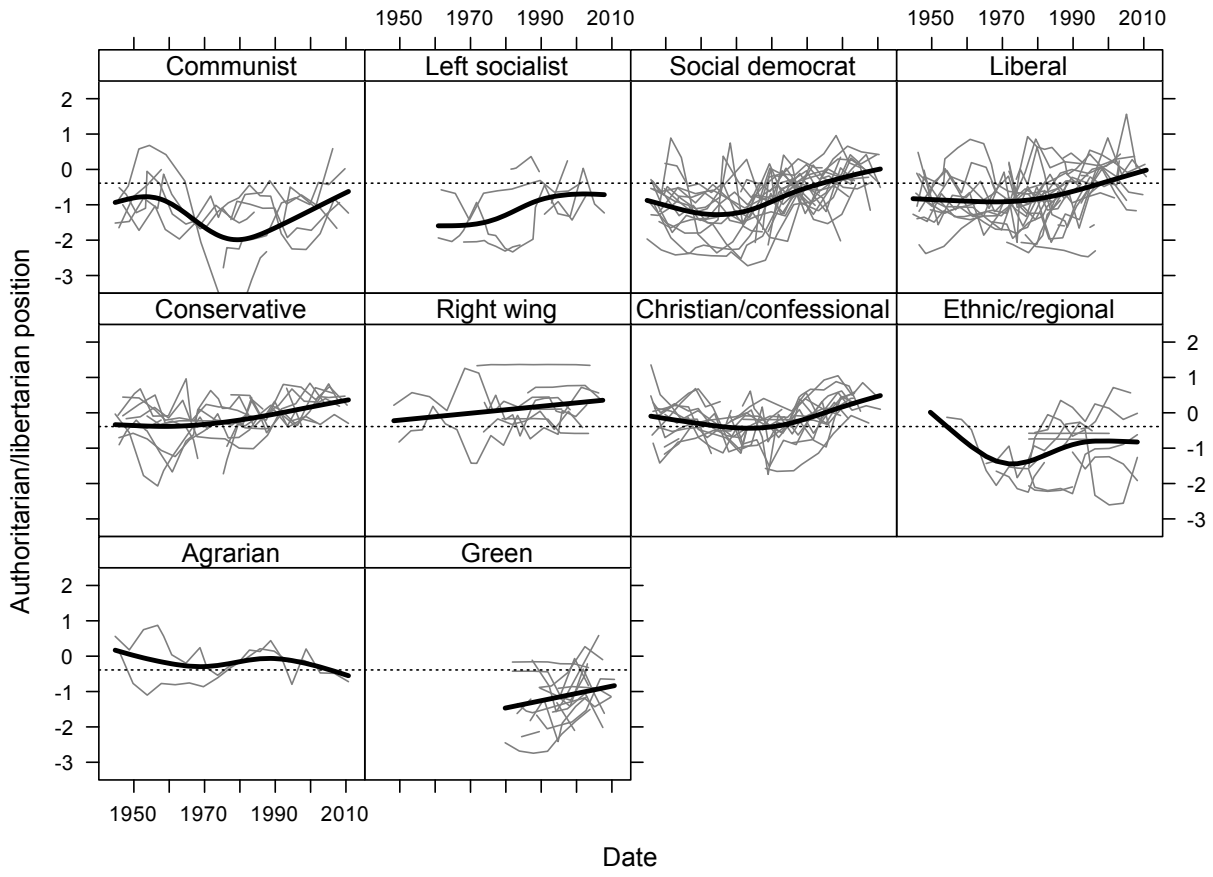


Figure 5: Development of parties' positions and party family averages on the authoritarian/libertarian axis of the social/moral policy space by party family. The parties' positions are represented by their posterior means. The average positions of the party families are smoothed using smoothing splines with automatic selection of the smoothing parameter by generalized cross-validation. Note that the diagrams use, in contrast to Figure 3 the original, non-standardized coordinates on the axis.

Figure 5 shows the development of individual parties' positions and of the average positions of the party families on the authoritarian/libertarian axis. Again, the change of the positions of the party families is reconstructed using a smoothing-spline fit of the average positions on time. The diagrams reveal a quite striking pattern in the development of most party families: From 1980s or 1990s onwards, all party families move into an authoritarian direction, with exception of the ethnic/regional and agrarian parties. That even left-socialist and green parties exhibit this trend is considerably intriguing. That the family of social democratic parties follows this patterns seems to contradict ideas brought forward by Kitschelt (1994) about the change in social democratic parties. But perhaps this pattern is not so much a truly ideological change towards authoritarianism, but rather a change in rhetoric and political "fashion": By the end of the Cold War, an appeal to the protection of "freedom and democracy" from the Soviet Bloc may no longer needed as a rhetorical standard device, while claims of being "tough on crime" may have proliferated in the same period. This may be an interesting question, yet answering it is beyond the current scope of this paper.

Figure 6 shows the movements of individual parties and party families along the other axis of the space of social/moral policies, the traditionalist/permissive axis. Again the movement of the average positions of the party families is emphasized using a smoothing-spline fit. The diagrams in the figure show that parties and party families by and large show a somewhat different kind of movement along this axis. While many parties and party families move in an authoritarian direction, the communist parties, the social democratic parties, the ethnic/regional parties and, to a lesser degree, even the conservative and the christian/confessional parties move in a more permissive direction from the 1970s onwards. The agrarian parties show a clear change away from traditionalist position throughout the period of observation as if that way giving substance to their re-branding as "center parties". Even one of the right-wing populist parties shows a movement away from traditionalist positions strong enough to pull the party family as a whole to the center of the policy space on this axis. Only the left-socialist parties, which show a quite irregular pattern of change, and the liberal and green parties do not show a systematic shift into the permissive direction, but maintain their respective centrist and permissive average positions.

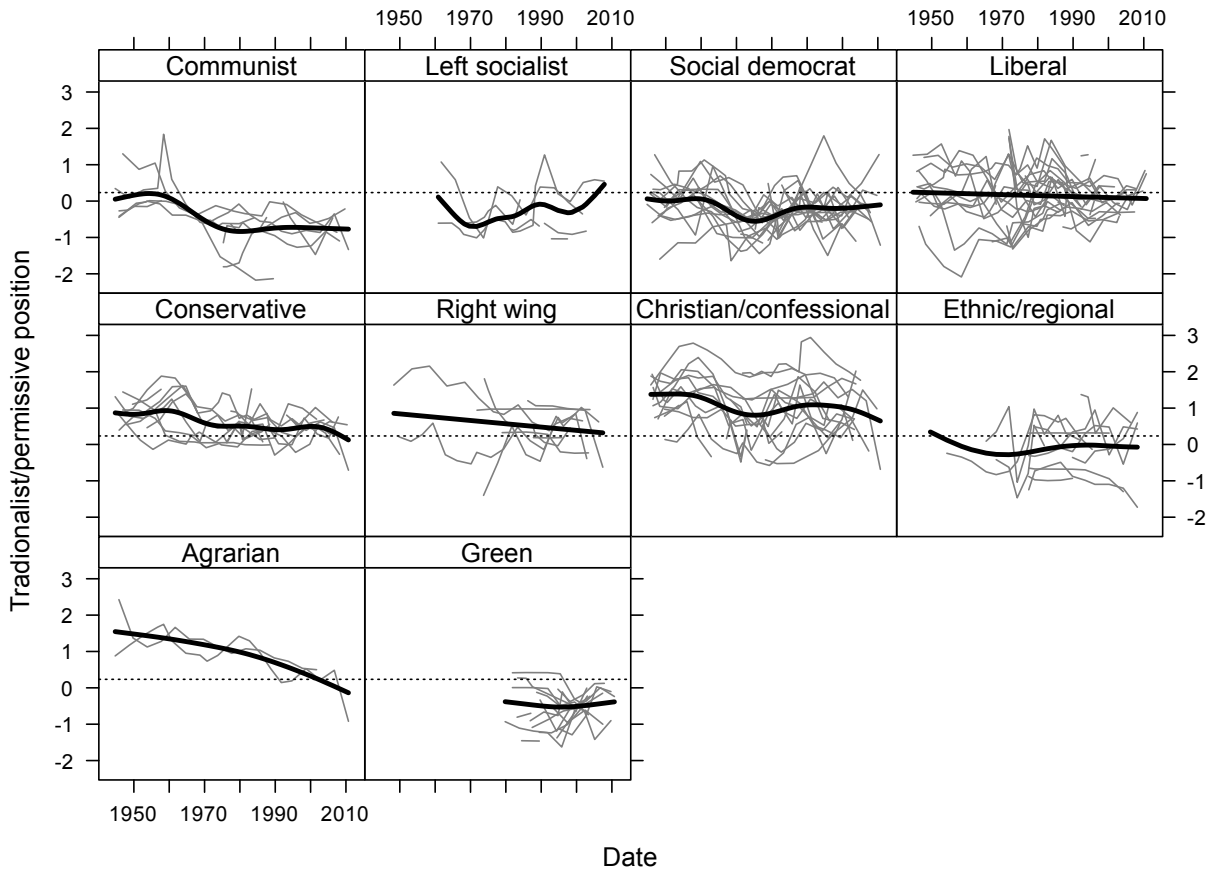


Figure 6: Development of parties' positions and party family averages on the traditionalist/permissive axis of the social/moral policy space by party family. The parties' positions are represented by their posterior means. The average positions of the party families are smoothed using smoothing splines with automatic selection of the smoothing parameter by generalized cross-validation. Note that the diagrams use, in contrast to Figure 3 the original, non-standardized coordinates on the axis.

The movement of the party families gives the impression that they compensate their more authoritarian movements on the first axis of the social/moral policy space with more permissive movements on the second axis. The latter movement may be a symptom of the influence of the "New Social Movements" emerging in the 1970s that stress the liberty of more socially egalitarian and permissive policies. At least the different patterns of change highlight the utility of a two-dimensional conception of the social/moral policy space, because clearly movements along both axes are not parallel, not quite in line with the notion of a hidden single ideological dimension governing this policy space.

5 Conclusion

The present paper puts forward a notion of ideology that emphasizes them as descriptions of a "good society" and of the chief means to attain it (Downs 1957). It also stresses the implication that ideologies by themselves do not lead to the existence of a single, overarching left-right dimension structuring party competition, but to the existence of more or less distinct ideological currents that give rise to more or less distinct ideological party families. Yet not all of the party families commonly distinguished in the scholarship on European politics can be identified with one of the ideological currents of the 19th and early 20th century, but rather have emerged from social movements that articulated the grievances of particular segments of society. Nevertheless these segmental party families may also show distinct patterns of programmatic of ideological orientation.

Using a methodology developed elsewhere (Elff 2013) the paper set out to examine whether and to what degree the party families often discussed in the scholarship on European politics are distinct in terms of their electoral platforms. As a first result, it turned out that there is at least as much variation between party families in terms of parties mean positions in the domains of economic policy and of social/moral policy than within party families, even though parties parties positions fluctuate or change to a degree that within party variation in terms of policy positions is at least as

large as the between party variation within party families. That notwithstanding, it became clear that the average positions of party families are distinctive enough to warrant their further investigation.

Further investigations into the distinctiveness of West European party families showed that several party families, in particular the families of the liberal parties, the christian/confessional parties, the agrarian parties, and the green parties, have policy profiles along the three dimensions of the two policy domains that do not fit well together with the idea of a single, overarching ideological dimension. It also turned out that three rather than two axes are needed to adequately describe the profiles of the party families in the two policy policy domains under study. The statement about the number of axes needed to describe the typical positions of party families should not be misunderstood as a statement about the number of ideological dimensions. Such an interpretation would rest on the ideology-as-dimension view criticized earlier in this paper. In fact, the number of relevant axes may further increase if more policy domains are taken into account, beyond those already covered in this paper (and this is planned for the continuation of the project to which this paper belongs).

An examination of over-time evolution in the "typical" position of party families revealed some intriguing patterns of change. First, the family of the social democratic parties looses much of its distinctiveness relative to the "bourgeois" families of liberal and conservative parties in the domain of economic policy, a finding that may help to understand the decline of class voting observed in Western Europe (Franklin et al. 1992; Dogan 1995; Dalton 2002; Elff 2007). Second, most party families tend to move into the authoritarian direction of first axis of the space of social/moral policies, perhaps responding to a fashion of "law and order" politics, but also move into a more permissive direction on the second axis of this policy space. The response of West European parties (and perhaps party systems) to the emergence of the "New Social Movements" thus appears quite double-edged.

This paper is a report on a yet to be finished project. It is planned to look at further policy domains, in particular the domain of welfare-related policies, environmental policy, and foreign

policy. While the project is unfinished the results obtained so far seem encouraging to further look into the distinctiveness of party families.

Appendix: Classification of Parties into Party Families

Austria: Social democrat: SPO Socialists; Liberal: LF Liberal Forum; Right wing: FPO Freedom Movement; Christian/confessional: OVP Christian Democrats; Green: GA Greens

Belgium: Social democrat: PSB-BSP Socialists, SP Flemish Socialists, PS Francophone Socialists; Liberal: PLP-PVV Liberals, PVV Flemish Liberals, PRL Francophone Liberals, PLDP Brussels Liberals, PRL/FDF Francophone Liberal and Democratic Front; Right wing: VB Flemish Block; Christian/confessional: PSC-CVP Christian Peoples Party, CVP Flemish Christian Peoples Party, PSC Francophone Christian Social Party; Ethnic/regional: VU Flemish Peoples Union, FDF French-Speaking Front, RW Walloon Rally; Green: Ecolo Francophone Ecologists, Agalev Flemish Greens

Denmark: Communist: DKP Communists; Left socialist: SF Socialist Peoples Party, VS Left Socialists, FK Common Course; Social democrat: SD Social Democrats; Liberal: RV Radicals, V Liberals, RF Justice Party, DS Danish Union, LC Liberal Centre, CD Centre Democrats; Conservative: KF Conservatives, DU Independents Party; Right wing: FP Progress Party; Christian/confessional: KrF Christian Peoples Party; Green: EL Unity List

France: Communist: PCF Communists; Social democrat: PS Socialists; Conservative: Gaullists, Conservatives, RPR; Right wing: Poujadists, FN National Front; Christian/confessional: MRP Popular Republicans, Centre Democrats, CDP Centre Democracy Progress, MR Reformers Movement, UDF; Green: Greens, Ecology Generation

Germany: Communist: KPD Communist Party; Left socialist: PDS Party for Democratic Socialism; Social democrat: SPD Social Democrats; Liberal: FDP Free Democrats; Conservative: DP German Party; Right wing: DKP-DRP German Reich Party; Christian/confessional:

CDU-CSU Christian Democrats, DZ Centre Party; Ethnic/regional: BP Bavarian Party, SSW South Schleswig League; Green: Greens, Greens-Alliance 90, Alliance 90-Greens

Great Britain: Social democrat: Labour, SDP Social Democratic Party; Liberal: Liberals, LDP Liberal Democrats; Conservative: Conservatives

Ireland: Left socialist: WP Workers Party, DLP Democratic Left; Social democrat: LP Labour Party; Liberal: PD Progressive Democratic Party; Green: Greens

Italy: Communist: RC New Communists; Left socialist: PSU United Socialists; Social democrat: PSI Socialists, PSDI Social Democrats; Liberal: PRI Republicans, PLI Liberals, PR Radicals, LR La Rete, PI Pact for Italy, AD Democratic Alliance, RI Italian Renewal; Conservative: FI Forza Italia; Right wing: AN National Alliance; Christian/confessional: PPI-DC Christian Democrats, CCD Christian Democratic Center; Ethnic/regional: LN Northern League; Green: FdV Greens

Luxembourg: Communist: PCL KPL Communists; Social democrat: POSL LSAP Social Democrats; Christian/confessional: PCS CSV Christian Social Party; Green: GAP Alternatives, GLEI Greens, Glei Gap Green Alternatives

Netherlands: Social democrat: PvdA Labour, DS 70 Democratic Socialists 70; Liberal: VVD Liberals, D 66 Libertarians, PPR Radical Political Party; Christian/confessional: KVP Catholic Peoples Party, ARP Anti-Revolutionary Party, CHU Christian Historical Union, CDA Christian Democrats; Green: GL Greens

Norway: Communist: NKP Communists; Left socialist: SV Left Socialists; Social democrat: DNA Labour; Liberal: V Liberals, DLF Liberal Peoples Party; Conservative: H Conservatives; Right wing: FrP Progress Party; Christian/confessional: KrF Christian Peoples Party; Agrarian: SP Centre Party

Portugal: Communist: UDP Popular Democratic Union, PCP Communists; Social democrat: PSP Socialists, ASDI Indep Social Democrats, NA; Liberal: MDP Democratic Movement, PRD

Democratic Renewal Party; Conservative: PSD Social Democrats, PPM Popular Monarchist Party; Christian/confessional: PP Popular Party; Green: PEV Greens

Spain: Communist: PCE-IU Communists; Social democrat: PSOE Socialists, CDS Centre Democrats; Liberal: PL Liberals; Conservative: AP/PP Conservatives, PDP Popular Democratic Party; Christian/confessional: UCD Democratic Centre; Ethnic/regional: EE Basque Left, PNV EAJ Basque National Party, PAR Aragonese Regionalist Party, ERC Catalan Republican Left, PA Andalusian Party, CiU Convergence and Unity, EA Basque Solidarity

Sweden: Communist: Vp Communists; Social democrat: SdaP Social Democrats; Liberal: FP Liberals; Conservative: MSP Conservatives; Right wing: NyD New Democracy; Christian/confessional: KdS Christian Democrats; Agrarian: CP Centre Party; Green: Greens

Switzerland: Social democrat: SPS-PSS Social Democrats; Liberal: FDP-PRD Radical Democrats; Conservative: SVP-UDC Peoples Party; Right wing: SD Democrats, FPS Freedom Party; Christian/confessional: CVP-PDC Christian Democrats, EVP-PEP Protestant Peoples Party; Green: Greens

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