




In the eye of the beholder: voters' perceptions of party policy shifts

Carolina Plescia & Magdalena Staniek


To cite this article: Carolina Plescia & Magdalena Staniek (2017) In the eye of the beholder: voters' perceptions of party policy shifts, *West European Politics*, 40:6, 1288-1309, DOI: [10.1080/01402382.2017.1309623](https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2017.1309623)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2017.1309623>

 [View supplementary material](#) 



 [Published online: 15 May 2017.](#)

 [Submit your article to this journal](#) 

 [Article views: 969](#)


 [View related articles](#) 

 [View Crossmark data](#) 

 [Citing articles: 8](#) [View citing articles](#) 



In the eye of the beholder: voters' perceptions of party policy shifts

Carolina Plescia^a  and Magdalena Staniek^b 

^aDepartment of Government, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria; ^bSchool of Politics and International Relations, University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

ABSTRACT


It is normatively desirable that parties' policy positions match the views of their supporters, as citizens in Western democracies are primarily represented by and through parties. Existing research suggests that parties shift their policy positions, but as of today, there is only weak and inconsistent empirical evidence that voters actually perceive these shifts. Using individual-level panel data from Germany, United Kingdom, Ireland and the Netherlands, this article tests the proposition that voters perceive parties' policy shifts only on salient issues while remaining oblivious to parties' changing positions on issues that they do not consider important. The results demonstrate that issue saliency plays a fundamental role in explaining voters' perceptions of parties' policy shifts: according to this logic, democratic discourse between the elites and the electorate appears to take place at the level of policy issues that voters care about.

KEYWORDS Voter perceptions; party policy positions; public opinion; representation; issue saliency

Whether and how parties shift their policy positions and whether or not voters perceive these shifts are central concerns not only for the political science discipline, but also well beyond as these issues continue to fascinate the media, the public, and the political players themselves. It is normatively desirable that parties' policy positions match the views of the parties' supporters, as citizens in Western democracies are primarily represented by and through parties (Adams *et al.* 2011; Dalton *et al.* 2011).

There is no shortage of research on the dynamics of parties' policy positions (e.g. Adams 2012; Dalton and McAllister 2015; Laver 2014). In most of these studies, the spotlight is on the supply side, i.e. on the parties, and only rarely has the focus been on the demand side, i.e. on the voters. Consequently, there is only

CONTACT Magdalena Staniek  staniekm@tcd.ie

 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed [here](#).

weak and inconsistent empirical evidence that voters actually perceive parties' policy shifts, and that these shifts have significant electoral consequences (e.g. Adams *et al.* 2004, 2011; Fernandez-Vazquez 2014; Tavits 2007).

We attempt to fill this lacuna by proposing and testing the argument that voters perceive and react to parties' policy shifts only on specific issues that they regard as highly relevant at a given time, while remaining oblivious to shifts in policy positions on issues that they do not consider to be important. This draws on two related mechanisms. First, parties' policy shifts may occur in particular issue areas rather than on the commonly used broad left–right ideological dimension (Adams *et al.* 2011; Meguid 2008; Meyer 2013). Second, voters do not care about everything in equal measure and they do not always consider all available information (Fiske and Taylor 2013; Lupia and McCubbins 1998). Accordingly, attitudes on topics voters consider important ought to have a powerful impact, whereas attitudes on topics unimportant to voters should have little impact (Krosnick 1990: 62). Hence, the way in which an individual voter processes relevant political information may well depend on the importance attached to these issues. In this study, we examine whether and how voters perceive the changes in the policy offer of political parties as this could be consequential at the ballot box and beyond. Thus, we put the voters – the demand side of the democratic equation – and their perceptions of policy dynamism at the centre-stage of our analysis.

We test our proposition through an in-depth case study of Germany between 1998 and 2013. Germany is well suited for our analysis because it represents a stable multiparty democracy with some of the longest living parties in the world, which allows an analysis across parties over time. In addition, the German case offers rich individual-level data not available in other electoral contexts. Each pair of elections starting from 1998 is covered by an individual-level panel survey. Every respondent was interviewed twice and, each time, we have information on his or her perception of parties' positions across several important issues. We also know whether that specific issue is indeed relevant for the respondent. We rely on this panel data to identify the relationships between party policy shifts and voters' perceptions of these shifts and to discover the mechanism that underlies these relationships. Subsequently, we employ panel data from United Kingdom, Ireland and the Netherlands to place the German case in a comparative perspective. Albeit not as extensive as the German panel data, the British, Irish and Dutch surveys provide us with reasonable evidence to demonstrate the applicability of our results to other parliamentary democracies. In particular, given that the four analysed countries cover four substantially different electoral systems – i.e. plurality, single-transferable voting, proportional and mixed-proportional electoral system – they provide additional ground to test the robustness of our findings.

Furthermore, we supplement individual-level data with the aggregate-level measurement of party policy dynamism provided by the Comparative Manifesto

Project (CMP, presently MARPOR), by far the most extensive source of longitudinal data on party policy positions and one that is explicitly grounded in the saliency theory of party competition (Budge 2001; Klingemann *et al.* 2006). To put it simply, in this article we ask: do citizens perceive party policy shifts, and if so, how? In the remainder of this article, we justify our empirical focus on the link between party policy dynamism and voter perceptions of changes in parties' policy offer. Drawing on the established theories of party competition and voter behaviour, we specify our theoretical propositions, present our method of analysis and results, and conclude with a discussion about the implications of our findings.

Theoretical heritage: parties and voters

Parties' policy positions matter because parties are the key policy-makers in democracies and the main link between citizens and political decisions (Schattschneider 1942). Among the rich scholarship on party competition, the spatial model of proximity and issue voting has a prominent pedigree in the classic Downsian economic voting theory (Downs 1957). The idea of 'issue congruence' forms the basis of the early spatial models. This means that each voter makes a rational calculation to support a candidate or a party whose position on a specific set of issues is the closest to his own in a one-dimensional space in which individual actor policy preferences can be represented by a single (ideal) point (Achen 1978). While voters are driven by their individual issue preferences, parties are driven by a desire to win votes and therefore they craft their policy platforms to appeal to the largest number of voters. Thus, issue voting is based on the idea that the ideological distance between voter and parties with respect to the essential political issues is a decisive criterion of an election. The model predicts that voters compare the positions of parties with their optimum position and vote for the party located closest in this space (Enelow and Hinich 1984).

Within their broad ideological constraints (Carter 2006), parties can vary their policies depending on the context of political competition, public demand, economic conditions, intra-party factors and so forth (Meguid 2008; Meyer 2013; Spoon 2011; Walgrave and Nuytemans 2009). Furthermore, it has also been argued that within a dynamic setting of party competition, parties can choose different strategies for adapting policy platforms: they can aim to satisfy the preferences of their current support base, adapt policy positions to rival parties, hunt for votes, or stick to their original policy positions (Budge 1994; Laver 2005; Laver and Sergenti 2011).

Empirical studies thus conclude that parties systematically shift their policy positions in response to factors such as changes in voters' policy preferences, rival parties' policy shifts, past election results, and changes in party elites' valence images (see Adams 2012 for a review). Altering their official stance

on either a single issue or a range of issues is probably the most direct tool for parties to influence vote choice and an increasing volume of prominent studies has focused on parties' use of this tool (e.g. Adams *et al.* 2004; Budge 1994; Laver 2005). The main reason for this is that the expression of issue positions by political actors, such as voters, elites and, especially, political parties, play a central role in the political process of representative democracies. However, left largely unexplored until very recently – despite its role as the crucial feature of the voter – party connection – is the question of the electorate's perceptions of the shifts in parties' policy positions.

How voters perceive the shifts in parties' policy positions is important because parties' electoral fortunes depend on the extent to which voters accept or reject these perceived shifts. According to Downs, 'If a party frequently adopts new policies inconsistent with its old ones, voters will suspect that it cannot be trusted to carry out any long-range policies at all' (Downs 1957: 109). Furthermore, research suggests that changes in issue saliency can affect the survival prospects for existing legislative parties as new parties can form and capture the vote in response to the heightened importance of specific policy areas (e.g. Hug 2001). Thus, parties' credibility with the voters is inextricably linked with the voters' perceptions of where the parties stand on issues.

Furthermore, voters' perceptions of party position shifts can be consequential for their evaluation of political parties, governments and politics in general (Meyer 2013). Misperceived or mismatched party policy positions could mean that voters base their vote choices on biased information whereby a voter does not vote for the best alternative (e.g. the party closest to his or her policy preferences) but casts the ballot for a party which actually shifted away from the voter's policy preferences (Lau *et al.* 2008; Lau and Redlawsk 1997).

Adams' (2012) review reveals that, as of today, there is only weak and inconsistent empirical evidence that voters actually perceive parties' policy shifts, or that these policy shifts have significant electoral consequences. Are voters simply oblivious to policy shifts of political parties? Not necessarily. The main conclusion of the literature is that parties' observable actions are more effective at reshaping voter opinions than policy rhetoric during election campaigns or changes in parties' policy statements: it has been shown that the policies parties implement while in office (Lupu 2014) and their legislative record have a significant influence on party policy images (Adams *et al.* 2016; Falco-Gimeno and Fernandez-Vazquez 2015; Fortunato and Stevenson 2013).

Our article suggests a solution to the puzzle of whether and how voters perceive changes in the policy positions of political parties by proposing that voters perceive and react to parties' policy shifts only on issues that are relevant to them at a given point in time while remaining oblivious to shifts on issue that are considered less important.

Heterogeneity in voters' perceptions of policy shifts

So far, much of the literature has evaluated whether citizens react to the left–right tone of parties' campaign-based policy statements (e.g. Adams *et al.* 2011; Dalton *et al.* 2011; Fernandez-Vazquez 2014). The standard questions usually pertain to the voters' and the parties' placement on a left–right axis (see Adams *et al.* 2016 for a recent exception). However, the left–right ideological position might be too broad to capture specific party positions as well as the mechanism of voting behaviour. On the first, we know that the political space is more complex and parties and voters may not interact on a single left–right dimension only (Benoit and Laver 2012; De Vries and Marks 2012). Also, parties do not compete on all issues in the political space in every election (Meguid 2008). Budge *et al.* (1987) observe that parties compete by accentuating issues on which they have an undoubted advantage, therefore affecting the salience of issues during election campaign (Budge *et al.* 1987; Klingemann *et al.* 1994). This idea is central to the issue ownership approach, which, at the individual level, argues that voters have not only preferences over specific course of actions, i.e. issue voting, but also issue priorities and will tend to vote for the party with the most similar priorities (e.g. Green and Hobolt 2008; van der Brug 2004).

Also, due to human cognitive limitations, 'when people make decisions, they rarely take into consideration the entire array of available relevant evidence'; instead they tend to concentrate on the pieces of information 'that come to mind quickly and automatically and those that are most accessible' (Miller and Krosnick 1996: 80–81). In line with this logic, attitudes on topics voters deem important should have a powerful impact, whereas attitudes on topics unimportant to the voters ought to have little impact (Krosnick 1990: 62). Studies demonstrate that attitude importance moderates the effect of issues on parties' and candidates' evaluations whereby attitudes on issues that are salient are more cognitively accessible, and they are therefore more likely to come to mind as a criterion with which to evaluate political objects (Fournier *et al.* 2003; Selck 2006). Given that 'people do not pay attention to everything' (Iyengar and Kinder 1987: 64) and given that it is costly for voters to acquire and process political information, they will collect information only on those issues that are relevant to them (e.g. Zaller 1992). Walgrave and Lefevere (2013) find that salience makes information more accessible for voters, which decreases the odds that they have a different stance than their party.

Hence, the way in which an individual voter processes relevant political information depends on the importance attached to these issues. Consequently, it is conceivable that even if parties do shift on certain policy issues, voters will not perceive these shifts unless they take place on policy issues that are relevant to voters. Resulting from this, the main argument we test is formalised in the following hypothesis:

H1: Voters are more likely to perceive a shift in parties' positions when the shift happens on a policy domain that is salient to the voters.

Furthermore, when voters care about an issue, they are likely to become more knowledgeable about the specific policies in that area and have greater incentives to understand the complexities of a policy-specific domain (De Vries and Giger 2014; see also McGraw and Pinney 1990). These voters are more likely to stay informed about parties' activities in respect to the particular issue and to become aware of the possible implications of these actions in the policy domain they care about. So, we expect issue saliency to also have an effect on whether voters correctly perceive the direction of the party's policy shift. This reasoning is formalised in the following hypothesis:

H2: Voters are more likely to perceive a shift in parties' positions *correctly* when the shift happens on a policy domain that is salient to the voters.

Data and measurement

Given that the focus of this article is on voters' perceptions, individual-level data are considered to be an empirically sounder alternative to other approaches. One consideration is of vital importance here: while it can be argued that content analyses and elite surveys (e.g. Budge 2001; Laver *et al.* 2003; Slapin and Proksch 2008) are effective means of measuring party behaviour (e.g. Benoit and Laver 2007; Dinas and Gemenis 2010; Volkens 2007), mass surveys are said to be superior in capturing voters' perceptions of party policy positions (Meyer 2013: 31). An additional consideration is that analysing policy shifts requires time-series data of party policy positions and, for some of the (aggregate-level) approaches mentioned above, it is difficult, if not impossible, to gather these data. Panel election studies are well suited to analyse voters' perceptions of party policy shifts as they collect data on the respondents' own policy positions and their perceptions of the main parties' policy positions on multiple issues at two subsequent elections. Moreover, panel data allow us to measure issue saliency directly, which is a crucial independent variable in our analysis.

Conceptually, our dependent variable captures each voter's perception of a policy shift for a specific party on a specific issue. Each respondent was interviewed twice: at the current election and at the previous election. For each available panel study, voters were asked to assess the positions of the parties on nuclear energy, immigration, Europe and socio-economic issues (see Supplemental data for details). Thus, the dataset is expanded by the number of parties and issues available in our surveys. In this 'stacked' dataset, each respondent contributes as many parties and issues as are available in the survey. Since these observations are not statistically independent, all observations based on a single respondent are treated as a 'cluster', and robust standard errors, corrected for clustering, are reported.¹ The parties included in our study are the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the Green party.²

To test our hypotheses, we run two sets of models. In the base model, the dependent variable measures, at the individual level, whether the respondent perceived a policy shift (= 1) or not (= 0) between two points in time (the respondent's current and lagged placement of the party on a given issue) when a shift in a party's policy actually took place. In the second set of models, we also evaluate whether the respondent correctly perceived the direction of the party's shift (= 1), or did not perceive any shift or perceived an incorrect shift (= 0) when a shift in a party's policy actually took place.³ In both cases, given the nature of our dependent variables, we employ logistic regression.⁴ Both dependent variables represent a combination of the perception and actual policy change.

There is no consensus in the literature on how to obtain a true measure of party positions. Each approach suffers from drawbacks that might jeopardise the validity of our empirical results.⁵ We follow much of the existing literature on voters' perception of parties' policy positions (e.g. Adams *et al.* 2011; Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; Fernandez-Vazquez 2014; Meyer 2013; Tavits 2007) and rely on the CMP/MARPOR data (Volkens *et al.* 2015). In fact, the theoretical premise and the methodological implications of the manifesto database is the saliency theory of party competition whereby 'policy differences between parties ... consist of contrasting emphases placed on different policy areas' (Budge 2001: 82; also see Klingemann *et al.* 2006). A detailed explanation of the derived variables for the policy positions created from the CMP/MARPOR database is provided in the Supplemental data.⁶ While the usage of manifesto data to measure policy positions has been criticised on multiple grounds (see Gemenis 2013 for a review), it remains the only measure that provides us with party policy positions for the entire period covered by our panel data.

According to the CMP/MARPOR coding scheme, the theoretical range within which a shift can happen on specific policy issues spans from 0 to 100. Regarding our two dependent variables, we examine whether a noticeable shift is perceived by those who attach importance to an issue versus those for whom that issue is not salient. Therefore we focus on shifts on specific issues and do not use the L–R (rile) scale of the CMP/MARPOR. Deciding on the cutoff point between a noticeable and a non-noticeable shift is a non-trivial matter. In the German case, the range of shift (in absolute terms) is from 0 to about 8 whereby 0 indicates no shift and increasing values indicate greater shifts. Within a shift in the full range (0 to 100), Tavits (2007: 156) chooses 4 as a final cutoff point. Here we face a much smaller shift range and thus choosing a cutoff point of 1 to differentiate between a noticeable and a non-noticeable shift seems reasonable.⁷ However, because the selection of a cutoff point is crucial in terms of the theory and the empirics, we run additional models using cutoff points of 0.5, 1, 1.5 and above.⁸ Full results, including the additional models, are available in the Supplemental data.⁹ In the analysis, we follow Adams *et al.* (2016) among others and recalibrate the CMP/MARPOR coding of party manifestos to match the scale of the election surveys.¹⁰

To measure issue saliency, a dummy variable takes a value of 1 for a specific issue when the respondent identified that issue when asked ‘Which is the most important issue facing the country today?’, and 0 otherwise.¹¹ To address concerns over the issue of saliency being the result of voters’ perception rather than vice versa, as our theoretical mechanism suggests, issue saliency is measured in the first wave within each panel.

Our models also include control variables for individual-level heterogeneity in perceptions of policy shifts. First, based on research linking human cognitive limits (e.g. Kuklinski *et al.* 2001; Lau and Redlawsk 2001) and political sophistication (e.g. Basinger and Lavine 2005) with citizens’ capacity to perceive and evaluate political information, we control for the respondents’ political interest and knowledge. To measure subjective assessment of political interest, we use the responses to the question available in all panels: ‘How interested are you in politics? Please evaluate using this list: (1) not at all, (2) a little, (3) neither/nor, (4) interested, (5) very interested.’ The panel data also include an objective measure of political knowledge, in the form of a question pertaining to the way in which seats are distributed in the German national parliament. Across all panels voters are asked which vote, the candidate or the party vote, is more important in the distribution of seats after the election. Our factual knowledge variable takes a value of 1 when the respondent says that the party vote is the most important (= correct answer) and 0 otherwise (= incorrect answer).

Secondly, we control for party identification, which may function as a heuristic voters use to make sense of the complexity of the political world (Gigerenzer and Gaissmaier 2011; Lau and Redlawsk 2001). Thus, party identification may lead voters to rely on their own belief rather than on policy information to locate parties and to use biased information in line with their beliefs (Meyer 2013: 89). Identification with a party is measured using the standard question: ‘Do you usually think of yourself as close to any political party?’ Identifiers score 1 on this dummy variable and non-identifiers score 0.

Finally, in all models we control for party size and for government status. In the first case, recent research indicates that all else being equal, mainstream parties, when compared to niche parties, tend to be characterised by larger shifts, at least according to the left–right tone of their election manifestos (e.g. Adams *et al.* 2004, 2006; Ezrow *et al.* 2011). We follow the approach suggested by Wagner (2011) and categorise the Green party as a niche party. In respect to governing parties, in the time frame we cover in this article (1998–2013), there were three different coalitions and all four parties that we examine were in government at some point. The higher profile of government parties gives them greater opportunities to display their policy successes – although also their policy ‘failures’ – thereby making it easier for voters to perceive shifts in the positions of parties while they are in government as opposed to when they are in the opposition (Bawn and Somer-Topcu 2012). Age and gender are two

widely used controls so we also include them in the analysis. The Supplemental data provides descriptive statistics of all variables employed in the analysis.

Empirical results

First, we explore voters' perceptions of policy shifts for the four main parties, before empirically analysing the hypothesised nexus between issue saliency and voters' perceptions of policy shifts over the past five national elections.

Descriptive evidence

Figure 1 demonstrates the changes in policy orientations for the four main German parties on the four issue dimensions analysed in this study. The plots represent changes in policy positions between consecutive elections (rather

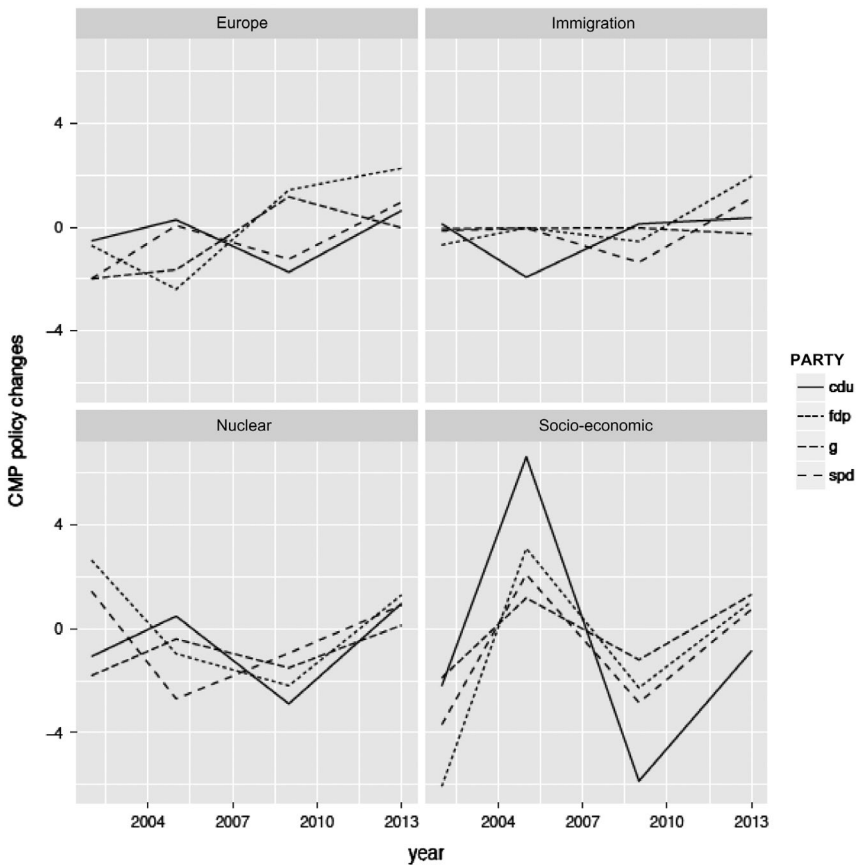


Figure 1. CMP/MARPOR policy change (Germany 1998–2013).

Note: The figure shows the magnitude of the shifts in party positions on each of the four issue dimensions between each election rather than the placement of the parties on these issues at the time of the election.

than policy positions at the time of the elections) as stated in parties' electoral manifestos. The interpretation of these plots is straightforward: all parties in Germany varied most of their stated policy offer during the period covered in our analysis. The smaller shifts took place on the topic of immigration especially for the two smaller parties, the Free Democratic Party and the Greens. The largest shifts are registered on the socio-economic issue equally across parties.

Concerning the electorate, Figure 2 presents detailed evidence of policy shifts and non-shifts for all parties we consider in our analysis as perceived by the voters (the missing data represent items that were not included in the panel study). Figure 2 also indicates the direction of shift, with shifts to the left indicating lower levels of European integration, less support for nuclear energy, more relaxed immigration laws and more social welfare services, while a shift to the right indicates a shift toward enhanced European integration, support for greater use of nuclear energy, tougher immigration laws and lower taxes, even if this will cause reduction in social welfare.¹² We see remarkable differences between shifts versus non-shifts not only across issues but also across parties. In the minds of the voters, the CDU appears to have moved more to the right than to the left on most issues, while more voters think that the SPD and the Greens shifted more to the left on most issues. For the FDP, the overall perception of shifts seems less clear-cut: decidedly more voters see a rightward shift on Europe, slightly more voters see a shift to the right on nuclear energy, and

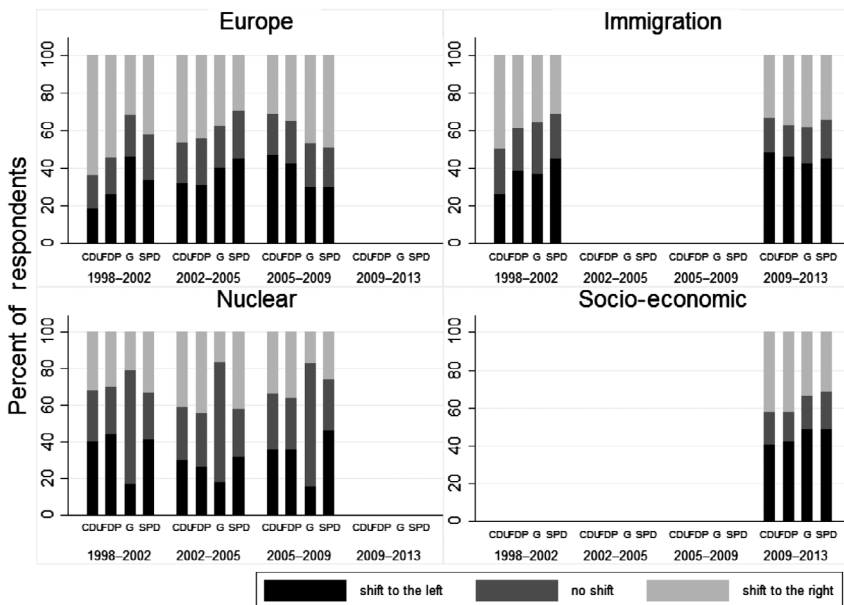


Figure 2. Perceptions of policy shifts (Germany 1998–2013), % respondents.

Note: The figure shows the percentage of respondents that perceive a party shift to the right, to the left or not shift over the different panel studies.

about the same numbers of voters see a shift to the left as to the right when it comes to immigration and socio-economic policy. The greatest share of voters who observed a shift to the left was for the Greens on socio-economic issues, while the CDU's rightward shift on immigration was perceived by more voters than any other possible rightward shift.

What is most striking about this brief overview of the voters' perceptions of party policy shifts in Germany is that with the exception of a single party on a single issue (Greens on nuclear energy policies), only about a quarter or less of the electorate did not perceive any shift in the parties' policy on the key issues as identified in the survey, while an overwhelming share of the voters observed changes in parties' policy positions on the issues that have dominated the political debate in Germany over the last five elections. Within the sample of the surveyed respondents, about 35% perceived a shift when the shift actually took place and about 20% perceived a correct shift.

Multivariate findings

Table 1 presents the logistic regression results for either the presence or absence of perceived shifts in policy positions by the German voters. Model 1 predicts

Table 1. Voters' perceptions of policy shifts: logit models (Germany 1998–2013).

Dependent variable:	Perception of shift (0 = no, 1 = yes)	Correct perception of shift (0 = no, 1 = yes)
	(Model 1)	(Model 2)
Saliency	0.560*** (0.072)	0.402*** (0.093)
CMP shift	4.647*** (0.063)	2.988*** (0.056)
Government party	0.313*** (0.022)	0.225*** (0.033)
Niche party	-0.010 (0.027)	0.193*** (0.036)
Political interest	-0.076*** (0.017)	-0.064*** (0.018)
Political knowledge	0.077* (0.031)	0.085** (0.032)
Party identification	-0.070* (0.034)	-0.060 (0.042)
Age	0.008*** (0.001)	0.005*** (0.001)
Female	0.013 (0.031)	-0.026 (0.032)
Constant	-2.387*** (0.082)	-2.881*** (0.084)
N	36,578	36,578
Pseudo R2	0.215	0.103
BIC	37,288.12	29,550.68
AIC	37,203.05	29,465.61

Note: Standard errors in parentheses adjusted for individual clusters.

The 1% cutoff point is used to distinguish shifter from non-shifter. Unweighted results. See supporting material for robustness checks.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

the effects of issue saliency and other theoretically relevant variables on whether or not voters changed their perceptions of policy dynamism when policy shifts took place. Model 2 also takes into account whether the directional shift was perceived correctly.

Starting with Model 1, the results of the analysis indicate that across policy issues, there is a positive and significant relationship between issue saliency and perceptions of policy shifts. This indicates that, consistent with our first hypothesis, the saliency voters attach to specific policy domains is a good predictor of whether or not they will perceive a change in parties' policy positions. Also, the coefficients for the absolute changes in parties' policy positions, measured by the CMP/MARPOR variable, are positive and statistically significant. This finding is corroborated by Model 2, for which the analysis is derived from our main hypothesis regarding the correct direction of the perceived policy shifts when a shift took place. Figure 3 shows the marginal effect of saliency, holding all other variable at their mean or mode. Here we observe that the effect of saliency on parties' dynamism is always positive and significant.

In respect to the other independent variables, we stated that voters with higher levels of political sophistication are more likely to perceive a shift in parties' positions than their less sophisticated counterparts. This hypothesis is firmly rejected using the self-assessment measure but confirmed using the factual measure of political awareness. In effect, this is indicative of the positive impact of political knowledge (measured objectively rather than subjectively) on the perceptions of shifts, whereby the more politically astute voters are more likely to perceive changes in parties' policy positions. Turning to party

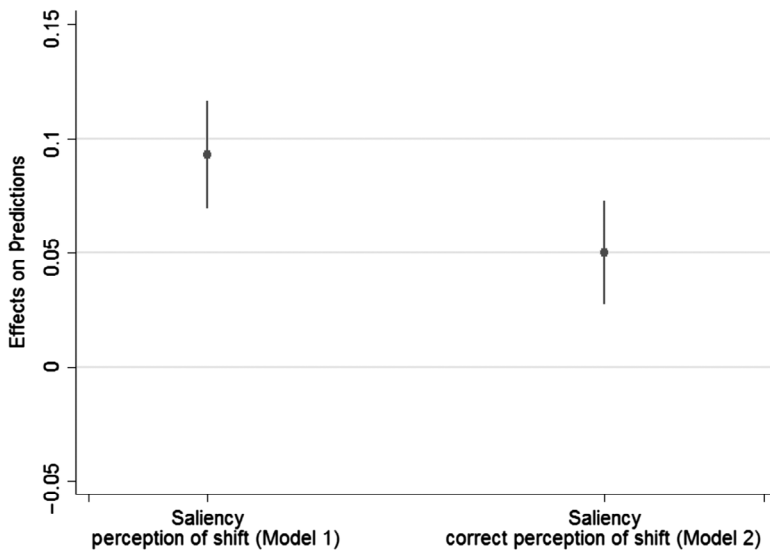


Figure 3. Average marginal effect of saliency (95% CI).

identification, we expected a negative impact of this variable on the probability of voters perceiving shifts in parties' policies. Although the negative effect of party identification is in line with our hypothesis, it is statistically significant only in Model 1, providing only partial evidence for our expectation.

In line with our assumptions, parties' participation in government leads to an increase in the probability that voters will perceive policy shifts. Here, partial regression coefficients are positive and significant across all model specifications. On the other hand, niche parties are overall less likely to shift, but if they do, our models suggest that it will be easier for citizens to perceive that shift. This indicates that all else being equal, a shift for a niche party is more dramatic and more easily perceived. Thus, perceptions of policy shifts appear to be mediated also by party characteristics.¹³

Demographic controls for age and gender indicate that older voters tend to perceive greater shifts in parties' policies; however, the impact of gender lacks statistical significance in all models, indicating that women are no more likely to perceive policy shifts than men.

Comparative perspective

How far do our findings travel? Unfortunately, panel data are rarely available; and in the handful of cases where they are available, they rarely simultaneously cover two consecutive elections and ask respondents to evaluate parties' policy positions across several corresponding issue domains for both elections. Furthermore, having just one panel dataset for one country cannot exclude specific election effects, which would limit generalisation. To the best of our knowledge, publicly available panel data that cover at least two elections and provide us with similar issue questions to Germany exist for the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands.¹⁴ The four analysed countries together cover four different electoral systems: plurality, single-transferable voting, proportional and mixed-proportional electoral systems, providing additional ground to test the robustness of our findings. It should be noted, however, that the saliency question is asked differently across years of election in the same country and across countries, which may affect the comparability of the results, as explained below.

For the UK, the models cover the shifts from 1987 to 1992, 1992 to 1997 and 2005 to 2010 for the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democratic parties on issues concerning crime, defence, Europe, nationalisation, socio-economics and taxation. For Ireland, the models cover the shifts between 2002 and 2007 for Fianna Fáil, Fine Gail, Labour, Greens and Sinn Féin on issues concerning the environment, Europe and taxation. For the Netherlands, the models cover the shifts between 1989 and 1994 for the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), Labour party (PvdA), Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) and Democrats 66 (D66) on issues concerning abortion, nuclear plants and socio-economics. Due to space limitation, complete information about

the data and the construction of our variables is available in the Supplemental data in Table S10.

Full results for the three country cases are presented in Table 2. Again, we observe that the effect of saliency on parties' dynamism is always positive and significant, except for Ireland where the coefficient, while in line with our theoretical expectation, fails to reach the standard level of statistical significance. This could be explained by the fact that in Ireland, as well as in the 1992–1997 UK panel, issue saliency is only available as a closed-ended question, whereby for each issue, respondents had to choose among five options ranging from very important to not important at all. Research suggests that when asked questions in the closed-ended format, respondents tend to rate all issues at higher levels of importance and minor issues are particularly prone to greater increases (Fournier *et al.* 2003). In regard to the other independent variables, we see that the coefficients for the absolute changes in parties' policy positions, measured by the CMP/MARPOR variable, are positive and statistically

Table 2. Voters' perceptions of policy shifts: logit models (United Kingdom, Ireland and the Netherlands).

	UNITED KINGDOM		IRELAND		NETHERLANDS	
	(Model 1)	(Model 2)	(Model 1)	(Model 2)	(Model 1)	(Model 2)
Saliency	0.190*** (0.054)	0.356*** (0.060)	0.009 (0.080)	0.051 (0.092)	0.195 (0.119)	0.239* (0.119)
CMP shift	9.332*** (0.141)	5.236*** (0.100)	12.975*** (0.697)	6.301*** (0.271)	0.913*** (0.027)	0.420*** (0.018)
Government party	0.072 (0.049)	0.486*** (0.049)	2.329*** (0.072)	1.492*** (0.066)	0.320*** (0.068)	0.054 (0.077)
Niche party			-0.049 (0.048)	0.107 (0.096)	-1.478*** (0.113)	-0.0338 (0.097)
Political interest	0.003 (0.016)	0.000 (0.019)	0.022 (0.044)	0.002 (0.046)	-0.336*** (0.068)	-0.217** (0.069)
Political knowledge	0.028 (0.040)	0.057 (0.044)	0.032 (0.078)	0.003 (0.079)	0.024 (0.031)	0.045 (0.031)
Party identification	-0.142** (0.050)	-0.075 (0.053)	-0.104 (0.132)	-0.047 (0.104)	-0.225** (0.074)	-0.256*** (0.074)
Age	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.003 (0.001)	0.001 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	0.004 (0.002)	0.005* (0.002)
Female	0.002 (0.036)	-0.078 (0.042)	0.064 (0.073)	0.028 (0.071)	0.167** (0.064)	-0.000 (0.065)
Constant	-2.284*** (0.075)	-2.262*** (0.085)	-2.214*** (0.201)	-2.576*** (0.198)	-1.935*** (0.138)	-2.253*** (0.137)
N	16,542	16,542	7590	7590	6280	6280
Pseudo R2	0.332	0.150	0.341	0.139	0.249	0.100
BIC	14,390.51	14,104.46	6911.98	6884.08	6621.74	6570.96
AIC	14,321.09	14,035.04	6842.64	6814.73	6554.29	6503.51

Note: Standard errors in parentheses adjusted for individual clusters.

Recall that Model 1 refers to the perception of shift when the shift happened, Model 2 refers to a correct perception of the shift when the shift happened. The 1% cutoff point is used to distinguish shifter from non-shifter. UK models cover the shift during 1987–1992, 1992–1997 and 2005–2010. For Ireland the models cover the shift during 2002–2007. For the Netherlands the models cover the shift between 2002–2007. See Supplemental data Table S10 for complete details. Unweighted results.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

significant, indicating a strong effect of the parties' actual policy positions on voters' perceptions of policy shifts. As in Germany, more politically knowledgeable British, Irish and Dutch voters are more likely to perceive a shift in parties' positions than their less knowledgeable counterparts. At the same time, party identifiers are less likely to perceive policy shifts of their party, albeit the effect is only significant in UK. We can also confirm that respondents are more likely to perceive the shift for parties in government, which is again in line with our findings for Germany.

Conclusion

Parties' policy positions matter, as parties are the key policy-makers in democracies and the main link between citizens and political decisions. How voters perceive the shifts in parties' policy positions is important, because parties' electoral future depends on the extent to which voters accept or reject these perceived shifts. The literature shows that not only parties (Budge 2015) but also voters have issue priorities and will tend to vote for the party with the most similar priorities (e.g. Green and Hobolt 2008; van der Brug 2004). The main proposition explored in this article contends that the level of saliency that voters attach to certain policy domains is an important force in shaping the electorate's perceptions of the amount of change in parties' policy offer.

We draw the following conclusions from the pattern of responses discussed in the analysis section. First, we disprove existing doubts about the overall capacity and attentiveness of citizens to parties' policy positions in general and shifts in particular. Specifically, our findings demonstrate that when research is based on individual-level data, the picture of how voters perceive party policy dynamism is more nuanced than when it is based on aggregate-level data. Perhaps the most important finding is that, in line with the main hypothesis of this study, the level of saliency that voters attach to policy issues appears to have a strong effect on voters' perceptions of policy changes, whereby the greatest changes in parties' policy positions are observed on issues that are salient to the voters. Beyond that, issue saliency is also a strong predictor of whether or not voters perceive the shifts in parties' policy positions correctly.

Our study also opens avenues for further research into other factors that could explain variation in individual-level determinants of changes in policy expectations. For instance, it may be the case that election-specific events modulate the magnitude of the effects we highlighted in this article. Indeed, while our theory assumes that individual-level salience is exogenous to the political process, it can also be that political parties strategically manipulate issue salience to advance their goals. This can be done either by highlighting it to make sure that voters perceive a shift or, instead, by avoiding it to obscure the fact that they are adopting less popular stances on the issue (e.g. Green and Hobolt 2008; Wagner and Meyer 2014). Hence, there is much scope for future

research on the ways in which parties' use of specific salience strategies can alter voters' own issue agenda.

Future research should also look into the consequences of voters (not) perceiving party policy shifts. Misperceiving policy positions of parties contesting elections can have profound consequences for the choice voters make at the ballot box and for their satisfaction with democracy. If voters have an erroneous perception of where parties stand on issues, then they risk basing their vote choice on biased information and not voting for the best alternative (i.e. the party closest to their policy preferences) but for a party which actually shifted away from the voters' policy preferences (Lau and Redlawsk 1997; Lau *et al.* 2008). The discrepancy between voters' perceptions of what their preferred parties stand for and the actual positions of these parties can also affect voters' evaluation of parliament and government. In addition, decision-makers can only be held accountable if voters perceive what they do, hence perceptions of policy shifts become important for the working of elections and representative democracy. The 'thermostatic' models of the opinion-policy relationship suggest in fact that the public adjusts its preferences over time in reaction to policy change (Soroka and Wlezien 2005).

Taken together, this study has important implications for our understanding of how parties are perceived by voters and it provides an insight into the way citizens view policy positions of political parties and understand politics more generally. Our study zooms in on the extent to which voters listen to parties with regard to policy issues that they care about. According to this logic, mass–elite policy linkages may take place more visibly and vividly at the level of issues, which voters consider salient. We believe that this finding provides the next step towards a better understanding of mass–elite political linkage in a democratic polity.

Notes

1. Note that using other model specifications, e.g. random-effect by individual or by party, yields similar results to the ones presented in the article. See Tables S2 and S3 in the Supplemental data for complete results.
2. The Left Party and the CSU are excluded due to lack of data.
3. Note that in our second set of models, only correct responses about the direction of shifts are coded as 1. Correct responses when there was no shift constitute less than 10% of the cases and therefore do not affect the substantive results and the inferences drawn therefrom. However, to ascertain that this is indeed the case, we also ran a set of corresponding specifications of the multinomial logistic regression models where the dependent variable took three values accounting for the correct responses where there was no shift, and our main results are confirmed. Note also that using the subsample of instances where the party's position does not change, salience has no effect in this case. Hence, it seems that saliency only plays a role when there are policy shifts (see Table S4 in the Supplemental data).

4. We do not measure the absolute change between the respondent's current and lagged placement of the party on a given issue for two main reasons. First, the extent of shift is not in itself a useful indicator for testing the hypotheses because the theory does not relate the magnitude of a policy shift to voters' perception of a policy shift. Secondly, it is commonly known, many policy shifts are small and may well be attributed to measurement error (e.g. Benoit *et al.* 2009). Hence, a variable measured on absolute values would have asymmetric right-skewed properties (see Meyer 2013: 223). However, since some shifts in policy positions can be so minute as to be imperceptible while dramatic policy shifts, albeit rather rare, are likely to be observed irrespective of the importance voters attach to these policies, we opt to differentiate between noticeable vs. non-noticeable shifts as discussed below.
5. For a discussion on party positions, its various measurements and drawbacks see the Supplemental data.
6. Attempts have been made to improve the scaling of party positions derived from political texts, e.g. by constructing a log ratio scale of the CMP/MARPOR data (Lowe *et al.* 2011). While the merits of different scaling procedures continue to be debated, all transformations come at a cost (Franzmann 2013; Meyer 2013: 42–3). The most contested CMP/MARPOR scale is the L–R (rile) scale, which we do not use in our analysis. Furthermore, the logit scores correlate with the original L–R (rile) scores at $r = 0.94$ (Budge and McDonald 2012) and this appears to also be the case for the policy sub-scales Lowe *et al.* (2011) propose.
7. Not surprisingly, parties in Western Europe are quite consistent in their choice of platforms and therefore the magnitude of one-period changes is quite small (Adams *et al.* 2016; Fernandez-Vazquez 2014: 1936; König and Luig 2009; Saalfeld and Zohlnhöfer 2014).
8. The analysis reveals that estimates are similar across cutoff points and become inefficient with cutoff points above 2. Insignificant results for the variable saliency for a cutoff of 2 and above are mostly due to the fact that swift policy shifts, albeit rather rare, are likely to be perceived by voters irrespective of the importance voters attach to these policies.
9. We also re-run our analysis looking at significant instead of noticeable shifts. Hence we calculated 95% confidence intervals around parties' policy positions following Benoit *et al.* (2009) and define as significant a shift that goes beyond these confidence bounds. Additional results are presented in the online supporting material. We thank a reviewer for this suggestion.
10. We set each CMP coding x_i of party j on the 0 to 100 scale to the value $[0.1(x_i)+0]$, which recalibrates these codings to an 11-point scale or to the value $[0.06(x_i)+0]$, which recalibrates to a 7-point scale. Although the theoretical range for the CMP policy positions is 0–100; there are negative values for Europe and immigration in our dataset because the derived variable for these two issues was created by subtracting the values of the oppositional categories per CMP coding (see the online appendix for details), while the negative values for the nuclear variable reflect the substantive meaning of the positional scale in the voter dataset. Thus, for nuclear, Europe and immigration, we set each CMP coding x_i of party j on the -100 to +100 scale to the value $[0.05(x_i)+5]$, which recalibrates these codings to an 11-point scale or to the value $[0.03(x_i)+3]$, which recalibrates to a 7-point scale.
11. The use of open-ended questions is justified on the grounds that they will more accurately reflect the 'true' saliency that voters attach to an issue than the closed-ended questions. Indeed, research suggests that when asked questions in the

closed-ended format, voters tend to rate all issues at higher levels of importance and minor issues are particularly prone to greater increases (Fournier *et al.* 2003).

12. We acknowledge that assigning EU integration to either the left or the right side of the ideological spectrum is less straightforward than doing so with the other three issue dimensions. Several have even discussed to what extent the EU related to a left/right competition (see Bakker *et al.* 2012 for a review). In Germany and the period under scrutiny in this article, the European project was championed more strongly by the parties of the centre-right than for the centre-left and we hence consider more EU integration as right-wing. However, it has to be stressed that flipping the scale has very little impact on our regression models.
13. We also replicated all our models adding a variable measuring lagged party's perceived position ($t-1$) to control for voters' long-term perceptions of party position; the resulting estimates support the same conclusions that we report in the article.
14. We have surveyed other European countries which have panel data available, including Sweden, Norway and Italy; however, they either only include the general left–right measurement or some issues are available only in one of the waves of the panel study.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Thomas Meyer, David Farrell, Jos Elkind, Louis Aslett and the colleagues from the Mair Library REP Group at University College Dublin for feedback on earlier versions of this manuscript. We also thank Veronika Heider for her superb research assistance and the anonymous reviewers for their critical comments and suggestions, which have greatly improved this article.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

Magdalena Staniek was supported by the Irish Research Council [grant number GOIPD/2015/494].

Notes on contributors

Carolina Plescia is Assistant Professor in the Department of Government at the University of Vienna. Her research focuses on public opinion, electoral behaviour and political representation. She is the author of *Split-Ticket Voting in Mixed-Member Electoral Systems* (ECPR Press), and has published in journals such as *Party Politics*, *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* and *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. [carolina.plescia@univie.ac.at]

Magdalena Staniek is a Government of Ireland postdoctoral research fellow in the School of Politics and International Relations, University College Dublin. She holds

a PhD in Political Science from Trinity College Dublin. Her research interests are political parties, electoral behaviour, legislative politics and quantitative methodology. [magdalena.staniek@ucd.i.e.]

ORCID

Carolina Plescia  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9719-001X>

Magdalena Staniek  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1480-8639>

References

- Achen, Christopher H. (1978). 'Measuring Representation', *American Journal of Political Science*, 22:1, 475–510.
- Adams, James (2012). 'Causes and Electoral Consequences of Party Policy Shifts in Multiparty Elections: Theoretical Results and Empirical Evidence', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 15, 401–19.
- Adams, James, Michael Clark, Lawrence Ezrow, and Garrett Glasgow (2004). 'Understanding Change and Stability in Party Ideologies: Do Parties Respond to Public Opinion or to Past Election Results?', *British Journal of Political Science*, 34:4, 589–610.
- Adams, James, Michael Clark, Lawrence Ezrow, and Garrett Glasgow (2006). 'Are Niche Parties Fundamentally Different from Mainstream Parties? The Causes and the Electoral Consequences of Western European Parties' Policy Shifts, 1976–1998', *American Journal of Political Science*, 50:3, 513–29.
- Adams, James, Lawrence Ezrow, and Zeynep Somer-Topcu (2011). 'Is Anybody Listening? Evidence that Voters Do Not Respond to European Parties' Policy Statements During Elections', *American Journal of Political Science*, 55:2, 370–82.
- Adams, James, Lawrence Ezrow, and Christopher Wlezien (2016). 'The Company You Keep: How Voters Infer Party Positions on European Integration from Governing Coalition Arrangements', *American Journal of Political Science*, 60:4, 811–23.
- Bakker, Ryan, Seth Jolly, and Jonathan Polk (2012). 'Complexity in the European Party Space: Exploring Dimensionality with Experts', *European Union Politics*, 13:2, 219–45.
- Basinger, Scott J., and Howard Lavine (2005). 'Ambivalence, Information, and Electoral Choice', *American Political Science Review*, 99:2, 169–84.
- Bawn, Kathleen, and Zeynep Somer-Topcu (2012). 'Government versus Opposition at the Polls: How Governing Status Affects the Impact of Policy Positions', *American Journal of Political Science*, 56:2, 433–46.
- Benoit, Kenneth, and Michael Laver (2007). 'Estimating Party Policy Positions: Comparing Expert Surveys and Hand-Coded Content Analysis', *Electoral Studies*, 26:1, 90–107.
- Benoit, Kenneth, and Michael Laver (2012). 'The Dimensionality of Political Space: Epistemological and Methodological Considerations', *European Union Politics*, 13:2, 194–218.
- Benoit, Kenneth, Michael Laver, and Slava Mikhaylov (2009). 'Treating Words as Data with Error: Uncertainty in Text Statements of Policy Positions', *American Journal of Political Science*, 53:2, 495–513.
- Budge, Ian (1994). 'A New Spatial Theory of Party Competition: Uncertainty, Ideology and Policy Equilibria Viewed Comparatively and Temporally', *British Journal of Political Science*, 24:4, 443–67.

- Budge, Ian (2001). *Mapping Policy Preferences: Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments, 1945–1998*, Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Budge, Ian (2015). 'Issue Emphases, Saliency Theory and Issue Ownership: A Historical and Conceptual Analysis', *West European Politics*, 38:4, 761–77.
- Budge, Ian, and Michael D. McDonald (2012). 'Conceptualising and Measuring 'Centrism' Correctly on the Left-Right Scale (RILE) – Without Systematic Bias: A General Response by MARPOR', *Electoral Studies*, 31:3, 609–12.
- Budge, Ian, David Robertson, and Derek Hearl (1987). *Ideology, Strategy and Party Change: Spatial Analyses of Post-War Election Programmes in 19 Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carter, Neil (2006). 'Party Politicization of the Environment in Britain', *Party Politics*, 12:6, 747–67.
- Dalton, Russell J., and Ian McAllister (2015). 'Random Walk or Planned Excursion? Continuity and Change in the Left-Right Positions of Political Parties', *Comparative Political Studies*, 48:6, 759–87.
- Dalton, Russell J., David M. Farrell, and Ian McAllister (2011). *Political Parties and Democratic Linkage: How Parties Organize Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- De Vries, Catherine E., and Gary Marks (2012). 'The Struggle over Dimensionality: A Note on Theory and Empirics', *European Union Politics*, 13:2, 185–93.
- De Vries, Catherine E., and Nathalie Giger (2014). 'Holding Governments Accountable: Individual Heterogeneity in Performance Voting', *European Journal of Political Research*, 53:2, 345–62.
- Dinas, Elias, and Kostas Gemenis (2010). 'Measuring Parties' Ideological Positions with Manifesto Data: A Critical Evaluation of the Competing Methods', *Party Politics*, 16:4, 427–50.
- Downs, Anthony (1957). *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York, NY: Harper.
- Enelow, James M., and Melvin J. Hinich (1984). *The Spatial Theory of Voting: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ezrow, Lawrence, and Georgios Xezonakis (2011). 'Citizen Satisfaction with Democracy and Parties' Policy Offerings', *Comparative Political Studies*, 44:9, 1152–78.
- Ezrow, Lawrence, Catherine De Vries, Marco Steenbergen, and Erica Edwards (2011). 'Mean Voter Representation and Partisan Constituency Representation: Do Parties Respond to the Mean Voter Position or to Their Supporters?', *Party Politics*, 17:3, 275–301.
- Falcó-Gimeno, Albert, and Pablo Fernandez-Vazquez (2015). 'Choices that Matter: Coalition Formation and Parties' Ideological Reputation', Unpublished manuscript.
- Fernandez-Vazquez, Pablo (2014). 'And Yet It Moves: The Effect of Election Platforms on Party Policy Images', *Comparative Political Studies*, 47:14, 1919–44.
- Fiske, Susan T., and Shelley E. Taylor (2013). *Social Cognition: From Brains to Culture*. London: Sage.
- Fortunato, David, and Randolph T. Stevenson (2013). 'Perceptions of Partisan Ideologies: The Effect of Coalition Participation', *American Journal of Political Science*, 57:2, 459–77.
- Fournier, Patrick, André Blais, Richard Nadeau, Elisabeth Gidengil, and Neil Nevitte (2003). 'Issue Importance and Performance Voting', *Political Behavior*, 25:1, 51–67.
- Franzmann, Simon T. (2013). 'From Data to Inference and Back Again: Perspectives from Content Analysis', in Andrea Volkens, Judith Bara, Ian Budge, Michael D. McDonald and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (eds.), *Mapping Policy Preferences from Texts: Measurement Solutions for Users, Analytic Strategies for Public Representation: 51 Countries, 1945–2010*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 210–35.

- Gemenis, Kostas (2013). 'What to Do (and Not to Do) with the Comparative Manifestos Project Data', *Political Studies*, 61:1, 3–23.
- Gigerenzer, Gerd, and Wolfgang Gaissmaier (2011). 'Heuristic Decision Making', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 62, 451–82.
- Green, Jane, and Sara B. Hobolt (2008). 'Owning the Issue Agenda: Party Strategies and Vote Choices in British Elections', *Electoral Studies*, 27:3, 460–76.
- Hug, Simon (2001). *Altering Party Systems: Strategic Behavior and the Emergence of New Political Parties in Western Democracies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Iyengar, Shanto, and Donald R. Kinder (1987). *News that Matters: Agenda Setting and Priming In A Television Age*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Klingemann, Hans-Dieter, Richard I. Hofferbert, and Ian Budge (1994). *Parties, Policies, and Democracy*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- Klingemann, Hans-Dieter, Andrea Volkens, Judith Bara, Ian Budge, and Michael D. McDonald (2006). *Mapping Policy Preferences II: Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments in Eastern Europe, European Union, and OECD 1990–2003*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- König, Thomas, and Bernd Luig (2009). 'German 'Lexiconspace': Policy Positions and Their Legislative Context', *German Politics*, 18:3, 345–64.
- Krosnick, Jon A. (1990). 'Government Policy and Citizen Passion: A Study of Issue Publics in Contemporary America', *Political Behavior*, 12:1, 59–92.
- Kuklinski, James H., Paul J. Quirk, Jennifer Jerit, and Robert F. Rich (2001). 'The Political Environment and Citizen Competence', *American Journal of Political Science*, 45:2, 410–24.
- Lau, Richard R., and David P. Redlawsk (1997). 'Voting Correctly', *American Political Science Review*, 91:3, 585–98.
- Lau, Richard R., and David P. Redlawsk (2001). 'Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making', *American Journal of Political Science*, 45:4, 951–71.
- Lau, Richard R., David J. Andersen, and David P. Redlawsk (2008). 'An Exploration of Correct Voting in Recent US Presidential Elections', *American Journal of Political Science*, 52:2, 395–411.
- Laver, Michael (2005). 'Policy and the Dynamics of Political Competition', *American Political Science Review*, 99:2, 263–81.
- Laver, Michael (2014). 'Measuring Policy Positions in Political Space', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 17, 207–23.
- Laver, Michael, and Ernest Sergenti (2011). *Party Competition: An Agent-Based Model*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Laver, Michael, Kenneth Benoit, and John Garry (2003). 'Extracting Policy Positions from Political Texts Using Words as Data', *American Political Science Review*, 97:2, 311–31.
- Lowe, Will, Kenneth Benoit, Slava Mikhaylov, and Michael Laver (2011). 'Scaling Policy Preferences from Coded Political Texts', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 36:1, 123–55.
- Lupia, Arthur, and Mathew D. McCubbins (1998). *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need To Know?*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lupu, Noam (2014). 'Brand Dilution and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America', *World Politics*, 66:4, 561–602.
- McGraw, Kathleen M., and Neil Pinney (1990). 'The Effects of General and Domain-Specific Expertise on Political Memory and Judgment', *Social Cognition*, 8:1, 9–30.
- Meguid, Bonnie M. (2008). *Competition between Unequals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meyer, Thomas M. (2013). *Constraints on Party Policy Change*. Colchester: ECPR Press.

- Miller, Joanne M., and Jon A. Krosnick (1996). 'News Media Impact on the Ingredients of Presidential Evaluations: A Program of Research on the Priming Hypothesis', in Diana Mutz and Paul M. Sniderman (eds.), *Political Persuasion and Attitude Change*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 79–100.
- Saalfeld, Thomas, and Reimut Zohlnhöfer (2014). 'From 'Dream Team' to 'Marriage of Convenience'? An Introduction', *German Politics*, 23:4, 237–50.
- Schattschneider, Elmer E. (1942). *Party Government*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Selck, Torsten J. (2006). 'The Effects of Issues Salience on Political Decision-Making', *Constitutional Political Economy*, 17:1, 5–13.
- Slapin, Jonathan B., and Sven-Oliver Proksch (2008). 'A Scaling Model for Estimating Time-Series Party Positions from Texts', *American Journal of Political Science*, 52:3, 705–22.
- Soroka, Stuart N., and Christopher Wlezien (2005). 'Opinion–policy Dynamics: Public Preferences and Public Expenditure in the United Kingdom', *British Journal of Political Science*, 35:4, 665–89.
- Spoon, Jae-Jae (2011). *Political Survival of Small parties in Europe*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Tavits, Margit (2007). 'Principle vs. Pragmatism: Policy Shifts and Political Competition', *American Journal of Political Science*, 51:1, 151–65.
- Van der Brug, Wouter (2004). 'Issue Ownership and Party Choice', *Electoral Studies*, 23:2, 209–33.
- Volkens, Andrea (2007). 'Strengths and Weaknesses of Approaches to Measuring Policy Positions of Parties', *Electoral Studies*, 26:1, 108–20.
- Volkens, Andrea, Pola Lehmann, Theres Matthieß, Nicolas Merz, Sven Regel, and Annika Werner (2015). *The Manifesto Data Collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR)*. Version 2015a. Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB).
- Wagner, Markus (2011). 'Defining and Measuring Niche Parties', *Party Politics*, 18:6, 845–64.
- Wagner, Markus, and Thomas M. Meyer (2014). 'Which Issues Do Parties Emphasise? Salience Strategies and Party Organisation in Multiparty Systems', *West European Politics*, 37:5, 1019–45.
- Walgrave, Stefaan, and Jonas Lefevere (2013). 'Ideology, Salience, and Complexity: Determinants of Policy Issue Incongruence Between Voters and Parties', *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties*, 23:4, 456–83.
- Walgrave, Stefaan, and Michiel Nuytemans (2009). 'Friction and Party Manifesto Change in 25 Countries, 1945–98', *American Journal of Political Science*, 53:1, 190–206.
- Zaller, John (1992). *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.