Working Paper

Where Is My Party?

Introducing New Data Sets on Ideological Cohesion and Ambiguity of Party Positions in Media Coverage

Markus Baumann, Martin Gross

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für europäische sozialforschung

UNIVERSITÄT
MANNHEIM

Markus Baumann
Martin Gross

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Arbeitspapiere – Working Papers
Nr. 167, 2016

Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung

Baumann, Markus:
Where Is My Party? Introducing New Data Sets on Ideological Cohesion and Ambiguity of Party Positions in Media Coverage / Markus Baumann; Martin Gross – Mannheim: 2016
(Arbeitspapiere - Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung; 167)
ISSN 1437-8574

Not available in book shops.
Token fee: € 3,00
Purchase: Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung (MZES)
D – 68131 Mannheim
www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de

Editorial Note:

Markus Baumann is a research associate in the project "Where Is My Party? Determinants of Voter Agreement about the Ideological Positions of Political Parties". He has previously worked in the MZES project "Intra-party Heterogeneity and its Political Consequences in Europe" and is currently also affiliated as a researcher in the project "Yes Minister! A Survey of Cabinet Ministers' Influence on Social Policy in Seven West European Countries" at the University of Lund and at the Professorship of Political Science III – Comparative Government (University of Mannheim). His research focuses on individual MP behaviour, intra-party heterogeneity, electoral incentives, and moral policymaking.

Martin Gross is a postdoctoral researcher at the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES) in Mannheim, Germany, and is currently working in the Horizon 2020 project "The impact of EU Cohesion Policy on European Identification (COHESIFY)". He received his PhD in 2015 from the Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany. His thesis dealt with coalition formation, coalition bargaining, and coalition agreements on the German local level in general and with coalitions between the CDU and the Greens in particular. His research is focused on local politics, political institutions, party competition, coalition formation processes in multi-level systems, and EU cohesion policy.

Abstract

Political parties change their policy positions throughout the course of an election campaign. They reinforce some of their campaign statements by articulating them more prominently while simultaneously downplaying other issues that may harm their election results. Party statements in the media and the framing of the statements by the media are at the centre of election campaigns. The most promising way to assess the clarity and consistency of party-provided messages is a media content analysis. In this working paper, we introduce new data sets on ideological cohesion and ambiguity of party positions in the media coverage of nine European countries. The data sets are divided in different aspects: (i) parties talking about themselves; (ii) parties talking about other parties; (iii) journalists talking about parties. Each of these data sets further distinguishes between three different kinds of information: (i) party/journalist talking about an issue area; (ii) party/journalist talking about the valence of that issue area; (iii) party/journalist talking about general valence characteristics, such as the competence or performance of party leaders. These measures of party campaign contents, differentiating between policy-centred and leader-centred campaigns and media framing, may serve as a basis for several future studies focusing on election campaigns and media impact in a cross-national way.

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1 Introduction

Political parties change their policy positions throughout the course of an election campaign. They reinforce some of their campaign statements by articulating them more prominently while simultaneously downplaying other issues that may harm their election results. This rational course of action by political parties, however, may unsettle voter perceptions of parties' point of views on policy issues. This could even be intensified by the media's framing of party statements. The link between voter preferences and party policies, however, is crucial for the quality and stability of democracy (see, e.g., Powell 2000, 2004). Citizens do not vote according to parties' actual policy positions but rather on the basis of how they perceive these policy positions. Hence, party statements in the media and the framing of the statements by the media are at the centre of this working paper, which is part of the research project "Where is my party? Determinants of Voter Agreement about the Ideological Positions of Political Parties". The project is funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and directed by Marc Debus (University of Mannheim & MZES), Margit Tavits (Washington University of St Louis), and Zeynep Somer-Topcu (The University of Texas at Austin).

The working paper is structured as follows. In the subsequent section, we give a brief review of the literature on voter perceptions of party positions and on parties' strategies of "blurring" their policy positions, which may result in positional ambiguity. We present the media data we use in the third section, followed by a description of the coding instrument and the coder training in section four. Section five comprises information on inter-coder agreement and data generation, while the different country sets are presented in Section six. In addition, we present some selected descriptive results in Section seven. The final section concludes.

2 Ideological cohesion, positional ambiguity, and voter perceptions of party positions in nine European countries

Party behaviour and actions of parties, especially during election campaigns, are supposed to influence voter perceptions of party policies. However, several studies show that voters differ in these perceptions which can be attributable to at least four reasons: (i) voters can misinterpret party statements due to a lack of political knowledge (Bartels 1996; Converse 1964; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Fortunato and Stevenson 2013a, 2013b; Kuklinski and Quirk 2000); (ii) parties can be unclear and inconsistent in their statements, either intentionally or unintentionally by sending "mixed signals" to voters as a result of intra-party ideological differences (Rovny 2012; Somer-Topcu 2015); (iii) parties can intentionally vary other parties' policy statements for the purpose of blaming them for being "unclear" and "unreliable" concerning specific policy issues; (iv) the framing of party statements by journalists strongly shapes voter perceptions of party positions, as the media are the main communication channel through which voters take notice of party statements. It is the last three aspects this working paper and the introduced data sets will focus on by analysing election campaigns of parties and the media's framing of party statements in nine European countries: The Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Cross-national studies on party position taking are mostly based on the analysis of party manifestos, either by using data of the *Manifesto Research on Political Representation* (MARPOR) (e.g., Budge et al. 2001, Klingemann et al. 2006, Volkens et al. 2013), expert surveys (e.g., Budge and Laver 2006), or by applying semi- and fully-automated computer techniques (e.g., Laver et al. 2003; Slapin and Proksch 2008). In the last years, however, there have been conducted several studies using media data to infer party policy

positions, frequently concentrating on the issue of European integration (e.g., Helbling and Tresch 2011; Hellström and Blomgren 2016).

Campaign media content analyses focus on the news coverage and the tone of news in federal elections on the one hand (for Germany see, e.g., Krewel et al. 2011; Krewel 2014; Leidecker and Wilke 2015; Wilke and Leidecker 2010; Wilke and Reinemann 2000, 2003, 2006; Wilke et al. 2011)[1] and on parties' negative campaigning and how this is covered and framed by the news on the other (e.g., Elmelund-Præstekær and Mølgaard Svensson 2014a, 2014b; Hansen and Pedersen 2008; Pedersen 2014).

There is less scholarly evidence on the positional ambiguity of political parties, though. For Hungary, Papp (2013) analysed the clarity of parties' election pledges in the media in comparison to parties' election pledges of the election manifestos. The media pledges seem to be more specific than the pledges of the election manifesto. Yet, this varies between parties. With regard to party debates on EU issues in national election campaigns, parties that are internally divided and whose voters are also disunited on such issues talk more on EU issues than other parties; however, they do so in an ambiguous way due to intraparty dissent (Hellström and Blomberg 2016).

3 Media data: sources, coverage, and sample selection

The most promising way to assess the clarity and consistency of party-provided messages is a media content analysis. This is particularly the case when a study aims at analysing the competition between parties (Helbling and Tresch 2011, p. 181). Following previous research on media content analysis of European Parliament election campaigns (de Vreese et al. 2006; Schuck et al. 2010), country teams collected the election-related content of two main daily newspapers concerning the two latest national elections in each country under study. The use of a more left-leaning and a more right-leaning daily newspaper minimizes the threat of a newspaper selection bias. In the German case, for instance, selecting the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* as a centre–left daily newspaper and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* as a centre–right daily newspaper is in line with previous studies, e.g., the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES).[2] Each country team selected two daily newspapers accordingly. Table 1 gives an overview of the daily newspapers and election years in the respective countries of the study.

Table 1: Daily newspapers and election years included in the study

Country	Daily newspapers		Election years		
Czech Republic	Mladá fronta Dnes	Právo		2010	2013
Denmark	Jyllands-Posten	Politiken		2007	2011
Germany	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung	Süddeutsche Zeitung		2009	2013
Hungary	Magyar Nemzet	Népszabadság		2006	2010
The Netherlands	De Telegraaf	de Volkskrant		2010	2012
Poland	Gazeta Wyborcza	Rzeczpospolita		2007	2011
Portugal	Jornal de Notícias	Público		2009	2011
Sweden	Aftonbladet	Dagens Nyheter		2010	2014
United Kingdom	The Guardian	The Daily Telegraph	2005	2010	2015

The last 30 days of an election campaign can be seen as the most "heated phase", in which parties intensify their election campaign output and media coverage increases. Based on this, newspaper articles related to national elections from four weeks prior to the election day have been collected and analysed by

1 In the following, we are focusing on studies related to *newspaper* media, as this is the only media source used in the project.

2 GLES analyses three additional newspapers and one tabloid (Schmitt-Beck et al. 2014).

each country team, composed of a country expert and several undergraduate research assistants (as coders).[3] The minimum article number requirement had been set to 60 per newspaper/election and the maximum to 100. All front page articles were coded as well as a 5 per cent random sample of the rest of the election-related articles until at least 60 articles per newspaper/election had been coded.

4 Coding instrument and coder training

In a first step, country experts were trained by coding several English training articles during a two-day workshop at the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES) in March 2015. In the following weeks, country experts trained and supervised their undergraduate research assistants with the same set of training articles and, additionally, with a sample of country-specific newspaper articles. Three coders per country were assigned to analyse the same content in order to ensure inter-coder reliability. Coding instructions and procedures have been developed on the basis of Clarke et al. (2004) and Schuck et al. (2010). Coders were instructed to fill out an online survey provided by the Population Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin (Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap)). Subsequent to the coding of training articles by the country experts, the project directors and the authors gave them feedback and raised their awareness of some general points with respect to coding the newspaper articles. Additionally, the country teams were advised to check the undergraduate student assistants' coding of several challenging articles at the end of the first and at the end of the third week of coding.

4.1 General information on article and subject

At the beginning of the questionnaire, coders were asked to enter basic information such as their own name, election year, newspaper title, article number, title of the article, and—most importantly—which party they were going to code.[4] Coders had to complete the questionnaire once for each subject that was mentioned in the respective newspaper article.

As "subjects", the country teams identified the most important parties as well as the national governments at that time in the respective countries, and if there was a coalition government in office before an election (see Appendix, Table A1). Following this, the coders had to state who is speaking on behalf of the subject. To this end, the coding instrument provided several options: "party as a whole", "party leader", "a member of the national parliament", "regional/local leader of the party", "a member of the local/regional parliament", "other member/affiliate of the party", and "other".[5]

In the following, we first describe which policy issues have been addressed in the survey. Secondly, we elaborate on one of the biggest advantages of the survey regarding party and journalist statements: the possible distinction between issue-related valence and general valence.

4.2 Policy issues

With respect to policy issues mentioned in the newspaper articles, coders had the possibility to code information in three different ways: (i) a subject mentions its own position on a specific issue; (ii) a subject

3 If the campaign period in a country lasted less than four weeks, only information concerning the campaign period was included.

4 Additionally, coders were asked to note down the newspaper page number of the article and the length of the article in words.

5 Coders had the possibility to name more than one person in cases where several persons speaking on behalf of the subject were mentioned in a newspaper article.

talks about issues of other parties; (iii) the journalist writing the article speaks about the issue positions of the subject. If coders confirmed one of these options, they were subsequently asked to which issue the subject referred to (for the list of issues asked in every country, see Table 7 in Section 6.2.2). "'Social policy/public services" was used as an umbrella category on welfare state-related policies. Due to the extensive scope of the category, coders had several options to code more detailed information (see Table 7 in Section 6.2.2). The first 16 policy issues are identical in every country.[6] However, the country teams were provided with the option to add additional policy issues specific to their country situation. These additional policy issues comprise main topics relevant to the specific election campaigns in the countries under study. Table 2 gives an overview of these additional issues, suggested by the country teams and implemented in the survey.

Table 2: List of additionally asked policy issues in specific countries

Country	Additional policy issues
Czech Republic	Constitutional change
	Roma
Denmark	Labour market policies (additional category of social policy/public services)
Hungary	Roma
	Hungarians outside the borders
Poland	Communist past
	Smolensk accident
	Corruption
Portugal	Corruption
	Bailout and austerity measures
Sweden	Gender equality

We also asked coders to give information on the *direction* in which the subject framed the respective policy issues by indicating whether the subject mentioned the issue in a negative, neutral[7], positive, or contradictory way. Regarding social policy and public service issues, however, coders were asked to provide information on whether the discussion was about decreasing or increasing spending (or whether the subject had an unclear or contradictory position).

4.3 Valence of statements

4.3.1 Issue-related valence

Following this information on the subject's discussion of policy issues, coders were instructed to code the *valence* of party and journalist statements on policy issues. This allows us to grasp the self-framing by parties concerning policy issues as well as the framing by rival parties and the framing by the media. In other words, parties may praise or criticise its own valence characteristics (or the valence characteristics of other parties) in the context of the issue that has to be coded. Again, several aspects of information had to be coded. In a first step, coders had to decide if the subject or the journalist writing about the subject mentioned valence characteristics of the subject and whether this discussion referred to a specific issue position. This distinction was made in order to grasp if parties base their election campaign more on policy issues or general (mainly positive) party characteristics. In a second step, coders had the possibility to insert information on whether a subject is talking about another actor's valence characteristic while refer-

6 Slightly different sets of issues were coded for the UK data. See Appendix, Table A3, for the detailed scheme applying to each campaign.

7 This means that the subject described the status quo, just mentioned the issue or took a vague/unclear position on this issue.

ring to an issue position. Regarding the valence content, coders could choose between seven different options: (i) “party/government honesty/integrity”; (ii) “party/government (past, current, future) competence/performance”; (iii) “party/government unity”; (iv) “leader honesty/integrity/character”; (v) “leader (past, current, future) competence/performance”; (vi) “leader charisma”; (vii) “other”. They also had to decide whether the valence category was referred to in a negative, neutral, or positive way.

4.3.2 General valence

During an election campaign, parties do not only discuss other parties’ policy issues, they also refer to other parties’ valence characteristics in general without connecting this to a specific issue. This action is one of the fundamental elements of negative campaigning (Lau and Rovner 2009; Skaperdas and Grofman 1995). Again, the coding instrument provided coders with the aforementioned seven options to code party (and journalist) statements discussing other parties’ valence characteristics without referring to an issue position. Accordingly, coders needed to decide on the (negative, neutral, or positive) direction of the valence statements.

4.3.3 Country-specific statement types asked in the survey

Country teams were given the opportunity to propose additional statement types to be included in the survey. These various statement types range from the discussion of coalition options to descriptive aspects such as the language used by political actors and journalists. Table 3 gives an overview of these country-specific types of statements.

Table 3: Country-specific statement types

Country	Statement types
Denmark	Sports/games/war language (e.g., winner, loser, rank, odds, fight, etc.) used by subjects and journalists
Germany	Potential coalition options for the federal government Journalist’s attitude toward potential coalition options Journalist’s statement on the numerical feasibility of coalition options after the election (e.g., by referencing poll results)
Portugal	Sports/games/war language (e.g., winner, loser, rank, odds, fight, etc.) used by subjects and journalists Mentioning of past election results by subjects and journalists Mentioning of parties’ placement in recent opinion polls by subjects and journalists Mentioning of subjects’ or other parties’ strategic choice or avoidance of issues by subjects and journalists

4.4 Journalist framing

At the end of the survey, coders were asked to assess the general tone of the article towards the subject by deciding whether the article discussed the respective subject in a negative, neutral, or positive way and by explaining their coding decisions in their own words. Furthermore, coders were asked if the article talks about an alleged event with regard to the subject and if the event can be considered a scandal. A scandal had been broadly defined as being related to corruption, party/campaign finances, private financial misconduct, violation of laws, and violations of social norms (i.e., lying, stealing, sex, drunk driving). Finally, coders had to decide which of the aforementioned issues related to the subject was the dominant issue in the article. However, coders were instructed to code an issue only as dominant if the entire article dis-

cussed only one issue concerning the subject. Otherwise, coders were advised to code that there was no dominant issue.

4.5 Identification of coder confidence

For each major topic in the survey, i.e., the identification of the subject, the mentioned issues, and the valence contents, coders were asked to provide information on how confident they were about their answers. If they were not "fully confident" but rather "somewhat confident" or "not confident", coders had to explain their coding decision in their own words. This information is essential for assessing inter-coder agreement, which will be elaborated in more detail in Section 5.

5 Inter-coder agreement and data generation

In order to make a valid claim about coder agreements, the data had to be cleaned and organized in a specific manner. This was done in several steps. First, the survey results were made available to the country teams, who were asked to check the coding and collect all errors in a list of required changes. Additionally, the project team provided the country teams with a checklist they should consult in order to find the errors in the respective country data (in particular concerning missing data, typographical errors, incorrect information, incorrect article numbers, etc.). Following this, we included all the required changes in the survey.

Each of the articles selected for coding was coded by three country expert coders, as described in section 4. Building a data set with statements that have been reliably identified by the coders therefore involved identifying and keeping statements which have been spotted and assessed in agreement. Coders had been asked to fill out one survey for each subject mentioned in a newspaper article and to collect all statements made by the actor in this article. Raw data was thus in a "wide" data format, with all of an actor's statements in an article constituting one observation. The number of utilized/coded variables depends on the number of actors appearing and statements made in the article. At this stage, the comparison of codings between coders is obstructed for several reasons. For instance, coders are relatively likely to agree on their codings for a short newspaper article that lists only very few statements of an actor. With an increase in complexity of the statements, however, codings are less likely to coincide. In addition, coders may agree on their coding of statements although not coding all statements in an identical order. To overcome this problem, we changed the observation unit to a statement level, meaning that data was brought into a "long" format, where one statement constituted an observation. This entailed reshaping and re-aggregating the raw data in multiple instances. Based on the long data, statements on which coders agree could now be identified. This allowed for discarding codings with no or a low agreement rate and thus limited reliability.

Bringing the wide, raw data to a common form and disaggregating observations on an actor–article level to a statement level required finding a common data structure for the coded statements. This was given by the systematics of the questionnaire, which asked coders to first identify the policy area, respectively the valence category of the statement, and then queried the direction of the statement and the coders' confidence in his/her coding choice with values of 1 to 3, indicating full, medium, and little confidence, respectively. This structure (for a detailed description of the data structure, see section 6 "The country data sets") has been chosen to recode data. Recoding and reshaping the data accordingly resulted in a data set within which statements were duplicated if they had been identified in the text by multiple coders. This made it possible to determine a decision rule of which statements to keep. This decision rule was based on

the number of observed identical codings and the confidence coders have assigned to their codings. Table 4 provides details for the decision rule.

Table 4: Decision rules on which statements to keep

Statement/observation kept if:	*Number of identical observations*	*Coders' confidence*
	3	No requirement
	2	Both coders at least "medium confident"
	1	Coder is "fully confident"

6 The country data sets

The following sections present the structure of the data sets after identifying the statements that were made by parties in the media and that were identified by country experts with a sufficient certainty (see section "Coder agreement"). For a detailed list of the respective electoral campaigns and coded media outlets, see section 3 "Media data: Sources, coverage, and sample selection". We begin by presenting a broad overview of the data in Section 6.1. In Section 6.2, we present the structure of the country data sets by providing information on variables that are common to all three data sets (Section 6.2.1) as well as variables in the data sets "Self" (Section 6.2.2), "Other" (Section 6.2.3), and "Journalist" (Section 6.2.4).

6.1 Data overview

Three data sets are available, covering different types of statements found in the media (see Table 5). The "Self" data set covers positions and statements made by parties in the media on their behalf, i.e., any expression made by party members in the media concerning their parties' issue positions, issue-related valence, or general valence. The "Other" data set covers statements which were made by members of one party but referred to another party, i.e., statements commenting on other parties' issue positions, issue-related valence, or general valence. Last, the "Journalist" data set covers equivalent statements made by journalists in the coded media.

Table 5: Overview of the data

Fact	Description
Countries covered	Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, United Kingdom
Electoral campaigns covered	Two per country (between 2007 and 2014); three for the United Kingdom (2005, 2010, 2015)
Observations/Units in data set	Statements made by a party in the media
Subjects	Parties and Journalists
Statement types	Statements on issues, issue-related valence, and general valence
Data Sets	
- Data set "Self"	Statements parties have made on their own issue positions, issue-related valence, and general valence
- Data set "Other"	Statements parties have made on the issue positions, issue-related valence, and general valence of other parties
- Data set "Journalist"	Statements journalists have made on parties' issue positions, issue-related valence, and general valence

6.2 Structure of country data sets

Within each country, the "Self", "Other" and "Journalist" data sets have been designed to be as similar in structure as possible. An "observation" in each data set generally represents one statement coded from the media outlet, except for codings of the journalist's tone towards a party (see Section 6.2.4). The variables heading each of the data sets contain information on the source of the coding, i.e., on the newspaper article from which the statement was extracted. Table 6 summarizes these variables, which are identical in all three country data sets. Tables 7, 8, and 9 summarize the variables according to the heading for each of the respective data sets. The general structure is very similar between the data sets: For any statement, the variable **statement_type** describes what the coded expression is about. The possible values of this variable depend on the data set, i.e., they vary between the "Self", "Other", and "Journalist" data sets. Generally covered are statements on issue positions, issue-related valence, and general valence. The contents of the variable **var_value** are contingent upon the type of statement as coded in **statement_type**. For example, if an issue position is coded, **var_value** reflects the policy field of the statement (see section 6.2.2), whereas, if **statement_type** indicates that the statement is a general valence statement, **var_value** reflects the valence category of the statement. In a similar manner, **valen_issue** and the social policy variables are dependent on statement types, i.e., the former only applies to issue-related valence statements and the social policy variables are only applicable for statements in the respective field. The direction variable will show missing values if a direction is not applicable, e.g., for policy field "99 – Other issue", or if it has been coded elsewhere, e.g., if a social policy spending direction is coded.

6.2.1 Identification of variables common to all three data sets

Table 6: How to identify common variables to all three data sets

Variable	Description
country	Country
coding_id	ID of the RedCap survey containing the statement (primarily for internal use)
article_number	Number/ID assigned to the newspaper article containing the statement
year_month	Election campaign
newspaper_title	Number of newspaper (for newspaper names, see Appendix, Table A2)
article_date	Article's publication date
section_name	Newspaper's section
page	Newspaper's page
length	Article's length
title	Article's title

6.2.2 Variables and values in data "Self"

Table 7: How to identify variables in data "Self"

Variable	Identification
subject	Party making statements on its issue positions, issue-related valence, and general valence (country-specific party code, see Appendix, Table A1)
statement_type	Type of statement made - *SelfIssue* (purely issue-related standpoint) - *SelfIssueVal* (issue-related valence) - *SelfVal* (general valence) - additional country-specific values (*see 6.3*)
var_value[8]	Content of statement, dependent on statement_type. For *statement_type*== - ***(Self-/Other)Issue**:* Policy area *1 – Taxes* *2 – Social Policy/Public Services* *3 – Inflation* *4 – Unemployment* *5 – Other Economic Performance* *6 – Centralization vs. Regional Autonomy* *7 – Environment* *8 – Immigration, Asylum* *9 – Justice System* *10 – Law and Order, Security, Terrorism* *11 – National Way of Life* *12 – Traditional Morality, Family Values, Religion* *13 – Europe/EU* *14 – Internationalism (not EU)* *15 – Foreign Intervention* *16 – Agriculture/Rural Affairs* *99 – Other Issue* *(for additional country-specific issue domains see Table 11)* - ***IssueVal**:* (issue-related) Valence category *1 – Party/government honesty/integrity* *2 – Party/govt (past, current, future) competence/performance* *3 – Party/government unity* *4 – Leader honesty/integrity/character* *5 – Leader (past, current, future) competence/performance* *6 – Leader charisma* *7 – Other* - ***SelfVal:** Valence category* *1 – Party/government honesty/integrity* *2 – Party/govt (past, current, future) competence/performance* *3 – Party/government unity* *4 – Leader honesty/integrity/character* *5 – Leader (past, current, future) competence/performance* *6 – Leader charisma* *7 – Other* - additional country-specific values (*see 6.3*)
direction	Direction of statement made *-1 – negative* *0 – neutral* *1 – positive* *99 – contradictory statement*
valen_issue	Issue/policy area related to issue valence statements: See codes for var_value if *statement_type == Issue* (only applicable for *statement_type == IssueVal***)**

8 Slightly different sets of issues were coded for the UK data. See Table A3 in the Appendix for the detailed scheme applying to each campaign.

Variable	Identification
socialPol	Social policy issue/area sub-code (only applicable for statements on social policy, i.e., *issue area==2*) - *1 – Education* - *2 – Health Care* - *3 – Elderly care/pensioners* - *4 – Public Housing* - *5 – Public Transportation* - *6 – Minimum Wage* - *7 – Social Security* - *8 – Childcare* - *9 – Youth* - *10 – Other family policies* - *99 – Other social policy/public services* *(for country-specific issue domains see Table 11)*
socialPol_spend_dir	Direction of social policy statement (only applicable for statements on social policy, i.e., *issue area==2*) - *-1* – decrease spending - *0* – neutral - *1* – increase spending - 99 – contradictory statement
dominant_issue	Dominant issue in the article, i.e., the issue an article focuses on. The issue categories are identical to those of the parties' statements; *see above*
dominant_issue_social	Dominant issue in the article, in the case of a social policy issue being the main issue (*dominant_issue==2)*; for issue categories, *see above*

6.2.3 Variables and values in data "Other"

Table 8: How to identify variables in data "Other"

Variable	Identification
subject	Party making statements on other parties' issue positions, issue-related valence, and general valence (country-specific party code; see Appendix, Table A1)
other_code	Party to which the statement refers (country-specific party code; see Appendix, Table A1)
statement_type	Type of statement made - *OtherIssue* (purely issue-related statement on other parties) - *OtherIssueVal* (issue-related valence statement on other parties) - *OtherVal* (general valence statement about other parties) - optional country-specific values (see Table 10)
var_value	Content of statement, dependent on statement_type. For *statement_type*== - *OtherIssue:* Policy area; *see 6.2.2* - *OtherIssueVal:* (issue-related) Valence category; *see 6.2.2* - *OtherSelfVal:* Valence category; *see 6.2.2* - optional country-specific values (see Table 10)
direction	Direction of statement made; *see 6.2.2*
valen_issue	Issue/policy area related to issue valence statements; see codes for var_value if *statement_type == OtherIssue* (only applicable for *statement_type == OtherIssueVal***)**
socialPol	Social policy issue/area sub-code (only applicable for statements on social policy, i.e., *issue area==2*); *see 6.2.2*
socialPol_spend_dir	Direction of social policy statement (only applicable for statements on social policy, i.e., *issue area==2*); *see 6.2.2*
dominant_issue	Dominant issue in the article, i.e. the issue an article focuses on. The issue categories are identical to those of the parties' statements; *see 6.2.2*
dominant_issue_social	Dominant issue in the article, in the case of a social policy issue being the main issue (*dominant_issue==2)*; for issue categories *see 6.2.2*

6.2.4 Variables and values in data “Journalist”

Table 9: How to identify variables in data “Journalist”

Variable	Identification
subject	Party to which journalist statements refer to (applicable only for *statement_type*== *Journ_articletone*)
statement_type	Type of statement made - *JournIssue* (purely issue-related statement) - *JournIssueVal* (issue-related valence) - *JournVal* (general valence statement) - *JournTone (*journalist’s tone towards the party (mean across coders)*)* - optional country-specific values (see Table 10)
var_value	Content of statement, dependent on statement_type. For *statement_type*== - *JournIssue:* Policy area; *see 6.2.2* - *JournIssueVal:* (issue-related) Valence category; *see 6.2.2* - *JournVal:* Valence category; *see 6.2.2* - optional country-specific values (see Table 10)
direction	Direction of statement made; *see 6.2.2*
valen_issue	Issue/policy area related to issue valence statements; see codes for var_value if *statement_type* == *JournIssue* (only applicable for *statement_type* == *JournIssueVal***)**
socialPol	Social policy issue/area sub-code (only applicable for statements on social policy, i.e., *issue area==2*); *see 6.2.2*
socialPol_spend_dir	Direction of social policy statement (only applicable for statements on social policy, i.e., *issue area==2*); *see 6.2.2*
dominant_issue	Dominant issue in the article, i.e., the issue an article focuses on. The issue categories are identical to those of the parties’ statements; *see 6.2.2*
dominant_issue_social	Dominant issue in the article, in the case of a social policy issue being the main issue (*dominant_issue==2)*; for issue categories, *see 6.2.2*

6.3 Additional country-specific variables and values

Since country expert teams have been involved in designing the RedCap survey and, in particular, have been asked to introduce country-specific changes to the coding scheme, the data sets vary slightly between countries. Changes relate either to introducing new statement types, e.g. by coding coalition statements made by parties in the media, or to introducing additional policy fields in the coding schemes. In both cases, this results in changes to the values of the existing variables. These country-specific deviations in the possible values are summarized in Tables 10 and 11.

Table 10: Country-specific variables and values

Data set	Variable	Additional Values
Germany		
Self	*statement_type*	*SelfCoal* (Coalition formation statements of parties)
	var_value *(if statement_type == SelfCoal)*	Coalition constellation statement refers to *1 – CDU/CSU and FDP* *2 – SPD and Buendnis 90/Die Gruenen* *3 – CDU/CSU and SPD* *4 – CDU/CSU and Buendnis 90/Gruene* *5 – SPD, FDP and Buendnis 90/Gruene* *6 – SPD, Buendnis 90/Gruene and Linke* *7 – Other Coalition Option*
Journalist	*statement_type*	*JournCoal* (Statements on coalition options by journalist)
	var_value *(if statement_type == JournCoal)*	Coalition constellation statement refers to *1 – CDU/CSU and FDP* *2 – SPD and Buendnis 90/Die Gruenen* *3 – CDU/CSU and SPD* *4 – CDU/CSU and Buendnis 90/Gruenen* *5 – SPD, FDP and Buendnis 90/Gruenen* *6 – SPD, Buendnis 90/Gruene and Linke* *7 – Other Coalition Option*
Denmark		
Self	*statement_type*	*SLang* (Usage of war/sports etc. language referring to the party)
	var_value	Content of war/sports language -1 – negative 0 – neutral 1 – positive
Other	*statement_type*	*OLang* (Usage of war/sports etc. language referring to other party)
	var_value	Content of war/sports language (see Self)
Journalist	*statement_type*	*JournLanguage* (Usage of war/sports etc. language by journalist)
	var_value	Content of war/sports language (see Self)
Portugal (1)		
Self	*statement_type*	*SLang* (Usage of war/sports etc. language referring to the party)
	var_value	Content of war/sports language -1 – negative 0 – neutral 1 – positive
Other	*statement_type*	*OLang* (Usage of war/sports etc. language referring to other party)
	var_value	Content of war/sports language (see Self)
Journalist	*statement_type*	*JournLanguage* (Usage of war/sports etc. language by journalist)
	var_value	Content of war/sports language (see Self)

Data set	Variable	Additional Values
Portugal (2)		
Self	*statement_type*	*SPelec* (Statements on past election results referring to the party)
	var_value	Reference to past election results -1 – negative 0 – neutral 1 – positive
Other	*statement_type*	*OPelec* (Statements on past election results referring to other party)
	var_value	Reference to past election results (see Self)
Journalist	*statement_type*	*JPelec* (Statements on past election results by journalist)
	var_value	Reference to past election results (see Self)
Portugal (3)		
Self	*statement_type*	*SPolls* (Statements on placement in recent opinion polls referring to the party)
	var_value	Reference to recent opinion polls -1 – negative 0 – neutral 1 – positive
Other	*statement_type*	*OPolls* (Statements on placement in recent opinion polls referring to other party)
	var_value	Reference to recent opinion polls (see Self)
Journalist	*statement_type*	*JPolls* (Statements on placement in recent opinion polls by journalist)
	var_value	Reference to recent opinion polls (see Self)
Portugal (4)		
Other	*statement_type*	*OStratIss* (Statements on strategic choice or avoidance of issue referring to other party)
	var_value	Reference to strategic choice or issue avoidance: -1 – negative 0 – neutral 1 – positive
Journalist	*statement_type*	*JStratIss* (Statements on strategic choice or avoidance of issue by journalist)
	var_value	Reference to strategic choice or issue avoidance (see Other)
Portugal (5)		
Other	*statement_type*	*OStratCamp* (Statements on strategic choice or avoidance of campaign means or events (e.g., interviews, debates, visits to specific regions of the country) referring to other party)
	var_value	Reference to strategic choice or avoidance of campaigns means or events: -1 – negative 0 – neutral 1 – positive
Journalist	*statement_type*	*JStratCamp* (Statements on strategic choice or avoidance of campaign means or events (e.g., interviews, debates, visits to specific regions of the country) by journalist)
	var_value	Reference to strategic choice or avoidance of campaigns means or events (see Other)

Table 11: Additional country-specific issue (sub-)domains

Country	Variable	Identification
Czech Republic	*var_value*	Content of statement, dependent on statement_type. For *statement_type*== - ***Issue**:* Policy area *17 – Corruption* *18 – Constitutional change* *19 – Roma*
Denmark	*socialPol*	Social policy issue/area sub-code (only applicable for statements on social policy, i.e., *issue area==2*) - *11 – Labour market policies*
Hungary	*var_value*	Content of statement, dependent on statement_type. For *statement_type*== - ***Issue**:* Policy area *17 – Roma* *18 – Hungarians outside the borders*
Poland	*var_value*	Content of statement, dependent on statement_type. For *statement_type*== - ***Issue**:* Policy area *17 – Communist past* *18 – Smolensk accident* *19 – Corruption*
Portugal	*var_value*	Content of statement, dependent on statement_type. For *statement_type*== - ***Issue**:* Policy area *17 – Corruption* *18 – Bailout and austerity measures*
Sweden	*var_value*	Content of statement, dependent on statement_type. For *statement_type*== - ***Issue**:* Policy area *17 – Gender equality*

Note: The country-specific issue (sub-)domains are included in all three data sets (Self, Other, Journalist). For various statement types see Tables 7-10.

7 Selected descriptive results from the data

The final section of the paper is devoted to presenting a few selected descriptive results, which can be directly derived from the raw data. Though this only sketches a small part of possible analyses, these examples are chosen to demonstrate key features of the data. First, the data offers the possibility to portray the issue spaces within which parties have positioned themselves in campaigns across countries and across time. Secondly, the data distinguishes between different types of statements on issues and opponents. Taking into account that political actors are able to make statements on their and their opponents' general valence characteristics as well as on valence characteristics in relation to certain issues enables researchers to assess how political actors have framed their and their opponents' competences.

Figures 1–3 present the issue emphases parties have made in their campaign communication with reference to their own standpoints for Germany, Poland, and Sweden. German parties have remained relatively stable concerning their statements in between the 2009 and the 2013 campaigns. In both cases, statements on "Internationalism" (category 14) and "Foreign Intervention" (category 15) dominated. However, the emphasis given to "Unemployment" and "Other Economic performances" (categories 4 and 5) in 2009 has considerably decreased in favour of a stronger emphasis on "Justice System" and "Law and Order" (categories 9 and 10) in 2013. Conversely, statements on "Taxes" and "Social Policy" (categories 1 and 2) have gained traction in Poland in the more recent election of 2011. Also notable is the appearance of the (country-specific) Smolensk-plane-accident issue, which played a role in the 2011 election. Lastly, the Swedish campaigns of both 2011 and 2014 show a strong emphasis on social policy issues. However,

“Immigration” (category 8) and “Gender Equality” (category 17, which is country-specific) have been more important in the more recent election.

Figure 1: Issue emphases of German parties in 2009 and 2013

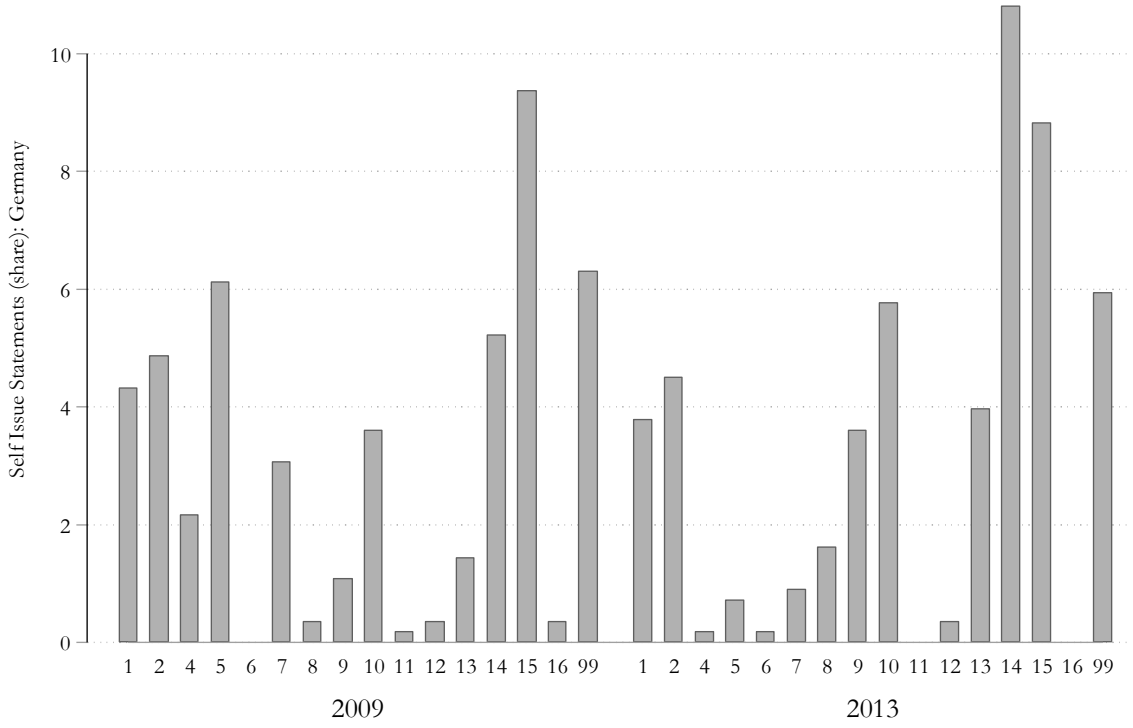


Figure 2: Issue emphases of Polish parties in 2007 and 2011

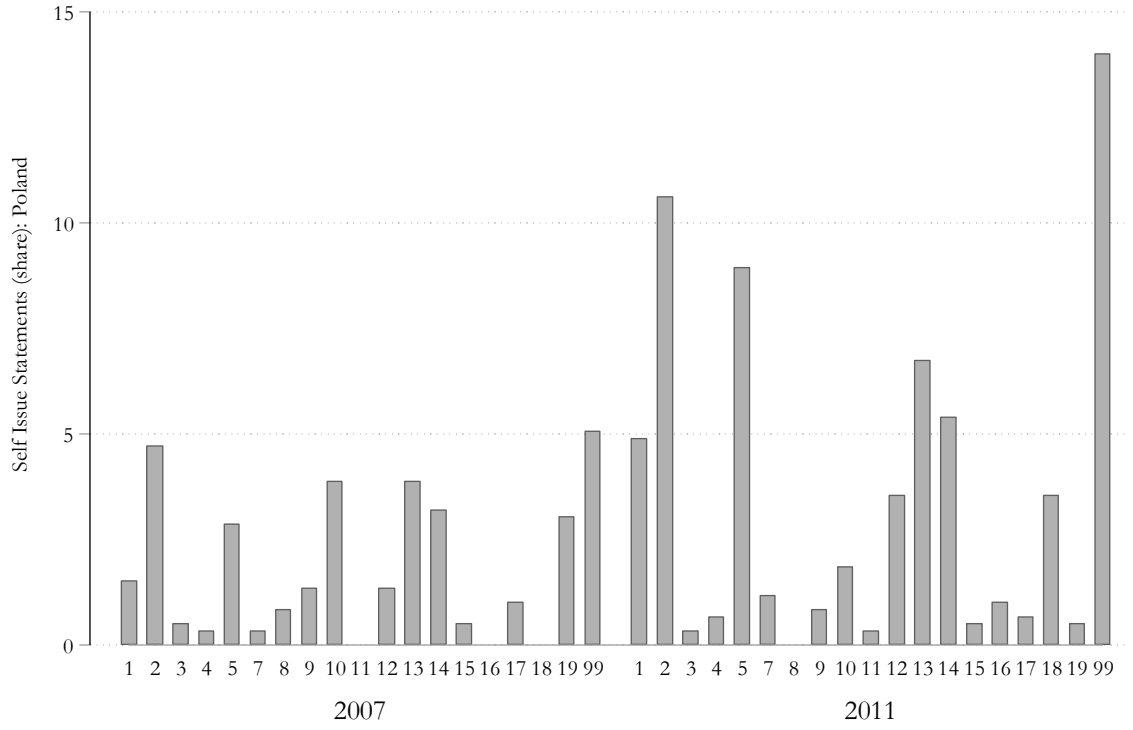
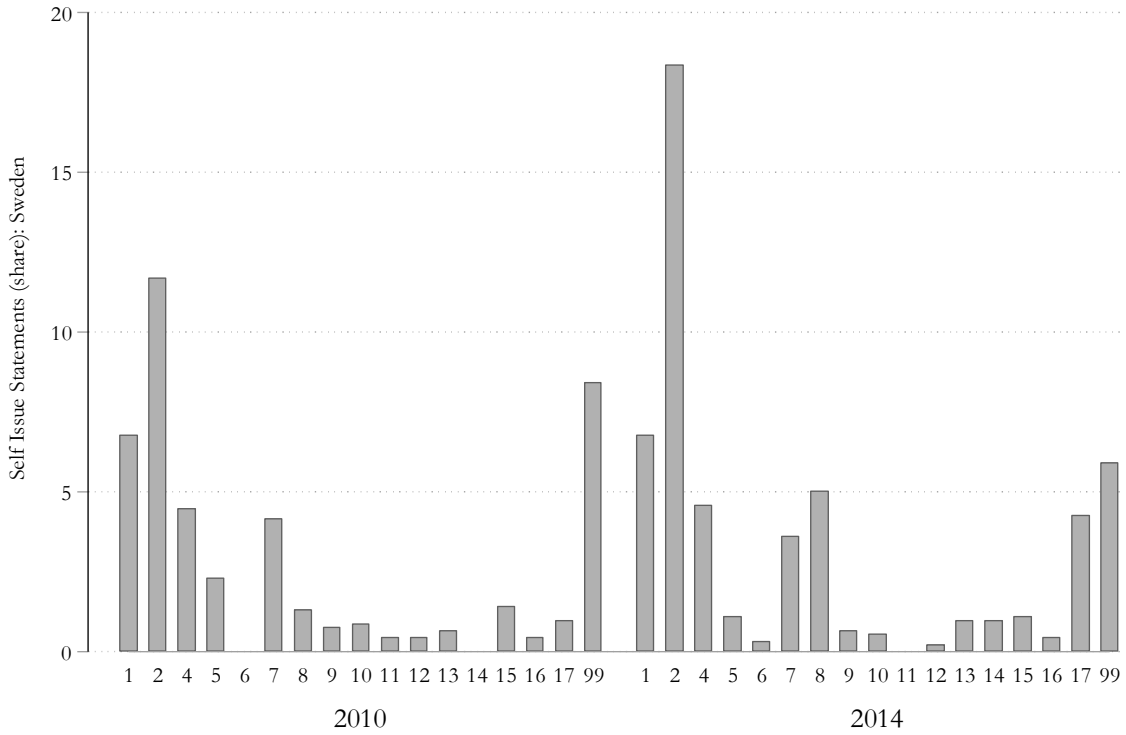


Figure 3: Issue emphases of Swedish parties in 2010 and 2014



Aside from depicting the importance of issue areas, including different types of statements enables assessing the content of parties' media communications. How do parties talk about themselves and about their issues? How do they talk about other parties and about their issues? Figure 4 presents some tentative results on valence characteristics used by German parties. First, the most striking result is that negative news prevail (see also Baumgartner and Chaqués-Bonafont 2015; Lengauer et al. 2012; Soroka 2014). Parties in Germany talk in a negative manner about other parties' valence in general and about the valence of other parties' issue positions in particular. When commenting on their own valence and their own issue-related valence, parties communicate positive statements. Though much more rarely, negative statements on one's own party are reported in the media. Complementing this, the communication on others' valences is—unsurprisingly—dominated by negative statements. Interestingly, this negativity trend also extends to valence statements made by journalists. If present, the journalists' assessment of parties' valence aspects is mostly negative.

Lastly, the data also allows for assessing how journalists have framed articles with regard to certain actors. Figure 5 presents the tone of articles toward the government for the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, and the UK[9] in the more recent elections, differentiated by newspapers. The results indicate that, on average, the journalists' tone toward the government was negative. This trend is more pronounced in, e.g., the Netherlands and Poland, where both newspapers have been negative in tone. Conversely, in Sweden and the UK, the media landscape seems to be more split: whereas *Dagens Nyheter* (value 1) was moderately positive on the centre-right government coalition, *Aftonbladet* (value 2) was more negative in its evaluation of the government. This "split" is even more pronounced for the UK in 2015, where *The Daily Telegraph* (value 2) positively framed reports on the sitting government, whereas *The Guardian* (value 1) took a more negative stance.

9 Note that the actor "government" is of differing importance in the media reporting in some countries (e.g., since governments may also be formed by only one party). The number of observations representing a newspaper in the figure thus varies between countries.

Figure 4: Valence characteristics used by German parties

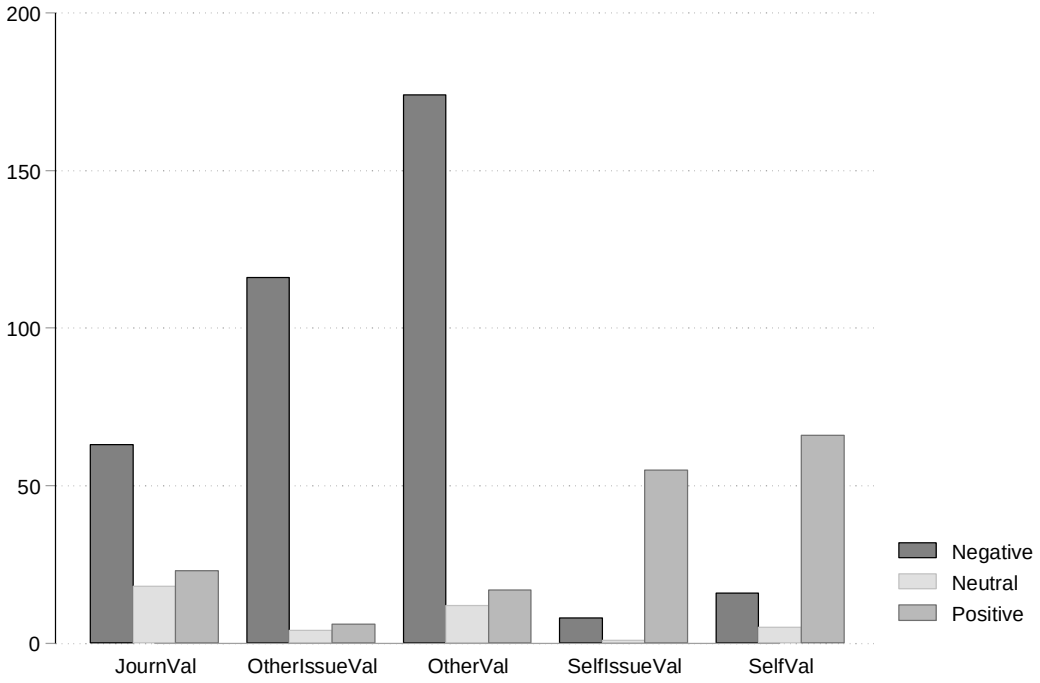
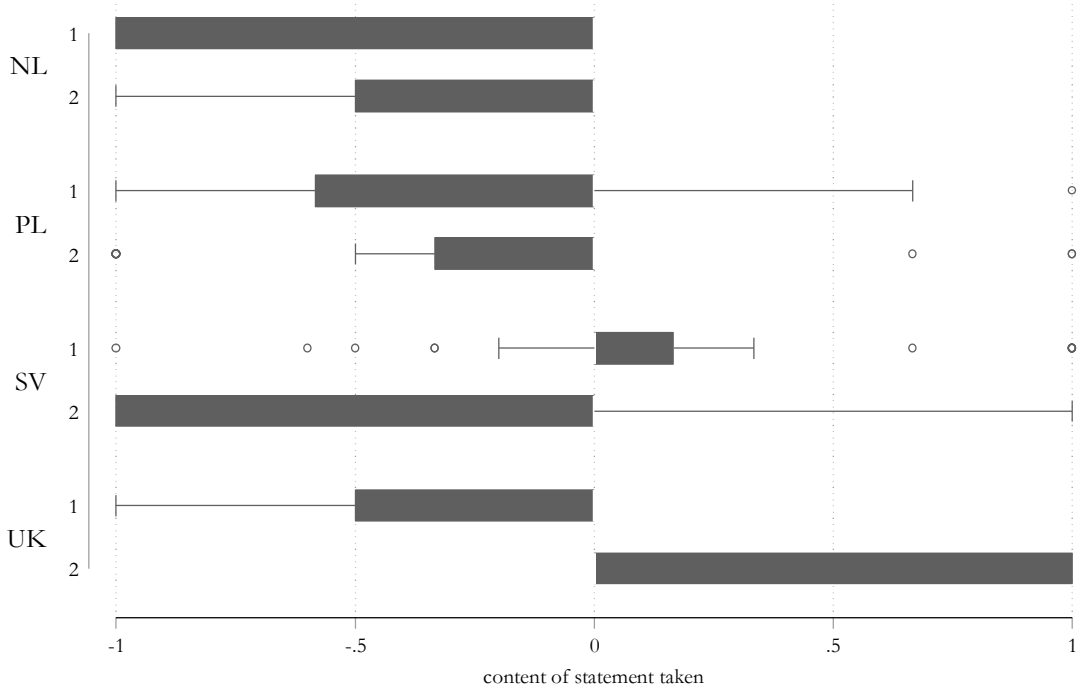


Figure 5: Tone of newspaper articles towards selected governments



Note: The figure shows the tone of newspaper articles towards governments during the election campaigns in the Netherlands 2012, Poland 2011, Sweden 2014, and the United Kingdom 2015. For the identification of newspaper titles, see Appendix, Table A2.

8 Concluding remarks

Parties' statements in the media and the framing of the statements by the media are at the centre of election campaigns. Understanding why parties emphasize one issue while "blurring" another (Rovny 2012) or why parties strategically want to appeal to a broad set of voters by making ambiguous statements (Somer-Topcu 2015) is essential to assessing the way parties campaign adequately. This working paper introduces a new data set on ideological cohesion and ambiguity of party positions in media coverage, which focuses on two election campaigns in nine European countries, respectively.

The datasets are divided in several different aspects, comprising data on parties talking about themselves, parties talking about other parties, and journalists talking about parties. Each of these data sets further distinguishes between three different kinds of information: (i) party/journalist talks about an issue area; (ii) party/journalist talks about the valence of that issue area; (iii) party/journalist talks about general valence characteristics, such as the competence or performance of party leaders. These measures of the content of party campaigns, differentiating between policy-centred and leader-centred campaigns and media framing, may serve as a basis for several future studies focusing on election campaigns and media impact in a cross-national way.

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Appendix

The country teams suggested the most important parties as well as the national government at the time of the two recent national elections. This information has been included in the survey, in which coders were asked to identify the subject(s) of the newspaper articles. Table A1 gives an overview of how to identify country-specific subjects, while Table A2 presents the variable values for identifying newspapers. Lastly, the slightly different sets of issues coded for the UK data are shown in Table A3.

Table A1: Identification of subjects

Country	Identification of subject making statements (*subject*)
Czech Republic	1 – Czech Social Democratic Party – CSSD 2 – Civic Democratic Party – ODS 3 – Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia – KSCM 4 – Christian Democratic Party – Czechoslovak People's Party – KDU–CSL 5 – TOP 09 6 – Public Affairs – VV (only in 2010) 7 – ANO 2011 (only in 2013) 8 – Tomio Okamura's Dawn of Direct Democracy (only in 2013) 9 – The government (CSSD + ODS + SZ as a whole in 2010, ODS + TOP 09 + VV/LIDEM as a whole in 2013)
Denmark	1 – Venstre [Liberals] 2 – Socialdemokraterne [Social Democrats] 3 – Dansk Folkeparti [Danish People's Party] 4 – Socialistik Folkeparti [Socialist People's Party] 5 – Det Konservative Folkeparti [Conservatives] 6 – Det Radikale Venstre [Social Liberals] 7 – Enhedslisten [Red/Green Alliance] 8 – Ny Alliance [New Alliance] (only in 2007) 9 – Liberal Alliance [Liberal Alliance] (only in 2011) 10 – The government (Venstre and Det Konservative Folkeparti as a whole)
Germany	1 – CDU 2 – CSU 3 – CDU/CSU (as a unitary actor) 4 – SPD 5 – FDP 6 – Buendnis 90/Die Gruenen 7 – Die Linke 8 – AfD (only in 2013) 9 – PIRATEN (only in 2013) 10 – The government (CDU + CSU + SPD as a whole for 2009, CDU + CSU + FDP as a whole for 2013)
Hungary	1 – Fidesz 2 – KDNP 3 – Fidesz–KDNP alliance as a whole 4 – MSZP (Hungarian Socialist Party) 5 – MIEP–Jobbik (MIEP–Jobbik Third Way Alliance of Parties) (Jobbik on its own in 2010) 6 – SZDSZ (Alliance of Free Democrats) (only in 2006) 7 – MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum) (only in 2006) 8 – LMP (Politics Can Be Different) (only in 2010) 9 – The government (MSZP–SZDSZ in 2006, please code the MSZP option above if the government is the subject for the 2010 election)
The Netherlands	1 – PvdA 2 – CDA 3 – VVD 4 – D66 5 – SP 6 – PVV 7 – ChristenUnie 8 – GroenLinks 9 – PvdD (Party for the Animals) (only in 2010) 10 – 50PLUS (only in 2012) 11 – The government (CDA + PvdA + CU as a whole in 2010, VVD + CDA as a whole in 2012)

Country	Identification of subject making statements (*subject*)
Poland	1 – Law and Justice (PiS) 2 – Civic Platform (PO) 3 – Left and Democrats (LiD) 4 – Polish Peasant's Party (PSL) 5 – League of Polish Families (LPR) (only in 2007) 6 – Self–Defense of the Republic of Poland (SRP) (only in 2007) 7 – Palikot's Movement (RP) (only in 2011) 8 – Poland Comes First (PJN) (only in 2011) 9 – The government (PiS + SRP + LPR as a whole in 2007, PO + PSL as a whole in 2011)
Portugal	1 – Partido Socialista (PS) 2 – Partido Social Democrata (PSD) 3 – Coligacao Democratica Unitaria (CDU) 4 – Bloco de Esquerda 5 – CDS – Partido Popular (CDS–PP)
Sweden	1 – Left party (v) 2 – Green party (mp) 3 – Social democratic party (s) 4 – Center party (c) 5 – Liberal party (fp) 6 – Moderate party (m) 7 – Christian democratic party (kd) 8 – The Sweden democrats (sd) 9 – Feminist initiative (fi) 10 – Red–green alliance 11 – The government (Moderate party M, Center party C, Liberal party FP, Christian democratic party KD as a whole for both elections)
United Kingdom (2005 & 2010)	1 – Labour Party 2 – Liberal Democratic Party 3 – Conservative Party
United Kingdom (2015)	1 – Labour Party 2 – Liberal Democratic Party 3 – Conservative Party 4 – UKIP 5 – The Scottish National Party 6 – Government

Table A2: Identification of newspapers

Country	Identification of newspapers (*newspaper_title*)
Czech Republic	1 – Právo 2 – Mláda Fronta Dnes
Denmark	1 – Politiken 2 – Jyllands-Posten
Germany	1 – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 2 – Süddeutsche Zeitung
Hungary	1 – Népszabadság 2 – Magyar Nemzet
The Netherlands	1 – Volkskrant 2 – Telegraaf
Poland	1 – Gazeta Wyborcza 2 – Rzeczpospolita
Portugal	1 – Público 2 – Jornal de Notícias
Sweden	1 – Dagens Nyheter 2 – Aftonbladet
United Kingdom	1 – The Guardian 2 – The Daily Telegraph

Table A3: Issue categories in UK data

Variable	Identification
Election campaigns 2005 and 2010	
var_value	Content of statement, dependent on statement_type. For *statement_type*== - ***Issue**:* Policy area *1 – Inflation* *2 – Social Policy/Public Services* *3 – Taxes* *4 – Unemployment* *5 – Centralization* *6 – Environment* *7 – Immigration* *8 – Justice System* *9 – Law and Order* *10 – National Way of Life* *11 – Traditional Morality* *12 – Europe/European Union* *13 – Internationalism* *14 – Agriculture/Rural Affairs* *99 – Other Issue*
Election campaign 2015	
var_value	Content of statement, dependent on statement_type. For *statement_type*== - ***Issue**:* Policy area *1 – Taxes* *2 – Social Policy/Public Services* *3 – Inflation* *4 – Unemployment* *5 – Other Economic Performances* *6 – Centralization* *7 – Environment* *8 – Immigration* *9 – Justice System* *10 – Law and Order* *11 – National Way of Life* *12 – Traditional Morality* *13 – Europe/European Union* *14 – Internationalism* *15 – Agriculture/Rural Affairs* *99 – Other Issue*