Asset or liability? An analysis of the effect of changes in party membership on partisan ideological change –

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Replication data is available from http://dvn.iq.harvard.edu/dvn/dv/ir_dataverse.

The supplementary paper serves to present and discuss the following issues:

(1) Included countries and parties;

(2) Results when controlling for unobserved country heterogeneity;

(3) Results for data including observations from the late 1990s;

(4) A test for differences between types of niche parties;

(5) A test for differences between government and opposition parties;

(6) Discussion of the use of position data with a focus on the Franzmann-Kaiser (FK) data (2006) and the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) data (Budge et al., 2001; Klingemann et al., 2006).

(1) Included countries parties

Austria
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs
Österreichische Volkspartei
Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs

Belgium
Agalev
Belgische Socialistische Partij – Parti Socialiste Belge
Christelijke Volkspartij
Parti de Réformes et de la Liberté de Wallonie
Parti Social Chrétien
Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang
Volksunie

Denmark
Centrumdemokraterne
Det Konservative Folkeparti
Det Radikale Venstre
Fremskridtspartiet
Kristeligt Folkeparti
Socialdemokraterne
Socialistisk Folkeparti

Finland
Kansallinen Kokoomus
Ruotsalainen Kansanpuolue/Svenska Folkpartiet
Suomen Kansan Demokraattinen Liitto – Demokratiska Förbundet för Finlands Folk
Suomen Keskusta; Keskustapuolue
Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue

Germany
Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands/Christlich-Soziale Union
Freie Demokratische Partei
Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands

Ireland
Fianna Fáil
Fine Gael
Páirti Lucht Oibre

Italy
Partito Comunisti Italiani
Partito della Democrazia Cristiana
Partito Liberale Italiano
Partito Radicale
Partito Repubblicano Italiano
Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano
Partito Socialista Italiano

The Netherlands
CHRISTELUK-HISTORISCHE UNIE
Christen-Democratisch Appel
Democraten'66
Partij van de Arbeid
Politieke Partij Radikalen
Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie

Norway
Det Norske Arbeiderparti
Høyre
Kristelig Folkeparti
Senterpartiet
Venstre

Sweden
Centerpartiet
Folkpartiet
Moderaterna; renamed: Moderata Samlingspartiet
Socialdemokratema
Vänsterpartiet; Vänsterpartiet kommunisterna

United Kingdom
Labour Party

(2) Country heterogeneity

In order to test for potential implications of controlling for unobserved country heterogeneity, the baseline model (column 1 in table 2 of main text) was also run with standard errors clustered by countries (column two of table 1 below) and country dummies (column three). The results are robust for controls for unobserved country heterogeneity.

Table 1: Basic model with control for unobserved country heterogeneity

	Basic model	Std. errors clustered by countries	Country dummies
Membership change	0.001**	0.001**	0.001**
	(0.0003)	(0.0002)	(0.0003)
Abs. past ideological change	0.218***	0.218***	0.118
	(0.0373)	(0.0396)	(0.0567)
Abs. public opinion change	0.053	0.053	0.056
	(0.0359)	(0.0357)	(0.0342)
Constant	0.259***	0.259***	0.341***
	(0.0268)	(0.0373)	(0.0240)
N	338	338	338
adj. R^2	0.067	0.067	0.124

Dependent variable: absolute ideological change between two consecutive elections

* p < 0.10; ** p< 0.05; *** 0.01, two-sided tests

OLS regression with standard errors clustered by parties (standard errors in parentheses)

Results for country dummies suppressed in column three

(3) Results for expanded dataset

The original dataset is expanded by incorporating the membership data from Mair and van Biezen (2001). While it is tempting to extend the period of analysis, adding this data is not without costs. For the original analysis, I used changes between pre-election membership figures as the independent variable. For the 1990s, most membership data is not derived from years in which an election took place, the consequence being that this data certainly includes some measurement error. For purposes of regression estimation, a dummy (NINETIES) measuring whether an observation is from the late 1990s (1 = late 1990s, 0 = otherwise) is added to the baseline model plus an interaction term between the dummy and the membership change variable. The model reads (see main text on the remaining variables):

$$|\Delta P_J(t)| = b_0 + b_1*\Delta M_J(t) + b_2*|\Delta P_J(t-1)| + b_3*|\Delta PO_K(t)| + b_4*\text{NINETIES} + b_5*Mj(t)*\text{NINETIES}$$

The results for the other variables are unaffected by the dummy and the interaction and I only report the estimates for the interaction term. The marginal effect is 0.0006, the standard error 0.0014, and the t-score 0.444, thus failing to reach statistical significance at .10.

(4) Distinguishing types of niche parties

Niche parties are qualitatively distinct from mainstream parties in terms of different ideological breadth and electoral appeal (Adams et al., 2006). This should not conceal that the category of niche parties comprises different types of party families. A party is taken as a niche party when it is a nationalist, communist, or ecological party (see main text). In the present analysis, there is no membership data for nationalist parties, leaving communist and ecological parties for analysis. Both are left-wing parties that traditionally maintain closer ties to their members than those from other party families (Bartolini, 1993). However, the two types also differ in important respects, for example, because communist parties are susceptible to conforming to the iron law of oligarchy (Rohrschneider, 1994). Following van de Wardt (2012), who examines the effect of intraparty divisions on party positioning on EU matters conditional on types of niche parties, I take a more exploratory approach by analysing whether and how ecological and communist differ from mainstream parties.

Table 2: Results for specific types of niche parties

	Basic model	Communist party model	Ecological party model
Membership change	0.001** (0.0003)	0.001** (0.0004)	0.001** (0.0003)
Abs. past ideological change	0.218*** (0.0373)	0.098* (0.056)	0.100* (0.055)
Abs. public opinion change	0.053 (0.0359)	0.057 (0.039)	0.057 (0.034)
Communist dummy	-	-0.117** (0.048)	-
Membership change * Communist dummy	-	-0.001* (0.001)	-
Ecological dummy	-	-	-0.030 (0.050)
Membership change * Ecological dummy	-	-	-0.003** (0.001)
Constant	0.259*** (0.0268)	0.312*** (0.031)	0.296*** (0.03)
N	338	335	309
adj. R^2	0.07	0.13	0.12
Dependent variable: absolute ideological change between two consecutive elections * p < 0.10; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01, two-sided tests OLS regression with standard errors clustered by parties (standard errors in parentheses) and country dummies (results for dummies suppressed)			

The results show a surprising variance. Both ecological and communist parties show a significant response to membership changes (not directly inferable from the table), but in opposite directions. Communist parties conform to the general pattern with a relatively strong marginal effect of 0.058 that is significant at .10 (standard error is 0.034). Ecological parties,

in contrast, show a small, but negative and significant effect significant at .10 (-0.002 with standard error of 0.001). As explained above, theory permits us to derive the expectation of a negative and positive marginal effect of membership changes on partisan ideological change. The common assumption is that parties are risk-averse actors adjusting the extent of ideological change to the degree of membership change (Somer-Topcu, 2009). The question is whether parties perceive it as the greater risk to make a bold move after a positive membership change or a negative membership development. All the analyses so far produced a positive effect. Considering that the effect is small, the Green parties are the only ones deviating from this pattern. As mentioned, the analysis distinguishing between types of niche parties is exploratory, meaning that there is no apparent reason why Green parties should be different from the rest. This is one of the issues to be explored in follow-up studies.

(5) Differences between government and opposition parties

As mentioned in the main text, the inferential leverage of the analysis can be increased by distinguishing between parties in *government* and in *opposition*. The rationale is that government and opposition parties do not draw on the benefits of members to the same degree. Government parties receive more public attention by virtue of being in office and receiving more media coverage. Moreover, many governments, for example, in Germany, have access to funds dedicated to public relations campaigns. Compared to opposition parties, office-related factors like these diminish the importance of members for government parties. Of course, government membership does not render members completely superfluous for government parties; for example, they recruit their candidates from among their members as well. Nevertheless, the differences between government and opposition parties give sufficient reason to hypothesize that the two types of parties differ with regard to the influence of party members. In light of the previous arguments, I develop the following *opposition membership hypothesis*:

Membership change has an effect on ideological change for opposition parties, but not for government parties.

The supporting results are presented in table 2 in the main text.

(6) Use of position estimates

The empirical analysis relies on the party position data generated with the procedure invented by Franzmann and Kaiser (2006). I first give a brief introduction as to how the estimates are derived and then turn to the CMP estimates that are not used in the main paper.

The FK position estimates are derived from the 56 raw categories of the CMP scheme, meaning that the FK data has the same spatio-temporal coverage as the CMP position estimates. The FK estimation procedure is based on a handful of plausible premises. Following Stokes (1963), FK distinguish between valence and position issues. Valence issues are defined as those that are shared by all parties to a similar degree and thus are not confrontational. For instance, market regulation is a valence issue in Germany where all parties support market regulation as a constitutive element of "social market economy". In other countries, market regulation is a positional issue on which parties take a confrontational stand {Franzmann, 2006 #3240}. The distinction between positional and valence issues might seem to dilute the elegance or parsimony of a stand-alone positional approach. But elegance is not a value of its own and the FK gains in plausibility by bringing valence issues into play. One can hardly say that an issue is positional when it is equally embraced by all parties in a country. Moreover, recent empirical research blending valence and positional thinking shows that it has great merit (Meguid, 2008).

A second premise of the FK procedure is that in deriving left-right position estimates, no issue should be excluded from the procedure *ex ante* as this already introduces the risk of excluding important issues and biasing the estimates. Finally, it is to mention here that FK allow for the possibility that left and right have a different meaning over time and across countries, as well as that a given issue may change its nature from valence to positional and vice versa.

The scaling procedure is described in detail by Franzmann and Kaiser (2006: 167-174) and I focus here on its two key features: the separation of position and valence issues and the

assignment of issues as left and right. The procedure starts with determining whether an issue belongs to the category of valence or position issues. This is achieved by taking every single issue of the CMP category as the dependent variable and the parties in a country as the independent variables. Each party is included in the regression as a dummy, taking one party as the reference category.[1] In general, when a dummy is significant, this indicates that the issue is positional because one party significantly stands apart of the other parties.[2] Temporal changes in the nature of an issue are easily modeled by dividing the period of analysis into sections. After having identified the positional issues, it is necessary to distinguish left from right issues. This is achieved by determining the left and right parties in a country via the consultation of an external source, such as expert surveys or the assignment of parties into party families (Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006: 171-172). Besides that every position estimation procedure has a subjective element at some point (Benoit and Laver, 2006: chap. 3), the use of external sources avoids circular reasoning (Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006: 184), as left and right issues are not determined from within the CMP categories. After left and right parties are identified and the previously derived positional issues are assigned to them, it is possible to position every party on a left-right dimension. The position is calculated by building the quotient of the difference of the sum of right position scores minus the sum of left position scores over the sum of all scores (that is, scores attached to position and valence issues) (Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006: 174).[3]

As explained in the main text, the FK procedure allows the meaning of left and right to change over time and differ across countries. Two elements of the protocol allow for this. First, the nature of issues in terms of valence and positional issues can differ over time and between countries. Second, the classification of an issue as left and right can differ over time

[1] See Franzmann and Kaiser (2006: 170) for the choice of parties.
[2] See Franzmann and Kaiser (2006: 168-169) for the comparison of coefficients across parties.
[3] The position scores are smoothed in a subsequent step, which is not of further relevance here (Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006: 173-74).

and between countries. The FK procedure thus avoids the fallacy of the CMP technique. By imposing a uniform left-right measure on all countries and periods in time, the CMP scaling technique rests on the assumption that party competition has followed the same lines from World War II until the present in all countries covered by the CMP data.

Validity and empirical assessment

Before discussing validity, table 1 below replicates the models in table 2 in the main text with the CMP position estimates. When comparing the marginal effects of the variables in both tables, recall that the left-right dimension on which parties are located runs from 0 to 10 for the FK position estimates and from -100 to 100 for the CMP position estimates.

A look at the top row and the second row for column two shows that the estimates for the membership variable differ, depending on what position data is used. In the main text using the FK data, the marginal effects are negative for all models and significant at .01.

The differences in the empirical results do not automatically speak for or against the FK data or the CMP data, as no data should be judged by the results it produces in an empirical analysis. Instead, validity tests represent the external criterion to be applied to data in order to discern whether it is useful for empirical research in the first place (Carmines and Zeller, 1979). Among the validity assessments that are on offer (Adcock and Collier, 2001), *convergent validity* and *content validity* are available for the present purpose.

Table 3: Replicating models testing for robustness of mainstream model using CMP data

	Basic model	Standardized membership model	Eurobarometer model	Vote share model	Natural log model
Membership change	-0.019** (0.009)	-	-0.007 (0.0057)	-0.018* (0.0097)	-0.001 (0.0006)
Standardized membership change	-	-0.019** (0.0088)	-	-	-
Abs. past ideological change	0.139* (0.0737)	0.133* (0.0741)	0.079 (0.1115)	0.137* (0.0743)	0.009** (0.0035)
Abs. public opinion change	0.306*** (0.0843)	0.308*** (0.0799)	-	0.309*** (0.0818)	0.031*** (0.0077)
Abs. public opinion change (Eurobarometer)	-	-	-2.232 (4.3458)	-	-
Abs. vote share change	-	-	-	0.522** (0.2181)	-
Constant	8.371*** (1.4042)	8.376*** (1.3599)	10.432*** (1.4344)	7.102*** (1.4420)	1.719*** (1.1387)
N	338	334	127	338	334
adj. R^2	0.212	0.212	0.002	0.220	0.117

Dependent variable: absolute ideological change between two consecutive elections

* p < 0.10; ** p< 0.05; *** 0.01, two-sided tests

OLS regression with standard errors clustered by parties and country dummies[4] (standard errors in parentheses, dummies suppressed)

[4] Results are robust to the exclusion of country dummies.

For the observations covered by the basic model in the main text, a test for convergent validity shows that the left-right party position data from the CMP and FK are highly positively and significantly correlated ($p < .01$). The strong correlation supports similar results obtained by Franzmann and Kaiser with a smaller number of observations (2006: 177). The correlation thus shows that the CMP and FK can be taken as measures of the same underlying construct.

Table 4: Correlation of CMP and Franzmann/Kaiser party position estimates

	CMP left-right position	FK left-right position
CMP left-right position	1	
FK left-right position	0.7025 (0.0000)	1
N=338		

However, other assessments of convergent validity yield a brighter picture for the FK data. Franzmann and Kaiser correlate their estimates and CMP estimates with position estimates derived from mass surveys. As Warwick (2010) demonstrates, respondents are able to validly locate parties on left-right dimension. The CMP data correlates at 0.84 with the survey estimates, while the FK data achieves a correlation of 0.90. An even larger difference is found by Dinas and Gemenis (2010) for Greece. Using expert assessments as an external criterion, CMP correlates with them at 0.67 and FK with 0.83, leading Dinas and Gemenis to conclude that the FK estimates are superior to the CMP, at least for Greece. At present, I do not know of additional tests for convergent validity.

Content validation means making a qualitative assessment of whether the indicators measure what they are supposed to measure (Adcock and Collier, 2001: 538). The right-left (RL) measure of the CMP assigns 13 categories of its coding scheme as belonging to the "right" and "left" (see for the codings and the scheme Volkens, 2001). The RL position estimate is derived by subtracting the sum of the 13 left issues from the sum of the 13 right issues. As previously explained, a salient problem with this RL measure is its invariance across countries and time (Benoit and Laver, 2007: 94-95), making it impossible to reflect cross-country and longitudinal changes in the meaning of left and right and the constitutive elements of the left-right dimension. Several studies show that the uniform CMP RL measure does not adequately capture party positioning on a left-right dimension (Pelizzo, 2003; Dinas and Gemenis, 2010). Most importantly, Benoit and Laver (2006) present expert assessments of party positions in more than 40 countries, clearly showing that the left-right dimension is differently constituted across countries. On the cross-country level, the CMP RL measure thus can be credibly argued to lack content validity.

A similar conclusion can be made for content validity in a longitudinal perspective. For one, a look at party competition within countries over time shows that the meaning of left and right changed simply because times change. For instance, the CMP RL measure includes "anti-imperialism: anti-colonialism" as a left issue. This might have been a point after World War II when several European countries still maintained colonies. Currently, however, colonialism is no longer an issue. A temporally invariant left-right measure cannot capture the clearly evolving nature of party competition within a country and therefore lacks content validity in this respect as well.

I note that there is a counterargument to this reasoning, namely that the invariant RL measure is sensitive to the extent that it changes when countries shift emphasis from traditional RL issues to issues that are not part of the RL measure (Budge, 2001: 88). If at all,

this property of the RL dimension is only related to longitudinal shifts in the left-right dimension and is unrelated to differences across countries.

In the longitudinal perspective, this view on RL measure is also fallacious for two reasons (see also Benoit and Laver, 2007: 95-96). From a substantive point of view, one should know the meaning of left and right in a country. This is not possible without extending the focus beyond the invariant measure and by considering the issues that become attached to left and right in party competition. Knowledge of the new left and right issues is indispensable because it has implications for our understanding of party competition, public opinion, voter-party relations and representation, and the state of democracy in a country more generally.

The second problem is that if the meaning of left and right changes and some of the 13 left and right issues cease to be relevant, the CMP RL measure is a proxy for the actual left-right position of a party at best. Using the RL measure as a proxy for position measurement is only feasible under assumptions that are hard to defend. A simple example clarifies this. Suppose 20 percent of all quasi-sentences in a party manifesto are spent on left issues and 20 percent on right issues, meaning that the party is exactly at the middle of the spectrum. Now we have a change in the meaning of left and right and the party puts more emphasis on issues outside of the CMP measure. As a consequence, the party now only spends 10 percent of all quasi-sentences on the left and right categories, respectively. According to the CMP RL measure, the party is still at the center of the spectrum. However, this positioning of the party is only valid if the party attaches equal weight to the new left and right issues as well. Until the new issues are identified empirically and taken into account in the party position estimate, one has to assume that a party splits emphasis on the new left and right issues in the same way as it does on the issues constituting the CMP RL. Otherwise, it becomes pointless to use this measure. In my view, the veracity of this assumption has so far not been examined and there is no theoretical argument rendering it an intelligible assumption.

The same holds true when the party attaches more salience to left than to right issues (or vice versa) and the meaning of left and right changes. Suppose a party spends 20 percent of its quasi-sentences on left issues and 10 percent on right issues of the CMP RL measure. In sum, the party is located at -10 on the RL scale. Due to a change in the substance of the left-right dimension, the party puts less emphasis on the RL issues that now only amount to 10 percent for the left issues and 5 percent for the right issues. The left issues are still twice as salient as the right issues, but the party is now located at -5 on the CMP RL scale. One could criticize this behavior of the CMP RL measure (Benoit and Laver, 2007), but, again, the more important point is that we do not know how emphasis is distributed across the new left and right issues. It is only justified to adhere to the CMP measure when one makes the very demanding assumption that the salience is similar for the new left and right issues.

For these reasons, it is justified to seriously question the validity of the CMP measure. Moreover, there is no way to improve the validity of the current CMP RL measure because it is impossible to tell whether a party is putting more emphasis on new left or right issues until one has examined them empirically. Since the quality of results derived from causal analyses depends on the validity (and reliability) of the underlying data, I conclude that the results presented in table 1 above do not challenge the results presented in the main text.

This is, of course, not to say that the FK technique permits to estimate the “true” party position estimates, because every estimation technique has its challenges (Benoit and Laver, 2006: chap. 3). Here, however, the question is whether the FK data is more valid than the CMP data. By all what we know at present about the respective validity, the answer is yes, leading me to run the analyses with the FK data and not with the CMP data.

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