
First Things First or the More the Merrier?

Topic Order as an Indicator of Issue Emphasis in Election Manifestos

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1 INTRODUCTION

In the 2017 German Bundestag election, immigration was the topic that dominated the election campaign (Bräuninger et al., 2019, p. 101). According to expert interviews, it was the most important topic for the CSU and the AfD, and among the three most important topics for the CDU and the Green Party (Bräuninger et al., 2019, p. 102). This emphasis on immigration issues was also reflected in the media coverage of parties' campaigns: In the four weeks before the 2017 election, immigration issues heavily dominated the newspaper coverage of the election campaign, and especially that of the CDU/CSU's campaign (own calculations based on the Comparative Campaign Dynamics Dataset; Debus et al., 2022). Looking at the CDU/CSU's election manifesto, however, immigration was *not* the topic that was talked about the most, as both technology and welfare state received more attention than immigration (own calculations based on the Manifesto Project data; Volkens et al., 2017). Instead, immigration was the first topic to appear in the CDU/CSU's manifesto. The CDU/CSU was therefore highlighting immigration through topic order, thereby signalling that it would be one of the focal topics of its election campaign in 2017.¹

In the first season of the Netflix series "The Crown", the late King George VI explains to his daughter – who soon becomes Queen Elizabeth II – how he prioritises which government documents to read first: Every day, he starts at the bottom of the stack, knowing that this is where the most important or controversial documents are hidden away (Morgan, 2016). In non-fictional contexts, TV or radio news always start with the most important news of the day, followed by less significant news items (Conway and Patterson, 2008; Eveland et al., 2002; McCombs and Shaw, 1972; McCombs et al., 2013; Protess and McCombs, 1991). On ballot papers, candidates that are placed at the top of the ballot are likely to gain more votes than candidates in the middle or at the bottom – even when this placement at the top is not due to a candidate being their party's top candidate, but simply due to the layout of the ballot (Blom-Hansen et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2015; Van Erkel and Thijssen, 2016).

As these examples illustrate, order matters in numerous contexts, both political and oth-

¹See Figure 2.18 in Section 2.7 for further details.

erwise. It is impossible to not order news items in TV news, candidates on a ballot paper, or topics in an election manifesto. Since we know that order matters in TV news and on ballot papers, the same should be true for election manifestos. Therefore, I introduce *topic order in election manifestos as a second dimension of the concept of issue emphasis* and in addition to issue attention, i.e., parties highlighting topics by talking about them at greater length than other topics.

In this dissertation, I argue that issue emphasis is a two-dimensional concept consisting of topic order and issue attention. In the context of party competition, we understand issue emphasis as the practice of parties highlighting certain issues, for instance because they have high credibility in those issues, or because they expect to shift a relevant portion of the electorate in their favour by highlighting agreeable topics (Budge and Farlie, 1983; Petrocik, 1996; Riker, 1986; Robertson, 1979). Issue emphasis is typically measured as how much parties talk about certain issues: the more a party talks about an issue, the more important we understand this topic to be for the party (Budge and Farlie, 1983; Budge, 1993; Green and Hobolt, 2008; Petrocik, 1996; Petrocik et al., 2003; Riker, 1986, 1993). Highlighting issues by talking about them more than others is called *issue attention* (Barberá et al., 2019; Klüver and Bäck, 2019; Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2015; Klüver and Spoon, 2016; Otjes and Green-Pedersen, 2019; Peeters et al., 2019). I introduce a second dimension to the overall concept of issue emphasis: *topic order*. Considering topic order as a second dimension of issue emphasis allows us to more comprehensively capture the structure and complexity of election manifestos. Topic order accounts for the fact that parties have to order the topics in their manifestos in some way, and that ordering topics consciously allows parties to have a second way of highlighting topics they want to emphasise.

Since topic order has, to my knowledge, not yet been considered as an additional dimension of issue emphasis, this dissertation assesses topic order from three perspectives. Starting with the *supply side*, I study how parties use both topic order and issue attention to highlight topics in their manifestos, and how they use these two dimensions of issue emphasis to speak to different audiences at once. I then consider the *demand side* to understand how topic order in election manifestos affects voters' perceptions of parties' most important issues. Lastly, I turn to the *media side* to assess how both topic order and issue attention in election manifestos have

an impact on which topics are covered in news media before the election. This comprehensive approach to topic order allows me to paint a full picture of topic order as the second dimension of issue emphasis. Furthermore, it enables me to show the many contexts in which it can be useful for scholars of party competition to include topic order instead of or in addition to issue attention.

In the remainder of the introduction, I will give an overview over how both parties and scholars use election manifestos. I will also give an introduction into the concept of issue emphasis and how including topic order can add to our understanding of parties' ways of highlighting topics in their manifestos.

1.1 The Functions and Uses of Election Manifestos

Election manifestos are central documents in parties' election campaigns (Bräuninger et al., 2013; Budge et al., 2010; Däubler, 2012a,b; Laver et al., 2003). They are a great tool for parties to present their policies since they are in full control over their manifestos' content and structure (Adams et al., 2011; Norris et al., 1999). They are adopted at party conventions or by party leadership, thereby representing the agenda of the party as a whole (Däubler, 2012a,b; Merz, 2017a). Manifestos set the tone for the campaign, present the campaign theme to the public (Adams et al., 2011), and help generate media attention for parties (Eder et al., 2017; Hornsteiner, 2023). Thus, election manifestos are at the core of parties' campaigns and help structure parties' entire campaigns.

In addition to being key to parties' campaigns, election manifestos also speak to all three of parties' main goals. They address policy-seeking strategies by presenting parties' policy goals to the public (Adams et al., 2011). Additionally, manifestos help parties' vote-seeking ambitions since they allow parties to present policies and highlight topics that they believe to be helpful in gaining more votes (Baumann et al., 2021). Finally, when it comes to an office-seeking perspective, election manifestos are often used as a basis for coalition agreements, and the topics that parties highlight in their manifestos often signal which government portfolios they want to secure for their party (Bäck et al., 2011; Däubler et al., 2024; Eichorst, 2014). Thus, election manifestos are highly important both during and after election campaigns.

When releasing their manifestos, parties are speaking to several audiences at once. Considering that election manifestos are a central part of parties' election campaigns, voters are a key audience for a manifesto. While parties are aware of the fact that many voters do not read manifestos, they do expect the content of their manifestos to be covered in the media and reach voters that way (Däubler, 2012a). Parties are therefore also speaking to the media through their manifestos. Additionally, parties also use their manifestos to speak to each other, as manifestos can be used as an indicator as to which policies and issue areas parties want to focus on should they become part of a coalition government (Bäck et al., 2011; Däubler et al., 2024; Eichorst, 2014). Finally, parties also address their own party base, and especially campaign activists, as election manifestos can be useful guidelines for staff and volunteers campaigning for their party (Däubler, 2012b; Eder et al., 2017).²

Within political science research, election manifestos are widely used. National election manifestos are made available regularly by projects such as the Manifesto Project (MARPOR, Volkens et al., 2017) or the Political Documents Archive (Polidoc, Benoit et al., 2009; Gross and Debus, 2018). At the European, regional, and local levels, the Euromanifesto Project (Carteny et al., 2023), the Regional Manifestos Project (Alonso et al., 2013), and the Local Manifesto Project (Gross and Jankowski, 2020) provide researchers with the respective manifesto data. Thus, election manifestos are an easily accessible data source. Furthermore, they are usually published by all major parties, making them comparable over time (Merz, 2017a). Thus, election manifestos are used for a wide variety of research. For instance, a growing body of research uses election manifestos, among other sources, to study parties' appeals to social groups (Dolinsky, 2023). Furthermore, manifestos help us understand whether governments fulfilled the pledges they made during the campaign (Matthieß and Vehrkamp, 2022). Election manifestos are also used to show under which circumstances sub-national parties emphasise regional topics during their campaigns (Gross et al., 2023).

²For further details on the different audiences parties need to address and how they can balance the different preferences and priorities of these audiences, see Chapter 2.3, as well as Charlot (1989); Dolezal et al. (2012); Greene (2016); Harmel (2018); Harmel et al. (2018).

1.2 *Issue Emphasis in Election Manifestos*

Why is it important to include topic order in our understanding of issue emphasis? Currently, issue emphasis in election manifestos is usually measured through issue attention, i.e. how much parties talk about individual topics (Barberá et al., 2019; Klüver and Bäck, 2019; Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2015; Klüver and Spoon, 2016; Otjes and Green-Pedersen, 2019; Peeters et al., 2019). However, I argue that we miss out on important information if we do not include topic order as a second dimension of the concept of issue emphasis. In the remainder of this section, I will summarise my main argument as to why it is worthwhile to add topic order to our understanding of issue emphasis.

Thinking of issue emphasis as a two-dimensional concept opens up the opportunity for parties to have both dimensions – topic order and issue emphasis – at their disposal as ways to highlight individual topics. Thus, parties are able to highlight some topics by covering them at greater length than other topics, and others by placing them early in the manifesto. Now, parties might highlight some topics by placing them in the beginning of the manifesto *and* by talking about them a lot. For instance, parties might use this all-in approach for topics that they really want to highlight, such as the main topics that they want to frame their campaign around. However, parties can also use topic order and issue attention separately. They can highlight some topics by placing them early, yet not talk about them at noticeably greater detail than the average topic. They then might highlight other topics by placing them around the middle or end of the manifesto, but talking about them a more than other topics to show that they have a lot to say on the matter. If we think of issue emphasis in terms of issue attention only, we risk not noticing those topics that are emphasised purely through topic order. Doing so would give us an incomplete picture of parties' issue priorities in their election campaigns.

When it comes to the uses of issue emphasis, having a more comprehensive picture of which topics parties highlight – and in which way – can only be beneficial. For instance, issue emphasis is often used as an indicator for portfolio allocation in coalition governments (Bäck et al., 2011; Däubler et al., 2024; Eichorst, 2014), where higher issue attention for certain topics is understood as a signal that those are the issue areas the party wants to be in charge of. In the scenario outlined above, where parties highlight some topics through issue attention, but

others through topic order only, we risk missing some of those signals that parties are sending not only to voters, but also to the media and to other parties, and therefore underestimate their preferences for certain issues.

In addition to thinking of topic order as a second dimension of issue emphasis in research on political parties, it is important to consider how readers of manifestos perceive these often-times long documents. While it is important for voters to understand the positions that parties present in their manifestos, it is also necessary for readers of manifestos to understand which issues parties want to prioritise. I argue that topic order is much more accessible to readers than issue attention. When reading or even skimming a manifesto, it is very easy to notice which issues are covered in the beginning of the document. In contrast, grasping which issues receive higher shares of attention is much harder and requires taking in the whole manifesto. Even then, if a topic is spread throughout different parts of the manifesto, simply reading the manifesto will not be enough to be able to make an informed estimate of how much attention this topic receives compared to others. I argue that using topic order to highlight topics leads to readers of manifestos being much more likely to notice these topics and understand that they are important topics for the respective party.

1.3 Composition of this Dissertation

This dissertation is structured as follows. In Chapter 2, I look at the supply side of manifestos to understand how parties use topic order to highlight topics and thereby address specific audiences. Chapter 3 then covers how voters perceive parties' issue priorities based on how topics are ordered in an election manifesto. In Chapter 4, I assess how topic order in election manifestos affects which topics are more likely to be covered in news media and, thereby, make it to the voters. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes this dissertation and showcases some avenues for further research.

The main takeaways of this dissertation are as follows. First, as I show in Chapter 2, parties sometimes use an all-or-nothing approach when it comes to how they choose to highlight topics in their manifestos: In the first quarter of their manifestos, they apply both topic order and issue attention to issues that they want to emphasise. However, they do not always go all

in when they want to highlight certain issues. This is the case especially when parties highlight topics that are relevant for audiences outside of the party, such as the electorate as a whole. Parties tend to highlight those topics by talking about them a lot, but not by placing them early in the manifesto.

Second, readers of an election manifesto understand the meaning of topic order, as I show in Chapter 3. They perceive those topics as particularly important to a party that are placed in the beginning of the manifesto. This finding underlines the importance of topic order in election manifestos, as it shows that anyone reading a manifesto ascribes meaning to the way that topics are ordered.

Third, in Chapter 4, I show that topics that are placed in the beginning of a manifesto receive more media coverage than those that appear later in the manifesto. Thus, topic order directly affects which topics make it into the news media, and, consequently, to the voter. This finding shows that topic order in election manifestos matters when it comes to parties' statements reaching the public.

In summary, my findings show that topic order is a relevant dimension within the concept of issue emphasis. It matters on the *supply side* in that parties can use topic order and issue attention to specifically target different audiences. It is also relevant on the *demand side*, since readers of a manifesto associate topic order with how much a topic matters to a party. Lastly, on the *media side*, topic order is an important factor explaining which topics reach the voter through media coverage.

Chapter 2

Supply Side: Understanding Parties' Use of Topic Order

2 SUPPLY SIDE: UNDERSTANDING PARTIES' USE OF TOPIC ORDER

How do parties order topics in their election manifestos, and what does topic order add to our understanding of issue emphasis? Political scientists use issue emphasis in parties' election manifestos to answer a variety of questions, for instance, to understand intra-party conflicts (Greene, 2016, 2019), parties' responsiveness to voters' policy priorities (Klüver and Spoon, 2016), coalition negotiations and portfolio allocation (Bäck et al., 2011; Eichorst, 2014), and parties' parliamentary activity during the legislative term (Gross et al., 2024). Issue emphasis is typically understood in terms of issue attention, i.e., how much parties talk about individual issues (Barberá et al., 2019; Klüver and Bäck, 2019; Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2015; Klüver and Spoon, 2016; Otjes and Green-Pedersen, 2019; Peeters et al., 2019). In this section of my dissertation, I argue that issue attention is only one dimension of issue emphasis. I introduce topic order as a second dimension and argue that parties can also emphasise topics by placing them earlier in their manifestos. Taking into account that parties need to address two different audiences at once – an external audience consisting of the electorate, other parties, and the media, and an internal audience consisting of party members – I discuss how parties can use topic order and issue attention to highlight topics separately to cater to both audiences at once.

Analysing German election manifestos between 2002 and 2017, I find that while parties do not use topic order and issue attention entirely separately, they do not serve the exact same purpose either. Most notably, issue attention is not parties' main way of highlighting topics that aim at an external audience, i.e., voters and other parties, unless these topics are placed in the later sections of the manifestos. Topic order, in contrast, is used to emphasise topics for the internal audience, i.e., party members, alongside higher issue attention. These findings strongly underline that studying issue emphasis by considering issue attention *only* can be misleading. This is the case especially when topics are highlighted through topic order, but not as much by being talked about more than other topics. Taking topic order into account not only helps us better differentiate parties' strategies and who they are talking to when they highlight individual topics, but it also gives us a much more complete – and more accurate – picture of issue emphasis as a whole.

This section of my dissertation is structured as follows. In section 2.1, I discuss why election manifestos matter for parties and for political scientists, and what we know about how parties emphasise their key topics in their manifestos. Section 2.2 introduces topic order as a second dimension of issue emphasis and discusses how we can expect topic order to differ from issue attention. Section 2.3 then goes into more detail and examines how we can expect parties to use topic order and issue attention in their manifestos to strategically target different audiences. In section 2.4, I present the data I use and thoroughly discuss their feasibility to test my hypotheses. In section 2.5, I present my operationalisation of topic order and issue attention, and in section 2.6 I introduce the remaining independent variables. Section 2.7 then gives a descriptive overview of topic order and issue attention in election manifestos. Sections 2.8 and 2.9 contain my analyses and discussion of the resulting findings. Lastly, section 2.10 concludes this part of my dissertation by discussing further research avenues.

2.1 *State of the Art: Of Manifestos and Issue Emphasis*

2.1.1 *Manifestos*

Election manifestos are important documents in parties' election campaigns (Bräuninger et al., 2013; Budge et al., 2010; Däubler, 2012a,b; Laver et al., 2003). Their main purpose is to present a party's policy goals and plans to the public before an election (Adams et al., 2011; Merz, 2017a). At the same time, they are comprehensive documents covering a large number of issue areas (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994; Green-Pedersen, 2007; Sigelman and Buell, 2004). Increasing issue competition has led to parties writing longer election manifestos that cover a wider array of issues: As issue competition rises, parties need to cover most or all topics that are on the party political agenda (Green-Pedersen, 2007) instead of focusing their manifestos on their owned or most beneficial topics (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994; Green-Pedersen, 2007; Sigelman and Buell, 2004).

But how are manifestos actually written? While the exact process can differ between parties, there is usually a common pattern. Typically, party leadership tasks a small group of people with the responsibility of coordinating and writing the first draft of the manifesto, either by appoint-

ing a formal manifesto committee or by handing the responsibility to select persons. While the exact composition differs between parties, typical actors in this committee are representatives of the parliamentary groups, party staffers, and in current government members party members working in the ministries that a party controls at the time of writing the manifesto. Furthermore, manifesto committees often task intra-party groups or spokespeople for individual policy areas with writing or advising on sections that are relevant to the issues they work on. Once all individual sections are drafted, either the committee itself or party leadership or the party's office collect and put together all sections to compile a first full draft. In some cases, this draft then goes through a round of revisions where party members and select intra-party groups are able to give feedback and suggest changes. Once the manifesto has been written, the process of finalising and publishing it differs between countries. In Germany and in Baden-Württemberg, all parties present the final draft to the party convention, where delegates can once again suggest changes and then vote on the final manifesto (cf. Däubler (2012b); Hornsteiner (2023) for a more detailed overview of the manifesto writing process in Baden-Württemberg and Germany, respectively). In Austria, party leadership adopts the manifesto and thereby finalises the drafting stage (Dolezal et al., 2012). In the Irish case, the manifestos are typically adopted by parties' executive boards or election committees (cf. Däubler (2012a) for more details). In all of these cases, the concrete task of writing a manifesto and putting together and organising individual paragraphs and sections falls into the hands of a small group of people.

When it comes to the target audience of manifestos, we know that the average voter does not read manifestos (Adams et al., 2011; Laver, 1984), and parties know this as well (Däubler, 2012a). Voters do, however, receive information about parties' manifestos through the media (Bara, 2007). Political parties understand that the media pick up on election manifestos, especially right after they are launched (Däubler, 2012a). Additionally, there is a second link that brings manifestos to the electorate: party activists that campaign for their respective party and use manifestos to help structure their efforts (Adams et al., 2011; Merz, 2017a). Thus, parties know that their manifestos reach the electorate through indirect links (Budge, 1987; Eder et al., 2017).

2.1.2 Issue Emphasis

As parties write comprehensive election manifestos covering issues that are on the party political agenda (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994; Green-Pedersen, 2007; Sigelman and Buell, 2004), they need to highlight certain issues over others. This practice of highlighting issues in their election manifestos is called *issue emphasis*. As we know from saliency theory, parties prefer not to position themselves on all issues, but instead highlight valence issues and other issues that they have credibility in (Budge and Farlie, 1983; Petrocik, 1996; Robertson, 1979). Contrary to the position shifts proposed by Downs (1957), parties instead adjust which topics they emphasise, since frequent position shifts would impede their credibility (Sio and Weber, 2014; Grofman, 2004; Müller and Strøm, 2005). Thus, parties highlight topics or dimensions where they expect to win or to divide the majority in their favour (Riker, 1986). This tactic brings about the additional benefit that highlighting certain topics puts parties in control over how these topics are framed in the public debate (Jerit, 2008; Nadeau et al., 2010). Hence, parties do not engage in a dialogue over a wide range of topics (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2015; Meyer and Wagner, 2016), but instead highlight certain topics (Budge and Farlie, 1983; Budge, 1993; Green and Hobolt, 2008; Petrocik, 1996; Petrocik et al., 2003; Riker, 1986, 1993).

There are a number of reasons as to *why* parties would want to highlight some issues. One reason for highlighting issues is that parties own these issues. We speak of issue ownership whenever the public understands a party as more competent on some issues than on others (Green and Jennings, 2017; Petrocik, 1996). Those issues that a party is perceived as being particularly good at are the issues that this party owns. In order to benefit from this attribution of competence in certain issues, parties focus more on their owned issues than on others (Budge and Farlie, 1983; Petrocik, 1996; Robertson, 1979). Doing so enables them to frame their election campaign in a way that voters will associate them with their owned issues, increasing a party's perceived competence. This electoral benefit increases even more when issues are salient at the time of the election (Bélanger and Meguid, 2008; Green and Jennings, 2017; Petrocik, 1996; Seeberg, 2017; Stubager and Seeberg, 2016). Due to high issue salience and high perceived competence in certain issues, a party can benefit a lot by highlighting these issues throughout its campaign (Abou-Chadi, 2018; Budge and Farlie, 1983; Budge, 1993; Green and Jennings, 2017;

Robertson, 1979).

Additionally, parties might want to *ride the wave*, that is highlight topics that are salient at the time of the election, especially when the party also agrees with a large share of the electorate on this issue (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994; Klüver and Spoon, 2016; Spoon and Klüver, 2015; Wagner and Meyer, 2014). By emphasising issues that are currently salient, parties show that they are aware of and can deal with current problems and that they care about voters' concerns (Sides, 2007). Furthermore, they increase their persuasiveness when they campaign on topics that are already salient and on the electorate's mind (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994).

2.2 Topic Order as a Dimension of Issue Emphasis

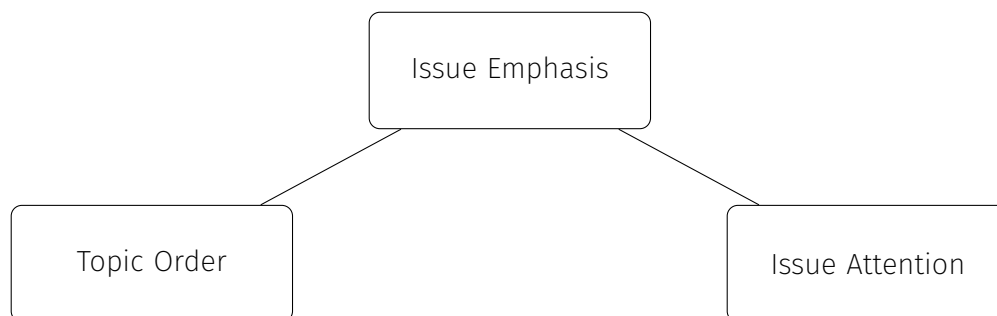
When studying issue emphasis, we typically look at how much parties talk about individual topics. The more a party talks about any given topic, the more important we conclude this topic to be for the party in question (Budge and Farlie, 1983; Budge, 1993; Green and Hobolt, 2008; Petrocik, 1996; Petrocik et al., 2003; Riker, 1986, 1993). We call this way of highlighting topics *issue attention* (Barberá et al., 2019; Klüver and Bäck, 2019; Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2015; Klüver and Spoon, 2016; Otjes and Green-Pedersen, 2019; Peeters et al., 2019). Looking at issue attention to understand issue emphasis can be very useful. A party deciding to spend more space on some issues than on others can indeed be a strong sign that the party also prioritises those issues. However, there is another reason that could also lead to a topic being discussed at greater length than other topics, as increased issue attention can also be a reflection of intra-party conflict. If different intra-party groups struggle to agree on a certain issue, a solution is to talk about it in more detail in order to put the internal compromise in writing, thereby binding party leadership to the intra-party decision (Greene, 2016, 2019).³ Therefore, whilst issue attention is a very important part of issue emphasis, it also contains other information that can distort our understanding of issue emphasis in a given election manifesto.

I argue that in addition to issue attention, there is another dimension of issue emphasis that we should not neglect: *topic order*. How things are ordered matters everywhere around us,

³There is similar evidence for coalition agreements, where coalition partners publicly commit to the compromise they reached by covering divisive issues in more detail (Eichorst, 2014; Klüver and Bäck, 2019).

both in political and non-political contexts. While the order in which to watch Star Wars films can start great debates among fans, we also see that order is relevant in contexts that are more closely related to the topic at hand. Specifically, research has found that the order of candidates on a ballot paper affects how many votes each candidate gets (Blom-Hansen et al., 2016). The authors used the fact that in Danish local and regional elections, ballot papers may be arranged in one or two columns, but that the layout is only decided *after* all competing parties submitted their candidates. This leads to candidates that are in the middle of their party's list being placed at the top in two-column layouts, but not in single-column ones. The authors find that candidates that are placed at the top gain more votes, even when those candidates are positioned in the middle of their party's candidate list and are only listed at the top due to the two-column layout of the ballot paper (Blom-Hansen et al., 2016). When taking topic order into account, issue emphasis becomes a concept consisting of two dimensions, namely topic order and issue attention. As illustrated in Figure 2.1, topic order and issue attention stand alongside each other as two separate parts of issue emphasis.

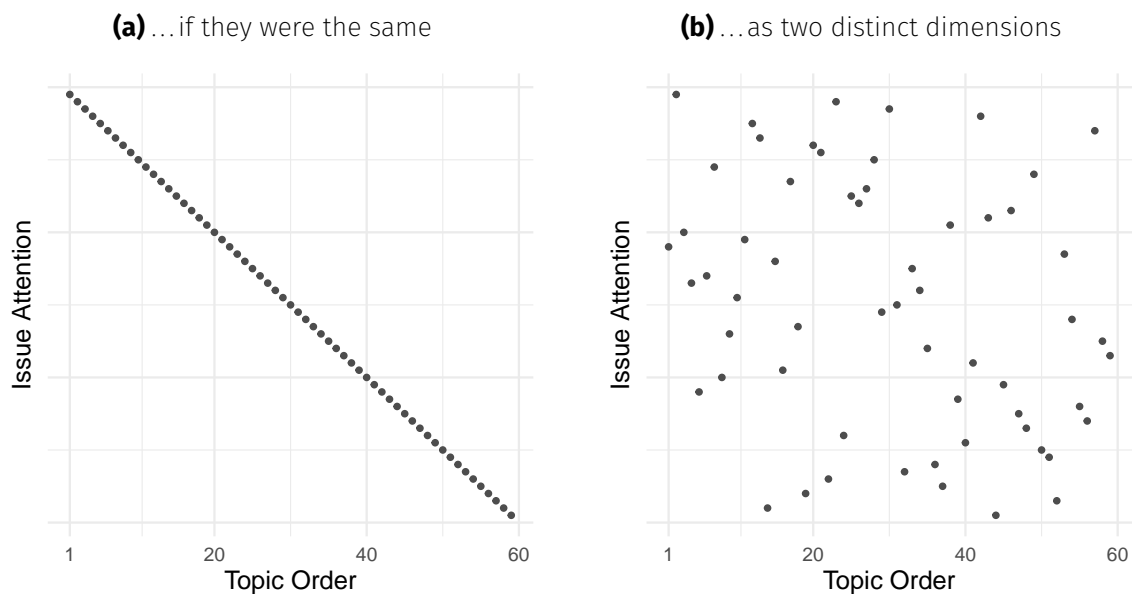
Figure 2.1: Topic Order and Issue Attention as two Dimensions of Issue Emphasis



When considering topic order as an additional dimension of issue emphasis, we find that parties now have *two different* means of highlighting issues. They can highlight some issues by talking about them at greater length, and others by placing them in the early chapters of the manifesto. In order to make full use of these two dimensions of issue emphasis, parties should use issue attention and topic order *separately*, i.e., they should *not* talk the most about the first topic, and the least about the last one. Instead, topic order and issue attention should be used

on different topics, which allows parties to highlight more issues at once. Figure 2.2 illustrates what the relationship between topic order and issue attention in election manifestos can look like, where topic order is displayed on the x-axis and issue attention on the y-axis. If topic order and issue attention were one and the same, i.e., if parties talked the most about the first topic, and the least about the last one, we would find a clear relationship between the two as pictured in Figure 2.2a. While the relationship illustrated in Figure 2.2a is linear, the relationship between topic order and issue attention does not need to be linear, but could also look differently. In contrast, if parties used topic order and issue attention separately, we would observe a relationship that looks more like the one in Figure 2.2b, where there is no clear correlation between the two.

Figure 2.2: Topic Order and Issue Attention



Note: Figure 2.2a shows what the relationship between topic order in election manifestos (x-axis) and issue attention (y-axis) would look like if parties did not use these two dimensions of issue emphasis differently. Figure 2.2b shows what this relationship should look like if parties used these two dimensions of issue emphasis separately.

So what would it mean substantively for parties to use topic order and issue attention as illustrated in Figure 2.2b? Conceptualising topic order and issue attention as two dimensions of issue emphasis allows us to consider parties highlighting different topics in different ways. For

instance, a party could begin its manifesto by placing its key issues for the upcoming campaign in the very first chapters.⁴ That way, anyone looking at the manifesto would immediately see the party's main issues for the election campaign. The same party could then emphasise other topics that might not be the focal point of its campaign, but still important to the party, by covering them at greater length, thereby showing that it cares enough about the topic to cover it in greater detail than other topics. Using topic order to highlight some issues and issue emphasis to highlight others therefore allows parties to highlight more topics at the same time, and to highlight them in different ways. Understanding topic order and issue attention as two different dimensions of issue emphasis thus leads to the expectation that, in order to make full use of both of them, parties should use topic order to highlight some topics, and issue attention for others. I thus propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Issue attention in parties' election manifestos is independent of topic order.

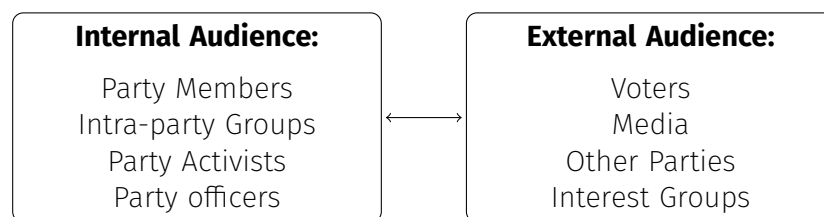
2.3 Communication to the Inside vs. Outside

But how to explain *how exactly* parties use issue attention and topic order as two separate dimensions of issue emphasis, and which issues they choose to highlight one way or the other? I argue that the decision of *how* to highlight individual topics or kinds of topics is driven by who the target audience of the topic at hand is. As parties have to balance meeting their electoral goals with ensuring the support of intra-party groups and party activists (Greene, 2016), emphasising different topics differently can help parties reach both audiences at once. This argument is based on the notion that party manifestos can address two audiences at the same time, an internal and an external audience (Charlot, 1989; Dolezal et al., 2012; Harmel, 2018; Harmel et al., 2018). As illustrated in Figure 2.3, the external audience consists of people, groups, or institutions that are not part of the party, including the media, opposing parties, interest groups, academic institutions, and the electorate (Charlot, 1989; Dolezal et al., 2012; Harmel, 2018; Harmel

⁴Note that throughout this dissertation, I use the term 'key issue' when referring to an issue that is important or central to a party's campaign, irrespective of whether a party has ownership of an issue.

et al., 2018). The internal audience, in contrast, comprises anything within the party, including party officers, members, and activists (Charlot, 1989; Dolezal et al., 2012; Harmel, 2018; Harmel et al., 2018). While party researchers have not settled on how to name these audiences, they all use names that follow a similar theme. The internal audience is also called part of the party or party supporters (Harmel et al., 2018), and in-group or inward-looking face (Charlot, 1989), while the external audience is referred to using terms like outside, looking in (Harmel et al., 2018), and out-group or public face (Charlot, 1989). In order to keep with the existing themes in naming those audiences, I will use the terms internal and external audience, and communicating to the inside and to the outside.

Figure 2.3: Parties' Internal and External Audiences



Addressing both the internal and external audience means to carefully build and maintain a party's identity and its image, where the identity is aimed at members' perceptions, and the image targets the perceptions of outsiders such as voters (Gioia and Thomas, 1996; Harmel et al., 2018). As parties are aware that they need to address two different audiences (Dolezal et al., 2012; Harmel et al., 2018), they need to keep those two target groups in mind when using their manifestos as communication tools during their campaigns. Therefore, I differentiate between parties communicating *to the outside*, that is to voters, the media, or other parties, and communicating *to the inside*, that is to their own party members and intra-party groups. In the remainder of this section, I will explain how issue emphasis is connected to these two kinds of communication.

When parties communicate to an external audience, that is to the voters and the media, they are acting from a strategic electoral point of view in an effort to maintain a curated image of themselves (Greene, 2016; Harmel et al., 2018). They should thus highlight issues that

they expect to be helpful in the electoral game (Baumann et al., 2021). For instance, they might claim responsibility for successful policy decisions that were made in the last legislative term, or focus their communication on topics that they already have an established credibility in, and they should minimise talking of any topic that might hinder their electoral chances (Petrocik, 1996; Sio and Weber, 2014). Considering that competence evaluations become increasingly important for voters' vote choice (Green and Hobolt, 2008), highlighting topics that add to a party's perceived competence is crucial during electoral campaigns.

While the literature on issue emphasis agrees that parties should highlight topics that are beneficial electorally (see, for instance, Budge and Farlie, 1983; Green and Jennings, 2017; Petrocik, 1996; Robertson, 1979; Stubager and Seeberg, 2016), nobody so far considered *how* parties should highlight them. I argue that highlighting them through topic order is more efficient compared to highlighting them through issue attention. By placing electorally beneficial issues right at the beginning of the manifesto, parties can ensure that readers notice the topic immediately upon opening the manifesto. This even holds true when readers skim the table of contents for topics that they are interested in: they will automatically notice the (relative) placement of a topic, but not so much the length of topics. Thus, by placing electorally beneficial topics early in their manifesto, parties can shape readers' first impression of their electoral campaign towards those topics that they want to focus on. In contrast, if a party were to highlight electorally beneficial topics not through topic order, but solely through issue attention, there is a risk of readers missing the topic entirely: as most people do not fully read manifestos (Adams et al., 2011; Laver, 1984), topics that are placed in the middle or towards the end are easier to miss than those that are on the first pages of the manifesto, no matter the length they are covered at. Thus, when highlighting electorally beneficial topics through issue attention only, parties risk not getting their key topic(s) across even to people who take a look at the manifesto. Therefore, I argue that parties should highlight electorally beneficial topics primarily through topic order to make sure that they are seen, and use issue attention only secondarily to emphasise those topics.

In addition to the voters, parties need to get a second, internal audience on board with their election campaign. Without support from intra-party groups and factions, parties will have

a hard time campaigning, and even getting the party assembly to agree on their manifesto. Since election manifestos are often a key tool for parties' election campaign teams (Däubler, 2012b; Eder et al., 2017), and since parties heavily rely on their party base's support during the campaign, it is important for them to also emphasise issues that party members particularly care about and that are important for maintaining the party's identity (Harmel et al., 2018). While these topics *can* be the same as those that are salient in the electorate or that are beneficial electorally, they can also be different. This is where using topic order and issue attention as two separate dimensions of issue emphasis comes into play, as it allows parties to highlight different topics for different audiences.

Since the party base has reasons to read their party's manifesto much more closely than the average voter, they are also more likely to look for their key topics, even if that means having to flip to the middle or even end of the manifesto. Then, by reading their party's propositions on the topics that they see as the party's core issues, they notice how much length is given to these topics, and whether all relevant aspects of the topics are covered in the manifesto. Therefore, I argue that issue attention is more suitable when speaking to the internal audience. In addition to the party base being more likely than the electorate to notice when topics are highlighted through issue attention, using issue attention to highlight the party base's core issues is especially beneficial when these issues are less electorally beneficial: Placing non-beneficial topics prominently in the first chapters of a manifesto risks that the external audience notices these topics and then associates them with the party for the rest of the campaign. By highlighting them through issue attention, a party can still signal to its voter base that it acknowledges the importance of these topics, without placing them too prominently in the manifesto.

H2: The more relevant a topic is for a party's communication to the outside, the more it is going to be highlighted through topic order.

H3: The more relevant a topic is for a party's communication to the inside, the more it is going to be highlighted through issue attention.

2.4 *Data Used to Study Issue Emphasis in Election Manifestos*

In order to study how exactly parties use topic order and issue attention to emphasise different kinds of issues, I examined German parties' federal election manifestos for five Bundestag elections (2002, 2005, 2009, 2013, and 2017).⁵ The full manifestos are available through the Manifesto Project (MARPOR, Volkens et al., 2017).⁶ Election manifestos play an important role in German election campaigns, and their importance has grown over time, as has their length (cf. Figure A.1a in the Appendix; also Hornsteiner, 2023, 88). Additionally, German election campaigns have a long tradition of parties writing manifestos where they present their political agenda and the media reporting on those manifestos. Since manifestos are such a core part of German parties' election campaigns, we can expect parties to be very intentional about how they write their manifestos and how they highlight individual topics, which makes German election manifestos an ideal case to understand how exactly parties emphasise different kinds of topics in their manifestos.

Furthermore, the German party system is comparable to many other European democracies in that it is a multi-party system where coalition governments are the norm. Parties in those party systems go into election campaigns knowing that they will have to join a coalition if they are to participate in government and that their election manifestos are also a signal to other parties regarding their own policy positions and issue priorities. Parties' issue emphasis in manifestos predicts portfolio allocation in coalition governments (Bäck et al., 2011), underlining the relevance of issue emphasis in Western European parties' manifestos. Using Germany as a first case to deepen our understanding of issue emphasis by considering its two dimensions, issue attention and topic order, separately therefore also allows us to draw more generalisable conclusions. Nonetheless, further research will be necessary to study if topic order and issue attention are used in similar ways in other countries, both those with multi-party systems

⁵The time frame covered in this dissertation is restricted to 2002 to 2017 for reasons of data availability. Manifesto data that allow me to identify sub-chapters, and therefore topic order, in manifestos are available no earlier than 1998. Additionally, the German Longitudinal Election Study has not asked respondents about their party identification before 2002, and has, at the time of writing this dissertation, not yet coded respondents' open answers regarding the most important problem for the 2021 election.

⁶In the case of the CDU/CSU manifestos, MARPOR collects and annotates the joint manifestos released by the CDU and CSU. In elections when the CSU releases an additional own manifesto, like in 2017, they are not included in the MARPOR dataset.

similar to the German one and those with different party systems.

In addition to the importance of election manifestos in German election campaigns and the comparability of the party system especially in Western Europe, using German Bundestag elections between 2002 and 2017 has practical advantages. First, the parties included in this dissertation vary in terms of party size, party family, mainstream or niche party status, and age. Second, studying all German Bundestag elections between 2002 and 2017 introduces temporal variance which ensures that any findings are not merely the result of one-time factors pertaining to a specific election.

2.4.1 *Level of Analysis*

In order to derive topic order and issue attention from German parties' full election manifestos, the first step is to choose a meaningful level of analysis from parties' manifestos. When working with election manifestos, many researchers work with small units such as sentences or even parts of sentences. Most prominently, coders from the Manifesto Project code statements in quasi-sentences, i.e. the smallest part of a sentence that still contains a meaningful statement (Volkens et al., 2017). While there are many practical applications of capturing the content of manifestos in this way, I argue that quasi-sentences or full sentences are a unit that is too small to capture topic order. When reading a manifesto and understanding what its individual parts are about, people do not grasp the topics that a party talks about for every individual sentence, but rather for bigger units such as paragraphs, sub-chapters, or chapters. Similarly, when perceiving if a topic is placed early or late in a manifesto, readers of said manifesto would not derive a topic's placement in the manifesto from a single sentence, but from those bigger units that are long enough to meaningfully convey a party's position on the given topic. I therefore do not use a sentence or quasi-sentence level to capture topic order.

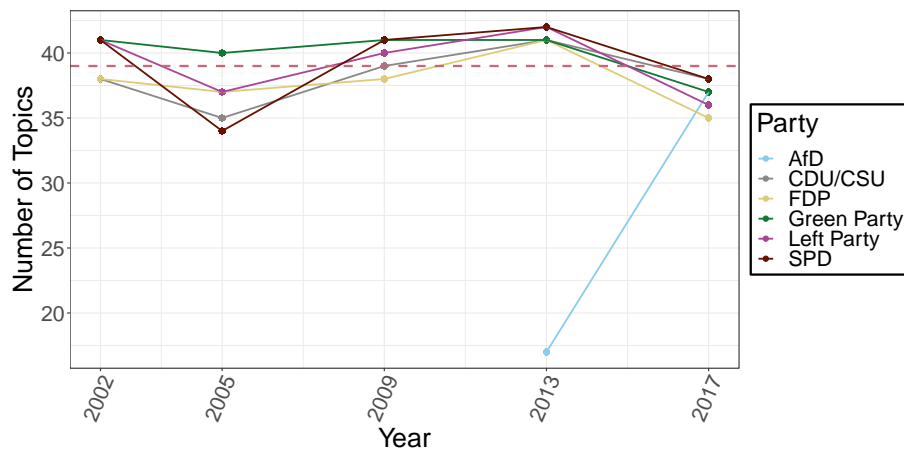
Looking at election manifestos, we find that they often follow a similar structure, where they start with a table of contents, followed by a preamble that sets the general tone for the manifesto and typically includes a general call for vote. After those introductory pages, parties start to present their positions and goals on individual policy issues. The remainder of a manifesto is then typically divided into chapters and sub-chapters. The specific way in which these chap-

ters and sub-chapters are structured can vary. Some manifestos have chapters where most or all sub-chapters within cover individual, more detailed aspects of the overarching topic of the chapters or topics that are closely related to it. Other manifestos have thematically very broad chapters, where the sub-chapters contain many different topics. Therefore, chapters would be too big and too diverse of a unit to meaningfully study issue emphasis in manifestos. Sub-chapters, however, are very well suited for the purpose of studying issue emphasis in election manifestos, as they are typically focused on a single issue and are still long enough to convey meaningful information to the reader. Additionally, sub-chapter headers are displayed in a visually distinct form throughout the text, which means that anyone who just so much as skims through a manifesto can notice the sub-chapter titles and get a first idea about what the individual sections are about. Therefore, I will use sub-chapters to study issue emphasis in party manifestos as they are meaningful sections of a manifesto that are relevant to the real-life experience of reading a manifesto to understand its content.

2.4.2 Using MARPOR Data to Study Issue Emphasis

In order to capture topic order in election manifestos, I use the data provided by the Manifesto Project (Volkens et al., 2017). MARPOR data contains information on the emphasis that parties place on pre-defined issues in their election manifestos. In order to gather this information, MARPOR divides each manifesto in quasi-sentences, i.e. parts of sentences that still contain a meaningful statement. For each quasi-sentence, coders assign a code that indicates the topic that the respective quasi-sentence is about. For some topics, the topic code additionally indicates whether a party has a positive or negative attitude, such as Military: Positive and Military: Negative. However, this differentiation is not done for all topics. Furthermore, a differentiation between positive and negative attitudes is not of interest in the analysis of topic order in election manifestos, as I am interested in how much parties talk about individual topics, no matter their position on the topic. I therefore recoded the topics that have a positive and negative category so that they are grouped together within the same topic code (see also Klüver and Spoon, 2016; Lowe et al., 2011; McGregor, 2013, p. 639). This leaves me with 44 different topics that we can find in parties' election manifestos.

Looking at the number of topics that parties cover in their manifestos, Figure 2.4 shows that there is only little variation. Across all elections, we can see that all parties, with the exception of the AfD in 2013, cover a great number of different topics in their manifestos. Parties cover between 34 and 42 topics in their manifestos, with the average manifesto containing 39 topics as depicted by the dashed line. The small fluctuations in the number of topics covered in election manifestos is consistent between parties and across elections, with the early election in 2005 being the only one that has comparatively large differences in how many topics parties cover in their manifestos. As the total number of topics available in the data is 44, it becomes clear that parties discuss their positions on most topics that are on the party political agenda, i.e., issues that are addressed by the other political parties (Green-Pedersen, 2007). In Figure A.1 in the Appendix, we can additionally see manifestos' length in words and the number of sub-chapters parties used. Here, we can also see a learning experience and professionalisation for the AfD in the two elections that it was part of. In 2013, when the AfD was still a brand new party, it had a very short manifesto with just 8 sub-chapters, and it discussed only 17 topics, which is less than half of what all other parties covered in their respective manifestos. Additionally, the AfD's manifesto in 2013 consisted of bullet points instead of full paragraphs. The AfD's manifesto in 2013 is thus not comparable to other manifestos in the same election. In 2017, just one election later, the AfD's manifesto was already much closer in length to the manifestos provided by the other parties, and counted 37 topics in 122 sub-chapters, thus covering a similar amount of topics to all other parties. Thus, the AfD's manifesto in 2013 is not comparable to the AfD's manifesto in 2017, and one can even argue that the AfD in 2013 and in 2017 are not the same party. Therefore, I exclude the AfD in 2013 from the analyses.

Figure 2.4: Number of Topics in German Election Manifestos between 2002 and 2017

Note: Dashed line represents average number of topics. Maximum number of topics possible: 44.
Source: MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

2.4.3 Identifying Sub-chapters

For chapter and sub-chapter headers, MARPOR coders assign a code that identifies them as headers, i.e., all chapter and sub-chapter headers share the code "H" instead of having a topic code, or were assigned N/A in older manifestos.⁷ This use of a separate code for headers in the manifesto data allows me to identify all manifestos' sub-chapters without having to manually annotate the data.⁸ Regarding the use of the topic code "H" to identify headers and sub-headers, MARPOR coders assign the topic code "H" to headers of any level, meaning that some manifestos have headers coded on two levels (headers and sub-headers), and others on three levels (headers, sub-headers, and sub-sub-headers). Table A.1 in the Appendix shows that having two or three levels of chapters are most common in German election manifestos, as 10 manifestos in the data have two levels, and 14 manifestos have three levels. Only the CDU/CSU

⁷Note that in the case of German manifestos, chapter and sub-chapter headers can only be identified through the use of this code "H", or N/A in older manifestos, for elections since 1998. For any German election before that, headers were coded like regular quasi-sentences.

⁸Despite there being no need to annotate the headers by hand, I manually checked the header codings for all manifestos in my data. In 21 out of 26 manifestos, I had to make some minor corrections. In all cases, those corrections were either instances of headers being mistakenly coded as regular quasi-sentences, or regular quasi-sentences being annotated as headers. However, I only had to make very few corrections per manifesto, usually in the low single digits, and those corrections can be attributed to minor oversights by the MARPOR coders, underlining the high quality of the MARPOR data. Table A.2 in the Appendix provides an overview over which manifestos had to be recoded.

manifesto in 2009 has 4 levels of headers.

There are two manifestos in the data that have only one level of headers. First, the AfD manifesto in 2013 only has one level of headers. Looking at the manifesto, it is apparent that this use of headers is not the only difference to other manifestos, as this manifesto is also very short and only contains bullet points. This difference in structure in the AfD 2013 manifesto can thus be attributed to it being the AfD's first Bundestag manifesto.

Figure 2.5: Use of Sub-headers in Election Manifestos

(a) FDP 2005

Ostdeutschland braucht weiterhin solidarische Hilfe.

Die FDP bekennt sich zum Aufbau Ost und zur gesamtdeutschen Solidarität. Wir stehen zum Verfassungsauftrag, **gleichwertige Lebenschancen in ganz Deutschland** zu eröffnen, und wollen durch eine wachstumsorientierte Wirtschaftspolitik dafür sorgen, daß alle Bürger Deutschlands eine Zukunft haben. Notwendig ist ein schlüssiges und grundlegendes Reformkonzept, wie es die FDP mit diesem Programm vorlegt. Nur durch eine grundlegende Verbesserung der steuerlichen Rahmenbedingungen, spürbare Senkung der Lohnzusatzkosten, Flexibilisierung des Arbeits- und Tarifrechts sowie umfassende Deregulierung und Entbürokratisierung kann die Massenarbeitslosigkeit wirksam bekämpft werden.

In einem Gesamtkonzept zur **Neuausrichtung des Aufbaus Ost** müssen neben der notwendigen Verbesserung der gesamtwirtschaftlichen auch die spezifischen Standortfaktoren und die vorhandenen Wettbewerbsvorteile Ostdeutschlands hinreichend berücksichtigt werden. Damit diese zum Tragen kommen und zu nachhaltigem Wirtschaftswachstum und damit zur Schaffung von Arbeitsplätzen führen, fordern wir den Bund und die neuen Länder zu folgenden Maßnahmen auf:

Besonders in Ostdeutschland sollen **Modellregionen** geschaffen werden. Die Förderpolitik muß neu geordnet werden: weg vom „Gießkannenprinzip“, hin zur gezielten Vergabe der Mittel. Die Förderung soll auf gewerbliche Investitionen und insbesondere auf wirtschaftsnahe Forschung und Entwicklung konzentriert werden. Im Rahmen des Auf- und Ausbaus der Infrastruktur müssen die Verkehrsprojekte Deutsche Einheit Priorität behalten. Wir stehen zum beschlossenen Solidarpakt II. Wir werden jedoch darauf achten, daß die Mittel vorrangig für Investitionen eingesetzt werden.

Nachhaltige Ausgabenkürzung ist die Aufgabe solider Haushaltspolitik.

Die FDP setzt sich auf allen staatlichen Ebenen für eine konsequente **Konsolidierung der öffentlichen Haushalte** ein. Die Schulden von heute sind die Steuererhöhungen von morgen. Sie belasten nachfolgende Generationen. Bei der Sanierung der Haushalte kann es nicht um Einnahmeverbesserung durch Steuererhöhungen gehen. Die FDP-Bundestagsfraktion hat in über 400 Anträgen zum Bundeshaushalt 2005 Einsparvorschläge in einer Gesamthöhe von 12,5 Mrd. Euro gemacht. Das zeigt, daß die Rekordneverschuldung durch nachhaltiges Konsolidieren und Reformieren gestoppt werden und der Bundeshaushalt sowohl den Vorgaben des Grundgesetzes als auch des Maastricht-Vertrages entsprechen kann. Statt die Maastrichtkriterien aufzuweichen, wollen wir diese im Grundgesetz festschreiben.

(b) SPD 2005

Wir wollen die Freiheit der Vielen

Wir wollen gemeinsam unser Schicksal in die Hand nehmen. Dazu müssen wir bereit, aber auch fähig sein. Nur wer seine Persönlichkeit frei entfalten und seine Begabungen ausschöpfen kann, wird sein eigenes Leben selbst bestimmen und am politischen, gesellschaftlichen und kulturellen Leben mitwirken können. Für uns ist Freiheit immer die Freiheit der Vielen, nicht der Egoismus Einzelner. Es ist die Freiheit, die durch soziale Gerechtigkeit ermöglicht wird und die in Solidarität mündet.

Wir bewahren den Sozialstaat

Die Sicherung des sozialen Ausgleichs ist und bleibt eine Hauptaufgabe des Sozialstaats. Wir wollen einen Staat, der das Gemeinwohl über die Einzelinteressen stellt und es durchsetzen kann. Einen Staat, der sich nur einmischet, wenn es nötig ist, der fordert und fördert und der das Prinzip der Subsidiarität beachtet. Einen aktivierenden Staat. Einen Staat, der den Menschen hilft, ein eigenständiges Leben zu führen. Einen starken und solidarischen Staat, der für die Menschen da ist, wenn sie Hilfe brauchen. Denn ohne einen solchen Staat gibt es ein selbst bestimmtes Leben nur für die wenigen besonders Starken.

Dabei wissen wir: Menschen sind unterschiedlich, in ihrer Leistungsfähigkeit und ihrer Leistungswilligkeit. Aber der Druck der Anpassung darf nicht vor allem auf den Schwächsten lasten. Wer stark ist, muss auch einen größeren Beitrag leisten, um dem Land zu dienen.

Wir wollen den Primat der Politik

Wir akzeptieren nicht, dass „Geld die Welt regiert“. Auch nicht im Zeitalter des globalen Kapitalismus. Wir reklamieren den Primat der Politik und halten fest am Ziel, der sozialen Dimension des Wirtschaftens auch auf internationaler Ebene stärkere Geltung zu verschaffen. Dazu ist ein wirtschaftlich starkes und sozial gerechtes Europa unverzichtbar. Die Idee des Sozialmodells Europa – das vor allem festmacht am Sozialstaat – ist zukunftsfähig und auch exportfähig. Die soziale Marktwirtschaft, die unserem Land wirtschaftliche Stärke und soziale Stabilität gebracht hat, ist ein Modell für globales Wirtschaften.

(c) SPD 2013

Kindertagespflege schaffen. Dazu gehört unter anderem eine aktivere Steuerungsrolle der Jugendämter in der Kindertagespflege, eine stärkere Vernetzung von Kindertagespflege und Kindertageseinrichtungen sowie die bessere und überregional vergleichbar geregelte Qualifizierung, Fortbildung und Bezahlung von Tagespflegepersonen.

Wir wollen, dass alle Kinder in materieller Sicherheit aufwachsen können.

Neben einer guten Infrastruktur brauchen Familien aber auch eine gute materielle Absicherung. Wir wollen für mehr Gerechtigkeit und Zielgenauigkeit in der Familienförderung sorgen. Heute bekommt ein Spitzenverdiener mehr Entlastung für seine Kinder als ein Normalverdiener, dies ist ungerecht. Gleichzeitig gelingt es im aktuellen System nicht, materielle Kinderarmut wirksam zu bekämpfen. Deshalb werden wir den Familienleistungsausgleich vom Kopf auf die Füße stellen. Mit unserem „sozial gestaffelten Kindergeld“ werden wir ein einkommensabhängiges Kindergeld für geringe und untere mittlere Einkommen einführen, in das wir den bisherigen Kinderzuschlag integrieren. Es wird künftig **Familien mit kleineren Einkommen überdurchschnittlich fördern** und nicht mehr die mit den höchsten Einkommen. Beispielsweise sollen berufstätige Familien mit zwei Kindern und einem Einkommen von unter 3.000 Euro monatlich künftig ein um bis zu 140 Euro pro Kind und Monat **erhöhtes Kindergeld** erhalten. Alle anderen Familien erhalten je Kind einheitlich wie bisher ein Kindergeld von 184 Euro im Monat. Der darüber hinaus gehende bisherige Steuervorteil für Familien mit hohen Einkommen entfällt. Für dritte und weitere Kinder bleibt es bei den erhöhten Kindergeldsätzen. Für die Finanzierung des sozial gestaffelten Kindergeldes werden wir auch die Familienleistungen einer Überprüfung unterziehen.

Source: PDF documents of the respective election manifestos as provided by MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

The second manifesto where MARPOR coders only coded one level of headers is that of the FDP in 2005, leading to this manifesto only having six chapters according to the MARPOR data. Looking at this manifesto, we see that one could also interpret the structure of the manifesto differently: In addition to the sentences that were coded as headers in the MARPOR data, chapters are further divided by sentences that are displayed in boldface and with a line-break before and after the sentence. In other manifestos, MARPOR coders interpreted such a visual distinction as these sentences being headers. Yet, in this particular manifesto we find that these header-sentences always end with a period, which MARPOR coders apparently interpreted as these sentences not being headers, but sentences that are simply emphasised visually. Figure 2.5 shows a comparison of the FDP 2005 manifesto with the SPD manifesto of the same year and the SPD manifesto of the 2013 election using screenshots of the manifestos. As Figure 2.5a shows, the FDP uses full sentences in boldface to separate paragraphs. For the SPD manifesto, Figure 2.5b shows that, while the visual separation between sub-headers and paragraphs is more clear than in the FDP manifesto, the SPD also uses full sentences as sub-headers. Figure 2.5c shows that in 2013, the SPD used full sentences as headers that, like in the 2005 FDP manifesto, end on a period. According to the original MARPOR coding, these sentences in the 2013 SPD manifesto qualify as headers instead of regular sentences. This leads me to interpret these header-sentences in the FDP manifesto as sub-headers instead of sentences that are emphasised through the use of boldface.

Looking at the distribution of topics in the chapters as they are coded in the MARPOR data supports this interpretation: Figure 2.6 shows how topics are distributed among the six chapters that MARPOR coders identified. Each sub-figure displays one chapter in the FDP's 2005 manifesto, where the x-axis shows all topics covered in the respective manifesto, and the y-axis shows the number of words attributed to each topic. We can see that most of the chapters include many different topics, and that in most chapters there is more than one prominent topic. In chapters 2 and 4 especially, we can see that these are not only the longest chapters at 7473 and 6246 words, respectively, but that they also both contain a high number of different topics, with 25 topics being present in chapter 2 and 26 topics in chapter 4. Additionally, we can see that governmental and administrative efficiency is not the topic that is *clearly* most

prominent in chapter 2, as economic orthodoxy and free market economy are also discussed frequently in this chapter. The same holds for chapter 4, where there is a peak not only for the topic of freedom and human rights, but also for the topic of equality. Taken together, all of these points lead me to the decision to recode the topic codes assigned to the FDP 2005 manifesto and code the boldface sentences that stand alone and are not situated within a paragraph as sub-headers, thereby giving this manifesto a second level of headers and making the data consistent with the actual structure of the manifesto.

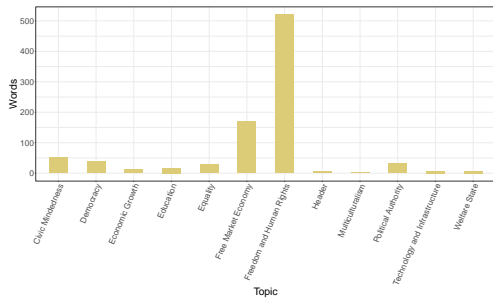
Figure A.1b in the Appendix shows how many sub-chapters parties use in their manifestos over time. The Green Party, Left Party, and AfD all increased the number of sub-chapters they use in their manifestos over time, while the number of sub-chapters remained constant in the SPD's manifestos. The FDP's manifestos show some variation over time, with the number of sub-chapters increasing most drastically from 41 in 2013 to 264 in 2017. Lastly, the CDU/CSU uses between 50 and 70 sub-chapters in all manifestos with the exception of 2013, where they divided their manifesto in over 300 sub-chapters.

2.4.4 *Identifying Topics in Sub-chapters*

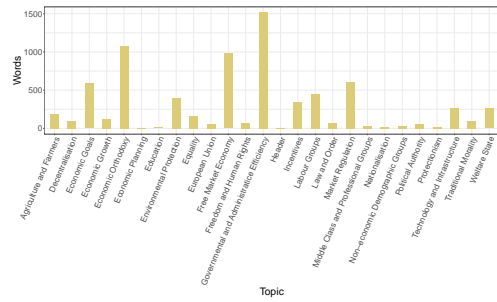
In order to identify the overall topic of each sub-chapter, I use the mode of all topics that are present in quasi-sentences in the respective sub-chapter. The underlying argument is that while sub-chapters are unlikely to have all quasi-sentences about the exact same topic, we can derive a sub-chapter's overall topic by looking at which topic is mentioned most often. In some sub-chapters, using the mode of all topics in that sub-chapter is not feasible: this is the case in sub-chapters that are very short and only contain a small number of quasi-sentences, each of which is coded with a different topic. In those cases, I used the topic of the quasi-sentence with the highest number of words as the overall topic of the respective sub-chapter. Out of the 2,738 sub-chapters in the data, only 42 were so short that I had to assign their overall chapter manually, and they occurred across all elections and parties.

Figure 2.6: Chapter Length and Topics in the FDP 2005 Manifesto, original MARPOR Coding. Chapter Titles Translated to English.

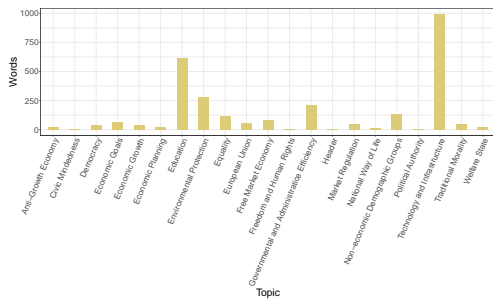
(a) Chapter 1: "The Opportunities of Freedom"; Chapter Length: 895 Words



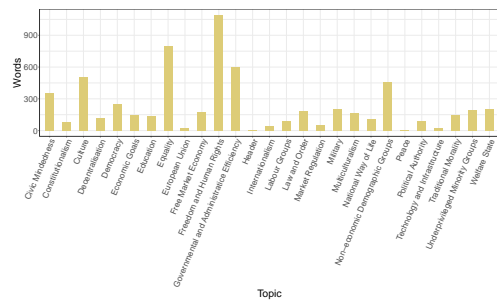
(b) Chapter 2: "More FDP for more Jobs and Prosperity"; Chapter Length: 7473 Words



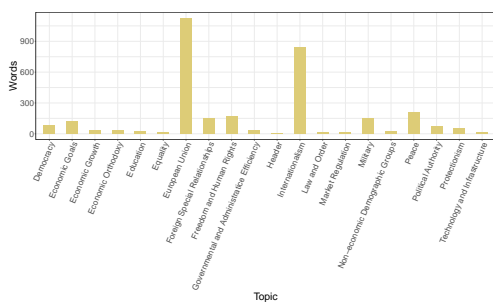
(c) Chapter 3: "More FDP for more Education and Innovation"; Chapter Length: 2808 Words



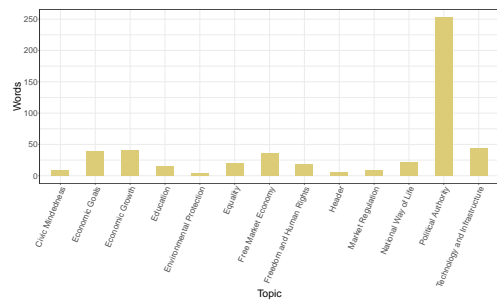
(d) Chapter 4: "More FDP for more Civic Rights, Trust, and Participation"; Chapter Length: 6246 Words



(e) Chapter 5: "More FDP for more International Cooperation and Security"; Chapter Length: 3219 Words



(f) Chapter 6: "Germany needs more FDP"; Chapter Length: 513 Words



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volken et al., 2017).

2.4.5 *Validity Assessment I: GAL-TAN*

Since I use existing data to operationalise a new concept, namely topic order in election manifestos, it is crucial to ensure the validity of my measurements. Therefore, this section shows how well using the mode of topics in each sub-chapter works to capture a sub-chapter's overall topic for the 2009 election. In most manifestos, the distribution of topics across the manifesto matches the assigned sub-chapter labels very well. There are some manifestos where there seems to be a discrepancy between the distribution of topics and the sub-chapter level topics that are acquired using the mode of all topics in the respective sub-chapter. Yet, upon taking a closer look, we can see that the distribution of individual topics matches the sub-chapter level topics as well. The remainder of this section will show that using the mode of all topics in a sub-chapter is a feasible strategy to determine the sub-chapter's overall topic.

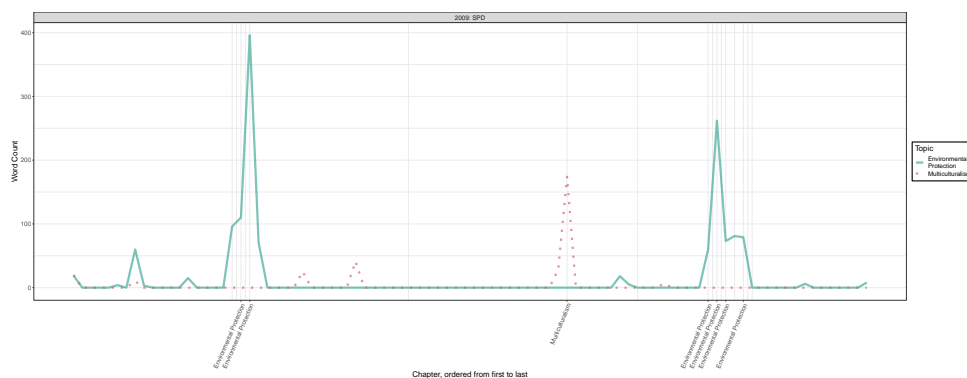
Figures 2.7 through 2.9 and Figures 2.11 and 2.13 show how well using the mode of topics works to measure a sub-chapter's overall topic for the 2009 election. In addition, Figures A.2 through A.22 in the Appendix show the same for all other elections in the data. In all of these Figures, we see how two topics, namely environmental protection and multiculturalism, are distributed across sub-chapters. I chose these two topics as they represent the two ends of the GAL-TAN dimension: Multiculturalism is an important topic for parties supporting traditionalism, authority, and nationalism (TAN), while environmental protection is important for parties caring about green, alternative, and libertarian outlooks (GAL).⁹ The y-axis displays the number of words parties attributed to environmental protection and multiculturalism, respectively. In addition to how much parties talk about environmental protection and multiculturalism throughout their manifestos, all Figures also show how individual sub-chapters were labelled using the mode of topics within each sub-chapter. For better legibility, sub-chapter labels are displayed for only those sub-chapters that are labelled as either environmental protection or multiculturalism. All sub-chapters on the x-axis are ordered the same way they are ordered in the manifesto, with the first sub-chapter to the very left of the axis and the last one to the very right.

In most manifestos, the distribution of both topics matches really well with the overall topic

⁹For more details on how GAL-TAN represents political ideologies in Europe, cf., among many others, Hooghe and Marks (2018); Hooghe et al. (2002); Kitschelt (1994); Rovny et al. (2022).

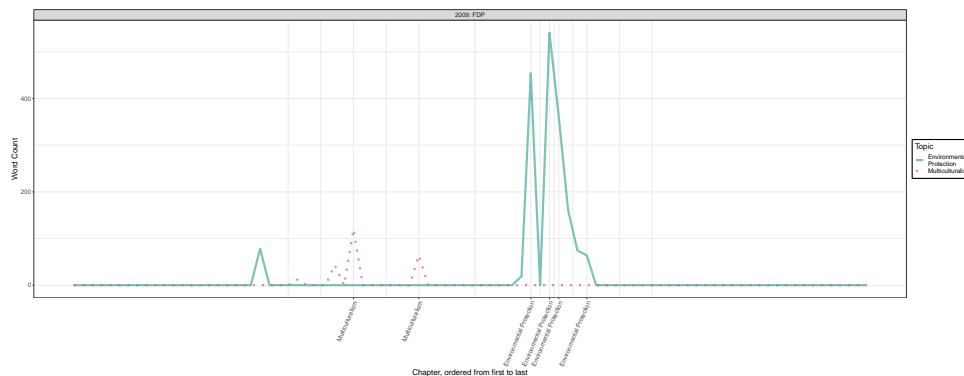
assigned to sub-chapters using the mode of topics. As we can see in Figures 2.7 and 2.8, both the SPD and the FDP in 2009 talked more about the environment than they did about multiculturalism. We see that the SPD has multiple sub-chapters where there is a peak in the word count for environmental protection, and that those sub-chapters are labelled as talking about the environment. When it comes to multiculturalism, there is only one peak in the second half of the manifesto. That sub-chapter is labelled with multiculturalism as well. In the FDP manifesto in 2009, we once again see multiple peaks for environmental protection. The sub-chapters with the largest peaks in this topic are labelled with environmental protection. There is one smaller peak in environmental protection in the first half of the manifesto which is labelled with agriculture and farmers, indicating that the topic of environmental protection was covered alongside the topic of agriculture. As for multiculturalism in the 2009 FDP manifesto, there is only one relatively small peak in word count, and that sub-chapter is labelled with multiculturalism as well. Both of these manifestos are typical for how the distribution of environmental protection and multiculturalism in German manifestos align with sub-chapter labels generated by using the mode of topics within each sub-chapter. In 17 out of the 27 manifestos in the data, the sub-chapter labels match the peaks in word-share of those two topics.¹⁰

Figure 2.7: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, SPD 2009



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

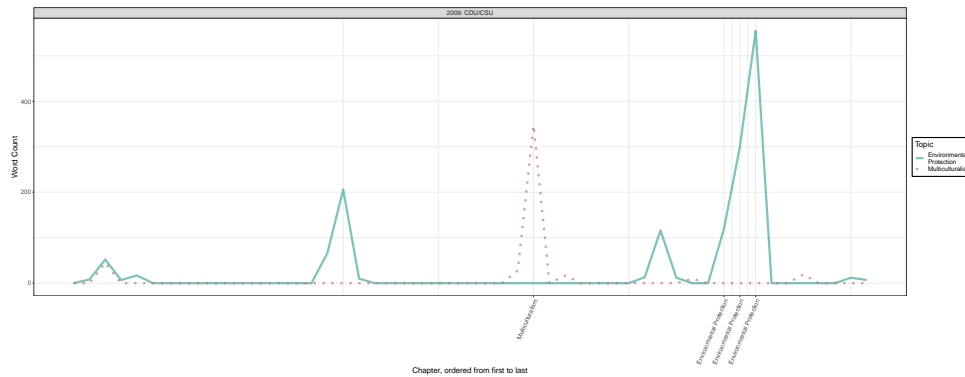
¹⁰The 17 manifestos where sub-chapter labels match the distribution of these two topics are: SPD 2002, FDP 2002, CDU 2005, SPD 2005, FDP 2009, FDP 2009, all six manifestos in 2013, and all manifestos but the CDU/CSU's in 2017. Note that the AfD did not talk about the environment at all in 2013, but that the sub-chapter label for multiculturalism matches the coverage of that topic in the manifesto.

Figure 2.8: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, FDP 2009

Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

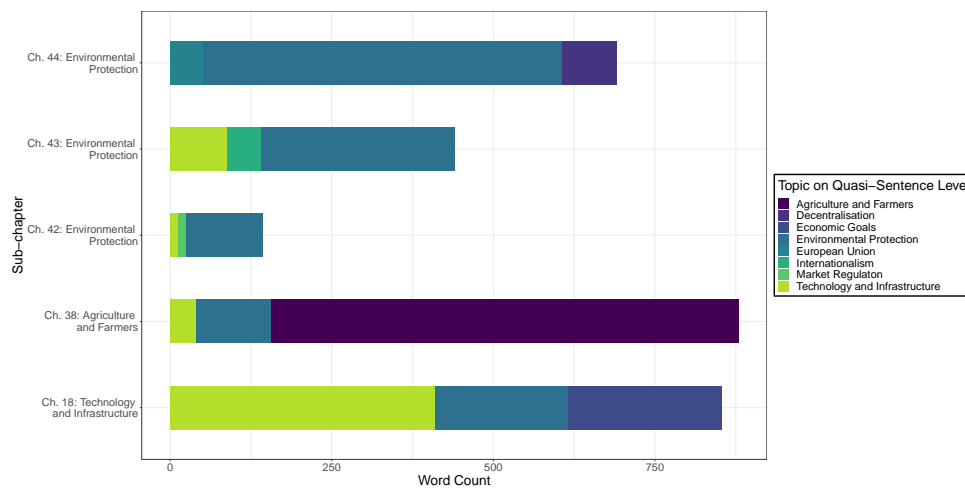
In Figure 2.9, we can see how the labelling of sub-chapters as talking about the environment partly fits the distribution of that topic across the CDU/CSU 2009 manifesto. There is a high peak in the last third of the manifesto where three sub-chapters are labelled as covering environmental protection. However, there are two smaller peaks where the sub-chapters are not labelled as environmental protection. The corresponding chapters here are labelled as technology and infrastructure for the first peak, and agriculture and farmers for the second one. As both of these topics are related to environmental protection, this is a sign that the environment is not *the main* topic of these sub-chapters, but instead it is discussed alongside technology or agriculture, respectively. Figure 2.10 supports this interpretation. It shows the word count on the y-axis, and the five sub-chapters where we saw peaks in environmental protection. The bars display the three topics that are discussed most often for each sub-chapter. In all three sub-chapters that are labelled as environmental protection, environmental protection is the topic that is covered most often. In contrast, in the sub-chapters that are labelled as agriculture and farmers and technology and infrastructure, respectively, we can see that environmental protection is not the topic that is discussed the most, but it is among the three topics that are talked about the most in these sub-chapters. Instead, the topics that are clearly talked about the most in both of these sub-chapters are also the ones that constitute the topic label of those sub-chapters. Other manifestos where there is a partial match between the distribution of environmental protection and the labelling of the corresponding sub-chapters are the CDU/CSU manifesto in 2002 and the CDU/CSU manifesto in 2017.

Figure 2.9: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, CDU/CSU 2009



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure 2.10: Topics in Sub-chapters with high Share of Environmental Protection, CDU/CSU 2009

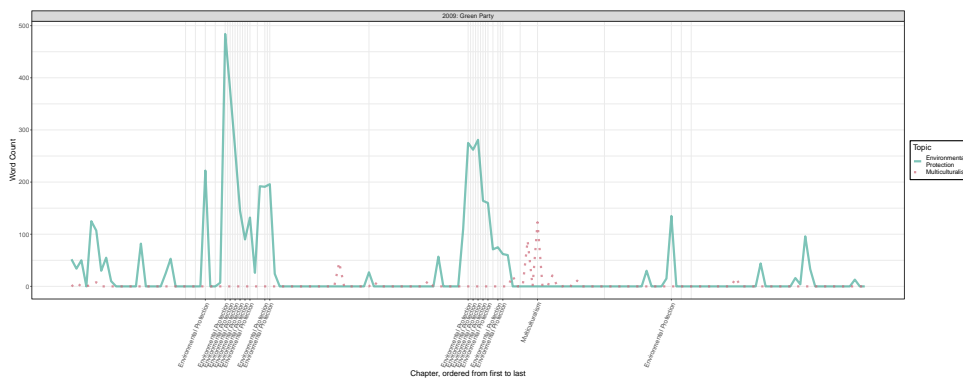


Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

When it comes to manifestos with sub-chapters that have a high coverage of multiculturalism but that have different topic labels, the Green Party manifesto in 2009 provides a good example, as Figure 2.11 shows. While notably smaller compared to environmental protection, there are three peaks in coverage of multiculturalism. The sub-chapter corresponding to the highest peak is labelled as multiculturalism, while the sub-chapters corresponding to the smaller ones are labelled as underprivileged minority groups and education, respectively. Again, both of these topics can be related to multiculturalism, indicating that multiculturalism was a topic covered in these sub-chapters, but not the main one. Looking at Figure 2.12, we can see that

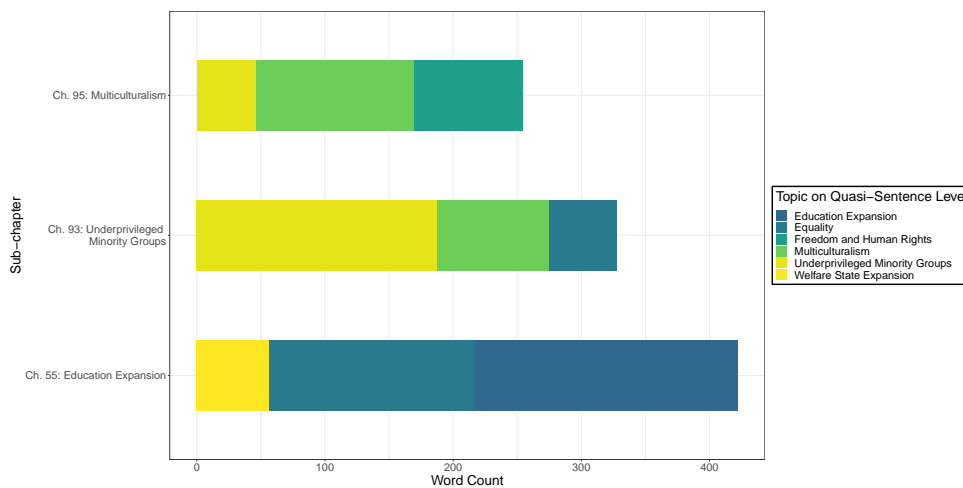
multiculturalism is indeed not the topic talked about the most in the two sub-chapters that only have a small peak in multiculturalism. While multiculturalism is still the second-most talked about topic in sub-chapter 93 (labelled underprivileged minority groups), it is not even among the three most talked about topics in sub-chapter 55, which focuses on education, and equality as a secondary topic.

Figure 2.11: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, Green Party 2009



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

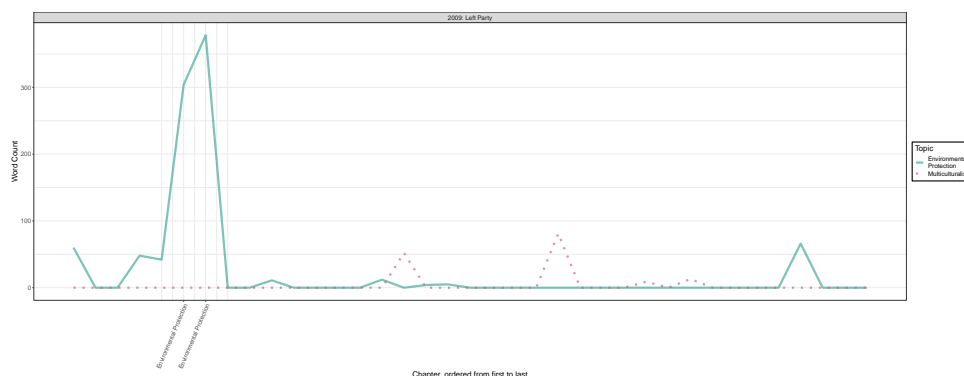
Figure 2.12: Topics in Sub-chapters with high Share of Multiculturalism, Green Party 2009



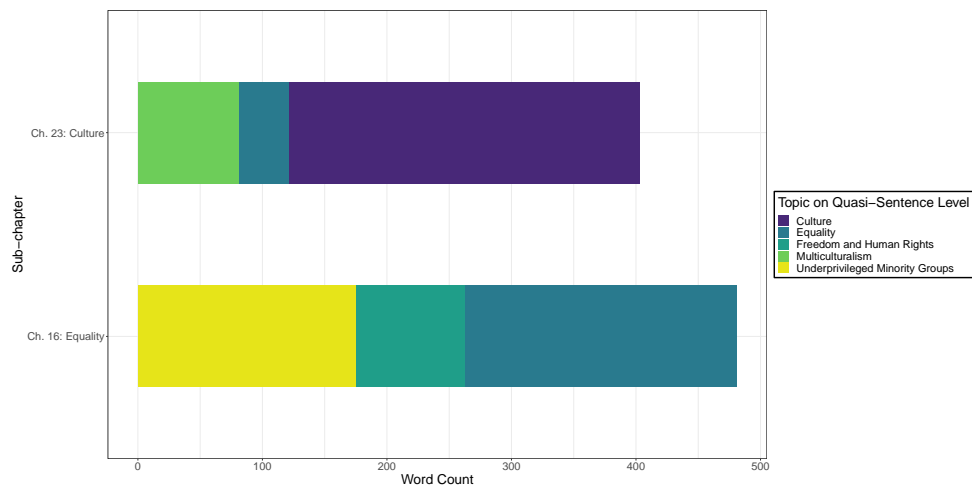
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

In addition to manifestos with partial fit between the coverage of a topic and the labelling of the corresponding sub-chapters, there are some manifestos where one of the topics has one or more peaks in coverage, but no corresponding sub-chapter that is labelled as the same topic. Figure 2.13 shows what that looks like for the Left Party in 2009. While the match between coverage and sub-chapter labelling is good for environmental protection, the same is not true for multiculturalism. There are two small peaks in coverage for multiculturalism, yet the corresponding sub-chapters are labelled as equality and culture, respectively. Once again, both of these topics are related to multiculturalism though, meaning that multiculturalism is likely not the main topic of either of those sub-chapters and that there simply is no sub-chapter with multiculturalism as a main topic. Figure 2.14 supports this interpretation. In sub-chapter 23, multiculturalism is the second-most talked about topic, but culture is talked about much more, which explains why this sub-chapter is labelled as having culture as the main topic and not multiculturalism. In sub-chapter 16, which has a much smaller peak in multiculturalism compared to sub-chapter 23, we see that multiculturalism is not even among the three most talked about topics. Instead, equality and underprivileged minority groups are the topics that are talked about the most, which matches the labelling of this sub-chapter as having equality as its main topic. Similar patterns can be found for the Green Party and the Left Party in 2002, and FDP and Left Party in 2005.

Figure 2.13: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, Left Party 2009



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure 2.14: Topics in Sub-chapters with high Share of Multiculturalism, Left Party 2009

Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

In conclusion, as Figures 2.7 through 2.14 as well as Figures A.2 through A.22 in the Appendix show, using the modal topic in each sub-chapter is an adequate way to measure each sub-chapter's overall topic.

2.4.6 Validity Assessment II: Economy Topics

In addition to testing the overall validity of using the mode of topics in a sub-chapter to determine the respective sub-chapter's overall topic, we need to take a close look at the topics that fall under the economy domain in the MARPOR data. While all topics are grouped together into larger categories, or domains as they are called in MARPOR, most topics within those domains are sufficiently different from one another. In the economy domain, however, the number of topics is rather high and some of them are fairly similar to one another to the untrained eye. Table 2.1 shows all topics that fall under the economy domain in MARPOR. After recoding the positive and negative protectionism topics into one joint topic, there are still 15 topics under the economy domain. By looking at the economy topics, it becomes clear that many of them are likely to be discussed within the same sub-chapter as they relate to each other so much. For instance, it makes sense for quasi-sentences on free market economy and incentives to stand right next to each other, or for economic goals to be covered alongside economic growth or

market regulation. While there is no inherent problem with quasi-sentences of related topics to stand next to each other, the high number of very similar economy topics poses a risk of some sub-chapters being mislabeled when using the mode of topics in that sub-chapter. This would be the case when there are several topics within the economy domain that are discussed in the same sub-chapter, and another non-economy topic covered in the same sub-chapter, yet no individual economy topic being discussed often enough to constitute to sub-chapter's overall topic. In such a case, while a reader of that sub-chapter would identify the main topic as being the economy, the sub-chapter label would not reflect that understanding. Therefore, the distribution of topics that fall under the economy domain and how they map the topics on a sub-chapter level needs to be examined closer.

Table 2.1: Topics Falling under the Economy Domain in MARPOR

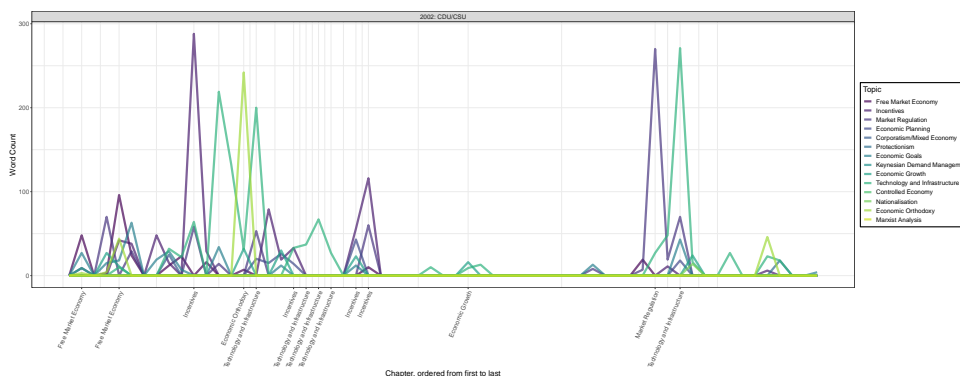
Topic Code	Topic
401	Free market economy
402	Incentives
403	Market regulation
404	Economic planning
405	Corporatism/mixed economy
406 & 407	Protectionism
408	Economic goals
409	Keynesian demand market
410	Economic growth
411	Technology and infrastructure
412	Controlled economy
413	Nationalisation
414	Economic orthodoxy
415	Marxist analysis
416	Anti-growth economy

Source: MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

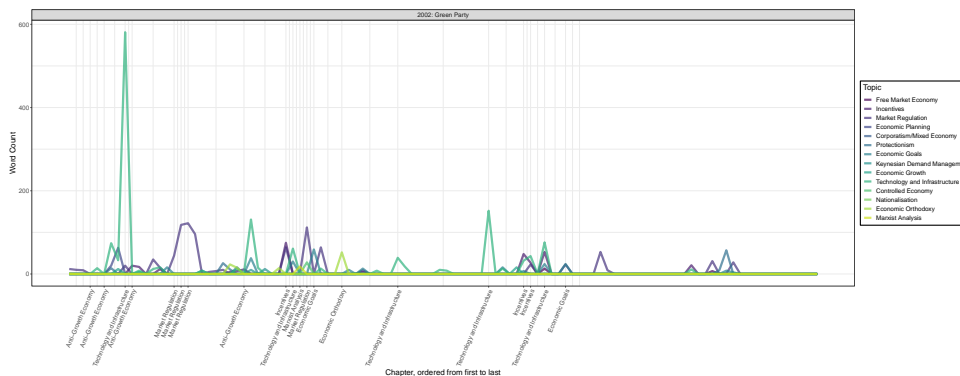
Figures 2.15 and 2.16 show how the topics that fall under the economy domain are distributed across all sub-chapters of the CDU/CSU and the Green Party in the 2002 election, respectively. While including all fifteen economy topics does make the Figures quite crowded, including all of them is necessary to see whether the peaks in economy topics match the labelling of sub-

chapter topics. If I were to only include those economy topics that are discussed most often, it would pose the risk of not noticing instances where many individual economy topics are covered in the same sub-chapter. Since the goal of these Figures is to see if there are instances like that, it is necessary to include all economy-related topics. On the x-axis, the Figures show the topic label assigned to each sub-chapter using the modal topic of each sub-chapter - however, for greater legibility, they only show the topic labels for any sub-chapters that are labelled with one of the topics that fall in the economy domain. As the relationship between peaks in economy topics and sub-chapter labels looks very similar for all manifestos, I chose these two manifestos – CDU/CSU in 2002 and Green Party in 2002 – as examples to show what this looks like for a large conservative party and a smaller left party. Figures A.23 through A.46 in the Appendix display the same information for all other manifestos in the data, and I draw the same conclusions from those as from the CDU/CSU and Green manifestos in 2002.

Figure 2.15: Distribution of Economy Topics, CDU/CSU 2002



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure 2.16: Distribution of Economy Topics, Green Party 2002

Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Looking at the CDU/CSU manifesto in 2002, Figure 2.15 shows that there are six sub-chapters with very clear peaks of 200 words or more in one of the economy topics - talking about incentives, economic orthodoxy, technology and infrastructure, or market regulation - and that five of them are labelled with the respective topic that peaks in that sub-chapter. Additionally, there are many smaller peaks of around 100 words or less, and some sub-chapters that have small peaks of more than one economy topic. Almost all of the sub-chapters with a high share of two or more economy topic also have the economy topic with the highest peak as the sub-chapter topic. Looking at the Green Party in Figure 2.16, we can see that, unlike the CDU/CSU, they have only one sub-chapter with a clear high peak of a singular economy topic, namely technology and infrastructure with almost 600 words. The corresponding sub-chapter is labelled technology and infrastructure, indicating that it is indeed the main topic of this sub-chapter. There are many sub-chapters with smaller peaks in economy topics, yet all of these are at 150 words or less. Some of these sub-chapters still have one of the economy topics as the overall sub-chapter topic. Those that are labelled with a non-economy topic are sub-chapters with only very small peaks in economy topics of around 50 words or less, indicating that the main topic of the respective sub-chapters is not economy related.

As we can see in Figures 2.15 and 2.16, the high number of economy topics in the MARPOR data does not lead to sub-chapters being incorrectly labelled as non-economy sub-chapters. Instead, there are sub-chapters with a clear high peak in a singular economy topic that are

labelled accordingly. Additionally, sub-chapters with comparatively smaller peaks in economy topics often have the respective topics as their main topic. The same is true for the manifestos displayed in Figures A.23 through A.46 in the Appendix. This demonstrates that the topics as they are available in MARPOR accurately represent the contents of election manifestos, and that aggregating them to a sub-chapter level using the modal topic stays true to that representation.

2.5 Operationalising Topic Order and Issue Attention

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first work studying topic order in election manifestos, and operationalising topic order using manifestos' sub-chapters. One challenge of operationalising topic order in manifestos is that some topics appear in more than one sub-chapter, and those sub-chapters covering the same topic are not necessarily placed one after the other but might be spread throughout the manifesto, with other topics being discussed in between. I identify two options of measuring topic order in manifestos on a sub-chapter level. First, one can use each topic's average position in the manifesto. This approach would take into account that a topic can be discussed more than once, and in more than one place in the manifesto. However, for a person reading a manifesto to understand a topic's *average* placement in a manifesto, they would have to read the entire manifesto and remember all the places that each topic is discussed throughout the manifesto. However, that does not reflect the reality of someone reading a manifesto, even *if* they read it very attentively. Second, one can use a topic's first appearance in a manifesto to measure how topics are ordered. While this approach does not take into account that topics can be covered more than once, it has the advantage of better capturing how a person reading a manifesto would observe topic order. When reading a manifesto, a person will read about a topic for the first time in the chapter where it is first discussed. Since people generally process information that is presented to them first more deeply than information that is presented later (Blom-Hansen et al., 2016; Krosnick and Alwin, 1987), a topic's first appearance in a manifesto is more likely to be subconsciously processed as that topic's position than it is for the topic's appearances in later sections of the manifesto to be taken into account as well. This argument is assuming that someone reads – or at least skims – a manifesto in the order it was written, looking at one chapter after the other. Yet, some

people might instead look for specific topics they are interested in. I argue that people looking for specific topics will still perceive topic order in a similar way: They either notice topic order while searching through the table of contents, where they will still notice that other topics come before the topic they are looking for, and where they will observe the relative placement of their topic of interest through this topic's first appearance. Alternatively, if they are looking at a digital version of a manifesto and using the search function instead of looking at a table of contents, while not necessarily noticing other topics' placement, they can still observe where their topic of interest is first appearing in a manifesto, as they are likely to subconsciously notice if the topic is placed on page 10 or page 100 of the document. Since my argument is based on how people reading a manifesto *perceive* topic order, and since a topic's first placement in a manifesto captures a reader's perception better than the average placement would, I will use a topic's first appearance to measure topic order in election manifestos.

In addition to topic order, I also need to know how much attention parties give to individual topics. I follow the consensus in the literature, where issue attention in documents such as manifestos or coalition agreements is typically measured by the share of words that are devoted to individual topics (see, for instance, Abou-Chadi et al., 2019; Baumann et al., 2021; Dolezal et al., 2014; Klüver and Spoon, 2016). Since I operate on the sub-chapter level instead of the quasi-sentence level, I count how many words parties use in each sub-chapter and add sub-chapters that cover the same topic together. I then set those absolute words in relation to the total number of words of the manifesto to get the share of words that a party spends on individual topics.

2.6 *Independent Variables*

In order to understand how parties' communication to the inside and to the outside affects how they highlight individual issues, I rely on survey data to find out what issues both the general population and the party supporters care about. I use pre-election surveys from the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES) for the Bundestag elections from 2002 to 2017 (Rattinger et al., 2012, 2019a,b; Roßteutscher et al., 2019), as these surveys were conducted consistently across all elections covered in this dissertation and included all the relevant questions.

2.6.1 *Outside communication*

In this dissertation, communication to the outside means communication to anyone outside of a party. Most importantly, this includes the electorate as a whole, and after that also other parties or the media. In order to decide which topics are relevant for the electorate, I need to know which topics people find particularly important or pressing at any given election, irrespective of individual party membership or party supporter status. Therefore, I use issue salience among the general population to understand a topic's relevance for outside communication. Using respondents' issue salience by including their assessments of which problems are most important gives me an understanding of which topics parties should address in order to present themselves as being able to tackle current and important problems (Budge and Farlie, 1983; Petrocik, 1996; Robertson, 1979). The most important problems, according to the general electorate, mark issues that should be relevant for any party when it is communicating to the outside, as neglecting pressing issues in any electoral campaign would only decrease a party's perceived ability to govern.

In order to measure issue salience, I use the question asking respondents about the most important problem in Germany at the time of answering the survey, which is an open-ended question that allows respondents to name any issues that they find important.¹¹ Survey questions on the most important problem are commonly used to identify respondents' issue salience (Dennison, 2019; Johns, 2010; Klüver and Spoon, 2016; Kratz and Schoen, 2017). Higher values on this variable indicate that a topic is perceived to be more important, and lower values indicate lower perceived importance.

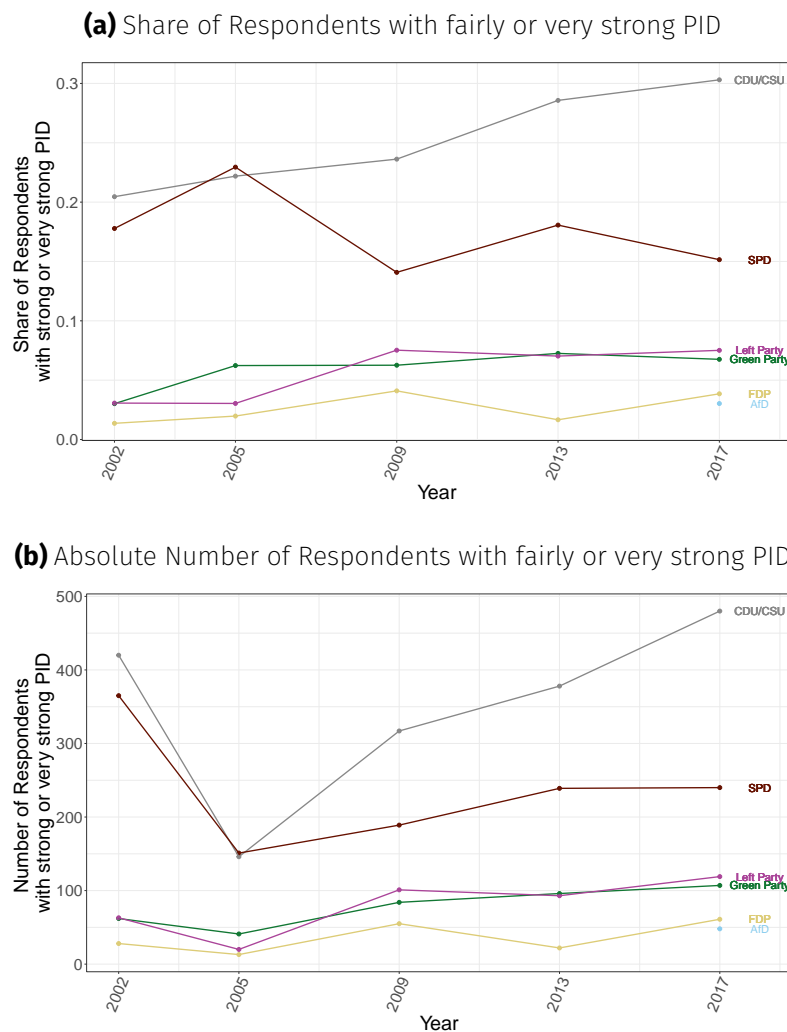
¹¹Note that this measure of voters' issue salience does not capture salience at the time when the manifestos were written, but shortly before the election, due to the timing of the survey. The implied assumption here is that voters' salience of individual issues does not change between the release of manifestos and election day. This assumption certainly holds for some elections, but it is not a generalisation that we can make. However, since election studies are usually in field a few weeks before the election and not when manifestos are written, the data I use do not allow me to adequately account for this issue. I am not aware of any election studies that were in field exactly in the time frame when the manifestos were released, and that include a question on the most important problem.

2.6.2 *Inside communication*

When it comes to measuring communication to the inside, we need to know which topics the party base cares about the most. Ideally, we would be able to use party members, as those are the people who parties are talking to when speaking to the inside. What would be even better would be to look at only certain party members - namely those that are active in the party, and their election campaign in particular, and not those members that do not do much besides paying their membership fee. As those members who actively participate in a party's campaign efforts need to be on the party's side and feel seen and heard by the party, ensuring their support for the campaign and the manifesto is crucial. However, questions on party membership are rarely included in survey data, and if they are, there is only a small number of people who state that they are party members even in large surveys. As tables A.3 and A.4 in the Appendix show, a question on party membership was included in all GLES waves from 2002 until 2017. However, we can also see that the number of participants who indicated being party members was low across all waves. While party membership was highest in 2009, even then there are only around 13% of respondents, or 85 individuals, who were party members. These numbers are even lower in other waves, with 2017 having the lowest number of party members: less than 4% of participants, or 73 individuals, indicated being party members. Furthermore, apart from 2017, respondents were not able to specify which party they were a member of, only if there were a member of *any* party at all, which makes the question on party membership unusable for assessing party members' issue priorities. Even in 2017, were respondents could indicate which party they are a member of, the numbers for individual parties are too low to be of use. As table A.5 in the Appendix shows, the CDU/CSU has the highest membership rate among survey participants. Out of all people who have a party membership, almost 40% indicated being CDU/CSU members. Yet, in absolute numbers, these are only 28 individuals. For the FDP, Green Party, Left Party, and AfD, the number of individuals who are members of these parties are even in the single digits. This makes the responses from party members on their issue priorities unusable.

So how to measure the party base's issue priorities instead? Däubler (2012b, 362) argues that a party's core voters, i.e., people who *usually* vote for this party and not another one, can

be assumed to be fairly similar to participants of a party convention, i.e. the body that adopts their party's election manifesto. He concludes that survey data for core voters can be used as an approximation for members of the party convention, and he operationalises core voters as respondents with a very strong or fairly strong party identification (Däubler, 2012b, 362). While the number of participants with a fairly strong or very strong party identification is not very high for some parties, it is still higher than the number of people who are party members, as we can see in Figure 2.17. Figure 2.17a shows the share of respondents who have a fairly strong or very strong party identification by election and party. The total share of respondents who identify with *any* party varies between elections, and is consistently the highest for CDU/CSU and SPD. The absolute number of respondents who indicated to have a fairly strong or very strong party identification was always at least in the double digits even for smaller parties, as Figure 2.17b shows. For the CDU/CSU and the SPD, the absolute number of respondents with a fairly or very strong party identification was at least in the low hundreds. The absolute number of respondents with a fairly strong or very strong party identification is considerably lower in 2005 than in other elections due to a much smaller number of total respondents in that particular wave. However, as we can see in Figure 2.17a, the *share* of respondents with fairly or very strong party identification in 2005 is comparable to the other elections in the data; and the absolute numbers for all parties in 2005 are still high enough to be usable to measure the party bases' issue priorities. In total, while the absolute numbers of respondents who have a fairly or very strong party identification are still not very high for some parties, they are much higher, and therefore much more useful, than the number of respondents who are party members. I will therefore use the issue priorities of respondents with fairly or very strong party identification in order to measure which topics the respective parties' bases care about the most. I use the same approach for party supporters that I use for the general population, in that I take what party supporters consider to be the most important problem to find out which issues they care about the most. Considering that a party's strong supporters can be expected to agree with their party's overall issue positions, it is reasonable to assume that they want their party to address what they consider to be the most important problem at that time.

Figure 2.17: Respondents with fairly or very strong Party Identification, by Election and Party.

Source: GLES Pre-Election Cross-Section, waves 2002 to 2017.

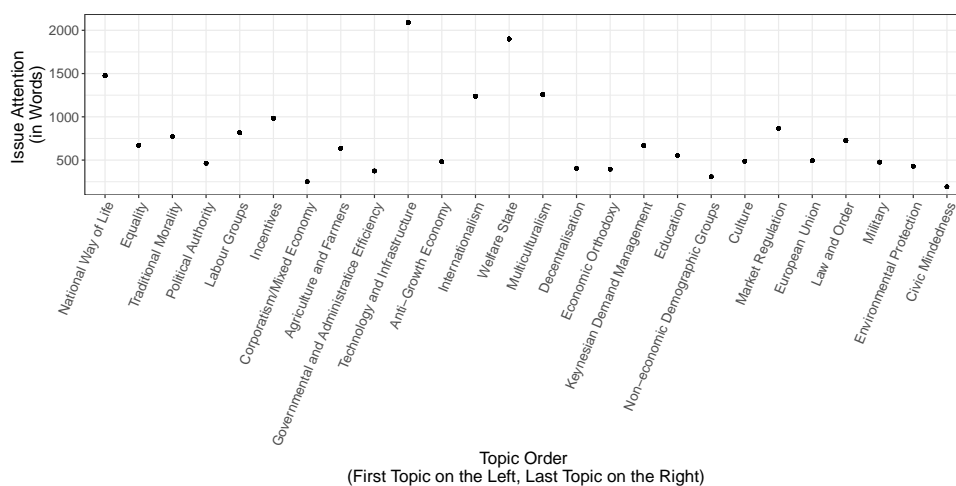
Note: Absolute number of respondents with a fairly or very strong party identification supports the use of strong party identification to approximate the party base's issue priorities, as it is always at least in the double digits even for smaller parties.

Note that topics can be relevant for both internal and external communication at the same time, or not particularly relevant for either audience. It is possible for a party's internal audience to be in overall agreement with the general population on which topics are most important for the current election. Therefore, these categories are not mutually exclusive. While we can expect any party to want to emphasise issues that are relevant for both audiences at the same time, situations where the party base and the external audience disagree on which topics are most important are where we can really learn which audience a party is speaking to.

2.7 Topic Order and Issue Attention in Election Manifestos: A First Look

In hypothesis 1, I claim that topic order in election manifestos should not be affected by issue attention. In Figures 2.18 through 2.23, I show what the relationship between topic order and issue attention looks like for the 2017 manifestos of all major parties. Additionally, Figures A.47 through A.66 in the Appendix show that same relationship for all major parties in German elections between 2002 and 2013. For all figures, the x-axis shows the topics that were discussed in their manifesto in the order they appeared in, with the first topic being on the left end of the axis and the last topic on the right end. The y-axis shows the number of words that the parties used to discuss the respective topics.

Figure 2.18: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the CDU/CSU 2017 Manifesto

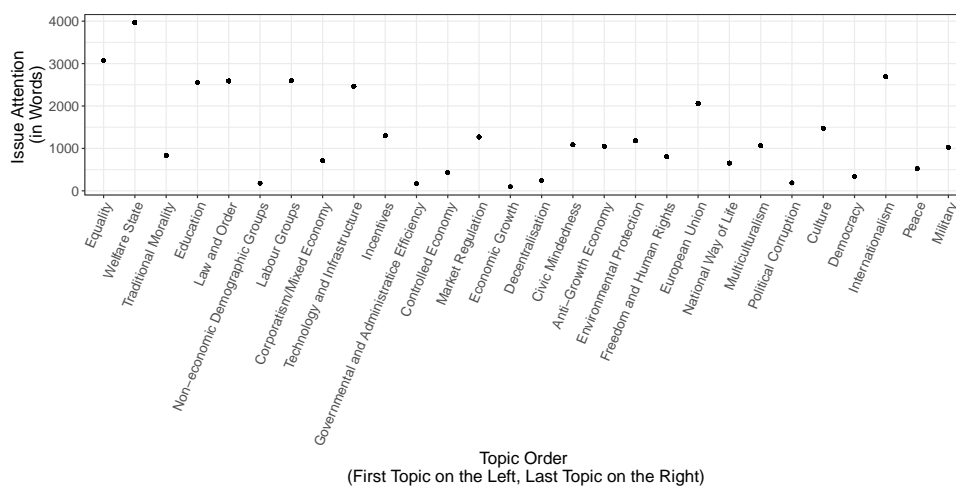


Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Starting with the CDU/CSU in 2017, Figure 2.18 shows how the party ordered topics in their manifesto, and how much they talked about each individual topic. The first topic that the CDU/CSU talked about in their manifesto was the national way of life, followed by equality and traditional morality. The last topic was civic mindedness, with environmental protection and military being the second-to-last and third-to-last topic, respectively. Just looking at the first and last three topics, we see that the three early topics received more issue attention than the last three topics. However, only one of those first topics – national way of life – was among the

topics that were talked about the most. The topic mentioned most often in the CDU/CSU 2017 manifesto was technology and infrastructure, followed by welfare state and national way of life. Apart from national way of life, which is the first topic of the manifesto, the two topics with the highest issue attention are placed in the middle of the manifesto. The fact that national way of life is mentioned in the first chapter of the 2017 manifesto and receives a high share of attention is unique among the CDU/CSU's manifestos. In the 2013 manifesto, the same topic was mentioned for the first time in the last third of the manifesto and received a rather low amount of attention. Placing the topic of national way of life so prominently in the 2017 manifesto is likely to be a direct response to the refugee crisis and a promise to the party base and the electorate to prioritise this issue area in the upcoming legislative debate. Considering that the CDU/CSU introduced the domain of (native) community (German: *Heimat*) to the Ministry of the Interior after the 2017 election, emphasising national way of life so heavily in their election manifesto can be interpreted as a clear signal regarding the party's policy priorities.¹²

Figure 2.19: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the SPD 2017 Manifesto



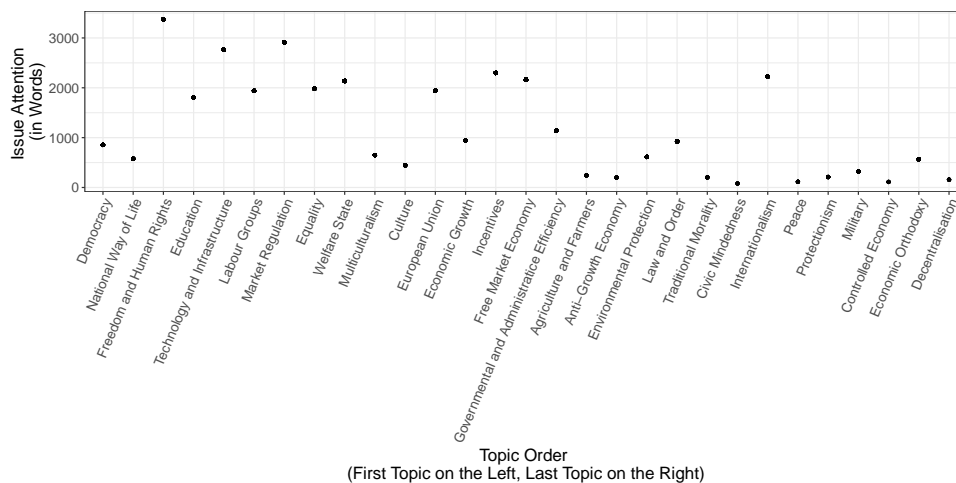
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Looking at the SPD's manifesto in 2017, Figure 2.19 shows that the SPD started its manifesto with the topics of equality, welfare state, and traditional morality, and ended the manifesto with internationalism, peace, and military. The three topics that received the highest issue at-

¹²Cf. Sieberer et al. (2021) for further insights in portfolio design in European democracies.

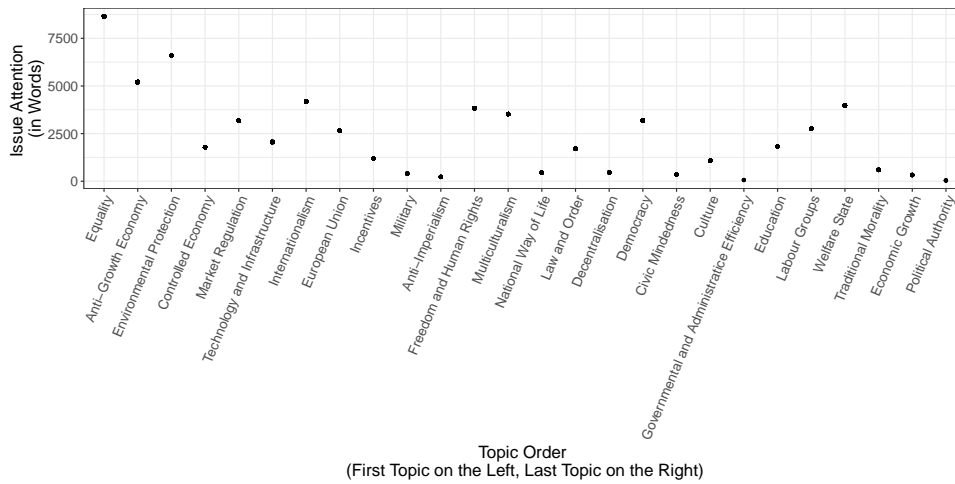
tention are welfare state, equality, and internationalism. We thus see that the SPD gave a high level of attention to its first two topics, as well as to the third-to-last topic. Additionally, some of the topics that are placed in the middle of the manifesto receive a very low level of issue attention, especially the topics of governmental and administrative efficiency, controlled economy, economic growth, and decentralisation, all of which are placed right in the middle of the manifesto. This low level of attention on these topics makes it look almost like the SPD wanted to hide these topics by burying them in between other topics *and* by talking about them only very briefly.

Figure 2.20: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the FDP 2017 Manifesto



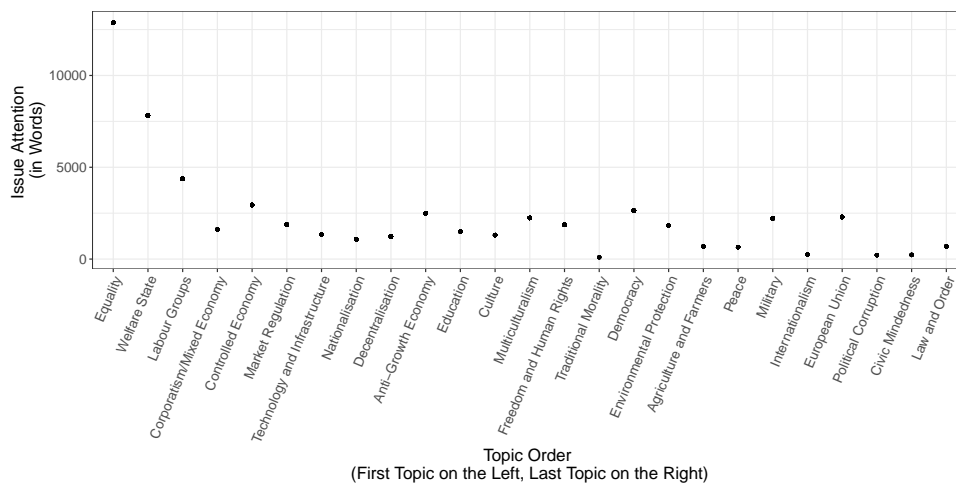
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure 2.20 shows topic order and issue attention in the FDP's 2017 manifesto. The manifesto started with the topics of democracy, national way of life, and freedom and human rights, and ended with controlled economy, economic orthodoxy, and decentralisation. We can see that the first two topics, as well as the last three topics, received a low level of issue attention. The three topics that the FDP talked about the most are freedom and human rights, technology and infrastructure, and market regulation. All three of those topics were discussed in the first third of the manifesto. However, some topics closer to the middle of the manifesto also received a relatively high amount of coverage, such as incentives and free market economy. All topics in the last third of the manifesto received low issue attention, except for internationalism.

Figure 2.21: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the Green Party 2017 Manifesto

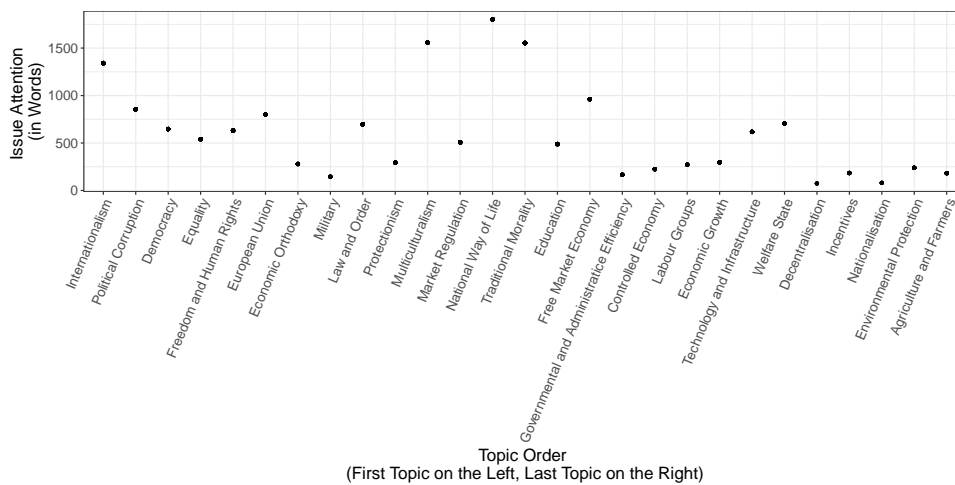
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

When it comes to the Green Party, we can see in Figure 2.21 that the first three topics of the 2017 manifesto were equality, anti-growth economy, and environmental protection. The last three topics were traditional morality, economic growth, and political authority. The first three topics are also the topics that are talked about the most, with equality having the highest level of issue attention, followed by environmental protection and anti-growth economy. The topics with the lowest level of issue attention are governmental and administrative efficiency, political authority, and anti-imperialism. Apart from political authority, these topics are placed in the middle of the manifesto. Topics with a moderate level of issue attention, such as internationalism, freedom and human rights, or welfare state, are placed throughout the manifesto.

Figure 2.22: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the Left Party 2017 Manifesto

Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

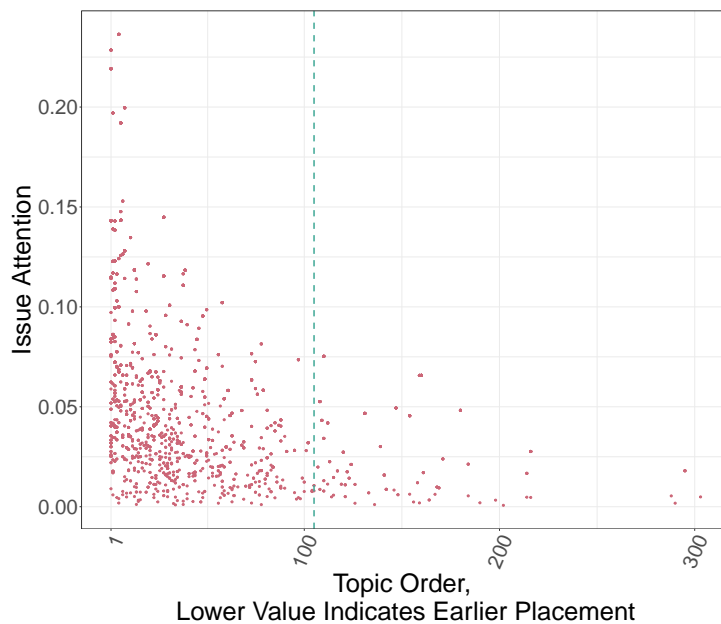
Figure 2.22 shows that the Left Party started its 2017 manifesto by talking about equality, welfare state, and labour groups, and ended it with the topics of political corruption, civic mindedness, and law and order. The first three topics of the manifesto also received the highest level of issue attention. The topics with the lowest amount of issue attention are traditional morality, civic mindedness, and political corruption. Interestingly, the first three topics were not only talked about the most, but received such a high level of issue attention that the level of issue attention on all other topics seems very small in comparison. Nonetheless, there is a visible correlation between topic order and issue attention in this particular manifesto.

Figure 2.23: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the AfD 2017 Manifesto

Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

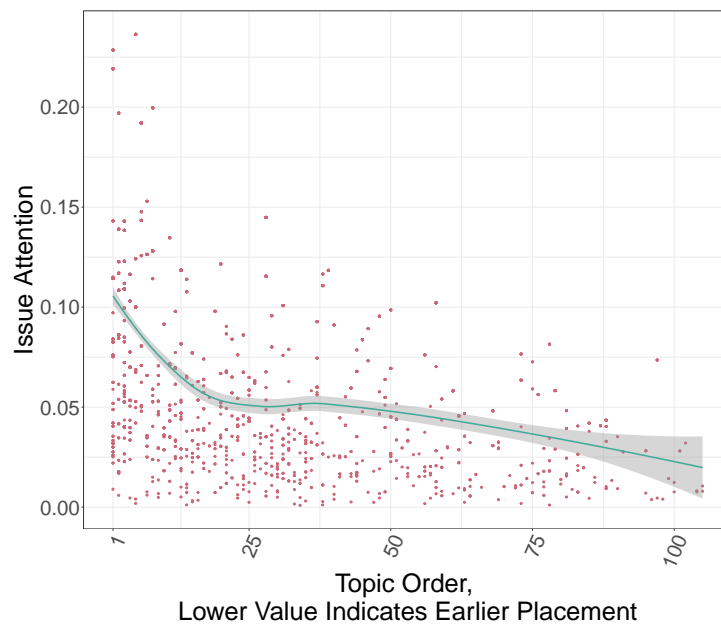
Lastly, Figure 2.23 shows the AfD's manifesto for the 2017 election. The manifesto started with internationalism, political corruption, and democracy, and ended with nationalisation, environmental protection, and agriculture and farmers. The three topics with the highest level of issue attention are national way of life, multiculturalism, and traditional morality, and are all placed right in the middle of the manifesto. The topics that the AfD talks about the least are nationalisation, decentralisation, and military, with military being covered in the first half of the manifesto and the other two topics being placed further towards the end. While the first two topics are still among the topics with higher issue attention, we clearly see that the AfD used topic order and issue attention separately by talking a lot about topics that were placed in the middle of the manifesto.

All in all, we see that in the 2017 Bundestag election, topic order and issue attention look like they might be related in some manifestos, but not everywhere. Overall, the same holds true for manifestos in the elections between 2002 and 2013, as Figures A.47 through A.66 in the Appendix show. There is no discernible pattern by party or by election, instead, parties sometimes give higher attention to topics that are placed early, and other times to topics that are placed in the middle of the manifesto, or even a handful of topics all throughout the manifesto.

Figure 2.24: Issue Attention and Topic Order in German Manifestos

Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure 2.24 illustrates how issue attention and topic order are related across all manifestos on a descriptive level, where the x-axis shows which sub-chapter a topic first appears in, and the y-axis shows how much attention any given topic received in each manifesto. The green vertical line indicates the average number of sub-chapters in the manifestos in my data. The plot shows a number of things. First, we can see that most topics make their first appearance within the first 100 sub-chapters of a manifesto, while topics that appear for the first time in sub-chapters later than that are increasingly rare. Note that as the average manifesto is 105 sub-chapters long, any topics who appear for the first time in sub-chapters 106 or above come from the few unusually long manifestos, most notably the CDU/CSU manifesto in 2013, the FDP manifesto in 2017, and all Green manifestos since 2009 (cf. Figure A.1b in the Appendix). Second, we can see that most topics are on the low end of issue attention, with most of them having a word share of 5% or less. Topics that are talked about in 10% or more of a manifesto are rare. Third, Figure 2.24 shows that most topics cluster in the bottom left corner of the plot, meaning that they first appear in the first 100 sub-chapters of a manifesto and have a word share of up to 5%.

Figure 2.25: Issue Attention in German Manifestos in Sub-chapters 1 to 105

Note: Green line is a LOESS curve with 95% Confidence Interval. Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure 2.25 shows the same relationship as Figure 2.24, but only for topics whose first appearance in a given manifesto occurs no later than the 105th sub-chapter, as this is the average number of sub-chapters in German election manifestos between 2002 and 2017. Zooming in on the relationship between topic order and issue attention in this way allows us to see it more clearly. The green LOESS curve shows that for topics appearing for the first time between sub-chapters 1 and 25, topic order and issue attention appear to be related in that an earlier placement in a manifesto also leads to higher issue attention for that topic. The same relationship is not apparent for topics making their first appearance after the 25 sub-chapter mark, where the placement of a topic does not clearly lead to higher (or lower) issue attention. The relationship between topic order and issue attention as it is displayed in Figure 2.25 thus indicates that parties do not use topic order and issue attention the same way throughout the entire manifesto, but that they adjust their strategy based on which part of the manifesto a topic is placed in. In about the first quarter of their manifestos, parties highlight topics using both dimensions of issue emphasis simultaneously: by placing topics in this early section of

the manifesto, and by talking about them more than about other topics. This finding in and of itself indicates that topic order *does* matter in election manifestos, albeit in a different way than postulated in hypothesis 1. Furthermore, in the remaining three quarters, the issue attention given to individual topics seems much more consistent and does not vary as much as in the first quarter. At the same time, parties have to use topic order in those three quarters of the manifesto just like in the first quarter: after all, they cannot not order topics. Topic order might therefore still be relevant in the last three quarters of a manifesto, while issue attention seems to matter much less.

2.8 Analyses: Effect of Topic Order on Issue Attention

The dependent variable, issue attention, runs between 0 and 1. Therefore, I run a beta regression with fixed effects for the manifestos using the `betareg` package for R (Kieschnick and McCullough, 2003; Zeileis et al., 2021).¹³ Since the total number of sub-chapters varies so much between manifestos, I normalise topic order to run from 0 to 1. Model 1 in Table 2.2 displays the relationship between topic order and issue attention. Additionally, Figure 2.26 shows the predicted issue attention across a range of topic order for topics making their first appearance no later than the 105th sub-chapter, as this is the average number of sub-chapters of manifestos in the data. Since Model 2 contains manifesto fixed effects, the manifesto for this scenario has been set to the FDP 2009 manifesto as it is an average manifesto when it comes to its length, number of sub-chapters, and number of topics covered, and lies in the middle of the time period under study (cf. Figures 2.4 and A.1). The predicted issue attention for this and all following models was simulated using the `clarify` package for R (Greifer et al., 2023) which performs simulation-based inference based on the methodology described in King et al. (2000).

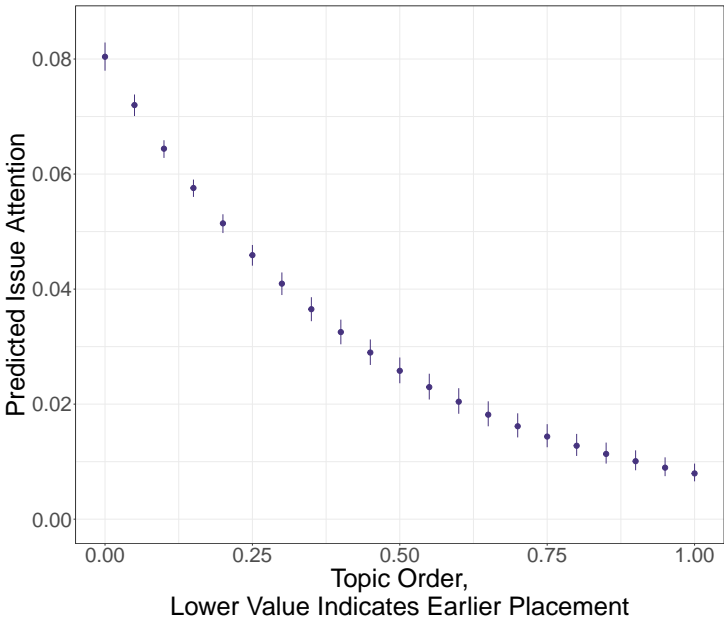
¹³To test the robustness of my results, I ran all models as linear models with topic order logged. Doing so produced the same results and only marginally improved model fit. Additionally, I re-ran all models with the AfD's 2013 manifesto included, which did not affect the results either.

Table 2.2: Effect of Topic Order on Issue Attention, Beta Regression with Manifesto Fixed Effects

<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
Issue attention	
Model 1	
Topic order	-2.287*** (0.095)
Constant	-2.480*** (0.015)
Observations	2,738
R ²	0.180
Log likelihood	5,467.037
Note:	* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01 Standard errors in parentheses. Manifesto fixed effects not displayed.

The results in Table 2.2 show that there is a negative effect of topic order on issue attention. Substantively, this result means that the earlier a topic is placed in a manifesto, the more a party speaks about it. Accordingly, we can see in Figure 2.26 that a given topic's issue attention is higher the earlier it is placed in a manifesto. Furthermore, while we can see a stark difference in issue attention between sub-chapters that are very far away from each other – say, a topic being placed in the beginning of a manifesto vs towards the end – the difference in issue attention is smaller when we compare sub-chapters that are right next to or very close to each other. We can also see that the slope is steeper in the earlier sub-chapters of a manifesto compared to the later ones. This difference in the slope indicates that the effect topic order has on issue attention is different depending on whether a topic is placed in the beginning, middle, or end of a manifesto.

Figure 2.26: Predicted Issue Attention over a Range of Topic Order



Note: Predicted values based on Model 1 shown in Table 2.2. Manifesto fixed at FDP 2009. Vertical lines represent 95% confidence interval.

Table 2.3 shows the results of a beta regression including the same variables as before with an additional interaction effect between topic order and first quarter, a binary variable indicating whether any given topic is mentioned for the first time in the first quarter of a manifesto. Again, we see an effect of topic order on issue attention, indicating that topics that are placed earlier in manifestos also receive more attention than topics that are discussed later. Accordingly, topics that appear for the first time in the first quarter of a manifesto are talked about more than topics that make their first appearance after the first quarter.

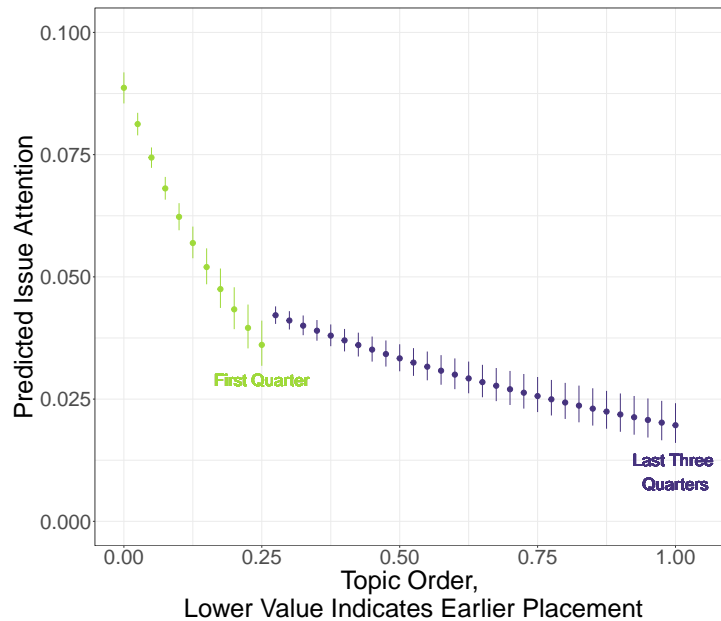
Table 2.3: Effect of Topic Order on Issue Attention, Beta Regression with Manifesto Fixed Effects

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Issue attention Model 2
Topic order	-1.397*** (0.136)
First quarter	0.349*** (0.040)
Topic order * first quarter	-1.973*** (0.315)
Constant	-2.744*** (0.037)
Observations	2,738
R ²	0.211
Log likelihood	5,500.645

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Standard errors in parentheses.
Manifesto fixed effects not displayed.

Figure 2.27 shows the effect of topic order on issue attention separately for the first quarter and last three quarters of a manifesto. The x-axis shows where in a manifesto a topic makes its first appearance, and the y-axis shows its predicted issue attention based on its placement in the manifesto. The green dots show the relationship between topic order and issue attention for topics that are mentioned for the first time in the first quarter of a manifesto, and the purple dots show the same relationship for topics that appear after the first quarter. Comparing the two, we can see that topic order has a much stronger effect on issue attention for topics that are covered for the first time in the first quarter of a manifesto compared to topics that appear for the first time in the middle or end. In the first quarter of a manifesto, topics that are placed earlier also receive more coverage. In the last three quarters, however, this relationship is a lot weaker, yet still present.

Figure 2.27: Predicted Issue Attention over a Range of Topic Order, depending on Placement in the First Quarter or later



Note: Expected values based Model 2 shown in Table 2.3. Manifesto fixed at FDP 2009. Vertical lines represent 95% confidence interval.

In substantive terms, the relationships in Figure 2.27 support what we saw earlier. In the first quarter of their manifestos, parties use all the ways of highlighting topics that they have available. The topics appearing here are placed early so that readers notice them upon opening the manifesto, and are talked about a lot to underline their importance. The first quarter of a manifesto is the part where parties put key issues in their campaign, topics that they want to be associated with, or topics that they want to use to advertise for themselves. After the first quarter of the manifesto, parties devote more similar amounts of attention to all topics compared to the first quarter. Parties thus do not seem to prioritise the use of issue attention to highlight topics in the middle or late sections of their manifestos. However, parties still use topic order - they have to, as they cannot place all remaining topics in the same sub-chapter of their manifesto. Therefore, topic order still matters in the last three quarters of a manifesto. For example, parties might place topics that are not central to their campaign, but that are still important, in the second and third quarter of the manifesto. The last quarter might then be the

place for all topics that have to be covered, but that are not of particular interest to the party or that are not topics to win elections with.

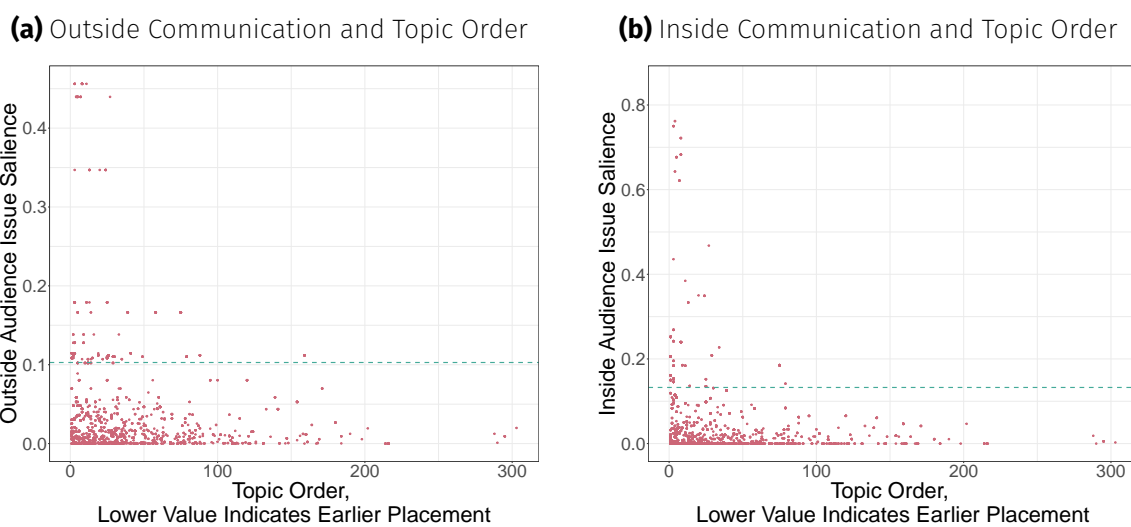
2.9 Analyses: How Communication to the Inside and Outside Affects Issue Emphasis

Hypothesis 2 states that a topic is going to be highlighted more heavily through topic order the more relevant it is for a party's communication to an external audience. Communicating to the outside of a party means addressing anyone who is not a party member, most notably the general electorate, but also other parties and the media (Charlot, 1989; Dolezal et al., 2012; Harmel, 2018; Harmel et al., 2018). I operationalise topics that are relevant for outside communication as topics that are of high importance to the general public at the time of the election. According to hypothesis 3, the more relevant a topic is for a party's internal communication, the more it is going to be highlighted through issue attention. Communication to the inside means addressing anyone inside the party, from high level party officials to simple party members (Charlot, 1989; Dolezal et al., 2012; Harmel, 2018; Harmel et al., 2018). Topics that are relevant for inside communication are operationalised as topics that are of high salience to the party base. In order to test these two hypotheses, I normalise both topic order and issue attention so that they both run between 0 and 1. Doing that enables me to better compare the results between different models. I once again run beta regressions with manifesto fixed effects, using topic order as the dependent variable in Model 3 and issue attention as the dependent variable in Model 4, which allows me to understand how communication to both the internal and external audience affects the two dimensions of issue emphasis.

Figure 2.28 shows how topics relevant for the external audience and topics relevant for the internal audience, respectively, are distributed across the span of a manifesto, with topic order on the x-axis, and issue salience on the y-axis. The dashed horizontal line separates the topics into high and lower salience, where high salience is defined as any topic with a salience that is at least one standard deviation above the mean (cf. De Vries and Edwards, 2009, p. 11, who used this approach to define a cutoff point to classify parties as Euroskeptic). Figure 2.28a shows a relationship between issues relevant for outside communication and topic order, in that highly salient topics are placed earlier in manifestos. Most strikingly, parties do not place

highly salient issues any later than the first half of a manifesto, and often even no later than the first quarter, which highlights how relevant topic order is for communicating to the outside of a party. Figure 2.28b shows that issues that are aimed at the internal audience of a party are placed earlier than topics that are not. Additionally, the party base's key topics are placed in about the first quarter of a manifesto only, but not in the later sections, which indicates that topic order is also relevant for highlighting these topics.

Figure 2.28: Communication to the Internal and External Audience throughout Manifestos



Note: Dashed line represents cutoff point between high issue salience and lower salience. Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Model 3, which is displayed in Table 2.4, shows how the importance of topics for both the inside and outside audience of a party affects the order of topics in election manifestos. We can see that both inside and outside communication affect how parties order topics, albeit in different ways. The more important a topic is for a party's external audience, the later it gets placed in a manifesto. This finding goes against hypothesis 2. Additionally, a topic's increasing importance for a party's internal audience leads to earlier placement in a manifesto. The same relationships are illustrated in Figure 2.29, which shows the predicted topic order on the x-axis, and topic salience for both the inside and the outside audience of a party on the y-axis. Once again, the predicted topic order was simulated using the clarify package for R (Greifer et al., 2023), and the manifesto was fixed at the FDP's 2009 manifesto. We can clearly see that topics

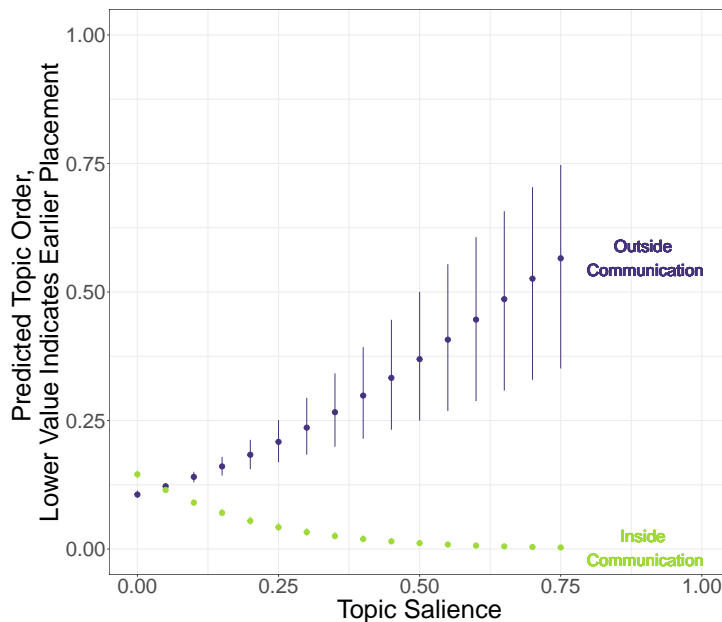
that are relevant for the internal audience are placed early in manifestos, and even more so at increasing salience for the internal audience. Topics that are salient for the external audience, in contrast, get placed later the more salient they are for the general population.

Table 2.4: Effect of Inside and Outside Communication on Topic Order, Beta Regression with Manifesto Fixed Effects

<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
Topic order	
Model 3	
Outside communication	3.195*** (0.625)
Inside communication	-5.385*** (0.445)
Constant	-1.899*** (0.029)
Observations	2,616
R ²	0.078
Log likelihood	3,800.749

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Standard errors in parentheses.
Manifesto fixed effects not displayed.

Figure 2.29: Predicted Topic Order by Issue Salience



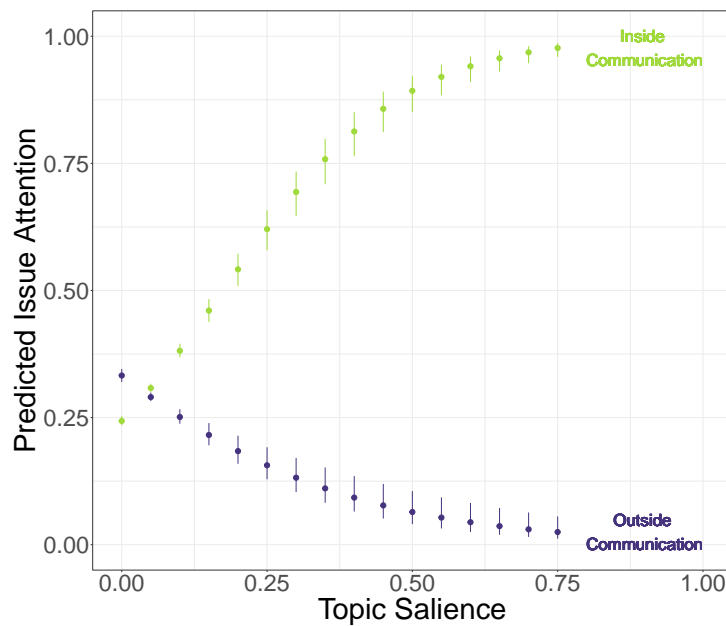
Note: Predicted values based on Model 3 shown in Table 2.4. Manifesto fixed at FDP 2009. Vertical lines represent 95% confidence interval.

Model 4 in Table 2.5 shows how speaking to the internal and external audiences affects issue attention. The more salient a topic is for a party's internal audience, the more attention that topic gets in an election manifesto. This finding is in line with hypothesis 3. Increasing importance for the external audience leads to a topic receiving less attention in an election manifesto. Figure 2.30 displays the stark difference in how a topic's importance for the internal and external audience, respectively, affect issue attention, where a topic's increasing relevance for the inside audience leads to very high predicted issue attention, whereas a high relevance for the outside audience leads to very low predicted issue attention.

Table 2.5: Effect of Inside and Outside Communication on Issue Attention, Beta Regression with Manifesto Fixed Effects

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Issue attention
	Model 4
Outside communication	-3.965*** (0.574)
Inside communication	6.506*** (0.411)
Constant	-0.978*** (0.023)
Observations	2,616
R ²	0.069
Log likelihood	861.666

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Standard errors in parentheses.
Manifesto fixed effects not displayed.

Figure 2.30: Predicted Issue Attention by Issue Salience

Note: Predicted values based on Model 4 shown in Table 2.5. Manifesto fixed at FDP 2009. Vertical lines represent 95% confidence interval.

In previous sections, we saw that the descriptive results in Figures 2.28a and 2.28b above show that topics that are relevant for the external or internal audience, respectively, tend to appear especially in the early chapters of a manifesto. Model 2 in Table 2.3 shows that the relationship between topic order and issue attention is different in different sections of a manifesto, yet Model 3 in Table 2.4 indicates that only high importance for the internal audience leads to earlier placement. Based on these findings, Model 5 aims to dig deeper. Table 2.6 and Figure 2.31 show the effect of a topic's relevance for both the internal and external audience on issue attention conditional on whether a topic is also placed in the first quarter of a manifesto.

Table 2.6: Effect of Inside and Outside Communication on Issue Attention by Topic Order, Beta Regression with Manifesto Fixed Effects

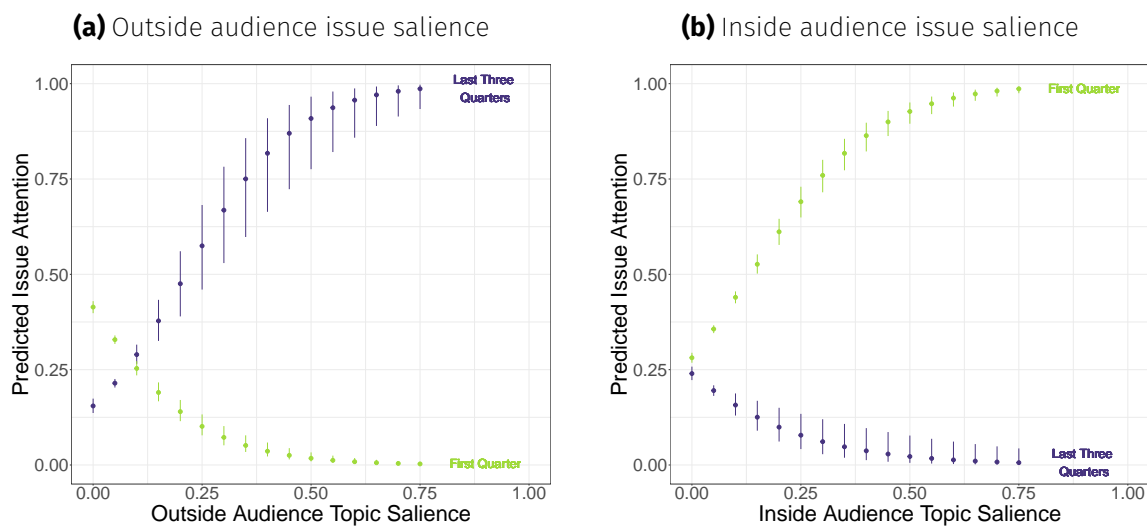
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Issue attention
	Model 5
Outside communication	7.991*** (1.234)
Inside communication	-5.256*** (1.482)
First quarter	0.819*** (0.043)
Outside communication * first quarter	-15.336*** (1.405)
Inside communication * first quarter	12.218*** (1.548)
Constant	-1.469*** (0.035)
Observations	2,616
R ²	0.177
Log likelihood	1,057.915
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01 Standard errors in parentheses. Manifesto fixed effects not displayed.

Figure 2.31a displays the predicted issue attention based on a topic's importance for the external audience and depending on whether it is placed in the first quarter of the manifesto. We see that topics that matter a lot for the external audience receive less attention when they are also placed early in a manifesto. In contrast, if topics that are highly relevant for the external audience are placed in the last three quarters, they receive more attention at increasing levels of salience. These findings indicate that parties use topic order and issue attention separately for topics that matter for the external audience. While we saw in Model 4 that overall, higher salience for the external audience does not lead to an increase in issue attention on those topics, this relationship changes once we take topic placement into account. Topics that are of high importance for the external audience do receive higher attention, but only when they are placed later than the first quarter of a manifesto. Considering that topics that are highly salient for the external audience tend to be placed in the later parts of a manifesto (see Model 3), this finding underlines the importance of taking into account both topic order and issue attention if we want to gain a full picture of how parties emphasise issues.

In Figure 2.31b, we can see the predicted issue attention based on the internal audience's issue salience, and dependent on whether a topic is placed in the first quarter of a manifesto. The

results show that topics that are more salient for the internal audience receive higher attention when they are placed in the first quarter of a manifesto. In contrast, topics that are placed after the first quarter receive lower issue attention, even when they are important for the internal audience. These results show that parties seem to follow an all-or-nothing approach when it comes to how they highlight topics that are important for the internal audience. These topics are either highlighted by being placed early *and* by receiving high issue attention, or they are not highlighted at all.

Figure 2.31: Predicted Issue Attention by Issue Salience and Topic Order



Note: Predicted values based on Model 5 shown in Table 2.6. Manifesto fixed at FDP 2009. Vertical lines represent 95% confidence interval.

As we saw in Models 3 through 5, whether a topic is relevant for a party's inside or outside communication can affect how a party chooses to highlight it in an election manifesto. Topics that are salient for the internal audience are placed earlier in manifestos and receive higher issue attention. When topics are relevant for the internal audience, parties highlight them in all the ways that they can. In contrast, the same is not true for topics that matter for the external audience. Overall, topics that are of high salience for the outside audience are placed later and receive less attention. Zooming in on this relationship, however, we can see that this is not always the case. When topics are very important for the external audience, they do receive higher attention, but only when they are placed in the last three quarters of a manifesto.

Taken together, these results mean several things. First, parties' issue emphasis across both topic order and issue attention seems to be mostly driven by how important topics are for the internal audience. In a way, parties seem to act in a sincere way when it comes to the way they highlight topics. Assuming that the party base's issue priorities are sufficiently close to the official party line, we can see that parties highlight their key issues in a way that readers of a manifesto can find them early in the manifesto *and* by covering them in greater detail. However, since election manifestos are voted upon and adopted by the party assembly, parties might also use both topic order and issue attention to highlight topics that are important to the internal audience in order to secure the delegates' support for the manifesto. Second, higher issue salience in the external audience does not lead to higher issue emphasis in most cases. When it comes to highlighting issues, parties seem to focus on their own priorities and do not let outside factors shape their issue emphasis in their own manifestos. Third, the fact that high importance for the outside audience *can* lead to higher issue attention, but only when those topics are placed in the later sections of a manifesto, shows that there are cases in which parties use topic order and issue attention separately. Specifically, while readers of a manifesto may have to search for topics that are important to the general population when those topics are not also important to a party's internal audience, they will get detailed information on the party's position on those topics once they find them. This finding in particular shows that considering topic order and issue attention as two different dimensions of issue emphasis can be worthwhile, especially when looking at topics that are important for the external audience of a party.

2.10 Chapter Conclusion

In this section of my dissertation, I introduced the concept of topic order as a second dimension of issue emphasis. Using German election manifestos from 2002 to 2017, I showed that parties use topic order and issue attention simultaneously in about the first quarter of their manifestos. After that, the relationship between topic order and issue attention becomes much weaker. Additionally, I showed that parties use the first chapters of their manifestos to emphasise topics that matter for their own party base by placing them early and covering them in great

detail. Topics that matter for the external audience tend to be placed in the later sections of a manifesto, but can still receive high levels of issue attention.

These findings underline how important it is to include both dimensions of issue emphasis, not only issue attention. This is the case especially when looking at issue emphasis in the context of the external audience. Especially for studies that use issue emphasis in manifestos in the context of parties campaigning for votes and, therefore, addressing the external audience, including topic order as a second dimension of issue emphasis can help gain a more detailed understanding of how parties highlight issues that can be beneficial in the electoral game. Considering that topic order is much easier for readers of a manifesto to notice than issue attention, taking topic order into account brings research on political parties closer to how readers of manifestos perceive parties' issue priorities. When it comes to the generalisability of these findings, further research is necessary to understand how parties' use of issue emphasis is affected by factors such as the kind of party system or its polarisation.

Knowing that parties use topic order in addition to issue attention to highlight topics aimed at both the internal and the external audience opens up many further research avenues that can help us understand issue emphasis, and topic order in particular, in more detail. For instance, there might be differences between niche and mainstream parties when it comes to how they emphasise topics. Since niche parties are often heavily associated with a small number of topics, it might be feasible for them to place all those topics in the beginning of a manifesto *and* talk about them a lot, and place all other topics in the remainder of the manifesto without explicitly highlighting them either way. If this is true, we would see a much bigger difference between topics that are placed in the first quarter and topics that are placed after that than we see when we do not take niche party status into account. Mainstream parties, in contrast, often lack this association with only a few specific topics and therefore must make a much broader offer for the electorate. This could become apparent by mainstream parties using issue attention more heavily throughout the entire manifesto in order to also highlight topics that are not placed in the beginning of a manifesto, which would mean a much smaller difference in how they emphasise topics in the first quarter and in the remainder of their manifesto.

Another field of research where topic order can be worthwhile to include is research on

coalition formation. Understanding how coalition partners use topic order and issue attention to emphasise topics in their coalition agreement can further our understanding of those negotiations and agreements. For instance, they might use topic order to place those topics early that they want to prioritise in the upcoming legislative period. Alternatively, coalitions might use topic order and issue attention to give all included parties the opportunity to highlight their own topics: One party might be able to place its key topics early, while the other gets to emphasise its topics by talking about them at greater length. Finally, including topic order to our understanding of issue emphasis raises the question if the order of topics can help us better predict portfolio allocation, considering that policy emphasis during election campaigns has been shown to be a predictor of portfolio allocation (Bäck et al., 2011; Däubler et al., 2024). By taking into account which topics are placed early in the governing parties' respective manifestos, we might be able to discern their preferred portfolios as well.

Once a new government has been established, topic order and issue attention can be helpful in better understanding parties' behaviour during the legislative term as well. First, including issue emphasis could be a useful indicator as to which kinds of pledges agreed upon in a coalition agreement are more or less likely to be fulfilled.¹⁴ Second, issue attention in parties' manifestos has been shown to lead to more parliamentary questions on that topic from the respective party (Gross et al., 2024). Including topic order in manifestos might yield a more thorough understanding of the topics that parties want to prioritise in their parliamentary activities.

In addition to studying issue emphasis in the written text of election manifestos, including the images that parties use in their manifestos can yield further understanding of how parties emphasise certain issues (Debus et al., 2015). Understanding how the use of images correlates with both topic order and issue attention can provide meaningful insights into which messages parties want to convey. For instance, if parties predominantly used images for topics that are important for the external audience, it could be a signal that parties want to draw attention to those topics despite placing them in the later sections of their manifestos. If, in contrast, they mostly added images to topics that matter for the internal audience, it would support the

¹⁴For more research on pledge fulfilment, cf. for example Matthieß and Vehrkamp (2022).

finding that parties particularly highlight their key issues in as many ways as they can.

Lastly, taking parties' online manifestos into account in addition to the physical and PDF versions can provide further insight not only into parties' issue emphasis, but also into how people perceive it. Studying if parties order topics in the online manifestos on their website the same way they order them in the physical manifesto or if they emphasise them differently can add to our understanding of how parties campaign depending on the format. Furthermore, using parties' online manifestos can help us understand how issue emphasis can shape readers' perception of issue priorities. This is the case especially when the online version suggests similar topics once a user has clicked on a topic they are interested in. Taking into account who reads manifestos and who looks at parties' websites can further our knowledge on how parties emphasise topics for different audiences.

Chapter 3

Demand Side: How Topic Order Affects Voters' Perceptions

3 DEMAND SIDE: HOW TOPIC ORDER AFFECTS VOTERS' PERCEPTIONS

Political parties' issue emphasis is an important factor shaping voters' party perceptions. When parties emphasise certain issues over others, these emphasised issues play a heavier role in voters' perceived left-right position of individual parties (Meyer and Wagner, 2018; Wagner and Meyer, 2023). However, we only know this to be the case for one dimension of issue emphasis, namely issue attention. As Wagner and Meyer (2023) have shown, longer issue statements were able to shift respondents' perceived party positions.

In this dissertation, I argue that issue emphasis consists of not one, but two dimensions: Issue attention, i.e. how much parties talk about individual issues, and topic order, i.e. the order in which parties arrange individual topics in their manifestos. Since I have shown in the previous section of this dissertation that there are cases in which parties use issue attention to highlight some topics, and topic order to highlight others, it is important to understand if topic order is also able to affect voters' party perceptions. Therefore, this section of my dissertation addresses the following question: How does topic order affect how readers of a manifesto perceive how important an issue is to a party?

Research on survey design and on ballot papers has shown that item order can affect people's understanding of the individual items. When completing surveys, in order to minimise the mental effort respondents have to put into answering survey questions, they subconsciously choose the first answer that is good enough, instead of looking to find the optimal answer (Krosnick and Alwin, 1987; Simon, 1957). This behaviour is especially prevalent when respondents are presented with a very long list of possible answers (Krosnick and Alwin, 1987; Schuman and Presser, 2000). Additionally, respondents often use item placement in a list as a quality indicator, in that items that are placed at the top are often considered to be better than those at the bottom (Anderson, 1965). Accordingly, candidates that are placed at the top of the ballot paper are perceived to be more qualified and, thus, get more votes than those at the bottom (Blom-Hansen et al., 2016). Item order thus affects people's perceptions, and it can have real consequences, such as in the case of ballot paper design. It is therefore likely that the same relationship is present in voters' perceptions of party's manifestos, where topic order should

affect voters' party perceptions.

Using a survey experiment I designed, I test if topic order makes readers of a manifesto more likely to perceive a topic as important to the party that wrote the manifesto. I find that in most cases, respondents are more likely to perceive a topic as important to the respective party if it was placed in the beginning of the manifesto. This is especially the case for issues that are not typically one of the key issues of the respective party. Ordering topics strategically can thus help parties to strengthen their association with certain topics in the eye of the voters. This effect can be particularly useful for parties that want to focus their campaign on an issue that is not their key issue - be it because they want to build their campaign on more than one central issue, or because they expect a non-key issue to be more likely to gain them votes in the current election than their key issue.

The remainder of this section is structured as follows. In section 3.1, I summarise how the order of items affects the perception of those items in other contexts, such as surveys and ballot papers. I then show how the same logic should apply to election manifestos. In section 3.2, I present the survey experiment I designed to test my hypothesis. Additionally, I give a first descriptive overview of the data and discuss the method I use. Section 3.3 contains my findings on how early placement of a topic in an election manifesto can affect readers' perceptions. It furthermore includes a test on how late topic placement can affect readers' perceptions in order to account for recency effects. Finally, I discuss my findings in section 3.4, and I conclude this part of my dissertation in section 3.5.

3.1 How Topic Order Affects Voters' Perceived Issue Importance

When reading an election manifesto, people notice which topic is placed in the very beginning of a manifesto. Accordingly, they might also notice whether their topics of interest are placed in the first few chapters or not. Whilst a particularly interested party member or voter might specifically look for the issues they are interested in, someone who rather just wants to gain a broad impression of what a party stands for might instead simply skim the document. By doing so, it is probable that they intuitively perceive topics that are covered earlier on in the manifesto as more important than those that are only covered later. In the remainder of this

section, I will show how I arrive at this expectation.

One reason why people tend to perceive items that are in the beginning as more important than those that appear later is because the first item in a list gets processed more deeply than later issues. This happens due to the way that our minds process this kind of information (Krosnick and Alwin, 1987) or due to cognitive fatigue (Blom-Hansen et al., 2016). For instance, when presented with a list of adjectives, people assign the first adjective in the list higher importance than the ones following (Anderson, 1965). Additionally, the concept of something being at the top – such as at the beginning of a list – is generally associated with being better or more important, whilst something being at the bottom is associated with being bad (Meier and Robinson, 2004; Tourangeau et al., 2013). Respondents are also more likely to remember items that are placed at the beginning of a list, compared with items that are positioned in the middle (Murdock, 1962; Postman and Phillips, 1965).

In a political context, we know that voters understand this ordered logic, too: Candidates that are placed at the top of a ballot paper have been found to gain more votes than those that are placed towards the bottom (Blom-Hansen et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2015; Van Erkel and Thijssen, 2016).¹⁵ Additionally, citizens understand that the information presented to them in the beginning of TV news or on the front page of a newspaper are those of the greatest relevance on that particular day (Graber, 2004). Thus, we can expect voters to apply the same understanding to topic order in election manifestos.

Given what we know about how people cognitively process longer lists of several items, and taking into account how people are capable of understanding ordered media logic and candidate order on ballot papers, we should expect them to process the order of topics in election manifestos in a similar way. When it comes to writing election manifestos, consciously deciding which issue to place early is a form of framing: Placing a topic in the beginning of a manifesto highlights a topic and, hence, makes it more salient. This way of framing can affect people's perception and understanding of an issue (cf., among many others, Entman,

¹⁵Note that the study by Blom-Hansen et al. (2016) utilised the fact that in Danish local and regional elections, ballot papers might be divided into one or two columns. The electoral board decides whether the ballot paper has one or two columns *after* parties submit their candidate lists. This layout choice thus can have the consequence that candidates that are in the middle of their party's list appear at the top of the second column if the ballot paper is printed in a two-column layout.

1993; Iyengar, 1994; Nelson et al., 1997). In addition to framing an issue as salient, placing it in the beginning of the manifesto where readers are likely to notice it can lead to a priming effect. The fact that readers notice a topic leads to it being at the top of their mind, which in turn affects their perceptions of the party that wrote the manifesto (for a detailed study on priming, cf. Iyengar and Kinder, 1991). Following this logic, framing an issue as salient by placing it in the beginning of the manifesto should lead to readers of a manifesto picking up on this framing, and adjusting their perception of the issue accordingly. This means that someone who looks at an election manifesto should perceive the first topics to be particularly important to the party that wrote the manifesto.

While this effect is certainly present for someone who attentively reads part or all of a manifesto, I argue that this relationship should still hold for someone who only skims a manifesto, or someone who looks for a topic they are interested in without fully considering other sections of a manifesto. When searching for a specific topic, a reader can still pick up on where this topic is placed in a manifesto, since they will notice whether they find it early in the manifesto, or whether they have to go through a larger section of the table of contents before they find the topic they are interested in.¹⁶ I therefore propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Voters are more likely to perceive a topic as a party's key issue if the topic is placed in the beginning of the manifesto.

¹⁶Even though voters usually do not read manifestos (Adams et al., 2011; Dolezal et al., 2012; Laver, 1984), their contents find their way to the voter through other means. First, parties' candidates and campaign workers can use their party's manifesto to guide their campaign efforts (Däubler, 2012a). Second, parties' manifestos and campaign messages are covered in the media. Yet, as journalists lack the time to read all election manifestos in great detail, they are likely to rely on shortcuts such as issue attention or topic order to decide which topics to cover. Thus, topic order should be one relevant factor that influences which topics voters learn about through the media, and this relationship will be further studied in section 4 of this dissertation.

3.2 *Data and Methods*

3.2.1 *Survey Experiment Design*

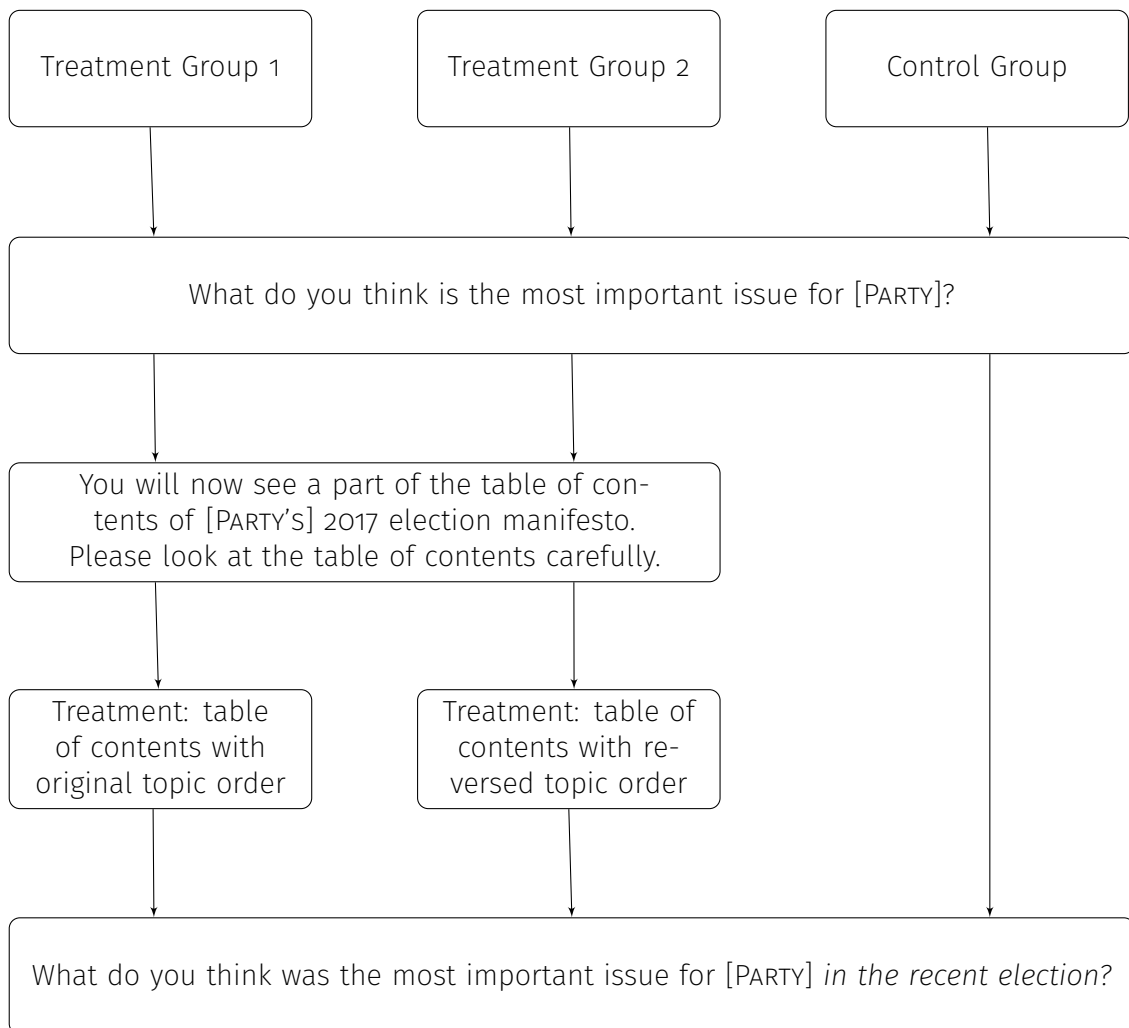
In order to address the question of how the order of topics in election manifestos affects voters' perceptions, I designed a survey experiment. Using this survey experiment, I test how respondents' perceptions of a party's key issues are affected by how topics are ordered in the respective party's election manifesto. Doing so allows me to randomly assign participants to different variations of the treatment to understand how it affects participants' perceptions. Using this method hence enables me to establish a causal relationship between the independent and dependent variable. In addition, through random assignment to treatment or control, other potentially confounding factors – such as, for example, political interest and knowledge – can be expected to be equally distributed among the groups (cf. Mutz, 2011, for more information on survey experiments).

When it comes to the specific parties that respondents were asked about, I divided the respondents into two groups in order to include two different parties. The first party is the German Green Party, who was an opposition party at the time the survey was in field. The reason I chose this party is that, traditionally, it is not only a niche party, but also one that is very strongly associated with one single topic, namely environmental protection (Meguid, 2005). For such a party, respondents are very likely to know what the Green Party's overall key topic is. At the same time, it will potentially be a particularly hard case for priming respondents towards choosing a topic other than the environment as the party's key topic, even when they are presented with a treatment that indicates that the Green Party did not place the environment in the very beginning of its manifesto. The second party is the CDU/CSU, who was in a government coalition with the SPD at the time under study. In contrast to the Green Party, this is a mainstream party that is not strongly associated with one single issue or issue area (Meguid, 2005). Instead, it aims at speaking to a bigger and more diverse portion of the electorate, which could make it harder for respondents to easily identify a key topic. At the same time, due to the party's key issue being less obvious, the effect of the treatment on respondents' perception of the CDU/CSU's main issue might be a lot more pronounced than for the Green Party. For both

parties, I use their 2017 national election manifestos (CDU/CSU, 2017; GRÜNEN, 2017).

Figure 3.1 presents an overview of how the survey experiment was designed, and the remainder of this section explains the design in detail.

Figure 3.1: Survey Experiment Design



In the beginning of the survey, all respondents within the two party groups were asked about what they think their assigned party – i.e., the Green Party or the CDU/CSU – stands for. Specifically, they got to answer the following question: "What do you think is the most important issue

for [PARTY]?"¹⁷. This question was presented with an open text box for respondents to put in their answer, rather than having them choose one issue from a long list of topics. Presenting respondents with a multiple-choice style question could have led to the order of options affecting which issue area they choose, rather than respondents freely answering the question. In contrast, using an open text box for respondents to write in their answer prevents the order of items in the list of available answers to affect the policy issue they choose for their answer. After having answered this question, respondents were randomly assigned to either the control or one of two treatment groups.

Both treatment groups were shown a table of contents of the party's most recent election manifesto. The reason they are exposed to the table of contents is that it provides them with an overview of how a party orders the individual policy issues, yet at the same time it is more concise and faster to grasp than, for example, skimming through the manifesto as a whole. In addition, respondents were not shown the whole table of contents, but only the first and last chapter, including all sub-chapters¹⁸. Since for some parties, even the tables of content can be very detailed and, hence, somewhat lengthy, this is another way of facilitating the whole procedure for the respondents in order to avoid that they lose focus and interest and are, therefore, not exposed to the whole treatment (Mutz, 2011).

Both treatment groups were introduced to the treatment through a prompt informing them that they were about to see part of the table of contents of their assigned party's 2017 election manifesto. Respondents were asked to take a careful look at the table of contents. The first treatment group got to see part of the real table of contents that their assigned party used in their manifesto. The second treatment group, in contrast, got to see a version where those same topics are ordered in reverse, so that the table of contents is now turned the wrong way around, starting with the last chapter of the real table of contents. The control group, in

¹⁷Walgrave et al. (2016) use a fairly similar set of questions to disentangle associative issue ownership from competence issue ownership, in that they include multiple questions asking respondents which party comes to mind when thinking about a specific policy issue.

¹⁸Note that in many election manifestos, parties start with some sort of general introduction or preamble, and end with a conclusion or call for vote. These parts are not treated as chapters here and, hence, are not covered in the tables of contents, since these parts of a manifesto typically have very broad titles that do not transfer much information – such as "Introduction" in the Greens' 2017 manifesto, and "A good country in times like these" in the CDU/CSU's 2017 manifesto.

contrast, did not see any version of the party's table of contents. This enables me to not only differentiate between the effect that the real manifesto has on voters' perceptions compared to the manipulated version, but also to distinguish between how both versions individually compare to no treatment at all. After having seen the table of contents – or right after the first question in the case of the control group – respondents were asked to answer the following question: "What do you think was the most important issue for [PARTY] *in the recent election*?" This question was asked to all respondents, including those in the control group. Just like in the first question, it was again an open-ended question.

Figures 3.2 and 3.3 show what the treatments looked like for the respondents. In the case of the Green Party, their original manifesto was enumerated, using letters for the chapters and numbers for all sub-chapters. The table of contents that was presented to respondents who were assigned to the Green Party contained an enumeration that was consistent with the original manifesto. The CDU/CSU, in contrast, did not enumerate its manifesto in any way. Therefore, the table of contest presented to respondents who were assigned to the CDU/CSU did not contain any enumeration either.

Figure 3.2: Survey Experiment Treatments, Green Party

(a) Treatment 1: original topic order

(b) Treatment 2: reversed topic order

(a) Treatment 1: original topic order

Gesellschaft im Wandel

A. Umwelt im Kopf

1. Wir erhalten unsere Natur
2. Wir sorgen für gesunde Lebensmittel und beenden Tierleid
3. Wir retten das Klima
4. Wir begrünen unsere Wirtschaft für Umweltschutz, Lebensqualität und Arbeitsplätze
5. Wir steigen um – komplett auf grüne Energien
6. Wir sorgen für saubere, bezahlbare und bequeme Mobilität

B. Gerechtigkeit im Sinn

1. Wir investieren in Kindertagesstätten, Schulen und Hochschulen
2. Wir kämpfen für bezahlbare Wohnungen und lebenswerte Kommunen
3. Wir teilen den Wohlstand gerechter
4. Wir machen den Sozialstaat sicher und zukunftsfest
5. Wir holen Kinder aus der Armut und fördern Familien
6. Wir kämpfen für gute Arbeit und bessere Vereinbarkeit
7. Wir gestalten Digitalisierung

< Zurück Weiter >

(b) Treatment 2: reversed topic order

Gesellschaft im Wandel

A. Gerechtigkeit im Sinn

1. Wir gestalten Digitalisierung
2. Wir kämpfen für gute Arbeit und bessere Vereinbarkeit
3. Wir holen Kinder aus der Armut und fördern Familien
4. Wir machen den Sozialstaat sicher und zukunftsfest
5. Wir teilen den Wohlstand gerechter
6. Wir kämpfen für bezahlbare Wohnungen und lebenswerte Kommunen
7. Wir investieren in Kindertagesstätten, Schulen und Hochschulen

B. Umwelt im Kopf

1. Wir sorgen für saubere, bezahlbare und bequeme Mobilität
2. Wir steigen um – komplett auf grüne Energien
3. Wir begrünen unsere Wirtschaft für Umweltschutz, Lebensqualität und Arbeitsplätze
4. Wir retten das Klima
5. Wir sorgen für gesunde Lebensmittel und beenden Tierleid
6. Wir erhalten unsere Natur

< Zurück Weiter >

Note: Treatments 1 and 2 for the Green Party's manifesto as they were displayed to respondents of wave 36 of the German Internet Panel (Blom et al., 2014).

Figure 3.3: Survey Experiment Treatments, CDU/CSU

(a) Treatment 1: original topic order

(b) Treatment 2: reversed topic order

Gute Arbeit auch für morgen – Vollbeschäftigung in Deutschland

- Arbeitsplätze sichern
- Neue Arbeitsplätze schaffen
- Langzeitarbeitslosen helfen
- Qualität von Arbeit ist uns wichtig
- Selbstständigkeit und Mittelstand stärken
- Tarifpartnerschaft stärken
- Landwirtschaft hat Zukunft
- Mehr Freiraum, weniger Bürokratie
- Verkehrsinfrastruktur erneuern und ausbauen
- Energiewende zum Erfolg führen
- Forschung und neue Technologien fördern
- Globalisierung für Deutschlands Zukunft nutzen

Was unser Land zusammenhält

- Gemeinschaft und Zusammenhalt
- Ehrenamt und Sport
- Christliche Kirchen und Religionsgemeinschaften
- Religionsfreiheit in Deutschland
- Damit Integration gelingt

Was unser Land zusammenhält

- Damit Integration gelingt
- Religionsfreiheit in Deutschland
- Christliche Kirchen und Religionsgemeinschaften
- Ehrenamt und Sport
- Gemeinschaft und Zusammenhalt

Gute Arbeit auch für morgen – Vollbeschäftigung in Deutschland

- Globalisierung für Deutschlands Zukunft nutzen
- Forschung und neue Technologien fördern
- Energiewende zum Erfolg führen
- Verkehrsinfrastruktur erneuern und ausbauen
- Mehr Freiraum, weniger Bürokratie
- Landwirtschaft hat Zukunft
- Tarifpartnerschaft stärken
- Selbstständigkeit und Mittelstand stärken
- Qualität von Arbeit ist uns wichtig
- Langzeitarbeitslosen helfen
- Neue Arbeitsplätze schaffen
- Arbeitsplätze sichern

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Note: Treatments 1 and 2 for the CDU/CSU's manifesto as they were displayed to respondents of wave 36 of the German Internet Panel (Blom et al., 2014).

3.2.2 Data

In order for the sample to be representative of the German electorate and in order for the number of respondents to be sufficiently high to draw conclusions from them, I rely on the resources and expertise of the German Internet Panel (GIP, Blom et al., 2014). I was able to place my survey experiment in Wave 36 of the GIP which was conducted in July 2018, i.e., less than a year after the Bundestag election which was held in September 2017. As Table 3.1 shows, the 2,438 respondents who answered all questions containing the survey experiment were equally

divided into two groups, answering questions about either the Green Party or the CDU/CSU. Within each party, one third of respondents were allocated to either treatment 1, treatment 2, or the control group.

Table 3.1: Allocation of Respondents to the different Treatment Groups

	Treatment 1: original topic order	Treatment 2: reversed topic order	Control	Total
Green Party	406	407	406	1,219
CDU/CSU	406	406	406	1,219
Total	812	813	812	2,438

Source: Wave 36 of the German Internet Panel (Blom et al., 2014)

In the data set of wave 36 of the GIP, the open answers that respondents provided are recoded into a numeric variable based on the master codebook of the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP; Bevan, 2019; John et al., 2013). After the survey was conducted, I was temporarily given access to the open answers to recode them. Since I was planning to manually code all the data I use in this dissertation at the time of recoding the open answers, I recoded them using the CAP coding scheme, which I was planning to use at the time. However, I have moved away from coding everything manually since then in favour of using the available data from the Manifesto Project (MARPOR, Volkens et al., 2017). In order to be consistent throughout this dissertation, I thus recoded the relevant variables in the GIP according to the codebook of the Manifesto Project. The issue categories used in the respective codebooks of CAP and MARPOR are similar enough that a translation from one to the other is possible. While a direct recoding from the open answers to MARPOR would be more precise, doing so is not possible since the GIP does not share any open answers for data security reasons once the original recoding is completed. Table A.6 in the Appendix shows how I translated the topic codes from the Comparative Agendas Project into MARPOR topic codes.

Note that for each treatment, I use the first chapter header that clearly belongs to an issue category as the first issue. Specifically, this means that for treatment group 2 for the Green

Party, and treatment group 2 for the CDU/CSU, I count the *second* sub-chapter header as the first issue, since the very first header is ambiguous in both cases. In the reversed order of the Green Party's manifesto, the first header is titled "Justice in mind" (German: *Gerechtigkeit im Sinn*), which can be interpreted in a number of ways and, without any further context, does not *clearly* belong to a single policy category.¹⁹ I therefore count the following header, "We shape digitisation" (German: *Wir gestalten Digitalisierung*), as the Green Party's first topic in treatment 2. In the case of the CDU/CSU's treatment group 2, the table of contents starts with "What holds our country together" (German: *Was unser Land zusammenhält*), which again is a very broad and ambiguous title that can belong to a number of policy issues. The following header, "For successful integration" (German: *Damit Integration gelingt*), clearly refers to migrants and therefore falls under the national way of life category, which is why I consider it to be the first substantial topic in this treatment.²⁰ Table 3.2 gives an overview over the first topics according to the MARPOR coding in each treatment group.

Table 3.2: First Topics in the respective Treatment Groups, Coded according to MARPOR Codebook

	Treatment 1: original topic order	Treatment 2: reversed topic order
Green Party	Environmental protection	Technology and infrastructure
CDU/CSU	Labour groups	National way of life

Figures 3.4 and 3.5 show the distribution of topics that respondents perceived as the Green Party's and CDU/CSU's overall most important topic, respectively. Looking at both parties' perceived overall key topic helps me establish a baseline for the topics that respondents typically

¹⁹Note that according to the MARPOR codebook, this header *can* be coded as belonging to the civic mindedness category. However, the question at hand does not care about the intricacies of MARPOR coding, but instead at how readers of a manifesto, specifically the respondents who answered this survey, understand the headers present in the respective tables of content. In this context, there are many different ways in which a reader could interpret this header, for instance as referring to more specific group-based inequalities, such as women's rights, or as issues such as taxation of the rich and inequalities in the social welfare system. Thus, while this header is technically codable under the MARPOR guidelines, I still find it too vague to be applicable for the research question at hand.

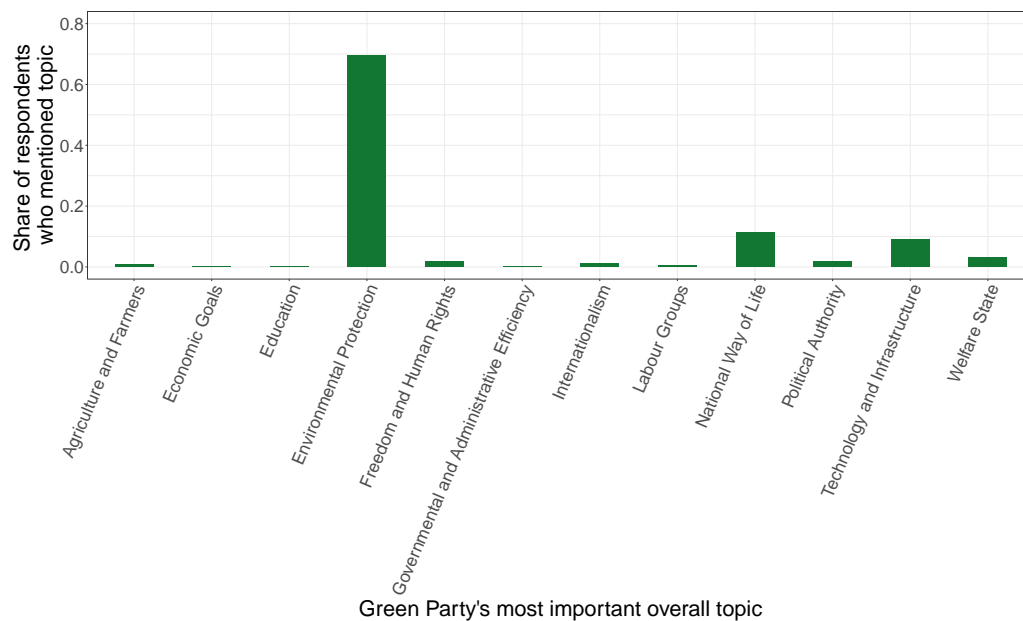
²⁰Note that these vague sub-chapter titles can be interesting to study in and of themselves, as vague statements enable parties to appeal to a broader audience (Somers-Topcu, 2015). Respondents might therefore interpret these vague sub-chapter headers to stand for whatever topic they want to see in the respective party's manifesto. However, if and to what extent these vague sub-chapter headers affect respondents' perceptions cannot be tested with the survey experiment at hand.

associate with the two parties. Overall, about 70% of respondents who were asked about the Green Party named the environment as the most important issue, followed by national way of life and technology and infrastructure, which were both mentioned by around 10% of respondents. Specifically, national way of life includes answers referring to taking in refugees, and technology and infrastructure contains mentions of energy. Respondents who answered these questions for the CDU/CSU overwhelmingly mentioned national way of life as the party's most important overall issue with over 70% of respondents naming this issue area, usually referring to refugees in their open answers. The second most mentioned topic area for the CDU/CSU is economic goals, followed by political authority, which often referred to the CDU/CSU's participation in government at the time. Both economic goals and political authority were mentioned by less than 10% of respondents as the CDU/CSU's most important issue. Figures 3.4 and 3.5 thus illustrate that for both parties, respondents had a very clear idea of their respective key issue, considering that the amount of respondents who named environmental protection for the Green Party, and national way of life for the CDU/CSU, is much larger than the amount of respondents who named the respective second and third topics. For both parties, the respective key issue according to respondents does not come to a surprise. The Green Party has a decades-long connection to environmental protection. While the CDU/CSU does not have that same kind of connection to issues that fall in the national way of life domain, the refugee crisis was very contentious at the time the survey was in the field, and the CDU/CSU was responsible for dealing with it at the national level since it was in government at the time. It is, therefore, not surprising that many respondents associated this issue area with the CDU/CSU.

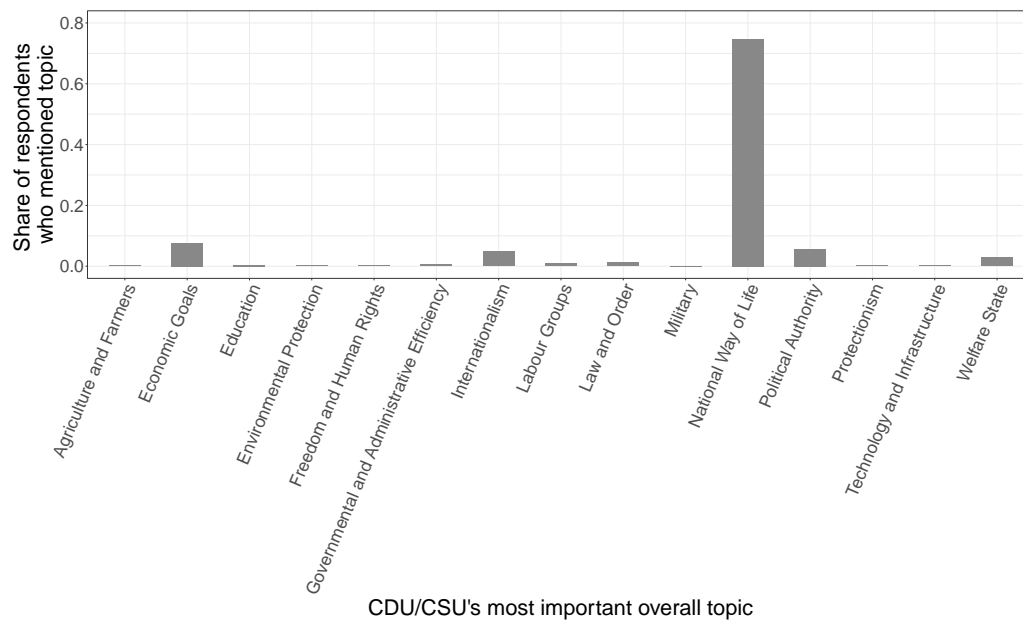
The fact that for both parties, their original manifestos are ordered so that there is a treatment group where the manifesto starts with the respective party's key issue makes the design of this survey experiment particularly interesting. The Green Party *started* its original manifesto with the environment, so that treatment group 1 sees the party's key issue at the beginning of their treatment. The CDU/CSU *ended* its original manifesto with a sub-chapter on national way of life, so that treatment group 2 sees a treatment that starts with the CDU/CSU's key issue. Priming respondents away from their respective party's overall key issue is likely to be more difficult than priming them *towards* a key issue and thereby supporting their previous under-

standing. Accordingly, the baseline for respondents associating their party with its key issue might be so high that placing this topic in the beginning of a manifesto does not make them any more likely to see this topic as the party's key issue since it does not affect the answer that they would have given anyway. Having a survey experiment that allows me to study how topic order affects how respondents perceive a party's most important issue for both parties' key and non-key issues is, therefore, a major strength of this design.

Figure 3.4: Green Party's most important Topic as Mentioned by Respondents



Source: German Internet Panel, Wave 36 (Blom et al., 2019). Question Wording: What do you think is the most important issue for the Green Party?

Figure 3.5: CDU/CSU's most important Topic as Mentioned by Respondents

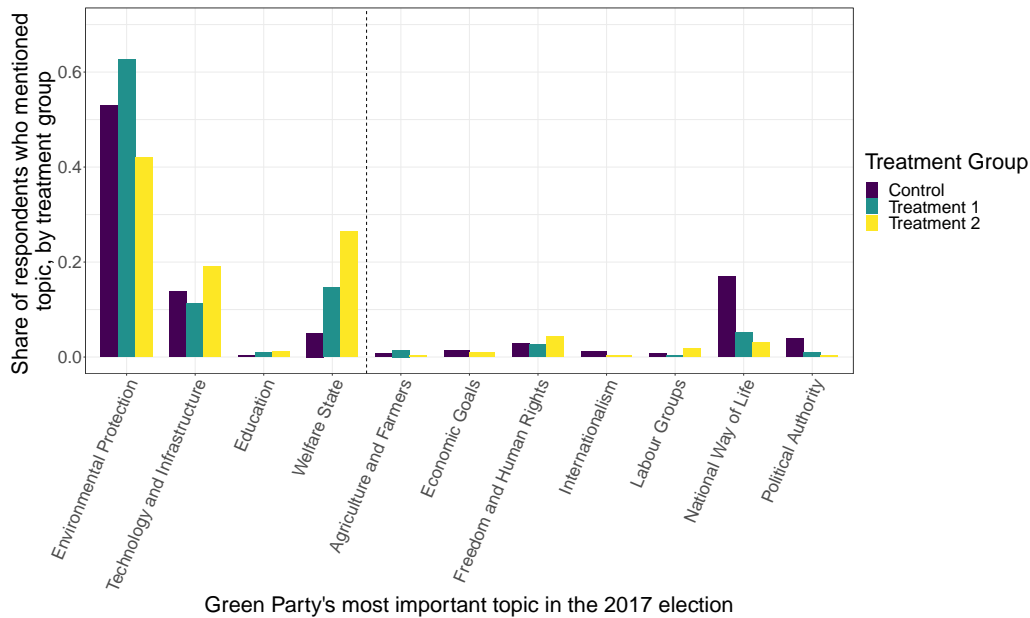
Source: German Internet Panel, Wave 36 (Blom et al., 2019). Question Wording: What do you think is the most important issue for the CDU/CSU?

Figures 3.6 and 3.7 show which topics respondents perceived to be the key topic in the 2017 election for the Green Party and the CDU/CSU, respectively. Both Figures show the respondents divided by treatment groups, where treatment 1 is the table of contents of the respective party's manifesto in its original order, treatment 2 is the table of contents in reversed order, and the control group received no treatment at all. The y-axis shows the share of respondents *per treatment group* who mentioned the topics displayed on the x-axis as the respective party's most important topic in the last election. The dashed lines divide both figures into topics that were present in the table of contents that respondents saw in the respective treatment groups to the left, and topics that were not present in the respective tables of contents to the right. Topics to the left of the dashed line are ordered by their first appearance in the original table of contents, topics to the right of the line are ordered alphabetically.

Starting with the Green Party in Figure 3.6, we can see that environmental protection continues to be the topic that respondents mentioned most often as the party's key issue in the 2017 election. However, there is variation between the treatment groups. Most notably, respondents

who were in treatment group 1, and who saw the table of contents that started with a chapter on the environment, are the group with the highest share of respondents who mentioned the environment as the Green Party's key topic, with over 60% of respondents in treatment group 1 naming the environment. Respondents in both treatment group 2 and in the control group named environmental protection as the Green Party's most important topic in the 2017 election at a lower share, namely just over 40% and 50%, respectively. Treatment group 2, who saw the revised table of contents that started with equity, digitisation, and work life balance, have higher shares of respondents who mentioned topics in the areas of welfare state and technology and infrastructure compared to the other treatment groups. Specifically, over a quarter of respondents in treatment group 2 mentioned topics that fall into the welfare state domain as the Green Party's key issue, compared to 15% in treatment group 1 and 5% in the control group. Lastly, the control group has the highest share of respondents who identified topics within the area of national way of life, i.e. the intake of refugees, as the Green Party's most important issue in the 2017 election, which is a topic area that is not mentioned in the table of contents at all. Overall, we can see that the topics that members of treatment groups 1 and 2 mentioned most often as the Green Party's key issue are those issues that are also present in the table of contents, either at the very beginning or the very end according to the original order. The comparison between treatment groups in Figure 3.6 thus indicates a descriptive connection between the order of topics in the Green Party's manifesto's table of contents and the perceived issue importance of these topics among respondents.

Figure 3.6: Green Party's most important Topic in 2017 Election as Mentioned by Respondents, by Treatment Group

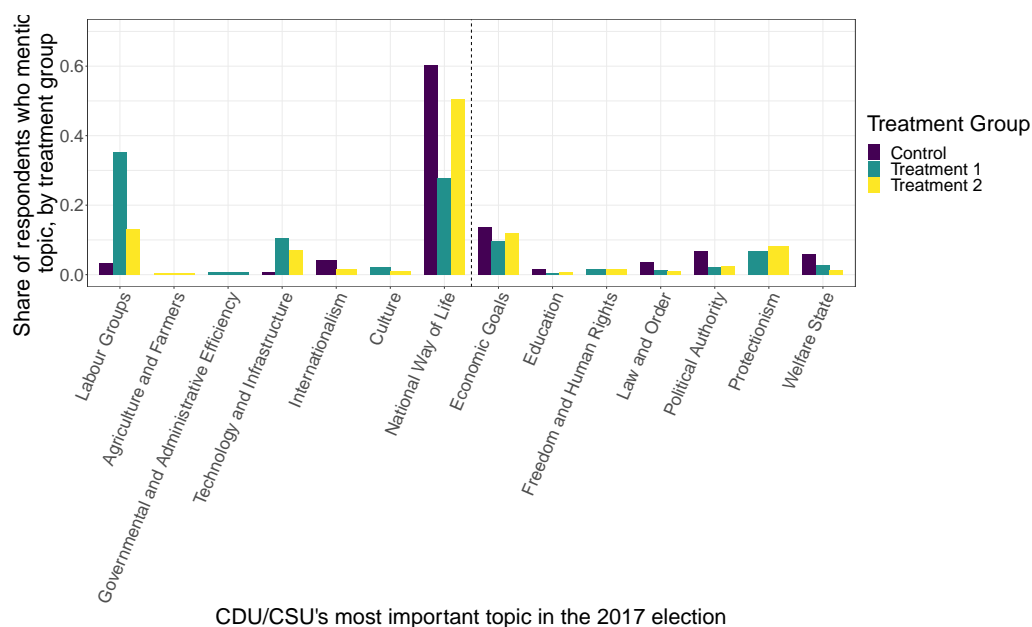


Topics left of the dashed line are ordered by their *first* appearance in the original table of contents. Topics right of the dashed line were not present in the table of contents and are therefore ordered alphabetically. Source: German Internet Panel, Wave 36 (Blom et al., 2019). Question Wording: What do you think is the most important issue for the Green Party *in the recent election*?

Figure 3.7 shows which topics respondents perceived to be the CDU/CSU's most important topic in the 2017 election by treatment group. For the control group and treatment group 2, we still see a high share of respondents – 60% and 50%, respectively) – who mentioned national way of life as the CDU/CSU's most important topic, just like they did before. However, treatment group 1, who saw the original table of contents that *ended* on a topic that falls into the national way of life category, has a much lower share of respondents who identified national way of life as the CDU/CSU's most important topic in the 2017 election with less than 30% of respondents in treatment group 1 mentioning this topic area. In fact, treatment group 1 has a higher share of respondents who named labour groups – the first topic in the original order that treatment group 1 saw – as the party's most important topic than respondents who mentioned national way of life. Looking at the order of topics in the two treatment groups, these findings make sense. Treatment group 2 saw the table of contents in reversed order, starting with integration and religious freedom, both of which are topics that fall under the national way of life domain.

Treatment group 1, in contrast, saw the original order of topics, starting with labour and employment. While there is no direct mention of labour *groups* in the (sub-)chapter titles of the manifesto, labour and employment do fall within the domain of labour groups according to the MARPOR codebook. The findings in Figure 3.7 thus indicate that the order of topics in the CDU/CSU's election manifesto is related to how respondents perceive the party's issue priorities in the 2017 election campaign.

Figure 3.7: CDU/CSU's most important Topic in 2017 Election as Mentioned by Respondents, by Treatment Group



Topics left of the dashed line are ordered by their *first* appearance in the original table of contents. Topics right of the dashed line were not present in the table of contents and are therefore ordered alphabetically. Source: German Internet Panel, Wave 36 (Blom et al., 2019). Question Wording: What do you think is the most important issue for the CDU/CSU in the recent election?

3.2.3 Control Variables

In the empirical models, I control for party identification and education. Both variables were present in wave 31 of the German Internet Panel (Blom et al., 2018), which was in field in September 2017, just around the Bundestag election that the survey experiment is referring to. Since wave 31 is close enough in time to wave 36, it is suitable to use for the addition of further variables.

Voters often perceive their own party differently than they perceive other parties. Since they share issue priorities and positions with their preferred party, chances are that their perceptions of their party's key issues are shaped by these shared preferences. I therefore include a dichotomous variable in all models which indicates whether respondents identified with the respective party. All models referring to the Green Party thus include a variable indicating whether respondents identify with the Green Party, and all models referring to the CDU/CSU include a variable indicating whether they identify with the CDU/CSU.

In addition to party identification, I include respondents' highest educational degree to account for formal education. Since people who are more highly educated might also have a higher political knowledge, they might also have a more accurate perception of political parties and their key issues. The variable included in all models ranges from the respondent still being in school to having obtained the *Abitur*, i.e. the degree giving respondents access to university education.

Besides party identification and education, other variables that would be worthwhile to include are political interest and political knowledge, as both of these are very likely to shape respondents' perceptions of parties' key issues. However, neither of those was included in any wave of the GIP that was in field between the Bundestag election of 2017 and the survey experiment in wave 36.

3.2.4 Methods

In order to test how the order of topics in election manifestos affects respondents' perceptions of parties' key issues, I compare the individual treatment groups with their respective control groups. For each respondent in a treatment group, I create a dichotomous variable indicating whether the topic they named as their party's most important topic *after* they saw the treatment was equal to the topic that the table of contents in their treatment started with. For instance, this variable is 1 for any respondents in the Green Party's treatment group 1 who named environmental protection as the Green Party's most important issue. Accordingly, this variable is also 1 for any respondent in the control group who named the same topic as the Green Party's key issue. Note that doing so leads to two separate variables per party, one for each treatment

group. Thus, the variable referring to treatment group 1 equals 1 for each respondent in either the control group or treatment group who mentioned this treatment's first topic as the respective party's key issue, and 0 otherwise. Accordingly, the variable for treatment group 2 equals 1 for each respondent in treatment group 2 or in the control group who mentioned the first topic of treatment 2 as their party's key issue.

Using a set of logistic regressions, I compare each treatment group with the control group of the same party, where the dependent variable is a dichotomous variable indicating whether respondents named the first topic in the respective treatment as the party's most important topic, and the independent variable is a dichotomous variable indicating whether they were in the treatment or control group. I then simulate the predicted probability that respondents name the first topic of the respective treatment as the party's key issue using the *clarify* package for R (Greifer et al., 2023). The *clarify* package performs simulation-based inference and is based on the methodology in King et al. (2000). Across all simulations, party identification is held at the mean, which is at 0, i.e. not identifying with the party. Education is held at its mode, which is the highest category, i.e. *Abitur*. I take the first difference between the respective treatment groups and the control group in order to assess the average treatment effects. Section 3.3.1 shows the results for all treatment groups.

In order to understand whether the last topic someone sees in a manifesto also affects their perception of the party's key issue, I also test for a recency effect using the same method. In addition to associating the first item in a list with importance or quality, people often remember the last item in such a list better than previous items, especially in the short term (Postman and Phillips, 1965). I expect this recency effect to be much more clear in this experimental design than it would be for people reading an election manifesto in the real world. When reading a manifesto, people can start and end their reading at any point: They might only look for one specific topic, and stop reading once they are finished with the chapter covering that specific topic, or they might keep on reading until they reach a topic that they do not care about, or until they run out of time. So while we can assume that readers might at the very least notice which topics are covered in the first chapters of a manifesto – even though they might not read those chapters – we have no way of telling if the last chapters of a manifesto are also the

last ones that readers notice. In the experimental design, however, we know which topic is the last one on the list, and we know that it is the same for all respondents who are in the same treatment group. I therefore expect the recency effect to be stronger in the survey experiment at hand compared to complete manifestos. The results for the last topic in each treatment are discussed in Section 3.3.2.

3.3 Findings

3.3.1 Average Treatment Effect: First Topic

In this section, I will present the results of the regression analysis, showing how topic order can affect respondents' perception of the Green Party's and CDU/CSU's key issues, respectively. Starting with the Green Party, Figure 3.8 shows the difference between the treatment groups' and control groups' likelihood to name the respective treatment's first topic as the Green Party's key issue for both treatments. Due to the two treatment groups seeing tables of contents that are ordered differently, I use a separate model for each treatment. In Model 1, I compare treatment group 1, who saw the original order, to the control group. Accordingly, Model 2 compares the control group to treatment group 2, who saw the reversed order of topics. Figure 3.8 shows the first difference between the respective groups based on Models 1 and 2 (cf. Table A.7 in the Appendix). The whiskers show the 95% confidence interval, and the dashed vertical line marks zero on the x-axis.

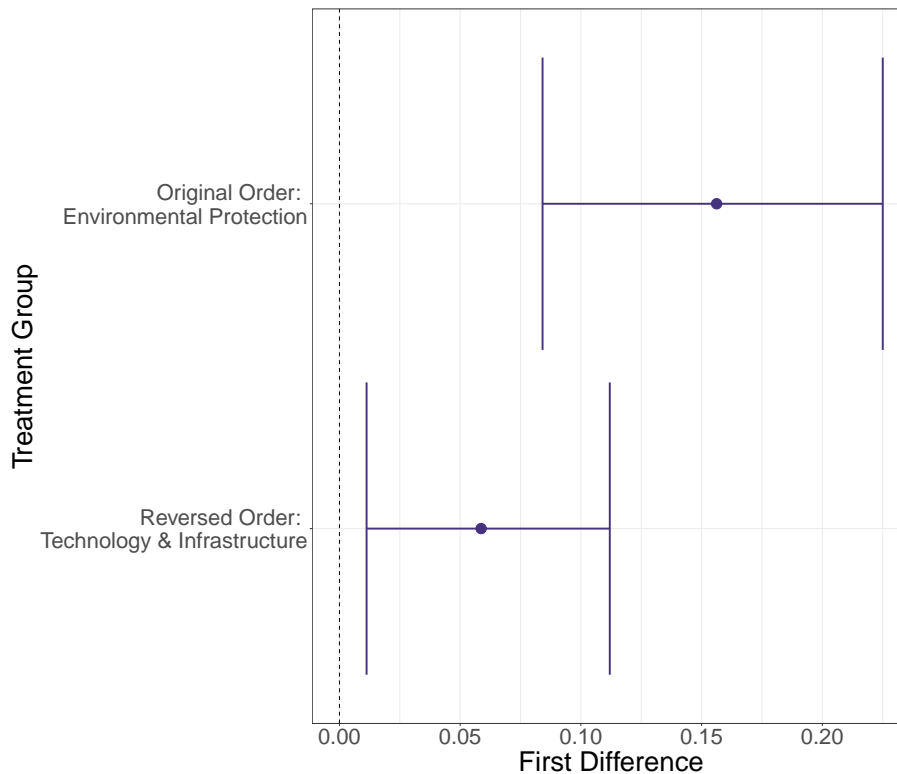
In Figure 3.8, we see a positive first difference for the original order of topics, indicating that the treatment group is more likely to name environmental protection, the Green Party's first topic according to their treatment, as the Green Party's key issue than the control group. Looking at the whiskers, we see that the 95% confidence interval does not overlap zero. The treatment group that saw the original order of topics is thus considerably more likely to name environmental protection as the Green Party's most important topic compared to the control group, which supports my hypothesis that topic order should affect respondents' perceptions of parties key issues. Additionally, Table A.7 in the Appendix shows that respondents who identify with the Green Party are also more likely to name the environment, i.e. the first topic of the

treatment, as the Green Party's key issue, while their education does not affect their perception of the Green Party's key issue.

Figure 3.8 also shows how treatment group 2, who saw the reversed topic order, differs in their probability to name the first topic of their treatment, technology and infrastructure, as the Green Party's most important issue compared to the control group. Once again, we see a positive first difference, indicating that the treatment group is more likely to name their first topic than the control group is. The 95% confidence interval does not cross into the negatives. Thus, the findings for treatment group 2 also support my hypothesis. As Table A.7 in the appendix shows, neither party identification nor education affect respondents' likelihood to name technology and infrastructure as the Green Party's key issue.

The results for the Green Party are thus in line with hypothesis 1. When it comes to environmental protection, which is the Green Party's key issue, we see that placing this issue early makes respondents more likely to see it as the party's key issue. This finding is particularly interesting because it is the Green Party's main issue, which means that many people already associate the Green Party with this issue to begin with. Accordingly, technology and infrastructure is also more likely to be seen as the party's key issue when it is placed in the beginning of the manifesto. Priming respondents towards seeing an issue that is not typically associated with the Green Party as the party's key issue thus increases the perceived importance of this issue. Taken together, these results show that for people looking at the Green Party's manifesto, topic order matters.

Figure 3.8: Average Treatment Effect of Topic Order on Respondents' Perception of the Green Party's Key Issue



Note: In the original topic order, the manifesto presented to respondents started with environmental protection. In the reversed topic order, it started with technology and infrastructure. Average treatment effects based on Models 1 and 2 shown in Table A.7.

Figure 3.9 shows how the treatment groups and control group differ in their likelihood to name the respective treatment's first topic as the CDU/CSU's main issue. The results are based on Models 3 and 4, which can be found in Table A.8 in the Appendix. Model 3 compares the CDU/CSU treatment group 1, i.e. the original order, to the control group, and Model 4 compares the control group to treatment group 2, who saw the reversed order.

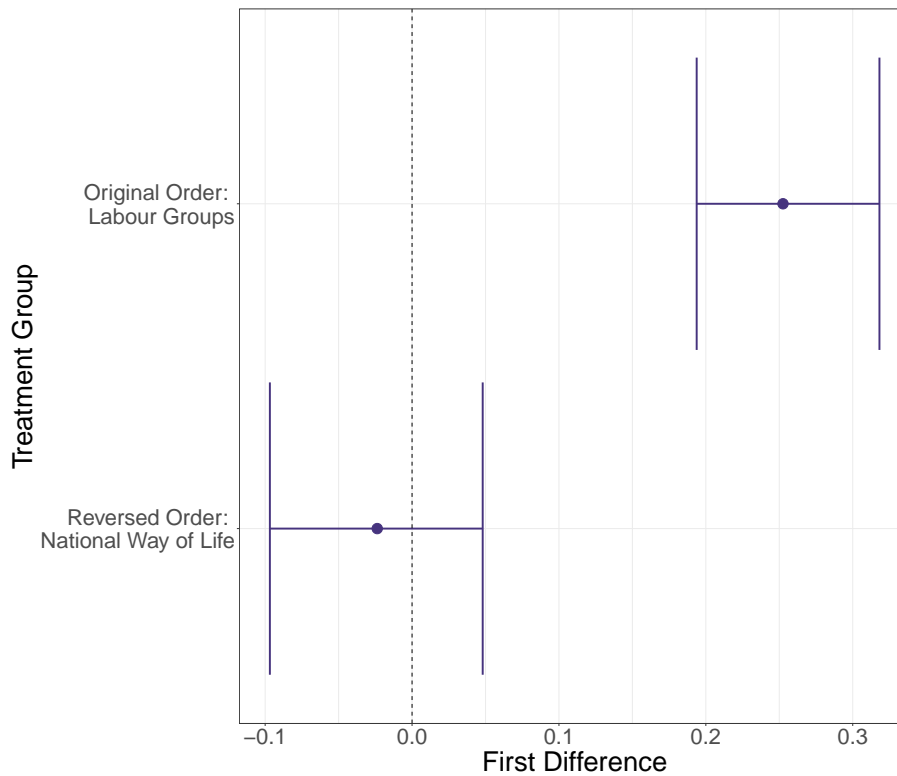
Looking at Figure 3.9, the first difference shows a clear positive effect for the treatment group who saw the original order. Treatment group 1 is much more likely to name labour groups as the CDU/CSU's most important topic than the control group, with the 95% confidence interval not overlapping zero. The table of contents in its original order was thus able to prime respondents towards seeing labour groups as the party's key issue by starting with this topic.

When it comes to the reversed order that respondents saw in treatment group 2, Figure 3.9

shows a different finding. For this treatment group, the 95% confidence interval does overlap zero. Thus, we see no discernible difference in the treatment group's probability to name national way of life as the CDU/CSU's main issue compared to the control group. The refugee crisis was a contentious issue at the time of the 2017 election, and the CDU/CSU was already heavily associated with this issue. It is thus likely that respondents associated the CDU/CSU with this issue so strongly that it does not matter where it is placed in the manifesto, and an early placement thus cannot strengthen this association even further.

We thus find mixed results for the CDU/CSU. Topic order does affect respondents' perception of the CDU/CSU's key issue, but only in treatment group 1, where respondents saw labour groups as the first issue in the manifesto, following the original topic order. Treatment group 2, which saw the reversed version of the manifesto that started with national way of life, does not seem to be affected by topic order when it comes to their understanding of the CDU/CSU's key issue. In both models 3 and 4, I find no effect of party identification and education on respondents' perception of the CDU/CSU's key issue. In contrast to the Green Party, it is thus easier for the CDU/CSU manifesto to prime respondents towards a topic that is not generally its key issue than it is to prime them towards a topic that they are already strongly associated with.

Figure 3.9: Average Treatment Effect of Topic Order on Respondents' Perception of the CDU/CSU's Key Issue



Note: In the original topic order, the manifesto presented to respondents started with labour groups. In the reversed topic order, it started with national way of life. Average treatment effects based on Models 3 and 4 shown in Table A.8.

3.3.2 Average Treatment Effect: Last Topic

The previous section has shown that parties can increase the perceived importance of individual issues by placing them in the very beginning of their manifesto. This is the case especially when parties want to highlight issues that are not their current key issue. However, from research on survey design, we also know that items that are placed at the very end of a list can have a similar effect on respondents' perception as those that are placed at the very beginning (cf., for instance, Postman and Phillips, 1965). This relationship is called recency effect. It is possible that respondents perceive the individual topics presented to them in an election manifesto's table of contents in a way that is very similar to how they process a longer list of answers they can choose from in a survey. It is, thus, important to account for a possible

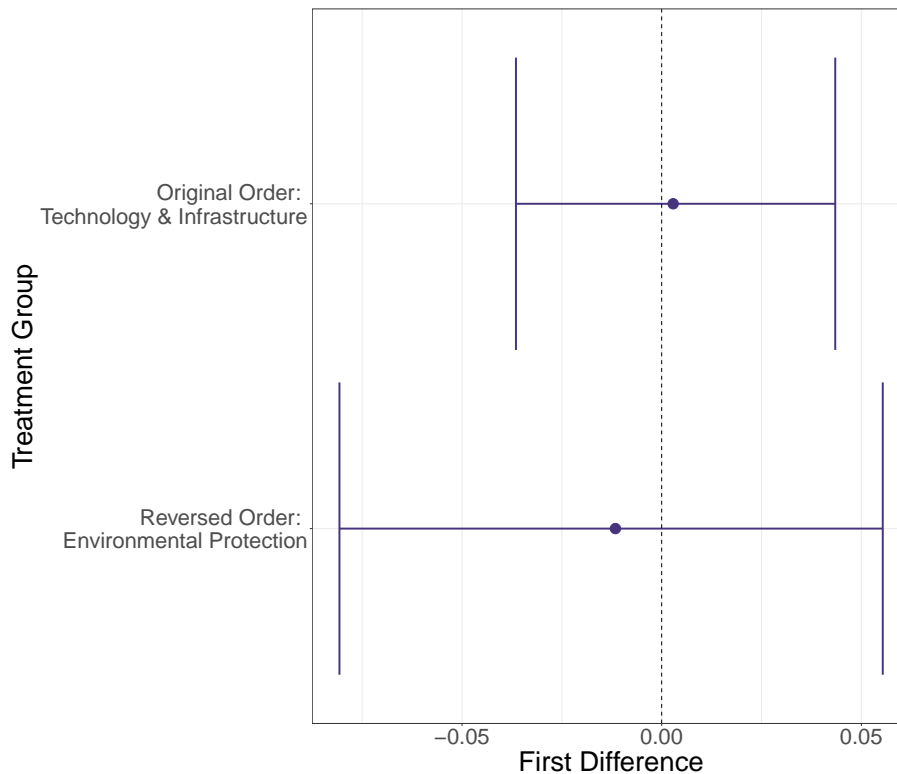
recency effect when studying how topic order in manifestos can affect voters' perceptions.

In order to account for recency effects, Figures 3.10 and 3.11 show the difference between the treatment groups' and control groups' predicted probability to name their respective treatment's *last* topic as their party's main issue. They are based on Models 5 through 8, displayed in Tables A.9 and A.10.

Starting with the Green Party, Figure 3.10 shows that treatment group 1, whose manifesto ended with technology and infrastructure based on the original order, has the same probability to identify this topic as the Green Party's key issue than the control group, as indicated by the first difference being almost exactly at zero. Placing this topic at the very end of the manifesto where it is the last item that respondents see does therefore not lead to higher chances of associating this topic with the Green Party.

We find similar results for treatment group 2, who saw the reversed order, as displayed in Figure 3.10. In this treatment, respondents saw a manifesto that ended with environmental protection as its last topic. Once again, this topic placement does not lead to respondents being more likely to identify it as the Green Party's key topic compared to the control group. I thus find no recency effect for the Green Party.

Figure 3.10: Average Treatment Effect of Topic Order on Respondents' Perception of the Green Party's Key Issue



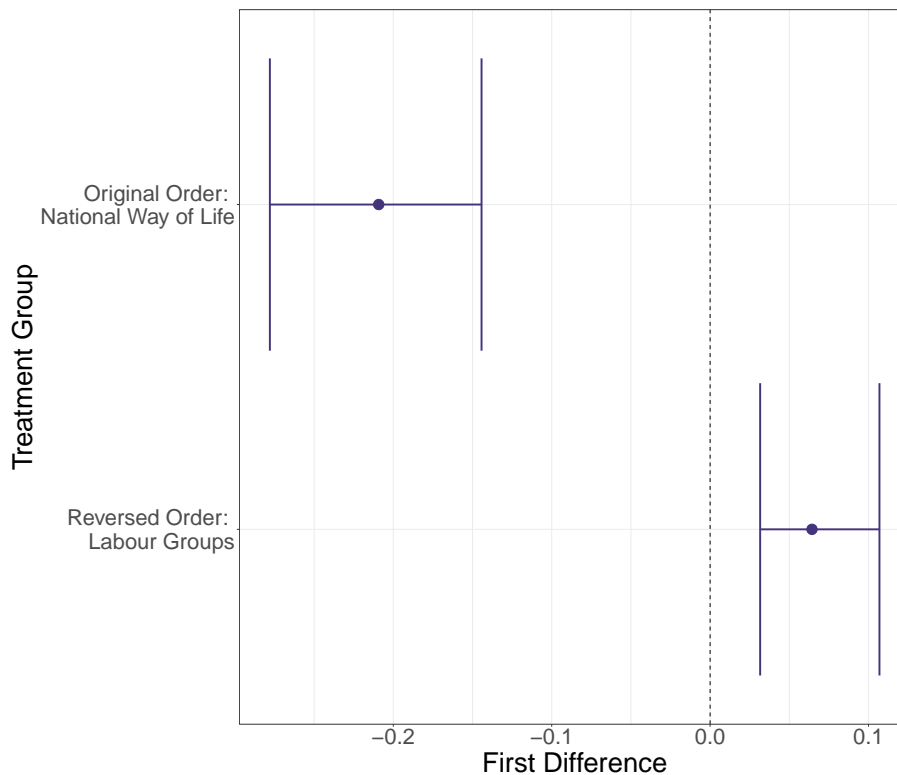
Note: In the original topic order, the manifesto presented to respondents ended with technology and infrastructure. In the reversed topic order, it ended with environment. Average treatment effects based on Models 5 and 6 shown in Table A.9.

Moving on to the CDU/CSU, we find different results. The effect of the original order in Figure 3.11 shows that there is a difference between treatment group 1 and the control group in their likelihood to name national way of life as the CDU/CSU's key issue. Here, we see a negative first difference, with the 95% confidence interval not overlapping zero. Thus, the control group is more likely to identify national way of life as the party's main issue compared to the treatment group. While there is no recency effect, we do find that there is an effect of placing this topic at the very end of the manifesto, in that it makes it *less* likely for respondents to associate this topic with the CDU/CSU.

Lastly, the positive first difference in Figure 3.11 shows that treatment group 2, who was presented with the reversed topic order, is more likely to name labour groups, their treatment's last topic, as the CDU/CSU's main issue compared to the control group. Once again, we find

that topic order matters when it comes to a topic that is not the CDU/CSU's main issue, since labour groups is more likely to be identified as the party's key topic both when it is placed at the very beginning *and* at the very end of the manifesto.

Figure 3.11: Average Treatment Effect of Topic Order on Respondents' Perception of the CDU/CSU's Key Issue



Note: In the original topic order, the manifesto presented to respondents ended with national way of life. In the reversed topic order, it ended with labour groups. Average treatment effects based on Models 7 and 8 shown in Table A.10.

3.4 Discussion

Table 3.3 shows how placing a topic in the beginning of a manifesto can affect respondents' perception of how important the given topic is for the respective party. When it comes to placing an issue early that a party already has a strong association with, we find mixed results. For topics that are not a key issue for the respective party, we find that it increases respondents' perceived importance of the respective topic for both the Green Party and the CDU/CSU.

Table 3.3: Effect of Placing a Topic early in a Manifesto on Respondents' perceived Importance of this Topic: an Overview

	Party's key issue	Non-key issue
Green Party	+	+
CDU/CSU	x	+

Despite the baseline for how many people associate the Green Party with environmental protection being very high to begin with (cf. Figure 3.4 that I discussed in Section 3.2.2), we still find that this perceived importance of environmental protection for the Green Party can be increased by placing this topic early. When it comes to the CDU/CSU, however, we see a different picture. With national way of life, we are also looking at a topic that was heavily associated with the CDU/CSU at the time of the election (cf. Figure 3.5 in Section 3.2.2), both due to the party making it an important campaign topic, and due to the CDU/CSU being in government during a time when it was a very contentious topic. Unlike for the Green Party, an early placement of this topic did not increase respondents' perceived importance of national way of life for the CDU/CSU. Additionally, respondents were not more likely than the control group to identify national way of life as the CDU/CSU's topic when it was placed at the very end of the manifesto either. Thus, national way of life – a topic that was heavily associated with the CDU/CSU at that time – could not be primed to voters through topic order either way.

The different findings regarding the impact of topic order on voters' perceptions of the importance of the two parties' respective key issues opens up the opportunity for further research to understand why we find these two different relationships. Placing the environment as the first topic in the Green Party's manifesto increased respondents' perception of the importance of this topic for the Green Party, while the same relationship was not present for the CDU/CSU and topics that fall under the umbrella of national way of life. There are a number of differences between the two parties and their respective key issues that could explain the different findings. First, the Green Party is a niche party that has advocated for environmental protection ever since it was founded. It has thus been associated with the environment for decades. The CDU/CSU, in contrast, is a mainstream party that does not hold such a decades-long association with any singular topic. Instead, its association with topics relating to national way of life

is much more short term, and most likely due to the topic being a contentious issue at the time of the election due to a high number of refugees searching asylum in Europe, and in Germany specifically. Since the CDU/CSU was in government at that time, and since it was Angela Merkel who famously made the statement "We can do this" (German: "*Wir schaffen das*", Merkel (2015)) regarding the intake of so many refugees, the association of the CDU/CSU with this topic was heavily shaped by the circumstances at the time.

Second, the issue area of national way of life was on the top of everyone's mind both at the time of the election and when the survey experiment was in field. Due to the CDU/CSU being in government at the time, the refugee crisis and the CDU/CSU were often mentioned alongside each other in newspapers, TV news, or radio news, as well as political conversations with others. Seeing references to the national way of life in the CDU/CSU manifesto was, therefore, not surprising or unexpected. Borrowing an argument from media logic, where unexpectedness is one factor that can lead to stories being covered in the news (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Harcup and O'Neill, 2001), we can conclude that this lack of surprise or unexpectedness lead to the finding that placing national way of life topics early in the CDU/CSU manifesto did not make it more likely for respondents to perceive this issue as important to the CDU/CSU. While there is also nothing surprising about the Green Party caring about the environment, environmental protection and climate change were not covered on the news and in political conversations as extensively as the intake of refugees at the time. Thus, seeing this topic in a Green Party's manifesto was possibly still unexpected in the sense that the *topic* was unexpected, but not the *connection* to the Green Party. By emphasising a topic through topic order that was not on respondents' minds as much at the time, it was, therefore, still possible to increase their likelihood to perceive this topic as important to the Green Party.

Lastly, despite many respondents stating that topics that fall under the national way of life umbrella are the CDU/CSU's most important topic, national way of life was and still is most heavily associated with the AfD. While the AfD always took a very clear anti-immigration stance, the CDU/CSU's position on the issue is much more moderate. Thus, while there was a clear situational association of the CDU/CSU with national way of life topics, it never owned the issue like the AfD does. Therefore, it is likely that placing the topic prominently in the CDU/CSU's

manifesto was not able to further prime respondents towards associating it with the CDU/CSU, since the association of the topic with the AfD was much stronger.

It is, therefore, likely that there are different mechanisms at work that allow the Green Party to increase the perceived importance of environmental protection through topic order, but prevent the CDU/CSU from doing the same with national way of life. Disentangling this relationship, however, is not possible using the survey experiment at hand, since it only covers two parties at one point in time. These findings, therefore, open up the opportunity for further research using data covering more parties and more than one election.

Regarding issues that are not the respective parties' key issues, we find that placing these issues – technology and infrastructure in the case of the Green Party, and labour groups in the case of the CDU/CSU – in the beginning of the manifesto leads to respondents being more likely to perceive these topics as important to the respective party. For the CDU/CSU, we even find that the priming of the topics that are placed early makes it *less likely* for respondents to identify national way of life as the party's key topic when it is placed at the very end.

So what do these results mean? Put simply, topic order matters for whether or not respondents perceive a topic to be important for the party whose manifesto they are looking at. In most cases, topics that are placed early in a manifesto are more likely to be understood as important to the party. The same is not consistently the case for topics that are placed at the very end of a manifesto. These results underline how important it is for parties to make conscious decisions about topic order. Topics that parties want to be associated with during the campaign should be placed earlier rather than later, to increase the chances of respondents associating those topics with the respective party.

3.5 Chapter Conclusion

In this section, I showed how topic order in election manifestos can affect people's perception of parties' most important topics. Using a survey experiment, I showed that respondents tend to perceive topics as key topics for a party when those topics are placed early in the election manifesto. The same is not true for topics that are placed at the very end of a manifesto. This finding supports the overall argument of my dissertation that topic order in election manifestos

matters.

One major strength of this survey design is that it allowed me to differentiate between parties' key topics and non-key topics, and to study how the placement of these topics affects how voters perceive them. I showed that placing non-key issues early in a manifesto always leads to voters ascribing a higher importance to those issues. The same is not always the case for parties' key issues, where the findings differ between parties, showing that placing key issues early can sometimes increase their perceived importance, but not always.

When it comes to the generalisability of these findings, further research is necessary to understand how topic order affects voters' perceptions in different party systems, but also in mediums other than manifestos. In this chapter, I used abbreviated tables of contents of parties' manifesto since they were suitable for the survey design at hand. Different survey designs can help us understand if we can find the same relationship when using treatments that look more similar to full manifestos. Additionally, looking into other campaign materials such as leaflets or online manifestos can provide further insights into how topic order affects voters' perceptions. Studying online manifestos can be particularly worthwhile, since they differ from the written manifestos in their layout, but also might suggest related topics once a reader has clicked on a topic, thereby directly affecting the order in which someone sees individual topics.

The survey experiment I designed in this section of my dissertation focuses on the effect of topic order on respondents' perceptions. However, we have seen in chapter 2 that topic order is only one part of the concept of issue emphasis. The second dimension is issue attention, i.e., how much parties talk about individual topics. It is therefore worth investigating how both issue attention and topic order can affect perceived issue importance, and whether some kinds of topics are better highlighted one way or the other. While the survey experiment at hand cannot account for issue attention, further research should take both dimensions of issue emphasis into account.

When studying the effect of issue emphasis on voters' perceptions in more detail, it is also worth investigating whether enumeration of topics can strengthen the effect of topic order. Enumerating the chapters present in a manifesto is likely to reinforce the effect of early topic placement, as chapters that are visibly numbered as the first or second chapter are more easily

recognisable as the early chapters of a manifesto compared to those that are not. This should be the case especially when looking at the actual manifestos, where topic order is less visible compared to the table of contents.

Bringing together the findings from this section of my dissertation with the work done by Wagner and Meyer (2023), we should also look beyond how issue emphasis affects voters' perceived issue priorities. Wagner and Meyer (2023) have shown that issue attention can affect how voters perceive parties' left-right positions. Based on the findings in this chapter, we should apply this relationship to topic order and study whether the same can be found for topic order. If the relationship holds for both dimensions of issue emphasis, it means that parties have even more tools at their disposal to change their *perceived* position without actually changing ideologically (cf. Wagner and Meyer, 2023, p. 1360).

Furthermore, the similarity between the survey experiment presented in this section and the question wording used by Walgrave et al. (2016) yields the question if and how issue emphasis in parties' election manifestos – both through topic order and issue attention – can affect parties' associative issue ownership. As we have seen, topic order affects which topics respondents perceive to be important for the party that wrote the respective manifesto. Since associative issue ownership entails voters' perceptions of how much parties care about issues (Lachat, 2014; Van Der Brug, 2004; Walgrave et al., 2012), topic order in election manifestos is very likely to be able to affect parties' associative issue ownership.

In addition to further studying the specific ways of highlighting topics in a written manifesto, we should also look at other formats. Pictures and videos especially are likely to form a stronger mental connection to an individual topic than the written text alone (Debus et al., 2015). Studying how the effect of pictures and videos in manifestos or on parties' websites interacts with topic order and issue attention can give us an even deeper understanding of how voters' perceptions are shaped by the ways in which parties highlight individual topics.

Lastly, studying issue emphasis as a whole in the context of voting advice applications can help us further our understanding in how these applications can help bring the contents of parties' manifestos to the voters. Voting advice applications increase users' knowledge on parties' positions in the given election (Munzert et al., 2021). Understanding if the order of items in

these applications or the amount of items covering the same or closely related topics affects users' perceptions of parties' issue priorities can yield valuable insights into how voters come to their understanding of parties' issue positions and preferences.

Chapter 4

The Media: Connecting Parties and Voters

4 THE MEDIA: CONNECTING PARTIES AND VOTERS

While voters often do not read election manifestos, they can learn about them in the media (Adams et al., 2011; Baumann and Gross, 2016; Bara, 2007; Laver, 1984; Merz, 2017a,b). Election manifestos receive high media coverage upon their release, and political parties expect their manifestos to receive this kind of media attention (Däubler, 2012a; Hornsteiner, 2023). While issue attention, i.e. how much parties talk about individual topics in their election manifestos, increases the media coverage of those topics (Merz, 2017a,b), we do not know how topic order in manifestos affects news coverage of manifestos.

In this dissertation, I argue that there are two dimensions to the content of issue emphasis in election manifestos. First, parties can emphasise issues by talking about them more than about other issues, i.e., they give more issue attention to those topics.²¹ Second, parties can highlight topics by placing them in the beginning of the manifesto, making them easy to see – i.e., they can use topic order to emphasise issues in their manifestos. Using German election manifestos between 2002 and 2017, I showed that parties use both topic order and issue attention to highlight topics, and that they use topic order in particular to highlight topics that are relevant for their own party base (see Chapter 2). Furthermore, I showed that voters are more likely to perceive topics as important to a party if that party placed those topics in the beginning of their manifesto using an original survey experiment (see Chapter 3). Taking into account that the media are what brings manifestos to the electorate (Adams et al., 2011; Baumann and Gross, 2016; Bara, 2007; Laver, 1984; Merz, 2017a,b), this chapter therefore seeks to answer the question of how topic order can affect the way that the media covers election manifestos and, thereby, what voters can learn about manifestos through the media.

Using newspaper articles covering the release of German election manifestos from 2002 until 2017, I test how topic order affects the news media coverage of election manifestos. I find that topics that are placed earlier in manifestos are covered more often in the media than topics that are placed later. This relationship holds no matter the level of issue attention that was given to a topic in the respective manifesto. Using additional newspaper articles that were released in

²¹For more research on issue attention, see for example Barberá et al. (2019); Klüver and Bäck (2019); Klüver and Sagarzazu (2015); Klüver and Spoon (2016); Otjes and Green-Pedersen (2019); Peeters et al. (2019).

the last month before election day for German elections between 2009 and 2017 (Adendorf and Florczak, 2022; Baumann and Gross, 2016; Debus et al., 2018, 2022), I show that this relationship vanishes between the release of election manifestos and the main phase of the campaign. The fact that topic order affects news coverage of election manifestos during the early days of the campaign has important implications on our understanding of party competition and election campaigns.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. In section 4.1, I discuss how news media cover election campaigns and manifestos and how we can expect topic order to affect news coverage of manifestos. Section 4.2 then provides an overview of the newspaper data I use to test my hypothesis. In section 4.3, I show the results of my analyses and discuss their implications. Additionally, in section 4.4, I analyse and discuss how topic order affects news coverage of manifestos in the last four weeks before the election takes places. Finally, in section 4.5, I conclude this chapter of my dissertation and discuss potential avenues for further research.

4.1 How Topic Order in Manifestos Affects News Coverage

When it comes to parties' campaign efforts, it is crucial to not only look at the information that parties offer to voters – through manifestos, leaflets, or posters – but also at how it reaches the voter. This is even more important when studying manifestos, which are not typically read by citizens, but their content is brought to people through the media (Adams et al., 2011; Baumann and Gross, 2016; Bara, 2007; Laver, 1984; Merz, 2017a,b). The media are a vital source for voters who want to stay informed about politics (Merz, 2017a), and political parties expect that the content of their manifestos reaches the electorate through the media, especially right after the manifestos are released (Däubler, 2012a, p. 58). Therefore, parties rely on being covered in mass media especially during electoral campaigns, where their success can be shaped by how often they appear in the media (Hopmann et al., 2010).

When the media report on parties in the context of talking about individual issues, they create and maintain party-issue linkages (Merz, 2017a,b). Party-issue linkages can be quotes of a politician or even full interviews covering a specific topic, references to a party's issue positions,

or any other way of mentioning a party and tying it to an issue (Merz, 2017a, p. 438). They can help parties to build and maintain associative issue ownership (Tresch et al., 2015) and affect voters' perceptions of parties and issues (Merz, 2017a). Furthermore, through issue ownership and issue framing, party-issue linkages can influence voters' vote choices (for more detail, see Merz (2017a, pp. 438), and also Bélanger and Meguid (2008); Slothuus and De Vreese (2010); Walgrave and de Swert (2007); Walgrave et al. (2012)). Since voters take into account parties' promises when making their vote choice (Budge and Farlie, 1983), unravelling the precise mechanism that is at work when journalists decide which issues to report on is highly salient for our understanding of the functioning of democracy. Thus, studying which parties and issues are linked by the media is an important aspect of party competition and party communication.

When it comes to deciding which news items to cover, journalists are not free of bias, as their individual preferences and judgements can play a role in which topics they cover (White, 1950). However, journalists do not make those decisions in a vacuum – instead, any news item's news value is also a factor when deciding whether or not to cover it. The traditional list of factors that increase an item's news value was developed by Galtung and Ruge (1965). It includes factors such as references to elite nations or people, unexpectedness, or meaningfulness. Harcup and O'Neill (2001) developed an updated list of news values that allows for better understanding of day-to-day news in addition to news covering international crises that Galtung and Ruge (1965) focused on in their original study. This contemporary approach to news values includes factors like celebrity and entertainment, but also news regarding the power elite, surprising news, or news about groups or issues that are relevant to the audience. Additionally, Harcup and O'Neill (2001) account for the fact that news organisations can have their own agenda that can also affect a topic's news value for individual newspapers.

Covering parties' election campaigns and the manifestos they release taps into several of the contemporary news factors developed by Harcup and O'Neill (2001). News stories about election campaign efforts often talk about established parties and politicians campaigning for re-election, thus referring to the *power elite*. Additionally, election outcomes shape a country's political future for the next years, which means they carry a high *magnitude* and are *relevant* to the audience. As election campaigns and their coverage in the news can go on for weeks or

even months ahead of the election, their coverage often consists of *follow-ups* about subjects that are already in the news. Lastly, election campaigns have the potential to also provide *entertainment*, either by politicians themselves behaving in entertaining ways²², or through others using election campaigns and politics to build their entertainment upon.²³

Many studies have found that during election campaigns, the media *follow* the political agenda that the parties set (Brandenburg, 2002, 2005; Butler, 1998; Kleinnijenhuis and Rietberg, 1995; Kleinnijenhuis, 2003; Walgrave and van Aelst, 2006). During campaign times, there is much more coverage of political news in the media than during non-campaign times (Hart, 2000; Semetko et al., 1991). This increase in coverage makes it easier for parties and politicians to get media coverage for their messages (Walgrave and van Aelst, 2006). Yet, some Irish political parties are under the impression that journalists do not care about policy details and that they do not read election manifestos (Däubler, 2012a, p. 59). Nonetheless, parties' issue emphasis in the form of issue attention does lead to a stronger party-issue linkage in the mass media (Merz, 2017a,b). If parties can increase news coverage of certain issues by increasing their issue attention, the question arises if the same is true for issues that are emphasised through topic order.

So why should topic order in election manifestos affect which topics are covered in the media? There are several reasons why journalists should report on issues that parties emphasise. First, when parties emphasise issues over a long time, they build ownership over the issue. This issue ownership gives parties a high degree of credibility in their respective issues, making it more likely for journalists to maintain and reinforce this party-issue linkage (Merz, 2017a,b). Second, when parties emphasise issues that they have not previously emphasised to the same extent, it creates a change away from everyday business, and toward something unex-

²²For instance, on 07 November 2020, Donald Trump held a press conference at Four Seasons Total Landscaping, a local landscaping company in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as part of his unsuccessful attempt to accuse Joe Biden and the Democratic Party of voter fraud in the 2020 US presidential election. The event was made fun of widely across all kinds of media for being held in the parking lot of a small business located near a sex shop and a crematorium instead of the Four Seasons Hotel, which people assumed was the intended venue for the press conference (Karni and Corosaniti, 2020).

²³For example, a radio comedy series called *Gerd-Show* ran on several radio stations between 1999 and 2005, parodying German politicians, most notably then-chancellor Gerhard Schröder. In addition to its long run time, the *Gerd-Show* also produced several singles and albums, the most successful of which – *Der Steuersong (Las Kanzlern)*; english: The Tax Song – ranked #1 in the German charts for 18 weeks (Kirschbaum, 2002).

pected. Since unexpectedness increases a potential news item's newsworthiness (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Harcup and O'Neill, 2001), journalists should pick up on this new party-issue linkage (Merz, 2017a,b). Lastly, higher issue emphasis from parties also creates more information that is available for journalists to use in their articles (Merz, 2017a,b). Therefore, journalists have good reasons to include issues that parties emphasise when covering parties' election campaigns.

Considering that there are two dimensions to issue emphasis, namely issue attention, i.e., talking more about some issues than others, and topic order, i.e., placing important issues in the beginning of a manifesto, it is important to understand how these two dimensions affect journalists' choices of which issues to cover. We know that higher attention in parties' manifestos leads to stronger party-issue-linkages in the media for those topics that were emphasised that way (Kleinnijenhuis and Rietberg, 1995; Merz, 2017a,b). In the following paragraphs, I argue that early placement of a topic in a party's election manifesto should also lead to an increased likelihood of journalists covering this topic in the context of this party's election campaign.

Several studies have found that the majority of the pledges parties make in their manifestos are not covered at all in the media (Costello and Thomson, 2008; Kostadinova, 2017; Maurer, 2007). Considering that election manifestos can be very long and detailed, and that journalists only have limited time to write their articles, this finding is not surprising.²⁴ Especially for articles that are published within a few days of a manifesto's release, journalists have to quickly identify and choose interesting and relevant topics to cover. Looking through the first few chapters of a manifesto and choosing an interesting topic to report on from among those can therefore be a helpful strategy for journalists covering parties' election manifestos.

Additionally, the media themselves have an ordered logic to them, where the most important news is presented on the front page of print media, or in the very beginning of TV or radio news (Conway and Patterson, 2008; Eveland et al., 2002; McCombs and Shaw, 1972; McCombs et al., 2013; Protess and McCombs, 1991). Since this way of ordering news items is so commonly applied, news consumers understand it and know where to look for the most important news of the day (Graber, 2004). It is, therefore, not unlikely for journalists to apply the same logic when looking at parties' election manifestos, in that they expect parties to place their key issues –

²⁴In the German 2017 federal election, for example, the AfD presented the shortest manifesto with 16,132 words on 76 pages, and the Green party presented the longest manifesto at 60,390 words, or 248 pages.

both long-term key issues and issues they want to highlight for a specific campaign – in the beginning of their manifestos. Taking into account that journalists have an interest in reporting on parties' key issues, we can therefore expect them to use topic order as one heuristic for identifying those key issues.

In sum, topic order in election manifestos should have an impact on which topics are covered in the media. Thus, I hypothesise the following:

H1: Topics that are placed early in parties' manifestos are covered more by the media than topics that are placed later when talking about the respective party.

4.2 Data

In order to test how topic order affects the media coverage of parties' election pledges, I analyse the news coverage of election manifestos for German Bundestag elections between 2002 and 2017. This time frame is consistent with the time frame I studied in Chapter 2, where I analysed how parties use topic order and issue attention in their election manifestos between 2002 and 2017. I include news coverage of all established parties' manifestos, including the AfD in 2017.

4.2.1 Party-Issue Linkages in the Media after Manifesto Release

Party-issue linkages occur when the media talks about a political party while also mentioning a policy issue, for instance in reference to the party's position on this topic. I use hand-coded data that covers how newspapers report on election manifestos and their contents in order to capture those party-issue linkages. Quality newspapers report very thoroughly on politics, and even more thoroughly than television (Druckman, 2005; Neuman et al., 1992). They cover political debates very comprehensively, which can affect editorial decisions of other news organisations as well (Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2008). Therefore, political actors aim to gain public attention for their statements through media coverage (Schmitt-Beck and Farrell, 2008). Newspapers are also a main source of political information for many people. According to the

German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES), newspapers are consistently the second-most used source of political information for respondents, and they are used far more than the internet in general and social media specifically (Rattinger et al., 2019a,b; Roßteutscher et al., 2019, cf. Tables A.11 and A.12 in the appendix). I therefore use newspaper articles to study party-issue linkages in the media coverage of parties' election manifestos.

I collected newspaper articles from the two biggest quality daily newspapers, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ)* for the German federal elections between 2002 and 2017. Choosing these two newspapers allows me to account for the fact that a newspaper's ideological profile affects the likelihood of parties' messages to receive news coverage (Haselmayer et al., 2017) by studying the content of a centre-right (FAZ) and a centre-left newspaper (SZ). This choice of newspapers is consistent with previous studies (cf., for instance, Baumann and Gross, 2016, p. 8).

For each election manifesto from a major party, I collected newspaper articles that were published up to three days after the manifesto's release and that cover the respective manifesto. News coverage of election manifestos is highest right after the manifestos are released, and decreases throughout the campaign (Hornsteiner, 2023, p. 90), since the focus shifts away from manifestos and towards candidates during the main phase of the campaign (Dolezal et al., 2012). News coverage on election manifestos picks up again after the election in the context of coalition negotiations (Hornsteiner, 2023, p.90). Taking into account that media interest in election manifestos is highest right after parties release their manifestos, it makes sense to focus on newspaper articles that are published during that period of heightened interest in election manifestos.

For each article, I coded which topics were covered, applying the MARPOR coding scheme to ensure compatibility with the data I use for topic order and issue attention in manifestos. Topics that are directional according to the MARPOR codebook – such as Labour Groups: Positive and Labour Groups: Negative – are coded in a non-directional way, so that positive and negative mentions are coded as the same topic, since I am interested in the extent to which individual topics are covered in the media, but not in parties' reported positions on these topics.

In order to test how topic order in election manifestos affects which topics are covered in

the media, I use party-issue linkages as my dependent variable. I operationalise a party-issue linkage as the relative attention that newspaper articles give to each topic when talking about the respective parties' manifestos. Linking the coverage of topics to the respective manifesto being covered allows me to specifically study the effect of topic order in a given manifesto on party-issue-linkages referring to this specific party in the media. Therefore, party-issue linkages consist of the share of attention that each topic takes up within the coverage of the respective manifesto. Using the share of attention that each topic receives – instead of, for instance, using the absolute number each party-issue linkage is mentioned in the media (for this approach see, for instance, Merz, 2017a) – is consistent with other studies on how parties' issues and positions are covered in the media (for instance, Somer-Topcu et al., 2020), as well as the coding of the MARPOR data, where issue attention in election manifestos is also coded as a topic's share of the total coverage within a manifesto (Volkens et al., 2017).

4.2.2 *Topic Order and Issue Attention*

On the party side, the data are based on the election manifestos of the parties represented in the German Bundestag. I use the same data that I used in Chapter 2.²⁵ Using the Manifesto Project data (MARPOR, Volkens et al., 2017), I aggregate their data from a quasi-sentence level to the sub-chapter level. Then, for each sub-chapter, I take the modal topic of all quasi-sentences as the sub-chapter's overall topic. The variable topic order then contains each topic's first appearance in the respective manifesto. Since the length of manifestos varies greatly between parties and over time, I normalised topic order to run between 0 and 1.

In addition to topic order, I also include issue attention in my analyses. Since issue attention is typically used to measure parties' issue emphasis in their manifestos (cf., for instance, Barberá et al., 2019; Klüver and Bäck, 2019; Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2015; Klüver and Spoon, 2016; Otjes and Green-Pedersen, 2019; Peeters et al., 2019), and since issue attention leads to higher media attention (Merz, 2017a,b), it is important to include both dimensions of issue emphasis in the analyses. Doing so allows me to differentiate how the two dimensions of issue emphasis affect media attention, and whether one has a stronger impact on newspaper articles than the other.

²⁵For detailed information on how I obtained the variables I use, see Section 2.5.

Like topic order, the variable issue attention originates in the MARPOR data and consists of each topic's share of words in the respective manifesto.

The findings in Chapter 2 indicate that parties use topic order and issue emphasis to address different audiences. Specifically, topics that are placed in the beginning of the manifesto are often those that are of particular importance to the party base, i.e., the party's internal audience. Topics that are highlighted through issue attention, in turn, often target the external audience, consisting of the electorate, the media, and other parties. Therefore, analysing whether topic order or issue attention affect party-issue linkages in news articles can show whether the internal or external audience are the ones to see their key issues represented in media coverage of party's election manifestos.

4.2.3 Issue Salience

In addition to parties' issue emphasis in their election manifestos, I will control for issue salience among the electorate. Since topics that are relevant to the audience of a news outlet have a higher news value than those who are not (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001), topics that are salient for voters should be likely to be covered in the media. At the same time, topics that are salient for the general electorate tend to be placed later in parties' manifestos (cf. section 2.9 in Chapter 3), which should lead to them receiving less media attention according to Hypothesis 1. I therefore include voters' issue salience in my analyses.

Voters' issue salience is measured the same way as in Chapter 3: Using the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES, Rattinger et al., 2012, 2019a,b; Roßteutscher et al., 2019), I use a question asking respondents to name the current most important problem in Germany (cf., among others, Dennison, 2019; Johns, 2010; Klüver and Spoon, 2016; Kratz and Schoen, 2017). This question is open-ended, allowing respondents to freely name a topic. A high value of issue salience means that a topic is perceived as important²⁶ by a large share of the respondents.

²⁶Note that using GLES data does not allow me to measure voters' issue salience *before* the manifestos were written and released, since the field time of the GLES is shortly before the election. Using a survey that was in the field after the manifestos were written builds on the assumption that respondents' issue priorities are the same all throughout the election campaign. While this assumption might be true for some elections, it is not always the case. However, to my knowledge, there is no other election study in Germany that covers all elections under study, consistently includes a question on issue salience, and is in the field before parties release their manifestos.

4.3 Newspaper Coverage of Parties' Issues: Analyses

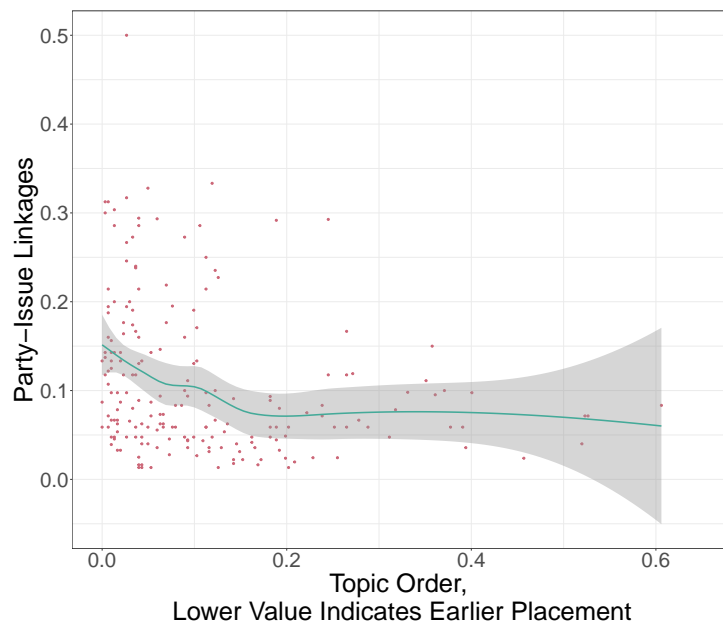
4.3.1 A First Look

When parties release their election manifestos, news media cover the manifesto release and the topics discussed therein. However, between the two biggest German newspapers, they often focus on different parties. Across all elections between 2002 and 2017, both the centre-right FAZ and the centre-left SZ often report more on manifestos released by parties that are positioned in the other half of the political spectrum. Additionally, the parties they focus on when reporting on election manifestos are not always the largest party at the given election. For instance, in 2002, the FAZ heavily focused on the manifestos released by the FDP and the Green Party. Figures A.67 through A.71 in the Appendix provide further details on the number of articles that cover parties' election manifestos.

Regarding the topics that news articles cover when reporting on election manifestos, there is a very clear focus on economic goals and welfare state in each election. Labour groups is the third topic that receives a lot of attention in news articles that cover election manifestos.²⁷ While news articles also address other topics when talking about manifesto releases, they address them much less frequently compared to the two or three dominant topics. Figures A.72 through A.76 in the Appendix show the party-issue linkages for each election in more detail.

Figure 4.1 shows how topic order and party-issue linkages are related descriptively. The x-axis contains topic order, with lower values indicating that a topic was placed earlier in a manifesto, and the y-axis shows a topic's share on the party-issue linkages in the media coverage on that manifesto. Topics that are placed in the very beginning of a manifesto receive a high share of the party-issue linkages, ranging up to 30% of media coverage on a manifesto focusing on the given topic, and even half of the coverage in the case of one outlier. For topics that are placed later, their share of party-issue linkages rarely goes beyond 15%. The green LOESS curve also indicates that topics that are placed in the beginning of a manifesto receive a higher share of party-issue linkages than those that are placed later.

²⁷Note that according to the MARPOR codebook, the issue category *labour groups* does not only include mentions of unions, but also of topics such as workers' rights and fair wages.

Figure 4.1: Party-Issue Linkages and Topic Order in German Election Manifestos

Note: Green line is a LOESS curve with 95% Confidence Interval. Source: Own calculations based on manually coded newspaper articles and MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

4.3.2 Effect of Topic Order in Manifestos on Party-Issue Linkages

Since the dependent variable, party-issue linkages, runs between 0 and 1, I use a beta regression with manifesto fixed effects using the `betareg` package for R (Kieschnick and McCullough, 2003; Zeileis et al., 2021). Table 4.1 shows the regression results. In both models, the dependent variable is the party-issue linkages in newspaper articles discussing the respective election manifesto. Model 1 shows that topic order can impact party-issue linkages, in that earlier placement of a topic in a manifesto leads to higher attention given to that topic in the media. Model 2 includes issue attention in manifestos and issue salience among voters as additional variables. Both issue attention in manifestos and issue salience among voters also increase party-issue linkages, in that topics that receive high issue attention in manifestos or that are salient for voters are reported on more in news articles.

Table 4.1: Effect of Topic Order in Manifestos on Party-Issue Linkages, Beta Regression with Manifesto Fixed Effects

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Party-issue linkages	
	Model 1	Model 2
Topic order in manifestos	-1.509*** (0.445)	-0.820* (0.450)
Issue attention in manifestos		3.001** (1.454)
Issue salience among voters		2.008*** (0.431)
Constant	-1.924*** (0.071)	-2.303*** (0.127)
Observations	189	189
R ²	0.066	0.175
Log Likelihood	247.951	259.022

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Standard errors in parentheses.
Manifesto fixed effects not displayed.

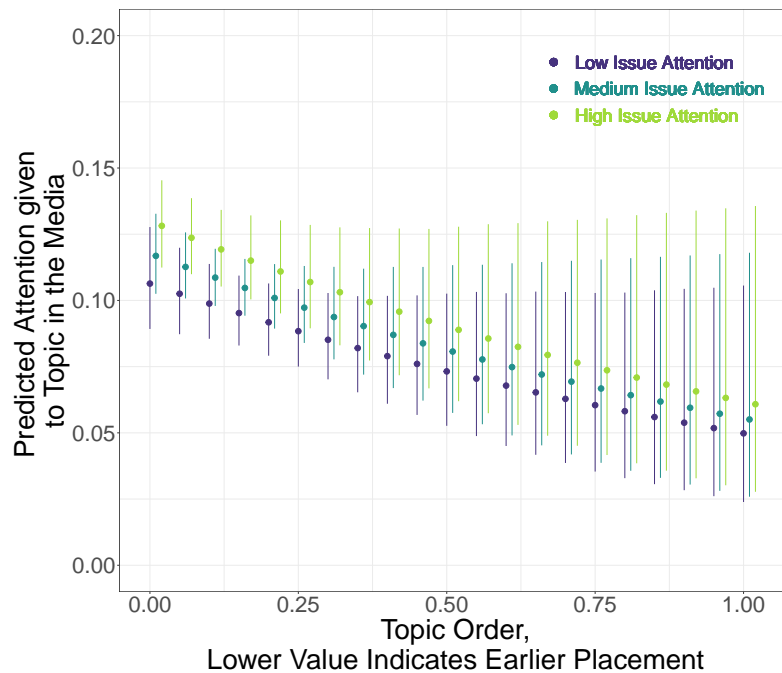
As I showed in Chapter 2, parties use topic order and issue attention to emphasise different topics and to address different audiences. Since parties have to speak to different audiences – on the one hand, they want to address their party base, or internal audience, whose support a party relies on during the campaign, and on the other hand, they want to speak to the external audience, consisting of the general electorate, but also other parties and the media – they need to find ways to emphasise topics aiming at either of those audiences.²⁸ Analysing German election manifestos from 2002 to 2017, I showed that topics that are placed in the beginning of the manifesto *and* that receive high attention are usually those topics that are important for a party's internal audience, i.e., the party members. Topics that are more targeted at the external audience, i.e., the electorate, the media, and other parties, often receive high issue attention, but are placed later in the manifesto (for more details on these findings, see Sections 2.8 and 2.9). Since parties use topic order and issue attention differently depending on who they want to address when highlighting a topic, it is important to look at how both parts of issue emphasis affect party-issue linkages in the media, and which audience actually gets to see its issues represented in newspapers.

²⁸For further details on how parties should address these two audiences, see Section 2.3, and also Charlot (1989); Dolezal et al. (2012); Greene (2016); Harmel (2018); Harmel et al. (2018)

Figure 4.2 illustrates how topic order in election manifestos can affect party-issue linkages. The x-axis displays topic order, where a higher value means that a topic is placed later in a manifesto. The y-axis shows the predicted party-issue linkages, where a higher value indicates that a topic receives more attention in the media. Figure 4.2 is based on Model 2 and was simulated using the Greifer et al. (2023) package for R (cf. King et al., 2000, for the underlying methodology), with issue salience among voters held at its mean and the manifesto fixed at the FDP in 2009.²⁹ The level of issue attention in manifestos varies across three levels, ranging from low to high issue attention. I consider issue salience to be high when a topic's issue attention is at least one standard deviation above the mean. Accordingly, low issue salience contains topics where the issue attention they received in a manifesto is at least one standard deviation below the mean. Consequently, medium issue attention contains topics whose issue attention is within one standard deviation of the mean in either direction (cf. De Vries and Edwards, 2009, p. 11, where this approach is used to differentiate between parties that are Euroskeptic and parties that are not).

In Figure 4.2, we see that topics that are placed earlier in manifestos consistently have a higher share of party-issue linkages than those that are placed later. This relationship holds in all three scenarios, i.e., no matter if the issue attention in manifestos is low, medium, or high. In cases where a topic receives high issue attention, the overall amount of party-issue linkages is a little higher than in cases of low and medium issue attention. Yet, even in the scenario where issue attention is high, we find an effect of topic order on party-issue linkages in the media. These findings show that topic order in election manifestos directly affects which topics receive more attention in news articles covering parties' manifestos. The earlier a topic is placed in a manifesto, the stronger the party-issue linkage will be for this topic. Taking into account that parties use topic order to emphasise issues that are relevant for their own party base, these findings show that it is especially topics that are aimed at this internal audience that receive higher media coverage.

²⁹The manifesto for this scenario has been fixed at the FDP's 2009 manifesto because this manifesto lies in the middle of the time period under study, and has an average length, number of sub-chapters, and number of topics that are covered.

Figure 4.2: Predicted Party-Issue Linkages by Topic Order and Issue Attention in Manifestos

Note: Predicted values based on Model 2 shown in Table 4.1. Manifesto fixed at FDP 2009, issue salience among voters held at mean. Vertical lines represent 95% confidence interval.

Models 1 and 2 both show results that are in line with hypothesis 1, which states that topics that are placed early in a manifesto should receive a higher share of party-issue linkages than those that are placed later. This is true across different levels of issue attention in a manifesto. These findings mean several things. First, it confirms that journalists do not process topic order in election manifestos any differently than voters. As we saw in Chapter 3, voters understand topics to be more important to a party when those topics are placed earlier in a manifesto. According to the results in Models 1 and 2, journalists share the same way of understanding. Second, the findings show that journalists use topic order as a shortcut when deciding which issues to talk about when covering a party's election manifesto. Using their understanding of topic order to be more efficient when writing news articles about election manifestos can be an important tool considering that manifestos are covered most prominently in the days immediately after they are released. Topic order in manifestos is, therefore, an important way for parties to emphasise topics that they want the news media to cover in order to bring their positions to the voters. Third, considering that parties aim to increase public attention and

support for their statements through media coverage (Schmitt-Beck and Farrell, 2008), it looks like the way they emphasise issues that address the external audience does not fully align with the way that parties' issues receive media coverage when they release their manifestos. Since parties place topics in the beginning of their manifesto that are especially relevant for their own party base, and since topics that are placed early in a manifesto receive a higher share of the party-issue linkages, it is topics that aim at the internal audience that receive higher media coverage. Compared to that, topics that target the external audience – and that are placed later in an election manifesto – do not benefit from the fact that journalists tend to report more on topics that are placed in the beginning of a manifesto.

4.4 Newspaper Coverage of Parties' Issues During the Campaign

Now that we know that topic order in election manifestos affects party-issue linkages in news articles that are published just after the respective manifesto release, I want to look beyond those early days of the campaign. Parties expect voters to learn about their manifesto content through the media (Däubler, 2012a, p. 58). However, news attention on parties' manifestos decreases of the course of a campaign (Dolezal et al., 2012; Hornsteiner, 2023). Therefore, I expect topic order in manifestos to become less important in determining which topics are covered in the media over the course of the campaign. Instead, events such as parties' own campaign events or TV debates are more likely to affect which topics are covered in the media with respect to the individual parties. Since many voters decide who to vote for only shortly before the election, it is important for parties to emphasise issues that are relevant for their target voters (Baumann et al., 2021). In this last section of this chapter, I will therefore test if topic order in election manifestos can affect party-issue linkages in news media in the last weeks of the campaign period.

In order to study how topic order in election manifestos affects party-issue linkages in the later stage of a campaign, I use the Comparative Campaign Dynamics Dataset (CCDD; Adendorf and Florczak, 2022; Baumann and Gross, 2016; Debus et al., 2018, 2022). The CCDD contains data on the media coverage of parties' election campaigns during the last month before election day. In the case of Germany, it includes elections between 2009 and 2017 and contains data from

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. The issue areas that were coded in the CCDD are based on the MARPOR coding scheme (Sommer-Topcu et al., 2020) and can therefore easily be matched to the data I use to gather topic order and issue attention in election manifestos. Using the CCDD allows me use the data structure that I used for studying party-issue linkages when manifestos are released. For each news article, the CCDD contains information about which topics were addressed with respect to each party, either through statements made by the parties or their candidates themselves, or through statements made by the journalist. For each party within each election, I operationalise my dependent variable, party-issue linkages, as the relative attention that is spent on each individual topic across all news articles referring to the respective party. For the main independent variable, I continue to use topic order in election manifestos, i.e. a topic's first appearance in the respective manifesto. I normalised topic order to run between 0 and 1 to account for the great variation in the length of manifestos.

Figure 4.3 shows which topics are covered in news articles just before the election. The x-axis displays all topics that were covered in those news articles, and the colours represent the different parties. Compared to the news articles that were released within three days of manifesto releases, the focal topics have changed in all three elections. While welfare state, economic goals, and labour groups were the key topics shortly after manifesto releases, these topics are barely mentioned at all in the weeks before the campaign. Instead, the key topic in news articles covering the election campaign in 2009 is military, which is talked about almost three times as often as the second most talked about topic, which is environmental protection. In 2013, the media focused mostly on law and order, followed closely by military and internationalism. Media articles in 2017 then very clearly focused on national way of life when covering parties' campaigns, followed by environmental protection. Figure 4.3 thus shows that the topics that are covered in news articles when talking about parties' election campaigns can change considerably between the release of a manifesto and election day.

This finding is consistent with the work of Däubler et al. (2024), who also find that parties emphasise different issues in their manifestos and during the last few weeks of the campaign. Issue emphasis in election manifestos and during the campaign are, therefore, two different

parts of party communication that capture parties' issue priorities at to different points in time (Däubler et al., 2024). Issue emphasis in manifestos and during the campaign both go beyond informing voters about party priorities. For instance, they both affect portfolio allocation at the coalition formation stage (Däubler et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important to differentiate between topic order and issue attention in election manifestos on the one hand, and issue emphasis during the main phase of the campaign on the other hand.

Figure 4.3: Topic Coverage in Newspaper Articles in German Election Campaigns between 2009 and 2017, by Party

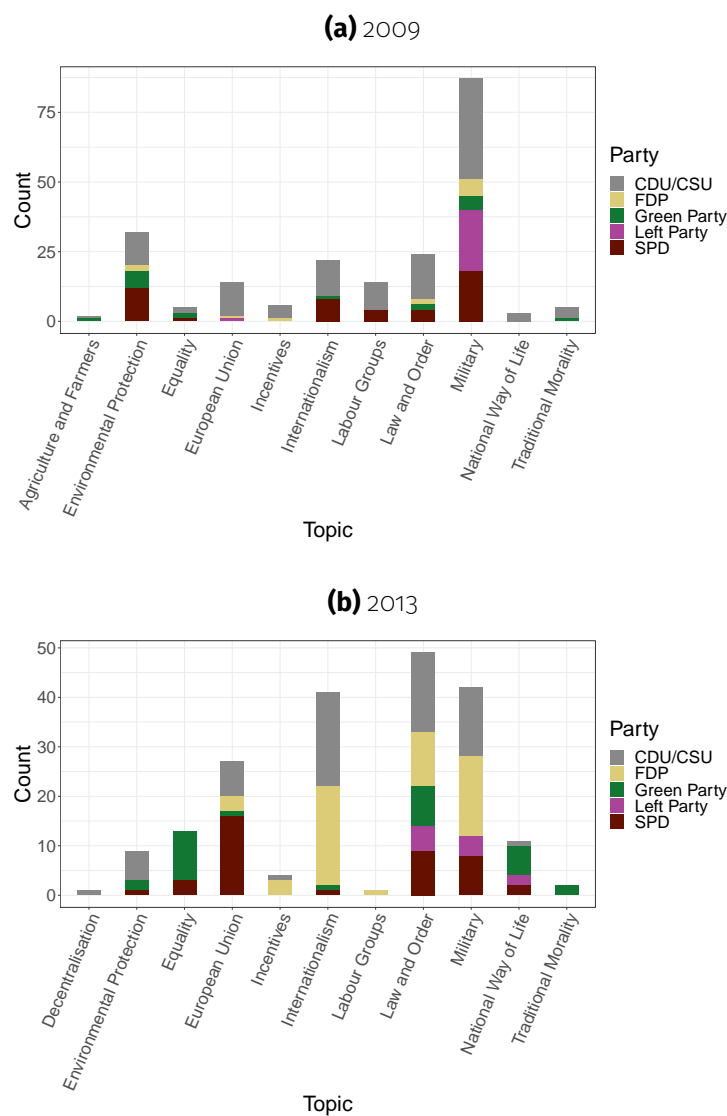
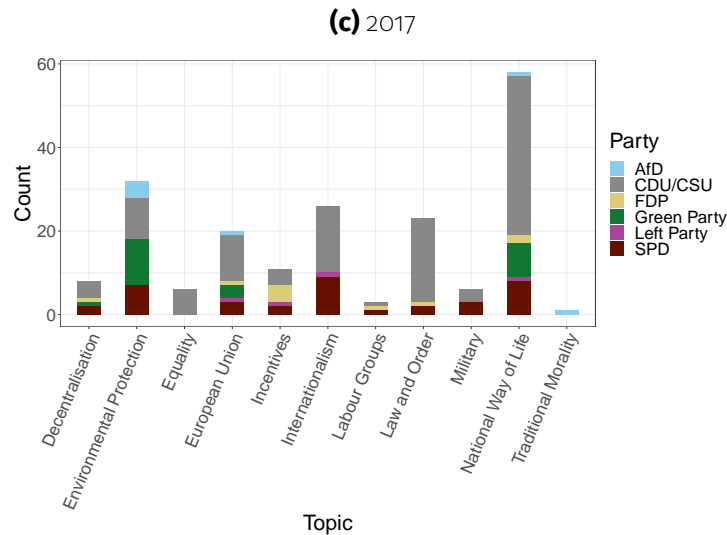


Figure 4.3: Topic Coverage in Newspaper Articles in German Election Campaigns between 2009 and 2017, by Party, ctd.



Source: Comparative Campaign Dynamics Dataset, Waves 1 and 2.

In order to understand how issue emphasis in election manifestos affects party-issue linkages in news articles shortly before election day, I ran a beta-regression with manifesto fixed effects. Like in the previous models, the dependent variable consists of the share of party-issue linkages in news articles in each election. The regression results are shown in Table 4.2. As we can see, the effects that we saw for topic order in manifestos, issue attention in manifestos, and issue salience among voters have completely vanished over the course of the campaign. Neither dimension of issue emphasis in manifestos can affect the party-issue linkages in news articles shortly before the campaign. This finding is not surprising, considering that over the course of an election campaign, news attention shifts away from manifestos and focuses more on the statements made by candidates (Dolezal et al., 2012; Hornsteiner, 2023).

Table 4.2: Effect of Topic Order in Manifestos on Party-Issue Linkages During the Campaign, Beta Regression with Manifesto Fixed Effects

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Party-issue linkages	
	Model 1	Model 2
Topic order in manifestos	0.856(0.668)	0.979(0.733)
Issue attention in manifestos		5.293(4.705)
Issue salience among voters		-2.709(1.702)
Constant	-1.783*** (0.170)	-1.924*** (0.324)
Observations	47	47
R ²	0.036	0.122
Log Likelihood	41.941	43.736

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Standard errors in parentheses.
Manifesto fixed effects not displayed.

4.5 Chapter Conclusion

In this Chapter of my dissertation, I studied how topic order in election manifestos affects party-issue linkages in newspaper articles. Using news articles covering the release of election manifestos for German Bundestag elections between 2002 and 2017, I tested whether early placement of a topic in a manifesto leads to a higher share in party-issue linkages for that topic in articles that talk about the respective party's manifesto. In addition to topic order, I controlled for issue attention in order to better understand if one dimension of issue emphasis has a heavier influence on party-issue linkages than the other. Using the Comparative Campaign Dynamics Dataset (Adendorf and Florczak, 2022; Baumann and Gross, 2016; Debus et al., 2018, 2022), I furthermore assessed whether topic order or issue attention in manifestos affects party-issue linkages in news articles that are released within a month before election day.

I find that topics that are placed earlier in a manifesto consistently receive a higher share of party-issue linkages than topics that are placed later. This is true across different levels of issue attention. While higher issue attention in manifestos also increases party-issue linkages, the effect of topic order adds to our understanding of media coverage of election manifestos. While the effect of topic order on party-linkages is very clear in news articles that specifically

cover the release of manifestos, this relationship vanishes over the course of the campaign. In news articles that cover the election campaign and that are released within a month before election day, neither topic order nor issue attention in election manifestos affect the party-issue linkages in the articles.

The fact that topic order in manifestos affects party-issue linkages in news articles adds to our understanding of party competition during election campaigns. It shows that parties that want to bring specific issues to the electorate at the beginning of the election campaign should emphasise them by placing them in the beginning of their manifesto. Considering that parties' ideological positions have not been found to affect party-issue linkages (Merz, 2017a,b) and that party competition is based more heavily in issue ownership than in ideological positions (Green-Pedersen, 2007), this finding adds to our understanding of how parties' statements reach the electorate. While most voters do not read election manifestos (Adams et al., 2011; Laver, 1984), topics that are emphasised in manifestos do receive more media coverage than topics that are not. Therefore, the assumption often made by party competition scholars using election manifestos, namely that their content does reach the electorate, is supported by my findings. However, they also show that not all topics that are addressed in manifestos reach the voter equally, but that we need to focus on topics that are placed in the beginning or that receive higher issue attention when studying election manifestos.

As I showed in this chapter, topic order in election manifestos increases party-issue linkages, but this relationship vanishes by the end of the campaign. Further research should therefore track party-issue linkages in news media across the entire campaign, starting with the release of manifestos going all the way to the coalition formation stage. Since election manifestos receive the most news coverage when they are released, and then again during coalition formation (Hornsteiner, 2023, p. 90), studying how and when topic order affects party-issue linkages in news media would be a worthwhile endeavour. Studying when issue emphasis in manifestos does *not* affect party-issue linkages can help us gain a better understanding of the dynamics of election campaigns and of which topics make it into the media and to the voter.

In addition to studying how topic order affects party-issue linkages over the course of the campaign, further research could assess whether this relationship holds equally for different

parties and different kinds of topics. For instance, the media focuses more on gendered policy issues when talking about parties with a female leader or with more female representatives, no matter whether the respective party emphasises these topics or not (Greene and Lühiste, 2018). Furthermore, parties starting their manifestos with topics other than their key issues could lead to journalists reporting more on those first topics as it goes against the expectations of how a given manifesto is typically structured. Lastly, certain kinds of issues might always be more likely to be covered in news media, no matter where they are placed in election manifestos, such as topics referring to the economy. Relationships like this are likely to affect how topics that are emphasised in election manifestos are covered in news media and could impact voters' image of parties election manifestos.

Further research could take intra-party dynamics and intra-party conflict into account when studying how issue emphasis in manifestos affects party-issue linkages in news media. Considering that intra-party disagreement can increase a topic's news value (van der Pas and Vliegenthart, 2016), any topics where there is public disagreement between different intra-party groups should receive a higher share of party-issue linkages no matter where it is placed in an election manifesto. Taking these intra-party dynamics into account can increase our understanding of party-issue linkages even further.

Lastly, while this chapter focused on how topic order in election manifestos affects party-issue linkages in traditional media, candidates increasingly turn to social media as an additional channel for their election campaigns more and more. Specifically, they use social media as a means to advertise for themselves, and also as an opportunity to enter into a dialogue with voters (Enli and Skogerbø, 2013). While many members of parliament stay close to the party line in their social media posts, especially backbenchers use it to deviate from their party's position (Castanho Silva and Proksch, 2022). Using social media to study if candidates focus on the same topics that their party emphasises in their manifesto – through topic order or issue attention – and whether they amplify existing party-issue linkages can further add to our understanding of party competition across different means of communication and media.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5 CONCLUSION

The order of things matters everywhere around us. For instance, we know that the order of candidates on ballot papers affects how many votes they will get, even when they are only placed at the top of the ballot due to its layout, and not because they are their party's top candidate (Blom-Hansen et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2015; Van Erkel and Thijssen, 2016). Furthermore, news media always present the most important news on the front page or at the very beginning of TV or radio news (Conway and Patterson, 2008; Eveland et al., 2002; McCombs and Shaw, 1972; McCombs et al., 2013; Protes and McCombs, 1991).

Therefore, I propose to extend the importance of order to election manifestos. I argue that we should extend our understanding of issue emphasis towards a two-dimensional concept. So far, scholars of party competition have used issue emphasis synonymous with issue attention, i.e. how much topics are talked about relative to each other (cf., for instance, Barberá et al., 2019; Klüver and Bäck, 2019; Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2015; Klüver and Spoon, 2016; Otjes and Green-Pedersen, 2019; Peeters et al., 2019). In this dissertation, I introduce issue emphasis as a two-dimensional concept, where issue attention is only one part of it. The second dimension is topic order, i.e. the order in which a party places topics in its manifesto.

The aim of this dissertation is to introduce the two-dimensionality of issue emphasis as a concept and to show that topic order is a part of election manifestos that we should not overlook when studying issue emphasis. Using data on German national election manifestos between 2002 and 2017, as well as an original survey experiment and newspaper articles from two daily German newspapers between 2002 and 2017, I show that topic order is (1) a relevant dimension of issue emphasis in election manifestos (Chapter 2), (2) a way for voters to assess which topics are important for a party (Chapter 3), and (3) a shortcut for journalists when reporting on the contents of newly released election manifestos (Chapter 4). The following paragraphs of this section will summarise the main arguments, hypotheses, and findings for each Chapter.

In Chapter 2, I focus on the supply side of party manifestos. I introduce the argument of issue emphasis as a two-dimensional concept. The first dimension of issue emphasis is issue attention, i.e., how much parties talk about a given topic. Issue attention is commonly used

in research on issue emphasis (cf., for instance, Barberá et al., 2019; Klüver and Bäck, 2019; Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2015; Klüver and Spoon, 2016; Otjes and Green-Pedersen, 2019; Peeters et al., 2019). Second, I introduce the dimension of topic order, i.e., where topics are placed in a manifesto. I argue that in order to emphasise as many different issues as possible, parties should highlight some topics by placing them in the beginning of the manifesto where they are easy to notice, and others by talking about them in greater detail.

When it comes to how parties should decide how to emphasise a topic, it matters which audience they want to address. Parties have two main audiences that they need to consider. First, the external audience, consisting of any actors that are not a part of the party, such as voters, other parties, and the media. Second, there is the internal audience, consisting of actors that are a part of the party, such as party members and activists.³⁰ During a campaign, it is important to address both audiences (Greene, 2016). Therefore, parties should emphasise topics in their manifestos that appeal to either audience.

I argue that in order to address the external audience, parties should put topics in the beginning of their manifestos that are important to the voters. Doing so increases the chances of voters seeing the topics they care about, without having to read the entire manifesto. Considering that manifestos are often very long documents, and that voters do not typically read them (Adams et al., 2011; Laver, 1984), placing topics that are important to the external audience in the beginning makes it possible for readers of a manifesto to notice them immediately upon opening the manifesto. The internal audience, in contrast, can be expected to be much more likely than the general electorate to read a manifesto or to specifically look for topics that are important to them. Therefore, I argue that topics that are important to the internal audience do not need to be placed in the very beginning of the manifesto. Instead, parties should highlight those topics by increasing their issue attention, allowing them to talk about those topics at greater length and in more detail. Since the internal audience consists of party members and activists, signalling a commitment to topics that matter to this audience by talking about them more than other topics can help ensure this audience's support during the electoral campaign.

Using data from the Manifesto Project (MARPOR, Volkens et al., 2017), I show how we can

³⁰For research on parties' internal and external audiences, see Charlot (1989); Dolezal et al. (2012); Harmel (2018); Harmel et al. (2018).

measure topic order with the data that is available in MARPOR. Studying German election manifestos between 2002 and 2017, I show that parties apply both topic order and issue attention to topics that are placed in the first quarter of their manifestos. In the chapters after that, the connection between the two becomes much weaker. Topics that are important for a party's internal audience are often emphasised through both topic order and issue attention. In contrast, topics that aim towards the external audience are placed in later chapters and are emphasised through issue attention rather than topic order.

In Chapter 3, I test the assumption I made in Chapter 2 that people reading a manifesto perceive topics that are placed in the beginning as more important to the party that wrote the manifesto. I argue that people ascribe higher importance to things that are placed earlier for a number of reasons. Survey research has shown that items that are placed at the top of a list are often perceived as more important either due to cognitive fatigue (Blom-Hansen et al., 2016) or because they get processed more deeply than later items (Krosnick and Alwin, 1987). Furthermore, people associate items that are at the top of a list with being better or more important, and items at the bottom of a list with being bad (Meier and Robinson, 2004; Tourangeau et al., 2013). In the context of election campaigns, candidates that are placed on the top of a ballot paper gain more votes than those that are placed later (Blom-Hansen et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2015; Van Erkel and Thijssen, 2016). I therefore hypothesise that voters see a topic as more important to a party if that party placed the topic earlier in its manifesto.

Using a novel survey experiment placed in the German Internet Panel in July 2018 (GIP, Blom et al., 2019), I test how respondents assess a topic's importance based on where it is placed in a manifesto. Using excerpts of the Green Party's and the CDU/CSU's manifestos for the 2017 Bundestag election, I show that topic order affects respondents' perception of how important topics are to a party. When parties place topics in the beginning of their manifesto, respondents are more likely to perceive those early topics as a party's key topics in most cases. This finding underlines my argument that parties should place topics that they want to emphasise in the beginning of their manifesto.

Lastly, in Chapter 4, I connect the two previous chapters by studying how the topics that parties talk about in their manifestos reach the voters. Voters often do not read manifestos (Adams

et al., 2011; Laver, 1984). However, news media cover manifestos as they release and thereby bring the content of manifestos to their readers (Adams et al., 2011; Baumann and Gross, 2016; Bara, 2007; Laver, 1984; Merz, 2017a,b). I argue that topic order in manifestos should affect which topics news media pick up on. Specifically, topics that are placed in the beginning of a manifesto should have higher chances of receiving news media coverage. I expect this relationship to exist for the following reasons. First, news media has itself an ordered logic that it follows, where the most important news stories are placed on the front page of a newspaper, or at the very beginning of television or radio news (Conway and Patterson, 2008; Eveland et al., 2002; McCombs and Shaw, 1972; McCombs et al., 2013; Protesse and McCombs, 1991). Thus, journalists already work with the understanding that the most important items should be covered first. Therefore, I expect them to apply this same logic to election manifestos. Second, manifestos are long documents that are covered in newspapers as soon as the day after parties release them. In order to report on manifestos this quickly, journalists have to prioritise which parts of a manifesto they even read. I argue that they look at the first few chapters of a manifesto as a shortcut to find interesting topics to cover. Thus, topics that are covered earlier in manifestos should be more likely to be covered in news media.

Using news articles from two daily German newspapers covering election manifestos between 2002 and 2017, I find that topics that are placed earlier in manifestos receive more media coverage than those that are placed later. This is true across different levels of issue attention. Additionally, I find that higher issue attention also leads to higher news coverage. Therefore, both dimensions of the concept of issue emphasis affect which topics are covered in news media and make it to the voter. However, this is only the case for news articles that are released shortly after a manifesto is published and that specifically talk about the manifesto that was released. Using data from the Comparative Campaign Dynamics Dataset (CCDD, Adendorf and Florczak, 2022; Baumann and Gross, 2016; Debus et al., 2018, 2022), I show that in the last four weeks before the election, issue emphasis in election manifestos no longer affects which topics are covered in news articles that report on the election campaign.

My findings show that it is important to understand issue emphasis as a two-dimensional concept consisting of topic order and issue attention. Especially when looking at election man-

ifestos and how they address parties' external audiences – i.e., voters, other parties, and the media – taking topic order into account can help us gain a much more accurate picture of issue emphasis. Considering that topic order in manifestos is particularly easy to spot, without having to even read most of the manifesto, including topic order in our understanding of issue emphasis brings our work much closer to how someone reading a manifesto will recognise a party's issue emphasis. Additionally, topic order in manifestos directly affects which topics receive more media coverage at the time a manifesto is released, which underlines the importance of including topic order when studying issue emphasis in the context of parties' external communication.

When it comes to the generalisability of my findings, German election manifestos are a useful case to start studying topic order as a dimension of issue emphasis. Germany is comparable to many other European party systems as it is a multi-party system with a norm of forming coalition governments. In that sense, my findings on how parties order topics in their manifestos, how readers perceive those topics, and how they are covered in the media can be expected to be transferable to other party systems as well. However, further research is necessary to better understand topic order in party systems that differ from the German multi-party system. Additionally, election manifestos are but one medium that parties use to present their policies to the electorate and to other parties. While manifestos are undoubtedly important campaign documents, studying topic order in, for instance, campaign leaflets or TV debates can only further our understanding of issue emphasis in election campaigns as a two-dimensional concept.

My findings open up several avenues for further research. When it comes to how parties use topic order and issue attention to emphasise different topics for different audiences, one next step should be to study if those relationships are the same for mainstream and niche parties. Niche parties are usually associated with a narrow area of topics and therefore can focus their emphasising strategies on a small number of topics. Mainstream parties, in contrast, lack such a strong issue ownership and must make a much broader offer, which could result in them relying on both topic order and issue attention to emphasise a larger number of topics.

Regarding the need for parties to address several different audiences in their manifestos,

one aspect of topic order worth looking at is whether the same findings also hold for coalition agreements, and how topic order can affect coalition formation and portfolio allocation. Considering that parties express their issue priorities and portfolio preferences through issue attention in their manifestos (Bäck et al., 2011; Däubler et al., 2024; Eichorst, 2014), topic order could be another indicator that parties use to communicate their priorities to potential coalition partners.

On the voter side, we have seen that topic order affects how voters perceive parties' issue priorities. However, we do not know yet how this relationship interacts with issue attention in manifestos, and whether one has a stronger or clearer effect on voters' perceptions. Going beyond the association between topic order and parties' key issues, my findings also raise the question of how topic order can affect associative issue ownership (Walgrave et al., 2016). Lastly, we know that issue attention can affect voters' perception of parties' left-right positions (Wagner and Meyer, 2023). Studying whether the same is true for topic order, and how it interacts with issue attention, can further our understanding of how voters come to understand parties' left-right positions.

Finally, when it comes to how topic order can affect party-issue linkages in the media, further research needs to study when the effect of topic order in manifestos vanishes, and what other factors affect which topics are covered in news media. Additionally, while there is an overall relationship between topic order and party-issue linkages, this relationship is likely to look different for different kinds of topics and parties (cf. Greene and Lühiste, 2018). For instance, the impact that topic order has on party-issue linkages might be even stronger for niche parties who place their key topic in the beginning of the manifesto than it is for mainstream parties who lack such a strong connection to a single issue.

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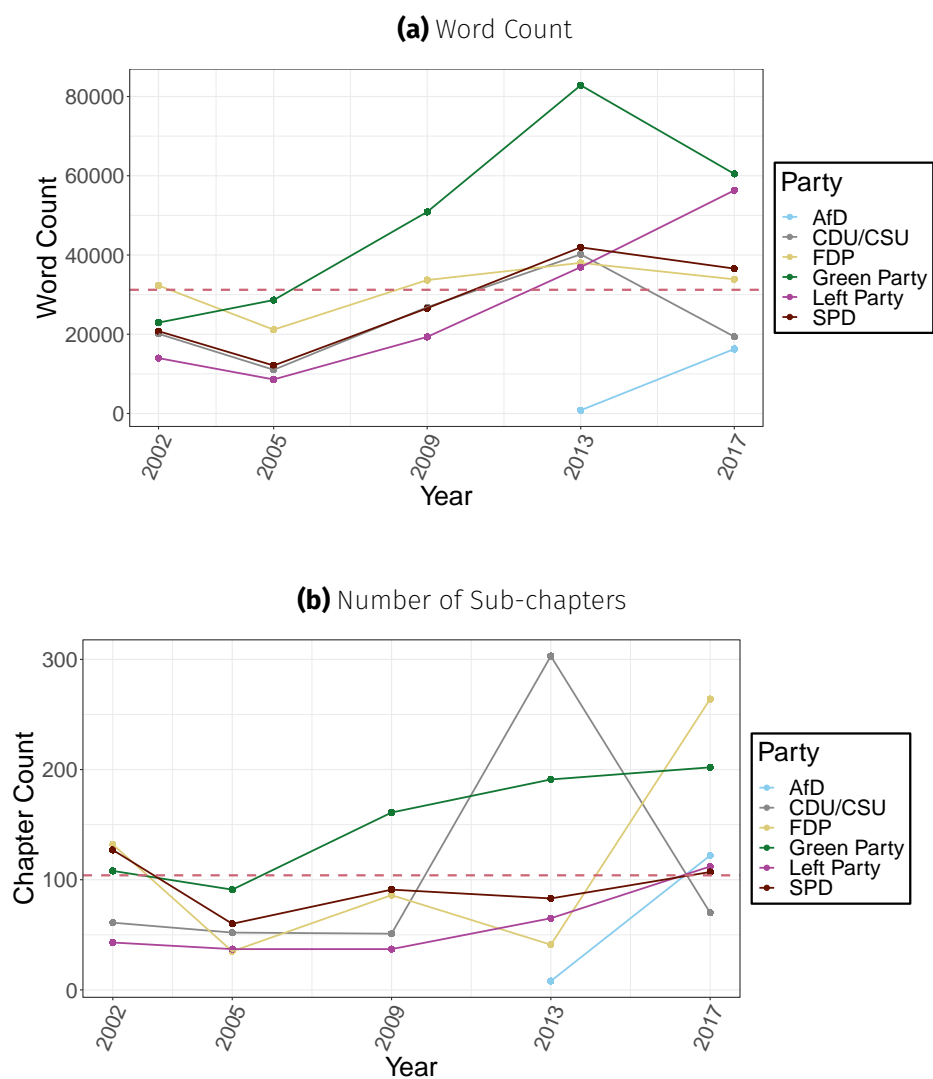
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Appendix

Appendix to Chapter 2
Supply Side: Understanding Parties' Use of
Topic Order

A APPENDIX

A.1 Sub-chapters in German Election Manifestos

Figure A.1: Length and Number of Sub-chapters in German Election Manifestos between 2002 and 2017

Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

A.2 Use of Headers and Sub-headers in German Election Manifestos

Table A.1: Use of Headers, Sub-headers, and Sub-sub-headers in German Election Manifestos between 2002 and 2005

Year	Party	Levels
2002	CDU/CSU	2
2002	SPD	3
2002	FDP	3
2002	Green Party	3
2002	Left Party	2
2005	CDU/CSU	3
2005	SPD	2
2005	FDP	2
2005	Green Party	2
2005	Left Party	3
2009	CDU/CSU	4
2009	SPD	3
2009	FDP	2
2009	Green Party	3
2009	Left Party	3
2013	CDU/CSU	3
2013	SPD	3
2013	FDP	2
2013	Green Party	3
2013	Left Party	3
2017	CDU/CSU	2
2017	SPD	2
2017	FDP	3
2017	Green Party	3
2017	Left Party	2
2017	AfD	2

Note: This table reflects the use of headers, sub-headers, and sub-sub-headers as I use them in my analyses. In the original MARPOR coding, the manifesto of the FDP in 2002 only has one level. Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

A.3 *Recodings Applied to MARPOR Data***Table A.2:** Overview of Recodings Applied to the MARPOR Data

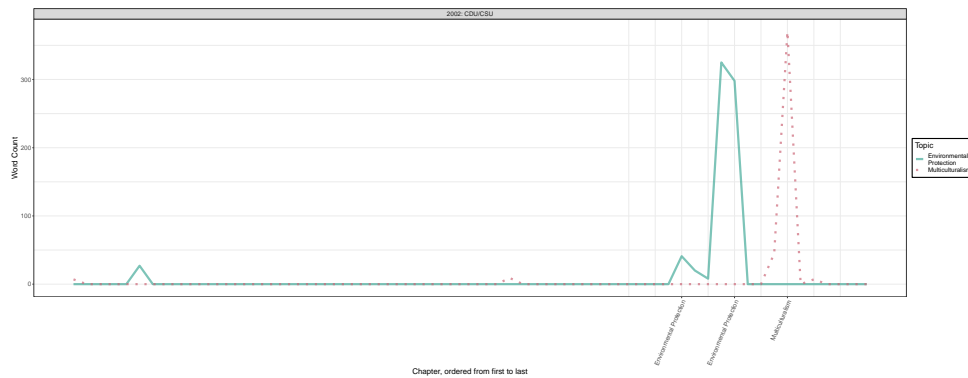
Year	Party	No recoding	Minor recoding	Major recoding
2002	CDU/CSU	X		
2002	SPD		X	
2002	FDP		X	
2002	Green Party		X	
2002	Left Party		X	
2005	CDU/CSU		X	
2005	SPD		X	
2005	FDP			X
2005	Green Party		X	
2005	Left Party		X	
2009	CDU/CSU		X	
2009	SPD		X	
2009	FDP		X	
2009	Green Party		X	
2009	Left Party		X	
2013	CDU/CSU		X	
2013	SPD		X	
2013	FDP		X	
2013	Green Party		X	
2013	Left Party		X	
2017	CDU/CSU	X		
2017	SPD	X		
2017	FDP		X	
2017	Green Party		X	
2017	Left Party		X	
2017	AfD	X		

Note: As this table shows, a high number of manifesto have undergone minor recodings. In all of these cases, these recodings constitute of headers that were accidentally coded as regular sentences, or sentences that were accidentally coded as headers. There is only case with major recodings, namely the FDP's manifesto in 2005. Source: Own recodings based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

A.4 Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism in German Manifestos

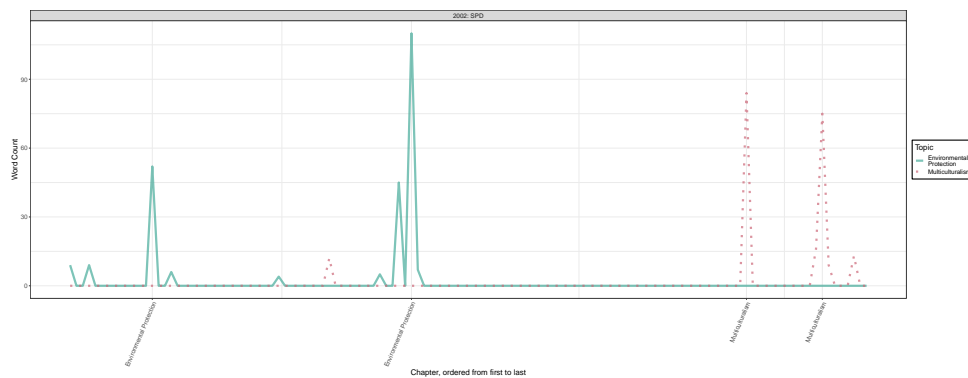
A.4.1 2002

Figure A.2: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, CDU/CSU 2002



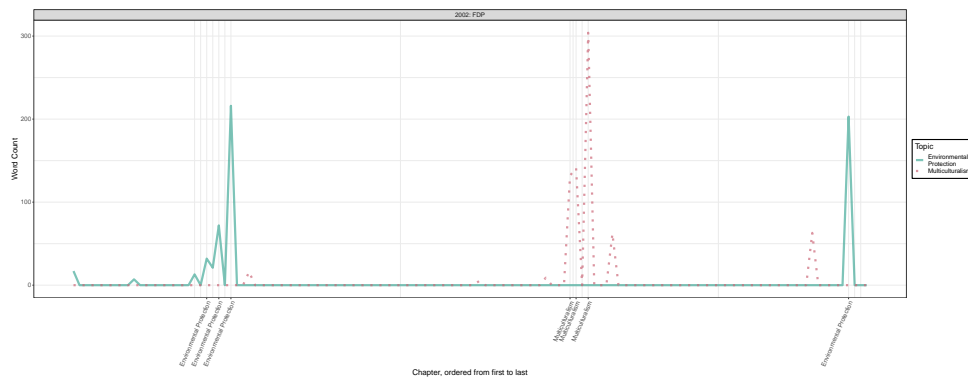
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.3: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, SPD 2002



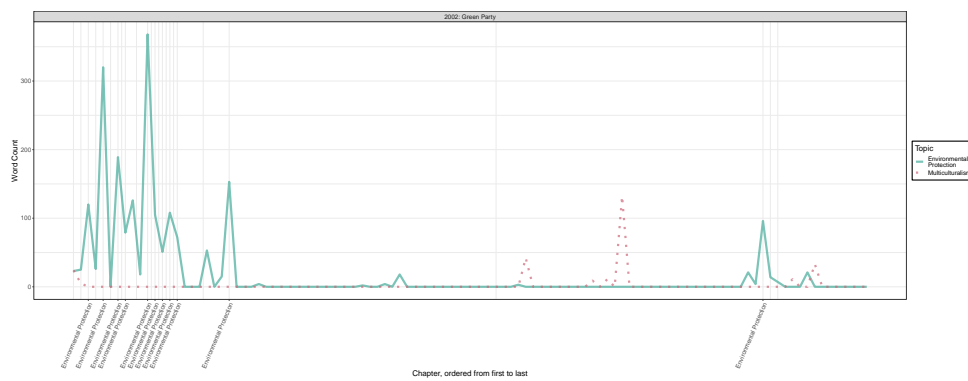
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.4: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, FDP 2002



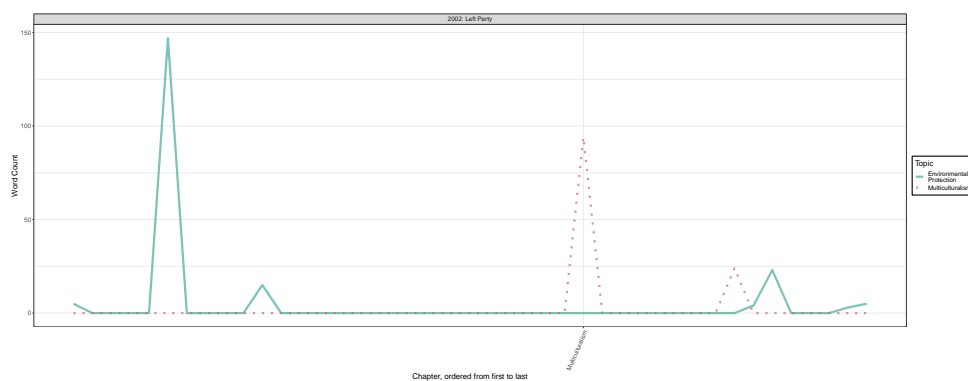
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.5: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, Green Party 2002



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

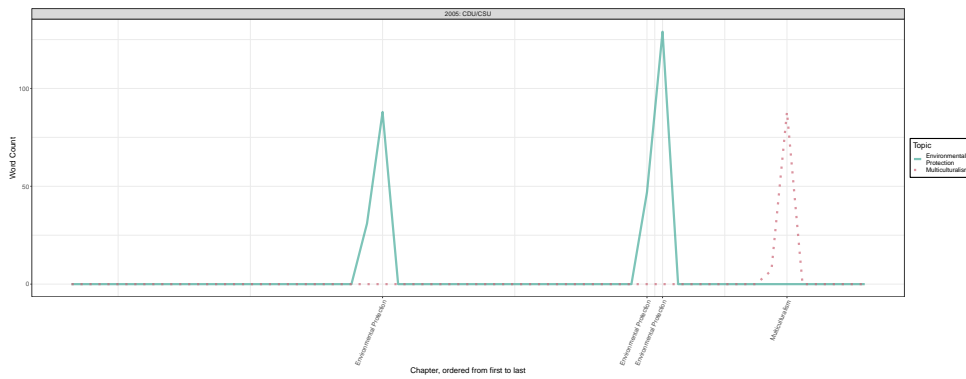
Figure A.6: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, Left Party 2002



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

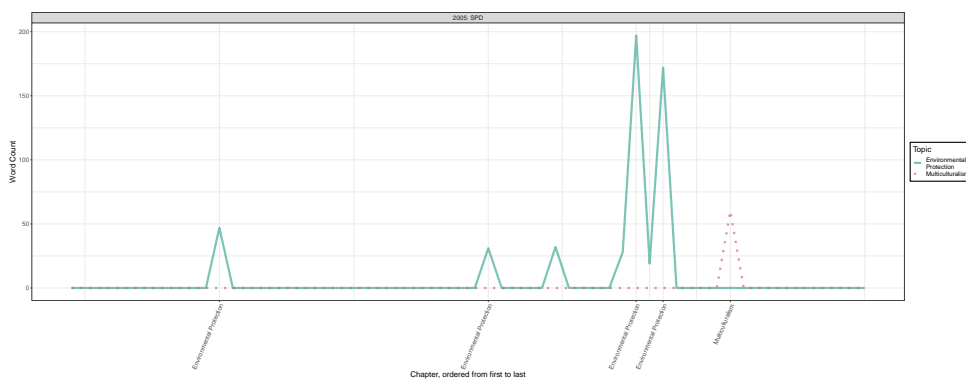
A.4.2 2005

Figure A.7: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, CDU/CSU 2005



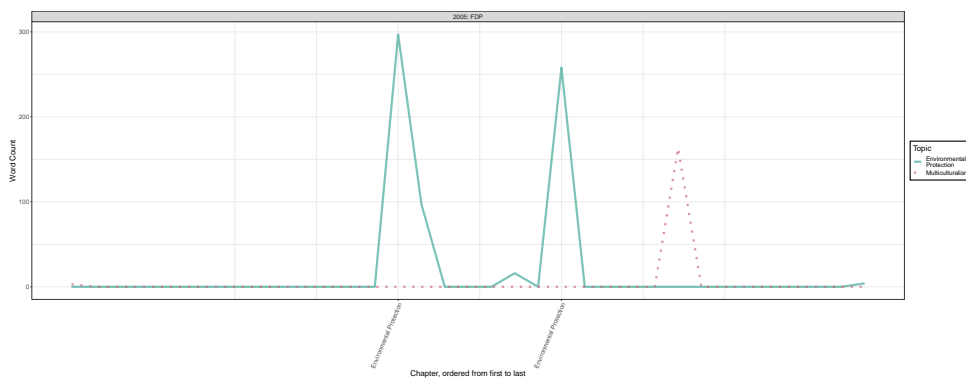
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.8: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, SPD 2005



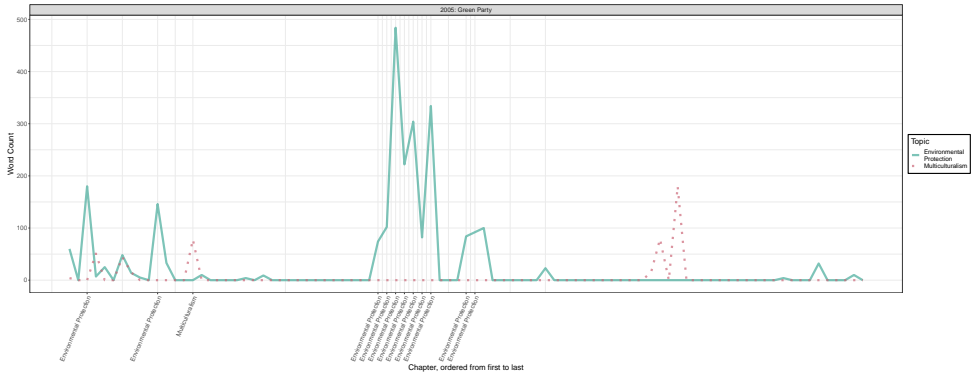
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.9: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, FDP 2005



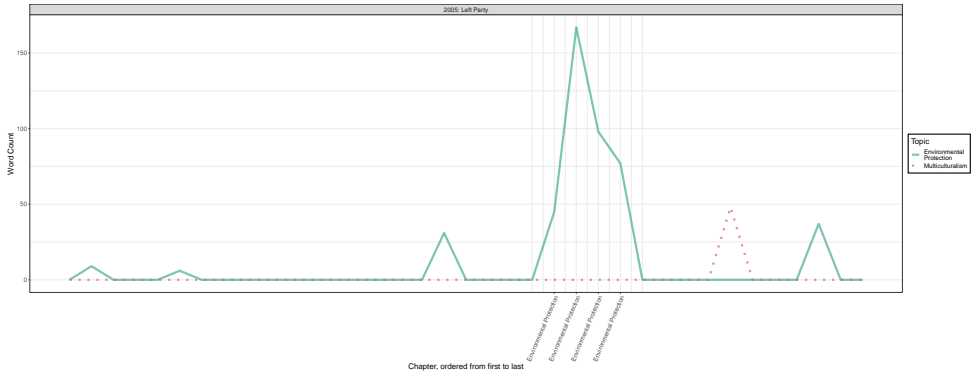
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.10: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, Green Party 2005



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

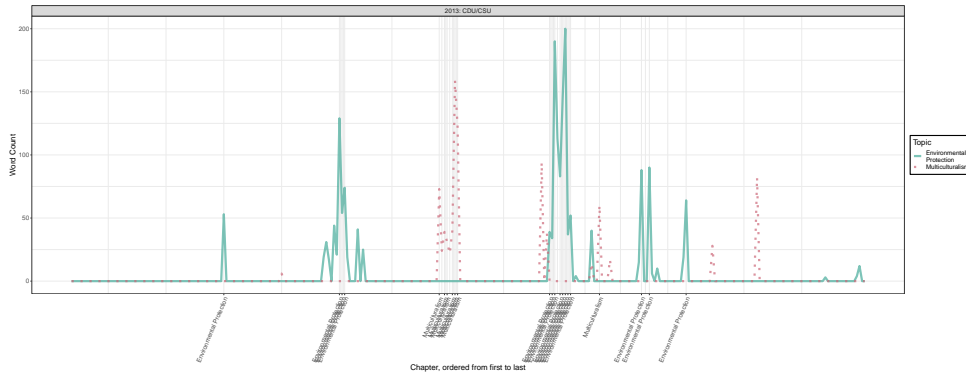
Figure A.11: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, Left Party 2005



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

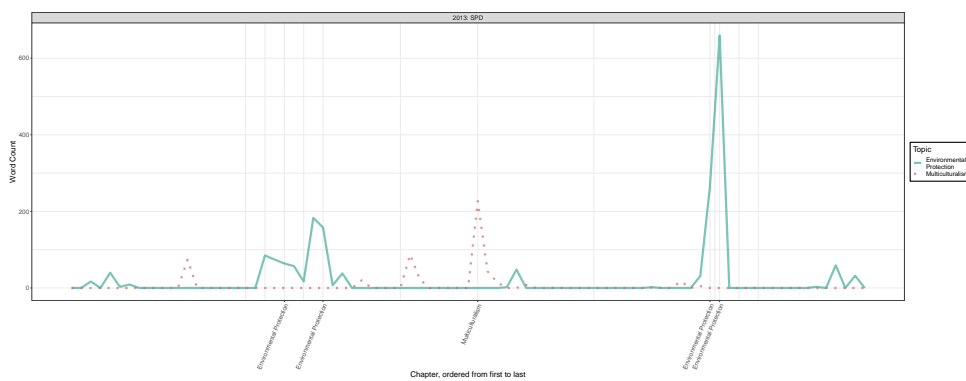
A.4.3 2013

Figure A.12: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, CDU/CSU 2013



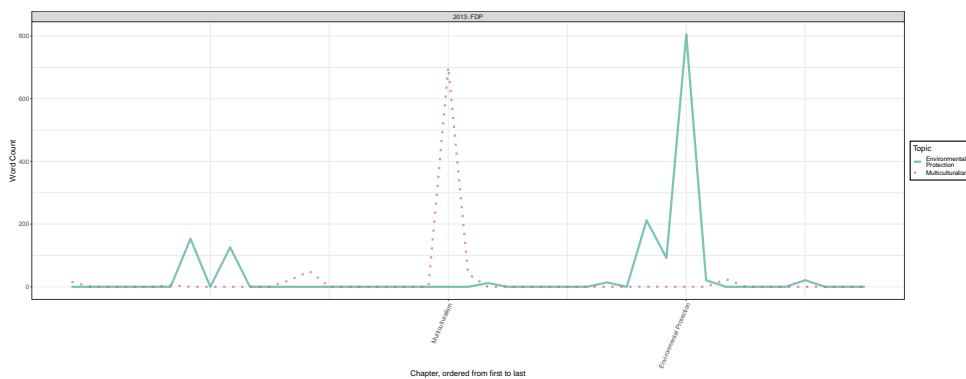
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.13: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, SPD 2013



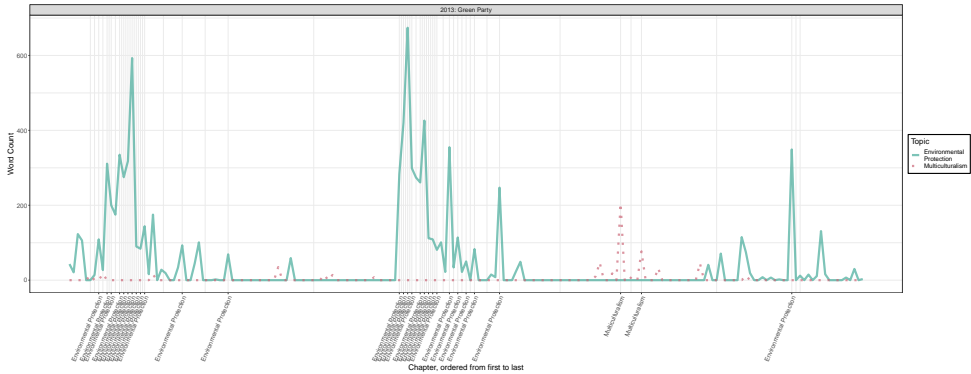
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.14: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, FDP 2013



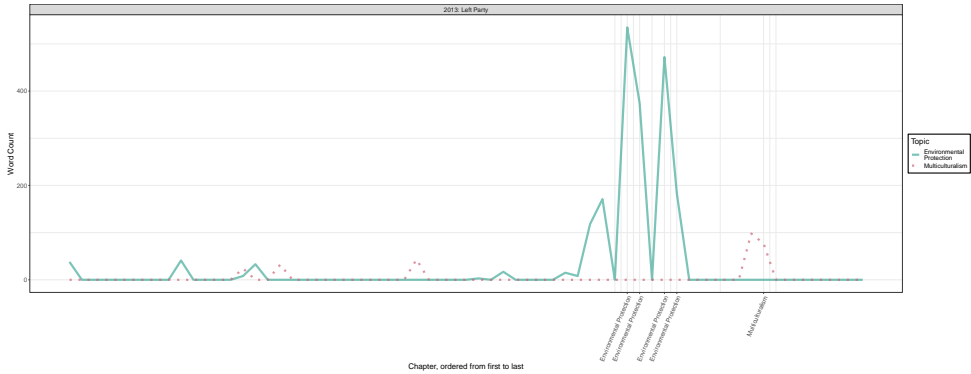
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.15: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, Green Party 2013



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

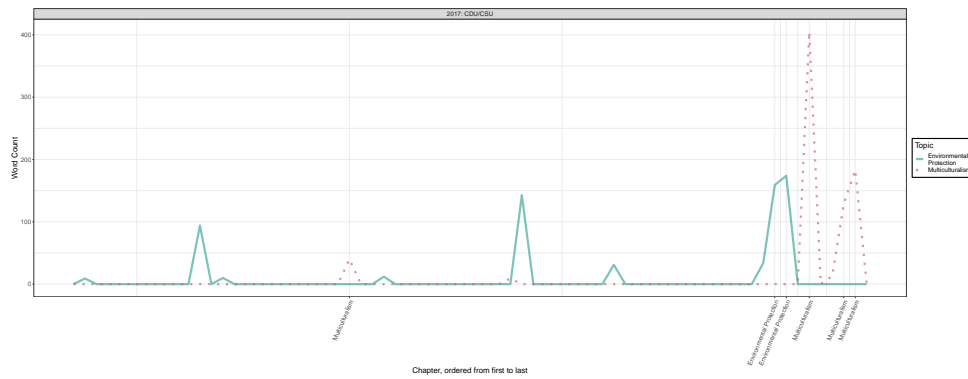
Figure A.16: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, Left Party 2013



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

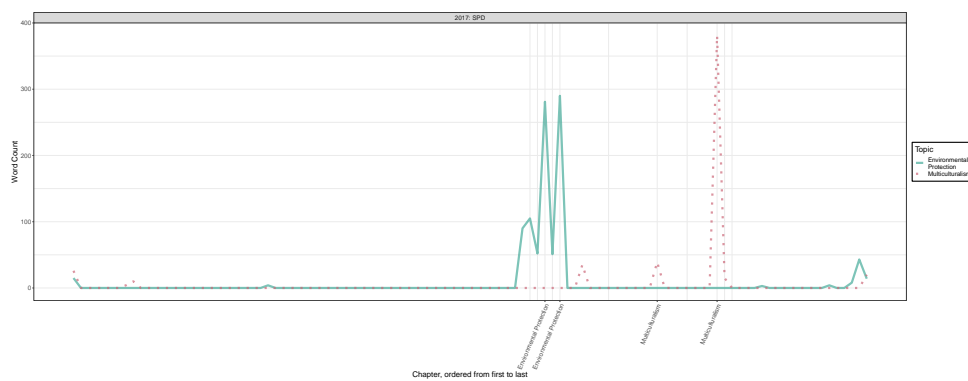
A.4.4 2017

Figure A.17: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, CDU/CSU 2017



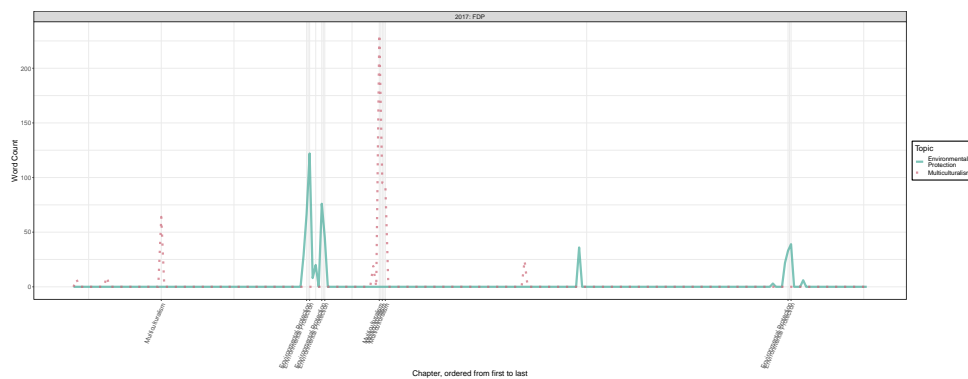
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.18: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, SPD 2017



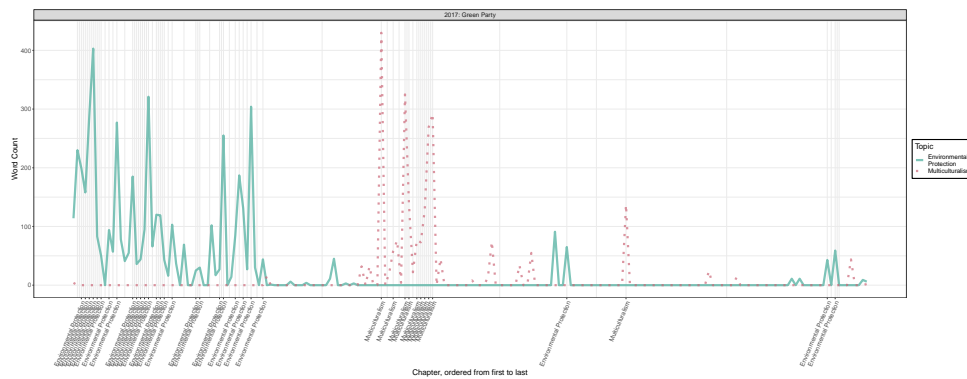
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.19: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, FDP 2017



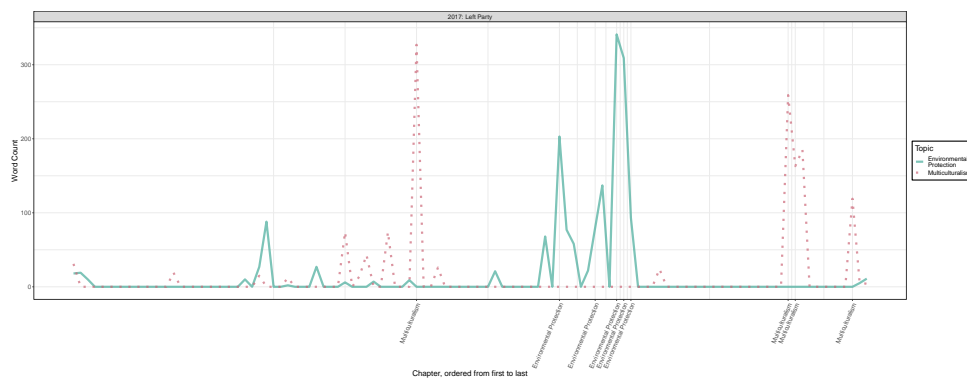
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.20: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, Green Party 2017



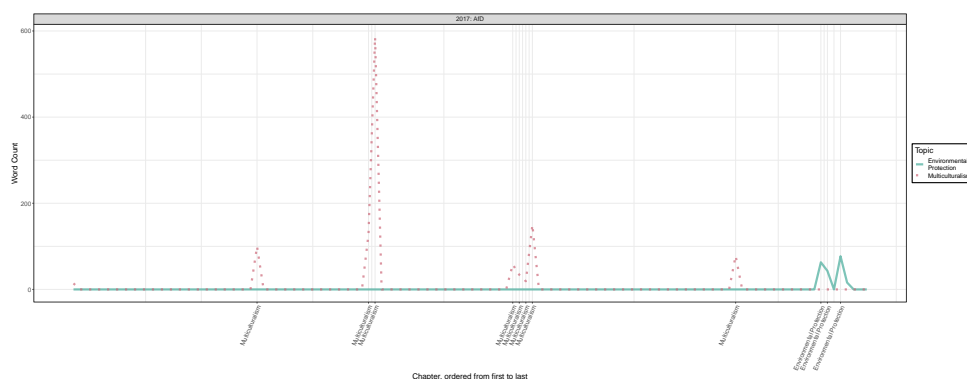
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.21: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, Left Party 2017



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.22: Distribution of Environmental Protection and Multiculturalism, AfD 2017

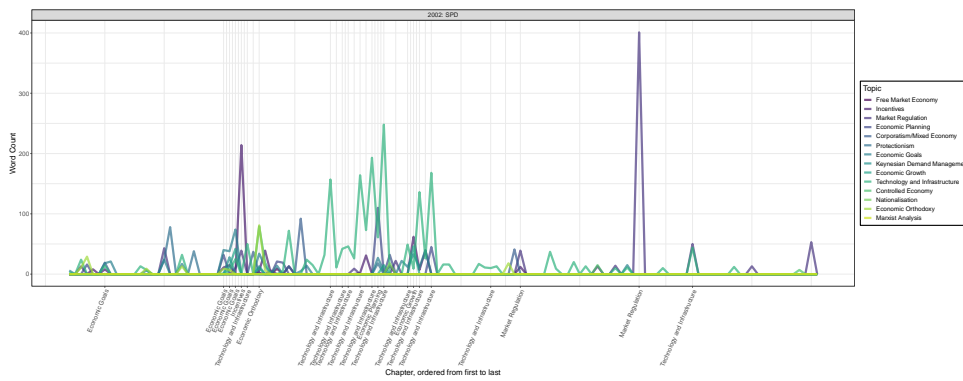


Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

A.5 Distribution of Topics in MARPOR's Economy Domain in German Manifestos

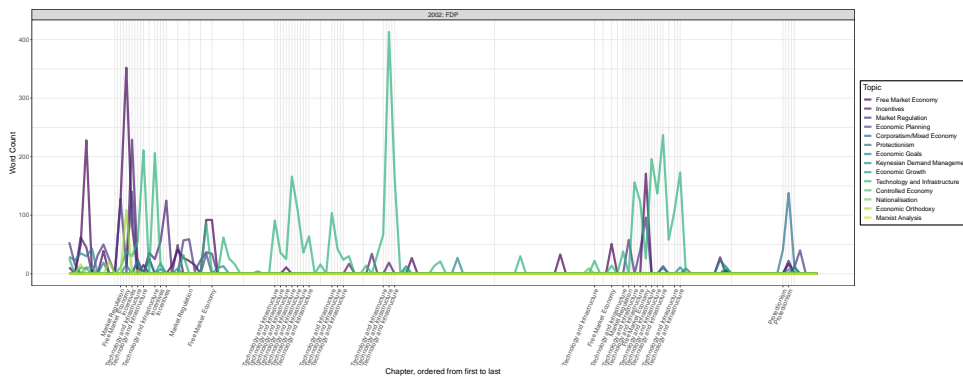
A.5.1 2002

Figure A.23: Distribution of Economy Topics, SPD 2002



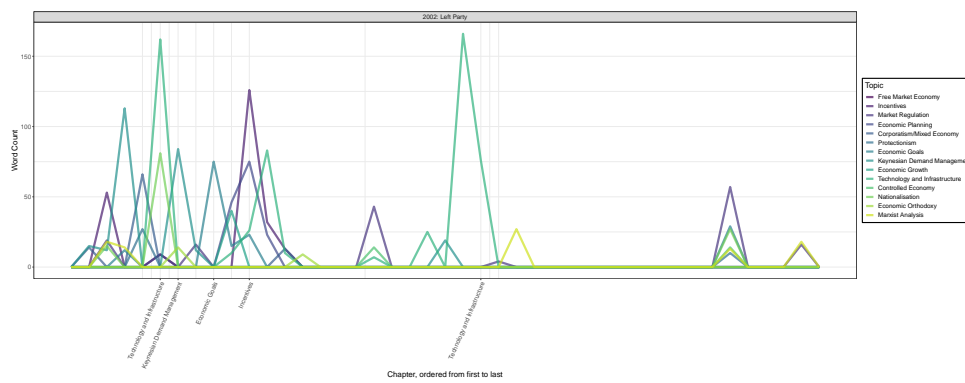
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.24: Distribution of Economy Topics, FDP 2002



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

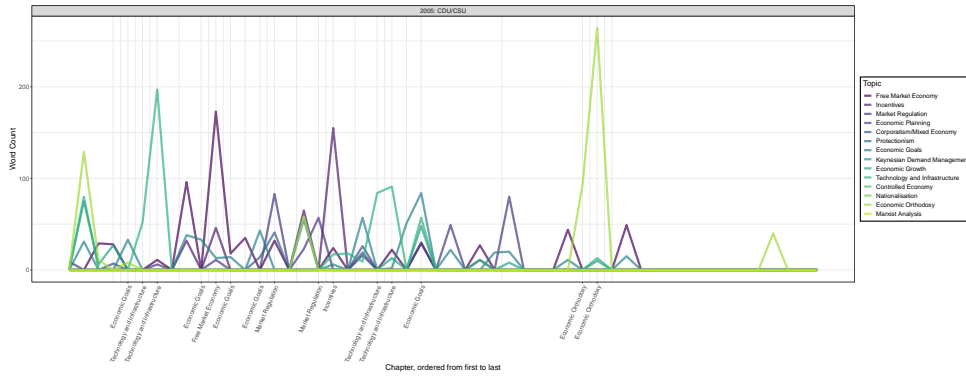
Figure A.25: Distribution of Economy Topics, Left Party 2002



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

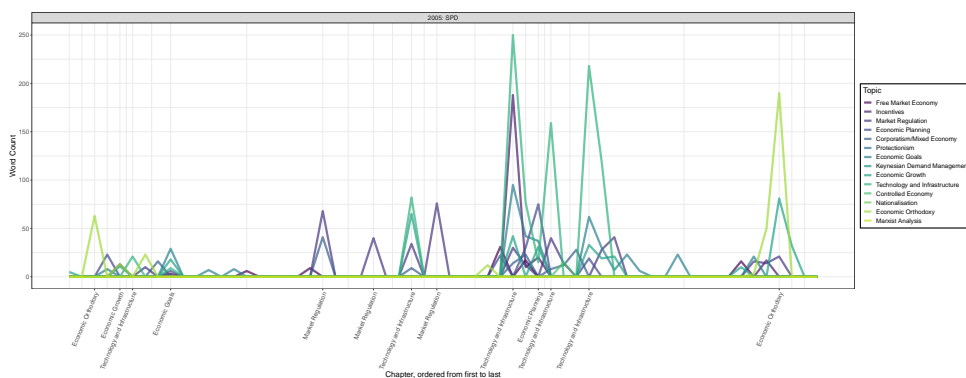
A.5.2 2005

Figure A.26: Distribution of Economy Topics, CDU/CSU 2005



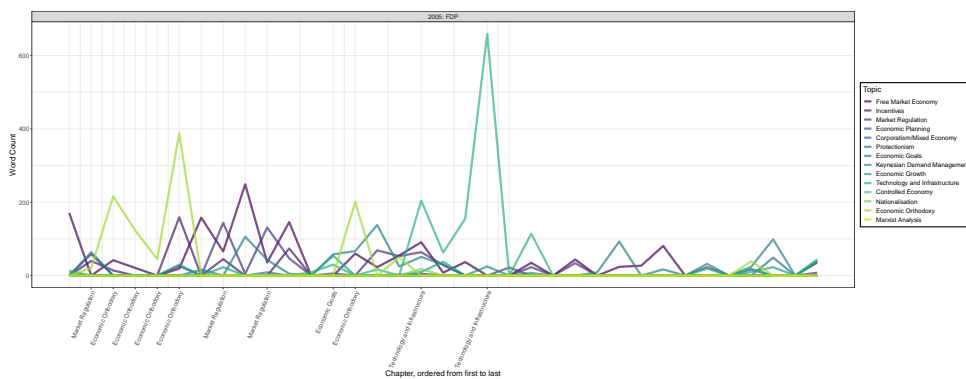
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.27: Distribution of Economy Topics, SPD 2005



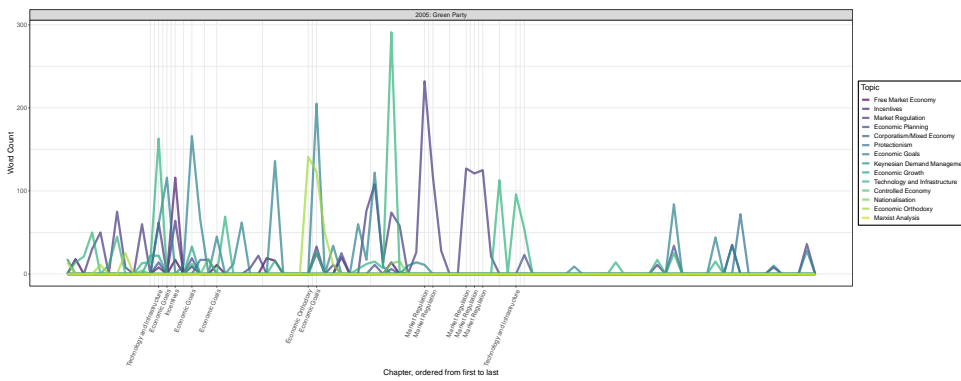
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.28: Distribution of Economy Topics, FDP 2005



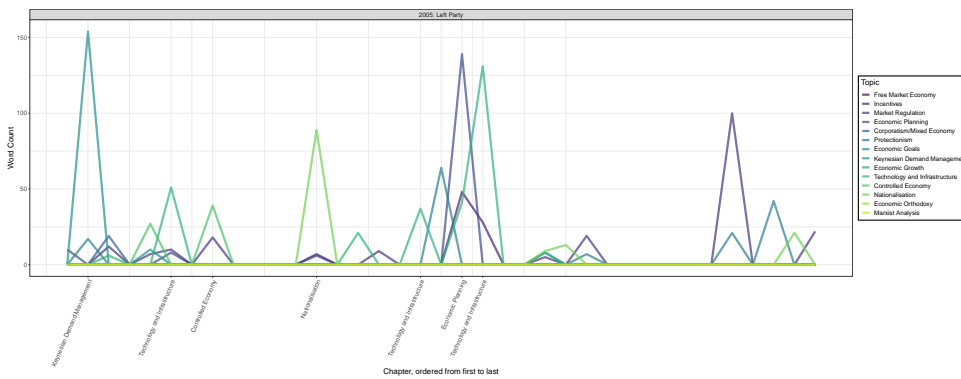
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.29: Distribution of Economy Topics, Green Party 2005



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

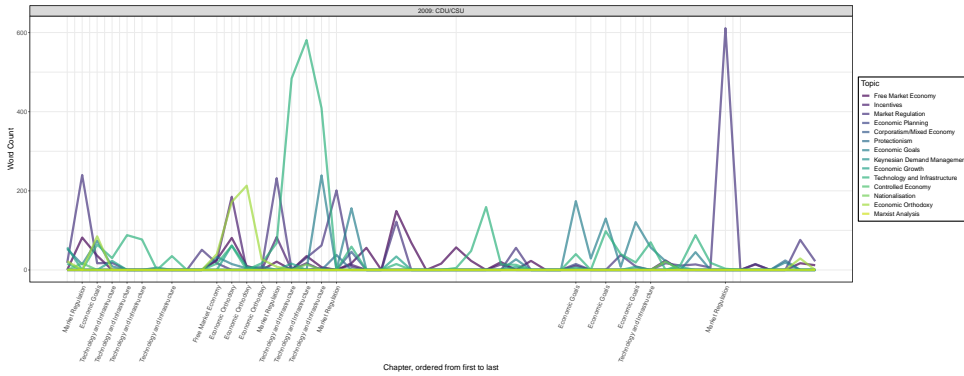
Figure A.30: Distribution of Economy Topics, Left Party 2005



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

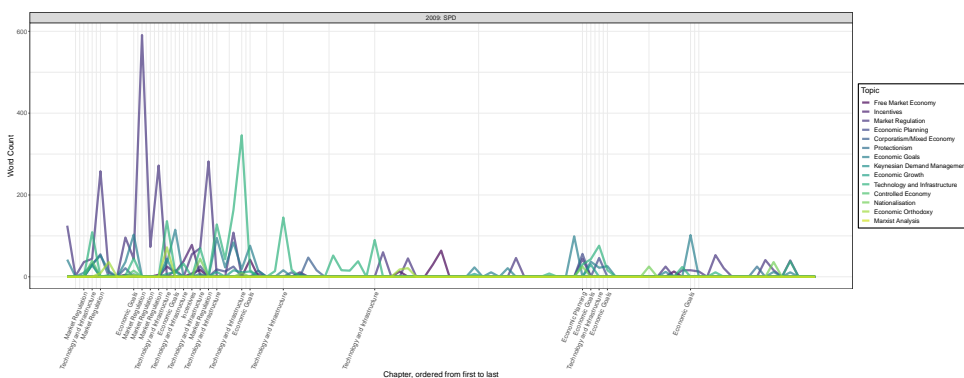
A.5.3 2009

Figure A.31: Distribution of Economy Topics, CDU/CSU 2009



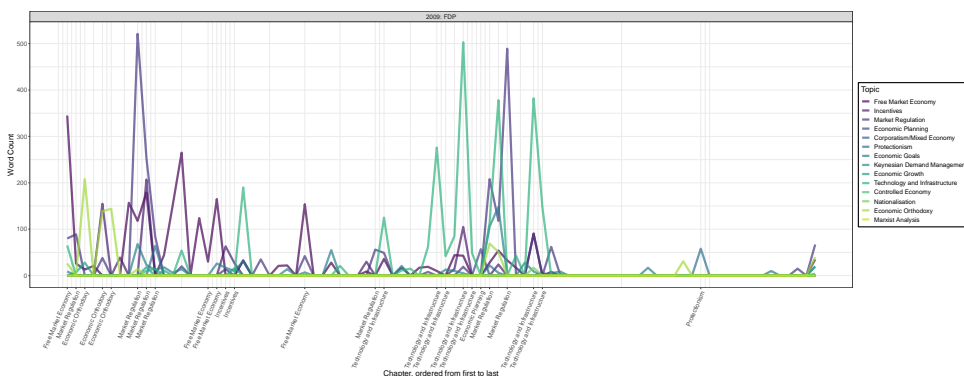
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.32: Distribution of Economy Topics, SPD 2009



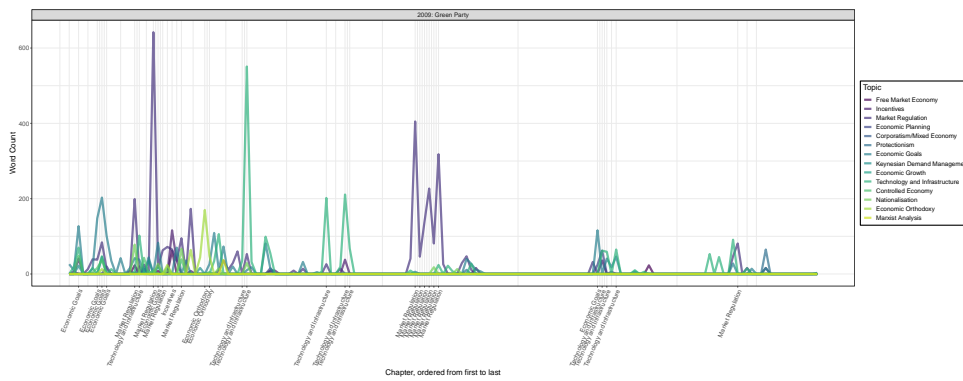
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.33: Distribution of Economy Topics, FDP 2009



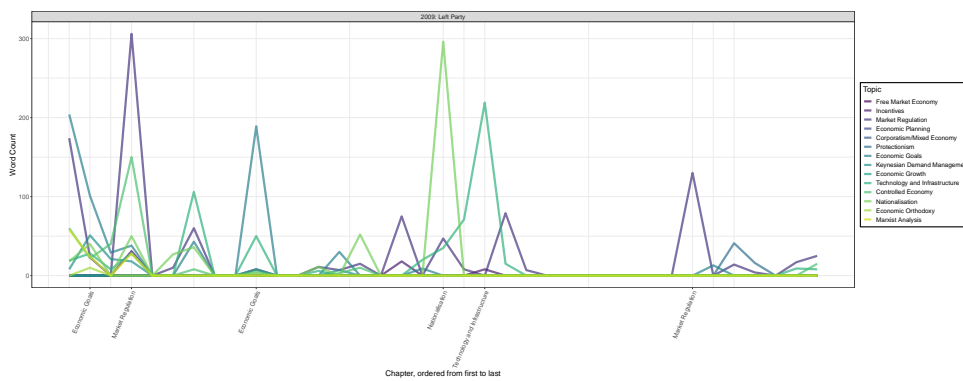
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.34: Distribution of Economy Topics, Green Party 2009



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

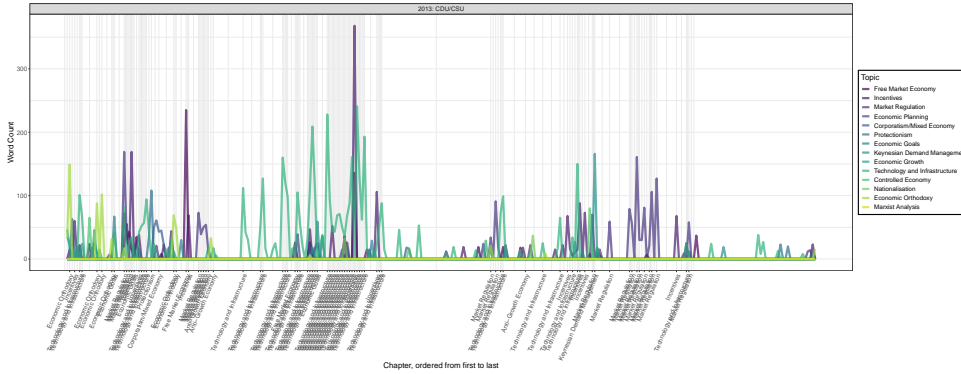
Figure A.35: Distribution of Economy Topics, Left Party 2009



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

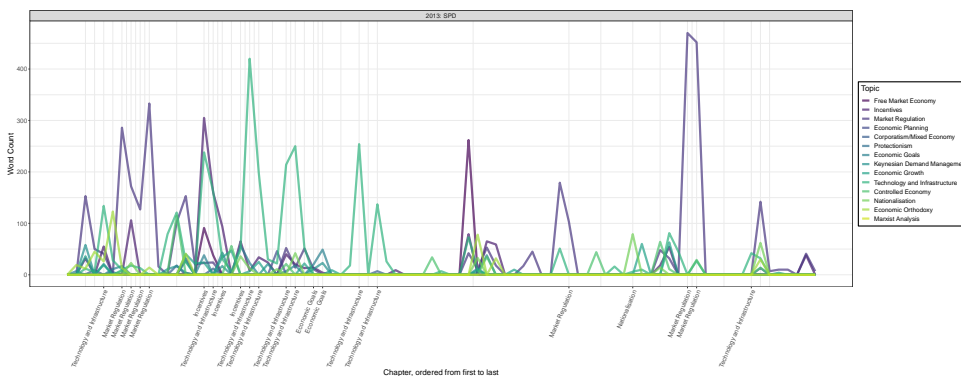
A.5.4 2013

Figure A.36: Distribution of Economy Topics, CDU/CSU 2013



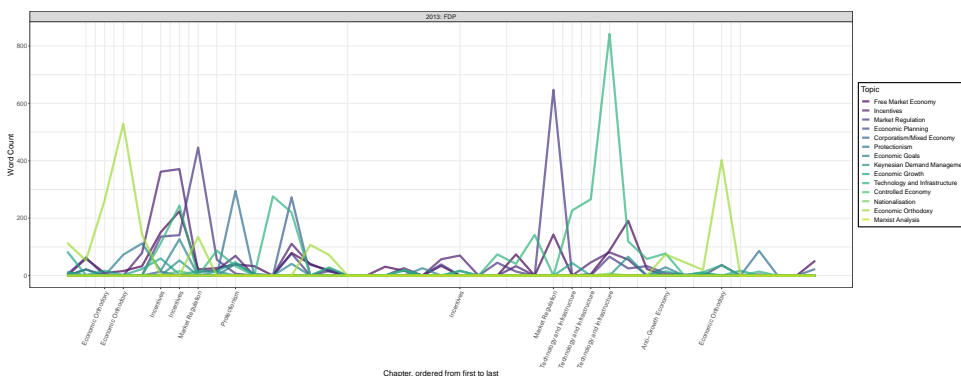
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.37: Distribution of Economy Topics, SPD 2013



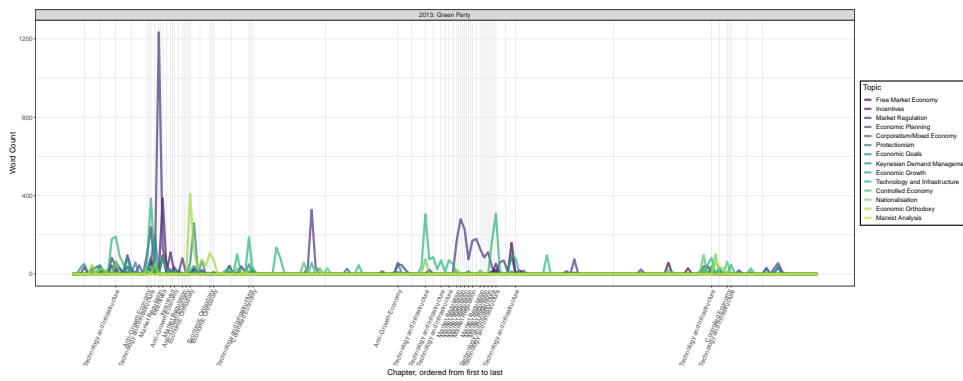
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.38: Distribution of Economy Topics, FDP 2013



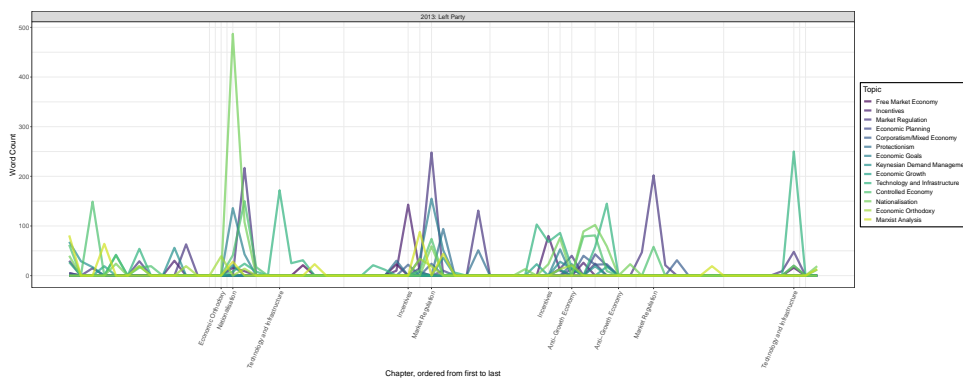
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.39: Distribution of Economy Topics, Green Party 2013



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

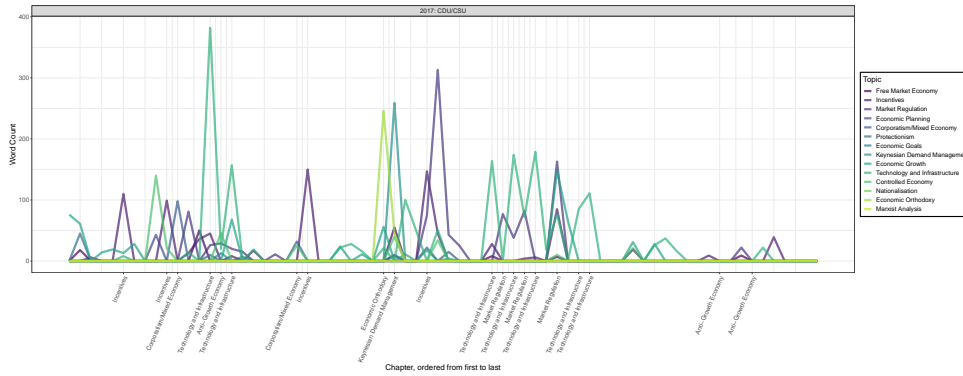
Figure A.40: Distribution of Economy Topics, Left Party 2013



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

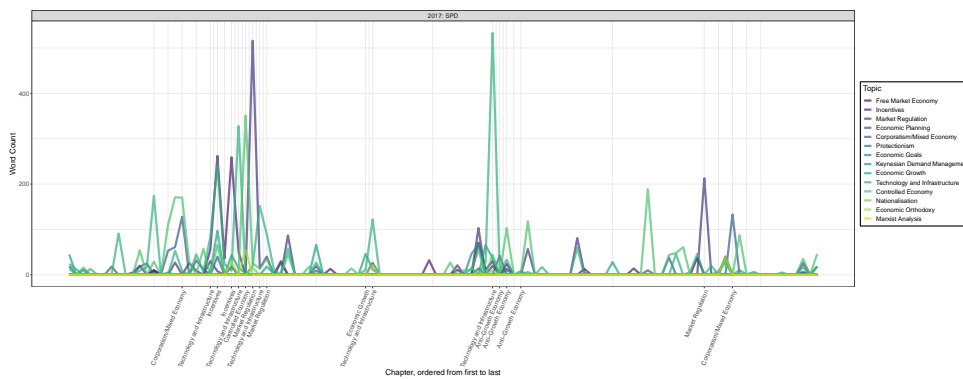
A.5.5 2017

Figure A.41: Distribution of Economy Topics, CDU/CSU 2017



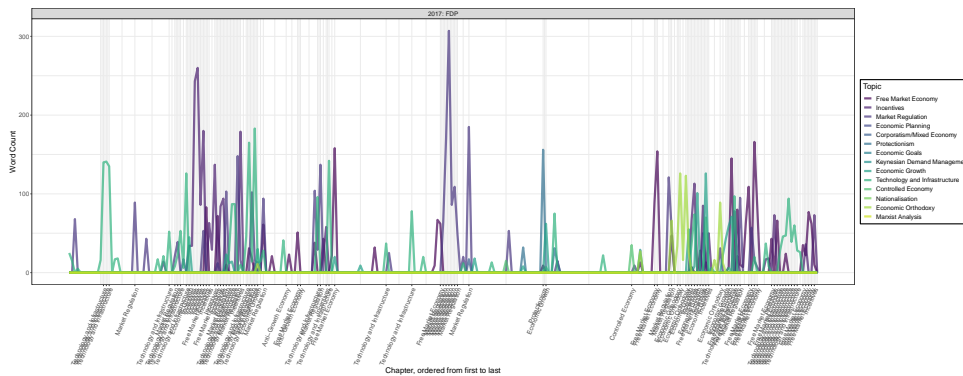
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.42: Distribution of Economy Topics, SPD 2017



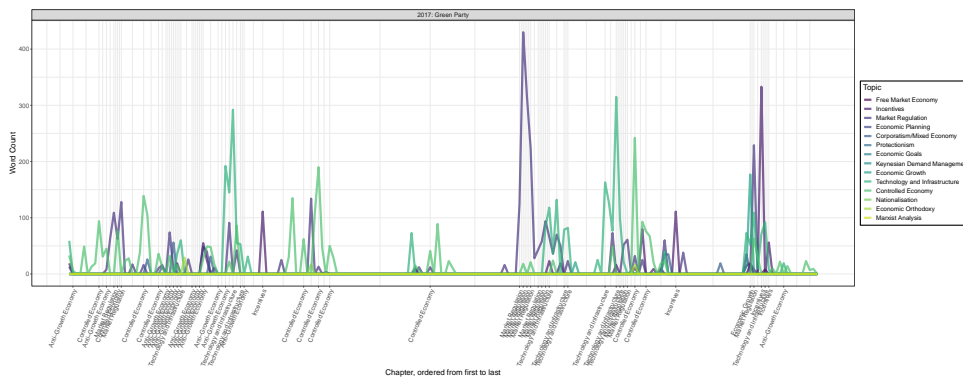
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.43: Distribution of Economy Topics, FDP 2017



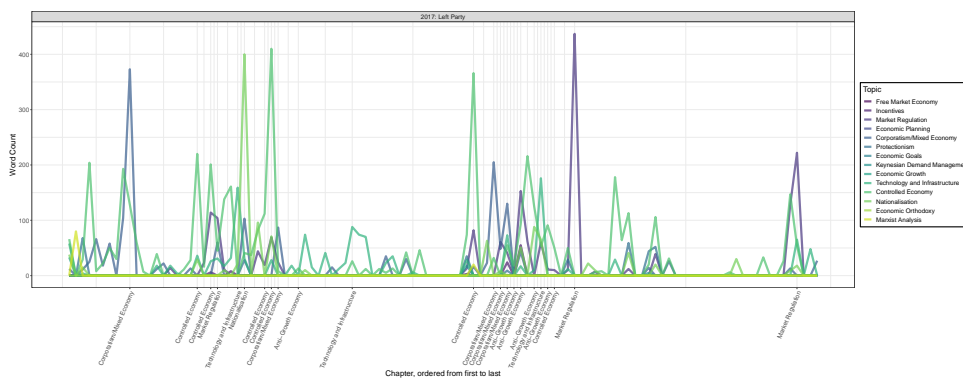
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.44: Distribution of Economy Topics, Green Party 2017



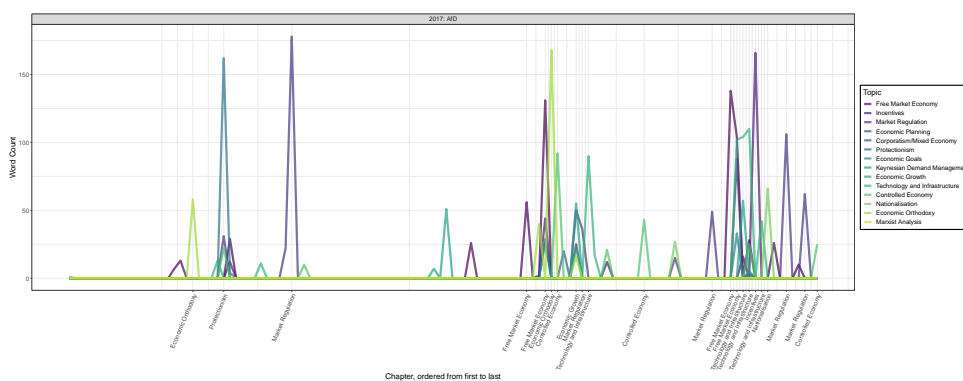
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.45: Distribution of Economy Topics, Left Party 2017



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.46: Distribution of Economy Topics, AfD 2017



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

A.6 Party Membership among GLES Respondents from 2002 to 2017

Table A.3: Party Membership 2013 and 2017. Absolute Numbers in Parentheses.

Party Membership	Election	
	2013	2017
Office-holding membership	0.5 (10)	0.9 (20)
Active membership, no office	1.7 (35)	0.9 (19)
Passive membership	2.3 (45)	1.5 (33)
No membership	95.5 (1,902)	96.6 (2,069)
Total	1,991	2,141

Source: GLES pre-election cross-section, waves 2013 and 2017.

Table A.4: Party Membership 2002, 2005, and 2009. Absolute Numbers in Parentheses.

Party Membership	Election		
	2002	2005	2009
Office-holding membership	1.5 (48)	2.6 (23)	4.7 (30)
Membership, no office	3.8 (124)	7.4 (66)	8.6 (55)
No membership	94.7 (3,060)	90.0 (804)	86.7 (553)
Total	3,232	893	638

Source: GLES pre-election cross-section, waves 2002 to 2009.

Table A.5: Party Membership by Party in 2017

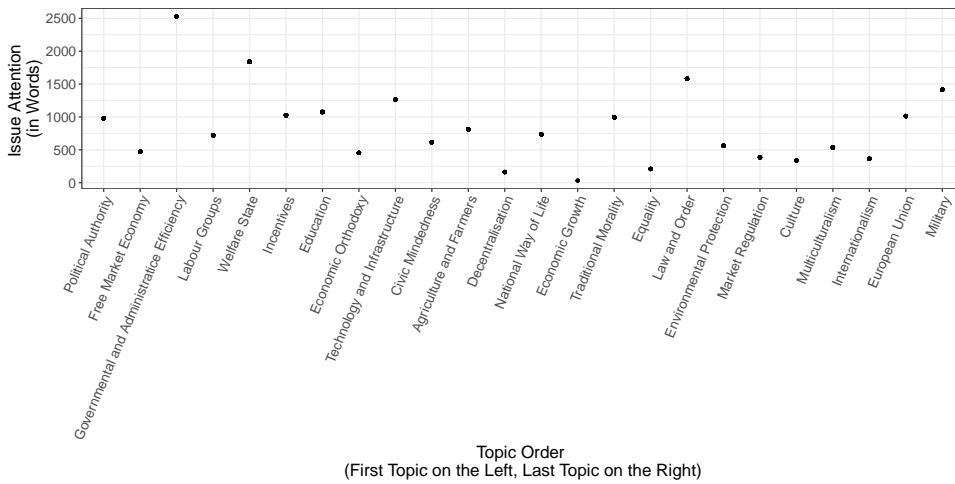
Party	Frequency	Percent
CDU/CSU	28	39.4
SPD	17	23.9
FDP	5	7.0
Green Party	3	4.2
Left Party	7	9.9
AfD	1	1.4
Total	61	

Source: GLES pre-election cross-section 2017. Note: Parties that are not studied in this dissertation were excluded from this table.

A.7 Topic Order and Issue Attention in German Election Manifestos

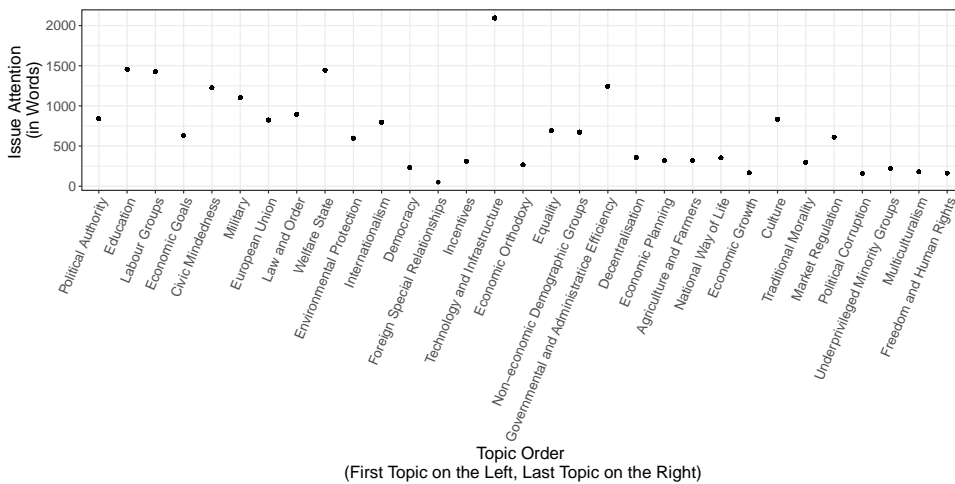
A.7.1 2002

Figure A.47: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the CDU/CSU 2002 Manifesto



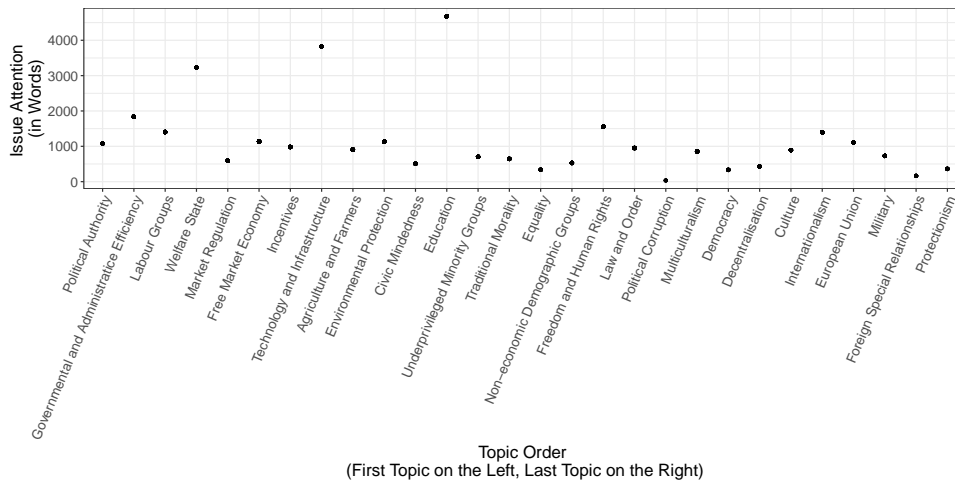
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.48: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the SPD 2002 Manifesto



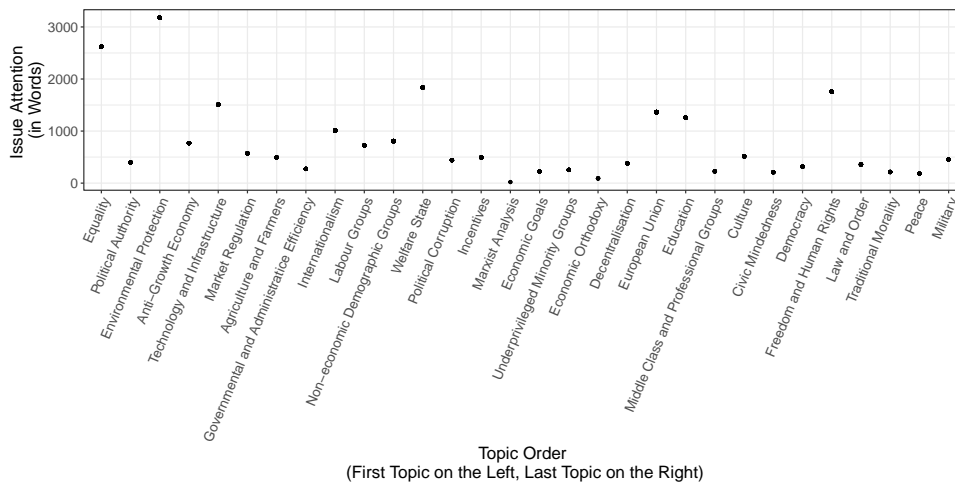
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.49: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the FDP 2002 Manifesto

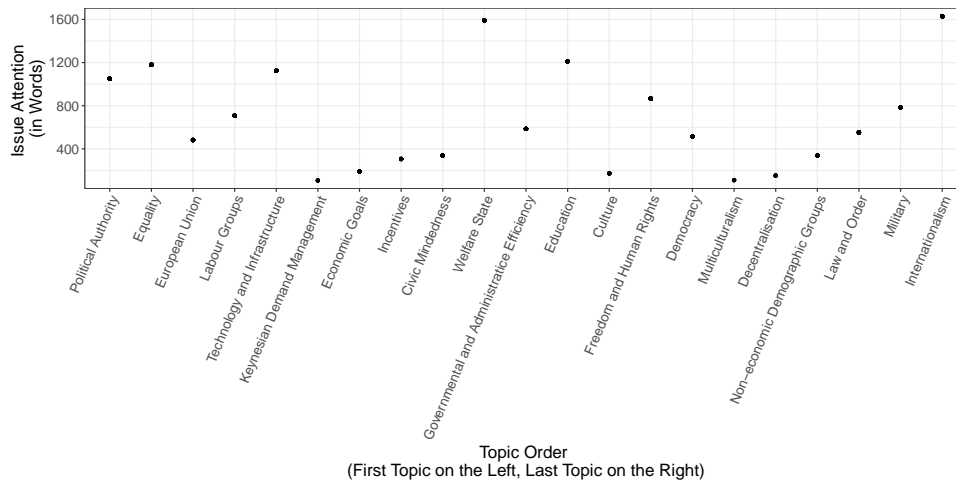


Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.50: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the Green Party 2002 Manifesto



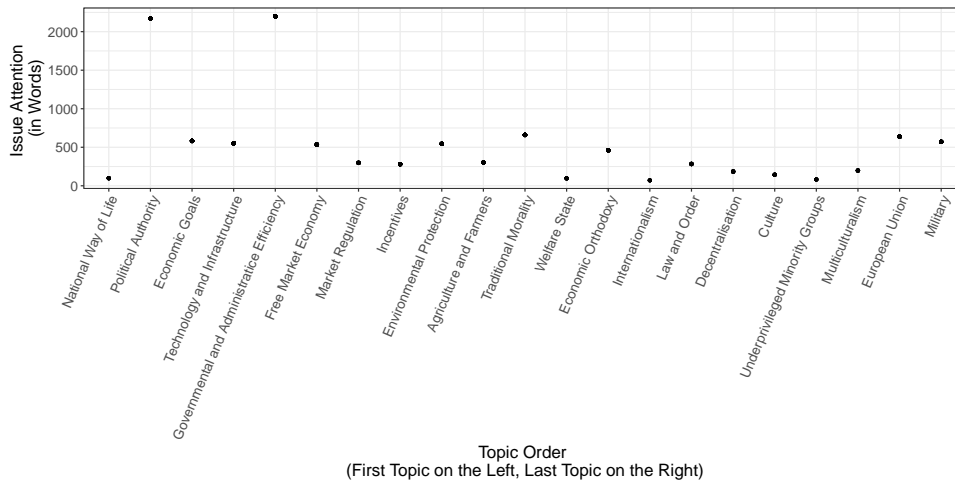
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.51: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the Left Party 2002 Manifesto

Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

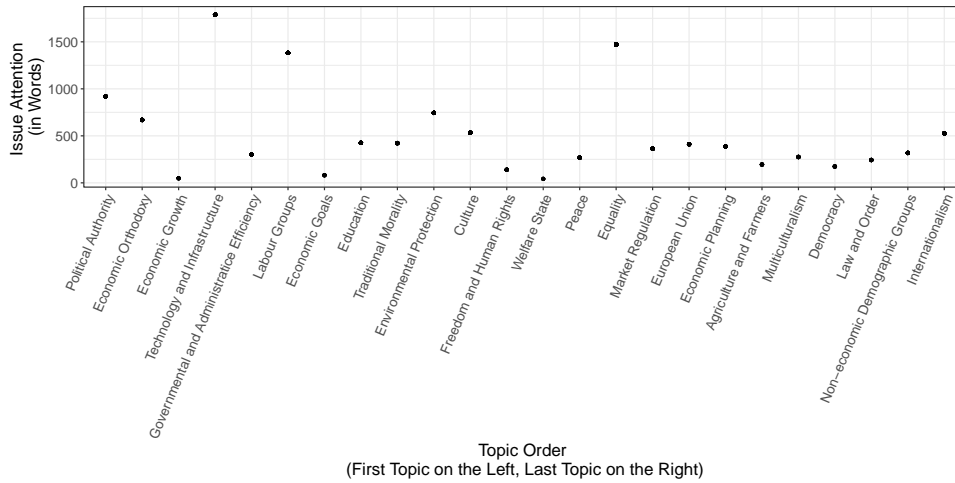
A.7.2 2005

Figure A.52: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the CDU/CSU 2005 Manifesto



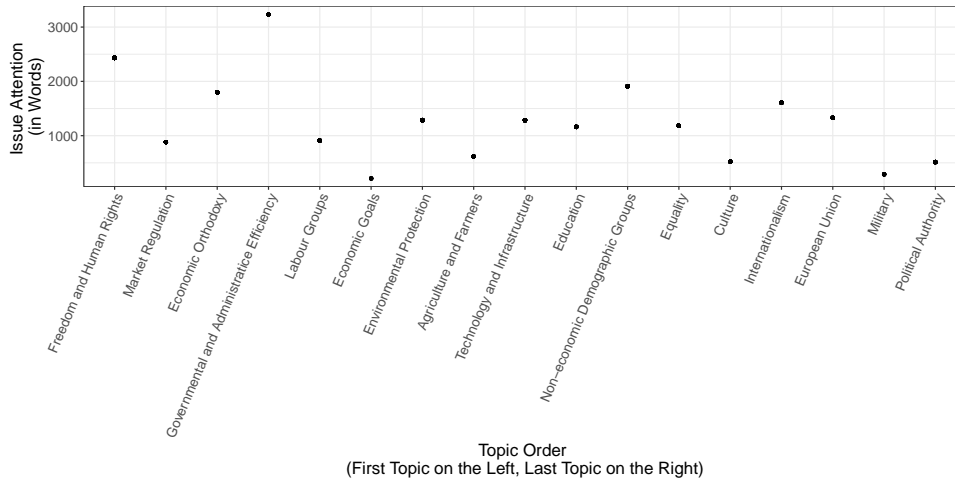
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volken et al., 2017).

Figure A.53: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the SPD 2005 Manifesto



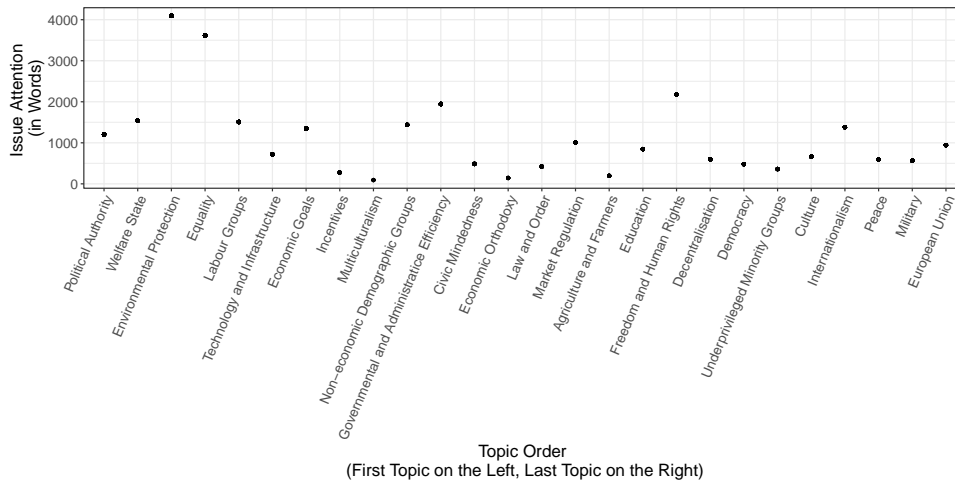
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volken et al., 2017).

Figure A.54: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the FDP 2005 Manifesto

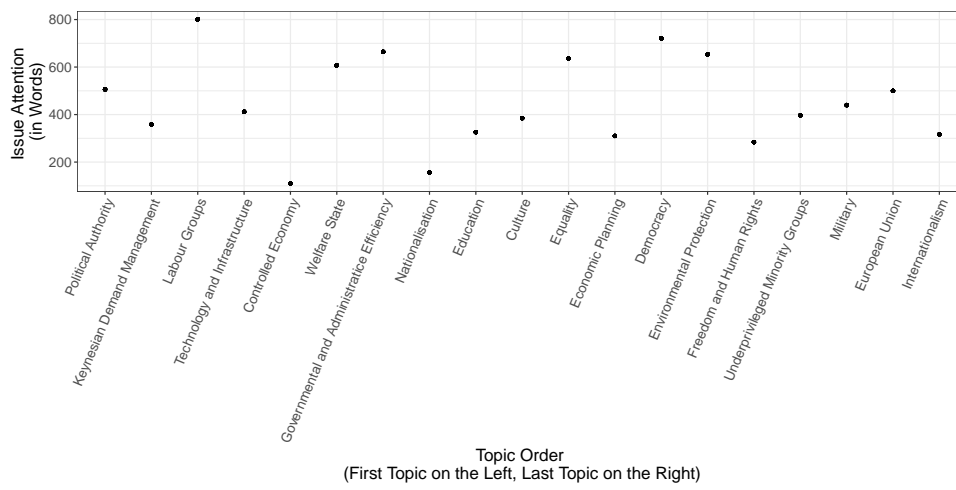


Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.55: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the Green Party 2005 Manifesto



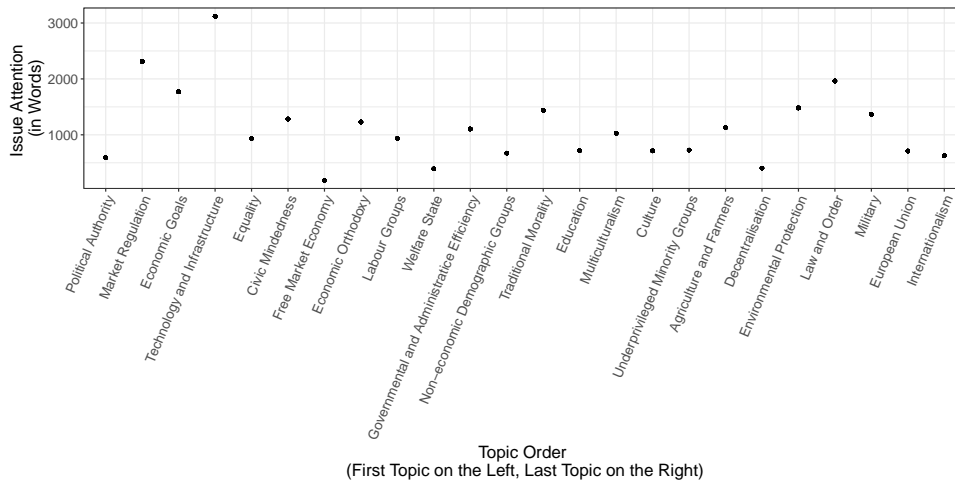
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.56: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the Left Party 2005 Manifesto

Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

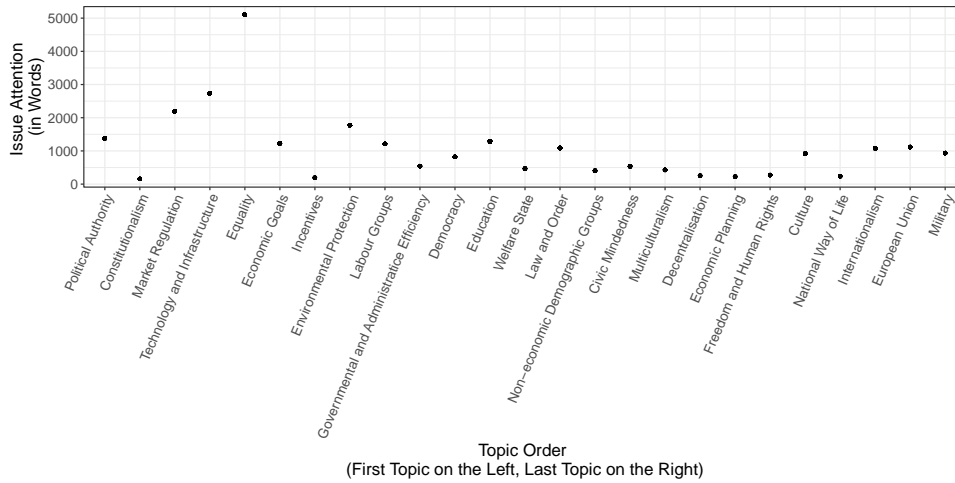
A.7.3 2009

Figure A.57: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the CDU/CSU 2009 Manifesto



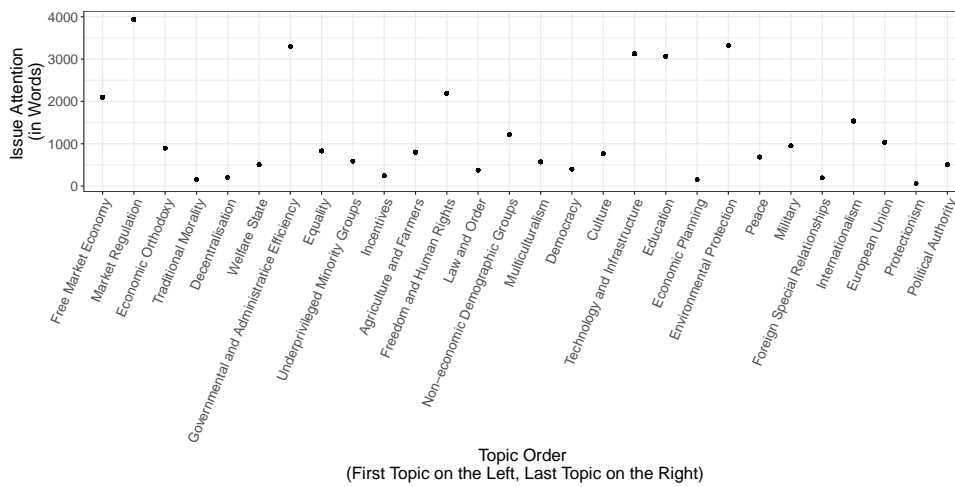
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.58: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the SPD 2009 Manifesto



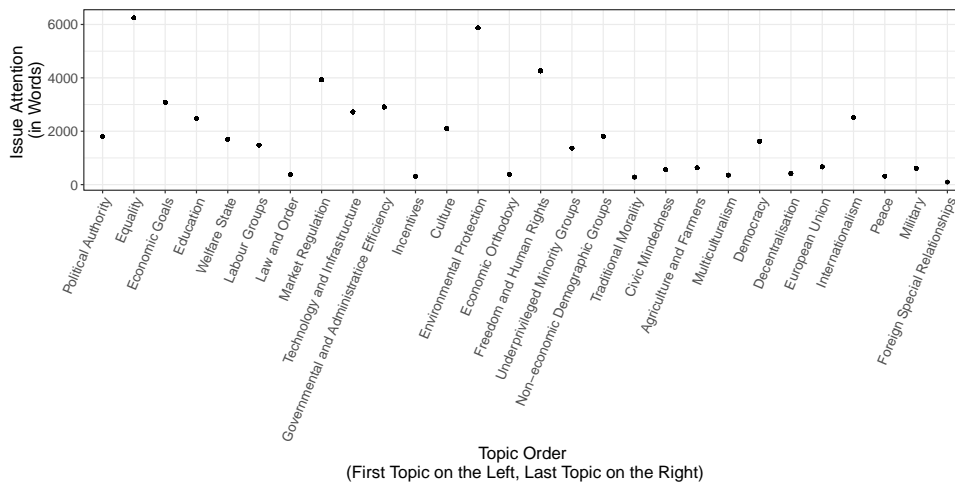
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.59: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the FDP 2009 Manifesto



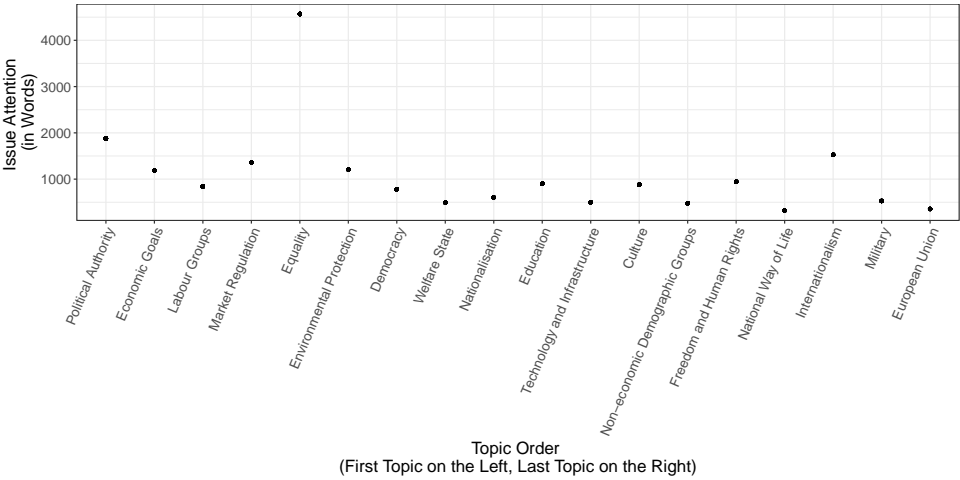
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.60: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the Green Party 2009 Manifesto



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

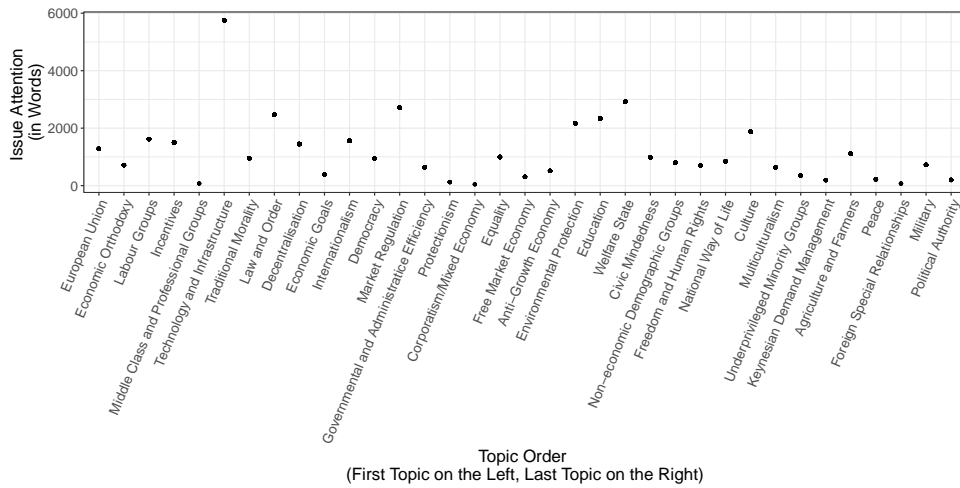
Figure A.61: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the Left Party 2009 Manifesto



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

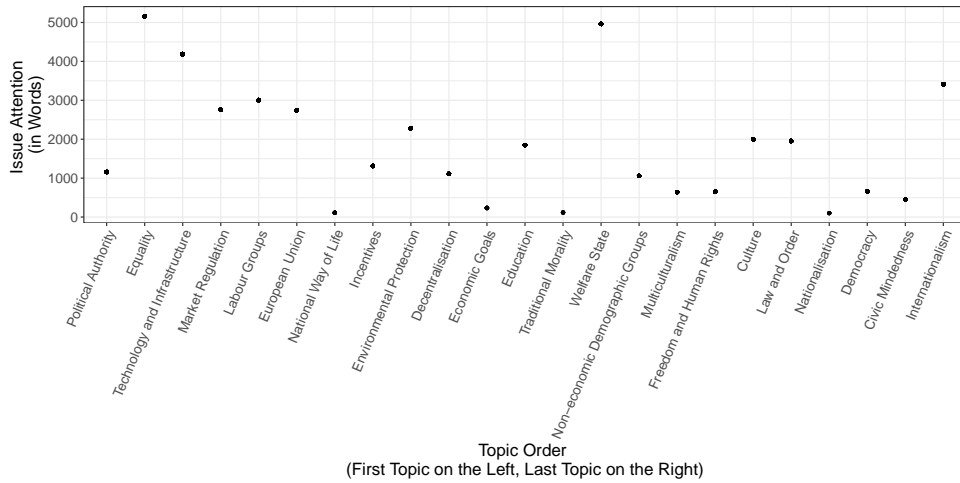
A.7.4 2013

Figure A.62: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the CDU/CSU 2013 Manifesto



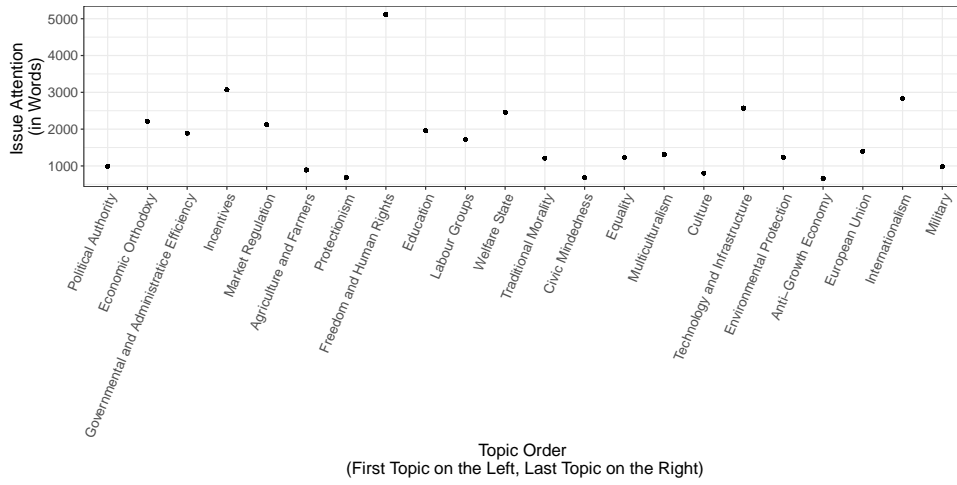
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.63: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the SPD 2013 Manifesto



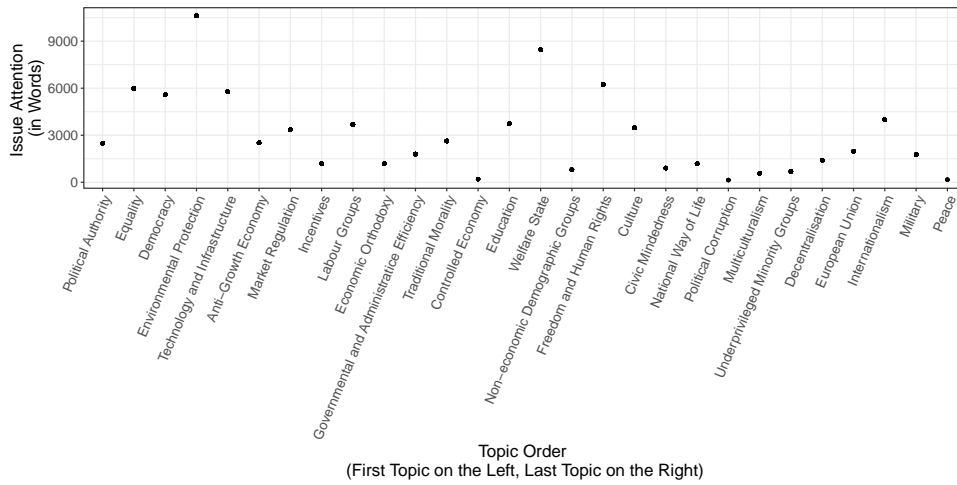
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.64: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the FDP 2013 Manifesto



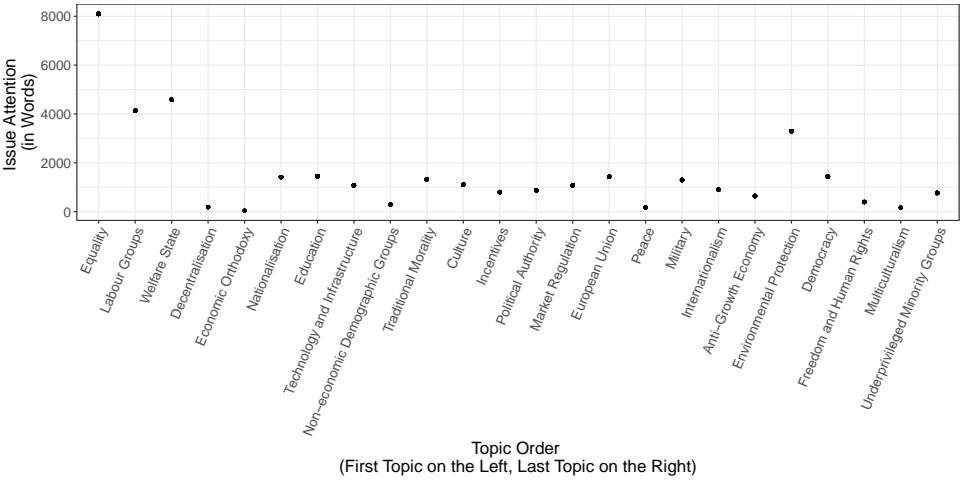
Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.65: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the Green Party 2013 Manifesto



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Figure A.66: Topic Order and Issue Attention in the Left Party 2013 Manifesto



Source: Own calculations based on MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2017).

Appendix to Chapter 3

Demand Side: How Topic Order Affects Voters'

Perceptions

A.8 *Transferring CAP Coding into MARPOR Coding***Table A.6:** Translation of Comparative Agendas Project Topic Codes to Manifesto Project Topic Codes

CAP Topic Code	MARPOR Topic Code
1 – Macroeconomics	408 – Economic Goals
2 – Civil Rights	201 – Human Rights
3 – Health	504 – Welfare State
4 – Agriculture	703 – Agriculture and Farmers
5 – Labor	701 – Labour Groups
6 – Education	506 – Education
7 – Environment	501 – Environmental Protection
8 – Energy	411 – Technology and Infrastructure
9 – Immigration	601 – National Way of Life
10 – Transportation	411 – Technology and Infrastructure
12 – Law and Crime	605 – Law and Order
13 – Social Welfare	504 – Welfare State
14 – Housing	504 – Welfare State
15 – Domestic Commerce	408 – Economic Goals
16 – Defense	104 – Military
17 – Technology	411 – Technology and Infrastructure
18 – Foreign Trade	406 – Protectionism
19 – International Affairs	107 – Internationalism
20 – Government Operations	303 – Governmental and Administrative Efficiency
23 – Culture	502 – Culture
24 – Government Participation	305 – Political Authority
26 – Home Affairs	601 – National Way of Life

A.9 *Effect of Topic Order on Respondents' Perceptions of Parties' Key Issues: Regression Tables*

Table A.7: Effect of Topic Order on Respondents' Perception of the Green Party's Key Issue, Logistic Regression

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Perceived issue importance	
	Model 1	Model 2
Original order	0.647*** (0.149)	
Reversed order		0.579** (0.227)
PID: Green Party	0.533* (0.305)	0.227 (0.434)
Education	0.073 (0.063)	-0.016 (0.095)
Constant	-0.998*** (0.320)	-2.222*** (0.483)
Observations	761	760
Log Likelihood	-508.139	-280.941
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,024.279	569.883

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Standard errors in parentheses.

Table A.8: Effect of Topic Order on Respondents' Perception of the CDU/CSU's Key Issue, Logistic Regression

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Perceived issue importance	
	Model 3	Model 4
Original order	2.829*** (0.340)	
Reversed order		-0.089 (0.147)
PID: CDU/CSU	0.335 (0.244)	0.181 (0.179)
Education	-0.064 (0.088)	0.060 (0.061)
Constant	-3.405*** (0.529)	-0.594* (0.314)
Observations	760	759
Log Likelihood	-276.453	-515.885
Akaike Inf. Crit.	560.905	1,039.769

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Standard errors in parentheses.

Table A.9: Effect of Topic Order on Respondents' Perception of the Green Party's Key Issue, Recency Effect, Logistic Regression

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Perceived issue importance	
	Model 5	Model 6
Original order	0.048(0.248)	
Reversed order		-0.045(0.153)
PID: Green Party	0.378(0.467)	0.192(0.309)
Education	-0.090(0.106)	-0.010(0.066)
Constant	-1.884*** (0.521)	-0.572* (0.329)
Observations	761	760
Log Likelihood	-237.690	-490.569
Akaike Inf. Crit.	483.380	989.138

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Standard errors in parentheses.

Table A.10: Effect of Topic Order on Respondents' Perception of the CDU/CSU's Key Issue, Recency Effect, Logistic Regression

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Perceived issue importance	
	Model 7	Model 8
Original order	-0.971*** (0.161)	
Reversed order		1.447*** (0.364)
PID: CDU/CSU	0.100(0.190)	0.095(0.361)
Education	0.022(0.067)	-0.105(0.121)
Constant	-0.394(0.340)	-3.151*** (0.656)
Observations	760	759
Log Likelihood	-463.651	-168.680
Akaike Inf. Crit.	935.302	345.360

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Standard errors in parentheses.

Appendix to Chapter 4
The Media: Connecting Parties and Voters

A.10 Most Important Source of Political Information

Table A.11: Most important Source of Political Information during 2009 and 2013 Bundestag Election Campaigns

Most important source for political information	Election	
	2009	2013
Television	60.02 (1,240)	69.54 (1,349)
Newspapers	23.18 (479)	20.52 (398)
Radio	4.02 (83)	2.68 (52)
Internet	4.74 (98)	4.48 (87)
Personal conversations	5.81 (120)	2.06 (40)
Other source	2.23 (46)	0.72 (14)
Total	2,066	1,940

Source: GLES pre-election cross-section, waves 2009 and 2013.

Table A.12: Most important Source of Political Information during 2017 Bundestag Election Campaign

Most important source for political information	Election	
	2017	
Television	58.16	(1,251)
Newspapers	19.94	(429)
Radio	7.62	(164)
Social media	6.09	(131)
Other internet sources	5.21	(112)
Personal conversations	2.19	(47)
Other source	0.79	(17)
Total	2,151	

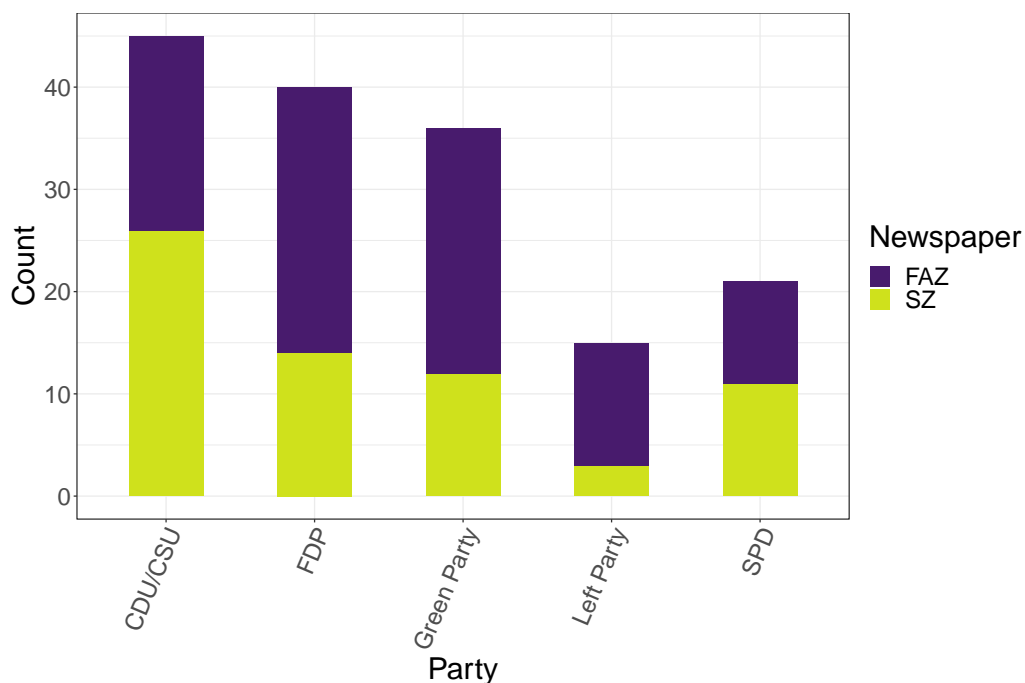
Source: GLES pre-election cross-section, wave 2017.

A.11 News Articles about Parties' Manifesto Releases

Figures A.67 through A.71 show the number of articles covering election manifestos from 2002 to 2017. Political parties are displayed on the x-axis. Articles published in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* are coloured in yellow, and articles published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* are coloured in purple. For all parties, the plots display the number of articles that were published up to three days after manifesto release.

In 2002, news coverage was highest for the manifestos released by the CDU/CSU and the FDP, with 45 and 40 newspaper articles covering those manifestos, respectively. Despite being in government at the time, the SPD got the second-to-lowest news coverage at 21 articles, with only the Left Party's manifesto being covered less. The two largest parties received higher coverage from the SZ than the FAZ, whereas the FDP, the Green Party, and the Left Party all receive higher coverage from the FAZ.

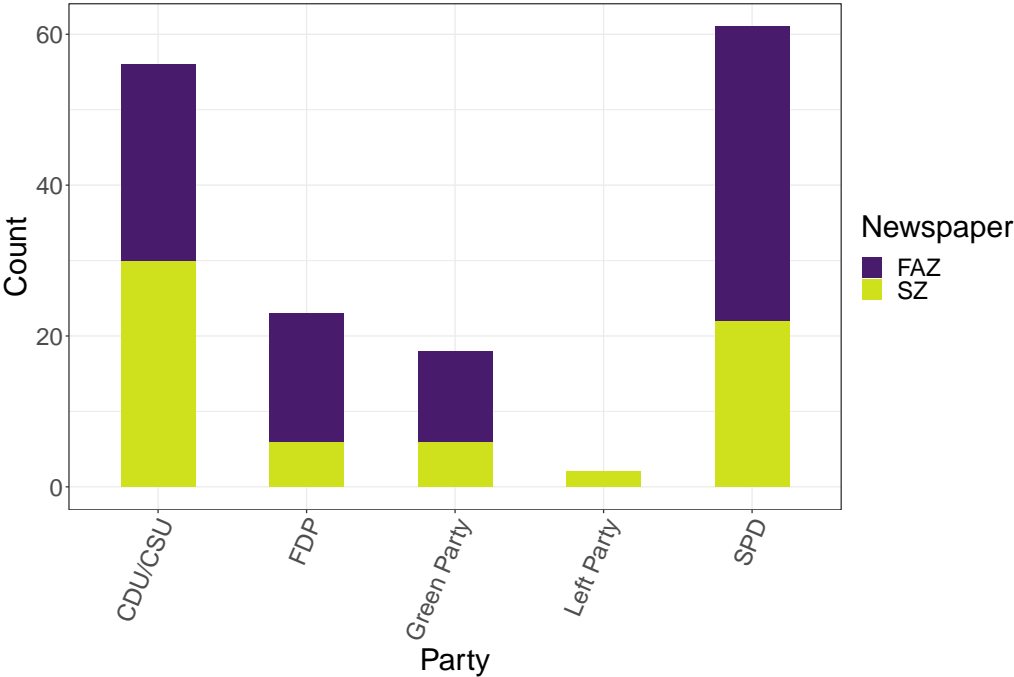
Figure A.67: Number of Articles Covering each Party's 2002 Election Manifesto, by Newspaper



Source: Manual coding of newspaper articles in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* covering parties' election manifestos up to three days after manifesto release. Total number of articles in 2002: 157.

In 2005, which was an early election after then-chancellor Gerhard Schröder lost a vote of confidence, news coverage was highest for the two biggest parties, with 61 news articles being published about the SPD's manifesto, and 56 articles about the CDU/CSU's manifesto. The SPD received almost twice as many articles in the FAZ than in the SZ, while CDU/CSU coverage was higher in the SZ. News coverage for the three smaller parties' manifestos did not exceed 25 articles for either of the parties. The Left Party's manifesto was covered in only 2 articles in the SZ as it was released.

Figure A.68: Number of Articles Covering each Party's 2005 Election Manifesto, by Newspaper

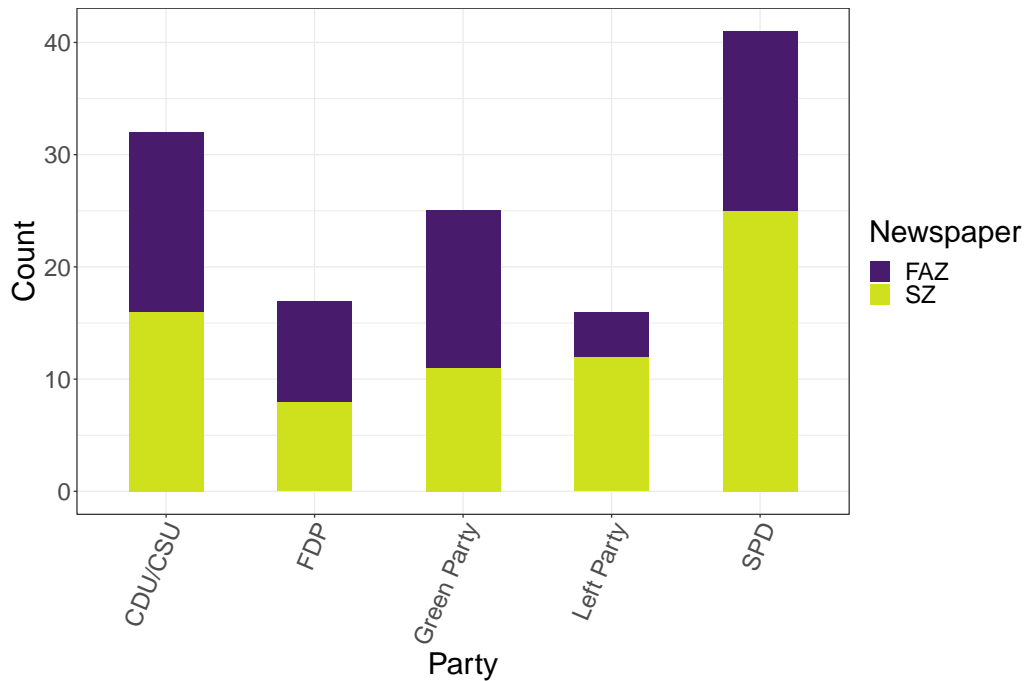


Source: Manual coding of newspaper articles in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* covering parties' election manifestos up to three days after manifesto release. Total number of articles in 2005: 160.

In 2009, news coverage was highest for the manifesto releases of the two biggest parties, the CDU/CSU and the SPD, who were also in a government coalition at the time of the election, with the SPD manifesto receiving higher coverage than the CDU/CSU manifesto. The SPD manifesto received higher coverage from the SZ, whereas the CDU/CSU manifesto was covered evenly among the two newspapers. Among the three opposition parties, the Green Party's manifesto

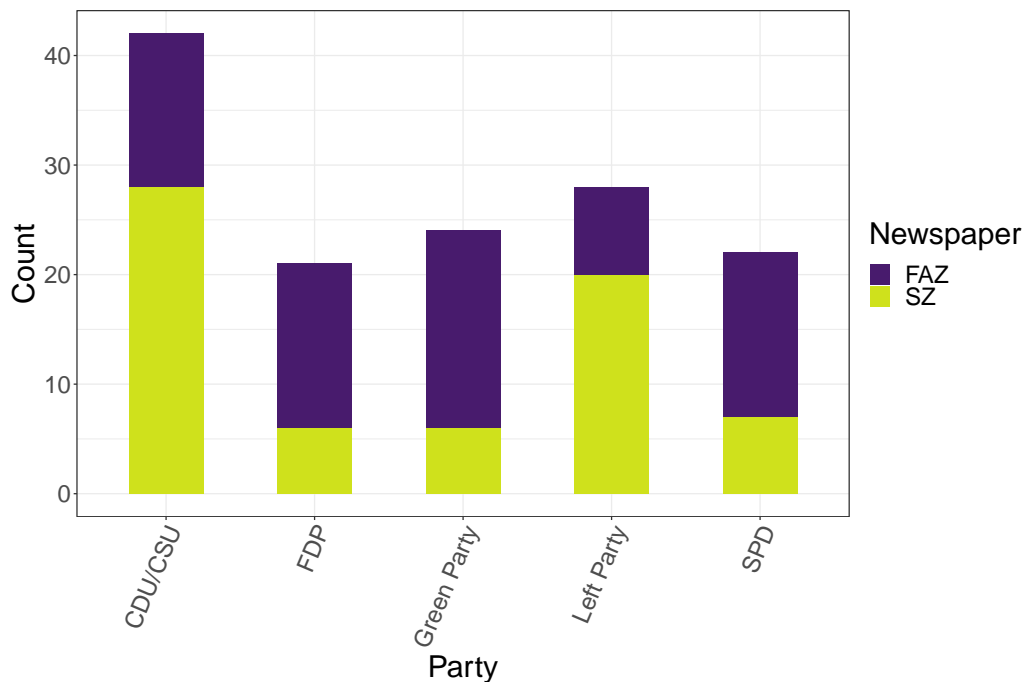
was covered the most in newspaper articles.

Figure A.69: Number of Articles Covering each Party's 2009 Election Manifesto, by Newspaper



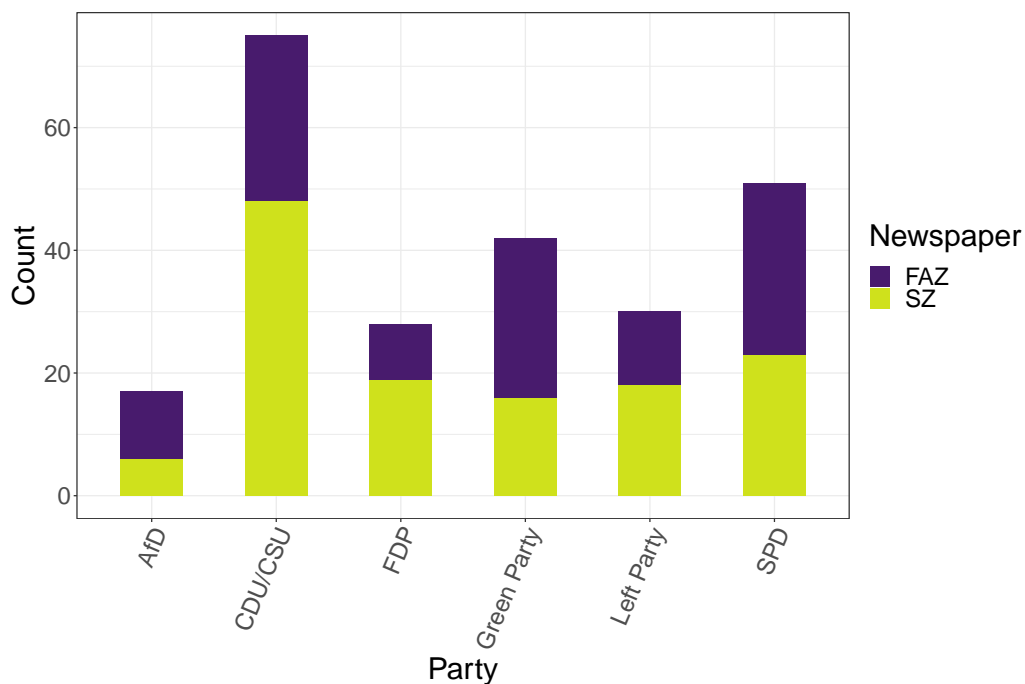
Source: Manual coding of newspaper articles in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* covering parties' election manifestos up to three days after manifesto release. Total number of articles in 2009: 131.

In 2013, when the incumbent coalition government consisted of the CDU/CSU and the FDP, the CDU/CSU's manifesto received by far the highest news coverage upon release. Out of the 42 news articles covering the chancellor's party's manifesto, 28 articles were published by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and the remaining 14 in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. For the first time, the Left Party's manifesto released did not receive the lowest news coverage among the parties in the data, but was covered the second most often at 28 articles, 20 of which appeared in the SZ. The FDP, who was the junior coalition party, received the lowest news coverage for its manifesto release, with 21 articles published across both newspapers, 15 of which appeared in the FAZ.

Figure A.70: Number of Articles Covering each Party's 2013 Election Manifesto, by Newspaper

Source: Manual coding of newspaper articles in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* covering parties' election manifestos up to three days after manifesto release. Total number of articles in 2013: 137.

In 2017, the two incumbent coalition partners, the CDU/CSU and the SPD, are the two parties whose manifesto releases received the highest news coverage. The CDU/CSU, who was the chancellor's party at the time, was covered by a total of 75 newspaper articles upon its manifesto release, almost two thirds of which appeared in the SZ. The SPD's manifesto release was covered in 51 newspaper articles, with over half of those appearing in the FAZ. Among the opposition parties, the Green Party's election manifesto had the highest news coverage at 42 articles. The party whose manifesto had the lowest news coverage was the AfD, who was elected into Parliament for the first time in 2017. Only 17 articles were published covering the new party's manifesto.

Figure A.71: Number of Articles Covering each Party's 2017 Election Manifesto, by Newspaper

Source: Manual coding of newspaper articles in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* covering parties' election manifestos up to three days after manifesto release. Total number of articles in 2017: 243.

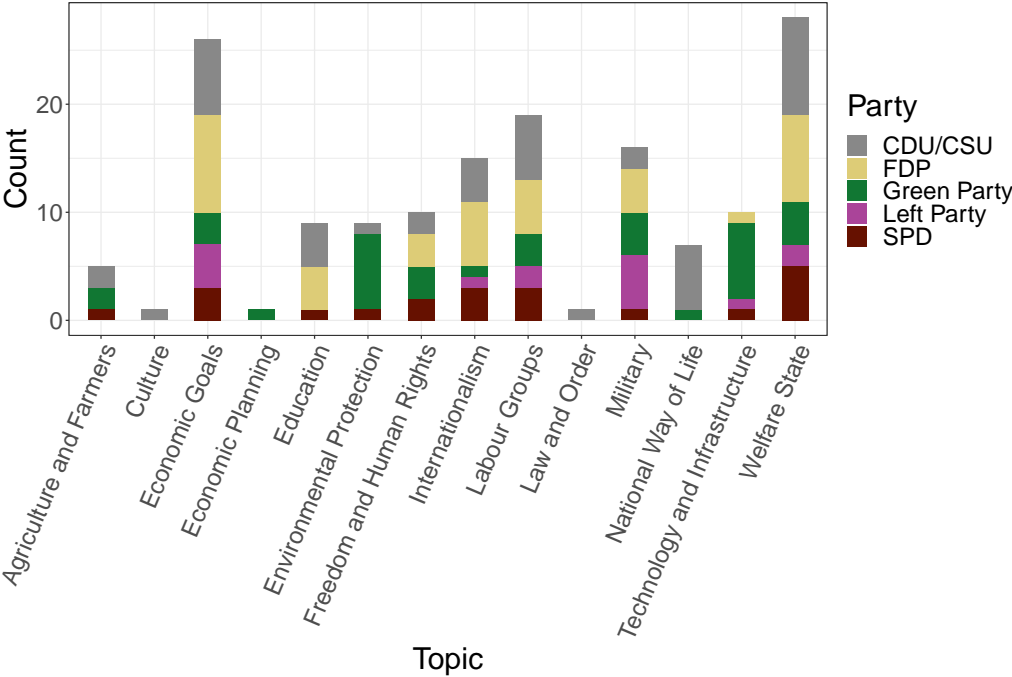
A.12 Topics Covered in News Articles about Election Manifestos

In Figures A.72 through A.76, we can see which topics are covered in news articles about parties' election manifestos. For each election, the plots show which topics were talked about in news articles covering the manifestos upon their release. The x-axis shows all topics that were included in all news articles for the given election. The colours denote which parties these topics were covered for in the newspaper articles that were released within three days after the respective manifesto was published.

Figure A.72 shows that in 2002, the topics that were talked about the most in news articles about parties' election manifestos are welfare state and economic goals. For three parties, namely the CDU/CSU, FDP, and SPD, these two topics were mentioned most often in the context of their respective manifestos. For the Green Party and the Left Party, in contrast, news articles focused on other topics in the context of their manifesto releases. Articles covering the Green

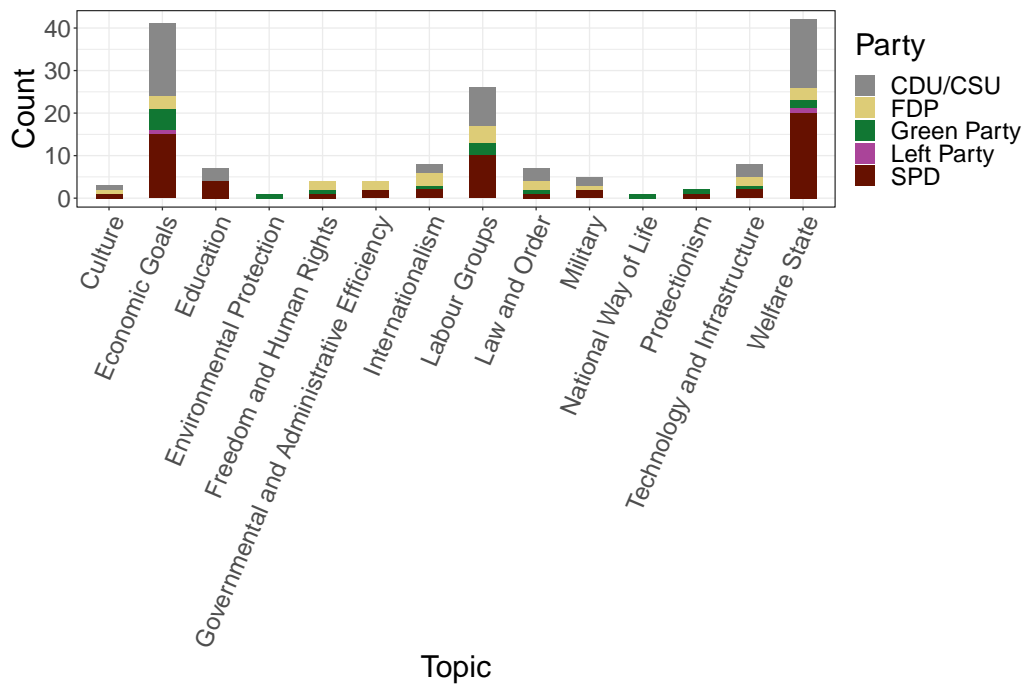
Party’s manifesto release talked about the issues of environmental protection and technology and infrastructure the most. Articles covering the Left Party focused on the topic of military, followed by economic goals.

Figure A.72: Topic Coverage in Newspaper Articles about 2002 Election Manifestos, by Party



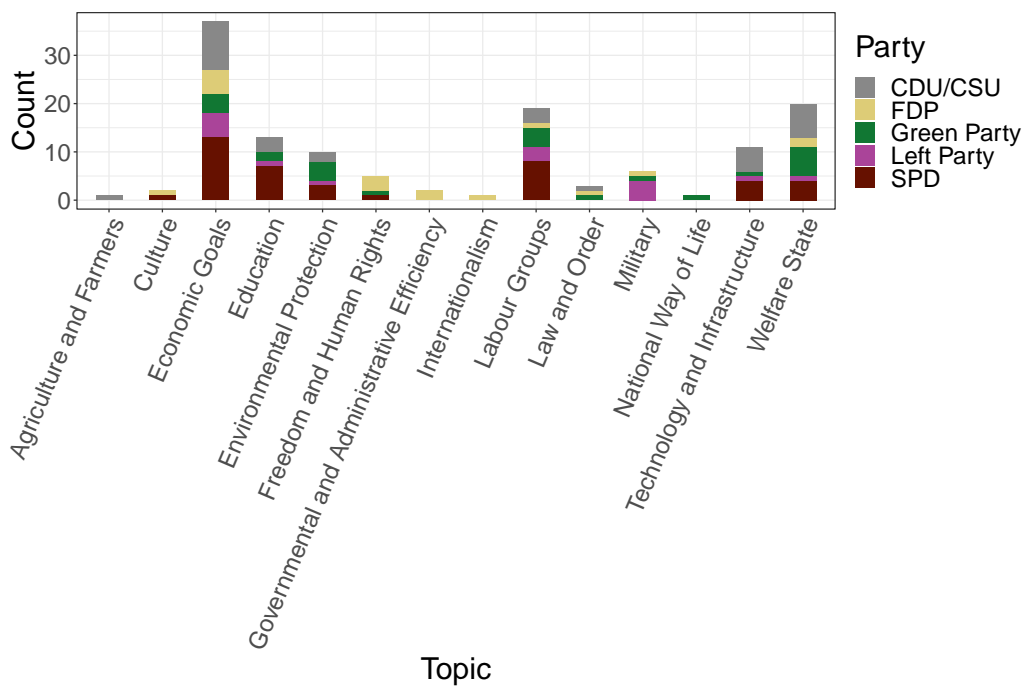
Source: Manual coding of newspaper articles in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* covering parties’ election manifestos up to three days after manifesto release.

In 2005, welfare state and economic goals were once again the two topics that were talked about the most in the context of parties’ manifesto releases, as depicted in Figure A.73. Accordingly, these topics are among the three topics that were mentioned most often for all individual manifestos. For the Left Party, where only two articles were published about its manifesto, welfare state and economic goals are even the only two topics that were covered at all. Interestingly, environmental protection is mentioned only once in the context of the Green Party’s manifesto, despite the environment being the Greens’ key issue. While the total number of topics that were covered in the context of parties’ manifestos is the same as in 2002, most topics were only mentioned once or twice, and only referring to two or three parties, making the news coverage of parties manifestos more focused than in the previous election.

Figure A.73: Topic Coverage in Newspaper Articles about 2005 Election Manifestos, by Party

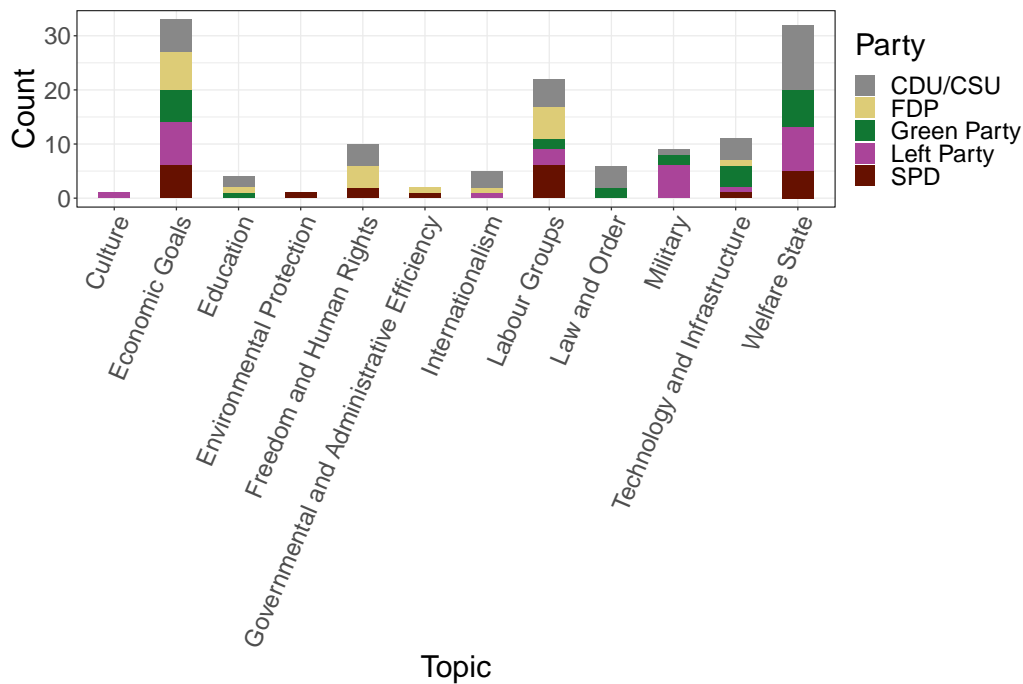
Source: Manual coding of newspaper articles in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* covering parties' election manifestos up to three days after manifesto release.

In 2009, Figure A.74 shows that there is once again a clear focus on economic goals in news articles that cover parties' election manifestos, followed by the topics of welfare state and labour groups. Accordingly, economic goals is among the two topics that are talked about the most for each individual manifesto. Additionally, news articles cover the topic of welfare state a lot when talking about the CDU/CSU's and the Green Party's manifestos. When talking about the SPD and the Left Party, they focus more on Labour Groups. Once again, there are topics that are covered only in reference to one or two manifestos, such as culture or governmental and administrative efficacy.

Figure A.74: Topic Coverage in Newspaper Articles about 2009 Election Manifestos, by Party

Source: Manual coding of newspaper articles in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* covering parties' election manifestos up to three days after manifesto release.

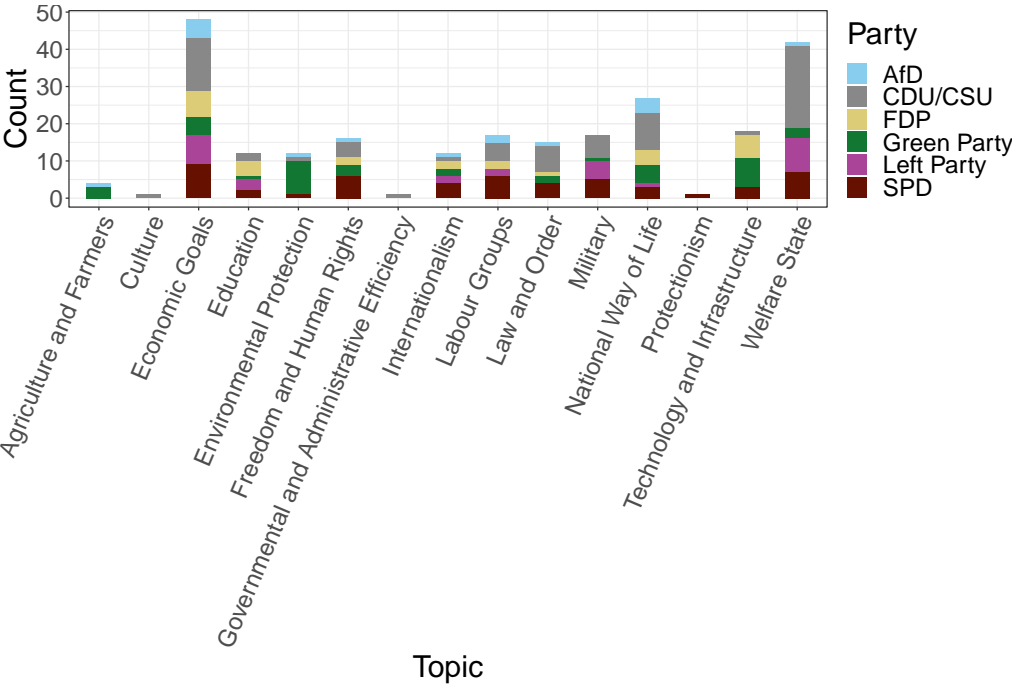
Figure A.74 shows that in 2009, economic goals and welfare state are once again the two topics that dominate news articles on parties' manifesto releases. Additionally, there is a lot of coverage on the topic of labour groups, especially in the context of the manifestos released by the SPD, the FDP, and the CDU/CSU. The topic of environmental protection is mentioned only when discussing the SPD's manifesto, but not in the context of the Green Party's election manifesto.

Figure A.75: Topic Coverage in Newspaper Articles about 2013 Election Manifestos, by Party

Source: Manual coding of newspaper articles in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* covering parties' election manifestos up to three days after manifesto release.

In Figure A.76, we can see that in the context of parties' election manifestos in 2017, economic goals and welfare state are once again the two topics that are mentioned the most. Furthermore, national way of life has become a prominent topic for the first time in news articles on parties' election manifestos. While being the second most talked about topic in the context of the AfD's manifesto, national way of life is also addressed a lot in the context of the CDU/CSU's manifesto, as well as the Green Party's and the FDP's manifesto. This increase in news coverage on parties talking about national way of life in their manifestos illustrates the impact of the AfD on German political discourse.

Figure A.76: Topic Coverage in Newspaper Articles about 2017 Election Manifestos, by Party



Source: Manual coding of newspaper articles in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* covering parties' election manifestos up to three days after manifesto release.