THE OUTPUT OF AGGREGATED PREFERENCES: WHY GOVERNMENT PARTIES CHANGE THEIR PLATFORM MORE THAN OPPOSITION PARTIES

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Who changes more: Government parties or opposition ones?

Classical, but largely untested, hypothesis 1: Opposition parties and government parties are equally likely to change their platform.

Why? Spatial models of elections predict that parties choose a platform that maximizes electoral support. If, say, public opinion shifts to the right, all parties will shift to the right as well.

Largely untested hypothesis 2a: Opposition parties are more likely to change their platform than government parties are.

Why? Parties use proxies, such as government/opposition status. Opposition parties have lost, motivating change.

Or, focusing on parties’ aspiration level and assuming that office is parties’ ultimate goal, only opposition parties perform below their aspiration level, motivating change.

PARTIES VARY IN PREFERENCE FOR OFFICE

Variation across parties in their preferences or goals (policy, votes or office)

We focus on office aspiration, a dynamic measure that changes according to performance.

Three main types of parties, varying in terms of behavior when entering office:

1. Parties that have (almost) never been in office and, hence, don’t expect office (low aspiration parties);
2. Parties that have (almost) always been in office and, hence, do expect office (high aspiration parties);
3. Parties that move in and out of office.
PARTIES' VARYING PREFERENCE FOR OFFICE (CONT'D)

Hypothesis 3: Opposition parties with low office aspiration are less likely to change their platform than government parties with low office aspiration.

Hypothesis 4: Opposition parties with high office aspiration are more likely to change their platform than government parties with high office aspiration.

DV: PARTY PLATFORM CHANGE

Based on comparative manifesto (CMP) dataset: data for 191 parties from 21 established democracies in the period 1950-2013, yielding > 1,600 platform changes. CMP data re-aggregated into 19 categories capturing change in issue attention or position.

Calculated whether a category significantly differed from previous election (if yes, coded 1 for change).

Counted number of significant differences per manifesto (min = 0; max = 19).

KEY INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Office performance (for H3 & H4)
- Dummy variable: In office (1) prior to election or not (0).

Office aspiration (for H3 & H4)
- Continuous variable between 0 and 1.
- Office aspiration = 0: about 30% of the sample (e.g., Die Linke, GroenLinks).
- 0 ≤ office aspiration ≤ 0.25: about 14% of the sample (e.g., German Green party; D66).
- 0.25 < office aspiration ≤ 0.5: about 20% of the sample (e.g., mainstream parties in the UK).
- 0.5 < office aspiration ≤ 0.95: about 27% of the sample (e.g., Swedish and Austrian social democrats).
- Office aspiration > 0.95: about 5% of the sample.
OFFICE ASPIRATION

OFFICE ASPIRATION

OFFICE PERFORMANCE AND OFFICE ASPIRATION

DO OFFICE PERFORMANCE AND OFFICE ASPIRATION EXPLAIN PLATFORM CHANGE?

THE SHORT-TERM SECTORAL REGIME ENDURING, REGRESSION ANALYSIS, CONTROLS EXCLUDED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(H1 &amp; H2)</td>
<td>(Main model [H3 &amp; H4])</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inflation</td>
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<td>Inflation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>.883*</td>
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<tr>
<td>(039)</td>
<td>(062)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office aspiration</td>
<td>.905</td>
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<tr>
<td>(139)</td>
<td>(190)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opposition x Office aspiration</td>
<td>1.688*</td>
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<tr>
<td>(273)</td>
<td>(293)</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1585</td>
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OFFICE ASPIRATION

MARGINAL EFFECT OF OPPOSITION ON PARTY PLATFORM CHANGE FOR INCREASING VALUES OF OFFICE ASPIRATION

SUMMING UP

Opposition parties do not change more than government parties do (H2a)

Instead, on average, governing parties change more than opposition parties do (H2b)

Moreover, opposition parties with low office aspiration are less likely to change their platform than government parties with low office aspiration (H3)

Opposition parties with high office aspiration are more likely to change their platform than government parties with high office aspiration.

Implications for preference aggregation?
THANKS FOR THE ATTENTION!

QUESTIONS?