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Policy, Office, and Votes – How Party Goals Relate to Party Platform Change

Research Master Thesis

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Why do parties adjust their positions in the process of electoral competition? Recent research suggests that parties change their positions in response to surprisingly ending up in opposition, or as a reaction to getting into government against all odds. Yet, we observe that parties which are not expected to change according to this argument are at least as likely to alter their positions as those parties that are identified as candidates for adjustment. To solve this puzzle, I argue and empirically corroborate that parties are not just office-seekers, but can follow different goals that relate to platform change in distinct ways. The puzzling behavior described above can be explained by taking into account that parties are not homogenously motivated. Analyzing position changes of 210 mostly Western European parties over the post-war period, I demonstrate that a party's goal-related and subjectively assessed performance relates to its positional adjustments in ways that suggest the operation of cognitive mechanisms such as endowment effects and loss aversion. This study thus contributes to the literature explaining party position change by incorporating more accurately theoretical insights about party goals, and by emphasizing the importance of the decision-making processes of cognitively limited parties. It helps us to better understand processes of electoral competition.

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Introduction

Why do parties adjust their positions in the process of electoral competition? One potential explanation for this behavior is given by Harmel and Janda (1994) in their *integrated theory of party goals and party change*: parties, which are generally resistant to change, adjust their strategies (read positions) in the face of failing to achieve their primary goal. Recently this argument has been amended by Schumacher, van de Wardt, Vis, and Klitgaard (2015), who reason that failure to reach one's goal does not drive platform change uniformly. Contrarily, these authors argue that office-motivated parties' responses to ending up in opposition, due to endowment effects and loss aversion (cf. Kahneman et al. 1990), are moderated by their level of office-aspiration; parties that have constantly been in government and therefore have high aspirations change after ending up in opposition. Parties with low aspirations change when they enter government.

Yet, among those parties which are not expected to adjust their platforms according to this argument (e.g. those in office for long, uninterrupted periods) unexpectedly high levels of platform change can be observed. The Dutch Christian Democrats, for example, changed their platform on average on six dimensions per election during their long spell of continuous government participation that lasted until the mid 1990s. Other parties with long-lasting control over government display similar behavior: the Swedish social democratic party changed its positions on average on four dimensions during its most successful period, the Italian Christian Democrats on five, and the Belgian Christian Democrats on eight dimensions. Parties that compete successfully and achieve their office-related goals seem at least as likely to change their platforms as parties that surprisingly fail to meet their goal.

In this paper I set out to shed light on this puzzle. I argue that the limited success of accounting for this behavior is due to the inaccurate conceptualization of parties as office-seekers

only. Parties can follow multiple goals (Strøm 1990) and the mechanisms connecting these party objectives to party position change vary. Specifically, in this paper I provide an answer to the question to what extent parties' goal-related performance and aspirations affect party position change. I suggest that the shock of a bad performance or the prospects of future failure induce loss-averse office- and vote-motivated parties to change their positions. For policy-oriented parties on the other hand, it is mainly the prospect of shaping public policy in the future, and the anticipation of the process that governs this act, that leads to platform change.

Analyzing platform change of 210 parties from the Western hemisphere over the period 1950-2013 I find broad support for these claims: only the government-opposition status of parties with high office-aspirations does not relate to platform change as expected. This study thus advances the literature on party position change on an important theoretical and empirical dimension. It incorporates more accurately theoretical insights about party goals into the empirical study of platform change by emphasizing and showing that parties can follow different motivations and that these relate differently to change. Taking this into account, not only failure, as theorized by Harmel and Janda (1994), or in addition the prospect of failure, as expected by Schumacher and colleagues (2015), but also the *prospect of success* can lead parties to change their positions. This has important implications for our understanding of the behavior of competitive political parties. When taking their positions they are not just driven by environmental incentives, as implied by a large number of studies, but some parties proactively adjust their platform in anticipation of electoral success.

To take the reader to this conclusion the rest of this paper is structured as follows. In the following section I will provide a brief review of the literature on party position change that leads to my theoretical argument about the relations between party goals and platform change. In

the same section I will formulate a number of hypotheses that will be tested and discussed in the subsequent part. In the last section I will summarize my argument and findings, highlight their implications, and conclude.

Theoretical Background

The Literature

Ever since Downs' (1957) *Economic Theory of Democracy* the study of party positions and party position change has received considerable scholarly attention. In this paper a party position is defined as the aggregated set of policies a party wants to enact, its ideas and beliefs in a specific point in time, as expressed by the party in its election program. Change or adjustment of this position occurs if a party alters these expressions. Parties position themselves on a number of dimensions – issues aggregated in one way or another – which constitute the multi-dimensional policy space.

The political science literature has attempted to provide explanations for parties' positional adjustments largely following three approaches: scholars have developed spatial rational choice models of party competition *deductively* (e.g. Downs 1957; Hinich/Ordeshook 1970; Wittman 1983; Cox 1990; Calvo/Hellwig 2011), they have taken over elements of these models to analyze the *empirical* patterns of party position change, and they have tried to explain these patterns from non-rational choice perspectives. Due to the empirical approach that I take in this paper, this review will focus on the latter two of these strands.

While scholars in the first of these two empirical traditions (e.g. Adams et al. 2004, 2006, 2009; Adams/Somer-Topcu 2009; Ezrow et al. 2011; Haupt 2010; Ward et al. 2011) mostly maintain the core assumption of the rational choice approach that parties are rationally adjusting

their positions in an attempt to maximize their payoffs in elections, these scholars pay close attention to the internal and external conditions under which parties operate. Central is the argument that parties change their platform in response to changing environmental incentives. Parties are shown to respond to changes of the position of the (partisan-) median voter as expected by Downs (among many others Adams et al. 2004; Ezrow et al. 2011); they adjust their positions in the context of differing electoral institutions (Calvo/Hellwig 2011), and they react to changes in global economic conditions (Adams et al. 2009; Haupt 2010; Ward et al. 2011).

At the same time, studies in this tradition have increasingly acknowledged that parties and their leaders are not entirely free in responding to these environmental stimuli optimally (i.e. choosing the position that yields the largest utility according to the spatial model). Their ability to shift their position towards the strategically demanded ideal position is curtailed both by party internal and external factors. Internally, party organizational features that relate to the balance of power between party leaders and rank-and-file activists moderate parties' responses, with activist-dominated parties being less flexible than leader-dominated ones (Schumacher et al. 2013). Similarly, niche parties, due to their higher policy orientation, display greater stability in party positions (Adams et al. 2006; Ezrow et al. 2011; but see Tromborg 2015), and party internal factions constrain their leaders across different kinds of parties (Budge et al. 2010; Ceron 2012).

Faced with the changes that the world of party politics has gone through in recent decades, e.g. growing electoral volatility (Drummond 2006), the rise of new parties (Mudde 2013) and of new issues (Kriesi 2010), this literature now faces the problem that, in order to keep up with these changes, explanations are becoming more conditional, context dependent, and less parsimonious.

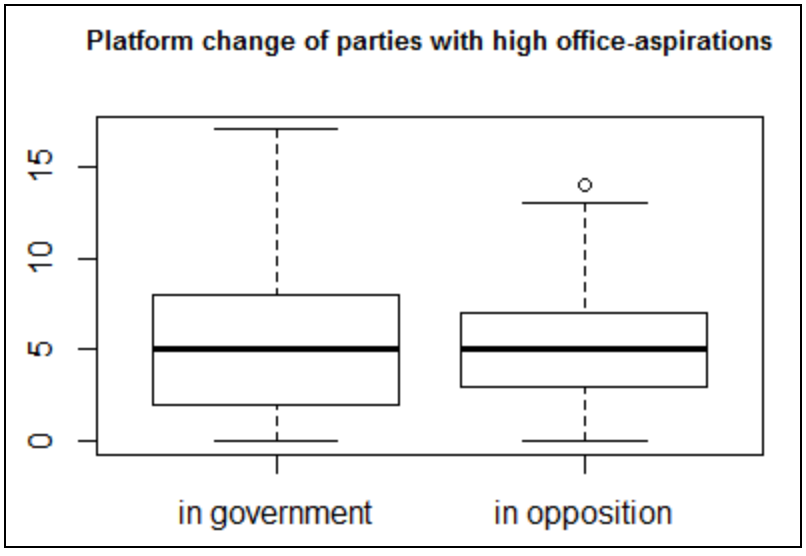
In contrast to these studies, a range of scholars have generally questioned the use of rational choice models for the study of party competition. In his *new spatial theory of party competition,* Budge (1994) argues that due to the great uncertainty surrounding electoral competition, cognitively limited parties apply simple decision rules to determine whether and how to change their platform. Recently Budge amended this explanation by arguing that the most relevant of his identified heuristics, the "past results model" (in which parties evaluate the success of their previous positional adjustment by setting it in relation to their electoral outcomes) interacts with party-internal factional change (Budge et al. 2010). This point echoes Harmel and Janda (1994) who argue that the most relevant *mechanism* leading to platform adjustment are changes to party-internal power relations. Furthermore these authors argue that the most relevant *causes* of platform change are goal-related shocks "which cause a party to reevaluate its effectiveness in meeting its primary goal" (Harmel/Janda 1994, 265).

More recently, two studies have advanced arguments that emphasize the operation of cognitive mechanisms within parties that shape their behavior. Bendor and colleagues (2011) suggest that parties are satisficing actors who change their strategies when outcomes do not satisfice. Assuming that parties are office motivated, their study claims that this is the case if parties fail to enter government. Schumacher et al. (2015) on the other hand, while maintaining the assumption of office-motivated parties, argue convincingly that the effect of ending up in opposition varies with regard to a party's office-aspiration; a dynamic benchmark against which outcomes are assessed. Furthermore, they amend Bendor et al.'s theory and suggest that endowment effects and risk attitudes (cf. Kahneman et al. 1990; Tversky/Kahneman 1992) are the mechanisms driving this behavior. And indeed, in accordance with this logic, the authors find that parties that unexpectedly ended up in opposition, or surprisingly managed to get into government

are more likely to change their positions than parties whose office performance was broadly in line with their aspirations (Schumacher et al. 2015, 1050).

Yet, a quick glance at the data presented below reveals the fact that a number of parties which are not expected to adjust their platforms according to this argument adjust their positions at levels that can hardly be squared with this logic. The Dutch Christian Democrats, for example, during their long spell of continuous government participation changed their platform on average on six dimensions per election. Other parties with long-term control over government display similar behavior: the Swedish SAP changed on average on four dimensions during its most successful period, the Italian Christian Democrats on five, and the Belgian Christian Democrats on eight dimensions – all on more than the average level of platform change observed in my data. Indeed, as Figure 1 illustrates, parties that compete successfully and achieve their office-related goals are at least as likely to change their platforms as parties that surprisingly fail to meet their goal. How can we explain this puzzling behavior? In the following section I argue that the limited success of accounting for this pattern is due to the inaccurate conceptualization of parties as office-seekers only. Parties can follow multiple goals (Strøm 1990) and the mechanisms connect-

Figure 1.



Note: The figure displays on how many dimensions parties with continuous government participation in the past change their positions in response to failing or succeeding to enter government (data described below).

ing these party objectives to party position change vary. When we take into account the different objectives that parties can pursue, the behavior of parties like those mentioned above becomes understandable.

How Party Goals relate to Platform Change

Party Goals

Drawing on Strøm (1990), Harmel and Janda (1994), and Budge (1994), I argue that parties' behavior is significantly shaped by their pursuit of potentially incompatible goals and the trade-offs they face in their attempt to reach them. Parties who are here conceptualized as cognitively limited actors performing under uncertainty and risk, prioritize one goal and devise and apply strategies that they belief will help them reach it – sometimes at costs with regard to other goals, sometimes in line with these. Parties may be primarily vote-seeking, office-seeking, or policy-seeking, and which of these objectives they prioritize depends on their organizational characteristics and the institutional constraints under which they operate (Strøm 1990). Building on Strøm (1990), in this paper the goals of parties are defined as follows. Whereas vote-seeking parties aim to increase their electoral support, office-seeking parties seek to expand their control over government. Policy-seeking parties aim to increase the congruence between public policy (PP) and their own ideal policy preferences.

There is an unresolved discussion in the literature about whether it is possible to reduce this trias of party goals further, to determine a priori a hierarchy of objectives, or to establish their mutual compatibility (for a recent discussion see Pedersen 2012, 897-900). In most cases, scholars assume that the main trade-off that parties face is that between office and policy; votes are often regarded as clearly subordinate and instrumental to reaching these goals (e.g. Laver/Hunt 1992). While it may be true that for most parties this configuration of goals is indeed

pertinent, I refrain from theorizing explicitly which hierarchies of aims parties might have and how they resolve each individual trade-off; I do not believe that a single and parsimonious model exists that accurately gives account of the large number of potential goal-compositions, compatibilities, and party behaviors. Nonetheless, taking into account the possibility of different motivations and deriving expectations about their relations to party position change is a more fruitful approach than making the unrealistic assumption of homogenously motivated parties (as done for example by Laver 2005; Bendor et al. 2011; Schumacher et al. 2015).

Parties pursue control over government or votes for the values instrumentally linked to these goods and realized in the direct aftermath of an election. Those values include the financial support that parties receive in most countries, based on the share of votes they get in an election (cf. Scarrow 2006), and votes get translated into parliamentary mandates which are valuable positions for party elites. Control over government, furthermore, brings with it an additional range of values: "power, prestige, [and] income" for party elites (Downs 1957, 291) as well as high profile positions to be distributed among the protégés of these elites (Kopecky/Scherlis 2008).

The value pursued by policy-oriented parties on the other hand is simultaneously both less immediate as it takes time to be realized, more enduring as policy once implemented is difficult to change, and more direct as it derives from the implemented policy itself: policy-oriented parties aim to implement a PP that matches their ideals and ideas about what PP should look like. What sets policy-oriented parties apart from vote- and office-motivated ones is thus the fact that for them, winning votes and gaining access to office can serve their goal to shape PP instrumentally – although neither large vote shares, nor government participation are necessary or sufficient conditions for that – whereas vote- and office-motivated parties use *policy* (promises) instrumentally to achieve their main objectives. For the former implementing policy is the goal; for

the latter the promise to do so is a means to garner electoral support and to increase their chance of getting into government. As I will argue in more detail below, this does not mean, that policy-motivated parties are "ideologically dogmatic, unconcerned with winning, or [value] platform position as an end itself" (Wittman 1987, 142). To the contrary, policy-oriented parties are interested in shaping PP and they are aware of the rules governing that game. Therefore, compromise on platform position is perfectly in accordance with their primary motivation (Wittman 1983; Ward et al. 2011, 516).

The Aspiration Level

Building on Schumacher and colleagues (2015) and Bendor et al. (2011), I argue in this paper that cognitive mechanisms relating to the prospects of winning and losing values related to party goals in the future are the drivers of party position change. Important in that respect is to realize that the failure and success for parties to meet their goals and to reap potential values are not based on external criteria, but are determined "in the eye of the beholder" (Harmel/Janda 1994, 269). In order to infer what counts as success or failure, I rely on Bendor and colleagues' (2011, 9) concept of the aspiration level. This level is defined as a dynamic threshold separating outcomes into satisfying and unsatisfying ones. Parties fail to reach their goal and lose valued goods when their performance delivers an outcome below their aspiration level (cf. Bendor et al. 2011, 8-11).

In this context the question remains where exactly this cutoff point between satisfying and unsatisfying outcomes (i.e. the aspiration level) is situated. For one vote-seeking party losing one percent of the vote share might come as a shock; for another, losing one percent might still be acceptable. While Bendor and colleagues (2011, 59) assume that all parties are office-seeking and that therefore the cutoff point has to be the static dividing line between getting into government and ending up in opposition, Schumacher and associates (2015) emphasize that the level of

aspiration is a *dynamic* threshold. Maintaining that all parties are office-motivated, but not to the same extent, these authors argue that a party's office aspiration level adjusts dynamically in response to a party's past performance. A party that succeeds in winning office raises its future aspirations in that regard. If a party fails to win office, its aspiration level adjusts downwards. I assume that policy- and vote-aspirations are formed in similar ways. Parties that lose votes in an election adjust their vote-aspirations downwards, and upwards if they gain votes. Likewise, parties that could increase the congruence between their ideal policies and PP in the past get higher aspirations to do so again in the future, and they will lower these if PP drifts away from their ideal positions.

Schumacher and colleagues' (2015, 1044) emphasis of the dynamic quality of the aspiration level is worthwhile. However, in this paper I qualify their definition with regard to the temporal aspects of past performance and aspirations. Schumacher et al.'s aspiration level is formed as the result of an infinitely long-lasting memory of a party. Following this view, a party that has been excluded from government after its first election, but has held on to office ever since, will never be able to reach the highest level of office-aspiration. Similarly, a party that has governed for the complete first half of its political existence but has been excluded from government ever since, is treated as a party with medium office aspirations, which needs to pass a relatively high threshold in order to reach a satisfying outcome despite its long-lasting spell of poor performance. These implications of the conceptualization are not only unsatisfying from an empirical point of view,[1] they also reveal a theoretical shortcoming: parties memories are not infinite. To the contrary, I argue that both organizational and cognitive mechanisms leave us with parties

[1] Does it make sense to treat a party that alternates between government and opposition equal to the party described in the second example?

which tend to place more emphasis on their recent past and which form their aspirations based on their performance within that time frame.

From an organizational perspective, we know that party leaders and elites attempt to strategically set the course of their parties. And while the memory of ordinary members in some parties might be long and indeed serve as a personal benchmark for current performance, there is no discernible reason for party leaders to use these yardsticks too. Any leader or elite within a party that strategically evaluates a party's performance will compare it to the performance achieved under similar conditions – and those are usually found in the more recent past. Alternatively, cognitive mechanisms such as the availability heuristic (Tversky/Kahneman 1974, 1127) can explain why actors base their assessment of a situation on recent events, ignoring those pieces of information that are less easily retrievable. Following either of these logics the aspiration level can thus be conceptualized as the threshold separating satisfying from unsatisfying outcomes which dynamically adjusts to the performance of the recent past. It plays an important part in the behavior of political parties. In the following paragraphs I will show how.

Bringing it Together – Party Goals, Aspirations, and Platform Change

As argued by Schumacher and colleagues (2015), endowment effects and risk taking (cf. Kahneman/Tversky 1979; Kahneman et al. 1990; Tversky/Kahneman 1992) might be the mechanisms linking goal-related performance, measured against the benchmark of aspirations, to a change of strategy. Endowment effects, whereby the mere possession of a good increases its value for the proprietor – be it an individual or group – lead these actors to engage in loss-avoiding behavior (Kahneman et al. 1990, 1326). The more likely they perceive the chance that they will lose the good again, the more risk-seeking their strategies to hold on to it become. The more certain they are that they will hold on to the good, the more they avoid risky strategies (Tversky/Kahneman 1992).

How do endowment effects and risk-taking relate to goal-oriented political parties? As I have indicated above, office and votes are goods that – if pursued by office- or vote-oriented parties – can induce endowment effects and different forms of risk attitudes (cf. Tversky/Kahneman 1992). The situation is different for policy-oriented parties, and I will discuss them below. For now I assume that parties want to hold on to what they have gained, be it votes or office, and that the chance with which they expect to succeed or fail in that endeavor critically shapes their behavior.

For vote-oriented parties this means that the party position as one of the strategic means to reach their goal will be adjusted in response to an unexpectedly good performance by some, and an unexpectedly bad performance by others. On the one hand, parties which have high vote-aspirations and perform well have little reason to expect that they will perform bad in the future and lose their vote-related endowments. Similarly, parties with a low vote-aspiration level delivering a poor performance perceive as negligible the chance that they will gain meaningful vote-endowments in the future. Both types of parties will act in a risk-avoiding manner and will not adjust their positions. On the other hand, parties that entered an election with high vote-aspirations and reached an unsatisfying outcome will be more risk-seeking in the next election. The shock of failure and the painful loss of their endowments are the drivers of this behavior. Accordingly, I hypothesize that:

> *H1: The higher a party's vote-aspiration level, the more it adjusts its position in response to a bad vote performance.*

Additionally, parties whose performance exceeded their low aspirations fear losing their new endowment again – their record of past disappointing performances and the generally observable trend of vote gains being followed by losses (cf. Somer-Topcu 2015, 849), which weigh

heavier for parties with lower vote aspirations, as they make up a larger proportion of their received goods, make losing their newly won endowment a realistic possibility – and will be inclined to engage in risk-seeking behavior to secure it in the future. I expect that:

H2: The lower a party's vote-aspiration level, the more it adjusts its position in response to a good vote performance.

Similar logics hold with regard to office-motivated parties (cf. Schumacher et al. 2015). Being in government enables a party to extract values it fears losing again in the future (see above) and endowment effects are likely to be present. Again, performance that is broadly in line with a party's aspirations induces parties to stick to their strategy. The chance perceived by a high-aspiration governing party that it will end up in opposition in the future will likely be marginal. And the perceived prospects of a low-aspiration opposition party to enter government will be just as small. Both parties have little incentive to adjust their positions. Conversely, high-aspiration parties that failed to get into government lost their endowment, and this shock leads them to become more risk-seeking. This expectation leads to hypothesis 3:

H3: The higher a party's office-aspiration level, the more it adjusts its position in response to being in opposition.

The same behavior is exhibited by low-aspiration parties who surprisingly entered government. These parties face a large chance of losing this endowment again, not only because of their past track record, but also because of the costs associated with governing: the significant chance of losing the next election (Schumacher et al. 2015, 1043). Hypothesis 4 thus reads:

H4: The lower a party's office-aspiration level, the more it adjusts its position in response to being in government.

Accepting higher risks, both of these parties will change their platforms in an attempt to increase the chance of gaining back what they have lost, or holding on to what they have gained.

I have indicated above that the mechanisms leading vote- and office-oriented parties to change are not the same that induce platform change in policy-oriented parties. The main reason for this, I argue, is that the good gained by shaping PP is not one that entails endowment effects. It is not one that is purchased for 'consumption' (cf. Kahneman et al. 1990, 1328): what policy-oriented parties can win or lose in the future is their *ability to shape* PP according to their creeds. *Implemented policy*, however, is what these parties care about, and due to the nature of the policy process (e.g. Jones/Baumgartner 2005) they are unlikely to lose endowments of that kind in the foreseeable future. Certainly, a change of direction of PP away from a party will be unsatisfying for it and might lead a party to reconsider its strategies, but the policies this party *managed* to implement in the past are very likely to stay. There is thus no need for policy-oriented parties to become risk-seeking and change their strategy in response to surprisingly winning or losing policy influence.

But how does policy-orientation relate to party position change? I propose that it is the prospect of shaping PP in the future that leads parties to change their platforms – and government participation is by no means the only way to do so, or a guarantee for success. This conclusion is based on the following argument. As I have stated above, policy-oriented parties are interested in shaping PP without being dogmatic about this, and they know that doing so usually involves compromise and trade-offs: in the process of government formation parties bargain over policy (Strøm et al. 2008), and with the parliament they face an institution that uses multiple channels to influence PP (Sieberer 2011). As minority government parties they depend even more on legislative support (Bergmann 1993), and other veto players such as upper chambers

can always demand concessions with regard to policy to be implemented (Tsebelis 2011). Furthermore, I assume that parties are willing to compromise and to trade in some of their positions *if* they believe that this will increase their chance of shaping PP in a way that does not mean giving up their core policy ideas (cf. Wittman 1983; Ward et al. 2011). For example, parties might change their platform in attempt to increase their coalition appeal by making their program more compatible with that of another party. Or alternatively, parties might change the content of their programs at the margins to enlarge their options in policy-bargaining strategies with other government parties or in parliament. Similarly, parties that hope to affect PP through other channels than the cabinet might slightly amend their platforms for strategic reasons as well. At the same time parties are bound by their promises and – if in the position to do so – will implement policies that are strongly constrained by the pledges made in their election programs (Mansergh/Thomson 2007).

For parties with a high prospect of shaping PP, adjustments of their programs can raise the perceived chance of indeed shaping it in the future and increase the value of the final good gained. Policy-oriented parties with low policy-aspirations, on the other hand, have no reason to trade in policy promises for that goal, as the costs of programmatic adjustments needed would outweigh the value potentially gained by implementing the promised (and distant) policy. For them, there is little reason to draft a program that diverges from the one they will present in parliamentary opposition and to the public. It follows that whereas parties with high prospects of shaping PP in the future have reasons to adjust their programs, parties with low prospects in that regard have no incentive to do so. And again, because of cognitive limitations, parties evaluate their prospects in light of their recent performance; the chances of shaping PP are estimated with the help of heuristics that overemphasize parties' experiences in comparable past situations (cf.

Tversky/Kahneman 1974, 1127), and parties' policy-aspiration levels represent precisely these experiences.

This argument leads to the following two hypotheses:

H5a: The higher a party's policy-aspirations, the more it adjusts its platform.

But since parties change their positions without giving up their ideological core I hypothesize that:

H5b: High policy-aspirations do not lead to change on the ideological left right dimension.

While the arguments advanced in this section are limited in the same way as the studies by Bendor and colleagues (2011) and Schumacher and colleagues (2015), in the sense that I cannot specify which primary objective a given party at a given point in time will follow, this paper advances the literature in two aspects. Specifically, it incorporates theoretically and empirically insights derived from the study of party goals, by emphasizing that parties can follow different motivations than just gaining access to office. Parties respond to their goal-related performance and to the prospects of future gains or losses, and the type of goal they aspire has an impact on the way they act. In order to understand the behavior of political parties in the process of electoral competition more accurately, our models need to allow for the possibility of heterogeneously motivated parties. Secondly, the paper clarifies the conceptual distinction between these party goals, and the level of aspiration parties may have with regard to these goals, as well as how these are formed. The aspiration level is the threshold that determines whether an outcome counts as a success or not; it divides satisfactory from unsatisfactory results (Bendor et al. 2011, 9) based on the performance of the *recent* past. It is not the same as a party's primary goal and only in some situations can we use the one in order to deduce the other (e.g. when a party that is fre-

quently successful in getting into government adjusts its primary motivation and becomes office-seeking cf. Harmel and Janda 1994, 280-81). On the one hand, when we inquire about a party's *primary goal*, we ask which objective it desires the most. Its *aspiration level* on the other hand determines what counts as a satisfying or unsatisfying outcome with regard to a goal.

Empirical Analysis: Party Goals and Platform Change[2]

Data and Variables

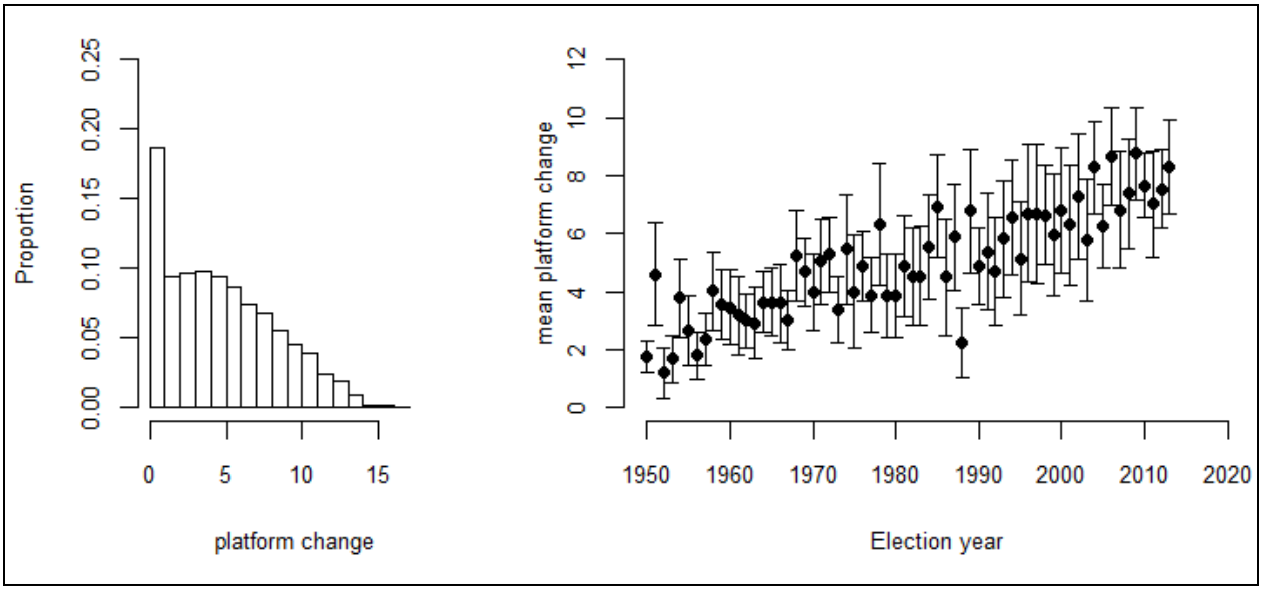
In order to answer the research question of this paper and to test the hypotheses spelled out in the previous section I employ a large-n quantitative research design that is based on the data provided by the Comparative Manifesto Project (Volkens et al. 2015) and the ParlGov database (Döring/Manow 2016). I analyze party position shifts of 210 parties in 25 established democracies for the period 1950-2013. The unit of analysis is a party at a given election so that individual parties contribute multiple observations to the data set, and accordingly the data will be treated as pooled and unbalanced time-series data.

Dependent variable. The dependent variable of my analysis *platform change* is operationalized and measured the following way: as the measure commonly applied in the literature, the absolute difference between a party's position on the CMP left right scale ('rile') at election$_{t-1}$ and election$_{t,}$ is limited (a) because it captures change only unidimensionally and ignores important aspects of the process of party competition (e.g. Riker 1986), and (b) because it is subject to a range of methodological and conceptual issues (e.g. Benoit et al. 2009; Mikhaylov et al. 2012) my main dependent variable *platform change* is based on the method suggested by Schumacher and colleagues (2015, 1046) and displays change as a count variable that indicates on

[2] A replication script detailing *all* analytical steps taken in the analysis is available from the author.

how many dimensions a party has changed. It compares party positions on 19 scales that represent different issue dimensions, based on the CMP issue categories, between two elections and sums up the number of dimensions on which a party has significantly changed its position. To do so, it makes use of the procedure developed by Benoit and colleagues (2009) and takes into account the uncertainty surrounding CMP-based positions (see the complementary material and Schumacher et al. 2015, 1047 for more information).[3] Figure 2 displays the distribution of platform change in my sample. It shows that most party platforms are changed on a relatively moderate number of dimensions and that radical change is rare. The variable thus captures the well-documented pattern of broad stability of party positions with exceptional cases of large-scale change (e.g. Budge et al. 2009, 792). Furthermore we see a steady increase in the number of adjustments that parties make to their platforms over the years.

Figure 2. Overview of platform change



[3] To test the robustness of results, and to ease comparison with other studies, I operationalized *platform change* in two additional ways and replicated my analysis with these dependent variables. The results of these models and an illustration of the differences between the three variables can be found in the appendix.

Central independent variables. The central independent variables of my analysis are measures of the policy-, vote- and office performance of a party in relation to its respective aspirations, of these aspiration levels, and for votes and office an interaction of the performance indicator and the corresponding aspiration level. Beginning with office motivations, the performance indicator *opposition* states whether a party ended up in opposition (1) or in government (0) at $election_{t-1}$. A party's *office-aspiration level* is measured as the share of election cycles a party was in government over the three cycles prior to $election_{t-1}$. It thus ranges from 0 (never in government – low aspiration level) to 1 (always in government – high aspiration level). For this and the following aspiration level variables, a period of three election cycles was chosen to measure a party's *recent* experience. While this is an arbitrarily selected threshold, I believe that it captures the longevity of a party's memory: on average one election cycle lasts three and a half years in the sample, and party elites – those actors with the relevant memory (see above) – change about once in eight years (cf. Andrews/Jackman 2008, 666), a period that is even slightly shorter than the chosen time frame.[4] Hypotheses three and four receive support if the coefficient of the interaction term of the two variables suggests that high-aspiration parties change in response to bad performance (*opposition* =1) and low-aspiration parties adjust their position in response to getting into government.

Next, the variable *vote performance* subtracts a party's *vote-aspiration level*, which is measured as the mean vote share of the previous three elections (i.e. $election_{t-4}$ – $election_{t-2}$), from its vote share at $election_{t-1}$. It signals whether a party's performance was good or bad in relation to that party's vote-aspirations and it thus more accurately reflects a party's subjective assessment of its performance than a comparison to just its last election results. Negative values

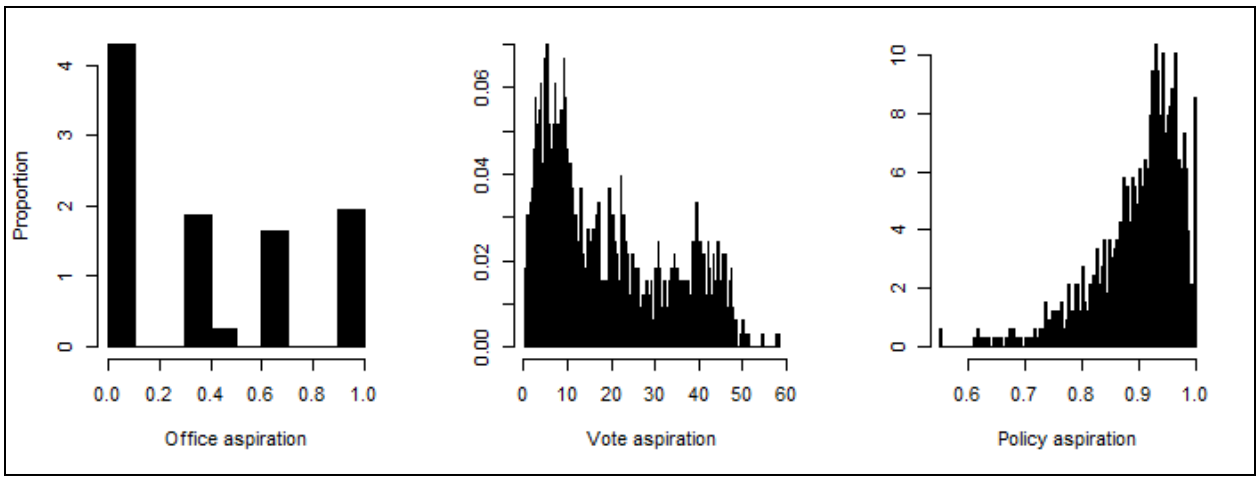
[4] The results of models with aspiration levels based on five election cycles, or on the whole period a party was observed in the complete dataset (1945-2015) yield no meaningfully different results.

on *vote performance* show that a party has performed below its aspirations, whereas positive values indicate a performance beyond its aspirations. A negative coefficient of the interaction term of the two indicates support for hypotheses one and two, as this means that high-aspiration parties change as a result of bad performance, and low-aspiration parties in response to a good performance.

Lastly, a party's *policy-aspiration level* is constructed in the following way. In a first step I standardized the absolute distance between a party's position on the MARPOR left-right scale at election$_{t-1}$ and the left-right position of the government that came into office at that election, as a proxy for a party's control over PP. The government position is calculated as the mean position of the government parties, weighted by the share of seats they contribute to the government's legislative fraction (based on Döring and Manow 2016).[5] This policy distance can thus theoretically take values from 0 (perfect congruence between a party's ideal- and PP) to 1 (perfect discord between the two). A party's *policy-aspiration level* finally, is the scale-reverted mean of the policy distance over the last three elections. It takes the value 0 for parties whose ideal policy has always differed perfectly from PP (low aspiration) and 1 for a party whose ideal policy has always been congruent with PP (high aspiration). Figure 3 shows the distributions of all three goal-related aspiration levels. To control for the possibility that – as only briefly discussed above – policy performance induces change, I have also included the variable *policy performance* which measures the difference between a party's proximity to PP at election$_{t-1}$ and its policy-aspiration level. Positive values of this variable indicate that a party performed above its aspirations and vice-versa.

[5] Following the suggestion by Döring & Schwander (2015, 184 Fn. 2) I estimate the government positions of minority governments at the point halfway between the government and the parliamentary position.

Figure 3. Distributions of aspiration variables



Furthermore, I include in my analysis the number of days between two elections to control for the fact that, if elections take place in short succession, parties might present the same, or only a slightly amended program, and platform change might accordingly be lower than normal. The effective number of parties at the seat level (Laakso/Taagepera 1979) is included in all models to account for different patterns of change in different party systems (e.g. Calvo/Hellwig 2011). An overview of all variables included in the analysis is provided in Table A1 in the appendix.

Modeling Strategy

In order to accurately estimate models explaining party platform change a number of modeling decisions have to be made. Firstly, the hierarchical structure of the dataset (i.e. party-elections are clustered within parties) needs to be taken into account. As observations in my data are not independent of one another, errors are potentially correlated within panels (parties) across time and contemporaneously across panels, and they can display different levels of homoscedasticity across panels and therefore be inefficient. Furthermore, unobserved differences between parties can bias estimated coefficients and lead to false inferences (Beck/Katz 1995; Beck 2008).

To remedy these problems I estimate multilevel models with random party-effects (i.e. a random intercept parameter, indicating different baseline probabilities for each party to change) that can handle these issues. The random effects specification has been chosen for both theoretical and methodological reasons (cf. Plümper et al. 2005). Theoretically, including fixed effects would mean to estimate models that explain platform change based on within-party differences of aspirations and performance only, but I expect platform change to be the result of both these within-party differences and differences between parties. Furthermore, including fixed effects would suppress the estimation of level effects (i.e. an effect that is due to the level of a certain variable, e.g. those triggered by a party's aspiration, and not due to changes in this level) and of effects of (largely) time invariant variables (again a party's aspiration level is an example, as there are parties who maintain the same level of e.g. office aspiration throughout the period under investigation) and make inferences about their impact on platform change impossible.

Secondly, as the dependent variable of my analysis *platform change* is a count variable, estimating OLS models would lead to false inference. For regression analyses with count variables as outcomes, Poisson or negative binomial models and their zero inflated versions that estimate the log count of the dependent variable are appropriate. As my dependent variable is over-dispersed, that is, its conditional variance is larger than its conditional mean (Wooldridge 2015, 548), Poisson models would estimate inefficient coefficients and therefore I estimate *panel negative binomial regression models with random party effects*.

Analysis and Discussion – Explaining Party Position Change

I will now discuss the results of my empirical analysis. To that end, Table 2 displays the results of the base models of my analysis. In these I included the theoretically relevant explanatory variables, as well as the time between elections and the effective number of parties as two

more technical control variables. At first I investigate the effects of the different goal-aspirations and –performance indicators separately, before I estimate a model that includes all of them in combination. The Table displays incident rate ratios (IRR) that indicate how platform change varies in response to one unit changes in an independent variable. Values below one indicate less change, whereas coefficients above one indicate more change. For example, we see that throughout the models each day between two elections increases platform change by a factor of 1.0003 ($p<.05$) and that each additional effective party in parliament multiplies *change* by a factor in the range of 1.061 – 1.178, that is, by between 6 and 18 percent.

What are the substantial results of the analysis? Beginning with the effects of office performance the first model shows that, unconditionally, parties that ended up in opposition in the last election, adjust their positions almost ten percent less (IRR=.905; $p<.05$) than government parties. However, the interaction effect of this variable and a party's office aspirations (model 2) indicates that these responses vary by the level of office aspiration. A log likelihood ratio test indicates that adding the office aspiration variable to the model significantly improves the model fit ($\chi^2=13.3$; $p<.01$). For parties with high office aspirations, failing to get into government increases the number of changes they apply to their platforms. Conversely, parties with low aspirations seem to adjust their positions in response to getting into government. I refrain from interpreting these effects further at this point, as interaction effects in (non-)linear models are difficult to interpret based on effect sizes and p-values only (e.g. Brambor et al. 2006). A more thorough interpretation based on the effects of the full model will follow below.

Models three and four test the effect of vote-performance in interaction with a party's vote-aspirations. Remember that hypotheses one and two stated that low aspiration parties

change their position in response to performing well, and high aspiration parties in the aftermath of a poor vote-performance.

Table1. Explaining party position change

	Dependent variable: platform change					
	(Office I)	(Office II)	(Votes I)	(Votes II)	(Policy)	(All motivations)
Opposition	.905*	.787*				.830*
	(.842, .973)	(.703, .881)				(.733, .941)
Office aspiration		.948				.805*
		(.809, 1.097)				(.693, .935)
Vote performance			.998	1.011		1.014
			(.99, 1.00)	(.992, 1.03)		(.997, 1.03)
Vote aspiration				1.013*		1.010*
				(1.007, 1.020)		(1.004 1.016)
Policy performance					.637*	.571*
					(.452 .886)	(.394, .769)
Policy aspiration					6.077*	5.197*
					(3.54, 11.23)	(3.288, 8.229)
Time between elections	1.0003*	1.0003*	1.0003*	1.0003*	1.0003*	1.0003*
	(1.0002, 1.0004)	(1.0002, 1.0004)	(1.0002, 1.0004)	(1.0002, 1.0004)	(1.0002, 1.0004)	(1.0002, 1.0004)
ENP_{seats}	1.123*	1.119*	1.125*	1.134*	1.106*	1.113*
	(1.076, 1.164)	(1.076, 1.167)	(1.08, 1.17)	(1.09, 1.178)	(1.061, 1.144)	(1.073, 1.158)
Opposition*Office aspiration		1.356*				1.277*
		(1.118, 1.602)				(1.064, 1.557)
Vote performance* Vote aspiration				.999*		.999*
				(.998, 1.000)		(.998, 1.000)
Intercept	1.903*	2.061*	1.760*	1.404*	.3814*	.426*
	(1.533, 2.448)	(1.572, 2.570)	(1.36, 2.16)	(1.071, 1.768)	(.225, .64)	(.273, .658)
σ-Intercept	.762	.756	.768	.715	.724	.678
Observations	1,643	1,643	1,643	1,643	1,643	1,643
Parties	210	210	210	210	210	210
Log Likelihood	-4,108	-4,102	-4,112	-4,102	-4,091	-4,076
AIC	8,228	8,219	8,236	8,220	8,196	8,178
BIC	8,261	8,262	8,268	8,263	8,234	8,248

*Note: Panel negative binomial regression explaining party position change. Coefficients are incident rate ratios (IRR). 95% confidence intervals were obtained via bootstrap procedure (500 iterations); *p<.05*

In line with these expectations, the interaction effect of vote-performance and -aspirations indicates that good performance leads to less change, the higher a party's aspirations. Parties with high vote-aspirations seem to adjust in response to performing below their aspirations, whereas their low-aspiration counterparts change after performing well. Interestingly, the aspiration level itself seems to have a positive effect on platform change. It indicates that generally not the parties with low vote shares in the past (and neutral performance), but those with comfortable vote shares adjust their programs more thoroughly.

Next, I estimate the effects that policy-aspirations have on party platform change. I have argued above that endowment effects and induced risk attitudes are unlikely to be the mechanisms that lead policy-oriented parties to change. Contrarily, I reasoned that it is the *prospect of shaping* PP itself that induces platform change. Hypothesis 5a stated that parties with high policy-aspirations – those with good prospects of shaping PP again – should change more than low-aspiration parties. Model 5 provides evidence for this claim. Performing above one's policy-aspirations in the prior election reduces the amount of platform change (IRR=.668; $p<.05$), but the level of policy-aspiration itself significantly and strongly enhances it (IRR=5.912; $p<.05$).[6] Parties with higher policy-aspirations change their platforms more drastically than low-aspiration parties.

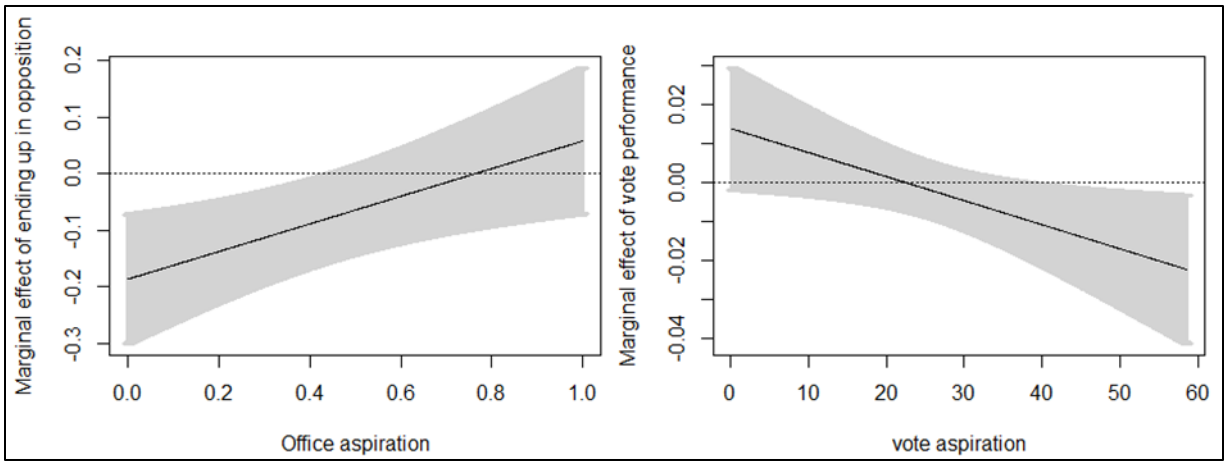
Do the results of the single-motivation models hold when effects are estimated in one model? Estimating a model that includes all theoretically relevant variables is a necessity, as parties can prioritize one of the three motivations, but I cannot specify beforehand which of them

[6] I have also tested whether the effect of policy performance – contrarily to my expectations – varies with the level of policy aspiration. In the respective interaction models, the coefficients of the two main effects keep their signs, and the interaction term is negative and very small. Confidence intervals of the estimates, however, become immensely large, indicating difficulties to estimate these effects. As a marginal effects plot indicates that the (unreliable) effect of policy performance is insignificant over almost the whole range of policy aspirations and always negative, I decided to display models that exclude this interaction term.

will primarily guide their behavior. Therefore, if effects persist that relate to different kinds of motivations while variables associated with the other party objectives are included in the model, this suggests that indeed all motivations are present. Furthermore, a full model including all theoretically interesting variables can increase the credibility of results, as effects that remain unchanged indicate that different aspiration- and performance variables capture distinct pieces of information.

Beginning with the impact of office-motivation related variables, the effect of office-performance in interaction with office-aspirations seems robust and strong. However, when we look at the left panel of Figure 4, which displays how the effect of ending up in opposition varies over different levels of office-aspiration, we see that it does not completely follow the pattern that was expected: in line with hypothesis four, for parties with low office-aspirations, the effect of ending up in opposition is negative; ceteris paribus low-aspiration parties change their positions in response to getting into government. High-aspiration parties on the other hand do not adjust their positions more when they ended up in opposition after the previous election. While

Figure 4. Marginal effects based on full model



Note: The figure displays the effects of ending up in opposition and of a party's vote performance (solid black lines) for the different levels of the respective aspiration variables based on the "all motivations" model. 95% confidence intervals are indicated by the grey shaded areas.

the estimated effect is positive for parties that have always been in office in the recent past, it fails to reach statistical significance. These results are thus not completely in line with the findings of Schumacher and colleagues (2015) and can only be partly explained with the argument advanced above that becoming a government party is a good that induces endowment effects. Parties that realistically have to fear losing this endowment again follow more risky strategies and adjust their platforms in an attempt to hold on to the good in the future. The shock felt by parties that have constantly been in government in the past but end up in opposition on the other hand, does not seem to affect platform change.

As the estimated effects based on which I draw this conclusion are very similar to those reported by Schumacher et al. (2015, 1049), I suspect that my results do reflect a genuine empirical pattern and are no artifact of the data. Remember that I differed from Schumacher and colleagues' argument and analysis by stressing that parties' memories do not last infinitely long and that their aspiration levels therefore are formed based on more recent performance. Indeed, I obtain similar results as those reported above when admitting a party's memory to last up to five, instead of three election cycles. Only when assuming an infinite memory, does the estimated effect of ending up in opposition become significant and positive for high-aspiration parties. However, maintaining that a time-less conceptualization of aspirations is inadequate, I trust the results of my original analysis and assert that I cannot provide support for hypothesis three: for parties with high office aspirations, their government or opposition status does not affect platform change. Conversely, for parties with low aspirations, it seems that "losses loom larger than corresponding gains" (Tversky/Kahneman 1992, 303). One potential explanation for these findings could be that high-aspiration governing parties have incentives to adjust their platforms *unrelated* to their office-endowments, but in connection with other motivations (e.g. they may have

fulfilled most of their election pledges and are thus in need of presenting new policies to their voters), and that these might overlay the pattern of platform change related to the shock of losing office. For low aspiration parties similar incentives do not exist and they respond only to the prospects of losing their imperiled office-endowment.

With regard to the effects of vote-motivation related variables, the model provides support for hypothesis one and two. As the right panel of Figure 4 shows, having increased one's vote share in relation to one's aspirations induces platform change for low-aspiration parties and makes change less likely for high-aspiration parties. Parties with on average less than five percent of the votes in the prior elections (18% of the parties in my sample), change their platforms in response to gaining votes ($p<.1$). Those with vote aspirations above 40% (12% of the parties) respond to losing votes ($p<.05$). Risk attitudes triggered by endowment effects could explain these patterns. Furthermore, the model adds support to the finding that parties with higher vote shares in the past (and a neutral performance), change more than parties with small vote shares (cf. Somer-Topcu 2009, 245).

Lastly, the model supports the earlier finding that the level of a party's policy aspiration significantly increases the number of changes it applies to its platform. Specifically, the model estimates that a party changes its platform by an additional 31% ($p<.05$) for an increase in its policy-aspiration level by one standard deviation. I take this as evidence for hypotheses 5a.[7] The result is in line with the argument that parties which perceive to have a high chance of shaping PP in the future – due to their heuristic-based assessment of these chances – adjust their positions in anticipation of the policy-bargaining and trade-offs that await them. Similarly robust is the finding that parties which were able to achieve above-aspiration congruence with PP, change less

[7] Hypotheses 5b that stated that the same pattern should not be observed in relation to change on the ideological left-right scale is tested in the appendix and finds robust support.

than parties who performed in a suboptimal way. Irrespective of the current level of a party's policy-aspirations, losing influence on PP leads parties to slightly change their platforms in the next elections. In the long run, however, this effect is outweighed by the change induced through the policy-aspiration level itself.

In summary, the previous analysis provides support for the arguments advanced about the drivers of platform change for vote- and policy-motivated parties, and is partly in line with the expectations derived about the behavior of office-motivated parties. What is more, all results are robust to the inclusion of a number of control variables, such as public opinion shifts, economic globalization, and party organizational characteristics that have been shown to relate to party position change as well.[8] Naturally, the research design chosen for this study is unable to elucidate the causal mechanisms that connect party goals and platform change. Nonetheless, the empirical patterns found are (for the bigger part) in line with my expectations, and the arguments that I have advanced above provide potential explanations for them. Clearly, not only the government-opposition dichotomy explains positional adjustments of goal-oriented parties, but policy- and vote-motivations matter as well. Getting into government affects parties with low office-aspirations. The effect of losing votes differs between high- and low-vote-aspiration parties. High policy-aspiration levels are associated with larger platform changes. Cognitive mechanisms such as endowment effects and risk taking, or perceptions of the chance of shaping public policy in the future that are based on simplifying heuristics might be the mechanisms leading from cause to effect.

[8] Detailed results are reported in the appendix.

Conclusion

Why do parties change their position as expressed in their election programs? In this paper I have argued and demonstrated that heterogeneously motivated parties adjust their positions in response to their goal-related and subjectively assessed performance in elections. My analysis of more than 200 mostly Western European parties over the entire post-war period suggests that cognitive mechanisms relating to the prospects of holding on to a gained good in the future connect party goals to party position change.

Endowment effects lead parties with low levels of vote- or office aspirations to engage in risk-accepting behavior and change their platforms in the aftermath of a surprisingly good performance. The fear of losing what they gained strongly affects those parties' choice of strategies. Parties with high aspirations with regard to these goals, on the other hand, were expected to respond to failing to reach their objectives. And indeed, these parties are more inclined to adjust their positions in the aftermath of a poor vote-performance. Ending up in opposition, however, does not make them change more than their governing counterparts. Ultimately, this finding might be due to different mechanisms leading to similar behavioral patterns of these parties. High-aspiration parties might adjust in response to the shock of ending up in opposition, but they might also adjust due to other factors. Indeed, we see that long-term governing parties such as the Dutch, Belgian, or Italian Christian Democrats, or the Swedish SAP display many characteristics that induce platform change even while being in government: they all had relatively high vote shares, but frequently gained less votes than they aspired to. Furthermore, they all decisively shaped the direction of public policy and had high prospects of doing so again. These prospects and the anticipation of the rules governing this process, in turn, were hypothesized to connect policy-orientations with party position change. My analysis provided clear evidence for the

claim that parties who can expect to shape public policy in the future frequently change their platforms. Together with the other factors just mentioned, this mechanism can explain the initially puzzling behavior of long-term governing parties.

By providing evidence for the claims about the relationships between party-goals and platform change this paper has advanced the literature explaining party position change theoretically and empirically. When we aim to understand the behavior of competitive political parties, we need to account for the fact that they can prioritize different objectives and thus are subject to different mechanisms connecting their (prospective) performance to the strategies and positions they choose. Developing models that can determine a priori the goal hierarchy and trade-offs faced by a party at a given point in time will be the next step to be taken in order to improve our understanding of the process of electoral competition. Viewing parties as cognitively limited actors operating under uncertainty and risk and following different objectives, we can develop explanations of their behavior that emphasize much more their own decision-making processes and depreciate the alleged impact of environmental factors that are sometimes very far away. This paper, with all its limitations, is a cautious attempt to do so.

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Appendix

In this appendix the following supplementary information and analyses are presented. At first I display descriptive statistics of all variables used in the main analysis of the thesis. Following this, a number of robustness checks of the analysis will be conducted. To that end the "all motivations" model of Table 1 will be replicated with additional control variables, and zero-inflated versions of the main models that account for the excess number of zeros in the data will be displayed. Following this, I discuss different operationalizations of the dependent variable of my analysis and show models that include these versions of *platform change*. In this section I will also demonstrate the limitations to using the standard measure of party position change that is applied in the literature.

Descriptive Statistics

Table A1. Descriptive statistics

	Min	Max	Median	Mean	SD	Missing
Independent variable						
Platform change	0	17	5	5.156	3.671	0
Dependent variables						
Opposition	0	1	1	0.596	0.491	0
Office aspiration	0	1	0.333	0.378	0.388	0
Vote performance	-25.717	28.65	-0.1	-0.085	4.312	0
Vote aspiration	0.205	58.55	13.17	18.267	14.148	0
Policy performance	-0.524	0.607	0.011	0.009	0.092	0
Policy aspiration	0.552	1	0.922	0.903	0.07	0
Time between elections (days)	140	1988	1386	1263.312	353.055	0
ENPseats	1.539	9.051	3.698	3.984	1.428	0
Leader strength	-3	6	1	1.446	1.678	963
Niche party	0	1	0	0.168	0.374	0
Globalization	15.92	290.79	66.3	72.437	39.959	271
Median voter shift	-0.637	0.531	-0.003	-0.015	0.179	1257

Observations: 1643; parties (panels): 210; countries included: AUS, AUT, BEL, CAN, CHE, CYP, DNK, ESP, FIN, FRA, GER, UK, GRC, ICE, IRE, ISR, ITA, JPN, LUX, MLT, NTH, NZL, NOR, PRT, SWE

Robustness of Results

The literature has identified a number of factors that affect party position change. How robust are my findings regarding the effects of performances and aspirations to including these as control variables? To control for the effects of changes in public opinion (e.g. Adams et al. 2004) I have added information on shifts of the position of the median voter to my model (based on Schmitt et al. 2008), and the influences of economic globalization (e.g. Ward et al. 2011) are accounted for by including information on the dependence of a country's economy on international trade (Armingeon et al. 2015). To control for the different abilities of party leaders to change platforms in response to these environmental incentives (e.g. Adams et al. 2006; Ezrow et al. 2011; Schumacher et al. 2013) I followed Adams and colleagues (2006, 513) and indicated whether a party counts as a niche party. Furthermore, taking into account Schumacher and colleagues' (2013) warning that this measure glosses over some major differences within this group of parties, I constructed an index based on the information of the Political Parties Database (PPDB) that describes the balance of power between party elites and leaders, and ordinary members and supporters in the manifesto drafting process. The index *leader strength* is constructed by summing a party's score on the variables C101MAN2 and C102MAN3 (the influence of party leaders and the national executive committee in the manifesto drafting process) and subtracting from this the sum of the variables C105MAN6 and C106MAN7 (the influence of party members and supporters in this process). Initially, all four component variables have been recoded so that higher values indicate more influence; the index ranges theoretically from -6 (activist domination) to 6 (leader domination). Table A2 displays the results of this analysis. Due to large differences in the coverage of these variables, I re-estimated model 6 of Table 1and added control variables in a step-wise procedure, whereby variables with the least amount of missing values were

added first. As a result I refrain from comparing these models among each other and focus on comparing the estimated effects of the theoretically relevant variables to those estimated in the full model of Table 2.

The Table shows that the effects estimated in the full model of Table 1 are robust to the inclusion of most of these control variables. Only in one case does an effect change its direction (policy performance in the last model) and even if the main effects of the theoretically interesting variables are estimated as insignificant in some of the models, they still follow the same pattern that was reported in the main analysis (see figures A1-A3).

With regard to the control variables, only the effects of economic globalization and median voter shifts are significant. Parties competing while being exposed to the forces of economic globalization, change their positions more than parties with lower exposition in that regard. This finding is in line with the literature that stresses that economic pressures induce parties to change their strategies and positions (e.g. Adams et al. 2009; Haupt 2010). The finding about the effect of median voter shifts, on the other hand, is counterintuitive as it implies that parties do not respond to changes in public opinion or public ideology. Keeping in mind though that studies claiming the existence of a connection of this kind mainly find conditional support for this claim (e.g. Ward et al. 2011, Ezrow et al. 2011), this should not be over-emphasized. Furthermore, the model on which this coefficient is based, relies on a drastically reduced number of parties, as well as countries studied, which makes me reluctant to draw any meaningful conclusions about it.

Table A2. Full models incl. controls

	Dependent variable: party platform change			
	All motivations (A1)	Niche party & globaliza-tion (A2)	Leader strength (A3)	Niche party, globalization & median voter shift (A4)
Opposition	-.187***	-.165***	-.292***	-.222**
	(-.301, -.072)	(-.283, -.047)	(-.442, -.142)	(-.402, -.041)
Office aspiration	-.217***	-.093	-.236**	-.223
	(-.369, -.066)	(-.254, .068)	(-.435, -.037)	(-.498, .053)
Vote performance	.014*	.015*	.015	.029**
	(-.002, .030)	(-.001, .030)	(-.006, .035)	(.007, .052)
Vote aspiration	.010***	.011***	.002	.012**
	(.004, .016)	(.005, .017)	(-.006, .010)	(.003, .022)
Policy perfor-mance	-.561***	-.554***	-.347	.175
	(-.926, -.195)	(-.943, -.165)	(-.901, .207)	(-.485, .836)
Policy aspiration	1.650***	.784**	.533	.654
	(1.030, 2.260)	(.121, 1.450)	(-.346, 1.410)	(-.705, 2.010)
Time between elections	.0003***	.0002***	.0003***	.0002***
	(.0002, .0004)	(.0001, .0003)	(.0002, .0004)	(.0001, .0004)
ENPseats	.107***	.038*	.134***	.015
	(.068, .146)	(-.004, .080)	(.075, .193)	(-.041, .071)
Niche party		.081		-.002
		(-.148, .310)		(-.299, .295)
Globalization		.006***		.004***
		(.004, .007)		(.002, .007)
Leader strength			.022	
			(-.049, .093)	
Median voter shift				-.291**
				(-.538, -.043)
Opposition*Office aspiration	.245**	.156	.348***	.278*
	(.057, .432)	(-.040, .352)	(.106, .591)	(-.036, .592)
Vote perfor-mance* Vote aspiration	-.001**	-.001**	-.001*	-.001***
	(-.001, -.0001)	(-.001, -.0001)	(-.001, .0001)	(-.002, -.0004)
Intercept	-.853***	-.095	.539	.315
	(-1.450, -.252)	(-.744, .555)	(-.319, 1.400)	(-.972, 1.600)
σ-Intercept	.678	.582	.508	.535
Observations	1,643	1,372	680	386
Parties	210	189	58	102
Log Likelihood	-4,076	-3,450	-1,726	-1,005
AIC	8,178	6,930	3,480	2,043
BIC	8,248	7,008	3,543	2,106

Note: Panel negative binomial regression explaining party position change. 95% confidence intervals obtained via bootstrap procedure (500 iterations) *p<0.1

Figure A1. Marginal effects based on model A2

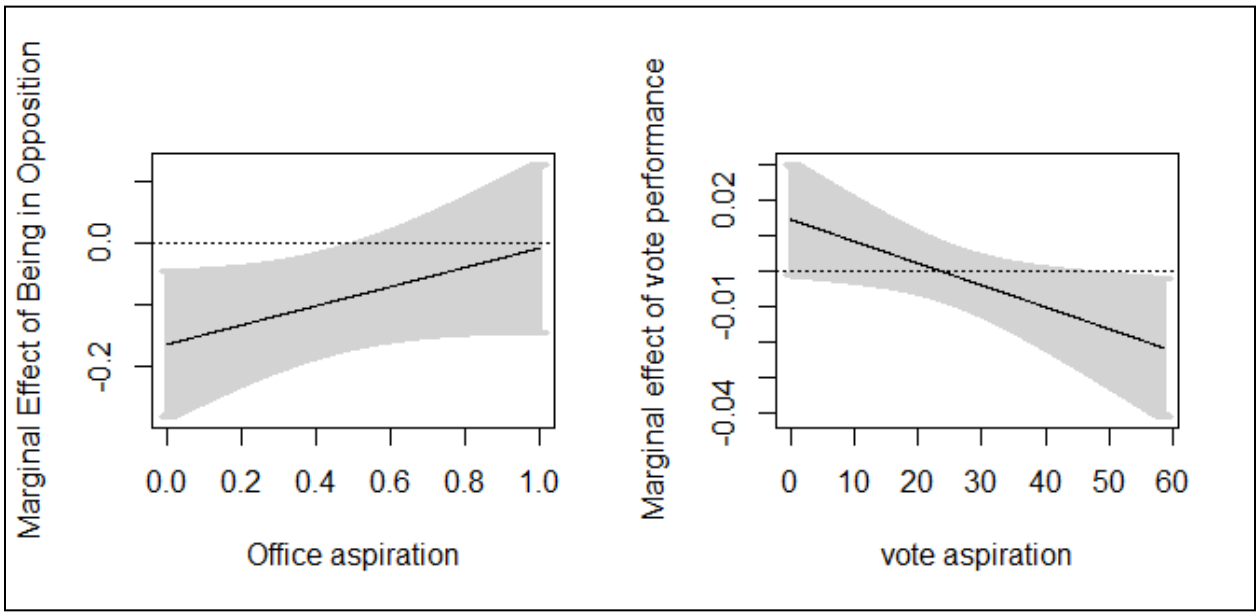


Figure A2. Marginal effects based on model A3

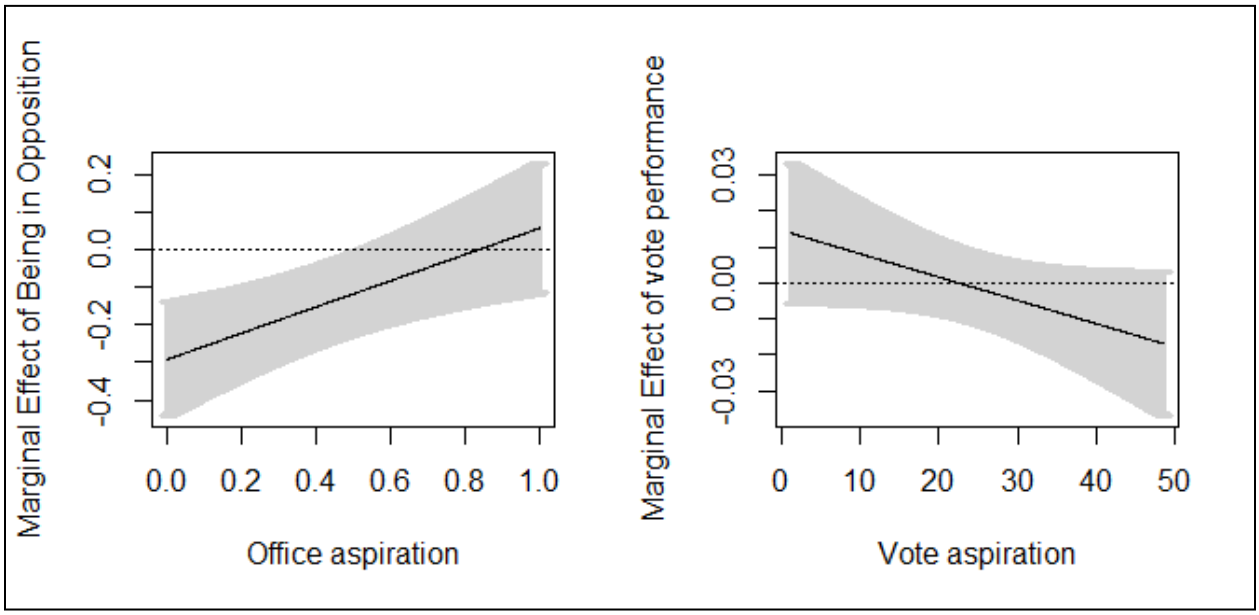
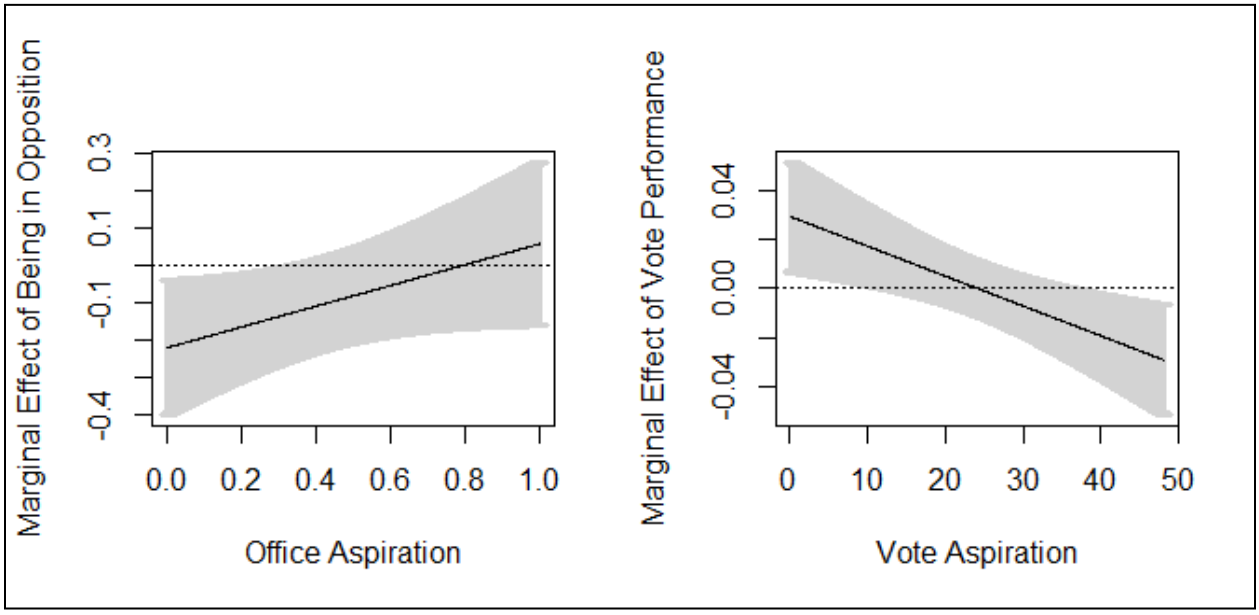


Figure A3. Marginal effects based on model A4



Zero Inflated Negative Binomial Models

As can be seen in Figure 2 my dependent variable contains a large number of zeros, indicating that platforms were not changed in between elections. For count data with excess zeros, the estimation of zero inflated models might be more appropriate than standard negative binomial models. However their multilevel versions are not yet fully implemented in R or any comparable statistical software. R's 'glmmADMB' package, the software that comes closest to estimating the appropriate model (currently it does not allow me to specify predictor variables that explain the high number of zeros (cf. Long 1997, 243-47), such as the time between elections, but estimates a single parameter explaining the 'no change'- 'change' dichotomy), was used to estimate zero-inflated negative binomial versions of the models reported in Table 1. These models are displayed in Table A3 and lend broad support to my theoretical claims.

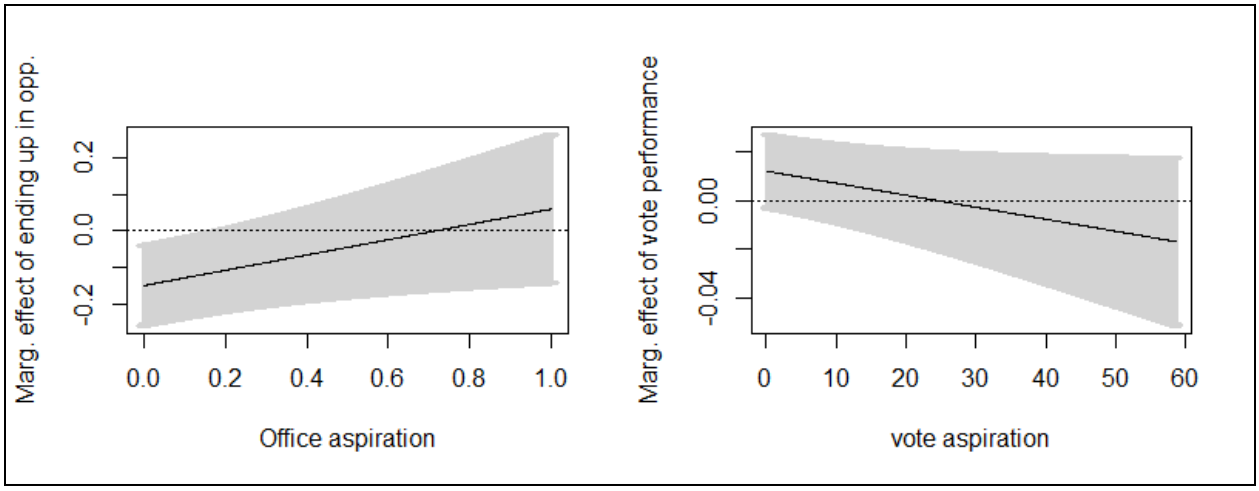
Table A3. Explaining party position change – Zero inflated negative binomial models

	Dependent variable: platform change				
	(Office I)	(Office II)	(Votes I)	(Policy)	(All motivations)
Opposition	.940*	.862***			.862***
	(.882, 1.000)	(.780, .952)			(.774, .960)
Office aspiration		.916			.814***
		(.804, 1.045)			(.707, .938)
Vote performance			.999		1.012
			(.993, 1.01)		(.997, 1.027)
Vote aspiration					1.008**
					(1.002, 1.013)
Policy performance				.707**	.631**
				(.515, .969)	(.444, .897)
Policy aspiration				4.801***	4.632***
				(2.790, 8.262)	(2.585, 8.301)
Time between elections	1.0002***	1.0002***	1.0002***	1.0002***	1.0002***
	(1.0001, 1.0003)	(1.0001, 1.0003)	(1.0001, 1.0004)	(1.0001, 1.0003)	(1.0001, 1.0003)
ENP_{seats}	1.150***	1.150***	1.137***	1.102***	1.108***
	(1.122, 1.175)	(1.122, 1.178)	(1.109, 1.17)	(1.062, 1.144)	(1.067, 1.150)
Opposition*Office aspiration		1.246**			1.231**
		(1.050, 1.480)			(1.032, 1.468)
Vote performance* Vote aspiration					.999*
					(.999, 1.00002)
Intercept	1.910***	2.087***	1.958***	.526	.539**
	(1.533, 2.37)	(1.670, 2.608)	(1.581, 2.43)	(.314, .881)	(.303, .957)
σ-Intercept	.733	.721	.742	.688	.656
Zero-inflation parameter	.044***	.042***	.046***	.039***	.038***
Observations	1,643	1,643	1,643	1,643	1,643
Log Likelihood	-4,077	-4,074	-4,079	-4,062	-4,052
AIC	8,168	8,165	8,173	8,140	8,132

*Note: Panel zero inflated negative binomial regression explaining party position change. Coefficients are incident rate ratios (IRR). 95-% confidence intervals in parentheses; *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.* The second votes model failed to converge, and could not be estimated.

Table A3 shows that the zero inflated models fit the data better than the models reported in Table 1 in the main article.[9] With regard to the coefficients estimated the models display no meaningful differences; effect sizes are comparably strong and significant at same levels. Accounting for the excess number of zeros in the data, that is, manifestos that did not change significantly in-between two elections, does not alter the results and conclusions to be drawn. As Figure A4 shows, the main model of this step of the analysis lends support to the conclusion that office- and vote-motivations relate to platform change through cognitive mechanisms as described in the paper, although the estimated effects are significant at lower levels.

Figure A4. Marginal effects based on "All motivations" zero inflated negative binomial model



Discussing the Dependent Variable: Platform Change

Due to a number of reasons I decided to deviate from the common procedure in the literature to operationalize party platform/position change as the absolute difference between a party's position on the CMP left right scale ('rile') at election$_{t-1}$ and election$_t$. First of all there is considerable doubt whether party competition is accurately described as happening on just one dimension and whether it can be captured by the rile-measure (e.g. Riker 1968; Benoit/Laver 2007;

[9] Nonetheless, due to the limited ability to estimate these models as theoretically required (cf. Long 1997, 243-47) I refrain from basing my main conclusions on them and decided to report results as mere robustness checks.

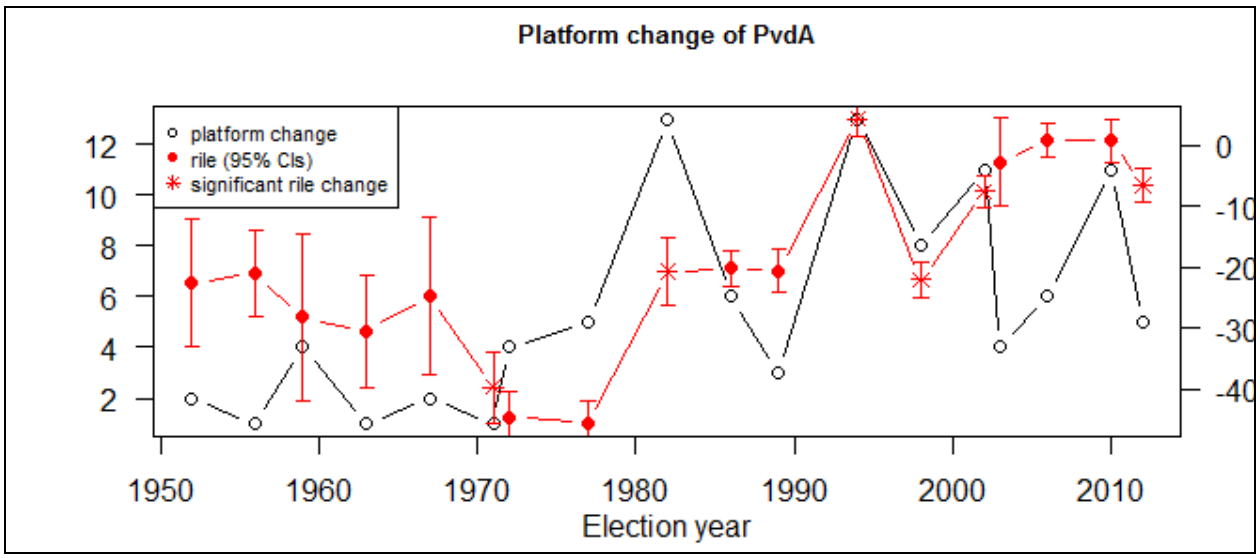
Kriesi et al. 2008). Secondly, both the manifesto drafting process and the coding of manifestos by the members of the Manifesto Project (MARPOR) lead to uncertainty surrounding rile-measures that are not captured accurately in the MARPOR data (Benoit et al. 2009; Mikhaylov et al. 2012).

To create an alternative measure that takes these issues into account, I applied Schumacher and colleagues' (2015, 1046-47) procedure and created my dependent variable that displays change as a count variable that indicates on how many dimensions a party has changed. It compares party positions on 19 scales that represent different issue dimensions, based on the 56 MARPOR issue categories, between two elections and sums up the number of dimensions on which a party has significantly changed its position. I applied the following procedure to create it: in a first step I collapsed the 56 base categories into 19 dimensions, each aggregating positions on related issues, as suggested by Schumacher et al. (2015, 1047). Secondly, I estimated the uncertainty surrounding the positions on each of these dimensions following Benoit and colleagues (2009). Thirdly, I created a dummy variable for each of the 19 dimensions that indicated whether a party's position differed significantly from one election to the next. Lastly, I created the dependent variable *platform change* that counted the number of significant changes by election.

Additionally, to allow for comparison with other studies, I operationalized *platform change* in two other ways. Firstly I measured *rile change* as the absolute difference between a party's position on the CMP -100 - 100 left right scale ('rile') at $election_{t-1}$ and $election_{t,}$ Secondly, as this measure does not take into account the uncertainty surrounding rile scores (see above) and therefore is prone to report change that is potentially the result of mere measurement error, I measure *significant rile change* as a dummy variable that indicates *significant* changes on this dimension, again based on Benoit and colleagues (2009).

Figure A5 illustrates the differences between these three operationalizations with the example of the position changes of the Dutch Labor Party (PvdA). Hollow circles in the Figure indicate the number of dimensions on which the PvdA significantly changed between two elections (*platform change*), whereas red circles display the party's rile-position with 95% confidence intervals. Most studies analyze differences in rile-positions in an attempt to capture party position change. We see however, that most of those differences are not actually significant and merely reflect measurement error. (Whereas non-overlapping confidence intervals necessarily mean that two adjacent positions differ, overlapping confidence intervals do not sufficiently rule out the possibility of significant differences. Therefore, significant differences were determined by comparing the observed difference between two positions with the respective critical value of the t-distribution.) Whereas my main dependent variable indicates that the PvdA always changed on at least one dimension, and altered its positions more frequently in recent years, *rile change* paints the picture of a party moving broadly through the left side of the policy space. Only in some instances, however, do displayed changes on the left-right dimension indicate genuine po-

Figure A5. Illustration of dependent variables



sitional adjustments and not just differences that are due to measurement error. Only in five elections did the PvdA present a program that significantly differed from its previous one on the left-right dimension.

It becomes clear that different measures of platform change tell different stories about the behavior of political parties, and we can expect that these measures affect the results of our analyses. As I have argued above, I do not believe that party competition can be accurately analyzed by focusing on the ideological left-right dimension only, and if one chooses to study position change on this dimension, one should be aware of the other caveats that MARPOR data is inflicted with. Bearing this in mind, I repeated my analysis of party position change using the versions of the dependent variable described above.

To begin with, and to illustrate how problematic its use is, I analyzed party position change on the left-right dimension, using the most commonly applied measure in the literature: *rile change*. As rile change is a normally distributed continuous variable, and in line with the literature, I estimated OLS models that take into account the hierarchical structure of the data and the problems associated with this. Specifically, as Breusch-Godfrey/Wooldridge tests for serial correlation, and autocorrelation functions of residuals indicate that errors in my models are first order AR(1) serially correlated, I estimate random intercept models with an adjustment for AR(1) correlated residuals. I report the result of the replication of the last model of Table 2 only (all motivations), and show how unreliable results of models estimating rile change are (Table A4). To that effect, I repeated the estimation of the model 100 times, each time simulating *rile change* to be the result of rile values that are drawn at random from the distribution indicating the uncertainty surrounding this measure. To simulate the effects that uncertain 'rile'-variables have on the outcome of the analysis I applied the following procedure:

1. I added (random) error to MARPOR's original 'rile'
2. re-created *rile change* based on this new 'rile'
3. estimated the model with the recreated dependent variable and stored the results
4. repeated steps 1-3 100 times
5. calculated summary statistics describing the estimates obtained in the *100* models.

Table A4. Party position change measured as *rile change*

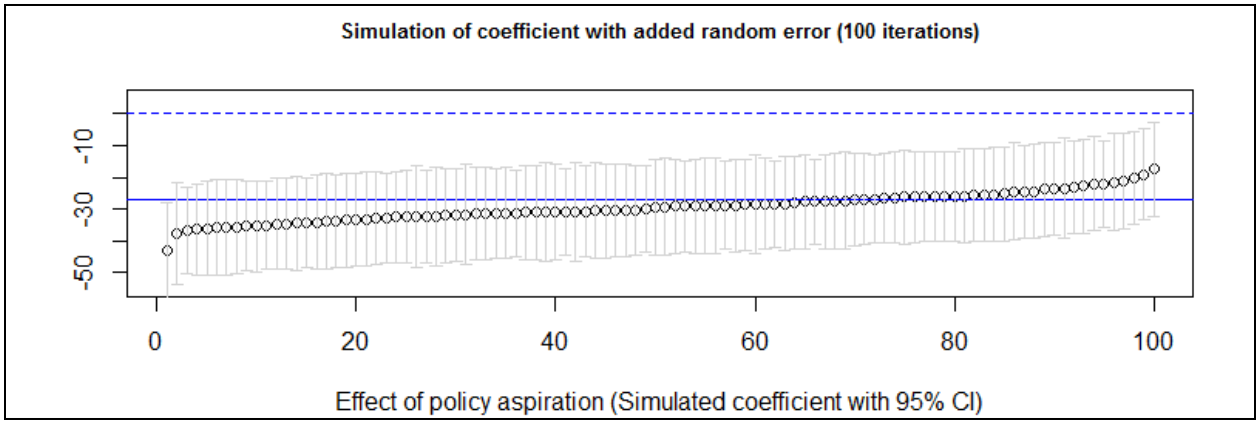
	Dependent variable: rile change		
	Replication of All motivations model with *rile change* as dependent variable	Simulation of All motivations model (100 iterations with added random error to *rile change)*	
		Mean coefficients and standard errors	Standard deviation of coefficients and standard errors
Opposition	-1.390	-1.780	.761
	(1.260)	(1.434)	(.031)
Office aspiration	1.880	2.269	1.046
	(1.750)	(1.949)	(.051)
Vote performance	-.152	-.168	.101
	(.188)	(.204)	(.005)
Vote aspiration	.065	.018	.026
	(.045)	(.051)	(.002)
Policy performance	-16.100***	-15.964***	2.975
	(4.070)	(4.742)	(.101)
Policy aspiration	-26.900***	-30.293***	3.807
	(6.540)	(7.494)	(.225)
ENPseats	.195	.087	.181
	(.348)	(.398)	(.013)
Time between elections	.0001	.001	.001
	(.001)	(.001)	(.00001)
Opposition*Office aspiration	-2.670	-1.845	1.201
	(2.120)	(2.382)	(.053)
Vote performance*Vote aspiration	-.001	.0001	.004
	(.007)	(.007)	(.0002)
Intercept	35.700***	41.17***	3.622
	(6.350)	(7.291)	(.210)
σ-Intercept	4.28		
Observations	1,451		
Log Likelihood	-5,716		
Akaike Inf. Crit.	11,460		
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	11,534		

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01; standard errors in parentheses; adjusted for AR(1) correlated residuals (φ=.242).

In Table A4 we see that the replication of the main model of my analysis with *rile change* as the dependent variable yields largely insignificant results. Only the policy-related coefficients are statistically significant ($p<.01$). Having more influence on public policy than a party could expect based on its policy-aspirations, reduces party position change on the left-right dimension, just as high policy-aspiration levels do. Clearly, high policy aspirations do not lead to positional adjustments on the chore ideological dimension of many party systems, as was expected in hypothesis 5b. There is, however, a potential issue of endogeneity in this model, as a party's 'rile' position is used to calculate both the dependent and the policy-related independent variables. Therefore, basing conclusions about hypothesis 5b on this model seems inappropriate. Furthermore, the simulation taking into account the uncertainty surrounding the 'rile'-measure that is displayed on the right side of Table A4 illustrates that the estimates of a model with *rile change* as its dependent variable need to be treated with caution. As can be expected (cf. Benoit et al. 2009, 505-07) for models with error-inflicted dependent variables, the simulation shows that especially the standard errors of coefficients are estimated as more efficient (i.e. smaller) than they most likely are. Similarly, the simulation draws attention to the dangers of relying on point estimates of coefficients. While the coefficients estimated in the simulation do not differ meaningfully from those based on a model that does not take into account the uncertainty of measures (i.e. they are largely within the 95%-confidence interval of the original coefficient), their size and especially conclusions and predictions based on them might be at odds with reality. To illustrate this, Figure A6 displays the coefficient of the variable *policy aspiration* as estimated in the first model of Table A4 (blue solid line) along with the values and confidence intervals obtained in the error simulation model. We see that the coefficient of the uncorrected model is lower than

the mean and median estimates of the error simulation models, and that potentially its *real* value is as much as ten points more negative.

Figure A6.



As a response to these limitations I created the dummy variable *significant rile change* that indicates whether the change reported by *rile change* is significant at the 5 percent level (see above). As this is a dichotomous dependent variable I estimated random intercept logit models, with counters and cubic splines to account for the temporal dependence that is present in the data (cf. Beck et al. 1998).[10] The models in Table A5 show that most of the findings related to the relationships between party goals, performance, aspirations, and position change do not extend to the left-right axis. At the same time, most effects estimated in these models go in the substantially same direction as those reported in the main analysis. Focusing on the results of the "all motivations" model, it seems that the only effects that extend to positional adjustments on the left-right dimension are those of the vote aspirations and the policy performance of a party and the time between two elections. As reported in the main part of the analysis, a good policy performance reduces the likelihood of platform change, while the time between two elections increases

[10] The number of cubic splines was chosen based on a comparison of the model fit of differently specified models. The AIC of models with just one cubic spline were generally the lowest, and therefore one cubic spline was in included in each model.

the odds for a party to change. Similarly, parties with higher vote aspirations and a neutral performance seem to be more engaged with positional adjustments on the left-right dimension (again, see Somer-Topcu 2009 for similar results).

Table A5. Party position change measured as significant *rile change*

	Dependent variable: significant rile change					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Opposition	-.113	-.167				-.133
	(.115)	(.182)				(.199)
Office aspiration		.146				-.299
		(.236)				(.254)
Vote performance			-.028**	.009		.003
			(.013)	(.029)		(.029)
Vote aspiration				.022***		.024***
				(.005)		(.006)
Policy performance					-1.970***	-2.030***
					(.594)	(.644)
Policy aspiration					1.090	.148
					(.837)	(.921)
Time between elections	.0003	.0003	.0003*	.0003*	.0003*	.0003**
	(.0002)	(.0002)	(.0002)	(.0002)	(.0002)	(.0002)
ENPseats	-.005	-.011	-.003	.056	-.002	.067
	(.044)	(.044)	(.044)	(.046)	(.044)	(.048)
Counter	-.108***	-.111***	-.108***	-.100***	-.118***	-.105***
	(.036)	(.036)	(.036)	(.036)	(.036)	(.036)
Cubic spline	.960***	.971***	.927***	1.010***	.868***	.957***
	(.258)	(.257)	(.259)	(.261)	(.259)	(.267)
Opposition*Office aspiration		.296				.078
		(.316)				(.325)
Vote performance*Vote aspiration				-.001		-.001
				(.001)		(.001)
Intercept	-.881***	-.901***	-.977***	-1.710***	-1.880**	-1.710*
	(.327)	(.341)	(.314)	(.361)	(.792)	(.905)
σ-Intercept	.457	.426	.474	.46	.437	.45
Observations	1,643	1,643	1,643	1,643	1,643	1,643
Log Likelihood	-1,071	-1,069	-1,069	-1,058	-1,065	-1,052
AIC	2,156	2,156	2,153	2,133	2,147	2,132
BIC	2,194	2,204	2,190	2,182	2,190	2,208

Note: Random Intercept Logit Regression explaining significant change on the left-right dimension. Coefficients are logit.
*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Importantly, parties do not adjust their positions on this dimension if they have high prospects of shaping public policy in the future. The effect of policy aspirations on position change is positive but clearly insignificant. Especially this finding supports my argument that policy-oriented parties with good prospects of shaping public policy in the future adjust their programs at the margins, but avoid leaving their ideological chore. Similar patterns can be reported with regard to the effects of a party's office- and vote performance. As can be seen in figures A7 and A8, the effects of these variables are in the expected direction, but they never/barely reach statistical significance. Apparently, the mechanisms connecting party goals with platform change do not lead parties to change their ideological profile significantly. This pattern is clearly in line with the theoretical expectation and empirical observation that parties are constrained by their ideological frame and avoid changing their programmatic positions dramatically (see e.g. Budge 1994; Harmel/Janda 1994).

Figure A7. Marginal effect based on all motivations model

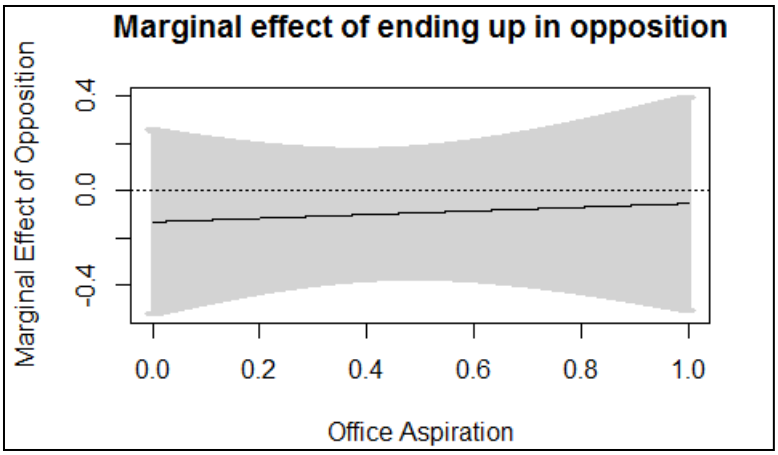
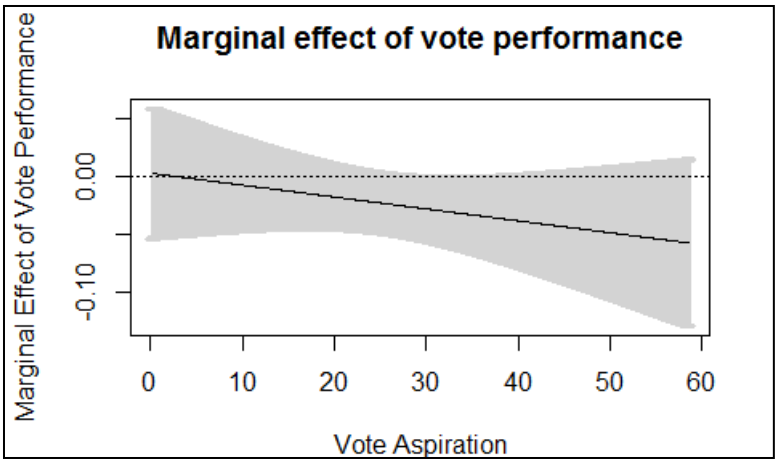


Figure A8. Marginal effect based on all motivations model



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