

On the Use of Different Modalities in Political Communication: Evidence from German Election Manifestos

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- There is lack of multimodal approaches to analyzing party competition
 - Text analysis has become an established method in political science
 - Image contents is studied to a much smaller degree (typically election campaign posters)
 - We are not aware of any work, that studies both text and images
- We want to fill this gap, this work is a (very) first step in this direction
 - We start from save grounds (party manifestos)
 - We extend existig analyses with image analysis
- Contributions:
 - Quantitative study of image use in party programmes
 - Qualitative analysis of image use in party programmes

Theory

- We know from political texts analysis that words or phrases used in election manifestos are not selected on a random basis.
- Parties try to address specific voter groups by sending out ‘ideological signals’ with specific words (e.g., Budge et al. 2001; Laver et al. 2003; Pappi and Shikano 2004)
- The ideological positions of parties – mentioned in election manifestos – depends on structural characteristics of the electorate, the overall economic conditions and the patterns of party competition (e.g., Adams et al. 2004, 2009; Giger et al. 2011)
- *We expect that similar patterns should be observable when it comes to the number and type of pictures included in an election manifesto*

Part 1:
The extent to which parties use images
in party manifestos

Hypotheses

- The stronger a party was at the previous election (and, thus, the more funding the party received), the more likely it is that a party comes up with more expensive print versions of election manifestos
 - The number of pictures in a manifesto should increase
- Left-wing parties are more open for ‘experiments’ when writing and typesetting manifestos, so that
 - the chances for the presence of pictures and the number of pictures should increase the more a party belongs to the left-wing of the ideological spectrum

Data

- Focus is on elections manifestos from the German state level
- Our analysis covers 337 state election manifestos from CDU, CSU, SPD, Greens, FDP, PDS/Linke, Pirate Party and Free Voter Associations (Bräuninger and Debus 2012)
- Covered time period: 1990-2013
- We refrain from including election manifestos from the federal level in order to hold the institutional and contextual setting (e.g., patterns of party organisation), in which election manifestos are prepared, constant.

Methods

Dependent Variables:

(1) Does an election manifesto include a picture (yes=1, no=0)

→ Logit model

(2) How many pictures are included in an election manifesto?

→ Negative binomial regression model

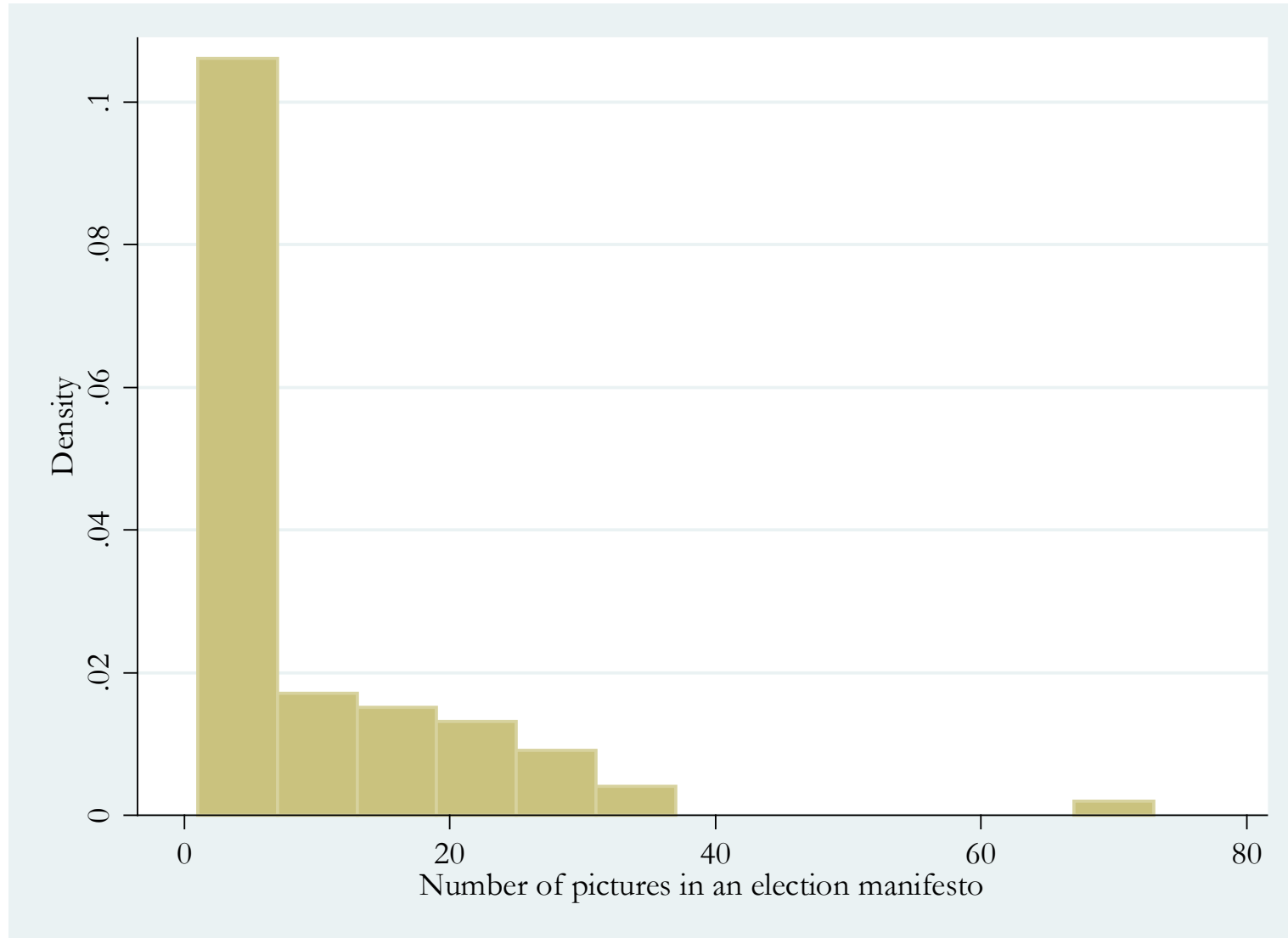
Independent variables:

Characteristics of state parties (vote share, ideological position) and of states (i.e. the German *Länder*)

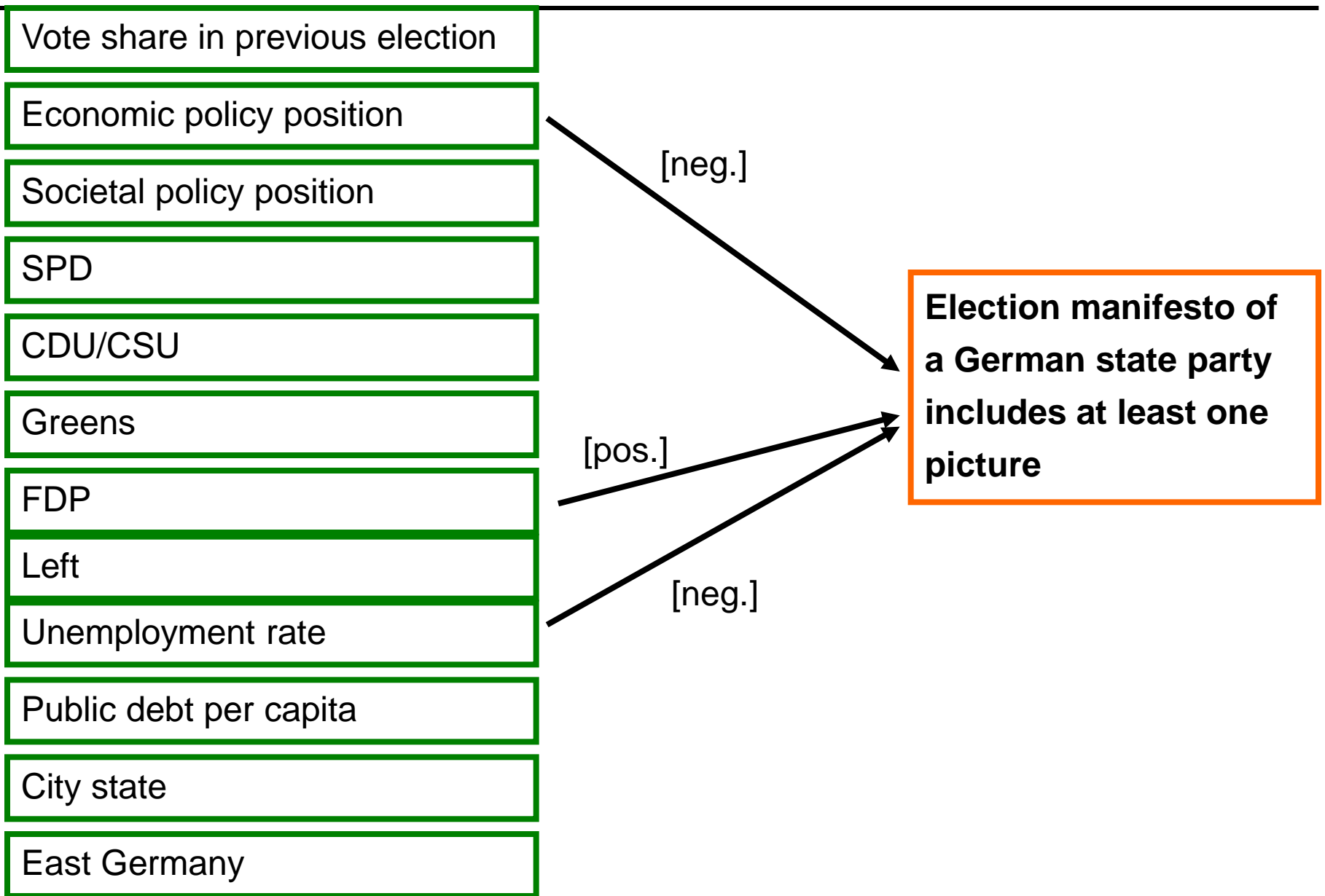
Descriptive results

- In 36,8% of the 337 election manifestos studied, an election manifesto included at least one picture
- The average number of pictures in the studied election manifestos is 2.86 (min: 0, max: 73)
- There is no (increasing or decreasing) trend over time in terms of the number of pictures in an election manifesto

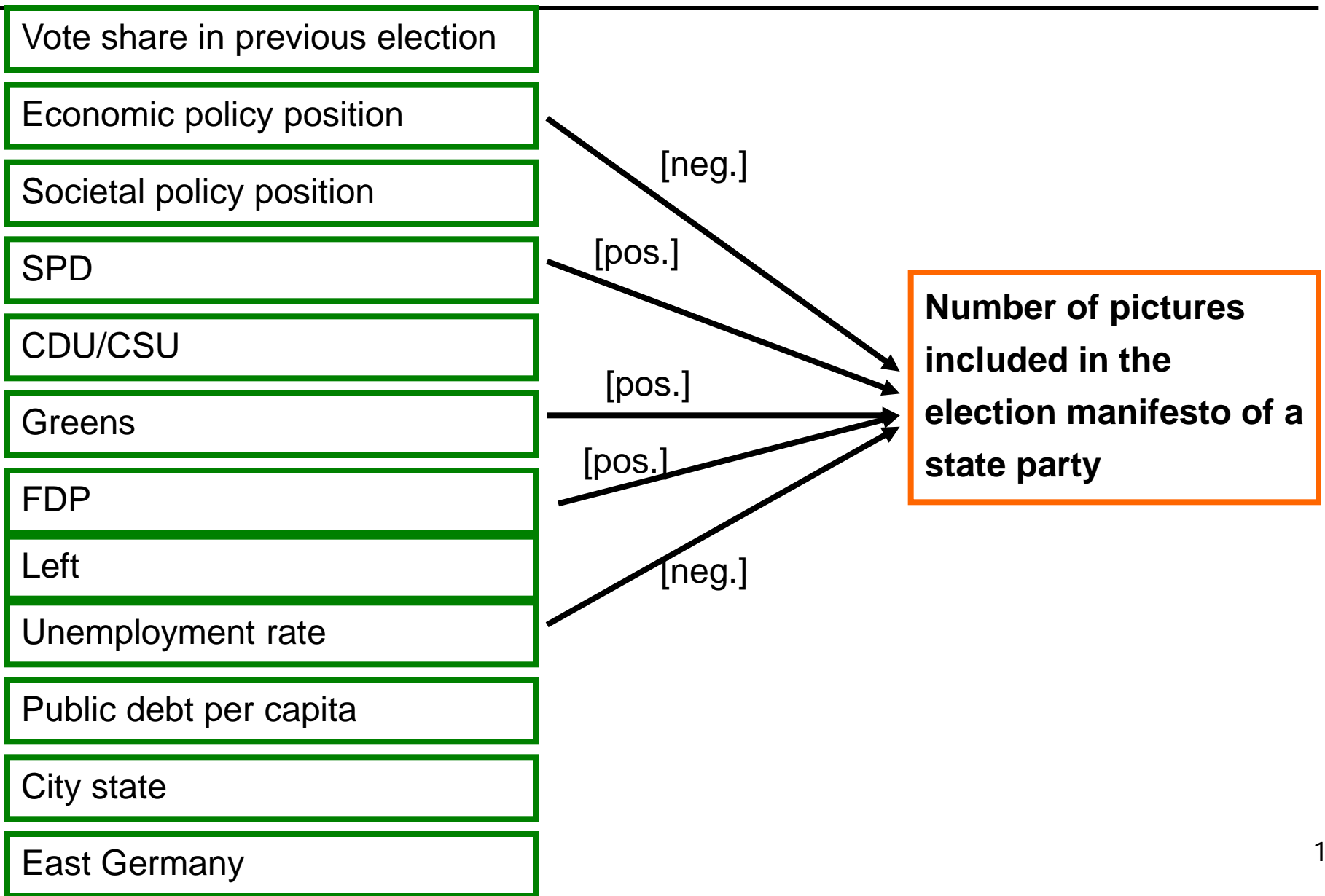
Number of pictures in an election manifesto



Basic Results – Logit model



Basic results – Logit model



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- Success in the previous election does not have an influence on the use of images
 - The economic position of a party has an influence on the use of images, but the societal position does not, i.e. the more economically left wing a party is, the more likely is the use of images
 - Certain parties do have a preference for image use, but it is hard to see a pattern
 - Surprising result: the worse the economic situation, the less likely it is that parties use images → Why?

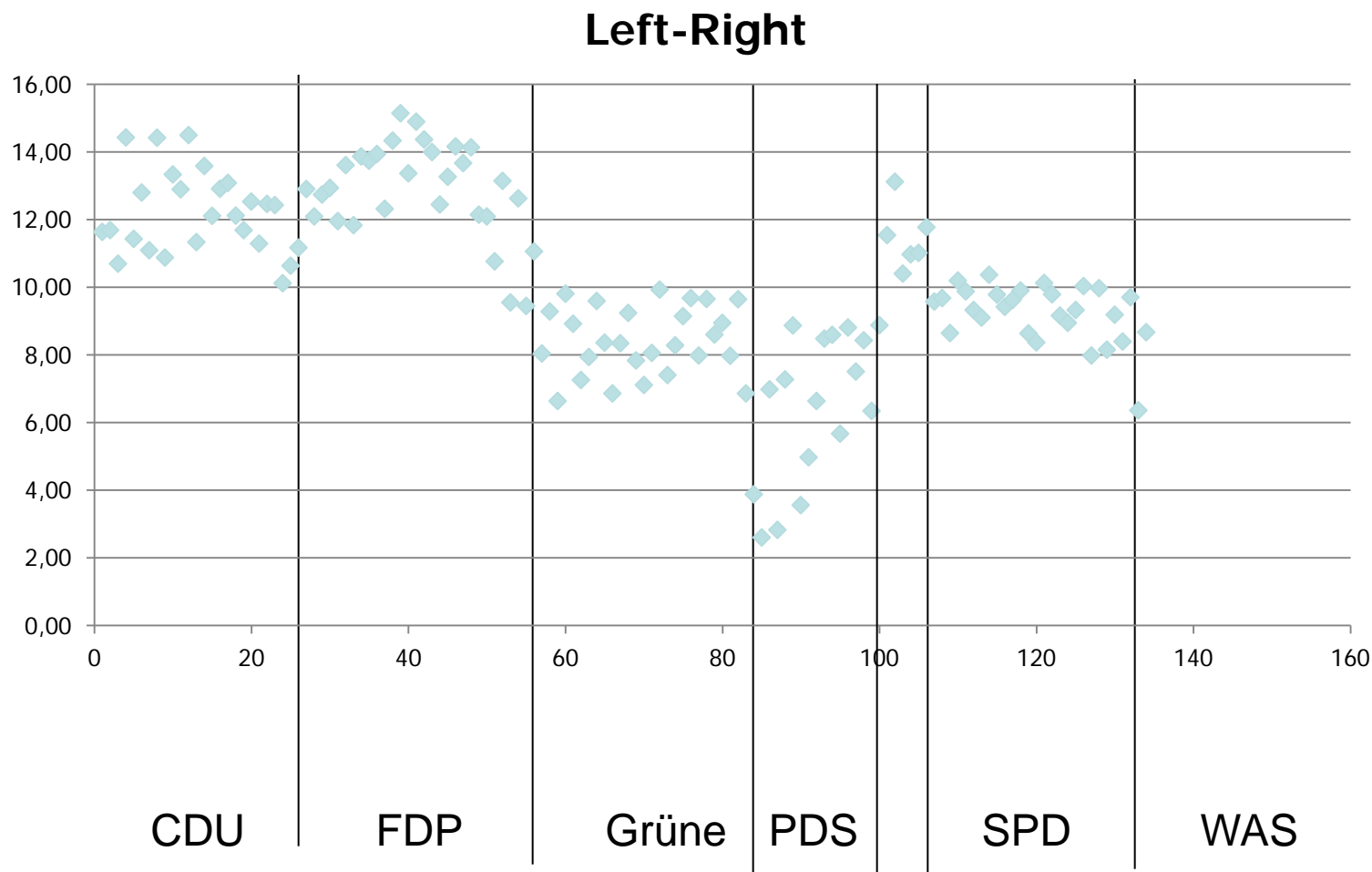
Part 2:

The types of images that parties use

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- Figure 1 is a word cloud plot showing the distribution of word weights for the German word "Frauen" (women). The y-axis is labeled "Word Fixed Effect" and ranges from -5 to 5. The x-axis is labeled "Word Weights" and ranges from -5 to 5. The word cloud is shaped like a triangle, with the most prominent words at the top. The words are in various shades of gray, with some in bold. The words include: und, der, f\u00fchr, weiden, das, sie, bundesrepublik, sichere, schuetzt, inkrafttreten, emanzipation, maennergewalt, berufsverbote, faschismus, pornographie, brd, lohnzusatzkosten, bildungsgutscheine, einkommensbesteuerung, heranfuhrung, buergergeldsystem, and many others.

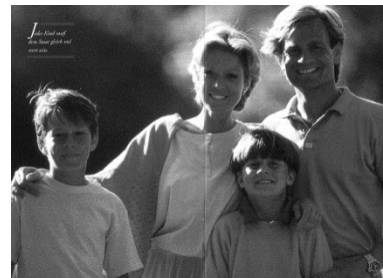
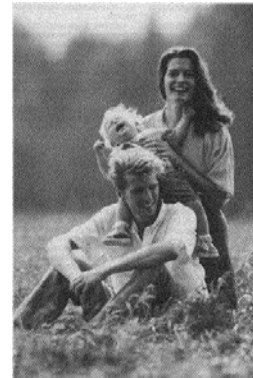
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- Is there a relation between the position of a document and the (kinds of) images used in the documents?
 - Do images carry a clear position or do parties use similar images irrespective of the position?
 - Can we link certain images to certain dimensions, e.g.
 - Family → liberal – conservative?
 - Work → Left – right?
 - Can we assign a position to an image ?

The Landscape of Party Programmes



- Select Images from manifestos with topics
 - Family → Liberal – Conservative
 - Work → Left – Right
- Align on with position of the respective documents
- Analyze images with similar position and identify common patterns
- Look for cross-position patterns
- Hypotheses:
 1. Images of family and work will be more similar across parties than political positions expressed in written text
 2. Remaining differences in image content will reflect differences in political positions between parties
 - Family: liberal side: more working moms; conservative: more three-generation families
 - Work: on the left: more collaboration at work, more blue-collar jobs

Family-related Images



Liberal

Conservative



Baden-Württemberg
1992 Die Grünen

Berlin 2011 FDP

Bund 1994 SPD

Bayern 2013 CSU

Hessen 1999 CDU

Hessen 1995 CDU

Work Related Images



Left

Right

Bund 1994 SPD

Bayern 2013 CSU

Berlin 2011 FDP

Hessen 1999 FDP

Hypothesis 1: Images of family and work will be more similar across parties than political positions expressed in written text

- Confirmed for SPD, FDP, CDU/CSU
- The Greens have partly diverging image content
- Greens and Pirate Party also have different visual genres (artistic photography, cartoons) in manifestos

Hypothesis 2: Remaining differences in image content will reflect differences in political positions between parties

- Family: liberal side: more working moms; conservative: more three-generation families
- Work: on the left: more collaboration at work, more blue-collar jobs
- Not confirmed

- **No general trend** toward greater visualization in party manifestos
- Images in party manifestos seem to be mainly used to direct readers' **attention to topics** and to **emphasize common ground** rather than to mark recognizable political positions
- Closer correspondence between textual positions and image content seems to be confined to the **margins** of the political spectrum where more **specific voter segments** are **targeted**
- The **production context** of party manifestos must be taken into account
 - Images in manifestos may be a by-product of other image strategies, e.g. in election posters, websites (some manifestos reproduce election posters)
 - Images in manifestos may not be the product of deliberate strategies in party leaderships, but may depend on idiosyncratic preferences of PR and advertising agencies
 - Commercial image databases have become very cheap and are used by PR and advertising agencies across the board, resulting in exchangeable „feelgood“ images at least for „centrist“ parties

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- Explore the connection between dire economic conditions and (less) visualization in manifestos
 - Cross-country comparison
 - Interviews with decision-makers
 - Contextualize images in manifestos in the overall communication mix and visualization strategies of political parties
 - Focus on website and Facebook images as a next step
 - Explore functions of images in manifestos for readers
 - Use study

Thank you for your attention !

Basic results of the logit model

- The **more market-liberal** the position of a party is, the **less likely** it is that the respective party includes pictures in their manifesto
- The **higher** the unemployment rate in a state is, the **less likely** it is that parties include pictures in their election manifesto
- FDP state parties are more likely to include pictures in their manifestos
- There is no statistically significant effect of
 - party vote share in the previous election,
 - the government or opposition status of a party
 - or of further characteristics of a state (city state, Western or Eastern Germany)

Basic results of the negative binomial regression model

- The **more market-liberal** a party positions itself in the election manifesto, **the lower is the number of pictures** included in the election manifesto
- The **higher the unemployment rate** in a state is, **the lower is the number of pictures** included in an election manifesto.
- **Social Democrats, Liberals and the Green Party include significantly more pictures** in their state election manifestos than other parties like Christian Democrats or Socialists
- No effect of
 - party vote share in the previous election,
 - the government or opposition status of a party
 - or of further characteristics of a state (city state, Western or Eastern Germany)

Results – Logit model

	Model 1
<i>Party characteristics</i>	
Vote share of party in previous state election	0.01 (0.01)
Economic policy position of state party (1 = left, 20=right)	-0.13 ⁺ (0.07)
Social policy position of state party (1 = progressive, 20=conservative)	0.02 (0.12)
Party in opposition	-0.23 (0.31)
SPD	1.78 (1.46)
CDU/CSU	1.48 (1.44)
FDP	1.91 ⁺ (1.08)
Greens	1.35 (1.12)
PDS/Linke	-0.04 (1.27)
<i>State characteristics</i>	
Unemployment rate at time of election	-0.11 ⁺ (0.06)
Public debt per capita	7.01 (49.38)
City state (Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen)	0.29 (0.30)
East Germany	0.92 (0.69)
Constant	0.42 (1.56)
N	337
pseudo R ²	0.069
AIC	440.59

Remarks: Robust standard errors (clustered by states) in parentheses. + = p < 0.1; * = p < 0.05; ** = p < 0.01.

Results – Negative binomial regression

Party characteristics

Vote share of party in previous state election	0.00 (0.02)
Economic policy position of state party (1 = left, 20=right)	-0.19* (0.09)
Societal policy position of state party (1 = progressive, 20=conservative)	0.08 (0.10)
Party in opposition	-0.18 (0.40)
SPD	2.59+ (1.55)
CDU/CSU	1.97 (1.44)
FDP	3.00** (1.14)
Greens	2.53* (1.00)
PDS/Linke	1.37 (1.35)

State characteristics

Unemployment rate at time of election	-0.12* (0.05)
Public debt per capita	7.88 (60.38)
City state (Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen)	-0.51 (0.33)
East Germany	0.58 (0.38)
Constant	1.68 (1.26)
Inalpha	1.79** (0.11)
N	337
Log pseudolikelihood	-545.54
AIC	1121.08

Remarks: Robust standard errors (clustered by states) in parentheses. + = $p < 0.1$; * = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.01$.