

# Issue competition in Western Europe in 2017: (evidence from) a comparative project

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# An age of «post-modern» party competition?

1. Public opinion:
  - De-ideologized; open to new, non-20th-century policy packages;
2. Party strategy (*all* parties):
  - Issue-based, ideology-lite, cross-cutting...
    - Across 20th-century ideological boundaries;
    - Across types of issues (valence, positional):  
*problem solving vs. conflict mobilization*;
  - A lens? *Issue yield theory* (De Sio, Weber APSR 2014):
    - Parties choose issues with low risk of losing existing support; high opportunity of gaining new.

# ICCP:


## a (6-country) comparative project

- Unique opportunity in 2017-18:
  - post-Brexit, Trump;
  - nl, fr, uk, de, at, ... it.
- Challenge: general approach for both positional, valence issues;
- Towards a longer-term project...

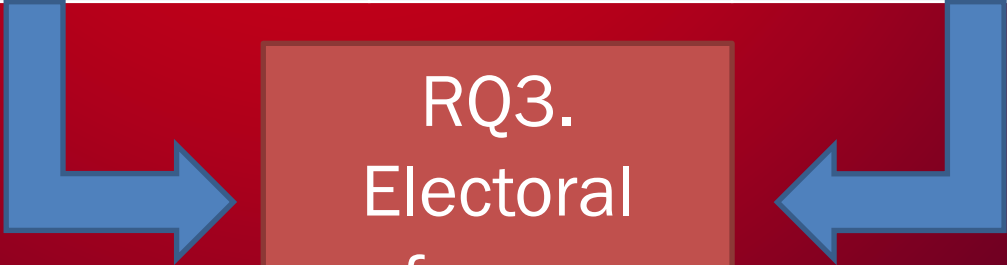
# A research design

- Public opinion configuration (pre-post CAWI):
  - large number of issues (various aspects) in *country-specific* framings;
  - Other standard vote predictors;
  - (Leadership traits).
- Party strategy:
  - Twitter data (*press release assumption*);
  - Manual coding of tweets.
- Pilot fieldwork: 2014 EP elections in Italy  
*Issue yield predicts Twitter emphasis*  
(De Sio, De Angelis and Emanuele CPS 2017);

# Empirical RQs

	Resources available for party competition (public opinion data)		Actual party strategy (Twitter data)
RQ1. Ideological (de)structuring (vs. classic 20 <sup>th</sup> century)	Are optimal (high-yield) issues ideologically consistent or ideologically challenging?		Is emphasis consistent with yield, or is ideological filtering applied?
RQ2. Positional/valence balance	What types of issues offer highest yield to the party?		What types of issues get most emphasis?

RQ3.  
Electoral  
performance



# A novel, general conceptualization of issues

- Key focus shift: from *issue* to *goal*:

Type of issue	Associated politically meaningful <i>goals</i> (context-dependent)
Positional	Two <i>rival</i> goals
Valence	One <i>shared</i> goal

- On any *goal*: same measurement of two generic, issue-yield related properties:
  - Level of support in polity  
(100% assumed for «pure» valence issues);
  - Party-*goal* association (*credibility*).

# Operationalization: positional

Now we'd like to know your views of what should be done on various issues. How would you place your views on this scale, where 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left, and 6 means you agree completely with the statement on the right? If your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between.

What do you think should be done?

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

1 = Keep Britain  
in the European  
Union

2

3

4

5

6 = Leave the  
European  
Union

Which parties do you think are credible for achieving this?

Do you think that achieving this goal should have a...

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- High priority
- Average priority
- Low priority

Please choose all that apply:

-  Conservatives
-  Labour
-  Liberal Democrats
-  UKIP
-  SNP
-  Greens
- Other party
- None of the parties
- I don't know




# Operationalization: valence

Now, you 'll be presented a list of issues where most people in the UK agree on what should be done.

## Protect the UK from terrorist attacks

Which parties do you think are credible for achieving this?

Please choose all that apply:

<input type="checkbox"/>		Conservatives
<input type="checkbox"/>		Labour
<input type="checkbox"/>		Liberal Democrats
<input type="checkbox"/>		UKIP
<input type="checkbox"/>		SNP
<input type="checkbox"/>		Greens
<input type="checkbox"/>		Other party
<input type="checkbox"/>		None of the parties
<input type="checkbox"/>		I don't know

Do you think that achieving this goal should have a...

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- High priority
- Average priority
- Low priority



# Operationalization: *generalized issue yield*

- Components of positional-only issue yield (De Sio and Weber 2014) now weighted by *credibility*;
- A summary index (GY);
- Allowing homogeneous assessment of positional and valence issues.

# RQ1: Ideological destructuring?

Party/candidate	Goal	GY	GY Cross-party ranking	Type	Prog /Cons	Dim.	Support	Credibility	Twitter share (within party)
<b>GroenLinks</b>	Fight environmental pollution	0,45	1	Valence	V		100%	45%	4%
	Do not completely close the Dutch borders to immigrants	0,39	1	Positional	P	CULT P	56%	18%	
	Maintain the current refugee policy in The Netherlands	0,34	2	Positional	P	CULT P	41%	12%	11%
	The Netherlands should stay in the EU	0,32	5	Positional	P	CULT P	63%	17%	8%
	Maintain the right to social provisions for Dutch nationals	0,27	1	Positional	P	CULT P	50%	13%	
	Reduce income differences	0,24	3	Positional	P	ECON P	73%	17%	45%
	Allow foreigners in The Netherlands to preserve their own culture	0,22	2	Positional	P	CULT P	32%	9%	2%
	Abolish the deductible in health insurance, even for Dutch citizens	0,20	2	Positional	P	ECON P	67%	12%	13%
	Legalise the selling and growing of weed	0,20	1	Positional	P	CULT P	53%	10%	8%
	Improve care for the elderly and the disabled	0,20	6	Valence	V		100%	20%	2%
<b>Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV)</b>	Take in less refugees in The Netherlands	0,68	1	Positional	C	CULT C	59%	35%	
	Completely close the Dutch borders to immigrants	0,59	1	Positional	C	CULT C	44%	23%	24%
	Require foreigners in The Netherlands to fully assimilate	0,52	1	Positional	C	CULT C	68%	32%	48%
	The Netherlands should leave the EU	0,51	1	Positional	C	CULT C	37%	17%	4%
	Restrict the right to social provisions to Dutch nationals	0,43	1	Positional	C	CULT C	50%	23%	8%
	Protect The Netherlands against terrorist attacks	0,33	2	Valence	V		100%	33%	8%
	Introduce possibilities for binding referenda	0,24	1	Positional	P	CULT P	60%	10%	
	Reduce the pension age to 65	0,21	3	Positional	P	ECON P	69%	11%	4%
	Abolish the deductible in health insurance, even for Dutch citizens	0,15	4	Positional	P	ECON P	67%	9%	
	Improve care for the elderly and the disabled	0,15	8	Valence	V		100%	15%	4%

(10 top-yield goals for each party)

# RQ2: positional or valence opportunities/strategy?

Party/candidate	Goal	GY	GY Cross-party ranking	Type	Prog/Cons	Dim.	Support	Internal support	Credibility
CDU-CSU	Stay in the EU	0.66	1	Positional	P	CULT P	81%	93%	55%
	Support the economic growth	0.56	1	Valence	V		100%		56%
	Protect from terrorism	0.48	1	Valence	V		100%		48%
	Fighting crime	0.47	1	Valence	V		100%		47%
	Maintaining infrastructure	0.47	1	Valence	V		100%		47%
	Fight unemployment	0.42	2	Valence	V		100%		42%
	Support for families and children	0.38	2	Valence	V		100%		38%

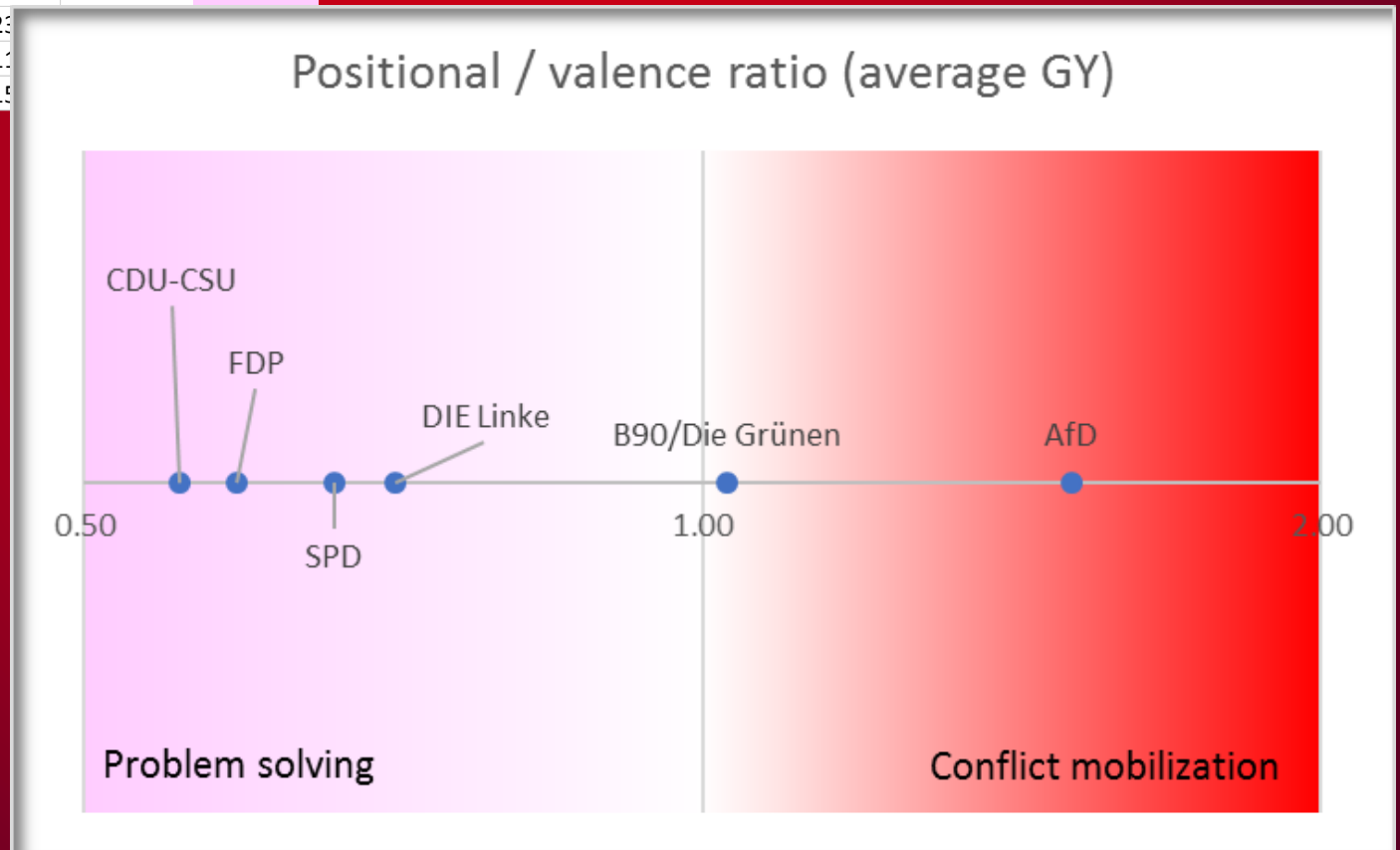
AfD	Require foreigners in Germany to fully ada	0.41	1	Positional	P	CULT P	71%	70%	20%
	Limit the number of refugees	0.38	1	Positional	P	CULT C	75%	92%	21%
	Make immigration rules more restrictive	0.36	1	Positional	P	CULT C	77%	91%	23%
	Germany should not pay any money to poc	0.30	1	Positional	P	ECON C	50%	77%	11%
	Leave the EU	0.30	1	Positional	P	CULT C	19%	54%	6%
	Each member state of the EU should decide	0.24	1	Positional	P	CULT C	29%	51%	7%

FDP	Stay in the EU	0.36	4	Positional	P	CULT P	81%	88%	32%
	Support the economic growth	0.32	3	Valence	V		100%		32%
	Maintaining infrastructure	0.24	3	Valence	V		100%		24%
	Fighting crime	0.22	3	Valence	V		100%		22%
	Protect from terrorism	0.20	3	Valence	V		100%		20%
	Fight unemployment	0.20	4	Valence	V		100%		20%
	Make immigration rules more restrictive	0.17	3	Positional	P	CULT C	77%	87%	12%
	Support for families and children	0.17	5	Valence	V		100%		17%
	Limit the number of refugees	0.16	3	Positional	P	CULT C	75%	84%	11%
	Require foreigners in Germany to fully ada	0.16	3	Positional	P	CULT C	73%	83%	12%

(10 top-yield goals for each party)

# RQ2: positional or valence opportunities/strategy?

Party/candidate	Average GY		
	Positional	Valence	P/V ratio
CDU-CSU	0.21	0.38	0.56
SPD	0.26	0.39	0.66
DIE Linke	0.17	0.23	0.71
B90/Die Grünen	0.23	0.23	1.00
FDP	0.11	0.11	1.00
AfD	0.15	0.15	1.00



# RQ3: strategy efficacy

- Strategicalness:
  - Closeness of Twitter emphasis to issue yield rankings
    - ⇒ parties effectively exploit available issue opportunities.
- Vs. just mirroring the system agenda;
- Strategicalness as a predictor of electoral performance...

# Yield-based strategicness (vs. plain systemic salience)

	(1) at17	(2) fr17	(3) nl17	(4) uk17
model				
gy3	0.13*** (0.03)	0.13*** (0.04)	0.75*** (0.13)	0.14*** (0.04)
priority	0.14** (0.05)	0.33*** (0.06)	0.19 (0.17)	0.25*** (0.06)
_cons	-0.10** (0.04)	-0.22*** (0.05)	-0.30* (0.12)	-0.18*** (0.04)
sigma				
_cons	0.05*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	0.19*** (0.02)	0.06*** (0.01)
<i>N</i>	186	193	260	168
<i>AIC</i>	-334.44	-257.92	108.69	-212.68
<i>BIC</i>	-321.54	-244.87	122.93	-200.19

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

# Party differences

Country	Strategic (GY significant)	System-driven (SS significant)	No pattern (both ns)
at	FPO, Gruene, Kurz	NEOS	Pilz, SPO
fr	Melenchon, Le Pen, Poutou	Hamon, Macron, Fillon, Arthaud, Dupont-Aignan	
nl	50Plus, CU, FvD, PVV, SGP		CDA, D66, DENK, GL, PvdA, PvdD, SP, VVD
uk	Greens, Labour*	Cons, Libdem, SNP, UKIP	
* Also rival effect is significant, but smaller			



# The roadmap

- 6-country comparative analysis: WEP special issue;
- Replication on new countries (relatively low cost);
- Future development towards a longer-term comparative project.