B2.6 Government Formation as an Optimal Combination of Office- and Policy-Motivation of Parties

Directors/ Franz Urban Pappi, Eric Linhart (Kiel), Susumu Shikano (Konstanz)
Researcher/ Nicole Seher
Funding/ German Research Foundation (DFG)

Research Question
Analysing the effects of office and policy motivations of German parties on coalition building in the German states and developing alternatives to mainstream formateur models which are based on assumptions not holding for Germany.

Recent coalition theories assume that parties are both office- and policy-oriented. Equilibrium solutions of coalition negotiations are derived non-cooperatively via backwards induction assuming a fixed sequence of negotiation steps which are started by the choice of a formateur. Contrary to that assumption, coalition bargaining in German states is free-style in a situation without a head of state.

Research Site
- 16 German states 1990 – 2010
- 11 German states 1975 – 1989

Advantages of German states as research site for coalition bargaining:
- Very similar institutional rules for coalition building
- State parties as regional organizations of national parties can be compared across states.

Problem: The policy positions of the regional parties, subdivided by departmental division of labour, had first to be identified.

First Result: Domain specific policy positions

Election programs and domain specific policy positions of all German state parties which were represented in state parliaments 1975 – 2010 are now available at MZES Eurodata.

Method: Section headings of state election programs were hand coded to assign the section text to one of 11 policy domains. Length of text is interpreted as measure of a party’s interest in domain (domain salience) and policy positions were identified with Wordfish (Poisson model for word frequencies in election programs, first principle component only) for four collapsed policy domains:
- Domestic affairs and justice
- Education and science
- Economic policy
- Labour and welfare policy

Second Result: Answer to the research question

Table 1: Mean pairwise policy distances of parties when governing together or not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Combination</th>
<th>In coalition</th>
<th>Not in coalition</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>ANMM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CDU-FDP</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>5/7</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU-SPD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0/7</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU-Gre    &amp; -</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>0/3</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU-PDS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD-Gre    &amp; 1.89</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD-FDP</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>4/7</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD-PDS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANMM</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11/27</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Which party will get the prime ministership? Conditional logit analysis.

Chart 1: Weight parameter estimates for policy motivation with 90 % credibility interval.

Chart 2: Correct prediction of ministries in coalition governments: How many and which ministries?

Third Result: Power play first, policy adjustment second

Dominant player 4.85***
Distance to policy mean in parliament if no dominant player -0.79**
N 126
Pseudo R² 0.52
Log pseudo R² 0.18

Table 2: Which party will get the prime ministership? Conditional logit analysis.

Anmerkungen: Robuste Standardfehler. Signifikanzniveaus: *** 0.01 ** 0.05 * 0.10

Chart 3: Party interests in policy domains: Text length vs. party leadership answers.