The project aims to investigate the patterns of legislation in all 16 German states (Länder) with a special focus on effects resulting from the multilevel structure of the polity. The main research questions are:

- How does preference heterogeneity within the government and between government and opposition influence the patterns of legislation?
- How inclusive (consensual) are law-making coalitions and which conflicts do they reflect?
- How do different government compositions between federal and state level influence legislation on the state level?
- Do the states differ in how they transpose EU regulations and which factors explain this difference?

Why study the legislation of the German Länder?

- Maximizing experimental variance & minimizing external variance
- The Länder have a most similar institutional set-up and similar party systems but offer a fruitful variance with regard to government-opposition configurations

Data and Methods

- Comprehensive Individual-level bill data (e.g. title of bill, policy area, legislative stimulus, initiator, dates of introduction, readings, votes, and adoption) combined with comprehensive data on party positions and behaviour (policy position in the respective policy area, voting behaviour)
- Data will be collected by using web-scraping and text-mining computer scripts and manual coding

Related Publications


This project looks at three types of interactions that are crucial to modern democracies:

- Within the government (coalition governance)
- Between government and opposition
- Between EU level, national level and state level

Normative implications

- Is Germany’s federalism a liability to the speedy and consistent transposition of European Legislation?
- Does the administrative implementation of national law at the state level create a political bias?

We analysed 410 election manifestos and 65 coalition agreements during all 92 regional elections (1990-2013) and identified 1715 announcements of legislative initiatives referring to the national level.

We found that regional parties refer more often to the national level, when they are in opposition at the national level.

We analysed 1619 bills that were submitted to Germany’s second chamber, the Bundesrat, by a Land government (1972-2013)

We found that Land governments that are in opposition at the national level announce and submit significantly more legislative initiatives aiming to change federal policies.