Representing Society? Development of Austrian Party-Voter Issue Salience in Social Policy

Carmen Walenta-Bergmann[a], Felix Wohlgemuth[a,b]

[a]Johannes Kepler University Linz
[b]European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research
carmen.walenta-bergmann@jku.at, wohlgemuth@euro.centre.org

Abstract

In representative democracies citizens hand over responsibility to parties, which represent their interests in policy-making. Current socioeconomic and political developments might foster declining quality of representation. We analyse the state of substantive representation of social policy issues in Austria and ask: How do voters and parties assess the importance of different social policy issues? How does the fit of voters' and parties' issue salience develop over time? Comparing the supply and demand side of social policy issue saliences between 2009 and 2019, we unexpectedly find convergence. Austrian parties and voters show more similar relative importance of social policy areas over time. Variations in issue saliences are partly explained by the material and sociocultural values of disaggregated social policy areas.

Keywords
Political Representation, Issue Salience, Parties, Electorate, Social Policy, Austria

Repräsentation der Gesellschaft? Die Bedeutung von sozialpolitischen Themen für österreichische Parteien und deren WählerInnen

Zusammenfassung

In repräsentativen Demokratien geben BürgerInnen Verantwortung an Parteien ab, die ihre Interessen im politischen Prozess vertreten. Frühere Studien identifizierten sozioökonomische und politische Veränderungen, die den Weg für eine Krise der Repräsentation ebnen. Wir analysieren den Stand der substanziellen Repräsentation von Sozialpolitik in Österreich und beantworten die Fragen: Wie schätzen WählerInnen und Parteien die Bedeutung verschiedener sozialpolitischer Themen ein? Wie entwickelt sich die Übereinstimmung von WählerInnen- und Parteienthemen über die Zeit? Die Analyse basiert auf der Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES), die zwischen 2009 und 2019 durchgeführt wurde. Beim Vergleich von Angebots- und Nachfrageseite stellen wir unerwartet eine Konvergenz im Zeitverlauf fest. Die disaggregierte Analyse weist außerdem darauf hin, dass die materielle und soziokulturelle Orientierung von Parteien und WählerInnen mitbestimmt, welche Sozialpolitik sie betonen.

Schlüsselwörter
Politische Repräsentation, Themensalienz, Parteien, WählerInnen, Sozialpolitik, Österreich

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

1. Introduction

In representative democracies, parties act as agents of citizens in the policy-making process, tasked through elections to represent voters' interests. Socioeconomic developments continuously put this mechanism under pressure and challenge the fit of interests between voters and their representatives. This is especially true for complex policy fields (Walgrave/Lefevere 2013), such as social policy which is affected by diversification and stratification due to increasing socioeconomic pressure and new social risks (Armingeon/Bonoli 2006; Taylor-Gooby 2004). In particular due to voters' post-industrial social policy preferences and parties' autonomy in choosing electorates and policy programmes, it is necessary to analyse which policy areas parties actually proclaim, what preferences voters actually state and if they fit (Häusermann 2010). An important part of the analysis of the fit of supply and demand side interests is the congruence of social policy areas' salience such as job and employment-, pension-, or family policy. We assume that vote-seeking parties are inclined to care about the same policy areas as their voters and thus place issues related to these policy areas on the political agenda. This raises our research questions: *How do voters and parties assess the importance of different social policy issues? How does the fit of voters' and parties' issue salience develop over time?*

Previous studies identified socioeconomic and political developments that tend to increase the divergence of voters' and parties' issue salience perceptions. Beyond the vague fear of a growing crisis of representation, increasing self-expression values in society (Kölln/Polk 2017), external shocks, like a financial crisis (Traber/Giger/Häusermann 2018) and party plurality (Bakker/Jolly/Polk 2020; Dennison 2020) are expected to decrease party-voters issue salience congruence. We further argue for disaggregating social policy in separate social policy areas. Depending on policy areas' material and sociocultural value, we expect different parties / voters to emphasise the area. Our analysis focuses on the development of issue salience congruence of different social policy areas in Austria.

Previous research in the field mainly focused on more general public-party congruence questions, like the congruence of average positions on the left-right political spectrum (e.g., McElwain 2020) or by using the social investment paradigm, the congruence of positions regarding social transfers, workfare and social investment policies (e.g., Busemeyer/Rathgeb/Sahm 2021; Fossati/Häusermann 2014). Most studies focus on positioning and remain at an aggregated level. Some authors engaged in a more fine-grained analysis of the public-party issue salience congruence for social policy subfields, such as labour market policies, childcare, or old age pensions (e.g., Pinggera 2020). However, the temporal dimension of issue salience congruence of social policy areas remains largely unexplored. We fill this gap with a disaggregated analysis of several social policy areas over time by combining two of the most common supply and demand issue salience measurements for Austria between 2009 and 2019. Our analysis is based on the supply and demand datasets of the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES). The results unexpectedly show convergence and not divergence of party-public issue salience congruence overt time in Austria. Categorising the policy areas by their material and sociocultural value explains partly the variation in issue salience on the demand and supply side of social policy preferences. This article is structured along five sections: (1) Introduction, (2) Theory and State of Research, (3) Data, Method and Operationalisation, (4) Results and (5) Conclusion and Discussion.

2. Theory and State of Research

When analysing interest congruence of voters and representatives, three prominent approaches exist in literature: comparison of issue positioning (Anderweg 2012; Busemeyer/Rathgeb/Sahm 2021; Fossati/Häusermann 2014); opinion-policy responsiveness and its mechanisms (Adams/Ezrow/Somer-Topcu 2014; Grewenig et al. 2020; Klüver/Spoon 2014; Pedersen 2020); and the congruence of voters' and parties' issue saliences (Pinggera 2020; Traber/Giger/Häusermann 2018; Häusermann/Kriesi 2015). The fit of issue positioning between voters and representatives remains the most prominent approach for the evaluation of democratic congruence. However, the meaningfulness of the issue position is limited if we do not know if, and to what extent an issue or policy area is considered to be important by both, parties and voters. The issue salience, or "the relative importance and significance that an actor ascribes to a given issue on the political agenda" (Oppermann 2010, 3) is especially interesting for policy fields, such as social policy, that show a high degree of stratification and a wide range of different issues.

The different social policy areas are faced with diversification and stratification due to socioeconomic developments and new social risks (Armingeon/Bonoli 2006). Current reforms are primarily structured along the social investment and social consumption dimension (Garritzmann/Busemeyer/Niemanns 2018; Gingrich/Ansell 2015; Hemerijck 2018; Huber/Stephens 2015). While social investment policies are answers to the growing demands of citizens affected by new social risks, social consumption policies are primarily designed to compensate for economic losses. Individual social policy areas such as family policy, job/employment or pensions can contain both social invest-

ment and consumption instruments. In the context of growing fiscal constraints (Pierson 1996) and limited regulatory capacity, the decisions by parties and voters to prioritise an issue, thus allocate limited resources to it, are crucial for policy-making. Parties and voters are increasingly in favour of welfare state issues (Manow et al. 2018), however fiscal constraints reinforce issue competitions over welfare issues (Pinggera 2020). Distributive conflicts over welfare state reforms (Busemeyer/Garritzmann 2017) highlight the initial importance of voters' and parties' issue salience for the choice of policy area to reform and subsequentially for the reform content. We therefore explore the relative issue salience of social policy areas over time.

Most research on issue salience engages with questions for only one point in time, which does not allow to make a statement about the temporal development of public-party issue salience congruence. Only a very small number of studies also take the time dimension of issue salience into account. Dennison (2020) analyses the public issue salience for the policy field of immigration in Western European countries between 2005 and 2018. Rovny and Polk (2020) study the party issue salience of radical right parties for economic issues in Western Europe between 1985 and 2015. Very rarely researchers try to combine these two approaches and pose the question whether issue salience of parties and voters is converging or diverging over time (for economic issues e.g., Traber/Giger/Häusermann 2018).

We tackle this issue for social policy areas and focus on the time dimension of public-party salience congruence. Therefore, this contribution focuses on the disaggregated comparison of public-party salience congruence over time, and asks: *How do voters and parties assess the importance of different social policy issues? How does the fit of voters' and parties' issue salience develop over time?*

The literature does not offer a uniform answer to this question. Cross-sectional studies comparing several countries and welfare state types such as Häusermann and Krisie (2015) or Pinggera (2020) conclude that party-voter congruence of social policy issue is at a higher level compared to other policy issues. Pinggera (2020) finds in his cross-country study of seven western European countries high congruence of public-party issue salience in 2018/2019. The salience congruence between parties, the general electorate, and their specific electorate is especially high for broadly supported issues. Yet, there are differences in the issue salience of party families, that corresponds to the issue emphases of their electorate.

However, there are also strong arguments for declining congruence between parties and citizens. The rise in party competition and parties shift from their voter representative to their governing role (Mair 2013) makes it difficult for parties to respond to voters' demands. The fiscal and regulatory capacity of governments and thus incumbent parties' freedom to act on voters' demands has been declining due to rise in public debts and pressure for fiscal consolidation (Streeck/Mertens 2013). We will analyse how the limited capacity to act on voters' issue preferences influences parties' issue emphases. The decline in party membership (Biezen/Poguntke 2014), accompanied by decreasing voter turnout for elections in Austria[1], indicate that party-voter linkages are weakening. The rise of populism and its "thin-centred ideology" (Freeden 1998, 748) contradicts the ideological differentiation of the social-political field by blurring issue emphases and positions. Radical right parties strategically blur certain social policy stances to attract broader electorates, however, regarding sociocultural stances these populist parties favour consumption policies (Enggist/Pinggera 2022). Current surveys also conclude that the trust towards politicians is decreasing[2], which suggests a decreasing fit between the interests of representatives and their electorate. Additionally, external shocks, such as financial crises (Traber et al. 2018) alter the congruence and are crucial factors when analysing the temporal development of public-party salience congruence in Austria.

Voter's issue salience has a direct effect on voting behaviour (Dennison 2020) and declining party-voter congruence for mainstream parties increases voters' likelihood of voting for anti-establishment challenger parties (Bakker/Jolly/Polk 2020). The level of issue salience congruence affects the plurality of the party system and on the other hand the number of parties also affects the party-voter issue salience congruence. Walgrave and Lefevere (2013) further found higher differences between public and party salience depending on the complexity of voters accessing the information about parties' positions and issues salience, and thus also depending on the complexity of the policy field and the different competing issues in the field. Kölln and Polk (2017) additionally found decreasing public-party congruence for societies with increasing self-expression values. The World Value Survey reports this trend for Austria[3]. With increasing fragmentation among electorates, in particular regarding different social policy issues (Häusermann/Kriesi 2015), parties find it difficult to listen and react to voters' demands (Mair 2003). Aggregating the interests of voters in parties' issue emphasis is increasingly difficult, which conversely makes it difficult for voters to compare their interests with parties' manifestos. Bearing all these examined relations in mind we hypothesise:

---

1   see for example: https://www.parlament.gv.at/PERK/HIS/WAHL/BETEIL/index.shtml# [last access: June 2021]
2   see online analysis of the European Social Survey (variable trstplt: Trust in politicians): http://nesstar.ess.nsd.uib.no/webview/ [last access: June 2021]
3   see online WVS self-expression values: https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp [last access: November 2021]

H1: In the field of social policy the issue salience congruence between voters and parties in Austria decreases over time.

Building on the results of Pinggera (2020), we further expect differences in salience levels comparing separate social policy areas and parties as well as their corresponding electorates. The traditional partisan theory assumes that parties have a distinct ideological position, since they represent the interests of their class-based electorate (Hibbs 1977; Häusermann/Picot/Geering 2013). Left parties and their voters are in favour of welfare state expansions and thus put social policy issues at the top of their agenda (Castles 1982; Schmidt 1996). We would expect high relative issue saliences of all separate social policy issues for left parties and voters. However, we assume that the party-voter linkages for different social policy issues are more complex. Thus we follow the multi-dimensional perspective on social policy (Garritzmann/Busemeyer/Niemanns 2018), but on the policy area level, and the "new school" of partisan politics emphasising the importance of party-voter linkages (Häusermann/Picot/Geering 2013). Parties emphasise specific social policy issues and areas to attract a specific group of voters. In contrast to the "old" partisan theory, parties are more flexible in their electoral strategies and thus more autonomous which electorate and issue they consider (Katz/Maier 1994).

Categorising our three disaggregated social policy areas regarding their material and sociocultural value (Kitschelt 1994; Kitschelt 2004) specifies these relationships. Policy areas that are primarily situated on the material dimension address questions like where and how the state should intervene and how much the state should modify the material distribution of the market economy (Häusermann 2010; Hieda 2021). Pensions policies possess strong material values since they primarily alter the socioeconomic position of individuals. Whereas family policy has strong sociocultural values and thus provides answers to the choice of appropriate unit of social protection (family or individual) and generally to question of gender roles and family models. We categorise job/employment policies primarily as policy area with strong material values, since these policies alter the socioeconomic position of individuals, however, active labour market instruments as sub-dimension of the policy area have sociocultural goals. We remain on the aggregated policy area level with job/employment policy's strong material value.

Individual family policy instruments illustrate the complex and time-dependent relationship between issue salience and position. Instruments such as family allowances, which compensate the economic loss when providing unpaid care, have strong material goals. Our analysis focuses on the last decades in Austria, during which an extensive family allowances system already

exists, and instead the public discourse is dominated by sociocultural family policy ideas and reforms in most OEDC countries (Kang/Meyers 2018; Gabel/Kamerman 2006). Current family policy reforms introduced instruments, such as paternity leave, which have strong sociocultural goals of increasing the gender equality in parental care. We remain on the aggregated policy area level and categorise family policy as primarily sociocultural policy area. We expect that parties and voters that emphasise material issues show high saliences of pension and job/employment policy relative to family policy. On the other hand, parties and voters with strong sociocultural agendas will show high family policy salience relative to the other issues.

We focus on parties and their respective electorates which successfully won seats for the Austrian Parliament (Nationalrat) in at least two elections between 2008 and 2019. Our sample includes the ÖVP, SPÖ, FPÖ, GRÜNE and NEOS. Following the Comparative Political Data Set (Armingeon et al. 2018) the ÖVP can be classified as religious centre party, the SPÖ as left social democratic party, the FPÖ as right party, The GRÜNE as green party and the NEOS as liberal party.

The party family classifications already indicate some party differences on the two dimensions. The values of the sociocultural salience (*galtan_salience [0,10]*) and material salience (*lrecon_salience [0,10]*) measurements from the 2019 Chapel Hill expert survey (Jolly et al. 2022) show that SPÖ and ÖVP have stronger material (both 6.9) and weaker sociocultural orientations (SPÖ 4, ÖVP 5.5), FPÖ and GRÜNE weaker material (FPÖ 4.2, GRÜNE 4.7) and stronger sociocultural orientations (FPÖ 7.7, GRÜNE 6.8), whereas NEOS show a strong material (7.4) and a strong sociocultural (6.4) orientation. Combining the orientations of these Austrian parties with the positioning of the three social policy issues results in following expectations:

H2a: The salience of family policy will be high among FPÖ, GRÜNE, NEOS and their electorates.
H2b: The salience of job/employment policy will be high among SPÖ, ÖVP, NEOS and their electorates.
H2c: The salience of pension policy will be high among SPÖ, ÖVP, NEOS and their electorates.

Regarding hypothesis 2a, Christian Democratic parties, such as the ÖVP, have been crucial for the implementation and design of early family policies (van Kersbergen 1995; Manow/van Kersbergen 2010). However, in the last decades Christian Democratic parties show high degrees of ideological similarity to conservative parties and are often aggregated in the same category (Camia/Caramani 2012; Kriesi et al. 2008; Häusermann 2012). Giuliani (2021) concluded that Christian Democratic and conservative parties altered their family policy ideas towards

optional familialism, which additionally supports gender equality, however through an economic and market-oriented frame. Which supports our classification of ÖVP as member of the conservative party family with strong material orientations and weak sociocultural orientations.

3. Data, Method and Operationalisation

In our analysis we focus on the party manifestos of Austrian parties and the issue saliences of electorates. We argue that the content of party manifestos, which are published during the election campaigns, are suitable proxies for issue salience of political actors. Primarily because manifestos can be defined as "contract between parties and voters […] reflect[ing] a party's realistic assessment of the policies which they could expect to implement if elected" (Ray 2007, 17). Due to data availability for both demand and supply issue salience, we limit our sample to 2009 - 2019. The Austrian national election dates during and shortly before our period of observation were 28th September 2008, 29th September 2013, and 15th October 2017. Our sample consists of all parties who won mandates for the Nationalrat at least two elections between 2008 and 2017, which is true for FPÖ, GRÜNE, NEOS, ÖVP and SPÖ.

The analysis is based on two different types of data, both collected as part of the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES[4]). Information on parties' social policy focus (supply side) can be found in the party manifestos released as campaigning instruments for elections to the Nationalrat. The AUTNES supply side dataset contains fine-grained coding of all policy statements, including social policy from 2002 to 2017. Information on voters' social policy emphases (demand side) can be surveyed by representative opinion polls among citizens eligible to vote. The AUTNES demand side dataset contains three independent survey projects of that kind (containing 20 survey waves between 2009 and 2019). By merging these, from a conceptual and methodological perspective, very different data sources, we developed a tool to compare public- and party issue saliences. Our analysis is focused on disaggregated social policy issues, however the data and our conceptualisation can be used to analyse any other issue over time and its congruence between voters and parties.

3.1 Operationalisation: voters' social policy emphases

The AUTNES demand side dataset is structured along three project periods. The survey for the first dataset was conducted in 2009 (Kritzinger/Aichholzer/et al. 2020). The surveys for the second dataset (containing six waves) were conducted between 2013 and 2015 (Kritzinger/Johann/et al. 2020). The surveys for the third dataset (containing 13 waves) were conducted between 2017 and 2019 (Aichholzer et al. 2017). The merged dataset contains 20 waves with more than 10.000 individuals participating. For some years multiple waves have been conducted (six waves in 2017, seven waves in 2019). Due to the panel structure of the survey data pooling was not a good option. We use only a maximum of one wave per year, and thus six out of 20 waves (2009, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2019)[5].

To calculate the average voter's issue salience for the electorate of each party, we combined *party preference* and *issue emphases* measurements for each individual. *Party preference* is measured by posing slightly different questions depending on the period of conduction (for 2009: Q18A; for 2013-2015: W1-Q3; for 2017-2019: W1-Q17 to W1-Q19).

Likewise, *public issue salience* is measured by posing several different questions depending on the survey project (see Table 1). For the first survey in 2009, participants had to name their most, and second most important political issue. The issues mentioned by the participants have later been coded into 22 policy fields. For consecutive surveys (2013-2015 and 2017-2019) participants had to choose the three most important policy fields out of 16 (including the option 'none of the above').

The public issue salience is calculated using these different questions on issue importance. Due to the fact that the number of issues that respondents could select varies between one and three, the issue choice has been weighted according to the total number of issues ticked by the respondent (see Equation 1). This approach enables us to compare the public issue salience over time and to combine it with the supply side data.

Equation 1: from issue importance questions to public salience variables

$$DemIS_{p,f} = \frac{\sum_{v_l}^{v_i} \frac{c}{\sum c_q}}{N_{v,p}}$$

DemIS…demand issue salience, *DemIS ≤ 1*

p…party, *p = [ÖVP,SPÖ,FPÖ,NEOS,GRÜNE]*

f…issue field, *f = [family policy, pensions, job/employment]*

v…voter of party p

c…issue choice, *c = [0,1]*

q…question about issue importance

$N_{v,p}$…Number of voters per party

The final dataset contains information on the public issue salience for 16 policy (sub)fields. For the analysis we use the social policy subfields 'family policy', 'pensions' and 'job/employment'. Further it contains information on the average public issue salience for the electorate of the six most important political parties in Austria (ÖVP, SPÖ, FPÖ, NEOS, GRÜNE).

3.2 Operationalisation: social policy issue saliences in party manifestos

To measure parties' issue saliences, we use the AUTNES supply side dataset (Müller et al. 2020b). The dataset contains information on the content of all relevant Austrian parties' manifestos between 2002 and 2017. We use the election years 2008, 2013 and 2017 *(variable: v19)* and the manifestos of ÖVP, SPÖ, FPÖ, GRÜNE and NEOS *(v20)* to ensure comparability with the AUTNES demand survey data.

Comparable to the Manifesto Project (Volkens et al. 2020), the AUTNES supply side team ascribed to each kernel sentence in the manifesto the containing issues *(v10 issue)*. The issue categories are based on a three-level hierarchical coding structure. For instance, issue "11704 salary of mothers" (level 3) is part of "1170 family/children/adolescents" (level 2) and "11000 welfare state" (level 1)[6]. Resulting in a dataset with structured information on how often one of the 650 level-3-issues appears in each party manifesto and thus the aggregated count of 15 level-1-issue categories. Based on the possible 16 answer categories of the voters' issue questions, we aggregated level-3-issues to three social policy issues: job/employment, pensions, and family policy (see Table 1). The original AUTNES manifesto dataset contains information on additional social policy issues such as health policy or general welfare state statements. However, the demand side survey did not offer these issues as answer categories, which limited our analysis to the three social policy issues. For each manifesto and for each social policy issue we calculated the count of issue statements and share of issue-statements in relation to all statements (see Equation 2). Thus, resulting in a dataset containing the count and share of social policy issues of 14 manifestos, since the NEOS were founded in 2012.

Equation 2: from manifesto issue statements to party salience variables

$$SupIS_{p,f} = \frac{\Sigma_{s_1}^{s_i} S_{p,f}}{\Sigma_{s_1}^{s_i} S_p}$$

SupIS…party/supply issue salience, *SupIS ≤ 1*
p…party, *p = [ÖVP,SPÖ,FPÖ,NEOS,GRÜNE]*

f…issue field, *f* = [family policy, pensions, job/employment]
s…manifesto statements

3.3 Combining public and party issue salience

Party manifestos are strategic instruments used by parties to address voters in which they present their positions and issue emphasis in competition to other parties. Following the argument of Budge (2015), the relative party issue salience compared to all other parties is more meaningful when analysing political competition. To capture the competitive issue salience and to control for general trends in party and public issue salience we create mean-centred relative issue salience variables by subtracting the mean share of a topic among all five and in 2008 four parties' manifestos in the same year (see Equation 3).[7]

By aggregating the different number of issues in the original demand surveys to 16 policy (sub)fields, we already made the different waves comparable. However, in order to combine the demand and supply side datasets, we also created mean-centred relative demand issue salience indicators. Manifestos contain more issues than issues surveyed among voters, which inflates the total amount of issues and thus creates different totals for comparing the share of demand and supply issue saliences. By centering the relative issue salience to all other parties and all other electorates, we control for the different total share of issues. The mean-centred public demand issue salience indicator measures the relative salience of an issue by an electorate compared to the group mean of all electorates (Equation 4).[8] The mean-centred issues salience variables show the emphasis of each party and electorate compared to the others and how the emphasis changes over time.

---

7   **Equation 3:** relative supply issue salience

$$RelSupIS_{p,f} = SupIS_{p,f} - \frac{\Sigma_{p_1}^{p_i} SupIS_{p,f}}{N_p}$$

RelSupIS…relative party/supply issue salience, *SupIS ≤ 1*
p…party, *p* = [ÖVP,SPÖ,FPÖ,NEOS,GRÜNE]
f…issue field, *f* = [family policy, pensions, job/employment]
s…manifesto statements
N_p…Number of parties

8   **Equation 4:** relative demand issue salience

$$RelDemIS_{p,f} = DemIS_{p,f} - \frac{\Sigma_{p_j}^{p_i} DemIS_{p,f}}{N_p}$$

RelDemIS…relative demand issue salience, *SupIS ≤ 1*
p…party, *p* = [ÖVP,SPÖ,FPÖ,NEOS,GRÜNE]
f…issue field, *f* = [family policy, pensions, job/employment]
s…manifesto statements
N_p…Number of parties

---

6   for the full list of issue codes, see (Müller et al. 2020a)

Table 1: Combine manifesto and survey issue coding

	SUPPLY SALIENCE	DEMAND SALIENCE		
Data Source:	AUTNES Party Manifestos 2002-2017	AUTNES Post Post Election Survey 2009	AUTNES Online Panel Study 2013–2015	AUTNES Online Panel Study 2017–2019
Variables:	*Issue Categories (level 2)*	*Q: [fmimpp] First most important problem (unique mention) & [smimpp] Second most important problem (unique mention)*	*Q: Which issues are most important to you personally in the upcoming national parliamentary election on 29 September 2013? [MULTIPLE RESPONSES POSSIBLE, MAXIMUM THREE]*	*Q: Which domestic political issues are currently most important to you personally? You can select up to three options. [RANDOMIZE ITEMS; max. 3 responses]*
Job/Employment	10200 job market / unemployment 11201 support of the unemployed	10 Unemployment 11 Youth unemployment / apprenticeship positions	job market / employment	job market / employment
Pensions	11600 pension	90 Private pension 91 Pensions 92 Elderly care	pension / old-age income security	pensions and old-age income security
Family Policy	11700 family / children / adolescents 13200 kindergarten	100 Family policy 101 Youth / young people / students	family policy	family policy

By comparing the electorates' and parties' mean-centred issue salience figures for each party over time, we are able to analyse if and how well the issue salience of each party fits to the issue salience of its electorate and vice versa. A positive family policy public issue salience value can be interpreted as an emphasis by the electorate on family policy compared to the other electorates. If a party wants to strategically address the issue salience of its voters we would see a positive party issue salience value for family policy, which means that the party emphasises the issue compared to the other parties. Following the approach of party ideology measurements (e.g., Jahn 2011), we use the content of party manifestos for the following years until a new party manifesto has been published for the next election. Thus, we combine the supply issue saliences from 2008 with the demand issue saliences from 2009, supply issue saliences from 2013 with demand issue saliences from 2013, 2014 and 2015, and supply issue saliences from 2017 with demand issue saliences from 2017 and 2019.

Our goal is to analyse the congruence of party and public issue salience for the disaggregated social policy issues family policy, job/employment, and pensions. To create issue salience congruence variables, we subtracted the mean-centred relative public issue salience from the relative mean-centred party issue salience (Equation 5).[9] For each party and issue, we have a congruence indicator which shows how well the supply and demand issue salience fits together. A negative value can be interpreted as greater demand issue salience by the electorate than the party supplies, and a positive value as greater supply than demand.

In order to analyse how the total issue salience congruence of social policy issues in Austria developed over time, we constructed a standardised congruence indicator by taking the square root of the sum of squared congruence values of all parties for each issue and year (Equation 6).[10] By squaring the values, we make oversupplied and undersupplied issues comparable and focus on the congruence. A zero value of the standardised congruence measurement indicates a perfect congruence between all parties and their specific electorate for the issue and year.
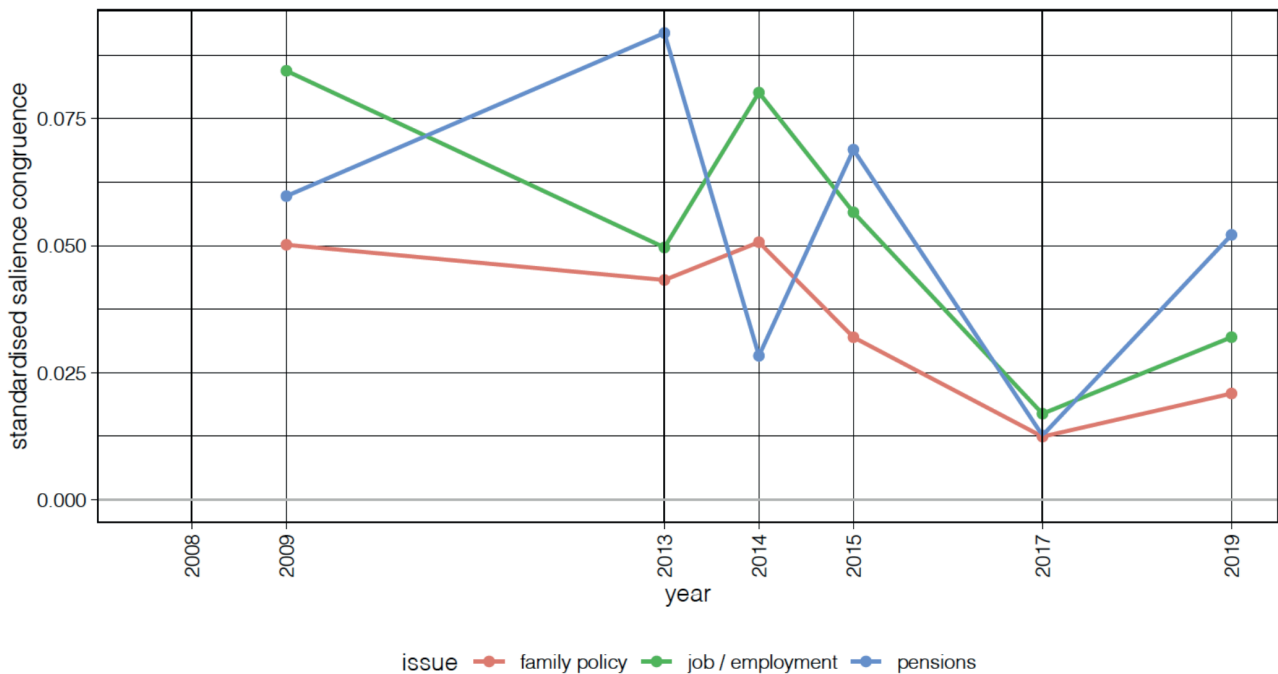

9　**Equation 5:** congruence issue salience

$$CongIS_{p,f} = RelSupIS_{p,f} - RelDemIS_{p,f}$$

10　**Equation 6:** standardised congruence

$$stdCongIS_f = \sqrt{\Sigma_{p_1}^{p_i} CongIS_{p,f}^2}$$

Figure 1: Total standardised issue salience congruence for family policy, job/employment and pensions

Note: 0 = prefect congruence between parties & electorates

Table 2: issue salience congruence over time – values

year	family policy	job/employment	pensions	election year?
2009	0.050	0.084	0.060	no
2013	0.043	0.050	0.092	yes
2014	0.051	0.080	0.028	no
2015	0.032	0.057	0.069	no
2017	0.012	0.017	0.013	yes
2019	0.021	0.032	0.052	no

4. Results

4.1 Standardised congruence between public and party issue salience

As can be seen in Figure 1 and Table 2 the results contradict our hypothesis 1. We expected that the congruence of public and party issue saliences decreases over time. But, on the contrary, the congruence of the three welfare issues increases over time (0 = perfect congruence), therefore hypothesis 1 must be rejected. In the election year 2017 the congruence between voters and parties was nearly perfect for all issues.

Except for 2014 family policy shows the best salience congruence among the three welfare issues. The standardised congruence of pensions and job/employment fluctuates much more, which indicates changes in party and public issues salience which are not matched by each other. The differences among issues support our argument for disaggregating the welfare state issue.

To answer hypotheses 2a to 2c we must take one step back and look at the disaggregated development within single parties and their electorate.

4.2 Party issue salience

Figure 2 shows the share of the three welfare issues in each party manifesto. Comparing the three issues, family policy has on average a higher issue salience than job/employment and pensions. Family policy is most prominent among FPÖ and ÖVP, while job/employment is most prominent in SPÖ manifestos. Pension policy has a high issue salience in FPÖ manifestos. Therefore, hypotheses 2a to 2c can only partially be confirmed. While family policy is indeed a prominent topic in FPÖ manifestos it is less than expected part of the party manifestos of GRÜNE and NEOS (H2a). The same is true for job/employment, which as expected is an important content of the SPÖ manifesto, but not too prominent in the party manifestos of ÖVP and NEOS (H2b). For pensions our expectations were wrong. Contradicting our argument, pension policy has a high issue salience in FPÖ, and not in SPÖ, ÖVP or NEOS party manifestos. Accordingly, H2c must be rejected for party issue salience.

Figure 2: Share of social policy content in party manifestos of FPÖ, GRÜNE, NEOS, ÖVP, SPÖ
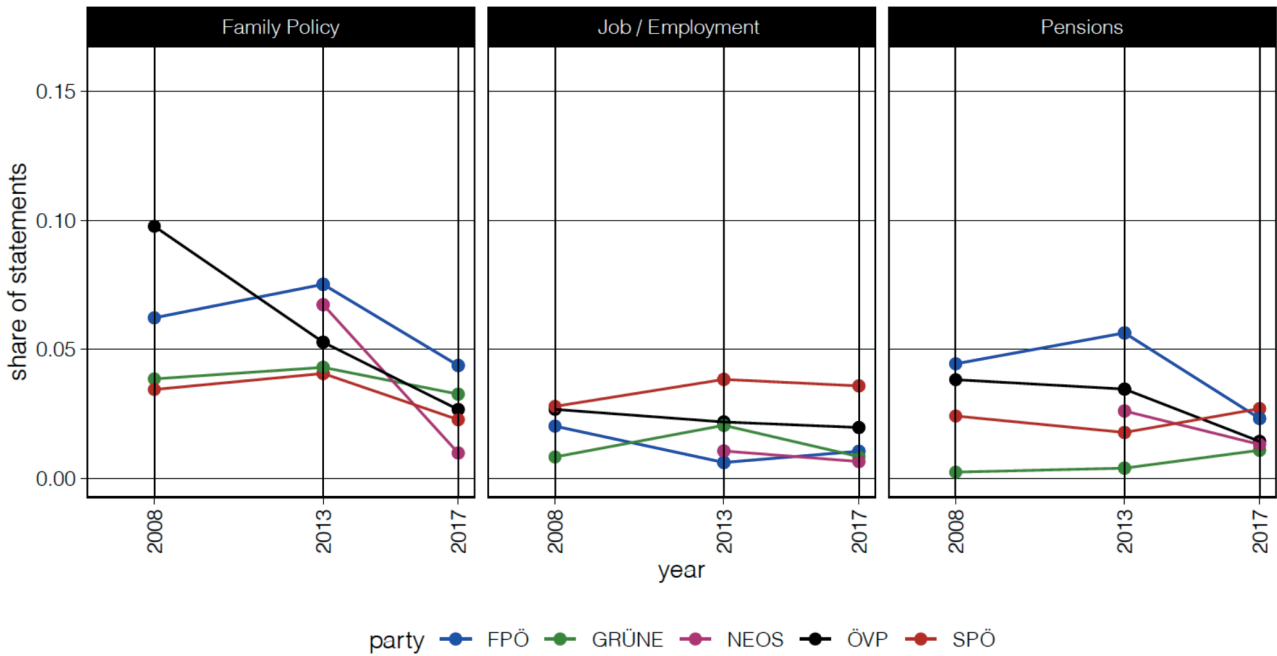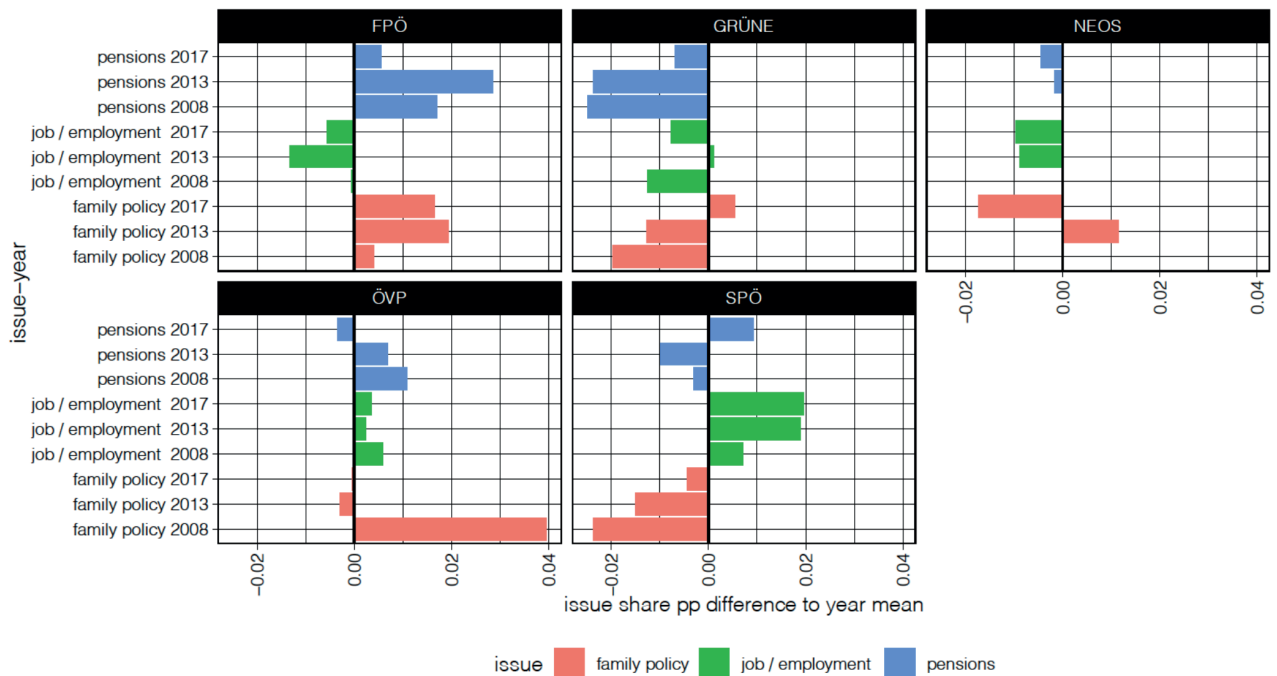

Figure 3: Relative supply issue salience by year and party

Note: mean of 5 parties

Figure 3 shows the relative party issue salience and thus how parties position themselves in competition to other parties in the Austrian party system. The FPÖ has a strong relative emphasis on family policy and pensions, while the SPÖ focuses on job/employment. The ÖVP had a strong family policy focus in 2008 with a 4-percentage point higher issue salience than the mean of all party manifestos, however in the following election campaigns the focus disappeared. The GRÜNE has generally lower relative issue saliences for welfare topics except for family policy in 2017. NEOS have low relative issue saliences for most social policy issues and years. In 2013

they emphasised family policy, but the relative salience disappeared in the following manifesto. Parties have unique patterns in their emphasis of social policy issues. Family policy seems to be an important issue for FPÖ, job/employment for SPÖ and pensions for FPÖ. In sum we find that relative issue salience figures (as absolute issue salience figures) partially confirm H2a and H2b, while H2c must be rejected for party issue salience.

4.3 Public issue salience

Figure 4 shows the public issue salience for family policy, job/employment, and pensions over time. For family policy, overall, we see stable figures for the electorates. The issue salience among the five electorates develops similarly and increases slightly between 2009 and 2019. Compared to the other two issues, family policy has the lowest level of issue salience and the lowest variation over time. The salience measurements of family policy do not exceed 0.08. A maximum of eight percent of the electorate perceives family policy to be a very important topic. In 2013 the highest family policy issue salience existed among ÖVP voters while in 2019 GRÜNE voters reported the highest issue salience on a similar level. The issue salience of job/employment starts on a much higher level in 2009 than the two other social policy issues and shows a declining trend until 2019. During the ten years of observation, SPÖ voters reported the highest issue salience, whereas the lowest issue salience is found for GRÜNE voters at the beginning of the observation period, FPÖ, ÖVP and NEOS voters declare job/employ-
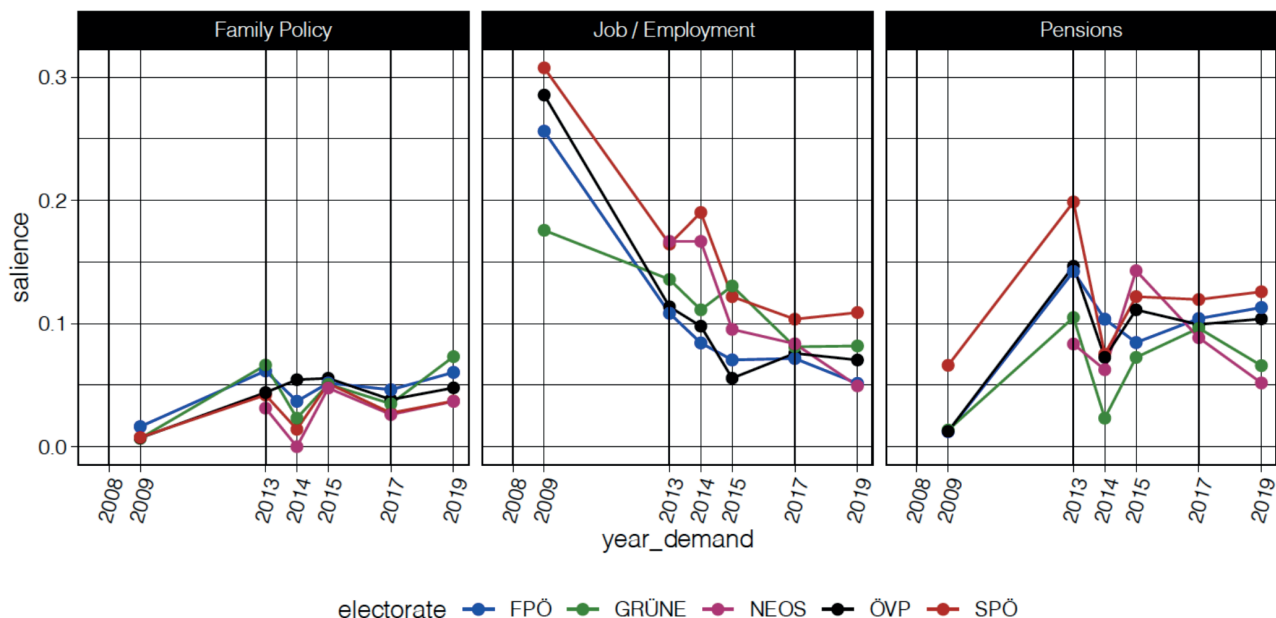
ment to be least salient in the consecutive waves of the survey.

While the public issue salience of job/employment decreases over time, the issue salience of pensions increases. The lowest issue salience of pensions exists primarily among GRÜNE voters and the highest among SPÖ voters. However, in 2014 and 2015 FPÖ and NEOS voters showed high issue saliences for pensions.

To be able to contextualise and evaluate the magnitude of the absolute demand issue salience measurements we further calculated the relative demand issue salience for each year and electorate. Figure 5 shows that SPÖ voters (compared to the four other electorates) show the highest relative issue salience for job/employment and in some years for pensions. Family policy is most prominent among FPÖ and ÖVP voters and in 2019 among voters of the GRÜNE.
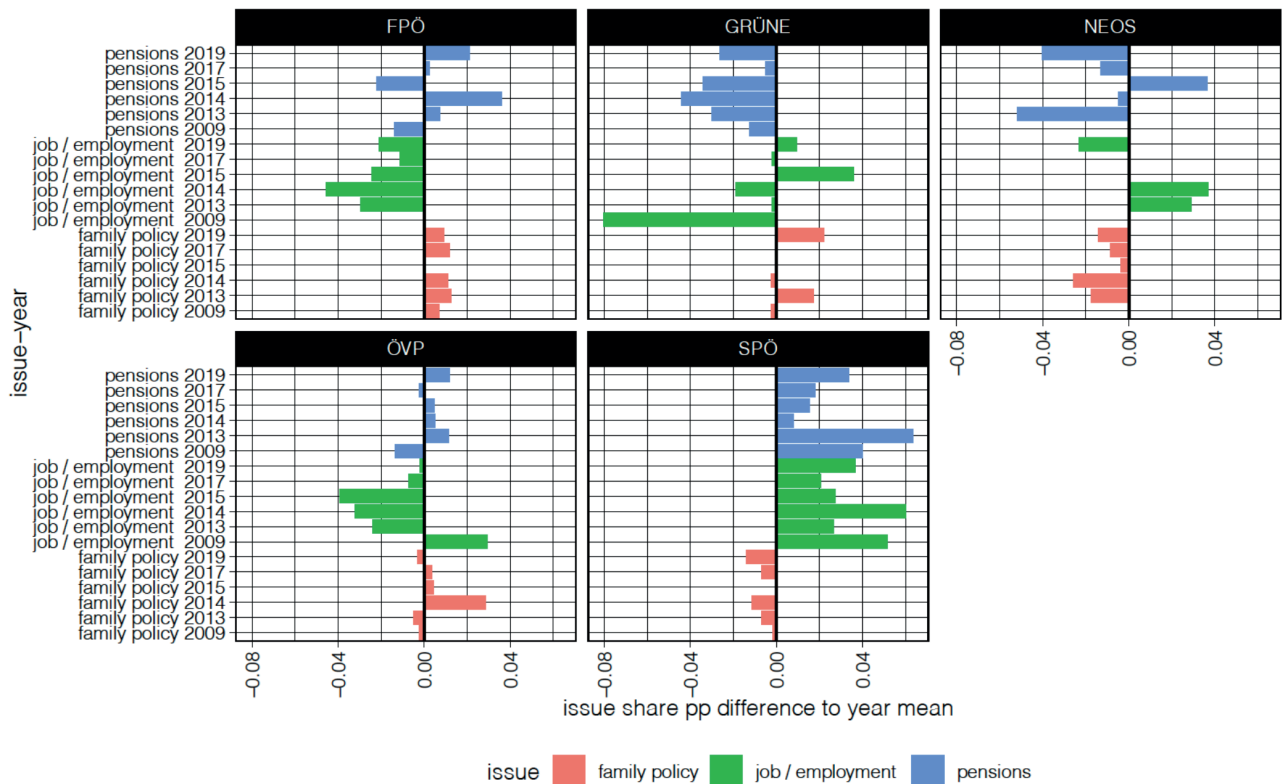
Like the results for party issue salience, the results for public issue salience partly confirm our hypotheses H2a to H2c. As expected, family policy is emphasised by FPÖ voters, but contradicting H2a, it is not emphasised by NEOS voters, and only at times (2013, 2019) by GRÜNE voters. As suggested in H2b job/employment is most important for SPÖ voters, but inconsistent with our hypothesis only in some years important for voters of ÖVP (2009) and NEOS (2013, 2014). The same is true for pensions, which are as expected very important for SPÖ voters, but contradicting H2c, less so for ÖVP and NEOS voters. Even though theory would not suggest it, we further see that not only SPÖ, but also FPÖ voters perceive pensions to be an important topic.

Figure 4: Public issue salience for the electorate of FPÖ, GRÜNE, NEOS, ÖVP, SPÖ

Note: Vertical black line indicates election years.

Figure 5: Relative demand issue salience by year and electorate

Note: mean of 5 electorates

4.4 Party and public issue salience congruence

The descriptive results of public and parties issue salience already show some concurring and diverging patterns between electorates and their corresponding parties. For a final assessment whether H2a, H2b and H2c can be confirmed or must be rejected we further calculated the congruence between party and public issue salience. The following Figure 6 to Figure 8 contain the relative issue salience for each party and its electorate and additionally the congruence between the two mean-centred salience variables. Coinciding demand and supply relative issue salience indicates congruence between voters and their respective party. The dotted line in the following figures summarises the congruence between voters and parties by subtracting the demand side (green line) from the relative issue salience in party manifestos (blue line). It can be interpreted as an under- or oversupply of issue salience by parties.

Figure 6 shows the results for public and party family policy issue salience. The FPÖ and SPÖ show a rather good congruence between voters and their manifestos, while the ÖVP in 2009 and NEOS in 2014 mismatched their issue salience with their voters. The direction of change in GRÜNE's manifestos fits the changes in their electorate but does not catch up after 2017. This indicates

that the 2017 party manifesto does not fit to the changes in issue salience of their electorate after the party did not win any mandates in the 2017 election. In sum H2a can only be confirmed for FPÖ and their voters.

Figure 7 shows that job/employment is most prominent among SPÖ voters and its manifestos. Voters of other parties show fluctuating issue salience, which are only partly answered by changes in party manifestos. The direction of change of the three FPÖ manifestos fits with their electorate, while the stable party saliences of NEOS and ÖVP mismatch with their voters. Therefore, H2b can only confirmed for SPÖ and their voters.

The relative saliences of pensions among ÖVP voters and in the ÖVP manifesto are relatively low, the congruence fluctuates close to zero (Figure 8). This indicates a good congruence between the electorate and ÖVP for pension. The congruence between SPÖ voters and their party shows a different pattern. While the relative salience of voters is quite high, the relative salience of the party remains closer to zero. The result is a dotted line far away from zero, hence a highly incongruent salience perceptions in the policy field pensions for SPÖ voters and their party. Still SPÖ catches up with the direction of change of their voters' issue salience for pensions with their 2017 manifesto.

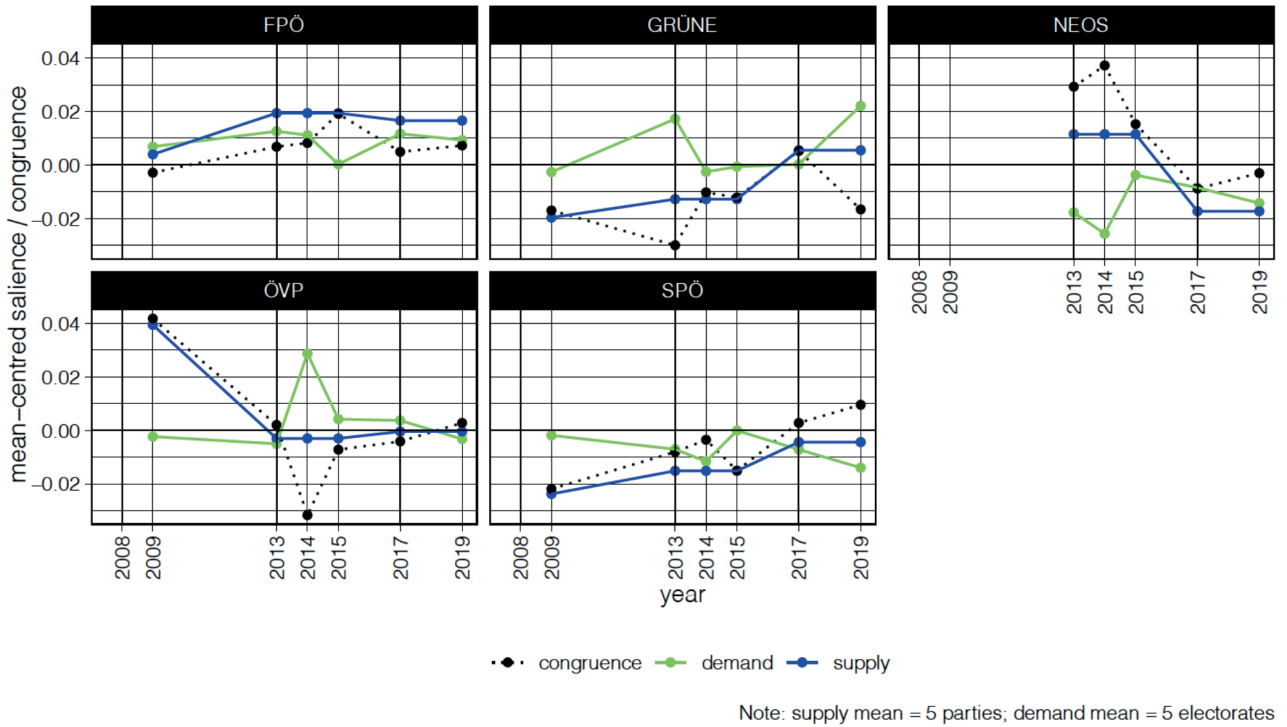**Figure 6: Relative demand and supply issue salience, and resulting party-voters congruence for family policy**

Note: supply mean = 5 parties; demand mean = 5 electorates

Figure 7: Relative demand and supply issue salience, and resulting party-voters congruence for job/employment

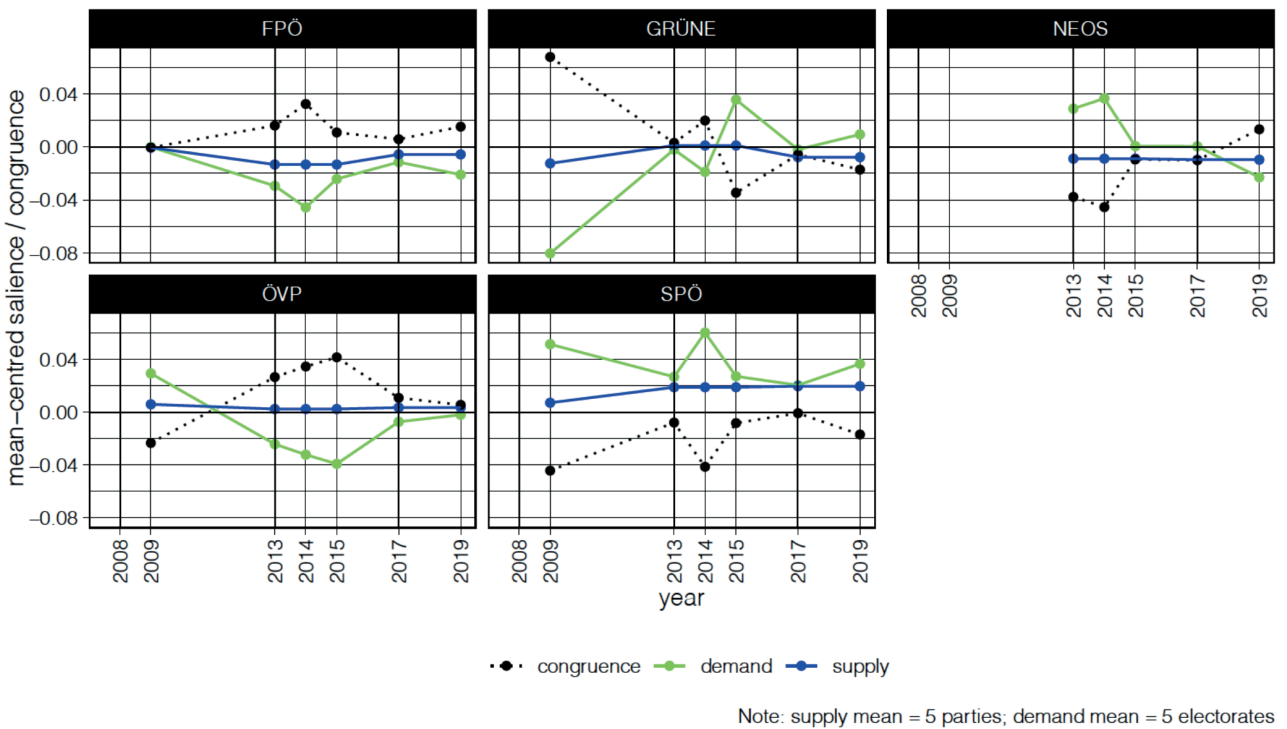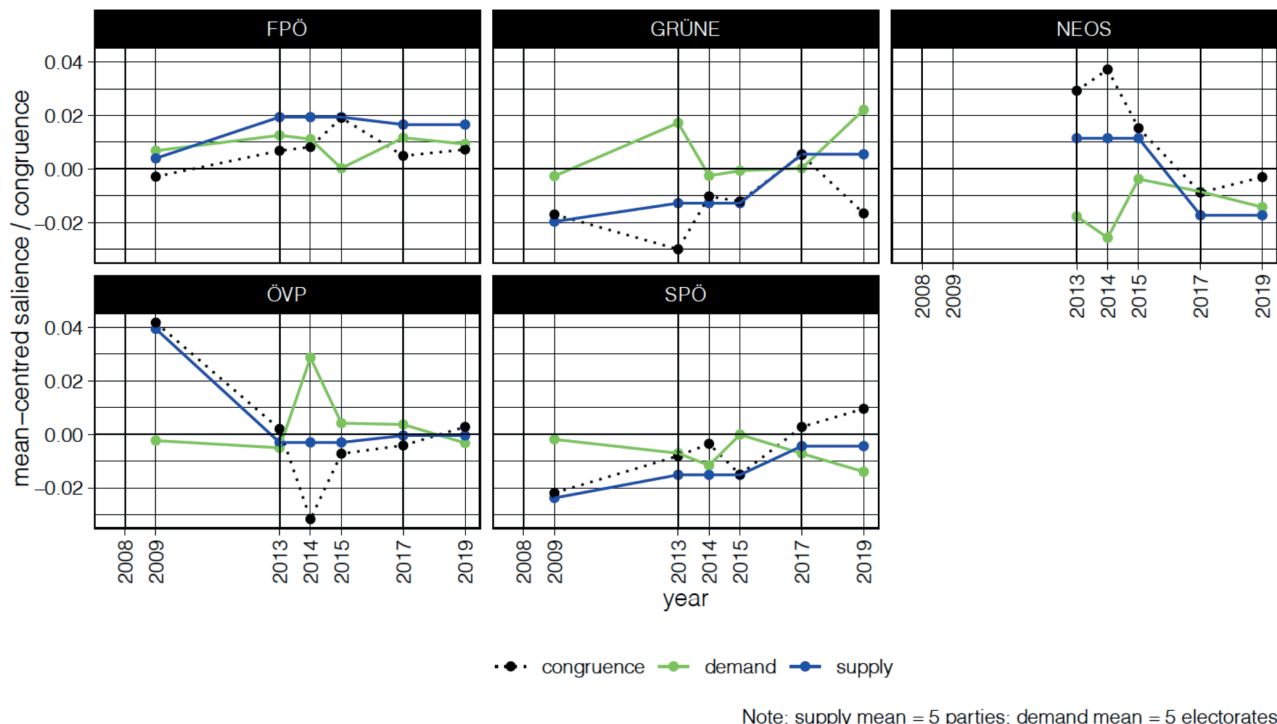Note: supply mean = 5 parties; demand mean = 5 electorates

Figure 8: Relative demand and supply issue salience, and resulting party-voters congruence for pensions

Note: supply mean = 5 parties; demand mean = 5 electorates

The GRÜNE and its voters have both negative issue saliences, and the direction of change coincides. The FPÖ's public and party issue salience has a good congruence in 2014 and 2017, however large differences in the other years. NEOS's party issue salience remains stable while their voters' issue salience fluctuates, however in 2014 and 2017 the congruence is good. Due to these inconsistencies and the already rejection for party issue salience, H2c must be rejected.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Literature claims an increasing crisis of representation in democracies, that has been fostered by socioeconomic and political developments of different kinds. Increasing complexity, economic change, as well as party plurality and increasing independence of party members put the mechanisms of representative democracies under pressure and challenge the fit of voters' and parties' agendas (Kölln/Polk 2017; Traber/Giger/Häusermann 2018; Bakker/Jolly/Polk 2020). This is especially true for social policy, which is affected by various socioeconomic pressures and new social risks (Armingeon/Bonoli 2006). We analysed the party-voter fit of issue salience for several social policy areas in Austria over time. By using a longitudinal approach, we contribute to reducing a gap in literature and analysed the development of party-voter issue congruence directly. Our analysis re-

vealed surprising results for our research questions: *How do voters and parties assess the importance of different social policy issues? How does the fit of voters' and parties' issue salience develop over time?*

Related to our second question and hypothesis 1, the analysis did not show divergence, but rather convergence for social policy issues during the analysed period in Austria. Hypothesis 1 therefore must be rejected. Our hypotheses 2a, 2b and 2c are only partly confirmed. The distinction between policy areas with strong material and sociocultural values explains parts of the issue salience variations. This is especially true for family policy, which argues for a multidimensional view, rather than a simple left-right classification of social policies.

For parties as well as for their electorates, the average issue salience of social policy areas varies greatly. The field of social policy seems to be a highly disaggregated policy field since the perceived relative importance of the different social policy areas is highly diverse and not developing into the same direction over time (see Figure 2 and 4). Comparing the absolute issue salience of parties and electorates it is surprising to see that family policy on average is the most salient area for parties, but the least salient for the electorate. This suggests that on average voters do care more about job/employment and pensions, whereas parties are focusing on family policy.

The results of our analysis can be considered relevant for various reasons. First of all, because we - contrary to all expectations - found increasing public-party

salience congruence in the field of social policy for the last two decades in Austria. This result is supported by a recent contribution of Brause and Kinski (2021) and studies that analysed the congruence with a cross-sectional design (Pinggera 2020; Häusermann/Kriesi 2015). Brause and Kinski (2021) found an increase of agenda-responsiveness in Western Europe and CEE for the time between 2004 and 2019, and comparatively high values of agenda responsiveness for Austrian parties. Secondly, we found evidence for the assertion that social policy is a highly complex and diversified policy field, which cannot simply be attributed to one (social-democratic) party and their voters. Our results are in line with other authors who used a multi-dimensional approach in analysing welfare politics (Beramendi et al. 2015; Busemayer/Rathgeb/Sahm 2021; Garritzmann/Busemeyer/Neimanns 2018). Thirdly, we managed to create a tool to compare the most common party- and public issue salience measurements (party manifesto and survey issue importance question) which are available for various different timepoints and countries. The calculation of mean-centred standardised congruence measures allow to compare variables with different scales (demand and supply) and compensates for the fact of developing survey questions over time (demand). The flexibility of our approach, and the accessibility of comparable data, not only for social policy, facilitates comparative research for all kinds of policy fields. Our method further enables us to estimate the issue salience of social policy areas in relation to all other policy fields, and not only its relative importance compared to other social policy issues (for this approach see e.g., Pinggera 2020).

The most apparent avenue for future research is the expansion of our public-party issue salience approach, to a more comprehensive tool taking not only issue salience, but also issue positions into account. Even though much effort has been put into the discussion of arguments in favour of one branch or the other (McElwain 2020), the issue position, issue salience and opinion-policy responsiveness approach should not be played off against each other. All three approaches are legitimate ways for investigation in the field of congruence between voters and political representatives, even though, or precisely because they are approaching the question from different angles (e.g., Costello et al. 2021).

However, it is important to mention that our results on issue salience cannot be used to infer any information on parties' and voters' position on a specific issue. A next step in research would be to combine issue salience and issue position, for instances as weights. Our study is further limited by the available data on social policy areas. We cannot interfere any congruence of social policy sub-dimensions such as childcare (social investment) or family allowances (social consumption). We capture the multi-dimensionality of welfare politics, however,

additional survey data that asks questions about different sub-dimensions of family policy, labour market policy, pensions or additional social policy areas would allow a more fine-grained analysis of party-voters issue salience congruence. Therefore, it would be of great value to use survey data that allows a comparison of the issue salience of social policy subdimensions and capture the complexity of contemporary welfare politics beyond the aggregated policy area level.

Nevertheless, the estimation of perceived importance of social policy areas might provide information as to whether or not these areas can be decisive for voting decisions. They further might contribute to measure party responsiveness to public interests, and public responsiveness to parties' interests. Since the causal mechanisms behind democratic responsiveness are reciprocal – party affects public (Grewenig et al. 2020), public affects party (Plescia/Kritzinger/Oberluggauer 2020), both claims are true (Wlezien/Soroka 2012), both claims are not true (Ibenskas/Polk 2021) – a valid and reliable measurement of public-party issue salience congruence is of great importance for future research.

However, our study did not consider if a party was successful with their manifesto and won mandates in the elections. The question remains if salience congruence of social policy issues is a necessary condition for electoral success. From the substantive representation perspective, the representation of voters' agendas through parties as agent is crucial for a functioning democracy.

References

Adams, James/Lawrence *Ezrow* /Zeynep *Somer-Topcu* (2014), Do Voters Respond to Party Manifestos or to a Wider Information Environment? An Analysis of Mass-Elite Linkages on European Integration, in: *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 58(4), 967-978.

Aichholzer, Julian/Julia *Partheymüller* /Markus *Wagner* / Sylvia *Kritzinger* et al. (2017), AUTNES Online Panel Study 2017-2019 (SUF Edition), Internet: https://doi.org/10.11587/QDETRI.

Anderweg, Rudy B. (2012), Approaching Perfect Policy Congruence, in: How Democracy Works, Amsterdam University Press.

Armingeon, Klaus/Giuliano *Bonoli*, (eds.) (2006), The Politics of Post-Industrial Welfare States, London; New York, NY: Routledge.

Armingeon, Klaus/Virginia *Wenger* /Fiona *Wiedermeier* / Christian *Isler* et al. (2018), Comparative Political Data Set 1960-2016, Bern: Institute of Political Science, University of Berne.

Bakker, Ryan/Seth *Jolly* /Jonathan *Polk* (2020), Multidimensional incongruence, political disaffection, and

support for anti-establishment parties, in: *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 27(2), 292-309.

Beramendi, Pablo/Silja *Häusermann* /Herbert *Kitschelt* / Hanspeter *Kriesi* (eds.) (2015), The Politics of Advanced Capitalism, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Biezen, Ingrid van/Thomas *Poguntke* (2014), The decline of membership-based politics, in: *Party Politics*, Vol. 20(2), 205-216.

Brause, Simon/Lucy *Kinski* (2021), The Electoral Success of Right-Wing Populist Parties and Mainstream Party Responsiveness in Europe, conference paper, *ECPR General Conference 2021, Responsiveness of democracies P365*. Innsbruck - online, 32, Internet: https://ecpr.eu/Events/Event/PaperDetails/57294 (access: 30.09.2021).

Budge, Ian (2015), Issue Emphases, Saliency Theory, and Issue Ownership: A Historical and Conceptual Analysis, in: *West European Politics*, Vol. 38(4), 761-777.

Busemeyer, Marius R./Julian L. *Garritzmann* (2017), Public opinion on policy and budgetary trade-offs in European welfare states: evidence from a new comparative survey, in: *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 24(6), 871-889.

Busemeyer, Marius R./Philip *Rathgeb* /Alexander H. J. *Sahm* (2021), Authoritarian values and the welfare state: the social policy preferences of radical right voters, in: *West European Politics*, 1-25.

Camia, Valeria/Daniele *Caramani* (2012), Family meetings: Ideological convergence within party families across Europe, 1945–2009, in: *Comparative European Politics*, Vol. 10(1), 48-85.

Castles, Francis G. (1982), The impact of parties: politics and policies in democratic capitalist states, Beverly Hills, CA.: Sage Publications.

Costello, Rory/Dimiter *Toshkov* /Barend *Bos* /André *Krouwel* (2021), Congruence between voters and parties: The role of party-level issue salience, in: *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 60(1), 92-113.

Dennison, James (2020), How Issue Salience Explains the Rise of the Populist Right in Western Europe, in: *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, Vol. 32(3), 397-420.

Enggist, Matthias/Michael *Pinggera* (2022), Radical right parties and their welfare state stances – not so blurry after all?, in: *West European Politics*, Vol. 45(1), 102-128.

Fossati, Flavia/Silja *Häusermann* (2014), Social Policy Preferences and Party Choice in the 2011 Swiss Elections, in: *Swiss Political Science Review*, Vol. 20(4), 590-611.

Freeden, Michael (1998), Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology?, in: *Political Studies*, Vol. 46(4), 748-765.

Gabel, Shirley Gatenio/Sheila B. *Kamerman* (2006), Investing in Children: Public Commitment in Twenty-one Industrialized Countries, in: *Social Service Review*, Vol. 80(2), 239-263.

Garritzmann, Julian L./Marius R. *Busemeyer*/Erik *Neimanns* (2018), Public demand for social investment: new supporting coalitions for welfare state reform in Western Europe?, in: *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 25(6), 844-861.

Giuliani, Giovanni Amerigo (2021), The family policy positions of conservative parties: A farewell to the male-breadwinner family model?, in: *European Journal of Political Research*, 1475-6765.12470.

Grewenig, Elisabeth/Philipp *Lergetporer* /Katharina, *Werner* /Ludger *Woessmann* (2020), Do party positions affect the public's policy preferences? Experimental evidence on support for family policies, in: *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, Vol. 179, 523-543.

Hemerijck, Anton (2018), Social investment as a policy paradigm, in: *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 25(6), 810-827.

Häusermann, Silja (2010), The Politics of Welfare State Reform in Continental Europe: Modernization in Hard Times, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Häusermann, Silja (2012), The Politics of Old and New Social Policies, in: *Bonoli*, Giuliano/David *Natali* (eds.): The Politics of the New Welfare State, Oxford University Press, 111-132.

Häusermann, Silja/Georg *Picot* /Dominik *Geering* (2013), Review Article: Rethinking Party Politics and the Welfare State – Recent Advances in the Literature, in: *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 43(1), 221-240.

Häusermann, Silja (2010), The Politics of Welfare State Reform in Continental Europe: Modernization in Hard Times, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Häusermann, Silja/Hanspeter *Kriesi* (2015), What do voters want?: dimensions and configurations in individual-level preferences and party choice, in: *Beramendi*, Pablo/Silja *Häusermann* /Herbert *Kitschelt*, Herbert/ Hanspeter *Kriesi* (eds.), The Politics of Advanced Capitalism, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 202-230.

Hibbs, Douglas A. (1977), Political Parties and Macroeconomic Policy, in: *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 71(4), 1467-1487.

Hieda, Takeshi (2021), Linking electoral realignment to welfare politics: an assessment of partisan effects on active labour market policy in post-industrial democracies, in: *Comparative European Politics*, Vol. 19(5), 555-575.

Ibenskas, Raimondas/Jonathan *Polk* (2021), Congruence and party responsiveness in Western Europe in the 21st century, in: *West European Politics*, 1-22.

Jahn, Detlef (2011), Conceptualizing Left and Right in comparative politics: Towards a deductive approach, in: *Party Politics*, Vol. 17(6), 745-765.

Jolly, Seth/Ryan *Bakker* /Liesbet *Hooghe* /Gary *Marks* et al. (2022), Chapel Hill Expert Survey trend file, 1999–2019, in: *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 75, 102420.

Katz, Richard/Peter *Mair* (1994), How Parties Organize: Change and Adaptation in Party Organizations in Western Democracies, London: Sage Publications.

Kersbergen, Kees van (1995), Social capitalism: a study of Christian democracy and the welfare state, London/New York: Routledge.

Kang, Ji Young/Marcia K. *Meyers* (2018), Family policy changes across welfare and production regimes, 1990 to 2010, in: *Eydal*, Güoný Björk/Tine *Rostgaard* (eds.): Handbook of family Policy, Cheltenham Northhampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 66-82.

Kitschelt, Herbert (2004), Diversification and reconfiguration of party systems in postindustrial democracies, Internet: https://library.fes.de/opus4/frontdoor/index/index/docId/7594 (access: 30.09.2021).

Kitschelt, Herbert (1994), The transformation of European social democracy, Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press.

Klüver, Heike/Jae-Jae *Spoon* (2016), Who Responds? Voters, Parties and Issue Attention, in: *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 46(3), 633-654.

Kölln, Ann-Kristin/Jonathan *Polk* (2017), Emancipated party members: Examining ideological incongruence within political parties, in: *Party Politics*, Vol. 23(1), 18-29.

Kriesi, Hanspeter/Edga *Grande* /Romain *Lachat* /Martin *Dolezal* et al. (2008), West European Politics in the Age of Globalization, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kritzinger, Sylvia/Julian *Aichholzer* /David *Johann* /Markus *Wagner* et al. (2020), AUTNES Post Post Election Survey 2009 (SUF edition), Internet: https://data.aussda.at/citation?persistentId=doi:10.11587/QZG1XH (access: 19.06.2021).

Kritzinger, Sylvia/David *Johann* /Kathrin *Thomas* /Christian *Glantschnigg* et al. (2020), AUTNES Online Panel Study 2013 - 2015 (SUF edition), Internet: https://data.aussda.at/citation?persistentId=doi:10.11587/RZ4GPB (access: 19.06.2021).

Mair, Peter (2013), Smaghi versus the Parties: Representative Government and Institutional Constraints, in: *Streeck*, Wolfgang/Armin *Schäfe* (eds.): Politics in the age of austerity, Cambridge, UK: Polity, 143-168.

Manow, Philip/Kees Van *Kersbergen* (2009), Religion and the Western Welfare State – The Theoretical Context, in: *van Kersbergen*, Kees/Philip *Manow* (eds.): Religion, Class Coalitions, and Welfare States, Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion and Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-38.

Manow, Philip/Bruno *Palier* /Hanna *Schwander* (eds.) (2018), Welfare Democracies and Party Politics: Explaining Electoral Dynamics in Times of Changing Welfare Capitalism, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McElwain, Kenneth Mori (2020), When candidates are more polarised than voters: constitutional revision in Japan, in: *European Political Science*, Vol. 19(4), 528-539.

Müller, Wolfgang C./Anita *Bodlos* /Martin *Dolezal* /Nikolaus *Eder* et al. (2020a), AUTNES Coding Instructions for Manifestos, Internet: https://data.aussda.at/file.xhtml?fileId=3692&version=1.0&widget=dataverse@AUSSDA (access: 19.06.2021).

Müller, Wolfgang C./Anita *Bodlos* /Martin *Dolezal* /Nikolaus *Eder* et al. (2020b), AUTNES Content Analysis of Party Manifestos: Cumulative File (SUF edition).

Oppermann, Kai (2010), The Concept of Issue Salience in Foreign Policy Analysis: Delineating the Scope Conditions of Theoretical Approaches in the Field, conference paper, *SGIR 7th Pan-European International Relations Conference*, 9.-11.09.2010, Stockholm, Sweden. .

Pedersen, Helene Helboe (2020), Mismatched Preferences for Responsiveness: Danish Voters and Politicians, in: *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 1467-9477.12192.

Pierson, Paul (1996), The New Politics of the Welfare State, in: *World Politics*, Vol. 48(2), 143-179.

Pinggera, Michael (2020). Congruent with whom? Parties' issue emphases and voter preferences in welfare politics, in: *Journal of European Public Policy*, 1-20.

Plescia, Carolina/Sylvia *Kritzinger* /Patricia *Oberluggauer* (2020), Parties' issue strategies on the drawing board: the 2017 Austrian case, in: *West European Politics*, Vol. 43(3), 639-664.

Ray, Leonard (2007), Validity of measured party positions on European integration: Assumptions, approaches, and a comparison of alternative measures, in: *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 26(1), 11-22.

Rovny, Jan/Jonathan *Polk* (2020), Still blurry? Economic salience, position and voting for radical right parties in Western Europe, in: *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 59(2), 248-268.

Schmidt, Manfred G. (1996), When parties matter: A review of the possibilities and limits of partisan influence on public policy, in: *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 30(2), 155-183.

Streeck, Wolfgang/Daniel *Mertens* (2013), Public Finance and the Decline of State Capacity in Democratic Capitalism, in: *Streeck*, Wolfgang/Armin *Schäfer* (eds.): Politics in the age of austerity, Cambridge, UK: Polity, 26-58.

Taylor-Gooby, Peter (2004), New Social Risks and Welfare States: New Paradigm and New Politics?, in: *Taylor-Gooby*, Peter (eds.): New Risks, New Welfare, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 209-238.

Traber, Denise/Nathalie *Giger* /Silja *Häusermann* (2018), How economic crises affect political representation:

declining party-voter congruence in times of constrained government, in: *West European Politics*, Vol. 41(5), 1100-1124.

Volkens, Andrea/Tobias *Burst* /Werner *Krause* /Pola *Lehmann* et al. (2020), Manifesto Project Dataset, Internet: https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/doi/manifesto. mpds.2020b (access: 19.06.2021).

Walgrave, Stefaan/Jonas *Lefevere* (2013), Ideology, Salience, and Complexity: Determinants of Policy Issue Incongruence between Voters and Parties, in: *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties*, Vol. 23(4), 456-483.

Wlezien, Christopher/Stuart N. *Soroka* (2012), Political Institutions and the Opinion–Policy Link, in: *West European Politics*, Vol. 35(6), 1407-1432.

Authors

Carmen Walenta-Bergmann is research and teaching assistant at the Johannes Kepler University Linz, Austria. Her research interests are local politics, social policy, political representation, and quantitative methodology.
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1317-5347

Felix Wohlgemuth is researcher at the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research and PhD student at the Johannes Kepler University Linz, Austria. His research interests are comparative social policy, family policy, and quantitative data analysis.
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6594-4649