

‘In the eye of the beholder’. Citizens’ perceptions of the German party system 1997-2005

Kai Arzheimer (Essex)

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2 Data & Method

3 Findings

4 Summary & Discussion

<http://www.politik.uni-mainz.de/kai.arzheimer/partyspace.pdf>

A changing party system?

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(Essex)

Data & Method

Summary & Discussion

- ▶ 1980s: Polarised 'Two-bloc' party system (Rudzio 2006)
- ▶ 1990s:
 - ▶ Not much change in the West
 - ▶ Regional 3-party-system in the East
- ▶ The setting in the mid-1990s:
 - ▶ (Cautious) welfare-state retrenchment by CDU/CSU/FDP government
 - ▶ Lafontaine endorses left-populist course
 - ▶ Pragmatists struggle to control green party

Key events 1997-1999

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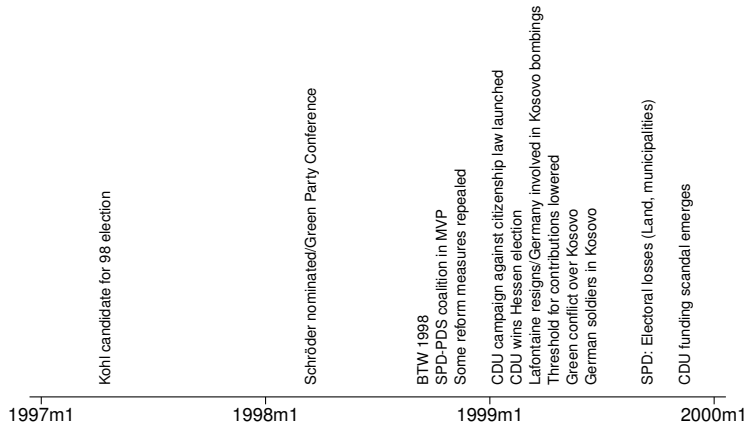
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Key events 2000-2002

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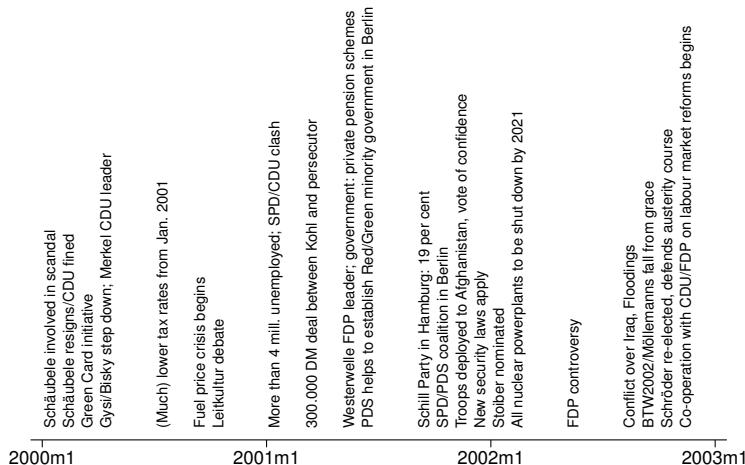
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Key events 2003-2005

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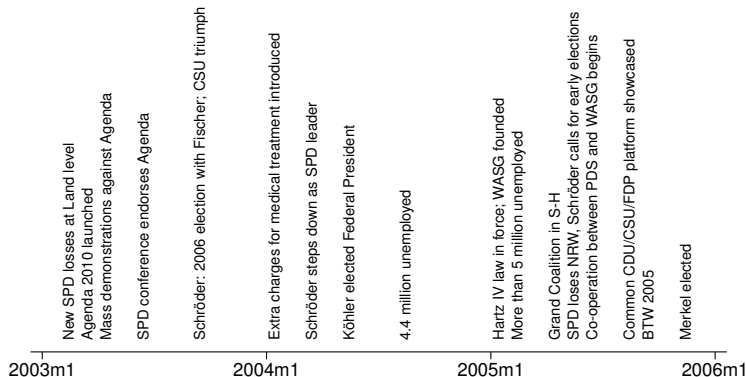
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Summary

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- ▶ **Bourgeois bloc**
 - ▶ FDP played with populism and equidistance
 - ▶ CDU too busy for debate on program
 - ▶ By and large kept/radicalised traditional position
- ▶ **PDS**
 - ▶ Moved towards Left Bloc in many ways
 - ▶ But: merger with WASG, campaigns against 'neoliberal' reform policies
- ▶ **Left Bloc**
 - ▶ Went boldly where Kohl government did not dare tread (armed forces, „The most significant reform of the German welfare state in recent decades“ (Kemmerling und Bruttel 2006: 108))
 - ▶ Unprecedented move of SPD/Greens to the centre?

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 - ▶ Yet kept left on highly symbolic issues

Summary

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- ▶ Bourgeois bloc
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 - ▶ Unprecedented move of SPD/Greens to the centre?
 - ▶ Yet kept left on highly symbolic issues
 - ▶ Citizenship
 - ▶ Immigration/Right-wing extremism

Impact on the public's views?

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- ▶ SPD/Greens moved a good deal but ...

Impact on the public's views?

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- ▶ SPD/Greens moved a good deal but ...
- ▶ Parties (try to) manipulate their public images ('Soziale Gerechtigkeit')
- ▶ Party images notoriously sticky
- ▶ 'Hard' policy changes could be off-set by symbolic/soft policy continuity

Research Question

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'Have the political changes and events affected the public's perceptions on the German Party system between 1997 and 2005?'

Research Question

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'Have the political changes and events affected the public's perceptions on the German Party system between 1997 and 2005?'

- ▶ Configuration & Distances (Blocs/Camps)?
- ▶ East-West differences?

Why does it matter?

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► Legitimacy

Why does it matter?

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- ▶ Legitimacy
- ▶ Electoral behaviour & outcomes
 - ▶ Tactical reasons
 - ▶ Parties 'waltzing before a blind audience' / able to get away with everything?
 - ▶ New parties/competition

1. Low number of dimensions (i.e. 2)
 - ▶ Pappi (1990)
 - ▶ Warwick (2002)
2. Two bloc structure intact (especially during campaigns)
3. But at least some evidence for convergence
4. PDS closer to Left Bloc in the East
5. (Cognitively mobilised segment of population should have clearer view of what's going on)

An ideal world ...

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- ▶ Direct comparisons between parties
 - ▶ Let respondents compare $\frac{6 \times 5}{2} = 15$ pairs of parties and record distances
 - ▶ (Let respondents rate each party on a number of well specified scales)
 - ▶ (Possibly provide well-defined anchor-points)
- ▶ Reconstruct cognitive map of party system from distances by scaling methods
- ▶ Incorporate ratings and anchor points to ease interpretation

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halte sehr viel von
dieser Partei

halte überhaupt nichts
von dieser Partei

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- ▶ Six parties could differ on up to five dimensions → 15 unique distances could be embedded into five-dimensional space
- ▶ Two dimensional 'space' much more likely (and manageable)
- ▶ MDS:
 1. Finds two-dimensional graph of party system
 2. So that distances between parties match perceived distances
 3. As closely as possible
- ▶ (Aggregate data over quarters)

- ▶ No absolute point of reference, i.e. *all* parties could move to the right
 - ▶ Focus on configuration and distances
 - ▶ Infinite number of solutions fit equally well
 - ▶ Establish convention to make configurations for different time-points comparable
 - ▶ Shift so that SPD is at [0,0]
 - ▶ Rotate so that CDU is on the x-axis and to the right of SPD
 - ▶ If necessary, reflect at x-axis so that PDS is 'below' SPD and CDU

The German Partystem 1997, Q1

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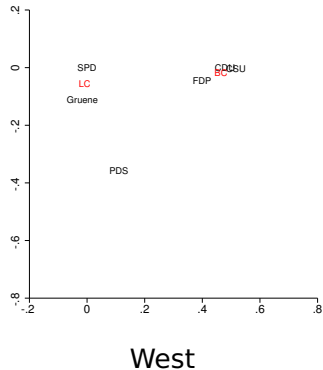
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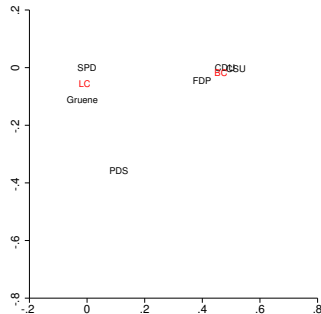
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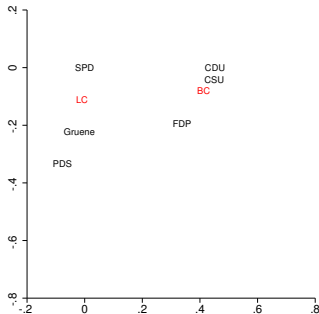
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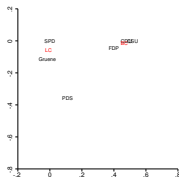
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- ▶ West: two blocs, PDS clearly separate
- ▶ East:
 - ▶ More dispersion
 - ▶ PDS much closer to other left

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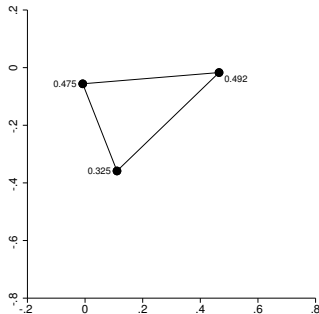
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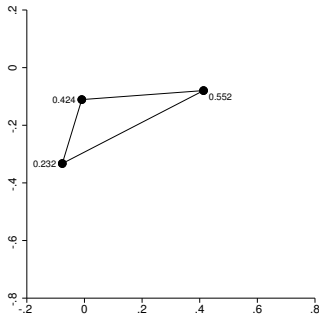
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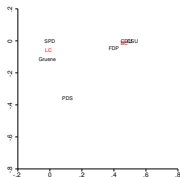
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- ▶ How does this square with experts' views (Benoit/Laver 2006)?

Experts' views 2003

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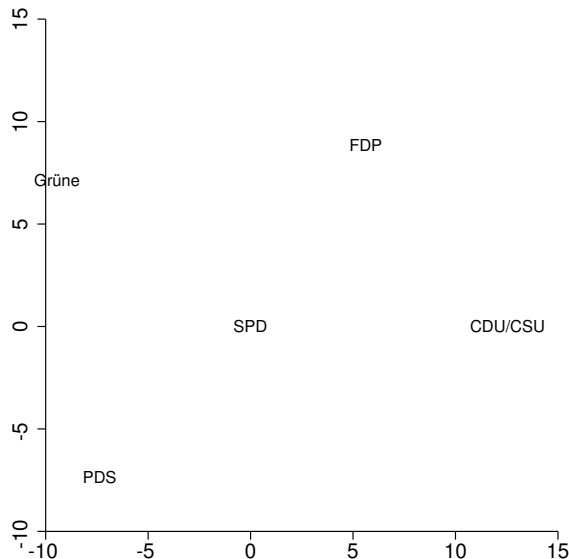
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Experts' views 2003

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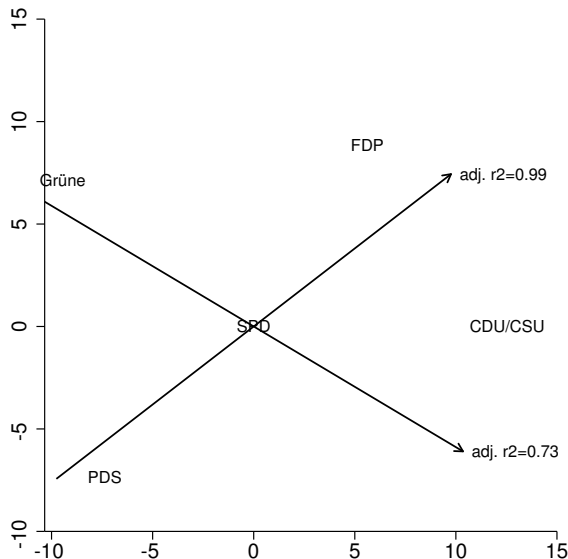
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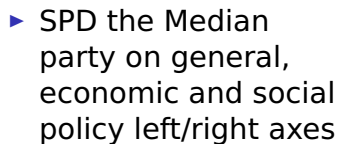


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Why the differences?

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- ▶ Data collected \approx 2003 \rightarrow six years later
- ▶ CDU/CSU & East/West combined
- ▶ Experts less susceptible to media effects and partisan cues (?)
- ▶ Explicitly based on eight dimensions (Taxes vs. Spending, Social, Environment, Decentralisation, EU-Peacekeeping, -Accountability and -Authority, Immigration)...
- ▶ ... not necessarily relevant for citizens (or experts!)

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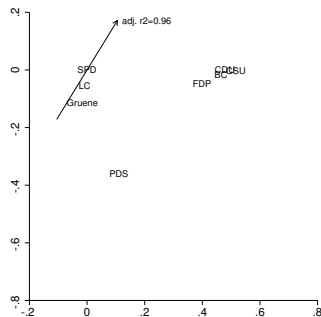
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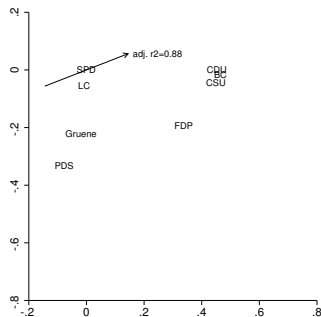
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- Embedding of experts' global left-right assessment fits well

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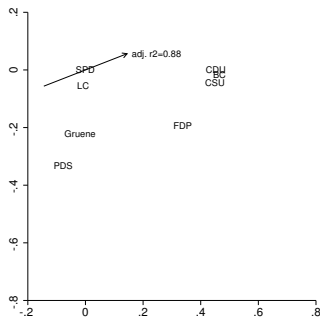
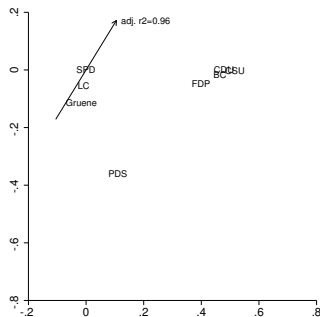
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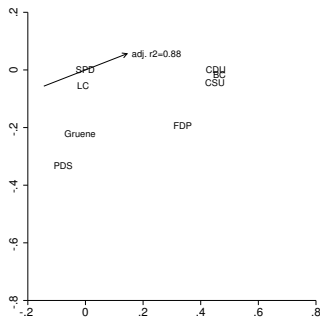
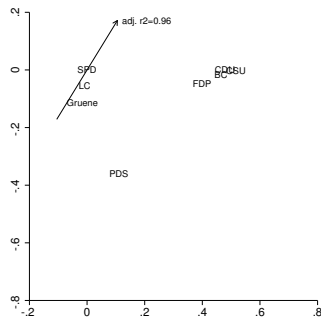


- ▶ Embedding of experts' global left-right assessment fits well
- ▶ Other criteria/features relevant than just policy
 - ▶ Emotions/identities
 - ▶ Performance

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- ▶ Embedding of experts' global left-right assessment fits well
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- ▶ East-West differences

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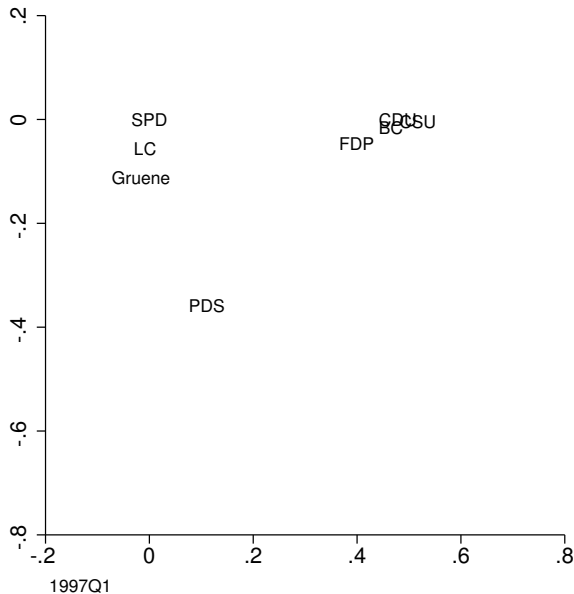
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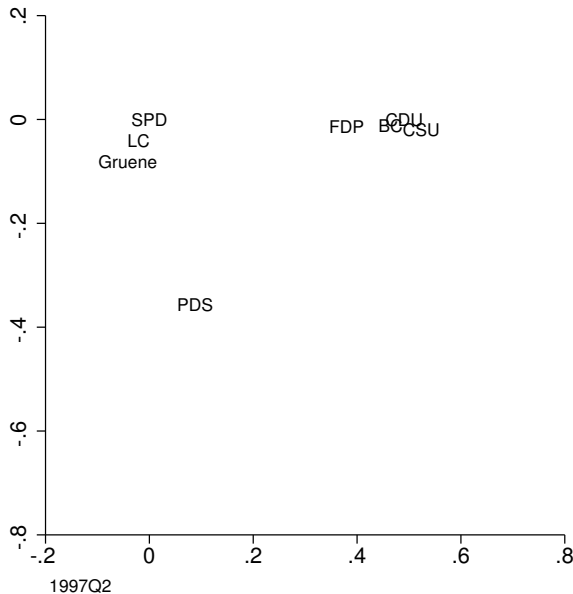
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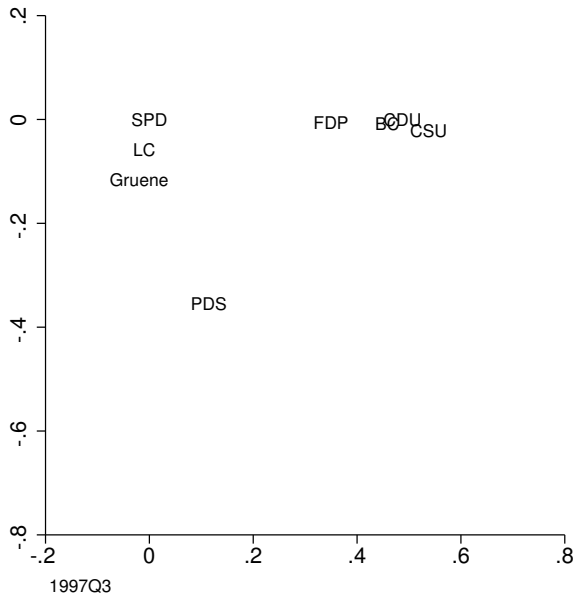
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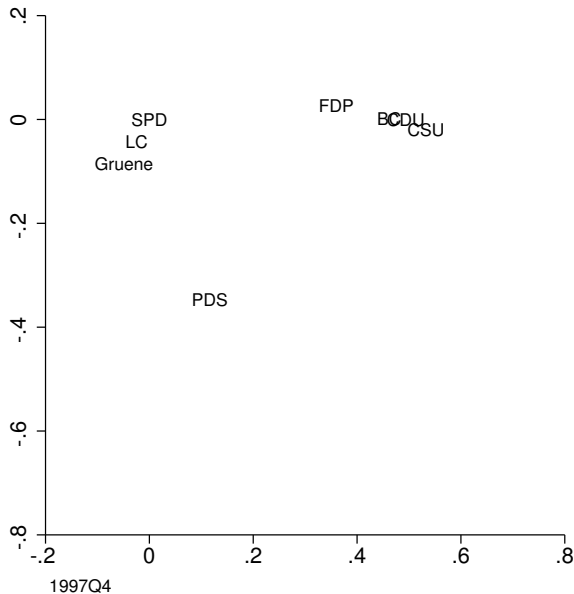
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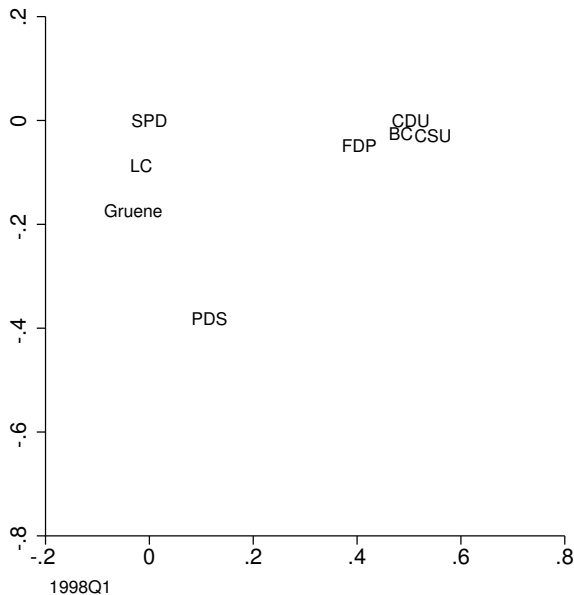
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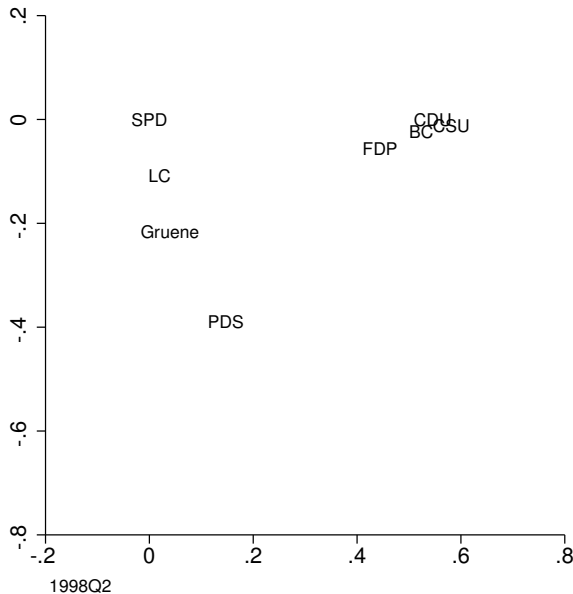
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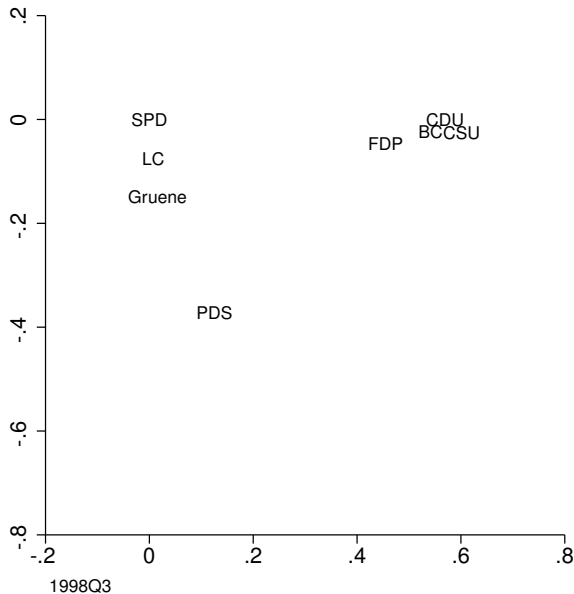
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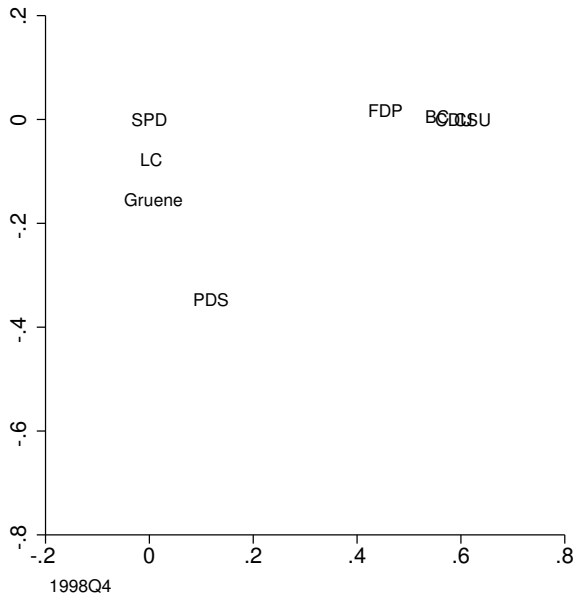
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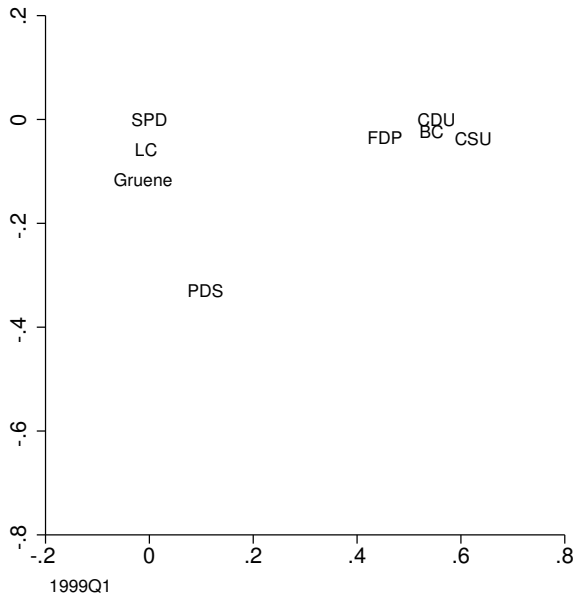
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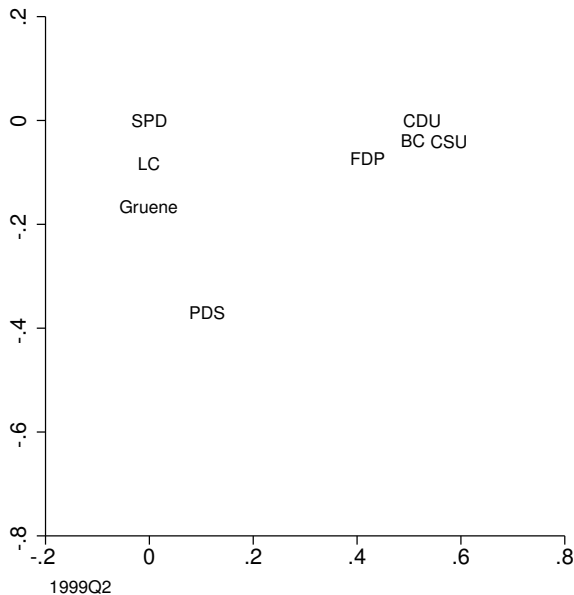
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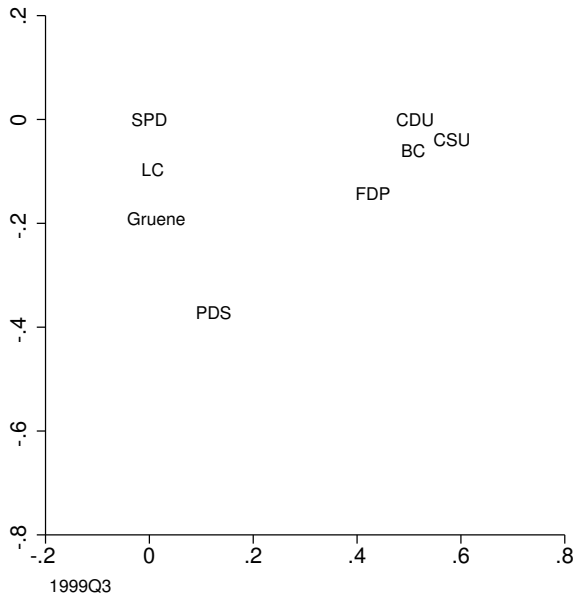
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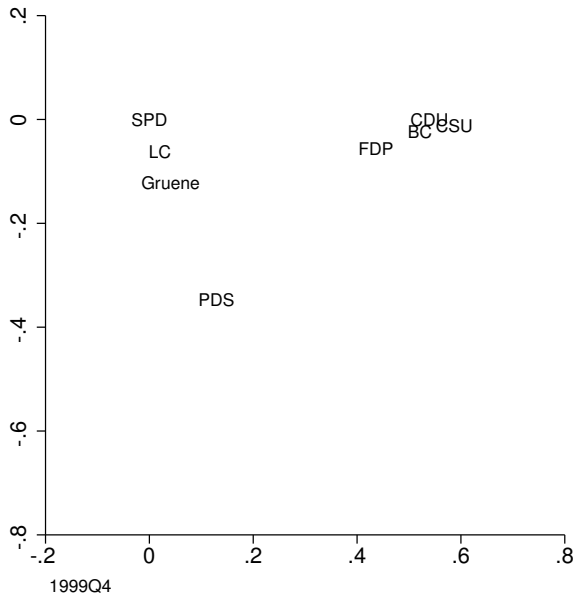
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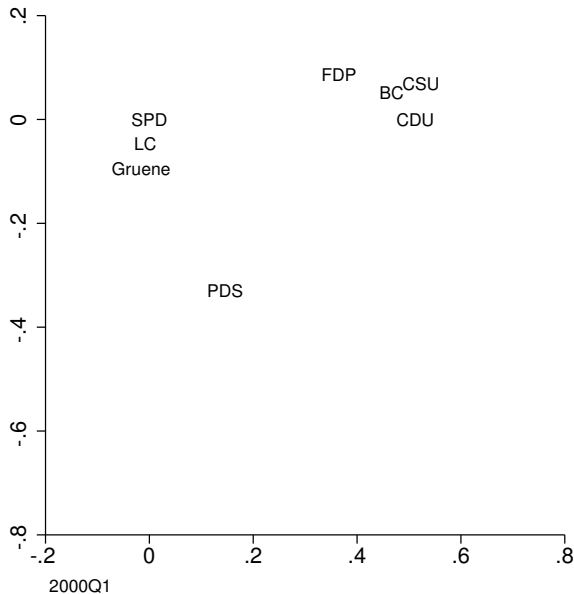
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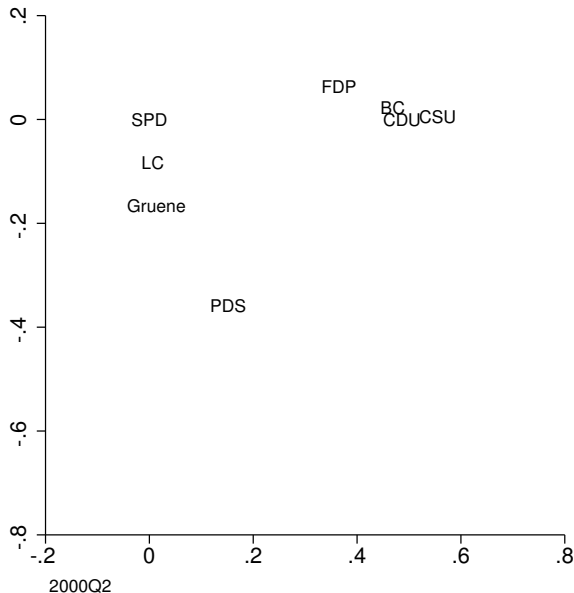
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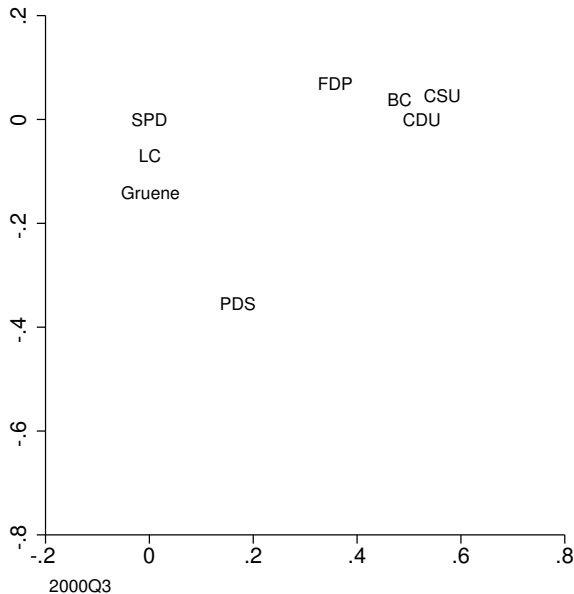
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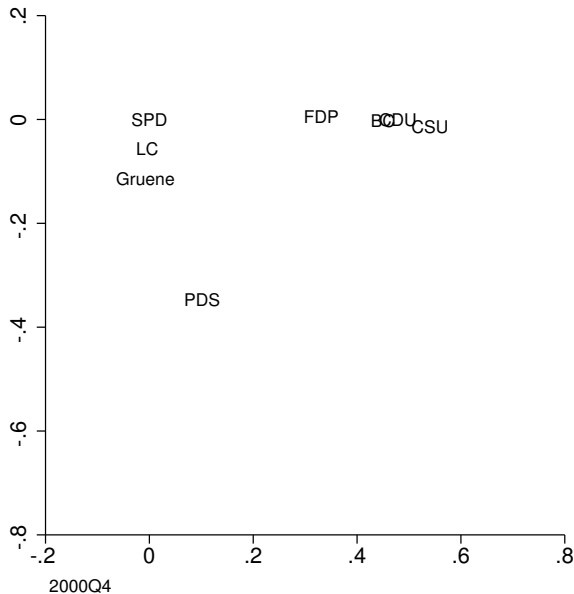
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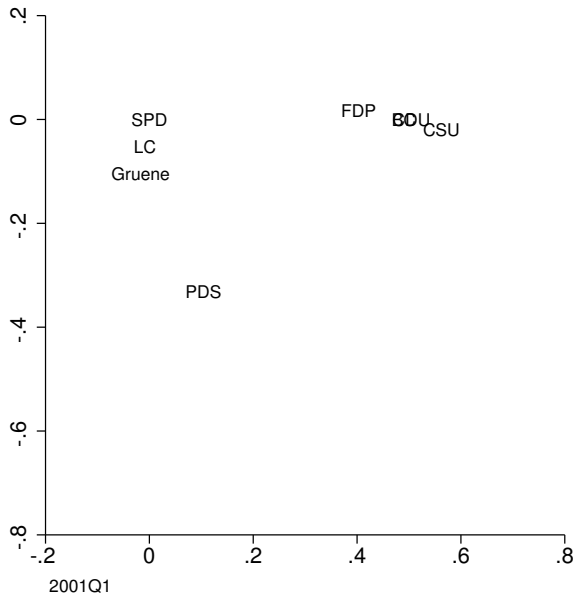
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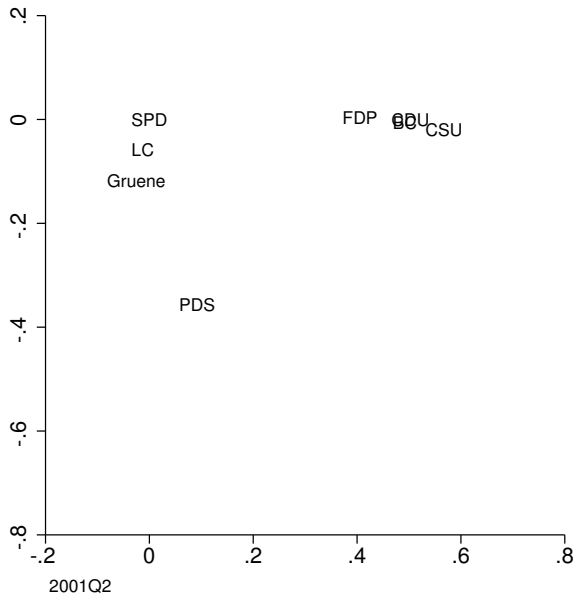
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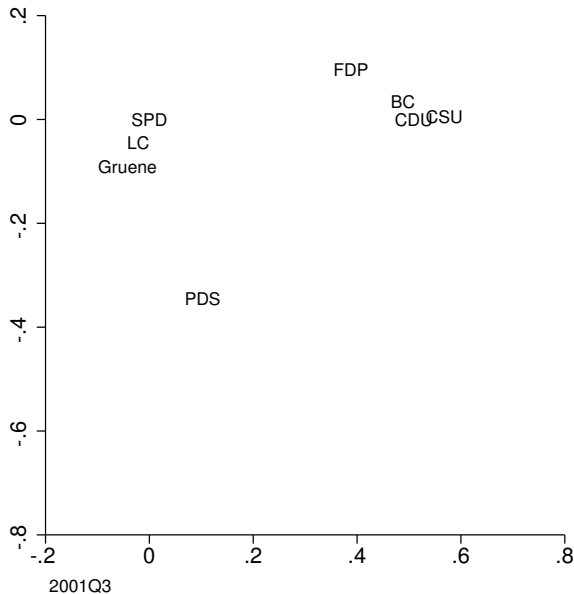
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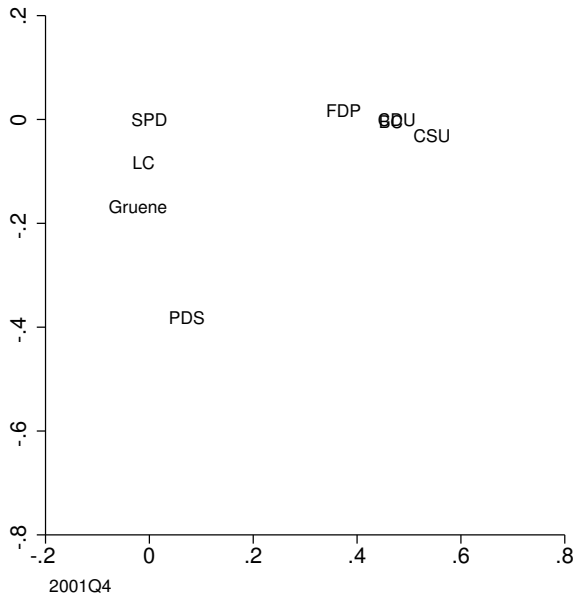
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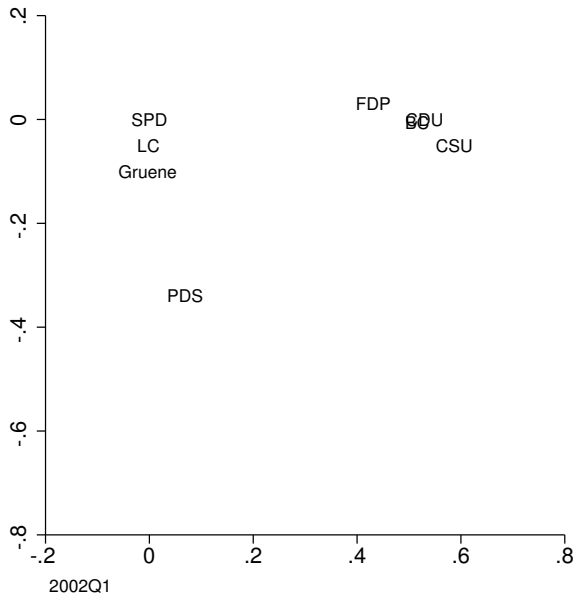
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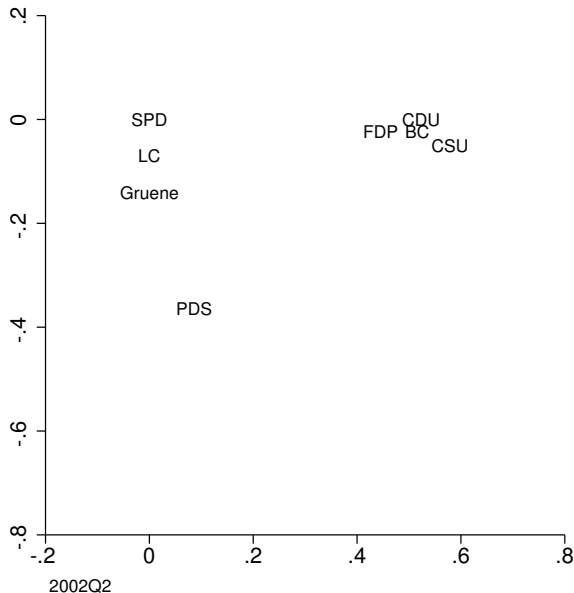
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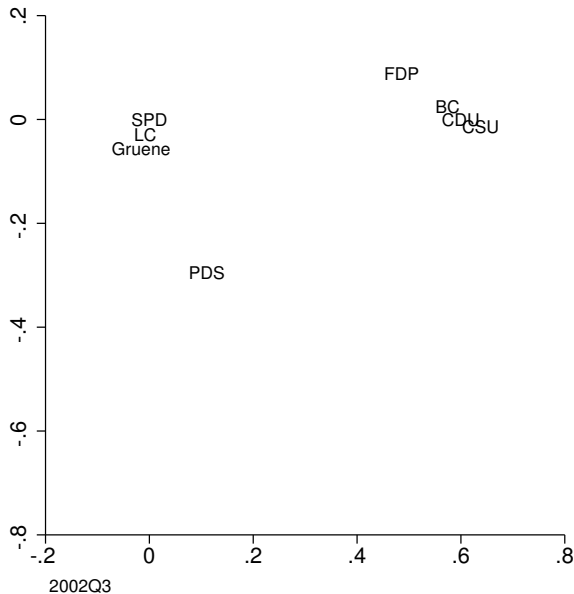
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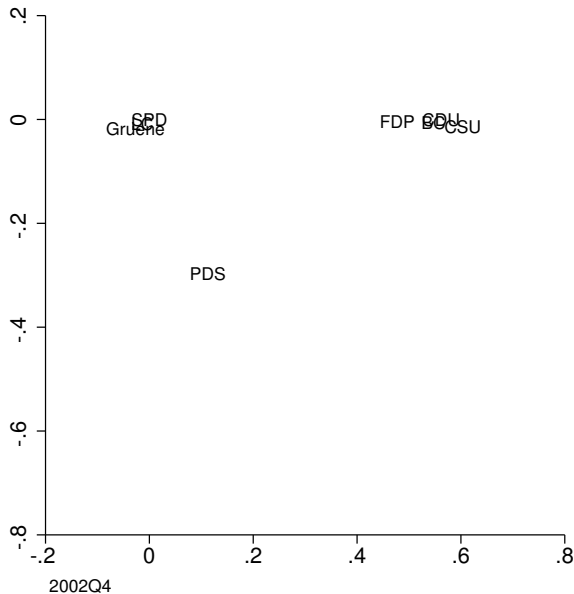
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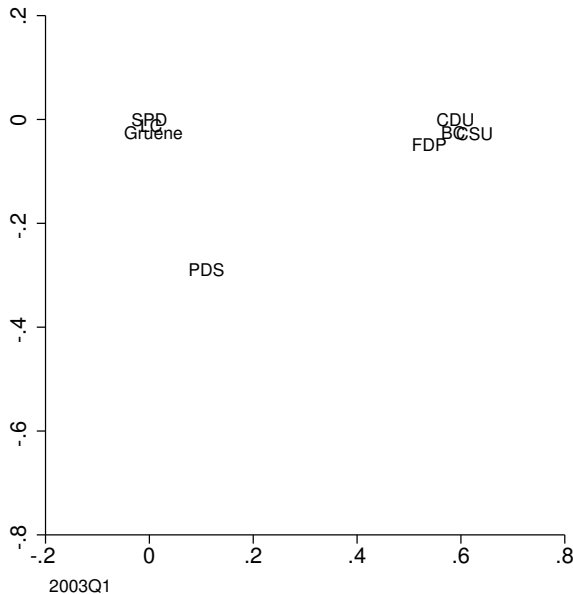
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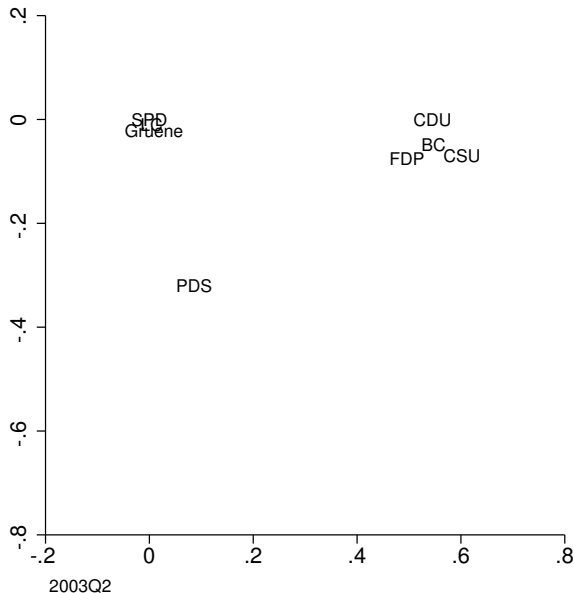
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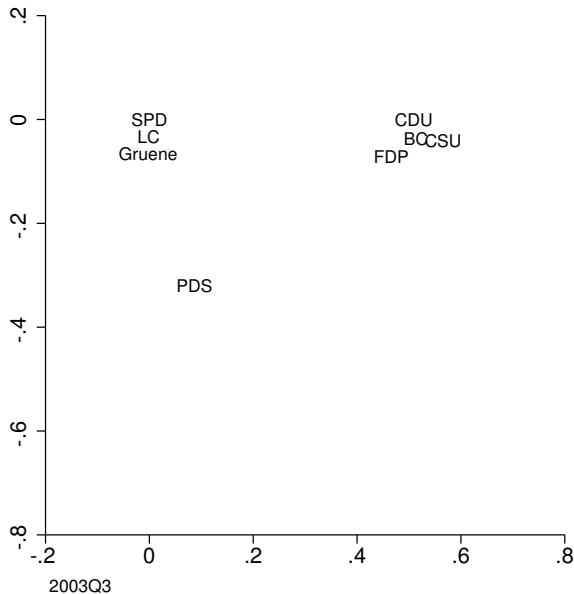
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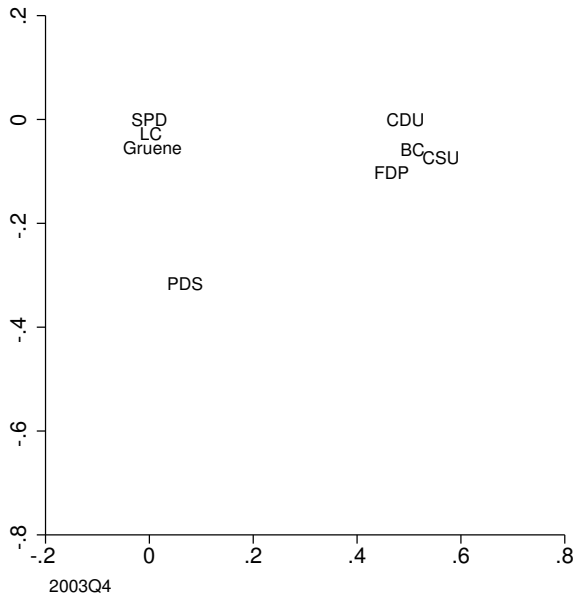
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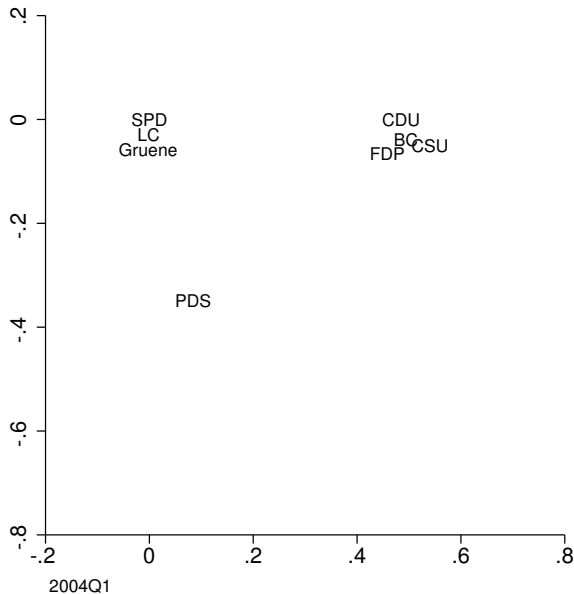
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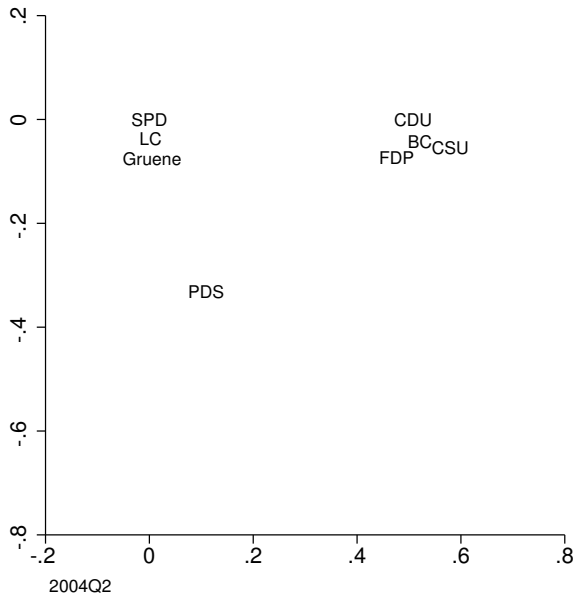
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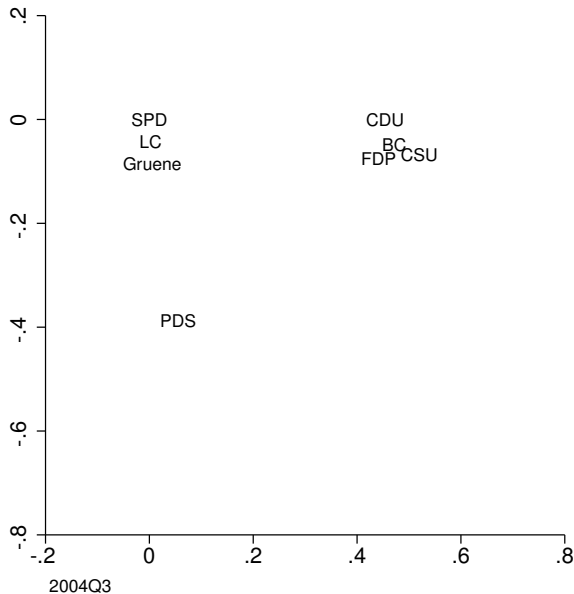
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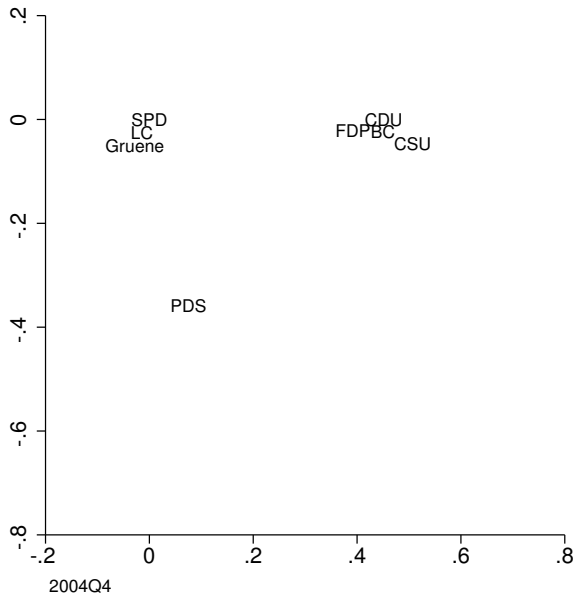
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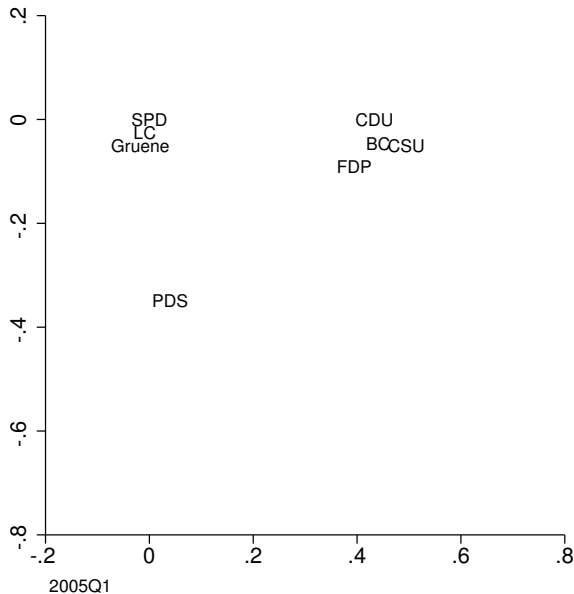
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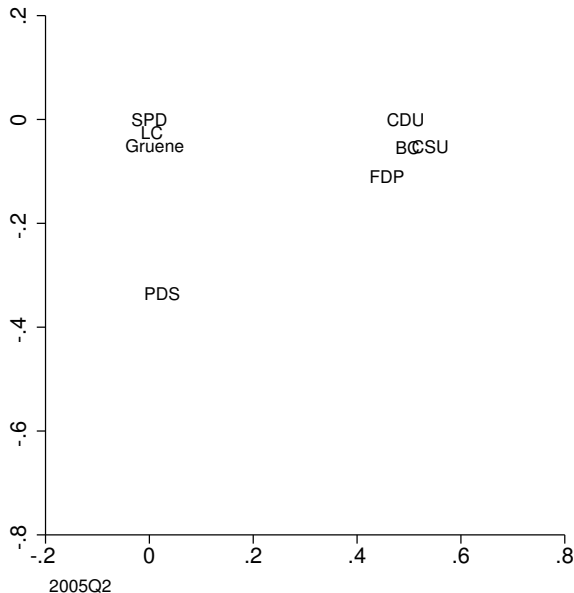
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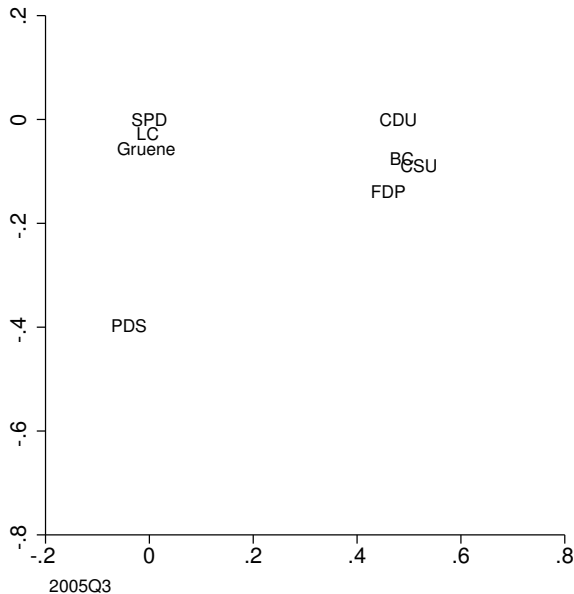
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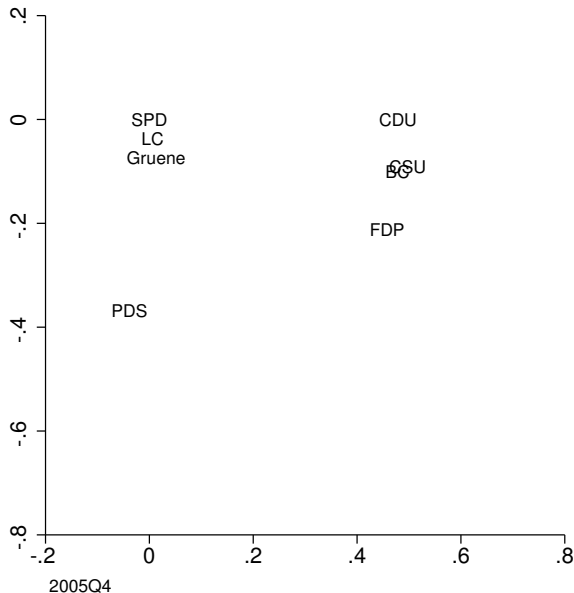
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- ▶ Greens rather far apart from SPD and surprisingly close to PDS in 98Q2, 99Q3; left parties move quite a bit
- ▶ From 2002Q4 on, almost identical positions for Greens and SPD
- ▶ FDP not equidistant, yet often closer to SPD than CDU/CSU
- ▶ CDU moves toward SPD from mid-/late 2003
- ▶ Even in 2005Q4 SPD and Greens surprisingly close, bourgeois camp definitively split

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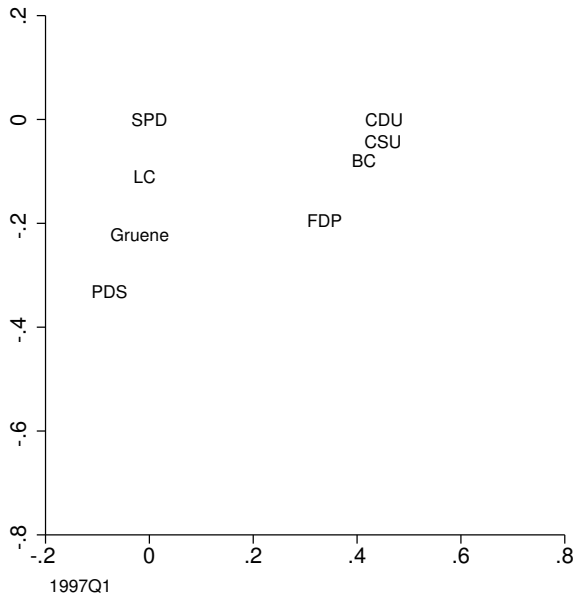
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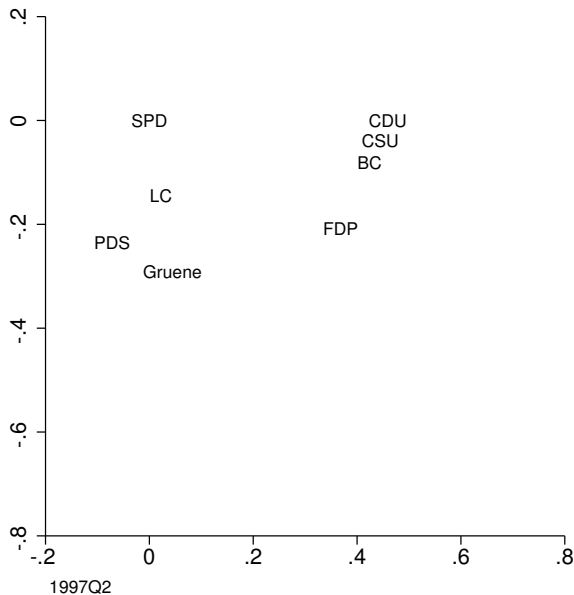
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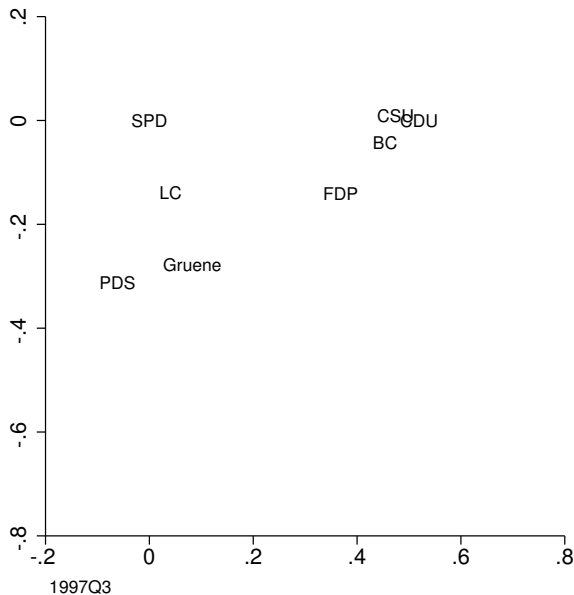
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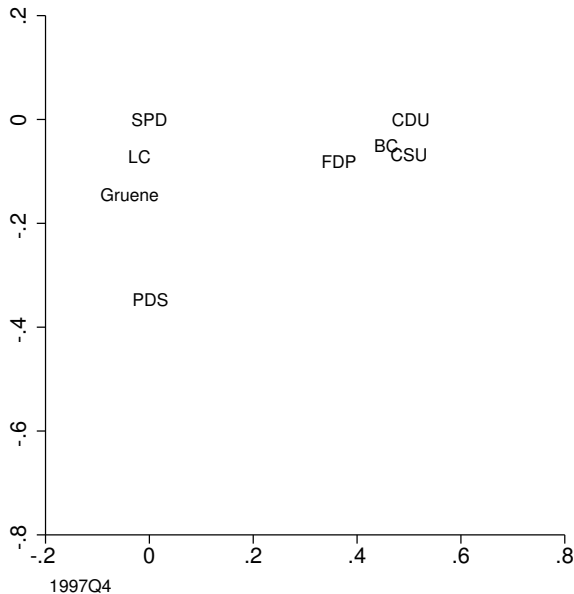
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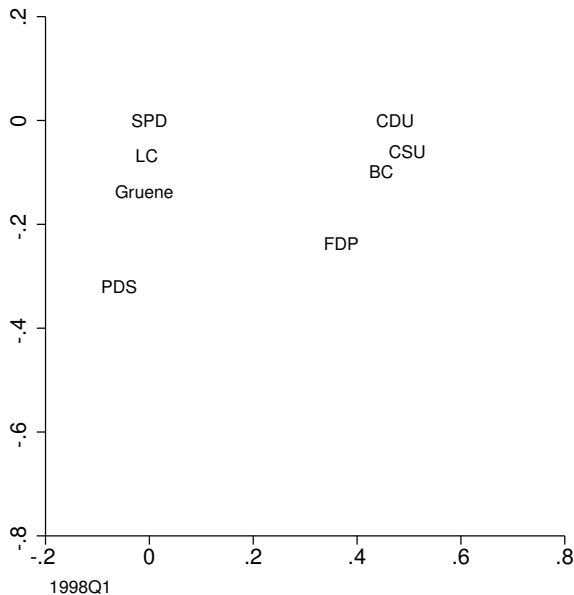
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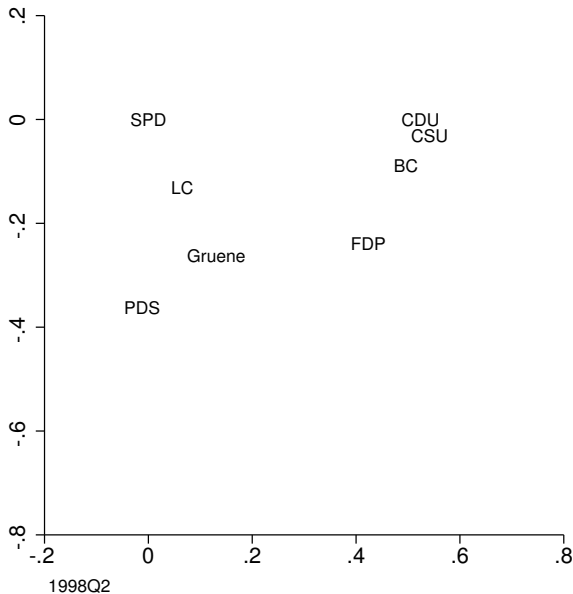
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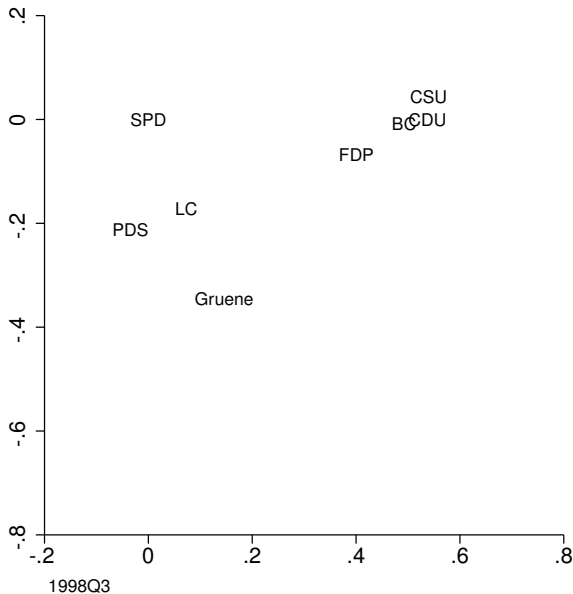
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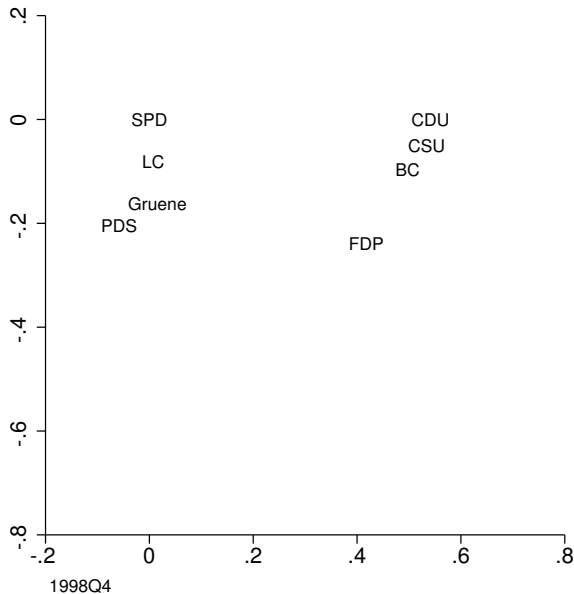
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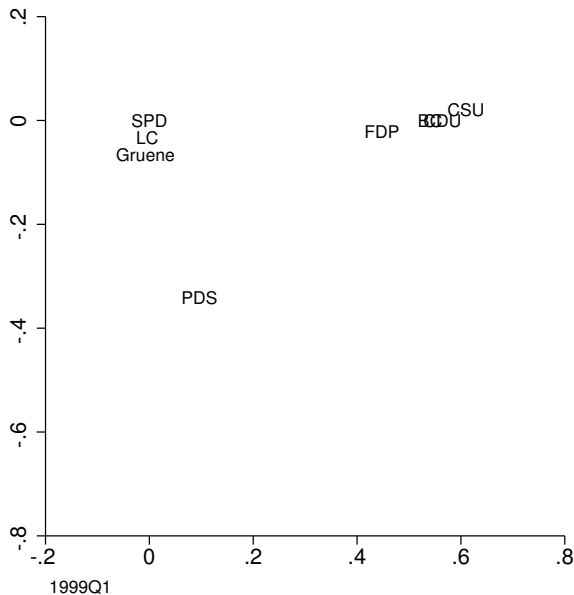
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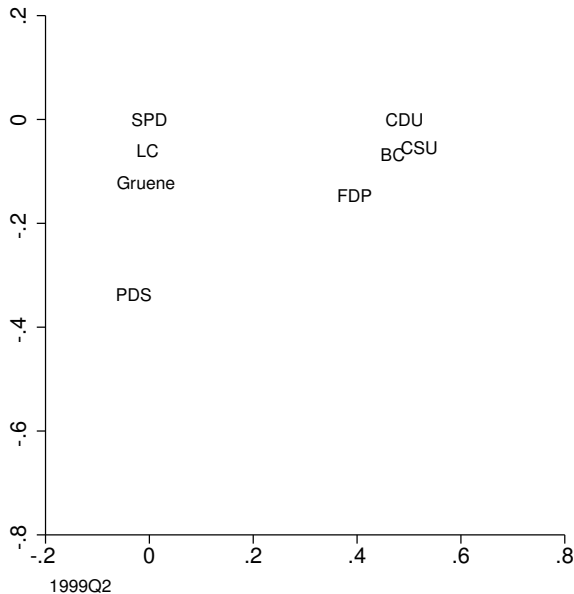
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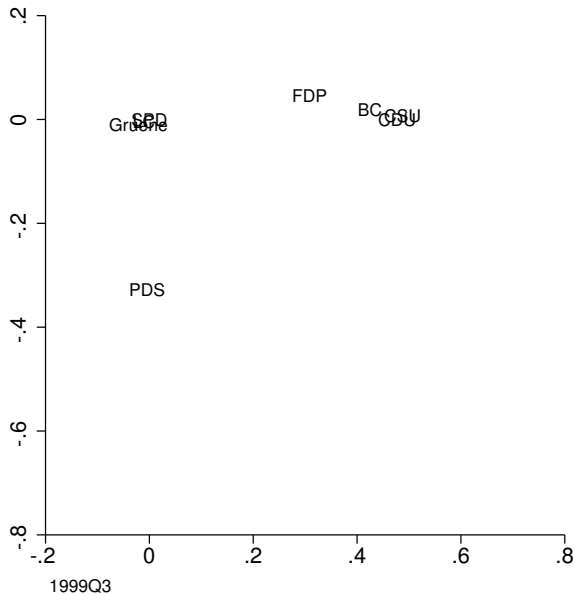
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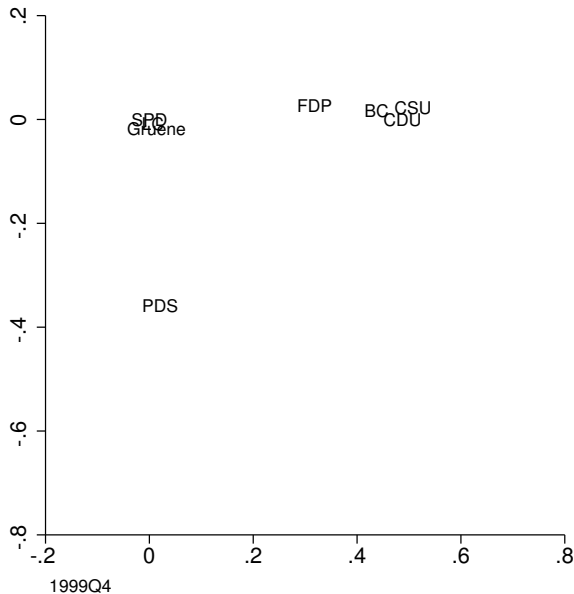
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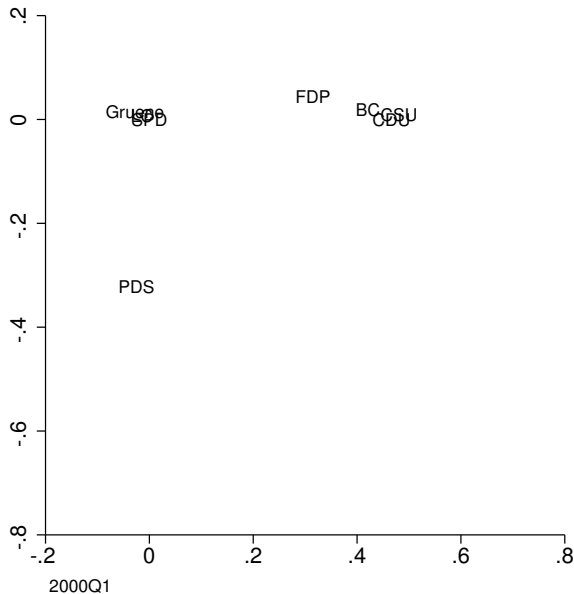
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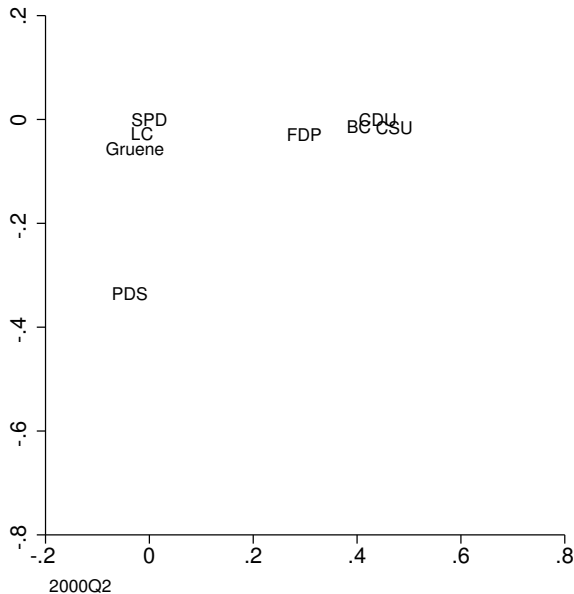
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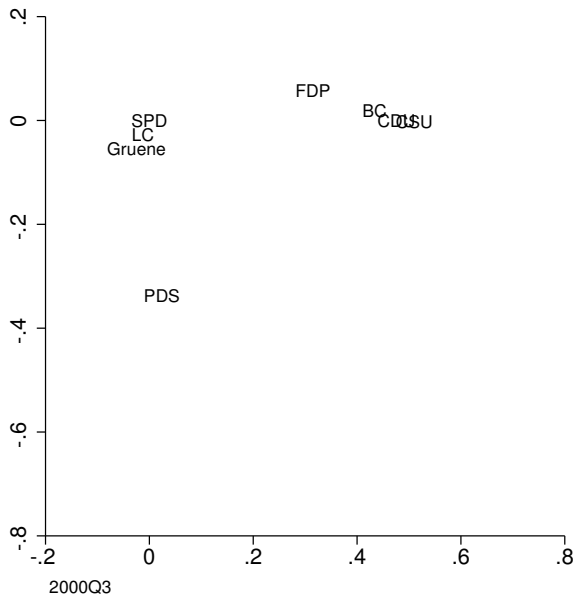
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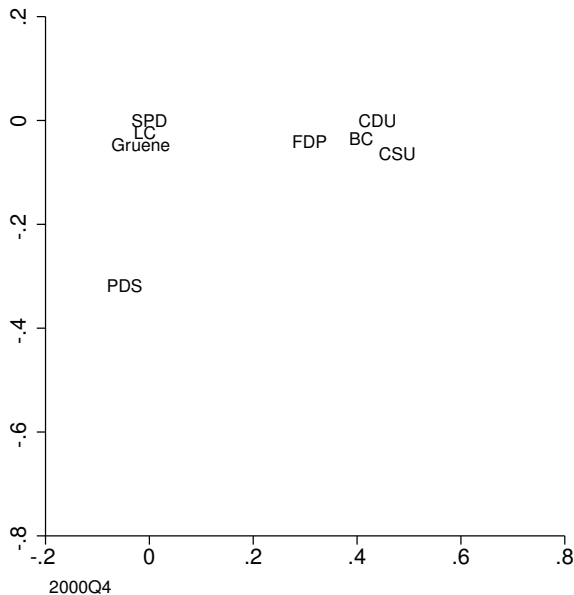
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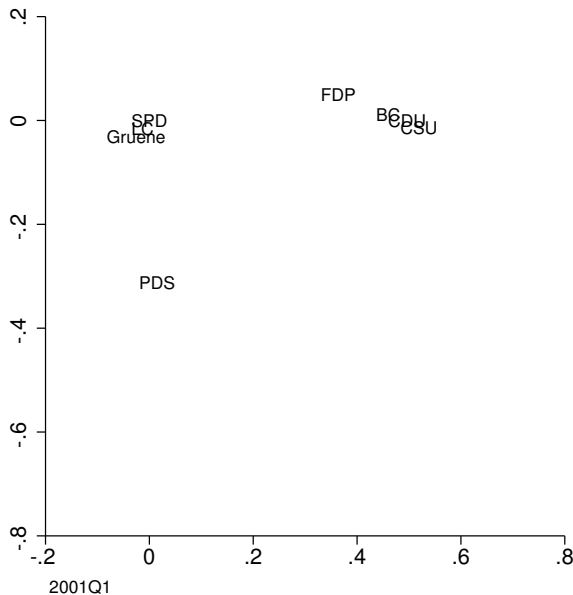
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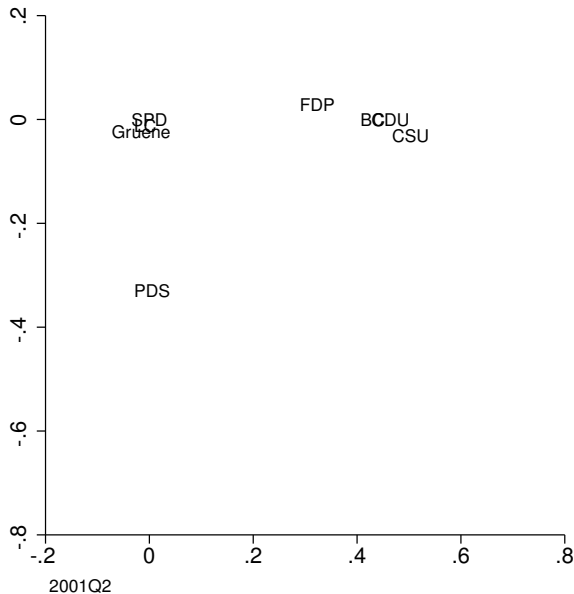
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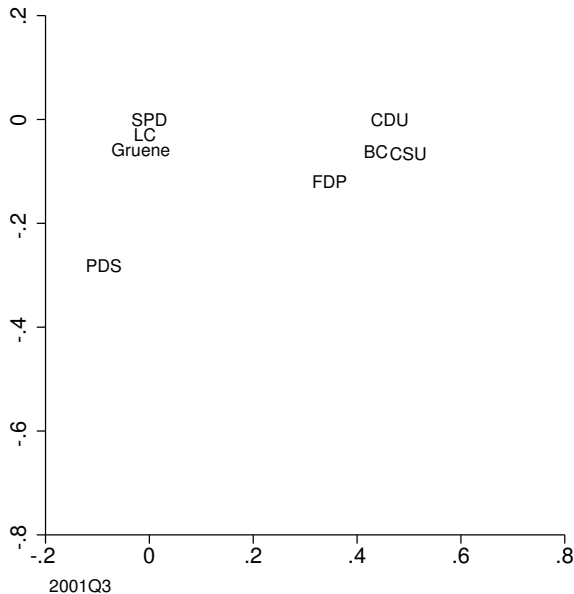
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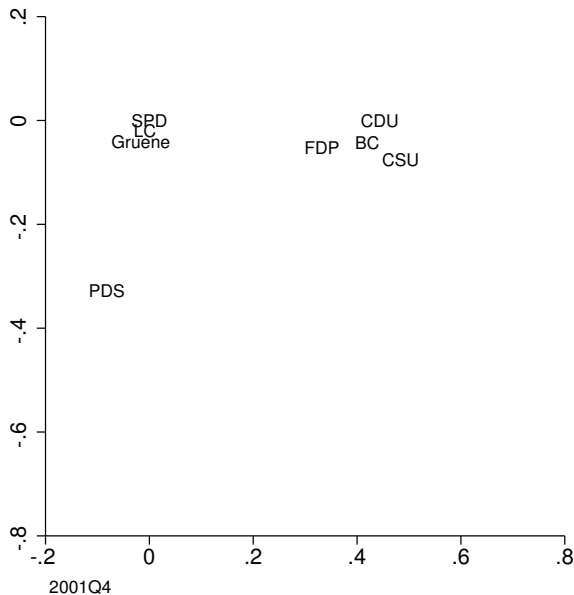
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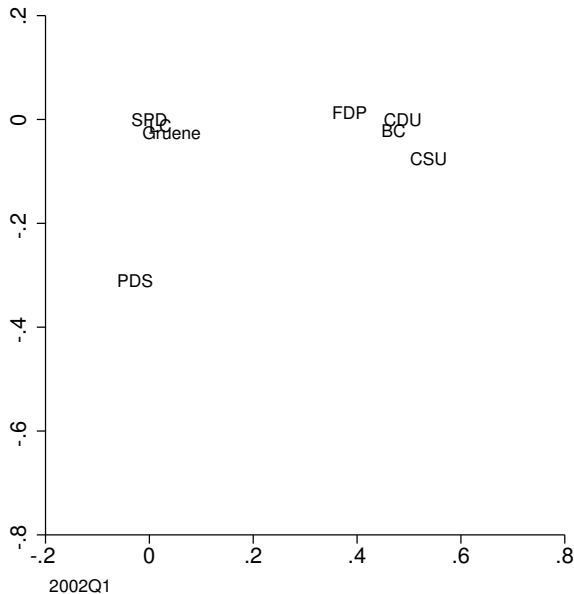
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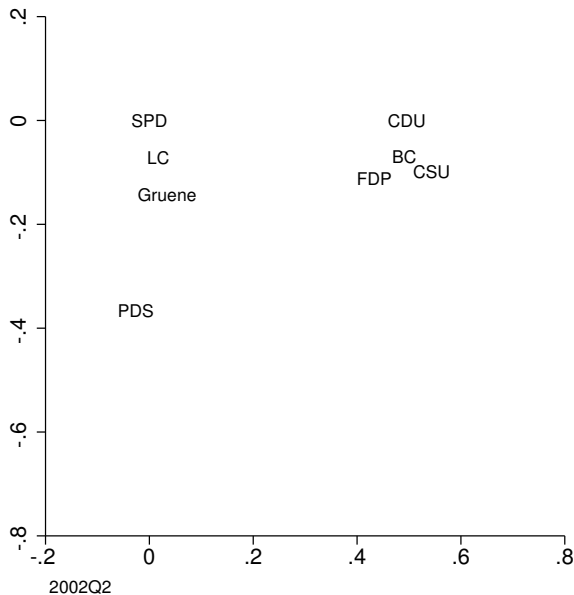
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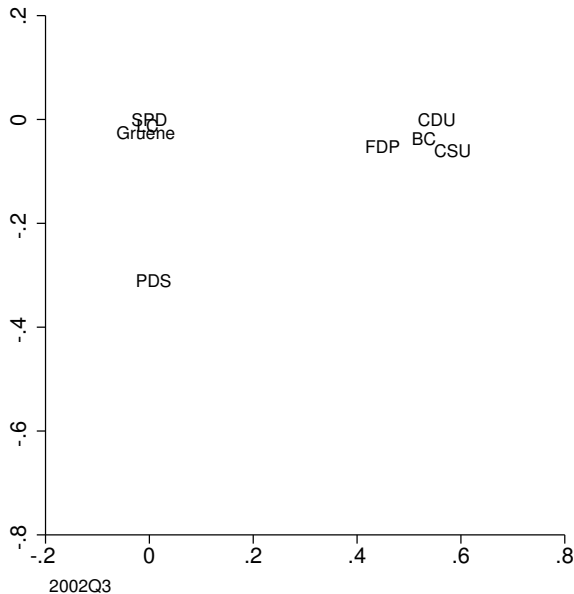
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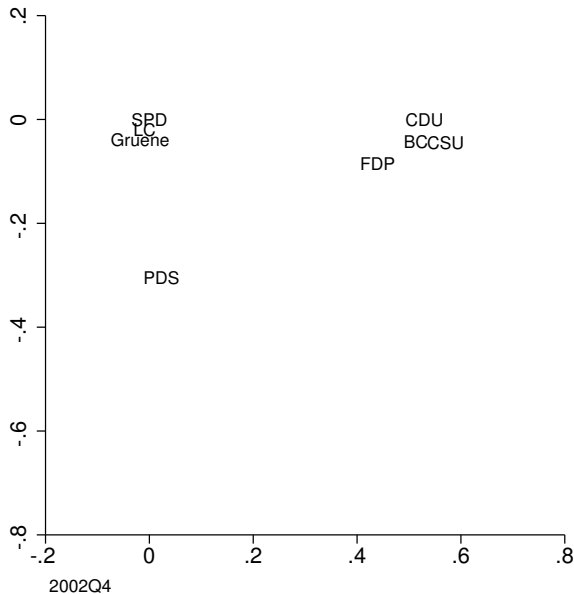
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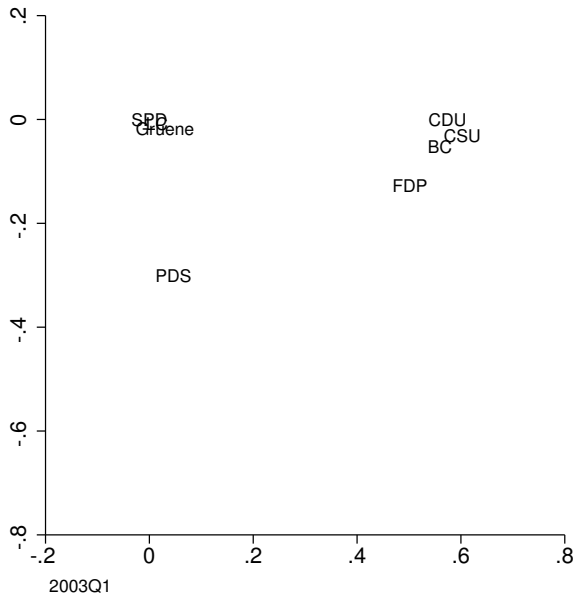
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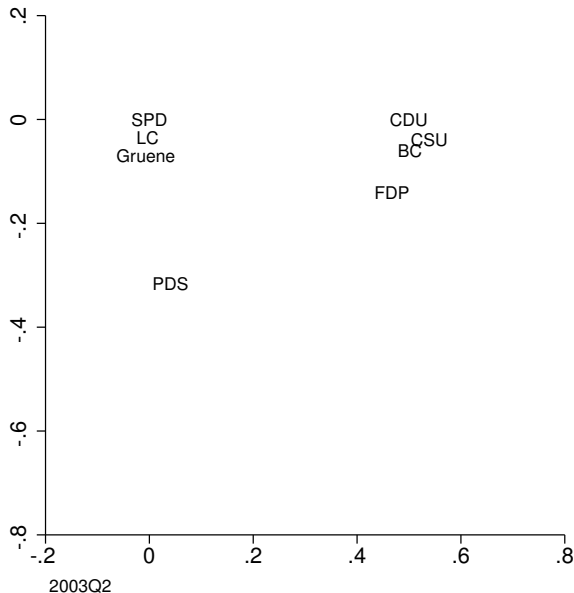
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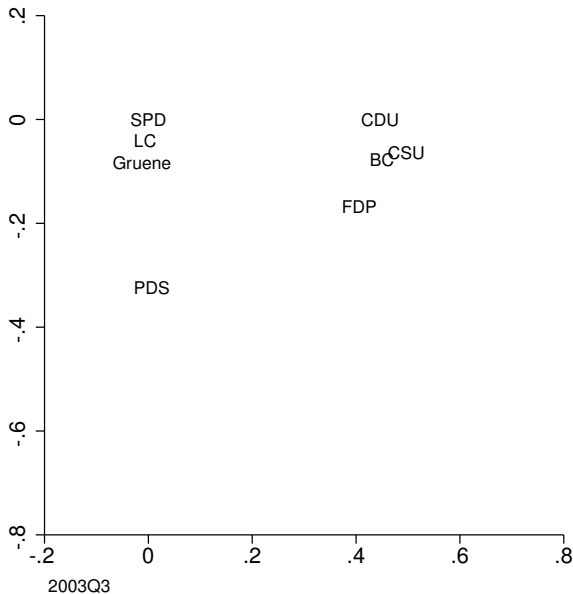
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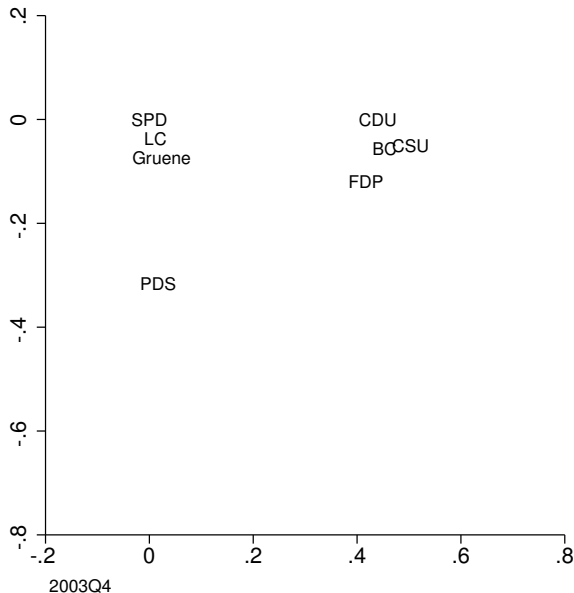
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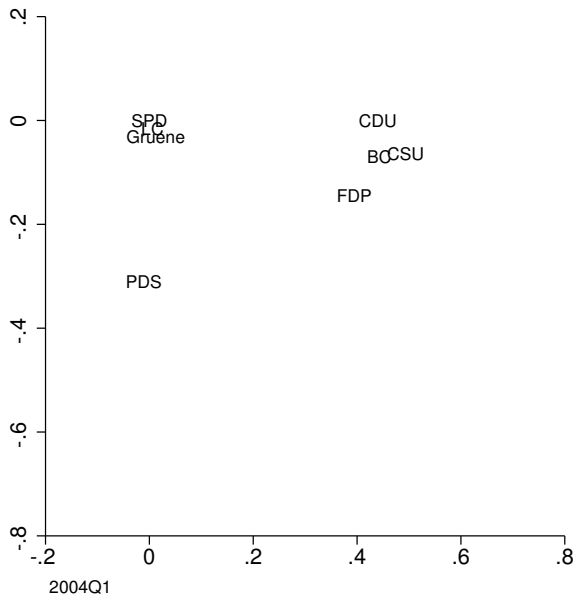
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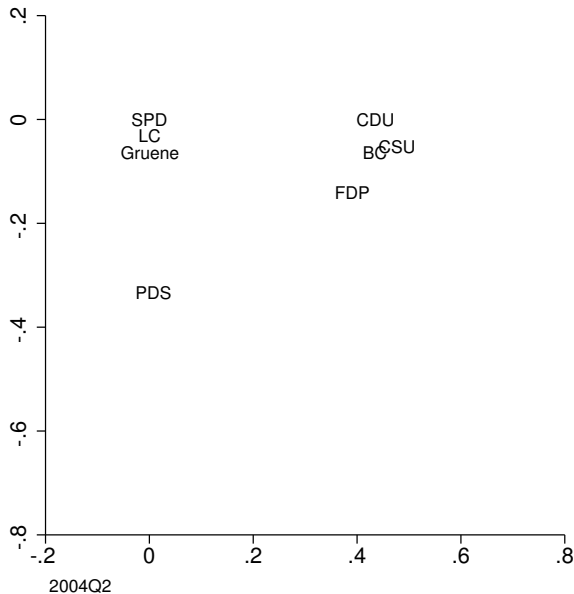
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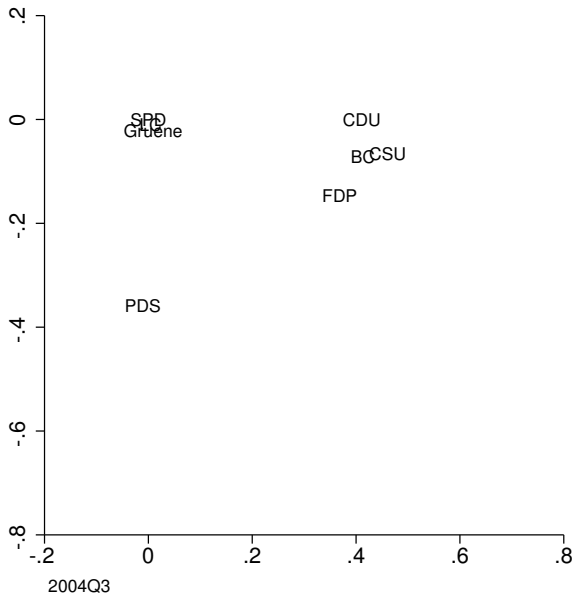
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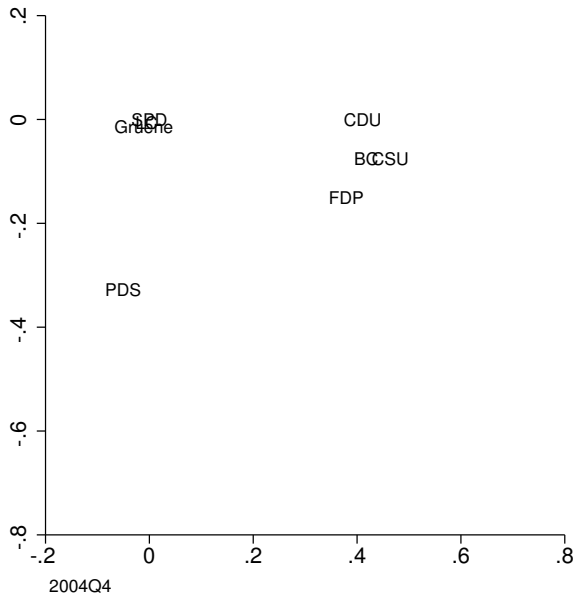
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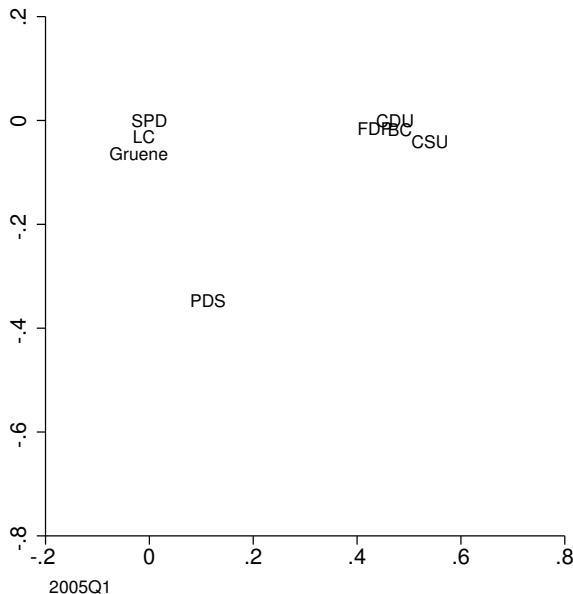
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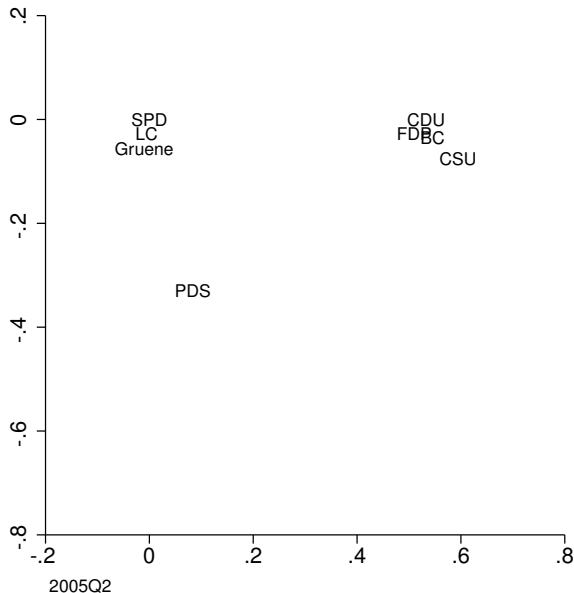
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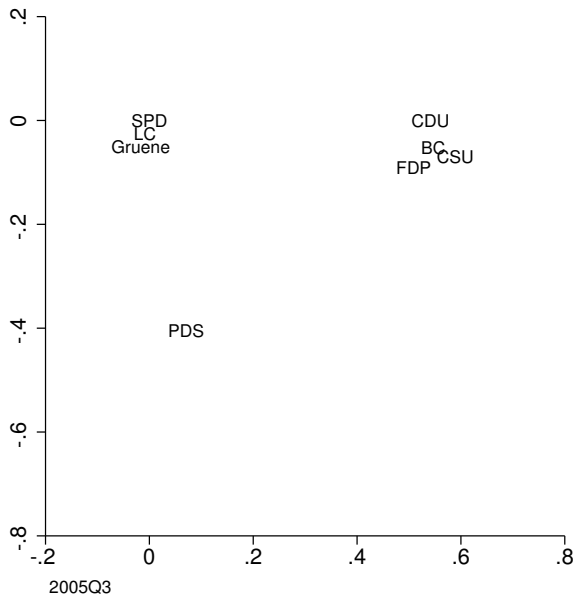
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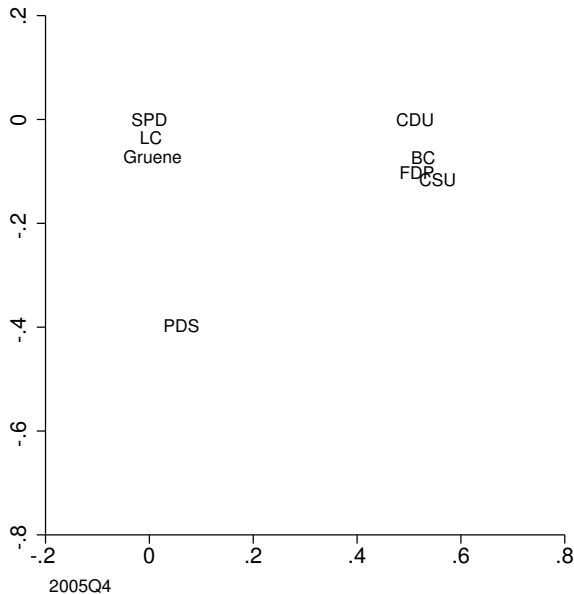
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- ▶ PDS *closer* to SPD than Greens before 1999; left parties move a lot
- ▶ SPD and Greens very close from 1999, structure now clearly resembles Western set-up
- ▶ CDU moves closer to SPD from mid-/late 2003
- ▶ Polarising effect of 2002 and 2005 elections
- ▶ Bourgeois camp somewhat split in late 2005

Distance between SPD/CDU

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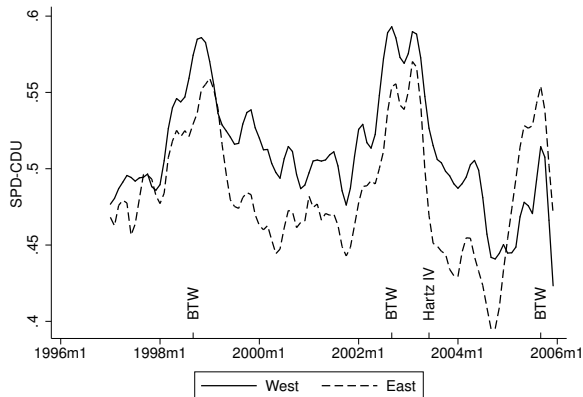
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Distance between SPD/Greens

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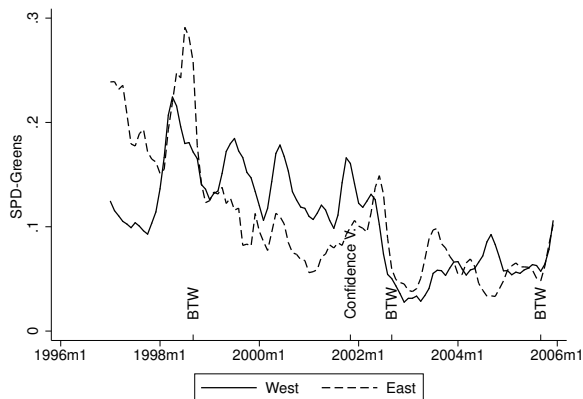
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Distance between SPD/PDS

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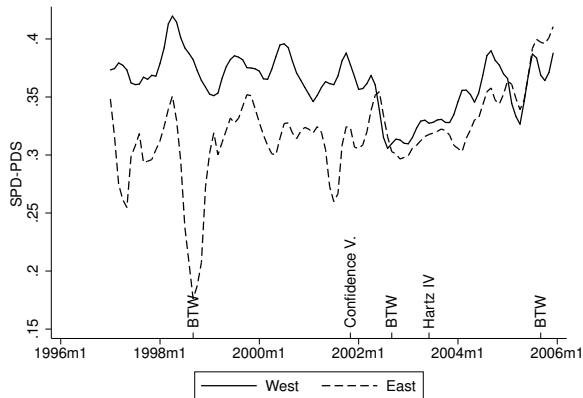
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Variation within Right Camp

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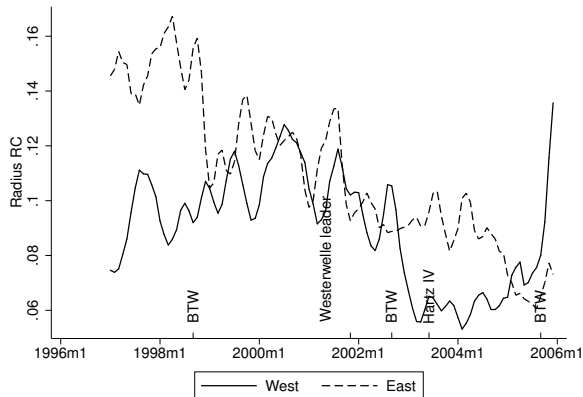
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Distance between PDS/Right Camp

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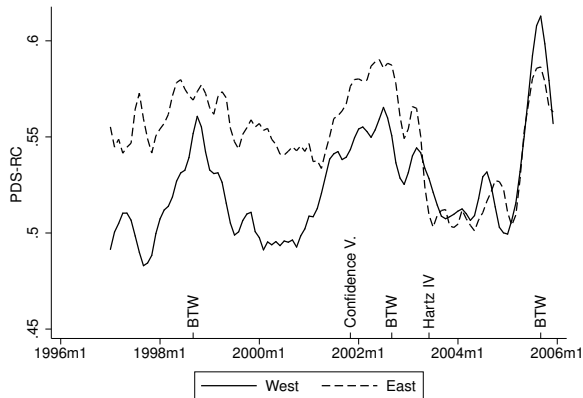
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'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose'?

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- ▶ Major policy and coalition changes *do* affect citizens' perceptions of the party system

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- ▶ Major policy and coalition changes *do* affect citizens' perceptions of the party system
 - ▶ Hartz-Cooperation reduced SPD-CDU distance to ≈ 60 per cent of its maximum
 - ▶ PDS moved closer to SPD after MVP & Berlin coalitions
 - ▶ 'Truce' within Red/Green coalition from summer 2002 shaped citizens' perceptions
 - ▶ Much more divergence in Right Camp in the 2005 election's aftermath

'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose'?

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- ▶ Major policy and coalition changes *do* affect citizens' perceptions of the party system
 - ▶ Hartz-Cooperation reduced SPD-CDU distance to ≈ 60 per cent of its maximum
 - ▶ PDS moved closer to SPD after MVP & Berlin coalitions
 - ▶ 'Truce' within Red/Green coalition from summer 2002 shaped citizens' perceptions
 - ▶ Much more divergence in Right Camp in the 2005 election's aftermath
- ▶ Once again: Voters no fools

'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose'?

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► But...

'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose'?

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- ▶ But...
 - ▶ Parties (media?) still able to emphasise differences during campaigns
 - ▶ Even during Hartz-Cooperation, SPD and CDU quite far apart
 - ▶ 'Two blocs + PDS'-structure as obvious in 2005 as in 1997
 - ▶ Perception of PDS image in the East now closer to Western pattern

'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose'?

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Findings

Summary &
Discussion

- ▶ But...
 - ▶ Parties (media?) still able to emphasise differences during campaigns
 - ▶ Even during Hartz-Cooperation, SPD and CDU quite far apart
 - ▶ 'Two blocs + PDS'-structure as obvious in 2005 as in 1997
 - ▶ Perception of PDS image in the East now closer to Western pattern
- ▶ Political turmoils of the last years had little *lasting* impact on citizens

Where do we go from here?

'In the eye of
the beholder'

Kai Arzheimer
(Essex)

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1. Impact of Grand Coalition? → data

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How to convert Pearson correlations into distances[0,1]?

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(Essex)

Literatur

Technical
information

$$d = 1 - \left(\frac{r}{2} + \frac{1}{2} \right) \quad (1)$$