# 'In the eye of the beholder'. Citizens' perceptions of the German party system 1997-2005

Kai Arzheimer (Essex)

ASGP Annual Conference, 29 May 2007

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2 Data & Method

3 Findings

4 Summary & Discussion

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

▶ 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

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  - Lafontaine endorses left-populist course
  - Pragmatists struggle to control green party
- But in 1997/98...
  - SPD invents/copies 'Neue Mitte'
  - Majority within the Green Party willing to form coalition
  - PDS very seriously considers coalitions at Land level

### Key events 1997-1999

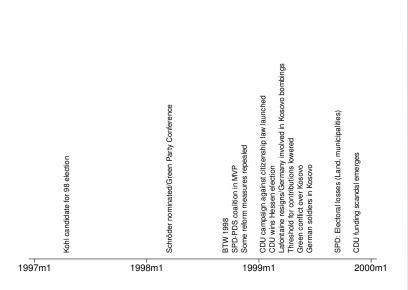


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### Key events 2000-2002

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PDS helps to establish Red/Green minority government in Berlin Westerwelle FDP leader; government: private pension schemes Co-operation with CDU/FDP on labour market reforms begins froops deployed to Afghanistan, vote of confidence All nuclear powerplants to be shut down by 2021 300.000 DM deal between Kohl and persecutor Schröder re-elected, defends austerity course BTW2002/Möllemanns fall from grace Schill Party in Hamburg: 19 per cent SPD/PDS coalition in Berlin Conflict over Iraq, Floodings New security laws apply Stoiber nominated FDP controversy

Schäubele involved in scandal
Schäubele resigns/CDU fined
Green Card initiative
Gys/Bisky step down; Merkel CDU leader
(Much) lower tax rates from Jan. 2001
Fuel price crisis begins
Leitkultur debate

More than 4 mill. unemployed; SPD/CDU clash
300.000 DM deal between Kohl and persecutor

2002m1

2003m1

### Key events 2003-2005

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Schröder: 2006 election with Fischer; CSU triumph SPD loses NRW, Schröder calls for early elections Extra charges for medical treatment introduced Co-operation between PDS and WASG begins Common CDU/CSU/FDP platform showcased Mass demonstrations against Agenda Hartz IV law in force; WASG founded Schröder steps down as SPD leader SPD conference endorses Agenda Köhler elected Federal President More than 5 million unemployed New SPD losses at Land level Agenda 2010 launched 4.4 million unemployed Grand Coalition in S-H Merkel elected BTW 2005 2003m1 2004m1 2005m1 2006m1

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Summary & Discussion

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
    - Citizenship
    - ► Immigration/Right-wing\_extremism, Parameter Square



SPD/Greens moved a good deal but . . .

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Findings

- 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

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Summary & Discussion

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

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

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Legitimacy

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Findings

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

Findings

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

#### Data & Method

Findings

- Direct comparisons between parties
  - Let respondents compare  $\frac{6\times5}{2} = 15$  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

Thermometer-type (1-11) ratings for six relevant parties available (monthly Politbarometer series, n=188357)

Findings

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+4

+3

+2

+1

0

-1

-2

-3

-4

-5

(Essex)

Thermometer-type (1-11) ratings for six relevant parties available (monthly Politbarometer series, n=188 357)

- We do not know which features/dimensions citizens employ
- But correlations between ratings are informative
  - If parties x and y are very similar: highly positively correlated ratings
  - ▶ If parties x and y are not very similar: low correlations approaching zero
  - ▶ If parties x and y are very dissimilar: highly negatively correlated ratings
- Interpret correlations as measures for perceived distances
- Apply MDS (classical metric scaling) to reconstruct cognitive map of party system

- 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
  - So that distances between parties match perceived distances
  - 3. As closely as possible
- (Aggregate data over quarters)

Data & Method

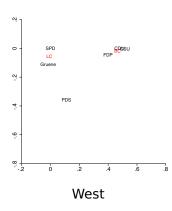
Findings

- ► 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

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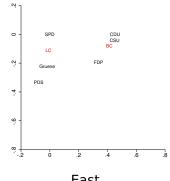
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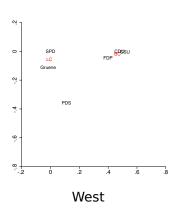
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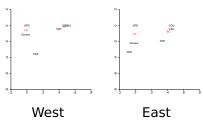
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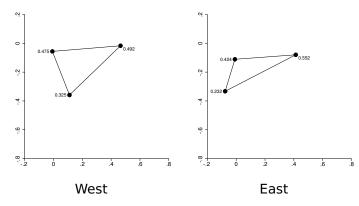
- West: two blocs, PDS clearly separate
- ► East:
  - More dispersion
  - PDS much closer to other left

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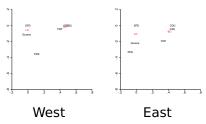
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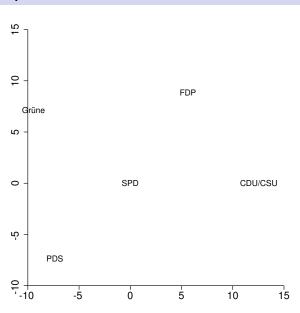
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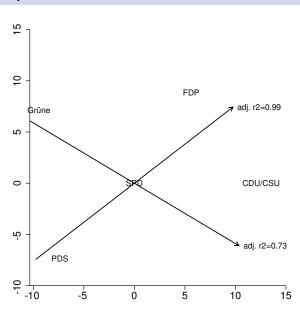
- West: two blocs, PDS clearly separate
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- How does this square with experts' views (Benoit/Laver 2006)?

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Findings



Findings

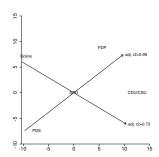


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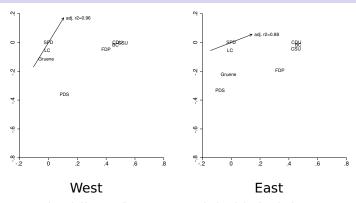


 SPD the Median party on general, economic and social policy left/right axes

#### Findings

- Data collected ≈ 2003 → 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!)

## The German Partystem 1997, Q1



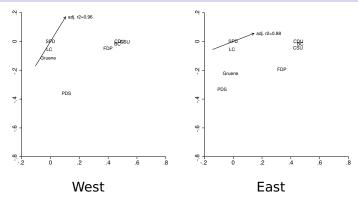
Embedding of experts' global left-right assessment fits well 'In the eye of the beholder'

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## The German Partystem 1997, Q1



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

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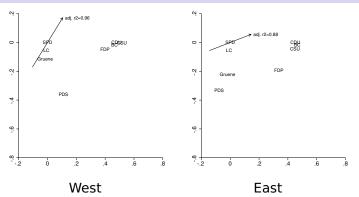
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## The German Partystem 1997, Q1



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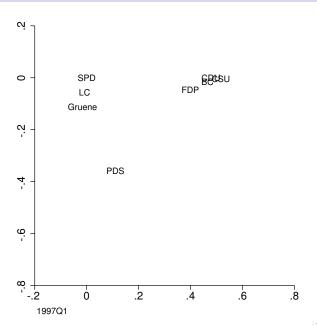
## West Germany 97-05





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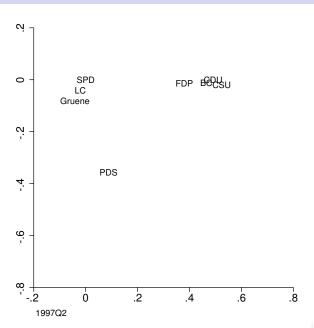
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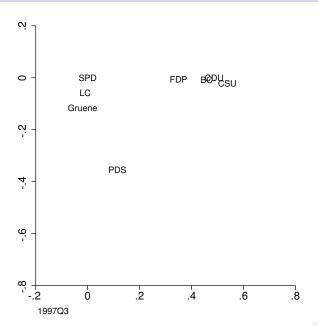
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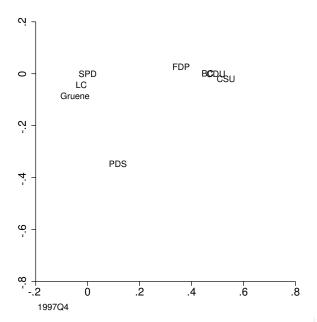




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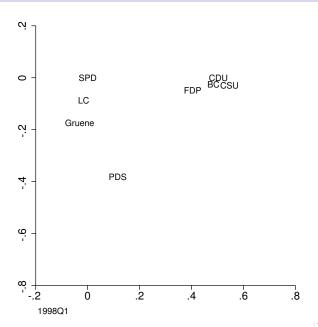
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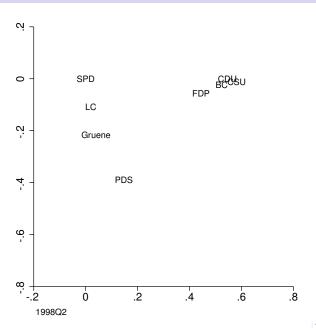


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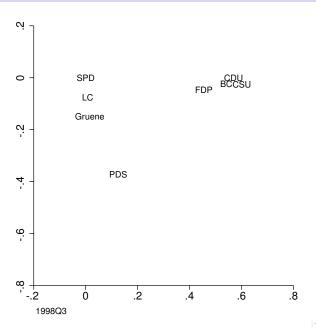


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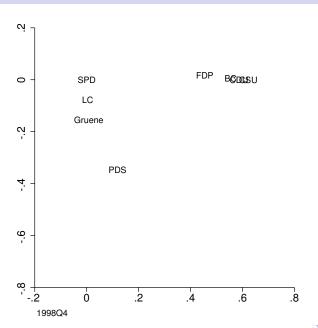


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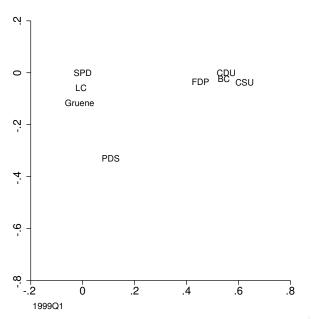
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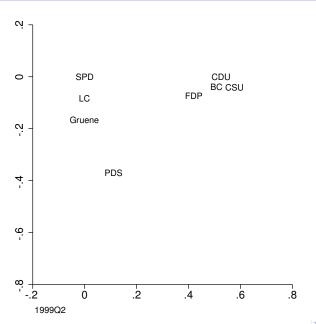


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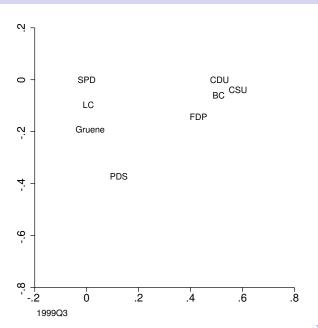


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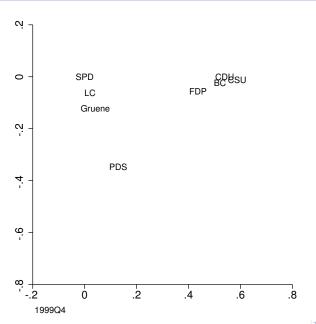






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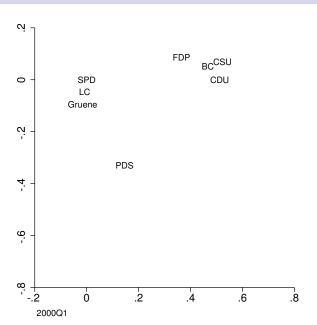




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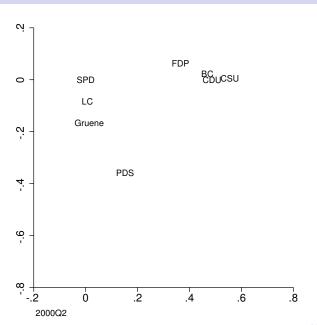
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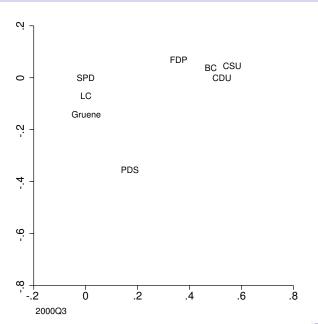


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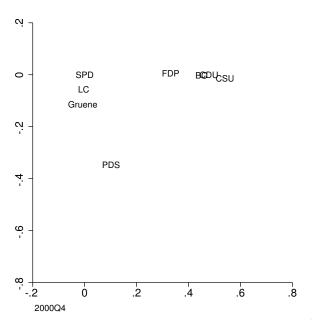






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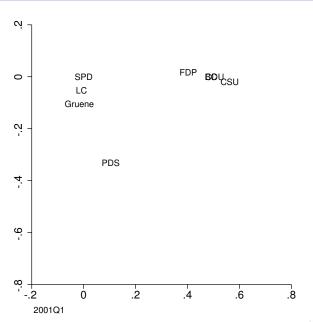
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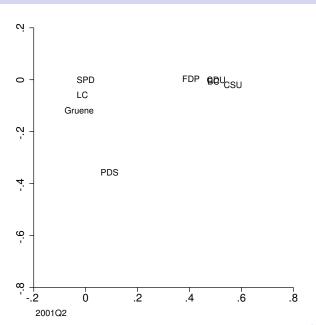
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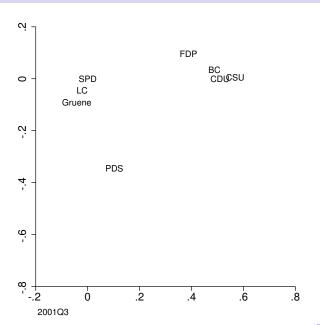






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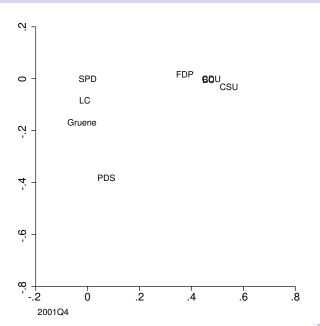
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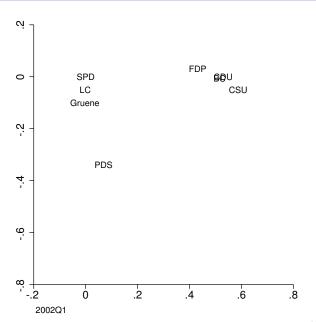
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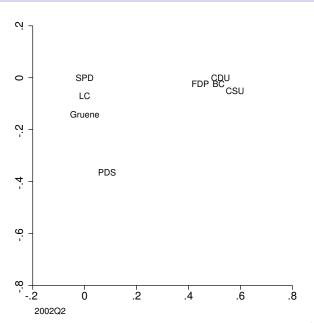
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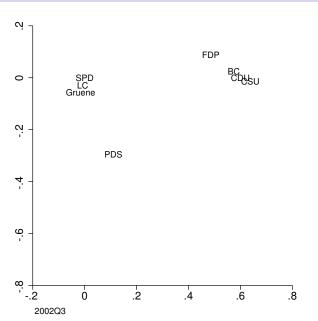


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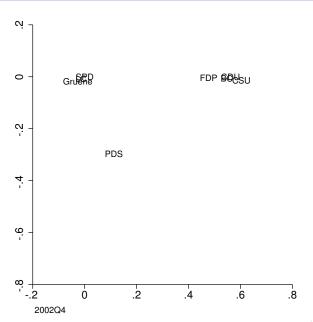
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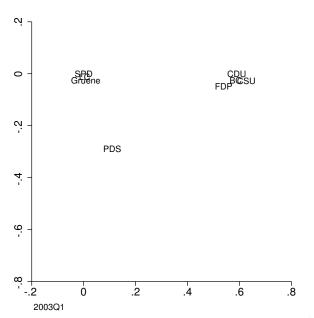






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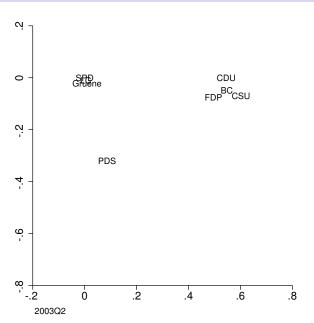
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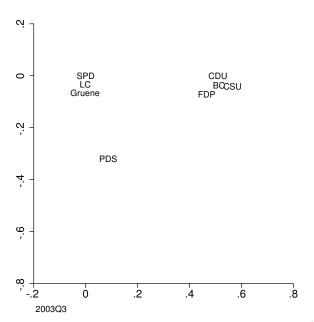






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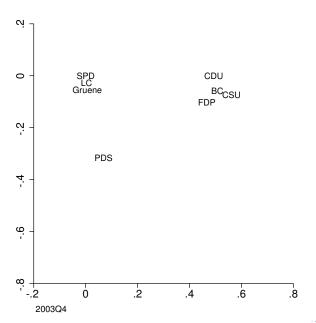




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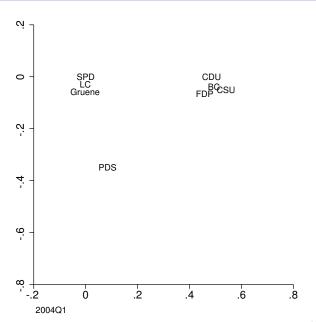




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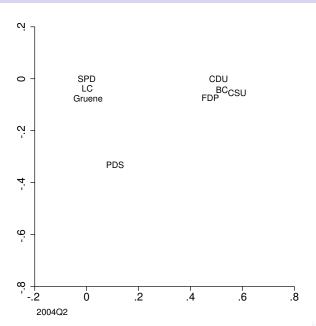
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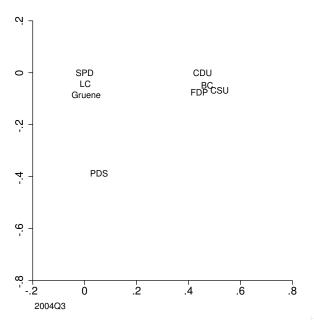




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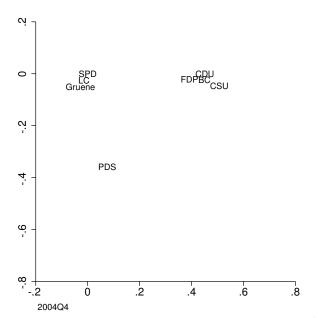
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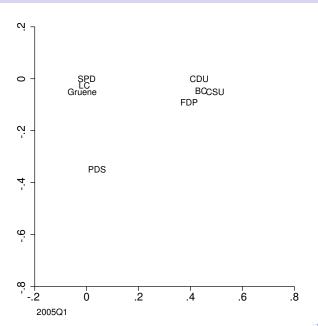
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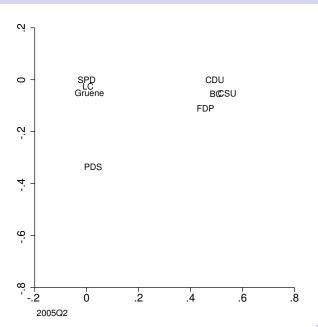
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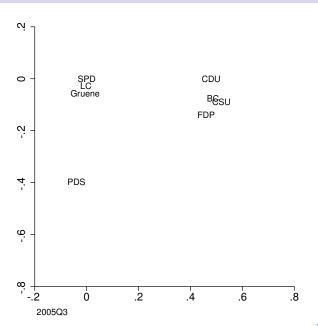
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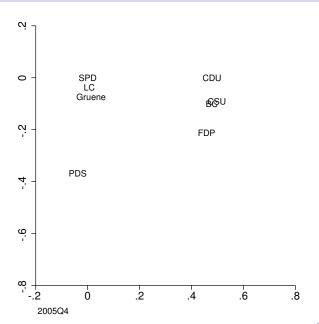


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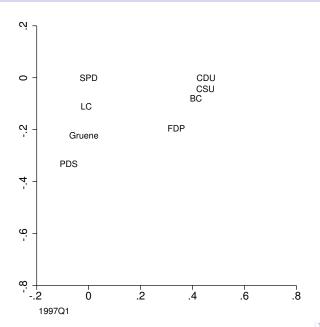
- Greens rather far apart from SPD and surprisingly close to PDS in 98Q2, 99Q3; left parties move quite a bit
- From 2002Q4 on, almost identical positions for Greens and SPD
- FDP not equidistant, yet often closer to SPD than CDU/CSU
- CDU moves toward SPD from mid-/late 2003
- Even in 2005Q4 SPD and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





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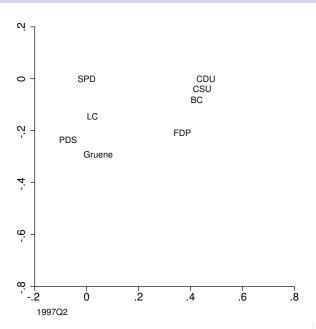


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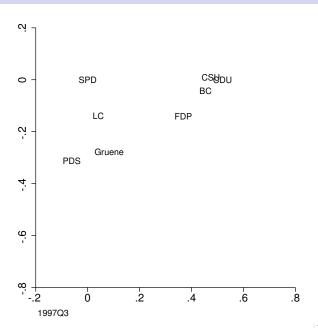






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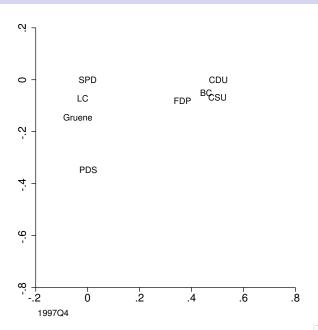






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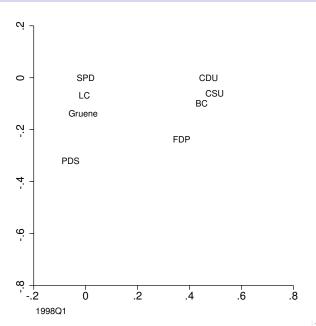




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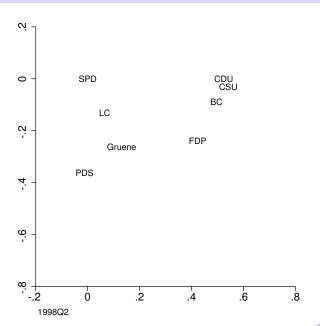




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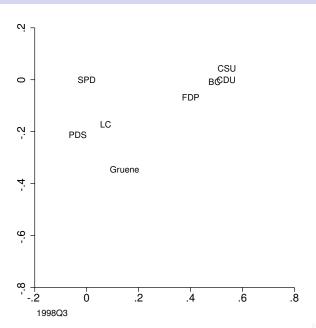




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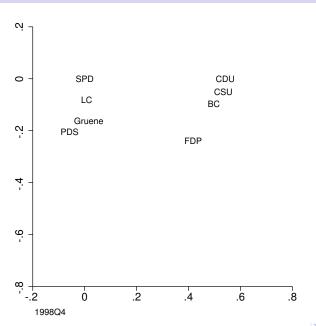




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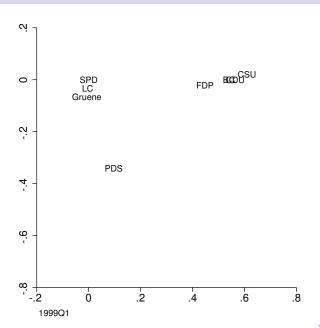
'In the eye of the beholder'

Kai Arzheimer (Essex)

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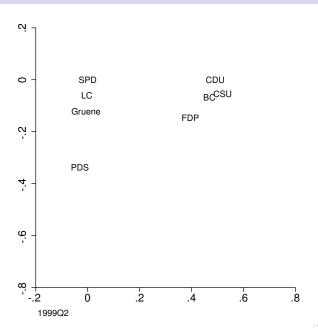




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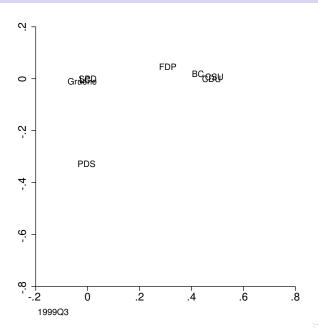




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#### Findings



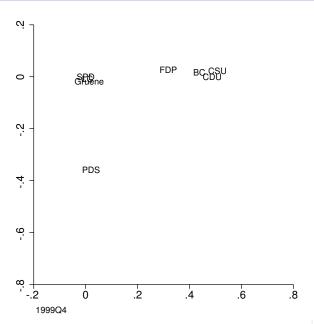


Kai Arzheimer (Essex)



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#### Findings



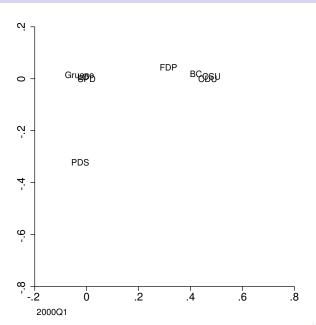




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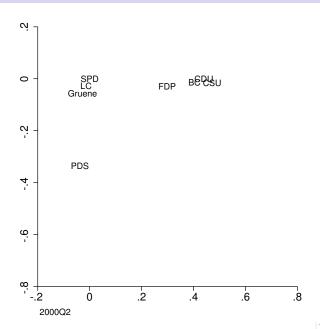
'In the eye of the beholder'

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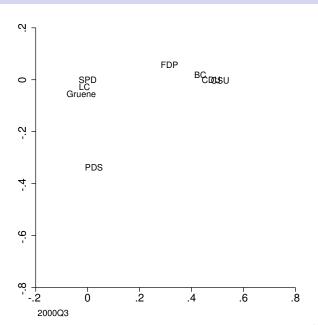


Kai Arzheimer (Essex)



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#### Findings



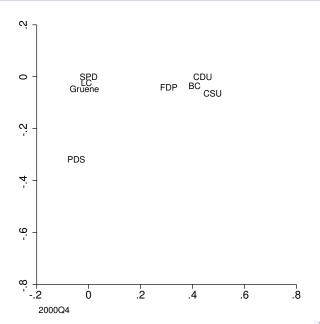




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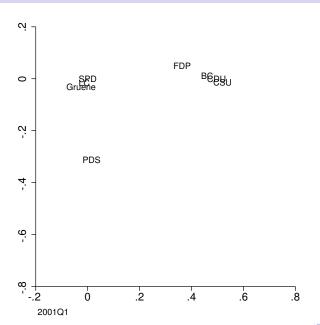
'In the eye of the beholder'



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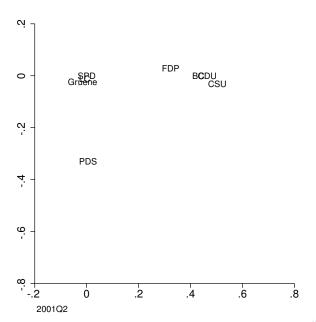




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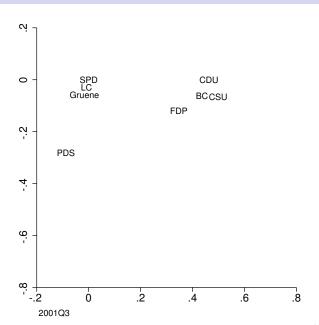


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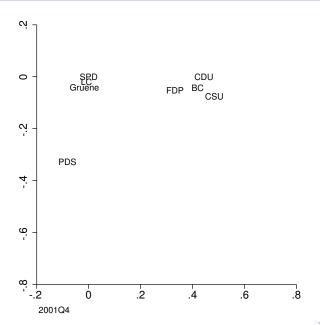




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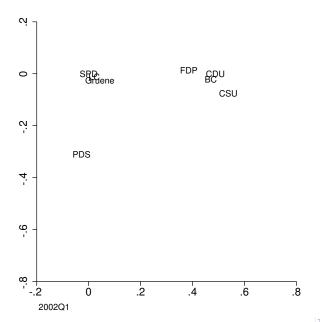




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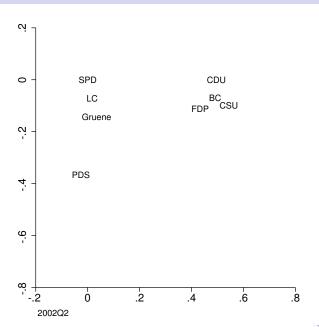






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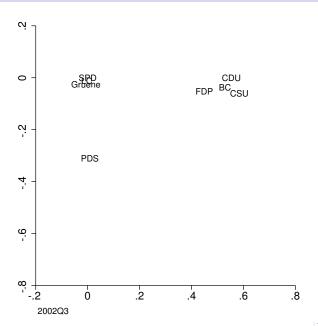






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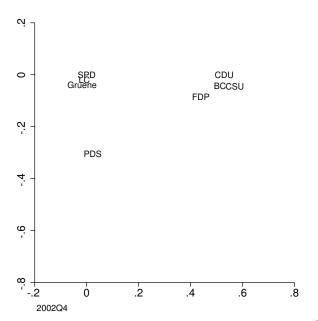
'In the eye of the beholder'

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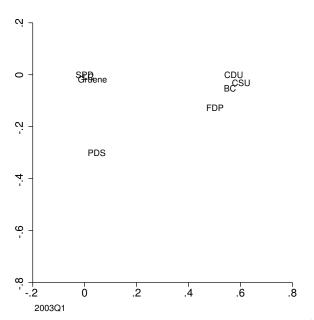
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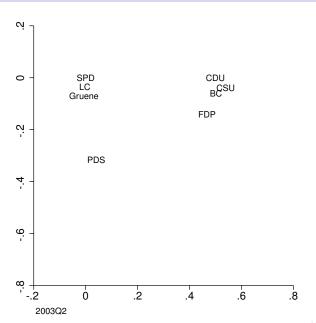
**Findings** 





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**Findings** 



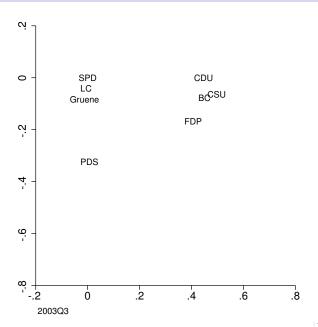




Intro & Research Problem

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#### Findings



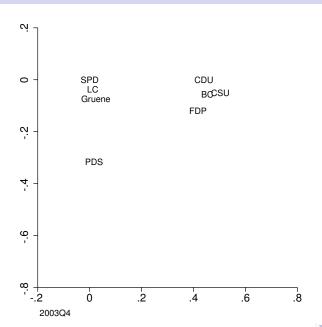






#### Data & Method

### Findings

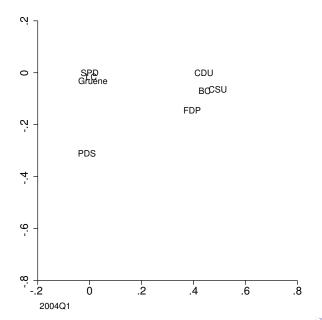






**Findings** 





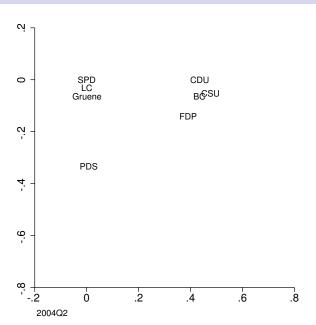
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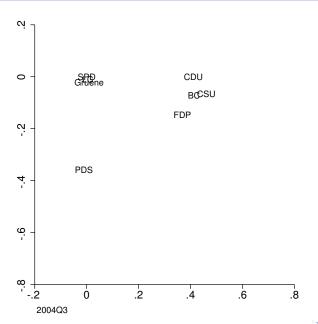
'In the eye of the beholder'

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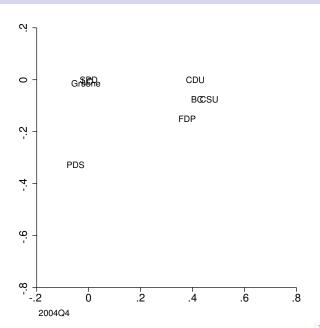




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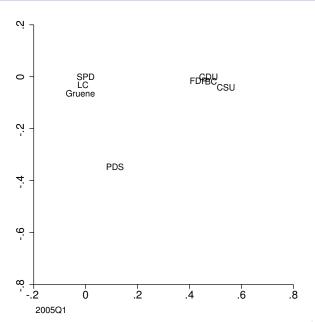


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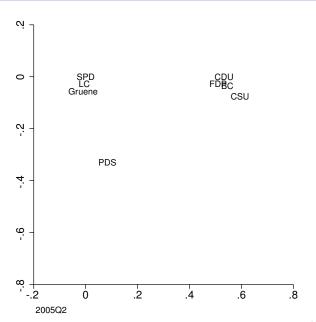


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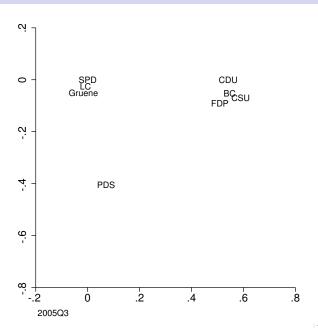


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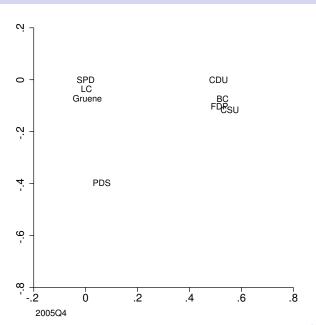




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#### Findings



Findings

- ▶ 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



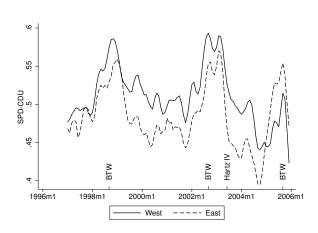
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## Distance between SPD/Greens



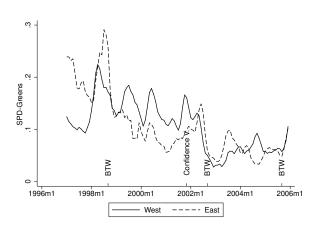
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#### Distance between SPD/PDS

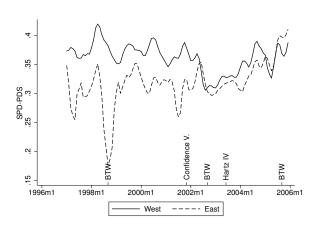


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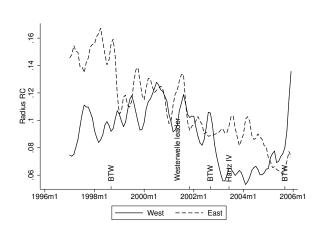
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Summary &



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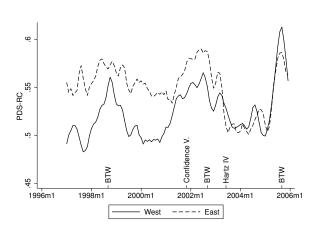
# Distance between PDS/Right Camp



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Summary & Discussion

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

Problem

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Findings

- 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

Problem

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Findings

- 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
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  - 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'?

But...

'In the eye of the beholder'

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Problem

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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

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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
- Political turmoils of the last years had little lasting impact on citizens

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Summary & Discussion

1. Impact of Grand Coalition? → data

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Data & Method

Findings

- 1. Impact of Grand Coalition? → data
- 2. Subgroups and subnational  $\rightarrow n$

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- 1. Impact of Grand Coalition? → data
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Data & Method

Findings

- 1. Impact of Grand Coalition? → data
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Data & Method

Findings

Summary & Discussion

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

Technical information

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Technical information

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