

Measuring Political Change in Party Systems on the Basis of the Index of Programmatic Similarity

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Abstract

Although party politics has been the focus of party research for a considerable time, there is still no measure of political change from one election to the next that would be sensitive to what is happening on the level of parties. This paper suggests two such measures, both of which are based on the index of programmatic similarity and both of which give us, from a slightly different angle, an idea of how party election manifestos change across elections. A broad exploratory and descriptive overview of party systems and parties is given on the basis of these measures. The most interesting pattern that emerges from this initial overview is that political change both for parties and for party systems seems to follow a cyclic pattern – increasing similarity across elections is followed by decreasing similarity, in turn followed by increasing similarity, etc.