

(De)Politicizing the Eurozone Crisis:
Comparative Analysis of Political Parties Discourses on
European Integration in Ireland and the United Kingdom

Alban Versailles (FRESH grant holder, F.R.S.-FNRS, UCL, Belgium)

Virginie Van Ingelgom (F.R.S.-FNRS, UCL, Belgium)

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Introduction

‘There was a sense of shock and disbelief in the early morning hours of 24 June 2016, both in Britain and across European capitals, when it became clear that a small majority (51.9 per cent) of British voters had cast their ballot in favour of leaving the European Union’ (Hobolt, 2016: 1259). In the very same time, in the Eurozone, the financial crisis has focused public attention on questions on European Union (EU) governance to an unprecedented extent. This attention has arisen with the growing politicization at the domestic level that has come with the Euro crisis. The 2016 referendum on United Kingdom membership in the EU, the vote for Eurosceptic parties – with very recently Marine Le Pen being present at the second tour of the French Presidential election, and more generally the widespread discontent of European citizens’ have led scholars to conclude that politicization of European integration seems obvious and attempts to reverse this trend are programmed to fail (Statham and Trenz, 2013; de Wilde and Zürn, 2012). In this context, politicization of European integration involves greater issue salience, polarization and actor expansion, stemming from the increased political authority of the EU (de Wilde and Zürn, 2012). The ‘sleeping giant’ of de Vries (2007) seems to be well awakened. Building on these perspectives, ‘the view of European integration as being successfully and strongly politicised issue has come to dominate the scholarly debate’ (Hoeglinger, 2016: 45).

However, far from these evidences and from the too obvious conclusions that they lead to, the current situation is certainly far more complex than it seems at a first glance. In fact, we still know very little about the mechanisms that lead eventually to politicization and depoliticization of European integration at the domestic level. The only thing that is clear enough is that these mechanisms of politicization are neither systematic nor leading to the same outcomes. The recently developed concept of *differentiated politicization* of European governance seems the best suited to describe the current state of politicization (de Wilde, Leupold and Schmidtke, 2016). The basic idea behind this concept is that a differentiated Europe leads to differentiated politicization across times, countries and settings. This paper takes stock of this recent development of politicization researches and builds on the theoretical development defining politicization as the salience of and polarization around a European issue in domestic political discourse (De Wilde 2011; Hurrelmann, 2012). More precisely, this paper explores the consequences of Eurozone crisis as a trigger of politicization. Has the financial crisis induced a growing politicization of European integration? Are EU related issues more salient and discourses more polarized in the period of the financial crisis in domestic arena? This paper explores the extent to which national political parties can foster – or not – politicization of European integration by combining the analysis of a contextual factor, the economic and financial crisis in the Eurozone, with the analysis of national political parties’ discourses defined as an intermediate factor of politicization of European integration.

Against this backdrop, this paper assesses the explanatory power of salience and polarization of attitudes as mechanism of politicization *and* depoliticization in the domestic political discourses of national parties’ in Ireland and the United Kingdom. The economic crisis and the discourse of political parties are analysed to evaluate their impact on the process of (de)politicization in these two countries. In order to do so, a corpus of national and European electoral manifestos belonging to Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, Labour and Sinn Féin in Ireland, and to Conservative, Labour, Liberal democrats and UKIP in the United Kingdom, from 2005 to 2016, is analysed. This methodology of discourse analysis has been used to highlight the presence or absence of two politicization dimensions: the saliency and the polarisation.

The article proceeds as follows. First, it discusses the theoretical background of our empirical analyses by articulating the concept of politicization of European integration. Second, the role played by national parties in this process as intermediary actors is presented and the two national cases under scrutiny are described: Ireland and the UK. In a third part, the paper presents an analysis of national parties’ discourses in the pre-crisis period and during the crisis. Parties’ manifestos are scrutinized to detail the salience and polarization of attitudes in order to assess evolutions from the pre-crisis period. Finally, we will discuss these results, using some extracts to push our argumentation, in order to test our hypotheses.

The differentiated politicization of the EU

The objective of this paper is to detail how the Irish and British political parties' discourses during the economic crisis that has struck the Eurozone are politicizing or depoliticizing EU issues. Thus, this work aims for a better understanding of the (de)politicizing of European integration by national political parties. Combining the analysis of a contextual factor, the financial and economic crisis in the Eurozone, with the analysis of national political parties, the goal is to think about their discourses as an intermediate factor of politicization of European integration. The choice has been made to focus on these actors because they occupy a pivotal position between national citizens and the European level. The particular context of crisis gives the opportunity to study these actors being confronted with a difficult national economic situation. This particular context could get them to adopt a different attitude vis-à-vis European integration and so contribute to politicize or depoliticize the debate. In other words, this paper proposes to analyse the potential influence of the economic crisis inside the Eurozone on the level of (de)politicization of European integration in the British and Irish political parties' discourses.

This work is thus following the field of researches around the concept of politicization. The recent success of such a notion in the academic debates is to read in the light of the break-up that occurred in the field of European studies with the rejection of the constitutional treaty by the French and Dutch referendums in 2005, followed by the economic and financial crisis. In an attempt to understand and explain the resistances to European integration from an important part of European citizens (Lacroix and Coman 2007; Costa et al. 2008; Crespy and Verschuere 2009; Vasilopoulou 2013), the theoretical thoughts about the process of integration developed around the concept of politicization (Hix and Bartolini 2006; Hooghe and Marks 2009; De Wilde 2011; De Wilde and Zürn 2012).

The politicization can be defined as the act of making previously unpolitical matters political, transposing an issue into the fields of politics (Zürn 2016). Pieter de Wilde proposes an operational definition of politicization as “*an increase in polarization of opinions, interests or values and the extent to which they are publicly advanced towards policy formulation within the EU*” (De Wilde 2011: 566-567). Out of this definition, this author distinguishes a tri-dimensional concept of politicization by differentiating three indicators of politicization: a growing salience, a polarization of opinions and an expansion of the actors involved in the debate (De Wilde et al. 2016).

According to this literature, the main hypothesis concerning the origin of politicization of European integration is the “*transfer of authority hypothesis*”, according to which the more member states transfer authority to the EU, the more there is an important potential for politicization (De Wilde and Zürn 2012). To this regard, one needs to consider the economic and financial crisis as a factor being part of the “*political opportunity structure*” highlighted by De Wilde and Zürn. This opportunity structure can either facilitate, either slow down the process of politicization of European integration which remains initially the consequence of authority transfer. From this point of view, the comparison between our two cases is interesting. First of all, both countries have suffered from the crisis even if Ireland was indeed hit more strongly by the crisis. Regarding transfer of authority, Ireland is part of the Eurozone whereas Britain is not. In this latter case, the question of being part of the Eurozone is clearly politicized by national parties but in a hypothetical way. The *transfer of authority hypothesis* helps us to formulate a first hypothesis. Since the UK has not transfer his authority on monetary issues, the politicization of EU issue should be in general less important. A second hypothesis is dealing with the crisis as a trigger of politicization. Here also one would expect the politicization to be higher in Ireland. This leads also to consider that the crisis should, in both cases even with different intensity, have politicized European integration.

Hypothesis 1 (transfer of authority): the more competences have been transfer to the EU, the more EU issues are politicized.

Hypothesis 2 (political opportunity structure): the economic and financial crisis represents a political opportunity for parties and is thus a trigger of politicization

However, this is not the only possible explanation offered in the literature. We will highlight here two other hypotheses we find complementary to the first one. The “*strategic competition hypothesis*”

(Taggart 1998; Sitter 2008) sees the politicization as mainly the result of political strategic competition amongst national political parties. And the “*cleavage transformation hypothesis*” reminds us that partisan competition is constrained by the ideological cleavages (Marks and Wilson 2000; Hooghe et al. 2004; Kriesi et al. 2008, 2012). These two hypothesis concern national political competition, which is one of the factors that can explain the important variety of degrees and patterns of politicization observed across time, space and settings. The *competition hypothesis* leads us to formulate a second hypothesis regarding our cases. Ireland and the UK are very different when it comes to national parties and their positioning regarding the EU – we will come back to this more specifically in the next section. At this stage, one should only underline that the presence of UKIP is the most important difference between our cases. One could indeed expect that UKIP will be an actor of strong politicization in the UK as it is specifically structured around the European issues.

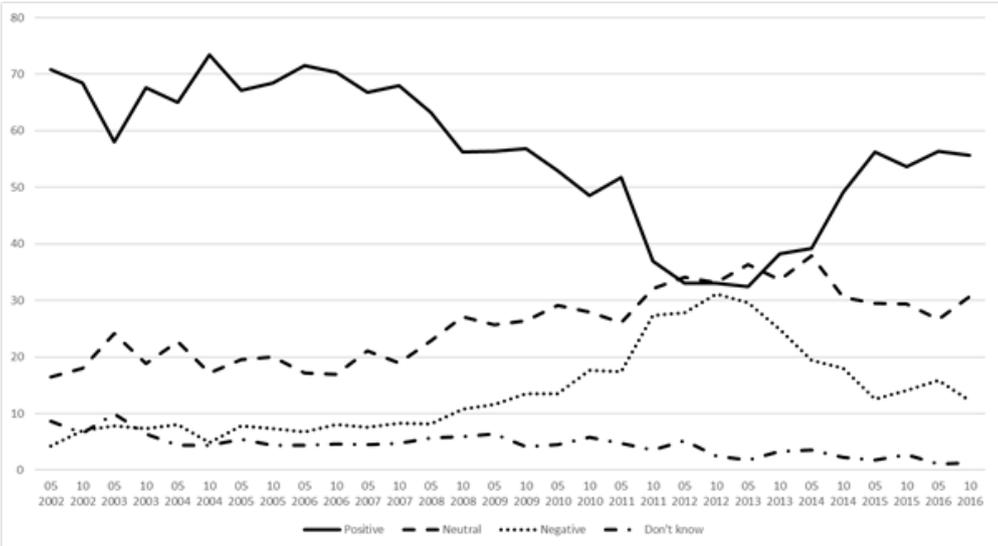
Hypothesis 3 (competition hypothesis): the presence of openly Eurosceptic party/ies in the domestic arena structures heavily party competition around EU issues and thus politicizes these issues.

Public opinion, National political parties and European integration

This paper starts from the assumption that the intermediate position of political parties, between the European level and the national public opinion, makes them some very important actors to study to understand the politicization process of European integration. Indeed, they structure national politics, which is one of the factors that can impact the pattern and degree of politicization (De Wilde and Zürn 2012). Moreover, they do have an influence on the degree of salience and polarization amongst public opinion (De Wilde 2011). Eventually, public opinion about European integration has become a field of strategic competition amongst political parties (Hooghe and Marks 2009).

Looking at the polarization amongst public opinion could thus be a first step in order to begin the reflections of the intermediate position of political parties in the process of politicization. Pictures 1 and 2 depict the evolution of the image of the EU in the Irish and British public opinions.

Figure 1 – EU image in Irish public opinion (2002-2016)

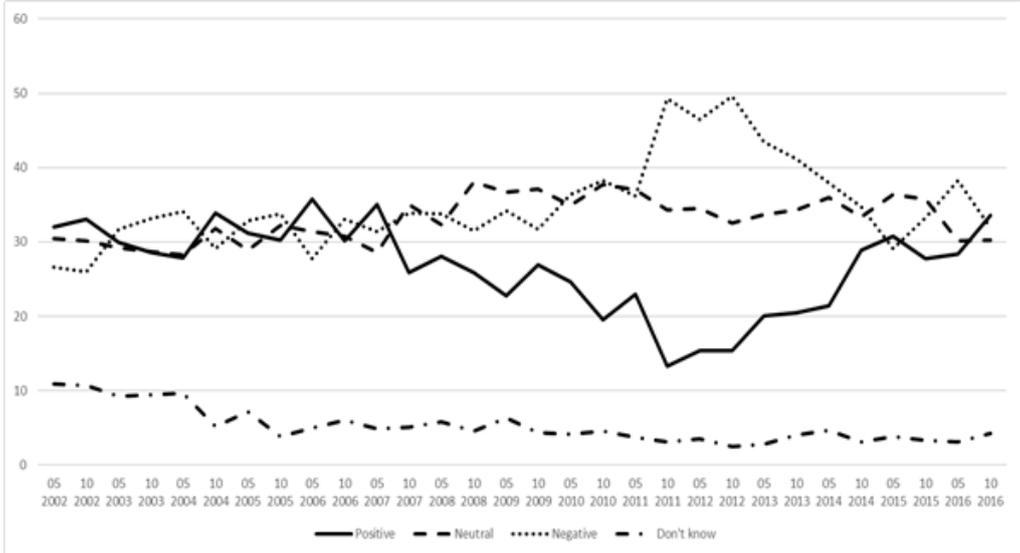


Source : Eurobarometer data.

While Britain is an outlier when it comes to the strength of Euroscepticism, Ireland is on contrary characterised by high level of support towards the EU. So how did the crisis impact these very different public opinions? First, regarding our two cases, comparisons between pre-crisis and crisis periods show that the crisis did impact public opinion in both countries. In Ireland, the percentage of citizens

perceiving the EU positively has declined from 68 percent in 2007 to 32 percent in 2011 whereas in the UK during the same period this percentage has fallen from 30 percent to 12 percent.

Figure 2 – EU image in British public opinion (2002-2016)



Source : Eurobarometer data.

Second, the picture of a simple decline in the positive image of the EU between the pre-crisis and crisis periods is however nuanced by survey evidence. From 2011 on, after a period that saw many landmark decisions and measures, including the first Greek and the Irish bailout, both Irish and British public opinions recorded a significant increase in the positive image of the EU. In both countries, the period between May 2011 and May 2014 coincides with the higher level of polarization in public opinion. Thus, if the crisis can be seen as a game changer in the politicization of Irish and British citizens’ in this specific period, this change does not correspond to a durable shift in domestic polarisation in any country. How can these evolution been understood? Have the national parties play a role in these patterns? And if so how?

To explore national parties’ role as actor of politicization further, an important set of information to take into account is the position of the eight national political parties vis-à-vis European integration. The point is to describe here the initial attitude of each actor in the pre-crisis period, before potential changes during the period of crisis.

Regarding the Irish case, on one hand, Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour all traditionally support European integration and form together a kind of “pro-european cartel” that dominate Irish political life (Laffan and O’Mahony 2008). Fianna Fail is not the most Europhile, its support for integration is mainly explained by a pragmatic vision (Benoit 2009; Hayward and Fallon 2009). Fine Gael is the most Europhile amongst Irish parties, it has a deeper and ideological support for integration (Reidy 2009). At last, Labour is today a pro-european party, but it has not been always the case. The party notably opposed membership in 1972. But, since Maastricht, Labour has supported all the treaty reforms (O’Mahony 2009). This evolution has already been interpreted as a strategic adaptation to catch more voters (Holmes 2009). On the other hand, Sinn Féin is the only one we can call Eurosceptic. But this is a “soft euroscepticism” (Frampton 2005; Maillot 2009), meaning a rejection of some aspects and/or of some particular policies without rejecting the whole process of integration. While “hard euroscepticism” is a principled opposition to the whole process of European integration (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2002)

Now turning to the UK, the Conservative party is the best example of a party with an important internal division over the question of European integration. The Eurosceptic members were a minority opposing the Maastricht Treaty in the nineties, but an evolution in the status has made of them a majority now,

because they best mirror the opinion of the militants (Alexandre-Collier 2015). Moreover, faced with the rise of UKIP, the party had to develop a soft Euroscepticism distinct from the hard opposition of the independentist (Lynch and Whitaker 2012). In the British political spectrum, Labour and Liberal Democrats are the two main pro-European parties (Schnapper 2015). Labour has seen its attitude evolve from a clear hostility in the first hours of integration towards a “constructive engagement”. This wasn’t a smooth evolution given there was an important internal division on the question (Daniels, 1998). Later, the “New Labour” of Tony Blair was pro-European and granted a lot of importance to the European dimension. But, faced with a more Eurosceptic public opinion, the party eventually tried to minimize the salience of European integration (Opperman 2008). Finally, UKIP is a populist, far right and anti-establishment party. Its opposition to European integration is total. This principled opposition, based on a sovereigntist rhetoric, is the “raison d’être” of the party (Tournier-Sol 2015). UKIP is the archetype of a Eurosceptic party.

Methods, data and operationalization

Our methodological choices follow one leading logic. We are interested in analysing the willingness of political parties to politicize European integration in their discourses. We do not want to know the actual salience or the actual position of parties, but the salience and the position they express in their discourse because what has a real impact on the process of politicization is not what they think but what they say.

Saliency

In order to evaluate the level of salience of European integration and of the eurozone crisis in the parties’ discourses, we will use a lexicometric approach. Some specific words, belonging respectively to the European and to the crisis vocabulary have been selected. They will constitute indicators of the relative presence or absence of discourse related to those subjects. The European integration lexical indicators are “EU”, “Europe” and “European”. The crisis indicators are “crisis”, “deficit”, “debt” and “bank”. The goal is not to make an exhaustive list of all words related to these issues, but to build strong and reliable indicators with a little number of key words. The term “Eurozone” is not taken into account neither in the first nor the second category, obviously because it can belong to both in the same time.

Once we have built the two indicators, we calculate, thanks to the Iramuteq software, their relative frequencies. The relative frequency of one word corresponds to its frequency of appearance per 1000 words in a specific corpus. The relative frequency of the two categories, European integration and crisis, corresponds to the sum of the belonging words frequencies. In the end, these scores will enable us to evaluate the degree of salience.

Of course, this approach cannot be used alone. We will also rely on a qualitative analysis and present some extracts in our discussion of the results. The logic behind our quantitative approach was that a party would talk more about subjects it wants to politicize and less about subjects it wants to depoliticize. However, there are some issues a serious electoral manifesto can never keep silent. The parties have to position themselves vis-à-vis the economic crisis inside the Eurozone and European integration. In other words, a party willing to diminish the salience of these subjects would still talk about them in its discourse. This is why we will also use a qualitative approach to analyse the discourses. We want to underline the rhetoric strategies aiming at reducing or increasing the salience of these issues.

After this, we will run an analysis in order to check if these vocabularies of crisis and European integration are linked in the discourse. The Reinert method (Reinert, 1983) classifies the lexical forms of a corpus into several categories. When two words are significantly associated with the same category, it means they belong to the same part of discourse. We want to know if the words “EU”, “Europe” and “European” are classified in the same category than the crisis related terms. We take into account only the national manifestos here, because the European dimension is present with all subjects in European manifestos.

Attitudes

Our methodological approach is based on hand coding. We have taken into account every occurrences of “EU”, “Europe” and “European”. Each occurrence belongs to a sentence which has to be classified in one category. When there are two or more occurrences in the same sentence, they are classified as one except if they refer to different ideas¹. There are three categories: “positive”, “negative” and “neutral”.

- The “positive” category contains all occurrences where the party says that the EU is a good thing and/or that the EU can be even better. It contains also references to specific EU policies when they are presented as a good thing and/or as improvable. Finally, it contains every statement of compliance with EU rules and/or implementation of EU policies.
- The “negative” category contains all occurrences where the party says that the EU is a bad thing and/or that it should be reformed because of that. It contains also references to specific EU policies when they are presented as a bad thing and/or when they should be reformed because of that.
- The “neutral” category contains all occurrences we can not interpret as positive or negative towards the European integration process. It includes many occurrences where “Europe” or “EU” is used only as a tool of comparison: “We have the greatest mountains in Europe” for example. It also includes the occurrences where “Europe” or “European” do not refer to European integration.

When the classification is done, we can calculate the share of positive statements vis-à-vis European integration for every coded manifesto. The neutral category is not taken into account here.

This method puts on equal foot some straightforward references about the European integration and some very peripheral subjects. For example, these two extracts are both coded as “positive”, with an equivalent weight, regardless the fact that the first one expresses a clear support for European integration as a whole while the second is only a commitment to meet some EU targets in a very specific domain:

“Labour believes that our membership of the European Union is central to our prosperity and security” (British Labour Party, 2015)

“Our National Air Quality Plan for consultation will include updated plans to more quickly meet existing EU air quality standards for concentrations of nitrogen dioxide.” (Liberal Democrats, 2015)

This approach can be seen as a weakness because it gives too much weight to some occurrences and too little to others. However, it has two main advantages. The first is related to this very research design, but the second is more general regarding the issue of coding references to Europe in parties’ manifestos.

First, the analysis of salience and the analysis of attitudes share exactly the same approach of the analysed material. They both rely on the occurrences of “EU”, “European” and “Europe”. That increases the validity of the comparison between salience and attitudes.

Second, rather than focusing only on the main references to European integration, this method enables to draw a more complete and complex analysis. We don’t want to interpret their actual position thanks to an analysis of the parties’ manifesto, otherwise focusing on main references would be the best option. We are interested in analysing their discourse as such. Our question is : “To what extent do they present European integration in a positive or in a negative way in their discourse ?”, rather than “What can their discourse teach us about their actual position regarding European integration ?”

Of course, this approach cannot be used alone. We will also rely on a qualitative analysis and present some extracts in our discussion of the results.

¹ This is the same approach as the “quasi-sentence” method used in the Comparative Manifesto Project. (Werner, Laceywell and Volkens 2015)

Results

Saliency of the crisis

First, we will measure the saliency of the crisis in the parties' discourses. We consider the economic crisis in the Eurozone as a potential strong element in the political opportunity structure of politicization. In order to test this hypothesis, we must therefore analyse the level of saliency of the crisis in the discourses. The greater the economic crisis becomes an important subject in the debate, the greater is the potential of politicization of European integration.

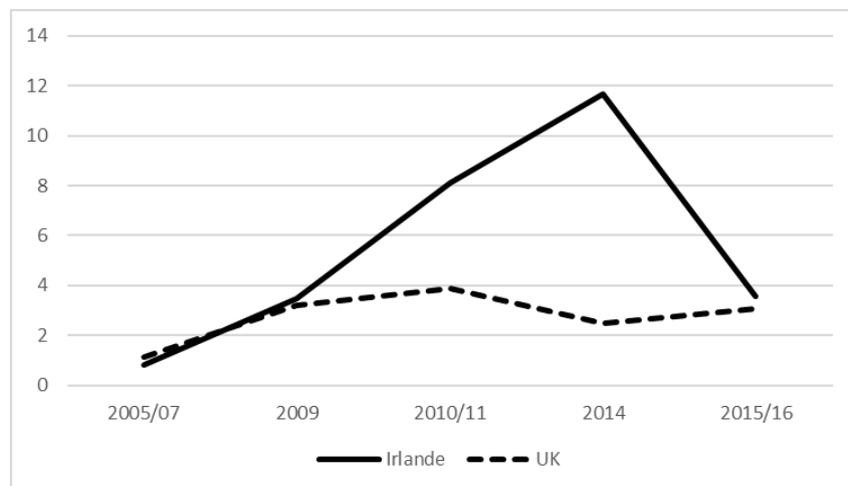
Figure 1 and shows the mean relative frequency of the crisis vocabulary in the national and European manifestos of Irish and British parties. The first clear observation we can get is their divergent evolutions. While Irish parties discuss a lot more about crisis related subjects in 2011 and 2014, this is absolutely not the case for British parties.

One can say this result is not surprising given that Ireland suffered much more than Britain during the economic crisis. However, we can draw some interesting facts concerning the behaviour of some individual parties. Table 1² shows the results for every party.

First, in Ireland, Sinn Féin is by far the party giving the biggest place to the crisis vocabulary in its discourse. The frequency of the specific indicator has grown up by 622% between 2009 and 2011, the hardest year of crisis in Ireland.

Second, in the United Kingdom, UKIP distinguishes itself with no reference at all to the crisis in its European manifestos (2009 and 2014). Moreover, in national elections, it remains the party giving the smallest place to that subject.

Figure 3: Mean relative frequency (/1000) of the crisis vocabulary in the British and Irish parties' manifestos (2005-2016)



In conclusion, on the one hand, there is a potential of politicization in Ireland due to the increased saliency of the crisis. Of course, we don't know yet if the economic crisis issue is related or not to the European dimension in the discourses. If they are, then the potential of politicization is strong. This is particularly the case for Sinn Féin, which is the party that has increased the saliency of the economic crisis the most. On the other hand, there is not such a potential for politicization in the United Kingdom, given that the parties did not really increase the economic crisis subject. Moreover, the very Eurosceptic UKIP seems not to take advantage of the crisis inside the Eurozone to criticize European integration.

² Annex

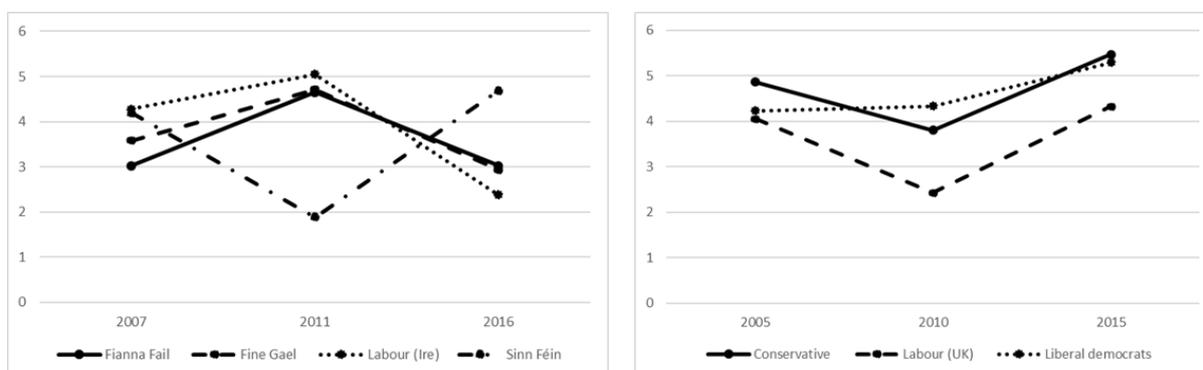
Salience of European integration

We will now use the same method as we have done to evaluate the salience of the crisis to measure the evolution of salience of European integration in the national manifestos. Indeed, only the corpus of national manifestos is taken into account here, because it makes no sense to evaluate the presence or absence of the European dimension in European manifestos.

Figures 2 and 3 and table 2³ show the cumulated relative frequencies of “EU”, “Europe” and “European” for each national elections’ manifestos. It enables us to analyse the degree of salience of the European dimension in the parties’ discourses.

The result for UKIP is not displayed in figure 3 because the Eurosceptic party is a total outlier regarding the salience of European integration in its discourse. Indeed, we observe that all other parties (Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, Labour and Sinn Féin in Ireland; Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrats in the United Kingdom) share a similar level of reference to European related subjects. They all talk about the Union and about specific European policies, but they do not dedicate a central attention to Europe.

Figures 4 and 5: Relative frequency (/1000) of the European dimension in Irish (left) and British (right) parties’ national manifestos (2005-2016)



However, as far as UKIP is concerned, the EU is absolutely central in its discourse. In 2005, the relative frequency of the European dimension in its manifestos is 27.1 occurrences per 1000 words. Since then, it has diminished but remains quite high compared to other parties with 18 in 2010 and 16.5 in 2015. In other words, UKIP talks more about the EU than Conservative, Labour and LibDem combined. Moreover, the decrease in frequency of European terms in the UKIP manifestos cannot be interpreted as a decrease in salience of European integration, but rather as an enrichment and a broadening of the scope of its discourse. This evolution illustrates the transformation of a “single issue party” towards a political party trying to embrace a greater amount of subjects.

In Ireland, Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour have increased the salience of European integration in 2011. However, there is only a rise of 32% between 2007 and 2011 in average in the frequency of occurrences related to integration, compared to the rise of 530% for the crisis related occurrences over the same period. So, there is only a very small increase in the salience of European integration compared to the salience of the crisis.

The case of Sinn Féin is particular. The party is the only Eurosceptic in Ireland and has given a very important place to the crisis in its discourse. We could clearly expect an increase in salience of European integration from this party. However, we observe Sinn Féin is the only Irish party to use less European words in its 2011 manifestos.

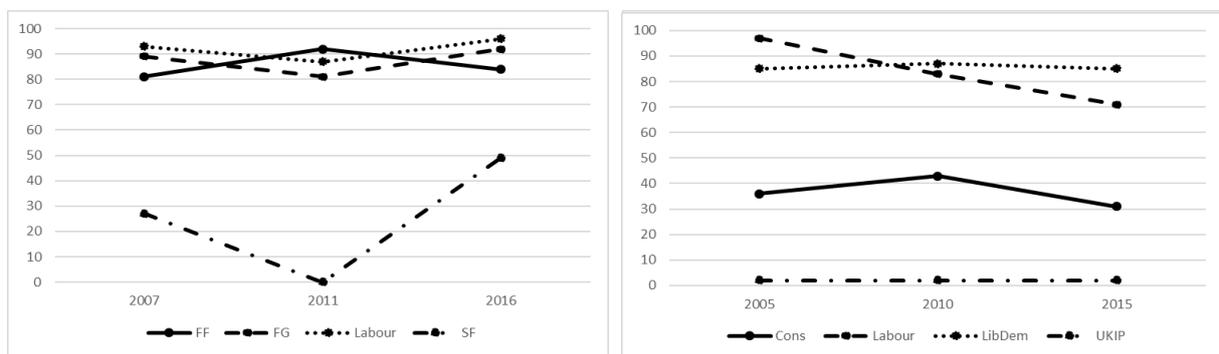
³ Annex

subjects : “business”, “investment”, “economy”, “growth”, “bank”, “industry”, “deficit”, “market”,... In conclusion, British parties don’t associate European integration with the economic crisis in their discourse. So, the weak salience of the crisis won’t have any impact on the salience of European integration.

Attitudes

After having measured the salience of European integration in the political parties’ manifestos, we want now evaluate their attitude. We want to know if their discourse is more pro-European or anti-European, and of course if it evolves through the time.

Figures 9 and 10: Share of positive statements of parties vis-à-vis European integration⁵



We observe a clear distinction between traditionally pro-European parties and Eurosceptic ones. On the one hand, Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour in Ireland plus Liberal Democrats and Labour in the United Kingdom have all (except the British Labour party in 2015) a share of positive statements of above 80%. It means that when they are talking about European integration in their discourse, they use a positive rhetoric in at least 8 out of 10 cases. On the other hand, Sinn Féin, the Conservative party and UKIP always have a share of positive statements below 50%. Moreover, the difference between the soft Eurosceptic Conservative party and the hard Eurosceptic UKIP is clear here: the first has always a share of positive statement between 30% and 40%, the second has never more than 5%.

First, we will briefly comment on the Irish case. The share of positive statements about European integration in the Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour’s discourse remains high between 2007 and 2016. But Fine Gael and Labour both knew a slight increase in the share of negative statement for the year 2011, while the Fianna Fail had an opposite evolution. The attitude of Sinn Féin seems to be a kind of rollercoaster. But we have to keep in mind that the salience of European integration in their 2011 manifestos is very low. Sinn Féin had zero positive statement in 2011 partly because there were very few statements concerning European integration in that manifesto.

Concerning the British case, it is interesting to see that all British parties followed divergent path. The Liberal Democrats and UKIP are the most stable, the first one is constantly very positive, and the second constantly very negative. Conservative and Labour both have a decreasing share of positive attitudes, the first one only in 2015, and the second during the whole period.

In conclusion, we observe a pro-European consensus between the three mainstream Irish parties. On the other hand, there is clear polarisation of opinions in the United Kingdom.

⁵ Table 3 with these results in annex

Discussion

No politicization in Ireland despite the Eurozone crisis

Ireland is a member of the European Union and a member of the Eurozone. There is de facto an important transfer of competence in many domains, including monetary sovereignty. According to the hypothesis of De Wilde and Zürn, the greater the transfer of authority, the greater the potential of politicization. Moreover, the Eurozone in general and Ireland in particular have suffered a severe economic crisis and we have seen that the subject of the crisis is linked to the European dimension in the Irish parties' manifestos. Finally, there is an important shift towards a more negative attitude in the Irish public opinion during the period of the Eurozone crisis. In this context, the potential for politicization of European integration was important.

In the light of the previous results and some manifestos' extracts, we will now discuss whether there was or no a politicization of European integration in the Irish parties discourses in the context of the Eurozone crisis.

First, it is obvious that there is a pro-European consensus amongst the three mainstream Irish parties: Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour. They remain constantly with more than 80% in their share of positive references to European integration in their manifestos of 2007, 2011 and 2016. Sinn Féin is the only party with a Eurosceptic discourse. In other words, there is a weak polarization of attitudes regarding European integration expressed in the manifestos.

However, there is a divergence in the evolution of Fianna Fail on the one hand and Fine Gael and Labour. We can see that the important turning point is the election of 2011. In the difficult context of economic crisis, that was the first real electoral loss for Fianna Fail for 75 years. This result has been largely commented on, it was an "earthquake" for the Irish political system (Gallagher 2011). It seems quite clear that it was mainly a protest vote against the government party during the crisis (Marsh and Cunningham 2011). Fine Gael and Labour have profited from that protest vote and they formed the next coalition after 2011.

One issue is central in that electoral campaign: the EU/IMF programme. The details of the programme and the general European management of the crisis are debated. The very high salience of this question explains the increased salience of European integration for Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour. It explains also why the words related to the crisis and those related to Europe are in the same class after the Reinert method.

The different evolution of attitude of, on the one hand, Fianna Fail and, on the other hand, Fine Gael and Labour can be explained with an analysis of their discourse about this specific question. Because their general position of pro-European parties didn't change at all. For Fianna Fail, the increased share of positive statements is due to the party defending the EU/IMF programme:

"It is obvious that the terms of the EU/IMF Programme - from the interest rate on the loans to the issue of defaulting of senior bonds – cannot be renegotiated unilaterally." (Fianna Fail 2011)

"In government, Fianna Fáil will meet this country's obligations under the EU/IMF Programme." (Fianna Fail 2011)

While Fine Gael and Labour were both criticizing this European deal:

"The current IMF-EU bail-out plan signed has not – and will not – restore confidence in Ireland, because at its heart is a commitment to continue the failed banking policies of the present Government." (Fine Gael 2011)

"Labour does not accept that the EU/IMF deal provides a workable basis for restoring the Irish economy. Labour in government will engage with the EU and the IMF to renegotiate the deal, so as to achieve fair and realistic terms for Ireland and for the Irish people." (Labour 2011)

Finally, the zero score of Sinn Féin in 2011 can also be explained. We have seen the salience of European integration was very low in their 2011 manifesto. Indeed, there are only a few sentences giving an opinion about European related matters. Amongst those, the majority is a criticism of the EU/IMF programme:

“Our sovereignty has been handed over to the IMF and EU and the banking debt has become the personal debt of every man, woman and child in the State. This is wrong.” (Sinn Féin 2011)

In conclusion, there is a polarization in the opinion of parties regarding the national and European management of the crisis. This subject divides the members of the pro-European consensus. Can this lead to a greater polarization of opinions about European integration in general? We argue that this has not happened because of two main factors.

First, Sinn Féin, the only Eurosceptic party and the only one to criticize both the European integration in general and the European management of the Eurozone crisis, has focused its discourse on the national dimension on the debate and excluded the European dimension. While the leftist and nationalist party has given a lot of importance to the crisis in its discourse, we have seen it has very little mentioned the European Union in its 2011 manifesto. It seems like the party has chosen to focus its discourse on the national debate only. The Irish government and the whole mainstream parties are blamed as responsible for the situation of the country. Sinn Féin wants to be seen as an alternative to other parties:

« Sinn Féin was the only party not to sign up to the Fianna Fáil/Green Party/Fine Gael/Labour ‘Consensus for Cuts’ and instead put forward a real alternative for economic recovery. » (Sinn Féin 2011)

This willingness to focus its discourse on the national level undermines a possible politicization of European integration.

Second, Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour have all refused the debate when they were in government. Indeed, during the electoral campaign in 2011, the Fianna Fail has to defend its record and knows it has to limit the degree of politicization of the debate about the crisis, and about the European dimension of the crisis. The 2011 Fianna Fail manifesto contains indeed some clear evidence of depoliticization thanks to the rhetoric “there is no alternative” :

« We have put all political considerations aside to stand behind our banking system through State guarantees, NAMA and the recapitalization of individual institutions. » (Fianna Fail 2011)

« It is obvious that the terms of the EU/IMF Programme (...) cannot be renegotiated unilaterally. » (Fianna Fail 2011)

Fianna Fail tries to present its decisions as apolitical and underlines that the European level agreement is not (re)negotiable.

Since 2011, Fine Gael and Labour have been in government. Therefore, we can find some attempts of depoliticization in their discourses too :

« We are at a crucial point in the economic recovery, and to keep going requires continued vigilance in the management of the economy and the public finances – we have seen how populist parties in other countries have undone all the good work, destroying confidence and stability. » (Fine Gael 2016)

« There are parties who have been reckless with the country’s finances in the past and parties who would be reckless with them if in government. Those parties would return us to crisis. Labour will not allow that happen. We need a strong economy to invest adequately in a decent society. That means ensuring the public finances continue to be responsibly managed, and using our available resources wisely to invest in our people and communities. » (Labour 2016)

These two extracts share the same narrative: they both present the government policy as the only one possible and criticize harshly “populist parties” and “reckless parties” because they would ruin all the efforts and the economic recovery with costly policies. For Fine Gael and Labour, there is no alternative.

We have seen that, once in government, the three parties have used that rhetoric in order to present their own decisions without alternative or negotiation possible. They refuse the debate on this question. This strategy aims at diminishing the salience, the importance of these subjects in the public debate, it's a strategy of depoliticization.

However, it is important to note that this rhetoric mainly concerns the crisis management issue. The European level is also concerned, like in the Fianna Fail discourse, but not central. Nonetheless, when parties diminish the salience of the economic crisis, they also diminish the potential for politicization of European integration, because the sovereign debt crisis is a very important factor in the political opportunity structure.

Some politicization in the United Kingdom, but no link with the Eurozone crisis

The United Kingdom is a member of the European Union but not a member of the Eurozone. There is de facto an important transfer of competence in many domains, but not including monetary sovereignty. According to the hypothesis of De Wilde and Zürn, the greater the transfer of authority, the greater the potential of politicization. However, the Eurozone crisis hasn't hurt the country and we have seen that the subject of the crisis is not linked to the European dimension in the British parties' manifestos. Finally, there is an important shift towards a more negative attitude in the British public opinion during the period of the Eurozone crisis. In this context, the potential for politicization of European integration was more ambiguous than for Ireland.

In the light of the previous results and some manifestos' extracts, we will now discuss whether there was or no a politicization of European integration in the British parties discourses in the context of the Eurozone crisis.

First, there is an important polarization of attitudes expressed regarding European integration in the British parties' manifestos. The Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party share a pro-European discourse, while the Conservative Party has a soft-Eurosceptic discourse and UKIP a completely one hundred Eurosceptic discourse. Such an important level of polarization is de facto a strong indicator of politicization of European integration. But the question of the impact of the Eurozone crisis on these attitudes remains.

We have seen that the crisis in the Eurozone was not particularly salient in British discourses. Still, there is an important question addressed in those manifestos: should the United Kingdom join the euro? The evolution of parties' answers to that question are some good indicators of the polarization of attitudes related to the context of Eurozone crisis.

The Conservative party remains consistent in its initial position, they won't join the euro:

"We will not join the euro" (Conservative 2005)

"A Conservative government would never take the UK into the euro." (Conservative 2010)

"we will (...) commit to keeping the pound and staying out of the Eurozone" (Conservative 2015)

The Labour party's initial position was that the United Kingdom should join the euro only if the economic conditions were satisfied:

"On the euro, we maintain our common-sense policy. The determining factor underpinning any government decision is the national economic interest and whether the case for joining is clear and unambiguous. The five economic tests must be met before any decision to join can be made. If the Government were to recommend joining, it would be put to a vote in Parliament and a referendum of the British people." (Labour 2005)

Five years later, only the commitment to a potential referendum on the question remains, but joining the euro is still part of the possibilities:

“On the Euro, we hold to our promise that there will be no membership of the single currency without the consent of the British people in a referendum.” (Labour 2010)

Finally, in 2015, we witness a clear change of attitude. The Labour party no longer considers joining the euro as a possibility. This more negative attitude is in line with the growing share of negative statements in the labour’s discourse.

“We will not join the Euro, and we will ensure EU rules protect the interests of non-Euro members.” (Labour 2015)

We can observe the same kind of evolution in the discourse of Liberal Democrats. Their initial position is even more positive than Labour, because the United Kingdom should not only join the euro if the economic conditions are satisfied, but should work to create these right conditions:

“Liberal Democrats believe that Britain should work to create the right economic conditions to join the euro (subject to a referendum) in order to safeguard investment in the UK and reduce the cost and risk of trade with the rest of Europe.” (Liberal Democrats 2005)

In 2010, their attitude is similar to the Labour’s, there is no longer any willingness to create the right economic conditions:

“We believe that it is in Britain’s long-term interest to be part of the euro. But Britain should only join when the economic conditions are right, and in the present economic situation, they are not. Britain should join the euro only if that decision were supported by the people of Britain in a referendum” (Liberal Democrats 2010)

In their 2014 European manifesto, there is a clear change of attitude. Joining the euro was “in Britain’s long-term interest” but this is no longer the case. So, despite a constant high share of positive statements, the party is adopting a more negative attitude about the euro.

“Liberal Democrats believe it will not be in the British national interest to join the Euro in the foreseeable future.” (Liberal Democrats 2014)

Finally, in the case of UKIP, the question is not discussed at all. In their logic, it makes sense: why would they argue about joining or not a currency belonging to a Union they absolutely want to leave?

In conclusion, the initial polarization of attitudes regarding the euro was in line with the polarization of attitudes regarding the whole process of European integration: a positive attitude for Labour and Liberal Democrats and negative for Conservative. However, in the times of crisis inside the Eurozone, this polarization has left room to a general consensus amongst all British political parties: they all agree to not join the euro. In other words, on the specific question of the European currency, the context of crisis has led to less politicization.

The case of UKIP is particular. In the discourse of the Eurosceptic party, the salience of European integration is maximal. Opposing the European Union and pushing for a Brexit is the true *raison d’être* of the party. In its manifestos, every single issue, every single policy tackled is an opportunity to criticize the EU and the loss of sovereignty. Roger Knapman, then leader of UKIP, sums up perfectly this attitude in the introduction of the 2005 manifesto :

« People sometimes tell me that UKIP is a single-issue party. The point is that the single issue of freeing Britain from the EU over-rides all others – no other issues can be properly addressed while we remain in the EU. For instance, we are no longer free to choose our own policy on asylum seekers because this is now subject to EU directives. » (UKIP 2005)

This maximum salience goes hand in hand with a strong willingness to provoke an open debate on the question of EU membership, symbolized by the request for a referendum:

“We need a new referendum on EU membership.” (UKIP 2010)

“It’s time to decide. We don’t need to wait until 2017 to have a referendum: let’s have one right now. Use the European Elections on 22 May to tell them what you think about the EU.” (UKIP 2014)

“UKIP believes British citizens should have an in/out referendum on our membership of the EU as soon as possible.” (UKIP 2015)

However, the party gives only a little place to the subject of the crisis in its discourse. We have seen they never talk about the crisis in their European manifestos, and very few in the national manifestos. This is highly unexpected. They had the opportunity to use the Eurozone crisis in order to criticize the European Union and its single currency. They had also the opportunity to criticize the side-lining of the United Kingdom in the European management of the crisis. But they didn’t.

Moreover, UKIP never talks about the euro. We assume they are opposed to an adhesion to the single European currency. This silence is highly instructive. UKIP is Eurosceptic because they want to bring back all powers from Brussels to the United Kingdom. Their position is primarily sovereigntist (Tournier-Sol 2015). In this case, the “*transfer of authority hypothesis*” of De Wilde and Zürn is perfectly verified. The United Kingdom is not a member of the Eurozone, there is therefore no transfer of competence in the monetary area. In this context, there is no reason for UKIP to politicize this subject.

In conclusion, the context of Eurozone crisis has not led to politicization of European integration in the United Kingdom. However, the rise of UKIP in the British political competition has a major consequence: European integration is becoming a very important subject in the political debate. This increases the pressure for other parties to adapt their discourse to this phenomenon. They can decide, on the one hand, to fight UKIP on its own ground by putting the question of European integration at the centre of the debate. On the other hand, they can decide to avoid and refuse the debate on that specific question.

The Conservative party of David Cameron has chosen the first option. They have decided to open the debate about the country’s membership of the European Union. Their promise of an in-out referendum is a clear increase of salience of European integration, because they accept a debate on the question of membership. In doing so, they hoped maybe to beat UKIP on its own ground. The Eurosceptic party is a growing threat for the Conservative, because it is able to seduce a large part of their electoral basis (Lynch and Whitaker, 2012). This engagement can be found in their 2014 and 2015 manifestos:

« The Conservatives are the only party with a track record of delivering change in Europe – and the only party that can and will hold an in-out referendum on Britain’s membership of the EU. » (Conservative 2014)

« The EU needs to change. And it is time for the British people – not politicians – to have their say. Only the Conservative Party will deliver real change and real choice on Europe, with an in-out referendum by the end of 2017. » (Conservative 2015)

The Liberal Democrats also promises a referendum on the EU membership of the United Kingdom. They don’t avoid the debate over that question and this leads also to an increase in salience. This engagement can be found in their 2014 and 2015 manifestos:

« Liberal Democrats want this referendum to be an in or out referendum, giving every British citizen a say on British membership of the European Union. » (Liberal Democrats 2014)

« Hold an In/Out referendum when there is next any Treaty change involving a material transfer of sovereignty from the UK to the EU. Liberal Democrats will campaign for the UK to remain in the European Union when that referendum comes. » (Liberal Democrats 2015)

Finally, the Labour party only proposes a referendum on the transfer of new competences towards the EU. The party do not want to open the debate on the specific question of membership, but rather on the question of potential further integration. This remains an increase in salience of European integration, but a limited one compared to the other parties.

« Labour will legislate for a lock that guarantees that there can be no transfer of powers from Britain to the European Union without the consent of the British public through an in/out referendum. » (Labour 2015)

Conclusion

In this conclusion, we will discuss whether the initial hypotheses are verified or not after our analyses.

The first hypothesis was the “*transfer of authority hypothesis*”. This hypothesis 1 is verified in the case of UKIP. Indeed, the United Kingdom is not a member of the Eurozone, there is therefore no transfer of competence in the monetary area. In this context, there is no reason for UKIP to politicize this subject. Because, the Eurosceptic position of UKIP is primarily a sovereigntist position, they want to bring back powers from Brussels. The domains where there has not been any transfer of authority are not important in the discourse of the party. So they never talk about the euro and about the Eurozone, moreover they have nearly never talked about the Eurozone crisis. This very low salience leads to zero politicization of European integration linked to the subject of economic crisis.

The second was the role of the economic and financial crisis in the Eurozone as an element of the “*political opportunity structure hypothesis*”. First, we have seen this hypothesis is not pertinent in the case of the United Kingdom. Because the subject of crisis has not gained salience in the parties’ discourses and is not linked to the European dimension. Then, concerning Ireland, there could have been a politicization of European integration linked to the subject of crisis. Because we have seen an extremely important increase of the salience of the crisis in the Irish manifestos, and this subject is linked to the European dimension in these discourses. However, this was not the case. We have argued that two main factors can explain this. First, Sinn Féin was focused on the national scene. Second, Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour have all used the “*there is no alternative*” to refuse the debate about the European management of the crisis when they were in government.

Finally, the third one was the “*competition hypothesis*”. It is strongly verified in the case of United Kingdom. The presence of an openly Eurosceptic party –UKIP- in the domestic arena structures heavily party competition around EU issues and thus politicizes these issues. The rise of UKIP in the British political competition has a major consequence: European integration is becoming a very important subject in the political debate. This increases the pressure for other parties to adapt their discourse to this phenomenon. The adaptation of these other parties (Conservative and Liberal Democrat) is clear, they have promised a referendum on the question of membership of the European Union. We now know where this has led ...

Annex

Table 1: Relative frequency (/1000) of the crisis vocabulary in the Irish (left) and British (right) parties' manifestos (2005-2016)

	2007	2009	2011	2014	2016		2005	2009	2010	2014	2015
Fianna Fail	0.77	2.94	5.7	13.73	3.26	Conservative	1.21	0.86	5.2	1.37	4.6
Fine Gael	1.45	2.52	8.72	9.09	2.8	Labour	1.35	5.05	6	7.24	4.8
Labour	1.06	9.16	6.26	11.94	3.98	Liberal Dem.	1.66	10.14	5.26	3.77	3.7
Sinn Féin	0.91	2.75	19.86	23.7	7.77	UKIP	1.38	0	3	0	2.24

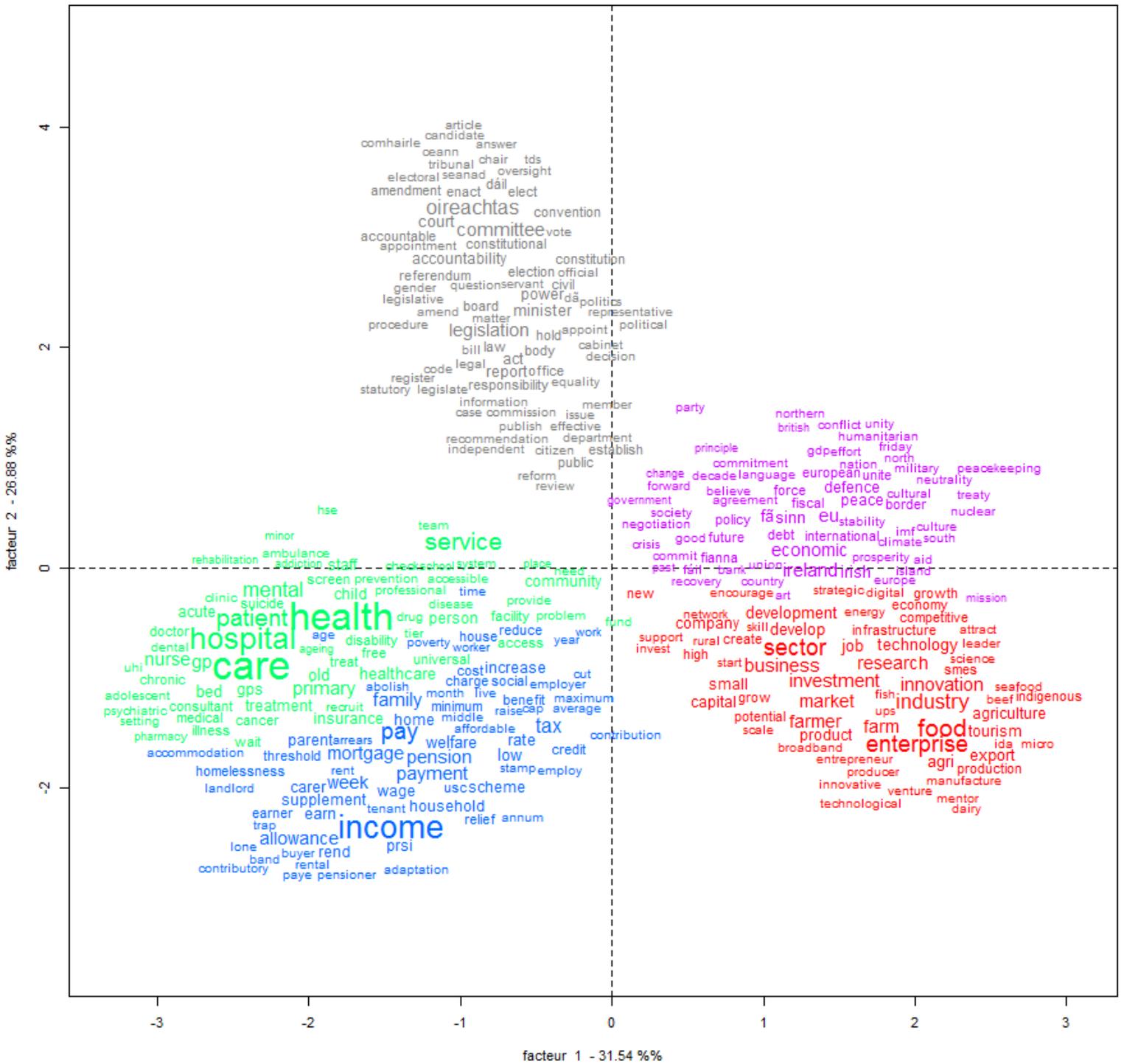
Table 2: Relative frequency (/1000) of the European dimension in Irish (left) and British (right) parties' national manifestos (2005-2016)

	2007	2011	2016		2005	2010	2015
Fianna Fail	3.02	4.65	3.02	Conservative	4.86	3.8	5.47
Fine Gael	3.58	4.71	2.94	Labour	4.05	2.43	4.32
Labour	4.28	5.05	2.38	Liberal Dem.	4.23	4.33	5.29
Sinn Féin	4.19	1.88	4.69	UKIP	27.09	18.03	16.51

Table 3: Share of positive statements of parties vis-à-vis European integration

	2007	2011	2016		2005	2010	2015
Fianna Fail	81	92	84	Conservative	36	43	31
Fine Gael	89	81	92	Labour	97	83	71
Labour	93	87	96	Liberal Dem.	85	87	85
Sinn Féin	27	0	49	UKIP	0	2	2

Figure 4: The classes in the Irish manifestos



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