
Nadia Khalil Tolosa
nadiakhaliltolosa@gmail.com

Pau Palop Garcia
Paupalop@gmail.com

Abstract. This paper analyses the proposals related to economic matters presented by the Spanish political parties with representation at the Spanish and European Parliament in their manifestos for the last national and EP elections in 2008/2011 and 2009/2014, respectively. The main work hypothesis assumes that the pledges in the manifestos of the parties without chances of gaining a majority of votes are more specific than those with possibilities of winning the elections. Using the content analysis as main methodology, the proposal of these parties to fight the crisis (essentially the proposals related to economic matters and employment), assessing their specificity and depth. Results confirm partially our starting hypothesis, showing that the largest parties present broader proposals than those with less chances of obtaining a majority of votes.

Keywords: content analysis, party manifestos, political parties, electoral campaigns

1 Introduction

Citizens’ trust in political parties has decreased in the last years. According to the polls conducted by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS)\(^\text{1}\) citizenry’s appraisal of the general political situation in Spain is quite negative. Just before the 2008 national elections, 40.2 percent of the interviewees defined it as ‘fair’, and 25 percent considered it to be ‘bad’. Spanish political parties and politicians were considered as the seventh biggest problem, after unemployment, economical problems, terrorism, housing, immigration, and security. Meanwhile, in the last poll before the

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\(^{1}\) The CIS is an independent entity assigned to the Ministry of the Presidency and one of its main functions is carrying out public opinion surveys (electoral studies, monthly public opinion barometers and monographic studies). The surveys made by the media (newspapers, radio and television stations) showed similar results.
2011 elections, most of the interviewees’ appraisal of the political situation was ‘bad’ (37.3 percent) and ‘very bad’ (30 percent). And politicians and their political parties were seen as the third biggest problem (7.6 percent), just after unemployment (65.3 percent) and economic problems (16.6 percent). Similar data can be found before the two last EU Parliament elections, adding a low interest in EU politics (36.5 percent stated they have little interest in news related to the EU and 45.3 percent stated that they have little interest in news related the EU Parliament elections, although 48.7 percent of the interviewees know that EU Parliament decisions affect their lives in a considerable way.

One of the possible reasons to explain this phenomenon is that political parties do not always accomplish the proposals that they present during electoral campaigns. But do they really present specific proposals to be accomplished? Or are these proposals intentionally broad and general in order to avoid a real commitment with voters?

The aim of this paper is to present a systematic analysis of the electoral manifestos promulgated by four Spanish political parties prior to last national elections in 2008 and 2011, and the UE elections in 2009 and 2014. Using content analysis, we hand-coded the manifestos in order to classify the economic-related proposals depending on its specificity by means of a specificity indicator. We analyse the economic proposals presented in the manifestos of the four national-wide political parties that have obtained seats in the two last national elections and the two last EU elections, namely, People’s Party (PP), Socialist Party (PSOE by its initials in Spanish), the People’s Party (PP), United Left (IU by its initials in Spanish) and Union, Progress and Democracy (UPyD by its initials in Spanish).

The next section provides an overview of some theoretical approaches on the study of party competition and manifestos, and also the hypotheses to be tested are presented. In the third section, we present the Spanish electoral and economic context and results in the last general elections in 2008 and 2011, and in the EU elections in 2009 and 2014. Next, in the fifth section, we explain the methods used to analyse the manifestos. In the sixth section, we present the obtained results and, finally, the last section includes a brief discussion on the results and some final remarks.

2 Theoretical Approach

There is a large number of studies that have attempted to explain party competition and the strategies used by the political parties to attract voters. One way of analysing these phenomena is the study of the political texts that parties generate. Most of these studies have focused on national parliamentary elections and to a lesser extent regional (Alonso et al, 2012; Alonso et al, 2013; Pogorelis et al, 2005) and local elections (Ashworth, 2000). However, they attempt to explain changes in party identity through the time (Janda et al., 1995), changes in issue profiles (Harmel et al, 1995), issue emphasis (Pogorelis et al, 2005), issue competition (Green-Pedersen, 2007), among oth-
ers. For instance, Ashworth tried to determine whether pledges in Welsh local party manifestos had the specificity required for being used as a mechanism of accountability (Ashworth, 2000). In the present paper, our aim is to find and analyse the differences between the manifestos of parties with chances of winning a parliamentary majority and those without such chances at both national and European Union levels, as we expect to find differences in the specificity of their policy stands.

**Spatial voting theory**

There are two main theoretical approaches to study electoral competition among parties: spatial voting theory and saliency theory. Literature on spatial theory of voting assumes that parties ‘formulate policies in order to win elections’ (Downs, 1957:28) and they compete by taking different positions along a set of issues. Thus, voters with a particular position on an issue will be more likely to vote for the party whose position on a given issue is closer to theirs. Anthony Downs' spatial voting theory considers that politicians know voters’ preferences, and electors are informed about party policies; polls give information about preferences to the parties and media and party manifestos give information about party policies to the electorate (Downs, 1957: 114-41 ff). Citizens vote according to the Downsian proximity model in a single-dimensional ideological space. Ideological preferences are determined by the distances between the voter’s ideological position and the positions the voter attributes to the parties that compete in the elections (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2008: 46). This approach arose several criticisms (see Alonso et al, 2012: 47, Stokes, 1963: 371, Pogerelis et al, 2005, Sánchez-Cuenca, 2008, among others). For instance, Stokes observed that in Downs’ model “it is quite possible that the voters see political conflict in terms that differ widely from those in which the parties see it” (Stokes, 1963: 373). Moreover, as Sánchez-Cuenca states, according to Downs, the ideological preferences are determined by the distances between the voter’s ideological position and the positions the voter attributes to the parties that compete (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2008: 46). However, the spatial voting theory remains incomplete since it ignores two basic problems: “whether policies are consistent with the ideological stance of the party” and “the capacity of the party to produce the desired outcomes with the right policies” (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2008: 47).

As Pogerelis et al. (2005: 994) indicate there are alternative approaches to party competition study to solve these limitations, such as the salience theory proposed by Robertson (1976) and restated by Budge (1982) and Budge and Farlie (1983a, 1983b).

**The saliency theory of party competition**

In fact, the saliency theory is one of the most influential accounts to explain the mechanics in party competition, and it provides the theoretical framework for the Comparative Manifesto Project, which has generated one of the most used and well-

Saliency theory’s core assumption claims that parties compete by selective issue emphasis, and not only by direct confrontation (Budge, 1982; Budge and Farlie 1983a, 1983b). In other words, this theory suggests that, contrary to Downs (1957), parties do not really alter their issue positions when they are competing for elections, rather they are selectively emphasizing or de-emphasizing issues of their policy inventory (Klingemann, Hofferbert, and Budge, 1994). The extent to which these issues are emphasized in a party manifesto indicates their 'salience' in the platform and thus to the electorate (Harmel et al, 1995: 4). Therefore, saliency theory is also based on a specific understanding of voting behaviour and strongly relies on the concept of 'issue ownership' (Petrocik, 1996)

Following this approach, parties try to emphasise their own areas of concern more prominently, so the focus is located on the extent to which parties emphasise different issues in their campaigns. For our study, this approach is relevant insofar as parties make an issue salient (or not) in order to attract voters concerned with this issue. However, “if a party does not expect a considerable benefit from the issue, it will say very little on it, expressing a moderate or ambiguous position” (Pogorelis et al., 2005: 994). The extent to which these issues are emphasised in a party manifesto indicates their 'salience' in the document and thus to the voters (Harmel et al., 1995: 4).

In this vein, saliency theory assumes that parties “rarely took specific policy stands at all or mentioned any other party or its positions. (...) (They) assume that there is only one tenable position on each issue and devote their energy to emphasizing the policy areas on which their credibility on that position is strong enough to pick up votes” (Budge 2001: 219). So, rather, parties operate in more abstract terms (Dolezal et al, 2014: 61). We assume that this statement only applies for the parties with real options to govern, as they avoid commitments in their manifestos and tend to present general and abstract proposals.

In sum, scholarly literature assumes that mentioning an issue makes it salient. The ‘saliency score’ is the rate of mentions that a particular policy receives in a given party manifesto; thus, “a high saliency score indicates that the issue is relevant for the party” (Alonso et al, 2013: 194). But what if all these mentions are vague and ab-

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2 In fact, testing the saliency theory of the electoral competition between parties was the starting theoretical point assumed by the Comparative Manifesto Project, although it was later extended to other research questions and theories (Alonso et al, 2012: 47).

3 As Petrocik states, the issue ownership of voting “emphasizes the role of campaigns in setting the criteria for voters to choose between candidates. It expects candidates to emphasize issues on which they are advantaged and their opponents are less well regarded” (Petrocik, 1996: 825).
Hypothoses: Party models and specificity of their proposals

Again with Downs (1957: 126), in multiparty systems like Spain, parties will strive to distinguish themselves ideologically from each other and keep the purity of their positions, whereas in two-party systems, each party will try to resemble its opponent as closely as possible. In the Spanish case, we hypothesize that the two biggest parties do not dare to make concrete and specific proposals in their manifestos, acting as a result like they are in a de facto two-party system instead of a multiparty system; whereas the other minor parties will formulate precise proposals to distinguish themselves from the other parties as much as possible.

Ambiguity increases the number of voters to whom a party may appeal. This fact encourages parties in a two-party system to be as equivocal as possible about their stands on each controversial issue. And since both parties find it rational to be ambiguous, neither is forced by the other's clarity to take a more precise stand (Downs, 1957: 136). Following these statements, we consider that the two main parties act like in a two-party system as their claims presented in their programmes are ambiguous and general. For us, ambiguous proposals are those that do not mean a real commitment and are vague about how the changes they claim could be achieved. Unfortunately, Downs did not expand this observation applied to the party manifestos, and this is a main goal for the present paper.

When talking about the impact of EU contraints, Nanou and Dorussen argue that: “(M)ainstream parties are more concerned about the credibility of their policy programmes. They are more likely to enter into government and the electorate will hold them accountable for offering unfeasible policy alternatives or for failing to deliver in office” (Nanou and Dorussen, 2013:77). Whereas, non-mainstream parties are “smaller and do not expect to win office by themselves. If they participate in a coalition government, they are usually minor players and held less accountable for policy implementation than their major coalition partners”. Also, they often avoid compromising their ideological principles.

There is a more sophisticated classification for parties attending to their competitive party behavior. According to Strom (1990: 566-567), rational theorists have developed three models of parties: vote, office and policy-seeking parties. Vote-seeking parties seek to maximize their electoral support for controlling the government, but depending on the context, parties can look for maximizing pluralities or the chances of winning a majority of seats; whereas office-seeking parties seek to maximize their control over political office and policy-seeking parties seek to maximize their effect on policies. Vote-seeking concept derives from Downs’ work, and office and policy-
seeking party concepts derive from coalition studies. Despite the fact that there is a large debate and critiques to accurate the scope of these models, these broad concepts fit perfectly in our research work. Vote-seeking parties are equivalent here to non-mainstream parties, and office-seeking parties are equivalent to mainstream parties, in Nanou and Dorussen’s terms. The parties we are studying are vote-seeking or office-seeking when competing at the national and European Union levels, none of them is policy-seeking. As Share (1999: 89 ff) analyses, PSOE shifted from being a vote-seeker in the first democratic elections after the dictatorship period to an office-seeker, as since then they had always won the elections or been the main opposition party. Similarly, in this study we consider PP as an office-seeker party, and IU and UPyD as vote-seeking parties, since they aspire to obtain seats in the Parliaments but not to obtain a majority of votes to govern. We claim that this can determine the specificity of the proposals that parties include in their platforms.

Based on the distinction between office-seeking and vote-seeking parties, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1: In national elections, office-seeking parties will present less specific proposals than vote-seeking parties.

European elections differ from the national, as the seats obtained by each national party will be included in different large European Parliamentary groups with MPs from all the EU member states. Again, the Socialists and Democrats group, where the PSOE is included, and the People's Party (Christian-Democratic group), where the PP is included, are the largest ones, but decisions are not taken on a national basis. Therefore:

Hypothesis 2: In European Elections, all parties behave as vote-seekers, thus, their present more specific proposals than in national elections.

3 The Spanish Case

In this paper, we will test a series of hypotheses related to the way Spanish political parties expose their economic proposals in their party programmes in the last national elections in 2008 and 2011, and in the UE elections in 2009 and 2014.

As we mentioned before, the CIS polls showed that economic problems and unemployment were considered as the two most important problems by the citizens just before elections took place. The global financial crisis which started in 2008 became systemic, “affecting productive activity, the labour market, public revenues and household economies” (Laparra and Perez Eransus, 2012), and Spain has been especially sensitive to these effects, which are lasting longer, achieving record unemploy-
ment rates in 2013¹. Taking this into account, we consider that parties would pay more attention to the proposals oriented to improve the economic situation and job creation, as those would be the most attractive for voters.

We analyse the specificity in the economic proposals presented in the manifestos of the four national-wide political parties that have obtained seats in the two last national elections and the two last EU elections, namely, People’s Party (PP), Socialist Party (PSOE by its initials in Spanish), the People’s Party (PP), United Left (IU by its initials in Spanish) and Union, Progress and Democracy (UPyD by its initials in Spanish). In national elections, we consider that PP and PSOE as office-seeking parties, as one of them has always won the elections since 1982, and IU and UPyD as vote-seeking parties, as they had never been part of the national government. However, we consider that in the European Elections the four parties act as vote-seekers since winning the European elections in the Spanish district does not mean direct access to office at the European level.

Traditionally, Spanish parties are more concerned on the national elections results than in the European Parliament elections. Their manifestos for the EU elections are shorter in length comparing to the national elections manifestos. Moreover, citizens feel EU elections as not so important. Polls and reports show that almost half (43 percent) of the surveyed population state that EU elections are not important and 72 percent declare to be little or nothing informed about EU politics (Barómetro BRIE, 2014). During the UE elections campaigns, mass media constantly insist in the importance and consequences of these elections at European level. As it can be observed in Table 1, the general turnout is always lower comparing to the national elections turnout, although slightly higher than the average in the whole EU member states. Despite low turnouts at election time, polls show that people is aware of the EU politics importance. Taking these aspects into account, we expect to see differences in the manifestos parties presented for the EU and national elections, but again we expect to find less specified proposals in the manifestos of office-seeking parties (PP and PSOE) than in the manifestos of vote-seeking parties (IU and UPyD).

### Table 1. Turnout in the last national and EU elections (in %)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>2009</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2011</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>44.87</td>
<td>43.81</td>
<td>73.85</td>
<td>71.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU 27</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EU 28</td>
<td></td>
<td>42.54</td>
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Source: Own elaboration with data obtained from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

National Elections 2008 and 2011

On the one hand, the study covers the manifestos presented by the four major Spanish national-wide political parties, namely, those parties who obtained parliamentary representation and the largest percentage of votes in the two last national elections in March 2008 and November 2011 (see Table 1): People's Party (PP), Socialist Party (PSOE), United Left (IU), and Union, Progress and Democracy (UPyD). In 2011, the amount of the votes that all these parties obtained represents 85 percent of the votes, and, altogether, they have 312 members of the Congress out of 350. In 2008, the amount of votes was 89 percent and they had 326 members of the Congress.

Table 2. 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2014 Spanish General Election and European Elections Results. Percentage of votes and number of Members of the Parliament.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Votes (%)</td>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Votes (%)</td>
<td>MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>39.94</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSOE</td>
<td>43.87</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>28.73</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.99</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPyD</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88.77</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>85.01</td>
<td>312</td>
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</table>

Source: Own elaboration with data from the Spanish Ministry of Home Affairs

In March 2008, PSOE had expectations of being re-elected. Polls agreed in the victory of the Socialists, but without an absolute majority. In the past years, some facts affected the Government in a negative way: the negotiation of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy in 2006, and the dialogue failure with ETA and their terrorist attack in 2007. The CIS polls aligned for a PSOE victory, although PP was close, in a second place. Moreover, 52.4 percent of the interviewees believed that PSOE would win and only 15.3 percent stated that PP would be the winner.

When the next national elections were held in November 2011, Spain was going through the middle of the crisis period. The global financial and economic crisis, which started in 2008, is still affecting Spain in a very strong way. PSOE won the national elections in March 2008 for the second time in a row, but with a lower number of votes. The international crisis arrived to Spain fiercely, slightly later and with larger effects than in other parts of the world. Thus, as the party in charge, the PSOE was especially disadvantaged. In that moment, the unemployment rate was almost five million people, and the Government had started a constitutional reform with the support of PP, perceived as controversial by the society as it was decided without consulting the citizenry. Three weeks before the national parliamentary elections in 2011, the CIS survey indicated an absolute majority for the PP with around 30.5 percent of votes. Besides, 82 percent of the participants expected the PP to win the elections.
European Parliament Elections 2009 and 2014

On the other hand, we also analyse the specificity in the economic proposals presented by the same four parties (PP, PSOE, IU and UPyD), as they also obtained parliamentary representation in the European Parliament in 2009 and 2014 (see Table 2). In 2009, the amount of the votes that all these parties obtained represent 87.34 percent of the votes, and, altogether, they had 47 seats in the European Parliament out of the 50 assigned to Spain. In 2014, the amount of votes was only 65.55 percent and they have 40 members of the European Parliament out of the 54 assigned to Spain.

Regarding the European Parliament elections held in 27 member states of the European Union in June 2009, in Spain, as expected in the polls, PP won the elections with 23 seats followed by the PSOE with 21, while the IU coalition obtained two seats and UPyD, one seat. The CIS survey carried out just before the elections indicated that most of the citizens vote for the same party in national and EU elections. In fact, although PSOE was in national government at that time, PP won the next national elections in November 2011. The unemployment rates had not decreased, and the incumbent government was not managing the crisis effects as expected, according the polls (CIS, 2009).

In May 2014, the EU elections were held in 28 member states. In Spain, the two main parties obtained a poor victory. The PP was the most voted party, but it obtained 7 seats less than in 2009. PSOE was the second most voted, and also lost 7 seats. For the first time, the total numbers of seats assigned to Spain, 54, were distributed among 10 coalitions and parties, outstanding the 5 seats obtained by the newcomer Podemos, which captured most of the “indignados” and disaffected citizens’ votes. Expectations according to the polls were more optimistical for the big parties: CIS polls predicted 20-21 seats for PP and 18-19 for PSOE, whereas 5 for IU coalition and 3 for UPyD.

4 Methodology

4.1 Studying Party Manifestos

Party positions have been studied using different methods, from expert surveys to in-depth interviews to party leaders. In our case, in order to analyse party proposals in concrete periods of time, we study of party manifestos provided by the parties short before the general elections 2008 and 2011 and the European Elections 2009 and 2014.

Manifestos are complex and lengthy documents, published at the beginning of the political campaigns that aim, for instance, to gather the maximum media coverage possible (i.e. Budge, 1994; Harmel, 1995). According to Budge, party manifestos set themes to be emphasized by party spokespersons; these themes will be then taken up by the media, and they can be considered the only statement of policy issued authori-
tatively on behalf of the whole party. Since there are extensive debates over the contents of the document, they are the “only fully authoritative statement of the party policy for an election” (Budge, 1994: 450-55). Party manifestos shape party images to the public expectations (Janda et al., 1995: 172).

Although party manifestos are mostly addressed to an external audience (voters, media etc.), its internal function should not be overlooked, in the words of Charlot, party manifestos “are also written, at least in some small part, to satisfy current members and activists, and to attract new ones” (1989: 361).

The direct study of party manifestos allows us to obtain more objective and bias-free information than expert surveys, analysis of the mass media agenda or interviews (Kleinnijenhuis and Pennings, 2001). Also, manifestos are easily accessible and available. Moreover, since they are issued by the whole party and not by party factions (Pogerelis et al., 2005: 994), we can consider that the statements contained in the programmes present their real policy intentions and stances.

In the last two decades we can see how party manifestos have gotten the attention of scholars. Different research programs and methodologies have been developed. Probably, the most well-known line of research has been implemented by the Party Manifesto Project (PMP). This project approaches the study of manifestos by means of content analysis (Budge et al., 1987; Budge et al., 2001). The PMP uses hand-coding to generate party positions on 56 issues that are grouped in seven categories. Codifiers must count the “quasi-sentences” included in the manifestos that fall into each issue, then, an “issue salience” score is calculated simply dividing the sentences for every issue by the total number of manifesto's sentences (Slapin and Proksh, 2008).

In the last years, several studies have appeared grounded on computer-based content analysis. Applying quantitative analysis to the study of political manifestos the hand-coding needed in the case of the PMP is avoided. For example, Slapin and Proksh (2008) implemented this method to study the positions of German parties in the left-right ideology scale finding that their results were consistent with the ones obtained applying the PMP methodology.

In the present paper, we use a hand-coding approach to codify the manifestos. However, our codification differs from the one used by the PMP or Slapin and Proksh. Since our main interests are not issue salience or party positions, but specificity of the proposals presented by the parties; we do not base our analysis in measuring the salience of certain issues throughout the manifesto, but in how specific the party positions and proposals are presented to the audience.
4.2 Specificity in Party Proposals

In this paper we focus on the economic-related proposals suggested by the Spanish parties in their manifestos for the national legislative elections of 2008 and 2011 and the European elections of 2009 and 2014. To be able to compare electoral manifestos (among different parties, but also within the same party and different elections), firstly we define economic-related policies as those that refer to fiscal reforms (taxes, the fight against tax fraud etc.), macroeconomic accounts (public debt control, inflation etc.), single-market reforms (red tape hindrances, regulatory committees etc.), employment and labor market, measures to increase private sector productivity, financial market regulations and support to entrepreneurship. Sectorial policies, as for instance I+D+i policy or industrial policy, are not included in the analysis.

We do not take into consideration if the proposals are concentrated in one economic section or dispersed throughout the manifesto. The strategy followed by the parties in the structure of their manifestos would matter if we would be analysing the actual content of their proposals or the priority setting given by the parties to every issue, but our research objective is to measure the specificity of the proposals. For this reason, we assume that the place given to the pledge does not have a significant effect on our results.

The operational definition of pledge/proposal used in this study is the one proposed by Rallings (1987): “a specific commitment on behalf of a party to act in a certain area following a strategy also mentioned”. In this sense, we would only take into our analysis assertions made by the parties in their manifestos that include a commitment. For example, the situation diagnoses usually elaborated by the parties as a preface for the proposals are not taken into consideration5.

In order to classify the pledges based on their degree of specificity or concision, we depart from the classification proposed by Barra (2005) in her analysis of the proposals made by the two main British parties between 1987 and 2001. The categories proposed by Barra, “Vague”, “General”, “Specific” and “Detailed” needed in our opinion a better definition in order to avoid overlapping errors. Similarly, Ashworth analysed pledges in the Welsh local manifestos dividing them into two categories: rhetorical and specific (Ashworth, 2000: 17). In this analysis we use the same categories proposed by Barra, but with two variations: first, we have aggregate the categories “Vague” and “General”. Second, we have re-defined the categories in order to facilitate the resolution of potential problems in the codification phase. The definitions of the three categories are:

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5 We have not been able to proceed with our first proposal for this project: the development of a new set of codes that would nested with the ones developed in the Manifesto Standard Classification Scheme (Party Manifesto Project. The unit of analysis of the PMP, the quasi-sentences, differs from ours, commitments, making the comparison not possible.
• **General:** it commits the party to a particular course of action but lacks precise specification or detail of either the intended outcome or means of implementation. The proposals contain a general objective and a concrete action, but lack mentioning how to be implemented.

• **Specific:** it outlines precisely what intention and what action is to be taken and refers to the implementation, at least, in a non-specific way. Therefore, it mentions a policy instrument.

• **Detailed:** their pledges are extended versions of specific pledges but differ in terms of providing precise information about intended action or target focus. It includes information about the general intention, concrete actions, implementation means and economic figures and/or a deadline to accomplish it.

In order to be able to compare the party manifestos easily, we have constructed a 'Specificity Indicator', based on the distribution of the pledges among categories. For every manifesto, the percentage of “general” proposals is multiplied by one, the percentage of “specific” is multiplied by 10 and the percentage of “detailed” proposals is multiplied by 20. Then, all the scores are added and divided by 2000, which is the highest score possible for every party manifesto (in case that 100 percent of the proposals are classified as “detailed”).

\[ SI = 100 \times (G + 10S + 20D)/2000 \]

Where G is the percentage of proposals classified under "general", S the percentage of proposals classified under "specific" and D the percentage of proposals classified under "detailed"

The weights proposed are based on a qualitative reasoning. The general proposals are given the lowest weight (1) and the detailed, the highest one, 20. The middle point in the scale, the specific proposals are given a 10.

5 Results

In this section we analyse the proposal specificity for the political parties that obtained parliamentary representation in the Spanish general elections in 2008 and 2011 and the European elections in 2009 and 2014.

As we can see in Table 3, in the 2008 elections, UPyD presented a manifesto with 41 economic-related proposals, the majority of them classified under “general” category (80.40 percent). Only 9.8 percent of the proposals were “specific”, the same amount than for “detailed”. In the manifesto presented in 2011, UPyD presented 67
economic-related proposals, being most of them were classified under the “general” category (58.20 percent) and the “specific” (40.3 percent). Only 1.5 percent “detailed”. Regarding the European Elections in 2009, UPyD presented again a rather general economic program with 63.64 percent of the proposals classify in this category and only 27.27 percent as “specific” or 9.09 percent as “detailed”. In the 2014 elections, although the percentage of general proposals was still the highest (50.00 percent), an increased in the other categories is observed (28.57 percent of “specific” commitments and 21.43 of “detailed”).

In 2008, Izquierda Unida (IU) obtained 3.77 of the votes and 2 representatives in Congress. For this election the coalition presented a party manifesto with 24.3 percent of “vague” pledges, 34.6 of “general”, and 11.5 percent of “specific” and “detailed”. For the 2011 elections, when the party obtained one of its best electoral results with 6.92 percent of the votes and 11 representatives, the specificity of the party manifesto presented a complete different pattern. This time, the “detailed” category was the one with more pledges (36.6 percent) followed by the “specific” category (22.5 percent), “general” (21.1 percent) and “vague” (19.7 percent). In the European Elections, the coalition led by IU obtained 3.73 percent of the total valid votes and 2 MEPs. In this occasion, the coalition presented a program with 63.64 percent of “general” proposals, 22.73 percent were “specific” and 13.64 “detailed”. In 2014, the coalition gained 9.99 percent of the votes and 6 MEPs. The increase of votes was parallel to the increase of the number of general proposals in their manifesto (73.58 percent classify under “general”). Only 1.89 percent of the proposals were “detailed” and 24.53 “specific”.

In the 2008 elections, as polls predicted, PP did not win the majority to form a government. In this occasion, 74.50 percent of the economic-related pledges fall into “general” category, “11.8 in the “specific” and 13.7 in “detailed”. The electoral situation changed in 2011, all surveys predicted a majority for the PP and the party presented itself during the campaign as the next party in government after the elections. The manifesto presented increased the amount of “general” pledges (up to 87.30 percent). The specific commitments and detailed were marginal (8.5 and 4.2 percent respectively). In 2009, PP won the European elections with 42.23 percent of the votes and 23 MEPs. 63.04 percent of their economic commitments were “general”, 34.78 were “specific” and 2.17 were “detailed”. In 2014, PP only obtained 26.06 percent of the votes and 16 MEPs. In these elections, 83.33 of their economic-related proposals were “general” and 16.67 “specific” (for this election, PP did not present any “detailed” commitments).

As predicted by experts and polls, the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) won the 2008 elections with 43.87 percent of the votes and 169 representatives. The economic-related pledges in its manifesto are classified as follow: 69.00 percent “general”.

6 The coalition led by IU included three regional parties ICV, EUIA and BA.
7 In this election, the coalition was formed by IU, ICV and Anova.
25.3 percent “specific” and 5.7 percent “detailed”. In 2011, PSOE expected to lose the elections, as it happened with one of the worst electoral results of the party's history (28.73 percent of the votes and 110 of representatives). The 62.30 percent of the proposals made in its manifesto were “general”, 36.1 percent were “specific” and 1.6 percent were “detailed”. The Socialist Party lost the 2009 European Elections with 38.51 percent of the votes and 21 MEPs. In this occasion, the Socialist Party presented a 17 page manifesto with only general commitments. In 2014, PSOE obtained its worst electoral result in a European Elections, gaining only 23.00 percent of the votes and 14 MEPs. The 2014 socialist manifesto contained 39.47 percent of “general” proposals, 31.58 of “specific” and 28.95 of “detailed”.

Table 3. Classification of the economic-related proposal based on the specificity (in %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTY</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>ELECTION</th>
<th>GENERAL</th>
<th>SPECIFIC</th>
<th>DETAILED</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UPyD</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>80,40</td>
<td>9,80</td>
<td>9,80</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPyD</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>63,64</td>
<td>27,27</td>
<td>9,09</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPyD</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>58,20</td>
<td>40,30</td>
<td>1,50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPyD</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>50,00</td>
<td>28,57</td>
<td>21,43</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>77,00</td>
<td>11,50</td>
<td>11,50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>63,64</td>
<td>22,73</td>
<td>13,64</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>40,90</td>
<td>22,50</td>
<td>36,60</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>73,58</td>
<td>24,53</td>
<td>1,89</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>74,50</td>
<td>11,80</td>
<td>13,70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>63,04</td>
<td>34,78</td>
<td>2,17</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>87,30</td>
<td>8,50</td>
<td>4,20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>83,33</td>
<td>16,67</td>
<td>0,00</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSOE</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>69,00</td>
<td>25,30</td>
<td>5,70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSOE</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>100,00</td>
<td>0,00</td>
<td>0,00</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSOE</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>62,30</td>
<td>36,10</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSOE</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>39,47</td>
<td>31,58</td>
<td>28,95</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration.

The previous analysis is helpful to see the temporary differences between manifests of the same party, but it gets confusing when it comes to make comparisons between different parties. For this reason, we have calculated a Specificity Indicator (SI) that composite all the categories in one single score for each manifesto. Table 4 shows the specificity scores of each party for the general and European elections. UPyD had SI score in 2008 of 18.72, IU 21.10, PP 23.33 and PSOE 21.80. In the 2011 elections, UPyD scored in specificity 24.56, IU 49.90, PP 12.82 and PSOE 22.77.
In the European elections the picture is similar. In the 2009, UPyD scored 25.91, IU 28.18, PP 22.72 and PSOE 5.00. In the 2014 elections, UPyD presented a program with a specificity score of 38.21, IU 17.83, PP 12.50 and PSOE 46.71.

If we analyse the grouped specificity scores, we see how all parties rather general (all parties are placed in the first third of the specificity scale, under 30 points out of 10). Nevertheless, we observe that, in average, vote-seekers in national elections (IU and UPyD) are slightly more specific (28.57 points out of 100) than parties acting as office-seekers (20.18 points out of 100). However, the average specificity score of parties is the national elections is 24.37, while the average score for the European elections is about the same 24.37.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTY</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>ELECTION</th>
<th>SPECIFICITY SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UPyD</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>18.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPyD</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>25.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPyD</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>24.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPyD</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>38.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>21.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>28.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>49.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>17.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>23.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>22.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>12.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>2014</td>
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<td>PSOE</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>21.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSOE</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>22.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSOE</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>46.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration

6 Discussion

The aim of this study was to analyse the specificity of the proposals stated in the manifestos elaborated by the main parties for the 2008 and 2011 Spanish general elec-
tions and the 2009 and 2014 European elections. We wanted to answer the question whether the parties that act as office-seeking present more vague or general manifestos than the ones that act as vote-seekers. Office-seekers would know that once they are in office, they should accomplish their proposals and, therefore, they present less specific proposal and avoid strong commitments to their voters. On the contrary, vote-seekers parties know that they will not win the majority of the Parliament seats and focus on maximizing their political influence. For this reason, they would present more specific proposals.

To answer our research question we have analysed the economic-related proposals presented by PP, PSOE, IU and UPyD. We have created a Specificity Indicator that allows us to compare, not only among manifestos presented by different parties for the same elections, but also among parties in different times.

Our first hypothesis stablished that, in national elections, and also the ones that act as office-seeking parties, would tend to present less specific proposals than those that act as vote seekers. This hypothesis is partially proved. If we attend to the specificity scores, we see how all parties present rather general proposals. Nevertheless, we observe that, in average, vote-seekers are slightly more specific than parties acting as office-seekers.

In the same line, we observe that both PP and PSOE, the two main parties in Spain and the ones that act as office-seeking, have in both national elections lower scores than UPyD and IU. Moreover, we observe that PP presented a more specific manifesto in 2008, when its chances of winning were lower, than in 2011, when all polls predicted a clear victory of the party in the elections.

On the other hand, UPyD and IU present higher scores in the Specificity Indicator than PP and PSOE. The only exception is UPyD's score for 2008, probably because the party was recently created and did not have the time and resources to present a full-developed manifesto.

Evidence to support our second hypothesis could not be found. We predicted that in this election all parties behave as vote-seekers since no office is at stake in the European elections (or, at least, arriving to office does not depend only on the results obtained in the Spanish district). In this sense, we foresaw that the specificity scores of the manifestos presented for the European elections would be higher than the ones presented for the national elections. Evidence, however, does not allow us to prove this hypothesis.

The results found in this study could open a new line of research; but they should be interpreted prudently. Further research should include more parties and not only the economic-related proposals. Moreover, with regard to the methodology it would be needed to include more codifiers (at least three) to analyse the manifestos and improve the validity of the results. Intercoder reliability (the amount of agreement or
correspondence among two or more coders) should be measured and the Krippendorf’s Alfa calculated. On other hand, future research could also compare manifestos from different countries.

Finally, it is worth discussion whether party manifestos should be specific or not. In this study we only described party manifestos in terms of specificity, but we have not discuss if manifestos should be, in fact, specific. A normative approach of how manifestos should be is beyond the scope of this research.

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