How Political Parties Respond to Voters

How Political Parties Respond to Voters focuses specifically on the question of interest aggregation: do parties today perform that function? If so, how – and if not, in what different ways do they seek to show themselves responsive to the electorate?

Until now, such changes have been more widely studied in the United States than in other democracies; this fascinating book studies the question with reference to the following democracies: Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Canada. A chapter on Russia demonstrates how newly powerful private interest groups and modern techniques of persuasion can work together to prevent effective party response to popular interests in systems where the authoritarian tradition remains strong. Introductory and concluding chapters by the editors explore the broader implications of the changes.

This book will be of great interest to students and researchers of politics, and party politics in particular; comparative politics and democratic theory.

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How Political Parties Respond to Voters

Interest aggregation revisited

Edited by Kay Lawson and Thomas Poguntke

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Distributive policy in post-Wall Berlin

Louise K. Davidson-Schmich

While parties may respond to a range of demands when writing a manifesto or conducting an electoral campaign, actually governing forces parties to 'put their money where their mouth is'. When campaigning, a party can promise something for everyone, but in an era of high capital mobility, a party in government has control over only limited public funds to be distributed among a range of competing interests. Voters, party members and interest groups all call on governments to distribute scarce resources in particular ways. To whose demands do parties in government respond?

This question is particularly interesting to ask in light of the changes that the latter part of the twentieth century brought to the relationships between political parties and Western European citizens. Since the 1950s, Western European electorates have become more volatile, citizens have grown less likely to join political parties, traditional partisan ties to churches and unions have declined as a result of secularization and globalization, and rising post-materialism has brought increasing ideological heterogeneity to traditional parties. How do these developments influence the way in which parties in government respond to the demands of voters, party members and interest groups? One way to answer this question is to compare the responses of parties in government in long-established Western democracies to the responses of parties in government in newly democratized post-Communist countries. The latter parties are characterized by advanced levels of the trends Western Europe has been experiencing in the past decades.

To this end, this chapter examines distributive policy in post-unification Berlin. At the time research was conducted, the city-state was broken down into twenty-three self-governing districts, eleven in the eastern and twelve in the western half of the city.[1] During the 1990s a fiscal crisis forced Berlin's local governments to slash their budgets by almost a third. I compare how long-established western parties and newly formed eastern parties in local governments responded to competing demands for limited public monies.[2] The newly formed party caucuses in post-Wall eastern Berlin lacked loyal voters, grassroots members, established ties to particular interest groups; furthermore legislative party groups lacked ideological

cohesion. When these eastern parties were deluged from all sides with a broad array of demands for particular expenditures, all caucuses responded with similarly undifferentiated spending strategies. In contrast, the parties in the long-democratic western districts received a narrower range of demands from a more established electorate, local party organizations and traditionally close interest groups; in turn comparatively ideologically cohesive party caucuses responded with clear-cut partisan distributive policies. These findings suggest that as electoral volatility rises, party membership drops, ties to interest groups weaken, and inner-party cohesion declines, parties in government have difficulty responding coherently. Such inchoate responses in turn deprive voters of a real choice among parties and complicate citizens' task of holding elected officials accountable for their actions.

I proceed as follows. First, I will discuss the types of demands for scarce resources to which eastern and western party caucuses were asked to respond. Second, I will portray how local parties *said* they would respond to these demands. Third, I will compare the relationship between partisan promises and *actual* spending in Berlin's twenty-three localities between 1995 and 1998. Fourth, I will conclude by discussing the implications of my findings for democracy.

What's different about the way post-communist parties respond?

In an article entitled 'What is Different About Post-Communist Party Systems?' Peter Mair outlines four characteristics of Eastern European party systems that make it difficult for caucuses like the ones in eastern Berlin to respond coherently to demands placed upon them. Each of these four characteristics has become more pronounced in Western Europe over the past decades; however, these factors are still much less prevalent in the established democracies than they are in post-Communist countries.

High electoral volatility

First, Mair observes, 'Generally speaking, the electorates in the established democracies tend to be relatively closed, being characterized by the presence of a structured set of partisan preferences and by a large degree of predictability. Newly established electorates, on the other hand, tend to be more open and available, and hence ... more volatile and uncertain' (1996: 9–10). Indeed, the eastern Berlin electorate was highly volatile in the 1990s (McKay 1996: 281). When considering how to spend scarce resources, then, eastern Berlin parties are much less certain of who their voters are and what types of expenditures they prefer than are western Berlin party caucuses. Rather than responding by promoting public spending for a narrow range of priorities as westerners can, eastern parties may

attempt to respond to all or most voters by pursuing spending for a broad range of priorities.

Low party membership

Mair also notes that, 'even when we allow for the recent relative decline in many of the west European countries, party membership in the new [eastern European] democracies still ranks substantially below the levels which are now being recorded in the established democracies' (1996: 13). Indeed, most studies of the eastern German CDU, SPD and Green party organizations find lower party member/ officeholder ratios there than in these parties' western branches (Linnemann 1994; Rueschemeyer 1998). Similar problems are present in Berlin, where media accounts often highlight a dearth of candidates and even officeholders in eastern localities ('Alle Parteien' 1998). Without an active grassroots membership articulating specific concerns, eastern party caucuses receive few cues to help them narrow their decision about which parts of the highly volatile electorate they should respond to when making distributive policies. Western parties in government, in contrast, enjoy stronger local organizations whose interests are more likely overlap with loyal voters' concerns; these party members and faithful voters can communicate specific demands for public monies to their party in government.

Weak party–interest group ties

Because individuals in a volatile electorate and non-existent party organizations cannot make coherent demands on political parties, some observers have suggested that eastern party caucuses should be more likely to rely on the demands of interest groups to guide policy-making (Patzelt and Schirmer 1996). Moreover, interest groups have long occupied an important place in German democracy, linking individuals to their governments and playing a key role in public policy-making (von Alemann 1996). As one scholar put it, 'One might even argue that interest groups and social movements are the underpinning of the party system' in western Germany (Wessels 1998: 209). For example, unions have historical ties to the Social Democratic Party, church and employers groups have traditionally had links to the Christian Democratic Union, and environmental organizations have enjoyed close relationships with the Greens (Conradt 1996; von Alemann 1996).

Even if these ties have weakened over the years, this situation contrasts starkly with the role played by pressure groups in post-Communist party systems, however. As Mair observes, Eastern European parties are 'less grounded within civil society' than Western ones (1996: 12). Under Communism, societal interests were highly organized in state-run interest associations that were coerced into following the Communist Party's

dictates. Since unification, however, truly voluntary grassroots pressure groups have sprung up in the larger eastern German cities. Scholars have observed a dynamic array of municipal interest groups, many of which are very influential in local politics (Benzler 1995). Some studies have found that today western and eastern elites do not differ significantly in the frequency with which they interact with interest organizations (Sauer and Schnapp 1997; Cusack 1996).

What does differ between eastern and western Germany are the relationships between such organizations and political parties; observers of the eastern German landscape after unification have found interest organizations there less closely tied to political parties than their western counterparts (Benzler 1995; Olk 1996; Rueschemeyer 1998; von Alemann 1996). This may stem from eastern Germans' reluctance to see relations between parties and voluntary associations get as close as they were under Communism. Instead, eastern interest organizations of all kinds tend to shun close ties with one party and instead approach all (or most) political parties about issues of concern. This leads eastern politicians to be contacted by a much broader array of interests than their western counterparts. Empirical research has found, for example, that while Christian Democrats enjoy much more frequent contacts with sports groups than other parties in western German localities, this is not the case in eastern Germany. There all parties have relatively equal amounts of contact with athletic organizations (Cusack 1996). Another study found eastern Greens are twice as likely as their western counterparts to have contact with business interests (Sauer and Schnapp 1997: 261). Finally, the relatively exclusive relationships western Social Democrats enjoy with unions and certain charitable organizations are not present in eastern localities (Schmitt 1998; Rueschemeyer 1998; Cusack 1996).

As a result, eastern parties in government are deluged with a broad array of demands from various interest groups, whereas western caucuses must respond only to demands from a narrower range of more traditional constituents. These relationships can also be observed in Berlin. To obtain data about local caucuses and their contacts with interest groups, I mailed a survey to every budget committee member in each of Berlin's twenty-three localities in 1997.[3] Respondents were given a list of fifteen possible lobbying groups and asked whether they or someone else from their caucus had been contacted by these interests during the drafting of that year's budget. The answers to this question show that while politicians across Berlin have frequent contact with a range of societal interests, the partisan patterns of such contact differ across the two halves of the city-state. On average easterners indicated lobbying came from 6.7 groups while westerners reported contact with 7.5 groups – not a statistically significant difference. When partisan patterns of party–interest group contacts were considered, however, significant east–west differences did emerge. Tables 6.1 and 6.2 examine the relationships between parties and

Table 6.1 Which groups lobbied western parties regarding budget issues?

Group	A90/Green N = 14 (%)	CDU N = 39 (%)	SPD N = 28 (%)
Environment**	42.8	10.2	14.3
Non-profits**	85.7	53.8	89.3
Sports*	50.0	82.0	75.9
Pre-school PTA*	71.4	69.2	62.0
School PTA*	78.6	76.9	85.7
Culture	57.1	43.6	55.1
Music school	57.1	41.0	46.4
Adult education	35.7	15.4	25.0
Business	16.7	30.8	21.4
Senior citizens	35.7	25.6	32.1
Mean number of groups	8.5	6.6	8.2

Source: Author's survey.

Notes

Answers are the percentage of respondents reporting lobbying from a given group.

** Chi square test finds significant partisan variation using a 95 per cent confidence interval.

*   Chi square test finds significant partisan variation using a 90 per cent confidence interval.

Table 6.2 Which groups lobbied eastern parties regarding budget issues?

Group	A90/Green N = 12 (%)	CDU N = 18 (%)	PDS N = 15 (%)	SPD N = 15 (%)
Pre-school PTA*	41.7	44.4	73.3	64.3
Sports*	50.0	72.0	46.7	78.6
Non-profits	75.0	77.8	100.0	86.7
School PTA	75.0	50.0	80.0	53.3
Culture	50.0	61.1	73.3	57.1
Senior citizens	50.0	16.7	46.7	32.1
Environment	50.0	22.2	13.3	13.3
Business	16.7	33.3	53.3	20.4
Music school	33.3	27.8	13.3	33.3
Adult education	8.3	22.2	20.0	0.0
Mean number of groups	7.8	5.9	8.7	5.5

Source: Author's survey.

Notes

Answers are the percentage of respondents reporting lobbying from a given group.

* Chi square test finds significant partisan variation using a 90 per cent confidence interval

the ten most frequently mentioned interest groups in western and eastern Berlin, respectively.

The relationships between western parties and societal organizations do not greatly deviate from the interest group–party relationships elsewhere in western Germany: Greens were significantly more likely than other parties to be contacted by environmental organizations. Greens and Social

Democrats were significantly more likely than Christian Democrats to report lobbying by local non-profit organizations.[4] Moreover, significant partisan patterns of sports, pre-school parent/teacher associations (PTAs), and school PTA lobbying were also found. In other areas, the frequencies at which parties reported contacts were for the most part in traditional patterns, although not statistically distinct. The Greens had the most contacts with the artists in local cultural organizations, music schools and with adult education teachers. The Christian Democrats reported the most frequent encounters with business groups. Perhaps the most surprising finding was that Christian Democrats reported the *fewest* visits by senior citizens, although pensioners are a traditional CDU constituency (Pridham 1977). Overall, however, interest groups across western Berlin targeted specific political parties with their lobbying messages. These relationships mean western caucuses must respond to a relatively narrow range of interests.

In the east, in contrast, patterns of contact between parties and societal interests were less established than in western districts. At the conventional 95 per cent confidence level, there was no significant variation in eastern parties' contacts with interest organizations; when the confidence interval was relaxed, significant partisan differences were found in only two areas. On the one hand, Alliance 90/Green and PDS politicians reported more contacts with pre-school PTAs than members of other parties. Christian and Social Democrats, on the other hand, had more frequent interactions with members of sports organizations. The lack of clear–cut party/ interest group relations in eastern Berlin makes it difficult for caucuses there to choose a narrow set of priorities towards which to target limited public funds; instead, there is pressure on these caucuses from all sides.

Eastern parties may not develop budget priorities as a result of formal lobbying, however, but rather through personal networks between individual politicians and organized groups (Hager 1997). Thus I also asked about individual representatives' personal involvement with voluntary groups. The survey listed eight organizations and asked politicians whether they were members of these associations.[5] Local officials' answers did not differ much across Berlin; on average, western politicians were members of 2.4 voluntary groups while easterners were members of 1.9 such bodies.

There were, however, differences in the ways in which members of specific political parties interacted with certain voluntary organizations. In western districts, chi square analysis found significant partisan variation in membership in three of the organizations listed (See Table 6.3). As with lobbying, the membership patterns observed corresponded to traditional western German party–pressure group patterns. The Greens were more often members of environmental groups than their counterparts from the Social and Christian Democrats. Social Democratic politicians were more

Table 6.3 Western politicians' group membership

Group	A90/Green N = 14 (%)	CDU N = 39 (%)	SPD N = 28 (%)
Environment**	33.3	2.6	27.6
Union**	53.3	41.0	79.3
Charity**	20.0	41.0	79.0
Business	0.0	23.1	6.9
PTA	0.0	5.1	3.4
Sports	6.7	25.6	34.5
Culture	13.3	33.3	41.4
Youth	0.0	7.7	20.7
Mean number of groups	1.7	2.0	3.3

Source: Author's survey.

Notes
Answers are percentage of respondents who are members of a given group.
** Chi square test finds partisan patterns significant at the 95 per cent level.

often union members than politicians from other parties. Christian and Social Democratic members were more often members of established church- or union-backed charitable groups than Greens. Christian Democrats were most often members of business groups, although this pattern was not statistically significant. Because western caucus members are often involved with the same voluntary organizations, they may be more likely than their eastern counterparts to agree on which constituents they should respond to when deciding how to spend their scarce resources.

In contrast, Table 6.4 shows that eastern politicians did not have as

Table 6.4 Eastern politicians' group membership

Group	A90/Green N = 12 (%)	CDU N = 18 (%)	PDS N = 15 (%)	SPD N = 15 (%)
Business**	8.3	16.7	33.3	46.7
Environment*	25.0	0.0	6.7	0.0
PTA	16.7	16.7	20.0	0.0
Charity	16.7	44.4	20.0	53.3
Sports	26.7	11.1	20.0	40.0
Culture	16.7	33.3	46.7	20.0
Union	8.3	16.7	33.3	46.7
Youth	25.0	11.1	20.0	20.0
Mean number of groups	1.6	1.9	2.0	1.9

Source: Author's survey.

Notes
Answers are percentage of respondents who are members of a given group.
** Chi square analysis finds significant partisan variation at 95 per cent level.
* Chi square analysis finds significant partisan variation at 90 per cent level.

clearly delineated partisan patterns of group membership as did western-ers. Chi square analysis found significant partisan differences only in terms of membership in business associations. Former Communists and Social Democrats were more likely to be involved with such groups than members of other parties. When the confidence interval was relaxed to 90 per cent, as in the west, Alliance 90/Green members were more likely to join an environmental association than members of other parties. None of the other relationships observed in eastern districts was statistically meaningful, however. The lack of clear-cut partisan involvement in voluntary associations makes it difficult for eastern caucuses to decide whom to respond to when allotting the limited funds over which they have discretion.

In western Berlin, political parties have established clearer ties to spe-cific interest organizations than their eastern counterparts. As a result, when western parties are in government, they receive demands for discre-tionary spending from 'their' interest groups, demands which are likely similar to those of the party's members and loyal voters. This means that party elites have a relatively focused set of demands to which they must respond. In contrast, recently formed eastern political parties have not yet established clear-cut ties to particular interest groups just as they have neither extensive local party organizations nor loyal voters. As a result, when eastern parties are in government, they receive pleas for public spending from all possible constituencies to which they must respond.

Low ideological cohesion

Further weakening the ability of eastern parties in government to respond to societal demands with a coherent distributive policy is that fact that eastern German party caucuses are much less ideologically cohesive than their western German counterparts (Rueschemeyer 1998; Linnemann 1994; Segert 1995; Bastian 1995). As a result, it is more difficult for party group members to agree among themselves to which interests they should respond. In response to such disagreements, Mair predicts that eastern European 'political elites are less likely to be motivated by organizational loyalties and commitments, and are correspondingly more likely to resolve conflicts . . . by engaging in short-term mergers and alliances with other parties' (1996: 16). A low level of loyalty to, and a lack of trust in, political parties is widespread at both the mass and elite levels in all post-Communist societies – not surprising given the negative experiences cit-izens there had with dictatorial Communist parties (Rose and Mishler 1997; Kopecky 1995; Wyman *et al*. 1995). Low ideological cohesion and elite distrust of political parties led to a much lower level of party discip-line in eastern Berlin district legislatures than in western assemblies (Davidson-Schmich 2000).

Weak party discipline influences the way in which decisions about

policy are made. Due to eastern parties' lack of discipline, budgets there are not passed by a majority party or coalition acting as a united bloc, but rather by oversized coalitions containing members of many parties (Davidson-Schmich 2002). Because eastern legislatures rely on members of many parties to pass their budgets, eastern spending plans represent compromises among many individual demands, regardless of which parties have a majority. In contrast, the high level of discipline practised in western legislatures means that budgets there must only please legislators from the relatively homogeneous governing party or parties.

To sum up then, in contrast to their eastern counterparts, western Berlin parties in government must respond to a narrower range of demands, not only from their voters, members and affiliated interest groups, but also from within their legislative caucuses.

Berlin parties' budget preferences

Because other factors which might influence parties' distribution of scarce resources are controlled for in Berlin, this case is particularly well suited to observing the influence of a volatile electorate, low party membership, weak party–interest group ties, and low party discipline on caucuses' ability to respond coherently to demands for public spending. The institutionalist and state-centric literatures have highlighted the importance of the organization of the state itself to distributive outcomes (Evans *et al*. 1985). In Berlin, however, the structure of formal political institutions is held constant across the city. All local governments have identical structures and politicians are required to follow an identical state budget law. Marxist literature has stressed the importance of capital's interest in determining who gets what (Elkin and Benjamin 1985) but local governments in Berlin have little influence over fiscal policies such as tax rates and welfare costs which would be of interest to capital; the state government is responsible for such policies.

Other scholars have emphasized demographic trends as an explanation of spending distribution (Berry and Lowery 1984; Lowery and Berry 1983), but Berlin's formal budget-making process allows us to rule out this explanation of variance in public spending because it is designed to control for the influence of problem load on distributive outcomes. The city-state's constitution legally requires an 'equality of living standards' across the districts and the state budget law was specifically designed to achieve this goal. Rather than depending on taxes and other income, Berlin's twenty-three localities are allotted lump sums by the state government according to their needs. For example, poorer districts receive higher allotments than richer ones so that they can cover welfare transfer payments and still fund other projects. Similarly, the law allots funds for each line item in the budget through special algorithms calculated in the same way for each district. The design of formal budgeting rules, therefore, controls for

demographic problem load, a factor which might otherwise cause districts with poor populations to go into debt or districts with richer citizens to spend more in certain luxury areas regardless of partisanship.

Thus formal institutional structures, capitalist pressure and demographic factors should not significantly influence spending distribution across Berlin. Instead, I argue, intentional action on the part of politicians is necessary to alter the distribution of district spending away from the amounts prescribed by the state budget law. If districts differ in the amount they spend on controversial line items it is because political actors have responded to political pressure and chosen to shift funds in the budget, protecting certain priorities from budget cuts and disproportionately slashing other expenditures.

This section examines what parties in eastern and western Berlin localities *claimed* their budget priorities were during a period in which state fiscal transfers to local governments were considerably reduced. Above, I argued that western parties in government were generally more cohesive and disciplined than their eastern counterparts. Western parties were also confronted by a more limited set of demands from voters, party members and particular interest groups than were eastern parliamentary parties. Because each western party caucus had a relatively narrow set of demands placed on it, each was able to respond by targeting its spending policy towards a specific set of particular constituents. Eastern parties responded to the much broader range of demands placed on them by developing much less distinctive policy preferences.

In order to assess which priorities Berlin's local party caucuses had for district budgets, I interviewed budget committee members, district executives and budget office directors in twenty-two districts. I asked the open-ended question: 'What were your caucus's priorities in this year's budget debate?'[6] Often respondents answered by highlighting other caucuses' positions in comparison to their own. In addition, many interviewees gave me party newsletters, press releases, or texts of legislative speeches outlining their party's budget preferences. As a follow-up to this question, I also asked politicians how they thought their district's fiscal problems could be solved. The following section is based on sixty-eight interviews and twenty party publications.[7]

Eliciting answers to the above questions was somewhat complicated in eastern Berlin. Western politicians articulated relatively narrowly defined spending priorities, whereas easterners had much less clearly delineated stances. In terms of spending for young people, for example, eastern politicians from all parties were likely to say they supported spending on undefined youth-related expenditures, while western parties stressed particular areas of the public school or non-profit budgets they wanted to protect (for example spending on textbooks or teen suicide prevention programmes). Given whom eastern and western parties were responding to, these differences are not surprising. In the east, because parties must

respond to a broad range of demands from undefined constituencies, politicians had little incentive to delineate narrow spending priorities. In the west, where disciplined parties faced demands from a distinct range of societal actors, it made sense for majority caucuses to develop and articulate clear-cut spending priorities targeting their constituents.

For this reason, westerners were also much more likely than their eastern counterparts to define their budget priorities in opposition to other parties' goals. Of the politicians interviewed, 61 per cent of westerners and only 20 per cent of easterners mentioned what expenditures should be cut in addition to mentioning what they would like to fund. Partisanship and spending distribution were so tightly linked that some western politicians in minority parties were reluctant even to state their caucus's budget wishes, lamenting that it did not matter what they would like to spend on because they were sure to be outvoted. As one caucus head put it, 'As a minority caucus we have little leeway to influence the budget' (Senftleben 1997). In the east, in contrast, politicians were much more reluctant to tie spending preferences to partisanship. The head of an eastern assembly explained, 'It's relatively unusual that there is great dissonance among the parties . . . There are few solid [partisan] blocs in our assembly' (Bärwolff 1996). Others expressed willingness to consider supporting line items suggested by members of other parties. One eastern politician observed, 'If something's a good idea we vote for it. It would be silly to vote a proposal down just because it came from another party!' (Bollensdorff 1997).

These varying attitudes towards political opponents also carried over into westerners' and easterners' ideas about how best to solve district financial problems. Instead of pointing fingers at parties within their district, easterners looked outwards for solutions to their problems or declared them unsolvable. The three most frequent solutions to local fiscal problems offered by eastern politicians included demanding more money from the state government, not offering any solution, and calling for changes to Berlin's state budget law, for example, allowing districts to run up debts. In contrast, westerners tended to focus on solutions that could be found within their own district; only 5 per cent of westerners demanded more money from the state government as a solution to their problems. Instead, half of the westerners interviewed proposed balancing their budgets by cutting certain expenditures, usually those favoured by another party. The second most common suggestion was to invest in public administration to make it more efficient (for example by introducing computers) and/or leaner (by privatizing services). Finally, some westerners also argued for eliminating district services such as small branch libraries or cultural centres.

The task of identifying partisan preferences was complicated by the fact that in sixteen of the twenty-three localities under investigation, parties did not govern alone, but in a coalition. In the east, there were five PDS/Alliance 90-Green and five SPD/CDU governments; in the west

there were four SPD/Green coalitions and seven CDU single-party majorities.[8] Despite these limitations, based on the above interviews and documents it was indeed possible to identify partisan differences in spend-ing preferences for twelve key areas.[9] Table 6.5 lists ten areas of public expenditure where western Christian Democrats and SPD/Green alliances publicly disagreed on the appropriate level of spending. Similarly, this table lists six controversial areas where eastern PDS/Alliance 90-Green and CDU/SPD coalitions professed disagreement about funding. Excluded from Table 6.5 are areas where coalition partners had opposing views on the desired level of spending as well as areas where all expenditures received support from both coalitions, as was often the case in eastern Berlin. Below, in alphabetical order, I explain partisan debates over certain expenditures.

Culture

Under Communism, state spending on culture was high (Deutscher Städtetag 1995). Responding to voters and party members' nostalgia for the old regime, PDS-led coalitions strongly favoured preserving districts' expenditures for local museums, libraries, adult education programmes and subsidies for an array of district cultural groups like choirs which had been funded during the Communist era. Eastern CDU/SPD governments, in contrast, questioned the wisdom of spending on cultural amenities at a time of fiscal crisis. In western Berlin, the Greens also advocated spending

Table 6.5 Coalitions' professed spending patterns

	Green/SPD	*CDU*
Favoured spending significantly more on in west	Culture Non-profits/general Youth: Non-profits Pre-schools School supplies Welfare	Public administration Maintenance and infrastructure Senior citizens More privatization
	PDS/A90-Green	*CDU/SPD*
Favoured spending significantly more on in east	Culture Welfare	Economic development Public administration School maintenance Sports

Source: Interviews and party documents.

Note

Areas excluded are those where coalition partners disagree on appropriate spending level and those items on which cross-coalitional support is found.

on locally run cultural institutions such as music schools and cultural centres where local artists could display their work. Local artists are a core Green constituency, as evidenced by the fact that western Greens were contacted by representatives of cultural organizations more often than other parties. Like their eastern counterparts, the western CDU called for cuts in this area.

Economic development

Although eastern Christian Democrats lacked close ties to local business organizations, CDU politicians often called for spending public monies on economic development initiatives to try to promote the creation of more small businesses in eastern districts – and with them perhaps CDU voters (Karrasch 1995). Eastern Social Democrats also supported funding pro-business initiatives; they were significantly more likely to be members of business organizations than members of other parties. Thus CDU/SPD governments favoured higher levels of spending on such programmes than did PDS/Alliance 90-Green governments, even though former Communists were also likely to belong to a business organization. In the economically much healthier western localities, such economic development initiatives were not a political issue.

Maintenance and infrastructure

Across Berlin the Christian Democrats' main priority was to preserve district infrastructure; the party called for spending on the upkeep of schools, public buildings and parks. The CDU also favoured maintaining district roads. Such expenditures responded to the interests of a number of traditional Christian Democratic constituents in western Berlin. Small locally owned businesses such as plumbers, electricians and builders received contracts to do the maintenance districts needed. The upkeep of public infrastructure increased the attractiveness of a given district as an investment location as well, satisfying the CDU's business constituents. The Social Democrats and Greens in both halves of the city called for cuts to maintenance and infrastructure spending, instead favoring social expenditures. They preferred, in the words of one politician, to 'put people before stones' (Wittig 1998). Only in one area – school maintenance – could eastern CDU caucuses find support from their SPD coalition partner for infrastructure spending. The Social Democrats favoured this type of spending in response to the complaints of parents and teachers about the conditions of school bathrooms and gymnasia, many of which had not been renovated in decades.

Non-profits

Rather than offering a number of specialized social services, German local governments delegate these tasks to non-profit organizations. Often services are performed by large national-level charities like the Catholic Caritas or the union-based *Arbeiterwohlfahrt*; such organizations do not depend heavily on local funding. In contrast, many district-level services, such as suicide prevention, debt-counselling, substance-abuse programmes, multicultural meeting places, rape crisis centres and such like. are provided by local non-profit organizations which rely almost exclusively on district funding. As mentioned above, the employees and beneficiaries of the latter non-profit organizations form one of the most active and vocal interest groups in Berlin.

In the eastern half of the city where relationships between such interests and parties are not yet clearly established, all parties responded to the non-profits' demands by supporting high levels of funding for them. In western Berlin, while the CDU had close ties to national religious organizations and the SPD to union-based groups, the Greens were most closely connected to the small, local non-profits (Olk 1996; von Alemann 1996; Wessels 1998). As outlined above, western Greens and their Social Democratic coalition partner were significantly more likely to be lobbied by non-profits than are Christian Democrats; similarly, Social Democrats were significantly more likely personally to be a member of such an organization. As a result, SPD/Green coalitions responded to the non-profits' demands by backing financial support for their work.

Privatization

Western Christian Democrats favoured privatizing services like district-run plant nurseries and school retreat centres, arguing that privatized services are more cost-efficient (Zentgraf and Hitzmann 1994). The CDU also tried to make what remained in public hands more streamlined; thus Christian Democrats argued for closing branch libraries and cultural centres in order to concentrate scarce resources in a central location and to cut overhead costs. Since such measures are likely to be associated with lay-offs of public sector employees, the SPD responded to its union clientele by opposing privatization. Privatization was not a relevant budgeting issue in eastern Berlin, however; given that extensive privatization occurred at the time of unification, there were no further nurseries, retreat centres and so on to be privatized.[10]

Public administration

All parties in Berlin agreed that administrative costs needed to be reduced in order to provide a long-run solution to the city's tight fiscal situation.

The parties disagreed, however, on how to cut costs. Across Berlin, Christian Democrats strongly favoured investing in public service in the short run to make it more efficient in the long run; for example, they called for increased expenditures on computers so that eventually fewer bureaucrats will be able to complete more tasks. Such calls were echoed by the western Greens, but this small party was outvoted by its SPD coalition partner, which resisted administrative reforms, likely responding to constituents who are members of public sector unions and fear eventual downsizing.

Senior citizens

In the west, the CDU favoured expenditures which would benefit senior citizens as pensioners have traditionally been a core Christian Democratic constituency (Pridham 1977). Western CDU governments responded to their interests by calling for increased spending on residents in district-run senior citizens' homes. In the east, such homes were privatized after the Wall fell and were therefore not part of the public budget during the period under examination.

Sports

Christian Democrats in eastern Berlin were significantly more likely to be lobbied by sports groups than members of other parties. While sports teams had previously enjoyed free access to public playing fields, locker rooms and referee services as well as subsidized lands for sailing and horse riding, Berlin's fiscal problems prompted state-level calls for greater contributions to be made by local sports groups. Eastern Christian Democrats responded by strongly supporting continued subsidies for these teams. In the west, Christian and Social Democrats both favoured protecting sports organizations, making partisan differences in spending unlikely in that half of Berlin.

Welfare

While German law mandates the amount of welfare benefits that individual recipients are entitled to, districts have the option of creating social programmes over and above the federal *Sozialhilfe* programme. The generous social safety net present under socialism is one of the things that eastern voters miss most about the GDR era (Stoltz 1995; *Deutscher Städtetag* 1995). Since the former Communists try to target voters who are nostalgic for the old regime, PDS/Alliance 90-Green coalitions called for more spending on discretionary welfare programmes than CDU/SPD governments did. In western Berlin parties of the left regularly respond to the needs of lower-income voters by expressing more support for social welfare programmes than Christian Democrats did.

Youth

The only other group that is as vociferous in its demands on elected officials in Berlin as the non-profit organizations are Berlin's parents, especially ones organized in parent/teacher associations (PTAs). Parents of schoolchildren and the teachers' union advocated spending on textbooks, computers and other school supplies. Parents of pre-school children demanded daycare centres that provide classrooms, teachers, toys and snacks for young children. And parents were joined by employees of non-profit agencies in their calls for an additional range of activities and services for young people, including after-school programmes and counselling services.

In eastern Berlin, where no party had significantly more contact with parents or the teachers' union[11], all parties agreed on the importance of spending on all types of youth-related expenditures. In contrast, in western Berlin the Social Democrats and Greens were significantly more likely to have contact with parent/teacher organizations and SPD politicians were more likely than members of any other caucus to belong to a union. SPD/Green coalitions responded to parents' and teachers' demands by promising to preserve spending for a range of youth expenditures. The CDU did not entirely ignore parents' and teachers' concerns, however; they strongly supported school maintenance. Contracts for school repairs generally benefited the CDU's small business constituents as well.

Summary

In terms of funding non-profit and youth-related programmes, eastern political parties expressed little disagreement. In other areas, however, these caucuses expressed conflicting preferences. CDU/SPD governments responded to business in their demands for school maintenance and economic development programmes, to sports groups in their demands for subsidized recreation, and to those who called for a reform of public administration. In contrast, eastern PDS/Alliance 90-Green governments responded to those nostalgic for the security of the old regime by calling for increased spending on cultural and social programmes. In the western half of the city, there was an even broader range of partisan disagreement. SPD/Green governments called for the preservation of cultural, youth, welfare and non-profit expenditures in response to a network of constituents tied to such groups. In contrast, conservative CDU governments responded to a different set of interests, calling for spending on senior citizens as well as for the small businesses that benefited from spending on public administration, maintenance and infrastructure, and the privatization of public services.

Actual spending distribution in Berlin

When it came time actually to allocate scarce funds, however, there were fewer significant differences among eastern parties than were expressed in the interviews and party documents examined above. To measure the distribution of district spending in the twelve controversial areas described above, I identified the relevant line items in each district's budget and measured spending in these areas between 1995 and 1998. I then converted relevant items into a per capita, per pupil, or per hectare measure to control for district population, demographics and size (Davidson-Schmich 1999: 326–38). Below, I compare western Christian Democratic and Social Democratic/Green districts' average spending in each of the contested areas between 1995 and 1998. In eastern districts I compare PDS/Alliance 90-Green districts' spending to that of CDU/SPD localities. I test to see whether the difference of means is significant. Table 6.6 summarizes my findings.

In western districts, parties claimed to have differences of opinions in ten key areas; in eight of these areas parties in government did indeed spend significantly more in the areas for which they professed support. Social Democratic/Green coalitions spent significantly more on non-profit organizations, school supplies and welfare programmes than Christian Democrats did. For example, SPD/Green districts spent DM777,708 on average each year to subsidize non-profit organizations in the cultural, social and health areas while Christian Democrats averaged DM358,842 per annum. In terms of spending on non-profits serving youth, SPD/Green districts spent twice per resident under eighteen what their Christian

Table 6.6 Coalitions' actual spending patterns, 1995–98

	Green/SPD	CDU
Spent significantly more on between 1995–98 in west	Culture** Non-profits/general** Youth: Non-profits* School supplies** Welfare*	Public administration** Senior citizens** More privatization**
	PDS/A90-Green	CDU/SPD
Spent significantly more on between 1995–98 in east	Sports**	

Source: Local budgets.

Notes
** Difference of partisan means significant at 95 per cent level.
* Difference of partisan means significant at 90 per cent level.

Democratic counterparts did. In contrast, CDU districts were significantly more likely to privatize or discontinue district services than their leftist counterparts; branch libraries and cultural centres as well as district-run services such as plant nurseries, school retreat homes and nursing homes were all closed on their watch, often over strong SPD/Green protest. Between 1995 and 1998 CDU districts closed an average of 1.9 such district-run installations while SPD/Green districts actually opened an average of 0.5. Further, Christian Democratic districts spent significantly more on administrative departments than leftist coalitions. For example, CDU governments spent more on average than SPD/Green districts on both their budget offices and their human resources departments. In addition, significant differences of means were found in one cultural area: adult education programmes. While CDU executives budgeted only DM197.5 per pupil on average, SPD/Green districts spent DM279 per pupil on offerings such as foreign language and arts and crafts classes. Partisanship was not a significant predictor of cross-district spending on cultural departments, music schools or libraries, however.

In two areas, despite western parties' contrasting claims, no significant differences in spending were found across districts. Although the Christian Democrats consistently called for increased maintenance expenditures for schools, roads and public buildings, CDU districts did not spend significantly more in these areas. Similarly, although the Social Democrats and Greens repeatedly stressed their commitment to pre-schools, they did not spend significantly more on their youngest constituents than the CDU did. In fact, Christian Democrats spent *more* in this area than did their leftist counterparts, subsidizing the average pre-schooler DM3,381 a year compared to the only DM3,047 per year provided by leftist governments. This may be due to the fact that, on average, CDU districts also charged higher fees for pre-schools than did Social Democratic and Green governments.

The results in eastern districts were quite different. In only one area was the difference of partisan means statistically significant and the difference was not in the expected direction. In eastern Berlin, CDU members often cited sports clubs as key constituents whose low-cost access to playing fields and referee services they wanted to preserve from fee hikes. In practice, though, CDU/SPD governments charged significantly higher fees for athletic field usage than did former Communist districts: 6.8 per cent of Christian/Social Democratic districts' athletic field budgets were covered by fees collected, compared with only 4.0 per cent of PDS districts' sports budgets.

In no other areas were significant partisan differences in spending distribution observed. In many cases the differences of means were not in the direction expected either. Across eastern Berlin Christian Democrats were vocal supporters of spending on economic development initiatives such as publishing glossy brochures extolling business opportunities or holding

workshops for potential small business owners. In practice, however, districts governed by the former Communists spent more on average for such initiatives than did CDU/SPD localities. Similarly, eastern Christian Democrats stressed that spending on building, street and park maintenance was their main budget priority, while all other parties argued in favour of cutting expenditures in these areas. In actuality, however, PDS districts spent more on average for maintenance than their neighbours. Finally, CDU/SPD districts spent slightly more on average for social, health and cultural non-profits than did the former Communists' districts, although the latter voiced consistent support for spending on non-profits. None of these differences was statistically significant, however.

Summary

Despite the fact that Berlin's budgeting institutions were designed to provide equal outcomes across districts, the fact that the districts' political structures were designed to give the maximum possible parties a say in government, and despite the fact that local budgets were slashed repeatedly throughout the period in question, western Berlin's political parties were still able to distribute the scarce resources at hand in significantly different ways in eight of the ten politically controversial areas examined. The small sample size and relatively high cross-district variance due to district-specific idiosyncrasies make these findings all the more impressive. Furthermore, in all but one of the relevant areas examined in the west, partisanship could predict the direction in which spending differed across districts. Eastern parties in contrast did not distribute their scarce resources in significantly different ways in five of six instances; partisanship was not a good predictor of the direction of the difference of means either.

In the west, long-established, disciplined political parties responded to loyal voters, party members and traditionally supportive interest groups by targeting public spending towards their needs. In the newly formed eastern party system, undisciplined, incoherent parties received demands from a range of interest groups without input from loyal voters or members. Parties from across the political spectrum responded with similarly undifferentiated fiscal policies.

Implications

The results from the comparison of eastern and western Berlin parties in government indicate that the level of electoral volatility, party membership, party–interest group ties and inner-caucus cohesion all influence the demands placed on political parties in government as well as their ability to respond to these demands with coherent partisan policies. In eastern Berlin, the trends which have emerged in western Europe in

the past several decades – increased electoral volatility, shrinking party membership, weakening party–interest group ties and reduced inner-party cohesion – are greatly magnified. These factors expanded the demands to which party caucuses had to respond, and in turn limited their ability to develop narrowly defined partisan fiscal policies. If these trends continue in Western Europe, Western parties in government may come more closely to resemble those in eastern Berlin. Similarly, Western parties may today more closely resemble Eastern parties than they did decades ago. What are the implications of these developments for European democracies?

In newly democratizing contexts such as eastern Berlin, electorates are volatile because recently established parties have not yet developed ties to a core group of voters. In order not to alienate potential supporters, parties in government try to respond to demands from all sides. In Western Europe, when electorates become more volatile, parties in government can no longer focus their responses only on the demands of their traditional constituents, but instead must try to target a broader range of potential voters with their responses. Additionally, in eastern Berlin and in other new democracies, ties between recently created political parties and (often newly formed) interest groups may be weak or nonexistent. Parties may wish to cultivate such ties, however, by responding to a wide range of potentially loyal interest associations. In western Berlin and Western Europe, if traditional ties between churches, unions and established political parties weaken as a result of secularization and globalization, parties in government must search for new allies. They too have an incentive to respond to as broad an array of interest group demands as possible.

As a result, all party families in government in Eastern Europe, and many in Western Europe as well, have incentives either to promise something to everyone or to make vague platforms that offend no one. Depending on one's perspective, this finding has different implications for democracy. On the one hand, broad platforms mean that interests from across the political spectrum are likely to see parties in government respond at least somewhat to their demands at all times, whereas narrow party platforms mean that particular interests can only be assured of a response if 'their' party is in government.

On the other hand, sweeping platforms that respond to virtually all interests limit both the capability of the party system to provide voters with clear-cut policy alternatives and the ability of voters to hold parliamentarians accountable for their actions. While western voters are able to use Berlin's proportional representation electoral system to reward or punish parties based on the distinctive policies they call for, eastern voters are forced to choose from among parties that advocate similar distributive policies. This deprives voters of a real choice. Furthermore, after parties are actually elected, they may be forced by the realities of govern-

ing to confront irreconcilable differences in their campaign promises. Rather than delivering something for everyone, they may be forced to choose among competing constituencies. Once parties are in office, such decisions are made by elected officials acting on their own. Where local party organizations are strong, party elites may be checked by vociferous grassroots members; where local party organizations lack committed members, or any members for that matter, elites have free rein to decide among competing priorities, further reducing citizens' ability to influence distributive decisions.

Even if parties have relatively specific platforms, however, elected officials may still fail actually to respond to demands with which they claim to sympathize. This was the case in all but one area where eastern parties disagreed on spending. Furthermore, although western Berlin political parties generally carried through on their distinctive spending preferences, there were some areas where even these parties failed to spend significantly different amounts of money in practice. For example, while Social Democratic/Green coalitions found scarce resources to divert to local artists and social service providers, they ultimately did not carry out their promise that they would spend more on pre-schools than their opponents would. Similarly, while Christian Democrats repeatedly promised to support both senior citizens' homes and road maintenance, in practice they carried through only on their promise to the elderly. The more unchecked parliamentary party groups are by grassroots party organizations, the greater leeway they have to pick and choose to which demands they respond and the less sure citizens can be that elected politicians will actually implement even specific promises, let alone vague ones.

The members of party caucuses who enjoy such leeway are, in new democracies, often quite ideologically heterogeneous. Even in Western Europe, as post-materialist values rise, caucuses are less ideologically cohesive than they once were. The lower the level of ideological cohesion among party members in government, the less certain citizens can be of what type of decisions elites will make.

Thus, the more that heterogeneous party elites try to appeal to a volatile electorate without guidance from grassroots members or allied interest groups, the more incentives they have to respond by promising something to everyone. While it may initially appear that parties are becoming *more* responsive to a wider range of constituents, there is a downside as well. When all parties respond in the same way, voters have little choice among parties, little idea how parties in government will actually respond, and little way to control the way they do respond.

Notes

1 Beginning in 2001, a territorial reform reduced the number of districts to twelve.
2 The parties in local governments at the time research was conducted included the Christian Democrats (CDU), Social Democrats (SPD), the Greens and their eastern branch Alliance 90, and – in eastern Berlin only – the former Communist Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS). The eastern SPD and Alliance 90/Greens came into existence in eastern Berlin only after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The pre-existing eastern CDU and the PDS significantly changed their leadership after 1989.
3 Committee members are chosen in proportion to a party's percentage of seats in the district legislative assembly, with each party guaranteed at least one seat. Thus the sample reflects the partisan composition of Berlin's local governments, although the Greens (the smallest party) are somewhat over-represented. The response rate was 56 per cent ($N = 147$) or 14.2 per cent of all those elected to local government in Berlin.
4 See below for more on non-profit organizations in Berlin.
5 The survey also included an open-ended 'other' category which was included when calculating the total number of groups. The most frequent associations listed here were church and professional groups.
6 In the case of bureaucrats, I asked, 'What were the parties' budget priorities?'
7 The interviews break down as follows: Bureaucrats (10); Alliance 90 east (7) and west (11); CDU east (7) and west (10); SPD east (9) and west (5); and only in the east PDS (9).
8 Two districts are excluded from analysis here. In one eastern locality no party had a clear majority and there was no stable coaltion. In one western district the SPD shifted from an alliance with the Greens to one with the CDU during the period studied.
9 Before discussing parties' spending stances, however, let me note a few unique points about Berlin's budget during this period. First, districts could not raise their own revenue; instead they received lump sum amounts from the state government to cover their expenses. Second, Berlin's local politicians are severely constrained in what they can and cannot do when budgeting. They are unable to levy taxes or borrow money. Berlin's two-tiered administrative structure also means that local politicians do not have to spend on law enforcement, teacher salaries, trash collection or other areas for which municipal governments are often responsible. In addition, they have little discretion over personnel costs, most transfer payments and large-scale, long-term investment projects.
10 At the time research was conducted Berlin was teetering on the brink of bankruptcy and local budgets had been slashed by one-third. Returning previously privatized institutions to the district budget was not a fiscally feasible option and no privatization decisions were reversed during the period studied.
11 The one exception to this rule involved the former Communists, who were somewhat more likely to meet with pre-school PTA organizations.

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They are usually chosen by a political party - groups of people with similar beliefs who come together to try to win power. A small number of candidates do not represent a party but stand alone as independents. The candidates compete against one another for votes in one of the UK's 650 voting areas, or constituencies. Whoever wins the most votes in a particular constituency is elected as an MP. Â To be on the ballot paper - which voters use to make their choice - candidates must complete nomination forms. They also have to pay a Â£500 deposit, which is returned to them if they win at least 5% of the votes cast. BBC. Â The parties normally have plenty of time to select candidates for an election. All parties currently represented in the UK Parliament follow similar procedures. In some definitions of political parties, a party is an organization that advances a specific set of ideological or policy goals, or that organizes people whose ideas about politics are similar.[7] However, many political parties are not primarily motivated by ideology or policy; for example, political parties can be mainly clientelistic or patronage-based organizations, or tools for advancing the career of. Â By the 1950s, economists and political scientists had shown that party organizations can take advantage of the distribution of voters' preferences over political issues, adjusting themselves in response to what voters believe in order to become more competitive In a political climate where Americans are more divided than ever and their beliefs are more deeply entrenched, people can still make dramatic mindset shifts. CNBC Make It spoke to two people who have switched parties since the 2016 election and are voting differently in 2020. David Weissman, 40, and Brandon Straka, 43, are at opposite ends of the political spectrum â€" Weissman is a Democrat and Straka is a Republican. But just a few years ago, Weissman was a self-described "Trump troll" and Straka was a tried and true liberal. "I was angry, sometimes hateful," says Weissman, an army vet living Political parties are important not only because of the range of functions they carry out, but also because the complex interrelationships between and among parties are crucial in structuring how political systems work in practice. This network of relationships is called a party system. One-party systems. A single party enjoys a monopoly of power through the exclusion of all other parties. two-party systems. A two-party system is duopolistic in that it is dominated by two major' parties that have a roughly equal prospect of winning. two partyism, moreover, creates a bias in favour of moderatio Political parties in the US serve as a mechanism to divide the US population and keep them from challenging the power of the plutarchy. There are two parties by design because the president is elected by plurality. Election by plurality causes any 3rd party to become a spoiler making it nearly impossible for the 3rd party to be successful. Â Moreover, while we seem to have a choice between two options politically, where the government and the corporations only rule, there isn't even a choice in most instances.