MPIfG Discussion Paper 04/9

Office versus Policy Motives in Portfolio Allocation
The Case of Junior Ministers

Philip Manow and Hendrik Zorn

MPIfG Discussion Paper

Philip Manow and Hendrik Zorn

**Office versus Policy Motives in Portfolio Allocation:
The Case of Junior Ministers**

Abstract

Why junior ministers? What function do they serve? Two explanations dominate the literature. Both focus on the role of junior ministers in coalition formation and coalition management. One approach sees junior ministers as instruments for controlling policy, the other as a means to solve or ease distributive conflict among coalition partners. As of yet, the literature lacks a discussion about when the two interpretations lead to similar empirical predictions and when they lead to different ones. The paper claims that different patterns of portfolio distribution can inform us about the underlying policy or office motives of the partners of a coalition government. Analyzing a rich data set on 11 countries from 1949 to 2004, the paper identifies a group of countries in which portfolio allocation shared a pattern best explained by office-seeking behavior, whereas in another group of countries portfolio allocation is better explained as the result of policy-seeking behavior.

Zusammenfassung

Was ist die Rolle von Juniorministern in Koalitionsregierungen? Insbesondere zwei Interpretationen finden sich in der Literatur, ohne dass bisher diese Deutungen zueinander in Beziehung gesetzt und auf übereinstimmende oder differierende Vorhersagen überprüft worden wären. Der erste Erklärungsansatz sieht Juniorminister als Mittel der Policy-Kontrolle und verweist auf das häufige Muster parteipolitisch wechselseitiger Besetzung von Minister- und Juniorminister- oder Staatssekretärposten. Innerhalb von Koalitionsregierungen haben Juniorminister der einen Partei dann die Aufgabe, die Ministerin einer anderen Partei zu überwachen. Der zweite Ansatz sieht diese Regierungspositionen weitgehend ohne eigenständige Policy-Funktion lediglich als Verteilungsmasse bei der Aufteilung politischer Pfründen zwischen Partnern einer Koalition. In dem Papier wird der Bereich identifiziert, in dem beide Erklärungsansätze zu unterschiedlichen empirischen Vorhersagen kommen. Die Überprüfung dieser Hypothesen an einem großen Datensatz über Koalitionsregierungen in 11 Ländern von 1949 bis 2004 identifiziert eine Gruppe von Ländern, in denen die Parteien tatsächlich eher „postenorientiert" handeln, während in einer anderen Gruppe von Ländern Parteien offensichtlich eher „policy-orientiert" sind.

Contents

[Of] the things that the (coalition) theories set out to explain, it is only the distribution of payoffs among members that provides us with any information about the validity of the assumptions upon which the theories were built in the first place. (Laver/Schofield 1990: 165)

1 Introduction

Why junior ministers? What function do they serve? It would seem that the answer to this question very much depends on the theoretical approach applied. Two explanations dominate the literature. Both focus on the role of junior ministers in coalition formation and coalition management. One approach sees junior ministers as instruments for controlling policy, the other as a means to solve or ease distributive conflict among coalition partners. In a coalition, parties have either to abdicate responsibility for certain policy domains to their coalition partner ('ministerial government', Laver/ Shepsle 1990, 1994, 1996) or 'incur costs' by losing ministerial portfolios to other parties, that is suffer from reduced office payoffs (Mershon 1996: 538, 2001). Both approaches claim that junior ministers compensate for loss in either the policy or the office dimension. Thies (2001) interprets junior ministers or undersecretaries as instruments for 'keeping tabs on partners' within government coalitions. In his view, junior ministers are instruments of policy control. They fulfill watchdog functions. A coalition which has to agree on a joint government program for the legislative term can use the allocation of ministerial portfolios as a self-commitment device. Once ministerial posts are allocated among the government parties, ministers implement their ideal policy: This safeguards a coalition from the ever-present danger of post-contract opportunism and chaotic voting cycles. Yet, a coalition will realize Pareto-superior solutions if policy abdication is not complete, but counteracted by checks or tabs on partners. Monitoring can work via parliament (Martin/Vanberg 2004), but also through undersecretaries/junior ministers. A party does not need to completely lose control over a policy sector if it can maintain partial influence by placing a junior minister of its choosing in a ministry led by its coalition partner (*contre minister*). Mershon (1996, 2001, 2002), in contrast, interprets junior ministers primarily as instruments for lowering the office costs for coalition parties. A party which shares power with other parties in a coalition has also to share the spoils of power with them. According to this view, undersecretaries are created to inflate the number of distributable positions to make the office loss less hurtful. Specifically, a bigger coalition party that has sacrificed 'too many' portfolios to smaller coalition partners can be compensated with undersecretaries (see below).

Who is right? Unfortunately, both approaches cite the same empirical evidence in support of their competing hypotheses. For instance, Thies interprets each case in which a junior minister of party A 'shadows' a minister of party B as support for his policy control or managed delegation hypothesis. Yet, some shadowing might be simply due to the fact that party A has a number of undersecretaries/junior ministers much larger than its number of ministerial portfolios. This would make some cross-party matching between ministers and undersecretaries inevitable if the party does not want to staff one of its own ministries with three, four or more of its own undersecretaries.[1] For example in Italy, where the Democrazia Cristiana maintained *on average* 15 ministers and almost the double number of undersecretaries (29) in all postwar coalition governments, shadowing might have often been more of a side-effect of office compensation games than an indication of policy control motives. At the same time the large surplus of undersecretaries for larger parties is exactly the predicted outcome of the 'office cost' argument as put forward by Mershon. She explains the large number of DC undersecretaries as a compensation for the relative costs that a hegemonic party like the Democrazia Cristiana has to incur if it takes smaller parties on board, given that smaller parties regularly can claim hold over more ministerial positions than a 'fair rule' of proportionality, namely their strength in seats, would suggest (cf. Hine 1993: 106, Table 3.4; Schofield/Laver 1985, 1990; Browne/Franklin 1973).

Obviously, we are confronted with a problem of observational equivalence. But can we disentangle policy from office motives in the use of JMs? In this paper we claim that it is not the extent of cross-party shadowing between senior and junior ministers, but the distributional impact of JM positions that provides us with critical information about the relative importance of office and policy motives.[2] Crucial for our argument is the extent to which junior ministers alter or do not alter the distribution of government posts among coalition partners. We distinguish two stylized scenarios. In the first scenario, *policy-oriented* parties engage in tough bargaining over the distribution of senior ministerial positions since these critically secure policy influence. In this scenario the relative political strength of the parties – measured as their parliamentary

---

1   Thies controls for cases in which a ministry could not have been 'shadowed' because coalition partners had already 'used up' all of their junior ministers (Thies 2001: 589–590). Yet, he does *not* control for the opposite case in which a party has more JMs than ministers and therefore cannot avoid shadowing another party's minister if it does not want to have two or more of its own JMs in the same ministry. In our view, this biases his findings in favor of his policy control hypothesis.

2   With respect to the distinction between policy and office motives we follow Budge/Laver (1985), Strøm/Müller (1999) and others who distinguish between parties that value office *instrumentally*, as an instrument for influencing policy, and parties that value office *intrinsically*, in and for itself. The crucial question then is whether a party's behavior is "aimed at increasing the party's control of executive office benefits … *even if it means sacrificing policy objectives*" (Strøm/Müller 1999: 6; italics added; see also Laver/Hunt 1992).

seat share – is a good predictor of the bargaining outcome, that is of the distribution of senior ministries among the coalition members. Junior ministers are subsequently used to monitor those ministries whose loss to other parties could not have been avoided. Since in this context junior ministers are not used with the aim of compensating for office loss, but for policy loss, we would not expect them to significantly alter the overall distributive picture; in some cases they may even aggravate the disproportional allocation of posts among coalition members. In a second scenario, primarily *office-oriented* parties allow larger deviations from a 'fair' distribution of ministerial positions, again measured against their relative seat share, since they anticipate being compensated for by JMs. In this case relative bargaining strength is not as good a predictor of portfolio allocation. Junior ministers in this case have clear 'office loss compensation' functions and therefore we expect them to bring a more disproportional distribution of senior government positions more closely into line with 'proportionality.' In other words, in this scenario we expect both larger 'initial' deviations from a close seat strength/senior office share correspondence and a significant corrective impact of junior ministers that brings the parties' office share closer to proportionality (for more details of our argument see section 2).

We therefore claim that large deviations from proportionality with respect to senior positions and strong 'corrections' through junior ministers should be positively linked. We demonstrate empirically below that the data do indeed confirm our expectations. Once the theoretically postulated nexus between deviation and compensation has been shown to exist, we can use it to assess on a country-to-country basis whether the distributional pattern in the allocation of senior and junior positions resembles more our policy-driven scenario 1 (small deviations, small compensations) or rather our office-driven scenario 2 (large deviations, strong compensations). Together with additional information about the overall size of the government and the 'elasticity' with which cabinet size reacts to changes in coalition size we then can assess the relative importance of policy-seeking versus that of office-seeking behavior in coalition formation in Western democracies. In a last step we validate our interpretation with results from an expert survey conducted by Laver and Hunt (1992) in which country experts were asked to assess how much parties value office gains over policy objectives. The paper proceeds as follows: In section 2 we will spell out our central argument in more detail. In section 3 we will present and analyze our data. Section 4 concludes.

2 Policy- and office-driven patterns of portfolio allocation

For various reasons the allocation of ministerial positions never exactly mirrors the respective seat share of members of a coalition, although 'relative seat share' is by far the single best predictor of the distribution of government posts among coalition par-

ties (Gamson 1961; Browne/Franklin 1973). One trivial reason for non-proportionality is the limited number of government positions that can be distributed. Public posts are a limited resource. Often the number of ministries cannot be expanded – at least not without incurring substantial political costs. In fact, where expansion is relatively easy, this itself is a good indicator of the office orientation of political parties. Hence, the correlation between changes in cabinet size (# of posts) and changes in coalition size (# of parties) in a given country should provide us with our first valuable information about the strength of office considerations (see section 3).

But even where politicians have much leeway and are very creative in inventing new governmental tasks and in establishing new ministries, junior ministers are usually needed for distributional fine-tuning. Where the number of cabinet posts is finite, an exact correspondence between election results and the distribution of government positions already reaches arithmetical limits. To guarantee a perfect match, a government would need to create as many distributable government positions as there are parliamentary seats of the governing parties. Therefore, some degree of non-proportionality is inevitable given the 'lumpiness' of office payoffs. But given that non-proportionality usually is non-randomly distributed among the members of a coalition, more than a simple arithmetical problem is involved here. A frequent finding in the literature is that especially smaller parties tend to be over-represented with respect to ministerial positions (Browne/Franklin 1973).

Systematic over-representation of small parties might be due to the fact that they occupy pivotal positions between bigger parties on the left and the right more often. Over-representation would then indicate that small parties have successfully 'cashed in' their privileged bargaining situation in the form of high office benefits (Browne/Franklin 1973; Schofield/Laver 1985).[3] Or over-representation may have primarily an arithmetic cause: every coalition party will insist on government representation through at least one minister. Thus if we assume a cabinet size of 14 ministers, a small party with one minister but less than 7% of all government parties' seats would be over-represented. Finally, the over-representation of small parties may in some cases also be the simple expression of ethnic-linguistic fractionalization in a country, if it is seen as crucial that national minorities are represented in the federal government. The participation of the Swedish Party in every Finnish post-war government would be a case in point.

Whichever of these accounts best explains the distributive patterns in coalition governments is an empirical question that we will take up in the following section. Here we only want to highlight two relatively stable findings in the literature on portfolio allocation in coalition governments. First, the relative seat share of a coalition party is the single best predictor of its relative share of government positions (Gamson 1961;
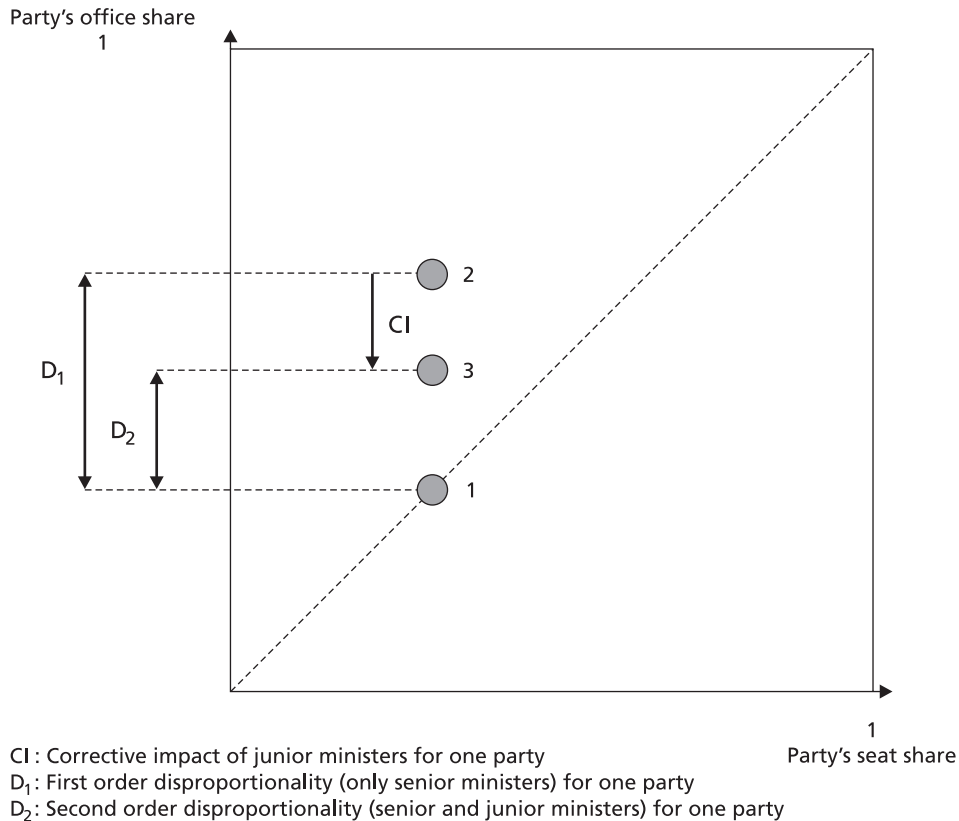
---

3   Schofield/Laver (1985) could not find much evidence in support of this thesis, though.

Browne/Franklin 1973). Second, deviations from this 'Gamson prediction' have been non-random, favoring systematically smaller coalition parties over larger ones (cf. Laver/Franklin 1990: 172). We start from these findings but, given that they were derived from studies that have exclusively focused on ministers and failed to take into account junior ministers, we may – as a first step – ask whether they survive once we broaden our data base and include JMs in our analysis. If junior ministers are 'distributional correctives,' as Carol Mershon and others have claimed, then non-proportionality should be significantly reduced or should even completely vanish as soon as we take a more complete view on the pool of distributable government positions. However, as we will show in the following section 3, non-proportionality is not 'explained away' by taking into account the wider pool of top government jobs over which coalition parties have command.

In the light of our argument this is not very surprising, given that it leads us to expect a significant reduction of non-proportionality through JMs only in those cases in which JMs have been used to compensate for 'office loss,' whereas junior ministers might even aggravate non-proportionality in the allocation of portfolios if they are used to compensate for policy loss. This refers us back to the argument already briefly outlined in the introduction of when exactly the distributional impact of junior ministers provides us with information on the underlying policy-seeking or office-seeking motives of political parties. It is to this question that we now turn in some more detail.

In both the office-reward and policy-control explanations, parties incur a loss whenever they form a coalition. According to the ministerial government argument, they incur policy loss (Laver/Shepsle 1990, 1994, 1996); according to a broad strand in coalition theory going back to Riker (1962), they incur primarily office loss (cf. Mershon 1996, 2002). Both approaches interpret junior ministers as a – partial – compensation. Whereas both approaches predict largely identical outcomes for some aspects of portfolio allocation (e.g. the shadowing of senior ministers; see above), they have different observational implications in other respects. We claim that this allows us to empirically disentangle policy from office motives – at least partially. Our argument might be demonstrated best with the help of Figure 1 in which we analyze the case of a party's over-representation. Needless to say, since each over-representation of party A is matched by under-representation of its coalition partner(s) party B (or parties B, C, D …), the argument could just as well have been exemplified by the opposite case of under-representation. The x-axis reports the seat share of a party, the y-axis its office share. The 'Gamson line' is the line of perfect proportionality between both. We ask to what extent junior ministers are used to bring deviations from proportionality in the distribution of ministries back 'into line.' We claim that whenever both deviation *and* compensation are comparatively large, parties are primarily oriented by office, not policy, motives. Put differently, if parties are more driven by policy control motives, they should *not* allow for large deviations from proportionality and junior ministers should not then be used as a corrective device for an unequal distribution of senior

**Figure 1   Deviations from a party's 'fair share' of ministries and junior ministers
as correctives**

Party's office share

CI : Corrective impact of junior ministers for one party   Party's seat share
D_1 : First order disproportionality (only senior ministers) for one party
D_2 : Second order disproportionality (senior and junior ministers) for one party

government positions. That is to say, junior ministers should *not* alter significantly the overall distributive picture.

Our substantial argument is based on the insight that a high degree of non-proportionality in the distribution of ministerial portfolios (a high D1), which is corrected through JMs (a high CI), reveals a willingness to trade losses in the allocation of senior ministers for gains in the allocation of JMs. But this means that parties trade the right to *initiate* legislation, which is usually the prerogative of senior ministers, for the right to *monitor* legislative initiatives by another party or other parties, which is the function of junior ministers. To put it pointedly: 'policy dictators' (Laver / Shepsle) are traded for 'watchdogs' (Thies). Obviously, different items are exchanged not only with respect to status and hierarchy, but also in terms of policy influence (cf. Laver / Shepsle 1994). In modern parliamentary democracies it is usually the minister who sets the political agenda, who moves first and initiates legislation. Even if junior ministers can block certain policies by alerting their party to 'hostile' projects of its coalition partner, they themselves do not usually have the right of legislative initiative. Where they do, this by itself provides us with an important bit of information about the role that

JMs play in coalition government. For our analysis we have excluded all cases from the data set in which junior ministers possess the right of legislative initiative like the French *ministres délégués*, the Swedish *konsultativ statsråde* or the Finnish deputy or sub-ministers.[4] For all other cases we feel safe to take the willingness to accept compensations in the form of junior ministers as an indication of office-seeking behavior exactly in the sense of the definition given by Kaare Strøm and Wolfgang Müller, who define office-seeking behavior as being "aimed at increasing the party's control of executive office benefits … *even if it means sacrificing policy objectives*" (Strøm/Müller 1999: 6; italics added).

An observational implication of our argument is that large deviations from the Gamson line in the distribution of ministerial portfolios and large compensations through the allocation of JMs among members of a coalition should be positively linked. We would also expect deviations-cum-compensations, interpreted as an indication of the importance of office motives, to correlate positively with the 'elasticity' with which cabinet size reacts to changes in coalition size (# of parties in government). Why do we treat the responsiveness of cabinet size to numbers of parties within the government as an indication of office orientation? The underlying argument is as follows. The range of government tasks and activities does not vary fundamentally between the Western democracies and mature industrialized countries. Against the background of a more or less fixed range of state responsibilities, the proliferation of ministerial portfolios is likely to lead merely to jurisdictional overlap, ill-defined responsibilities, mutual blockage etc. Coordination and information costs increase exponentially with every additional ministry. In other words, to increase the number of portfolios often means to decrease policy efficiency. And these are costs to be paid by *all* coalition parties. Again, anecdotal evidence is provided by the Italian case, in which the almost uncontrolled growth of government positions led to what students of Italian politics describe as "multidirectional disconnected government" – read: chaos (Cheli, quoted from Mershon 2002: 37; Golden 2003). Therefore, we feel safe to interpret the willingness of coalition parties to flexibly adjust the number of distributable government positions to the number of government parties as an indication of office-seeking behavior. This seems straightforward since the *overall* negative impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of government policy again clearly refers to the critical criterion for office-seeking behavior: maximizing executive office benefits '*even if it means sacrificing policy objectives*' (see Strøm/Müller above).

To sum up the argument: we follow Laver and Schofield's general suggestion to extract from the "distribution of payoffs among members" of a coalition government

---

4   A Swedish *konsultativ statsråd*, a Finnish deputy minister, an Australian assistant minister and a French *ministre délégué* all have their own right to initiate legislation. We therefore excluded them from our analysis. We included Swedish *statssekreterare*, who play a role comparable to a parliamentary secretary in Germany (see Bergman 2000; svenska statskalender, various years).

"information about the validity of the assumptions" of current strands of coalition theory (Laver/Schofield 1990: 165). In this respect we identify two patterns of portfolio allocation. In the one, the office-driven pattern, we expect a *comparatively* loose (but still significant) nexus between parties' seat strength and their respective office shares. This relation should become considerably closer once we include in our analysis the positions on the second hierarchical layer of democratic government, the *sottosegretari* (Italy), *statssekreterare* (Sweden), *statssekretærer* (Norway), *parlamentarische Staatssekretäre* (Germany), *junior, deputy* or *assistant ministers* etc. As another characteristic of the office-driven pattern we also expect the total number of top government positions to co-vary with the number of governing parties. In the policy-driven pattern, in contrast, we expect the allocation of senior posts to follow the parties' relative seat strength more closely. In other words, deviations from the Gamson line should be smaller. The corrective impact of JMs should also be much smaller, absent or even negative in this instance. Where junior ministers are used as checks on the other parties within the coalition, they might even increase the degree of non-proportionality realized with a given allocation of ministerial portfolios. Here we also expect the number of political appointees not to vary strongly with coalition size. In the following section we will present our data and test our hypotheses.

3   Data and evidence

Solid comparative information on junior ministers in coalition cabinets is still astonishingly rare. While recent comparative data collections on portfolio allocation include a large number of countries, they typically focus solely (Woldendorp/Keman et al. 2000) or mainly (the data yearbooks of the European Journal of Political Research or Keesing's contemporary archive, for example) on senior ministers. The data that Carol Mershon reports (2000, Annex) includes information on the number of junior ministers, but provides no information about their party affiliation. Thies's (2001) analysis is based on a relatively small data set containing information on multi-party government in Germany and Italy plus data on multi-factional government in Japan. One laudable effort to collect systematic data on state secretaries has recently been made by Wolfgang Müller and Kaare Strøm (Müller/Strøm 2000). We build on their work and have complemented[5] and extended the data that was collected in their project.

---

5   The table on the Netherlands in Müller/Strøm (2000) does not provide information on junior ministers that have the same party affiliation as the respective senior minister. The data for Ireland, Norway and Luxembourg was found to lack some junior ministers. We cover a longer time period from 1949 to the latest available information for 2004. This has enabled us to gather information on about 60 additional cabinets and 2 more countries compared to the Müller/Strøm data.

Combining a rich variety of sources,[6] we were able to construct a dataset on portfolio allocation containing information on both senior and junior ministers in coalition and single-party cabinets. Our sample includes 14 countries mainly from 1945 up to the latest available information.[7] We conceive the holding of government posts as the defining criterion for membership in government. We follow Woldendorp et al. and discriminate between governments in the following manner: A government is treated as a new 'case' in our dataset if an election has taken place, if the prime minister or the party composition of the government has changed and if the previous government has resigned[8] (Woldendorp/Keman et al. 2000: 10). This translates into information on 249 coalition cabinets. Data on junior minister allocation was available for 698 parties in 215 coalition governments in 11 countries. This adds up to an – as far as we know – unprecedentedly large dataset with comparative information on the allocation of top government positions including junior ministers.

We counted ministers instead of portfolios or posts, since it is not clear how to discriminate between individual tasks in the event of one minister assuming multiple functions.[9] In order to avoid double counting when ministers hold multiple posts we only recorded the highest status of these persons. Table 1 compares our data set to the data sets previously used in the literature.

On this broad basis we can, as a first step, confirm two findings that were emphasized in the existing studies on portfolio allocation in coalition governments (see Table 2). First, the relative seat strength of a party is a good predictor of its relative office share. Second, as the negative coefficient in column two of Table 2 shows, larger parties are less likely to be over-represented when it comes to the distribution of office spoils or, put differently, small parties tend to receive a larger share of government positions than their seat strength would suggest.

---

6   For data sources, see appendix.

7   The 14 countries included in our dataset are Norway, Finland, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Austria, Ireland, Sweden and Australia. In the case of Belgium we integrated the data for the regional splittings of the Christian democratic, Liberal and Socialist parties in order not to artificially inflate the number of observations. For our analysis Denmark drops out completely, since the position of a junior minister or a state secretary is not known to the Danish political system. We decided not to count Finnish sub-ministers either, given that they have the power to initiate legislation themselves. Before 1987 Australian assisting ministers also held another portfolio as senior minister. Excluding these cases leaves such a small N that we also decided to drop the Australian case. Therefore the number of countries that we analyze is reduced to 11.

8   We excluded cabinets that existed less than 35 days, since these interim cabinets would bias our results in an unjustifiable way.

9   We included all nominations that took place in the first six weeks of the governing period, given that in many cases not all ministers of a new government were immediately nominated.

Table 1   Empirical studies on portfolio allocation

Study	Time period	Coalition governments		Coalition governments with junior ministers	
		Coalitions	Countries	Coalitions	Countries
Browne/Franklin 1973	1945–1969	114	13	…	…
Shofield/Laver 1985	1945–1982	134	12	…	…
Müller/Strøm 2000	1945–1999	238	13	154	9
Mershon	1945–1995	214	10	129	9
Thies 2001	~1966–1996	68	3	68	3
Our data	1945–2004	249	14	215	11

Table 2   Disproportionality of cabinet allocation – correlation coefficients

	Cabinet share (senior ministers)	Over-representation (senior ministers)
Government seats	0.931	−0.4716
N [parties]	698	698

This leads to three subsequent questions. First, does this pattern change substantially once we enhance the analysis to include junior positions in government? Secondly, is the more frequent over-representation of small parties due to the fact that more often than not they occupy a pivotal bargaining position? Thirdly, is cabinet size an explanatory variable, since one could hypothesize that, as more parties gather around the cabinet table, a higher number of small parties seek ministerial representation and the overall portfolio allocation becomes less proportional? As Table 3 shows, assumptions 2 and 3 do indeed find some justification in the data. Shapley values as well as the variable 'coalition size' have some explanatory power. Yet, explained variance as well as the coefficients for parties' seat share remain largely unaltered once we include JMs in our analysis. In others words, the conventional picture that previous studies on portfolio allocation produced does not change dramatically once we take junior ministers into account.[10]

---

10   An implicit assumption of our analysis as well as of previous studies is that parties weight all ministries more or less equally. Obviously, this is a simplification and anecdotal evidence suggests that parties do indeed make fine distinctions (see the role that the so-called *Manuale Cencelli* has played in Italian coalition formation). We must leave it to future analyses to look into the pattern that emerges once we drop this assumption. The national rank orders of ministerial 'status' reported in Laver/Hunt (1992) can provide valuable information for such an analysis.

Table 3   Explanations of cabinet allocation

|	Cabinet share (senior ministers)	Cabinet share (senior ministers)	Cabinet share (all posts)	Cabinet share (all posts)
Government seats	.827*** (0.012)	.744*** (0.022)	.841*** (0.012)	.756*** (0.022)
Shapley	–	6.051* (2.894)	–	6.860* (2.822)
Coalition size	–	−2.212*** (0.292)	–	−2.034*** (0.284)
Intercept	5.934*** (0.519)	14.794*** (1.273)	5.451*** (0.504)	13.594*** (1.242)
N [parties]	698	698	698	698
R²	0.87	0.88	0.88	0.89

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; two tailed.

This leads us to investigate the *national* patterns in the distribution of senior and junior government positions, since our argument suggests that the distributional impact of JMs depends on the junior ministers' functions, i.e. we claim that parties' underlying motives on the basis of which they came to agree on a given distribution of senior and junior positions matter. Our argument implies two things: systematic positive correlation between deviations (D1) and compensations (CI), and significant variance between countries. Figure 2 shows that both assumptions hold true for the 11 countries of our sample (see Figure 2).

Figure 2   The effects of the distribution of senior and junior minister positions – cross-national differences

Figure 3   Mean cabinet size
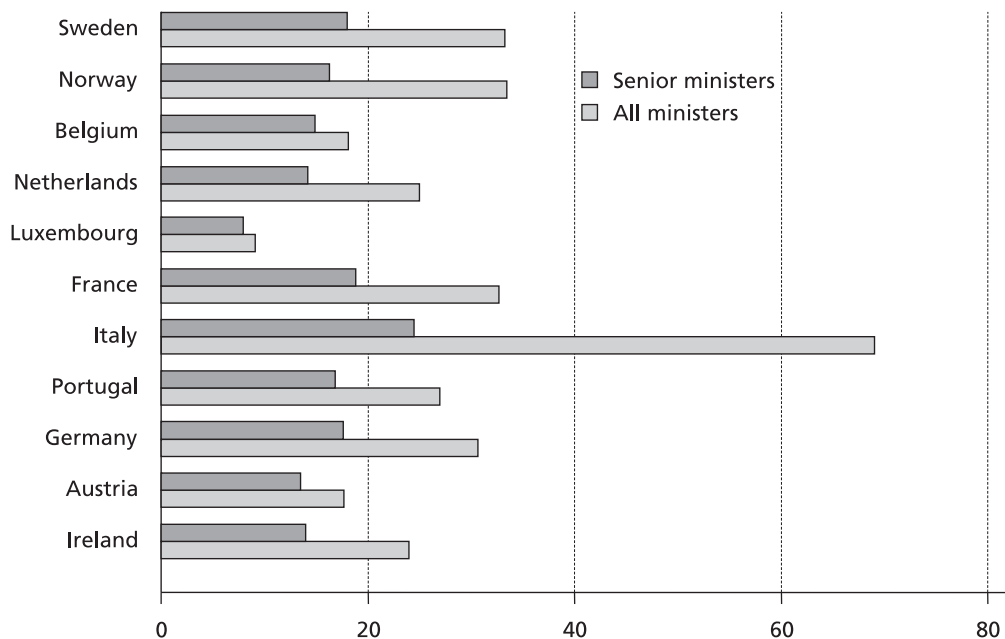
Cabinets that existed less than 35 days have been excluded.

We do indeed observe a clear, systematic and positive correlation between deviations from the Gamson line in the allocation of ministerial portfolios (D1) and compensations through the allocation of junior ministers (CI). Furthermore, we can also observe substantial variance between the countries in our sample. As Figure 2 shows, there is a group of countries that allow for quite large deviations from the principle of proportionality with respect to ministerial portfolios, namely France, Italy and Portugal. Secondly, it is especially in these countries that junior ministers significantly reduce total non-proportionality. Other countries in which JMs correct for deviations from the Gamson line, albeit on a much lower level of overall non-proportionality, are Belgium and Germany. In all the other countries we either can detect no significant distributional effect of junior ministers or even an effect of *increasing* deviations from perfect proportionality. The last group includes Sweden, Luxembourg and Austria.

In the next step of our analysis we would like to investigate whether 'enlarging the cake' by generating additional distributable positions is a frequent strategy in coalition formation. As a first take on this issue we may ask to what extent the average size of cabinets varies between countries. Figure 3 supports our assumption that the size of governments, if we only consider senior positions, does not differ much between the established Western democracies, and the variation that does exist seems to be driven largely by country size. Yet, once we take junior ministers into account, the cross-country variation increases significantly and one outlier is clearly identifiable: Italy (see Figure 3).

Table 4   Inventing new portfolios? A correlation between change of government size and change in the number of coalition parties

| Δ # Government parties	Cabinets[a] N	% Change of cabinet size	
		Senior posts	All posts
Sweden	25	−0.0803	−0.3054
Norway	25	0.2855	−0.1291
Belgium	35	0.7566***	0.7473***
Netherlands	21	0.4277*	0.6142***
Luxembourg	17	0.4054	0.2075
France	42	0.2564	0.1389
Italy	50	0.6368***	0.6383***
Portugal	9	−0.0726	0.4717
Germany	18	0.4789**	0.5989***
Austria	20	0.2072	0.3342
Ireland	20	0.3544	0.3078
Total	282	0.3712***	0.3064***

a   Since we included one-party governments, our N in Table 4 is greater than that reported in Table 1.
*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$; two tailed.

But how much is government size driven by the number of parties in government? We report in Table 4 a simple correlation between 'changes in the number of government parties' and 'changes in the number of government positions.' The first coefficient includes only senior ministers, the second coefficient takes account of both senior and junior positions.

As can be seen from Table 4, only in Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Germany do we find a positive and significant coefficient, with the size effect being manifestly strongest in Belgium and Italy. We take this as further evidence for the dominance of office motives in coalition formation in these countries. Note that there is considerable overlap in the group of countries that allow for large deviations from proportionality in the allocation of ministerial posts and countries that reveal a high propensity to adjust the number of distributable positions to the number of parties in government.

Summarizing our findings we can identify a cluster of countries in which all our evidence testifies to a strong influence of office motives in coalition formation (Italy, Belgium, France and, to some extent, Portugal) and countries in which policy motives clearly seem to dominate (Sweden, Luxembourg and, less clearly, Norway). We may also count Finland among this latter group of countries given that in Finland the institutional rules and the 'job description' for JMs already make it clear that they serve predominantly policy objectives (see also Nousiainen 1994). The same holds true for Australian assistant ministers. In between is a group of countries (Germany, Netherlands, Austria) for which we found mixed evidence. Here both office and policy-seeking behavior seem to have some importance.

Figure 4   **Office orientation index and the results of the Laver/Hunt (1992)**
                  expert survey on the importance of 'office rewards'
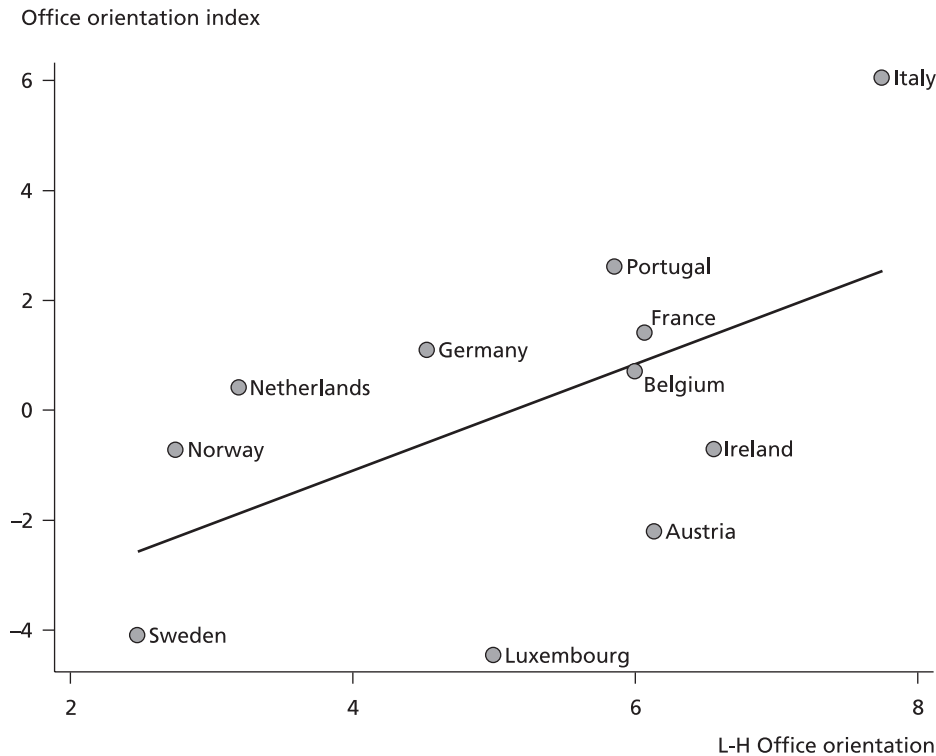
This assessment finds itself in broad agreement with the country literature, but for further validation of our findings we can compare them with the results that the expert survey of Laver/Hunt (1992) generated when country specialists responded to their question (19): "Are cabinet portfolios valued more as rewards of office or as means to affect policy?" (cf. Laver/Hunt 1992: 125). In order to do this, we derived an indicator from our empirical results which captures the relative importance of office-seeking behavior. We took the country averages for initial deviations from the Gamson line (D1), for the corrective impact of junior ministers (CI), for 'office elasticity' and for total cabinet size, z-standardized these averages and summed them up. A simple correlation between our indicator and the Laver/Hunt index produces a correlation coefficient of .55. Once we exclude Luxembourg, for which we have good reasons to assume that non-proportionality is primarily caused by small country and cabinet size, this coefficient increases to .61. Figure 4 shows the scatter plot.

This positive external validation of our argument finally allows us to return to the one particularly contentious case that already figured prominently in the introduction to this article – the case of Italy. Both Michael Thies and Carol Mershon have claimed that the Italian example provides supporting evidence for their 'managed delegation' or 'costs of coalition' thesis, respectively. According to our findings, all evidence suggests that Italian junior ministers are rather 'chips' in the game of office allocation than watchdogs that are installed in 'hostile' ministries to monitor their seniors.

Cross-party 'shadowing' in the Italian case is obviously a side effect of distributional games between coalition parties rather than the result of parties' policy control motives. In this respect our findings are in broad agreement with the country literature, which emphasizes – in contrast to Thies – the dominance of office over policy motives in the Italian party system: Italian parties show poor cohesion, members of parliament are only interested in "benefits for their constituencies, and [in] resources for their personal electoral machines and their faction's organization" (Hine 1993: 171), most legislation is narrow 'special interest legislation' (*leggine*), and undersecretaries are a "convenient currency with which to gratify deputies and buy loyalty" (Dogan, quoted in Mershon 1999: 66); in particular they do not possess any substantial policy influence (Calandra 2002: 72–73). Moreover, according to a long-established "informal division of labour an undersecretary is left free to distribute the patronage of the ministry in his constituency" (Allum, quoted in Mershon 1996: 544; cf. Marradi 1982), a motive which would explain a high degree of mutual 'shadowing' among partners of a coalition (or between factions of a hegemonic party) without politicians needing to follow policy-control motives.[11]

4   Conclusion

When parties of a coalition government distribute portfolios among themselves, what exactly is it that they distribute: office rewards or institutional guarantees to influence future policies in a given jurisdiction? Current strands of coalition theory most often simply assume that the one or the other motive prevails. Scholars have paid little attention to the question of whether different theoretical assumptions about the underlying motives of parties or politicians have similar or differing empirical implications. This has led them to cite exactly the same empirical evidence in support of their opposing theories. In this paper we have identified instances where office and policy assumption of coalition theory do indeed translate into different empirical expecta-

---

11   Similar reservations could be formulated for Thies's other positive case, Japan (not analyzed in our study), given that a large country literature sees the LDP *habatsu* as "exclusively office-driven actors" (Bouissou 2001: 596 and passim; cf. Ramseyer/McCall-Rosenbluth 1993; Cox/Rosenbluth 1996). Very similar to the Italian case, the pattern of position allotment in Japan is described by Bouissou as primarily driven by a "deep-rooted clientelism" (Bouissou 2001: 587). LDP factions are eager to occupy political sub-spaces in order to deliver "posts, prestige and money" to their constituencies (587–588) and, in order to ensure that government positions were "just numbers in the arithmetic of internal party politics, posts were also deprived of almost all decision making power" (ibid.: 598). Again, purely office-driven parties or party factions would also have an interest in maximizing the number of political 'sub-spaces'. In particular, they would all have an interest in being represented in the same pork-rich ministries, which would produce a pattern of mutual 'shadowing' without shadowing being the intention of the political actors.

tions. This allows us, we claim, to discriminate empirically and within a comparative framework between office and policy motives, an approach which is understood to be complementary to the valuable country case studies in which the relative importance of policy versus office-seeking motives has been mainly studied so far (see the contributions in Müller/Strøm1999).

Obviously, a neat separation between office and policy motives can only be made analytically, whereas these motives always mix in the real world to some extent. Yet, casual empiricism suggests that the mixtures themselves are not identical across parties and across party systems: there can be no doubt that, say, Swedish parties differ in behavior and motivation from, say, their Italian counterparts. In this paper we have been able to back this casual empiricism with systematic evidence derived from the analysis of portfolio allocation in Western coalition governments from 1949 to 2004. Our empirical evidence suggests that national party systems vary quite significantly with respect to the dominance of either policy or office motives. The findings of our study found solid support when checked against the expert survey results of Laver/Hunt (1992) and are in broad agreement with the country literature. We infer that different strands of coalition theory obviously are more or less suited to different countries.

Appendix

Description of variables

Government seats	Parties' parliamentary seats as a share of all government parties' seats
Shapley	Shapley value; calculated as share of all possible coalition permutations in which the respective party is decisive in terms of generating the absolute parliamentary majority (N/2 + 1)
Coalition size	Number of governing parties
Δ # Government parties	Change in the number of governing parties
% Change of cabinet size	Relative change of overall number of cabinet posts
∅ D1[a]	$\frac{1}{2}\sum_{i=1}^{N}|D1_i|$
∅ CI	∣∅ D1∣ – ∣∅ D2∣

a   The division by two is necessary in order to obtain easily interpretable index values and to avoid accounting for both over- *and* under-representation. One could imagine that the resulting sum of absolute deviations from the 'Gamson line' is the share of disproportionally distributed ministers. To put it differently: It quantifies the share of ministers that would have to change their party affiliation in order to distribute the offices proportionally. The corrective impact measures the decline or increase of non-proportionality between first order and second order distribution.

Data sources

Parliamentary seats	Mackie/Rose 1991; Data Yearbooks of the European Journal of Political Research (EJPR)

Composition of governments (various sources)

Luxembourg	<http://www.gouvernement.lu/gouvernement/gouvernements_precedents/>, 20 November 2003
Netherlands	<http://www.parlement.com>, 17 November 2003
Norway	<http://odin.dep.no/smk/engelsk/regjeringen/tidl_regjeringer>, 24 November 2003
Finland	<www.vnk.fi/vn/liston>, 17 November 2003
Austria	<www.austria.gv.at/regierung/reg45.htm>, Archiv der Gegenwart and various sources
Germany	Archiv der Gegenwart, EJPR, Müller/Strøm
Portugal	Müller/Strøm, EJPR
Italy	Müller/Strøm, EJPR, Woldendorp, <http://www.palazzochigi.it/Governo/Governi>, 20 November 2003
Belgium	Müller/Strøm, Archiv der Gegenwart, <http://www.crisp.be/Documents-ref/Gouvernements.htm>, 1 December 2003
Ireland	Mershon, Archiv der Gegenwart, <http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/>, 27 November 2003; <http://www.stormcentre.net/elections/people/>, 27 November 2003
France	Keesings Contemporary Archive, Woldendorp, <http://recherche.assemblee-nationale.fr/>, 15 December 2003; <http://francepolitique.free.fr>, 2 December 2003; <http://www.georges-pompidou.org/epoque/gvnmt_cabinets/> 4 December 2003
Sweden	Sveriges Statskalender, various years <http://www.sweden.gov.se/systemofgov/governments/>, 4 December 2003
Australia	<http://www.aph.gov.au/library/handbook/historical/ministries/index.htm>, 27 November 2003
Denmark	Müller/Strøm, EJPR

References

Bergman, Torbjörn, 2000: Sweden. When Minority Cabinets are the Rule and Majority Coalitions the Exception. In: Wolfgang C. Müller/Kaare Strøm (eds.), *Coalition Governments in Western Europe.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 192–230.

Bouissou, Jean-Marie, 2001: Party Factions and the Politics of Coalition: Japanese Politics under the "System of 1955." In: *Electoral Studies* 20, 581–602.

Browne, Eric C./Mark Franklin, 1973: Aspects of Coalition Payoffs in European Parliamentary Democracies. In: *American Political Science Review* 67, 453–469.

Budge, Ian/Michael Laver, 1985: Office Seeking and Policy Pursuit in Coalition Theory. In: *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 11, 485–506.

Calandra, Piero, 2002: *Il governo della Repubblica. Come funziona l'istituzione che guida il paese.* Bologno: il Mulino.

Cox, Gary/Francis Rosenbluth, 1996: Factional Competition for the Party Endorsement: The Case of Japan's LDP. In: *Electoral Studies* 26, 259–269.

Gamson, William A., 1961: A Theory of Coalition Formation. In: *American Sociological Review* 26, 373–382.

Golden, Miriam, 2003: Electoral Connections: The Effects of the Personal Vote on Political Patronage, Bureaucracy and Legislation in Postwar Italy. In: *British Journal of Political Science* 33, 189–212.

Hine, David, 1993: *Governing Italy. The Politics of Bargained Pluralism.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Laver, Michael C./W. Ben Hunt, 1992: *Policy and Party Competition.* London: Routledge.

Laver, Michael C./Norman Schofield, 1990: *Multiparty Government. The Politics of Coalitions in Europe.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Laver, Michael/Kenneth A. Shepsle, 1990: Coalitions and Cabinet Government. In: *The American Political Science Review* 84, 873–890.

Laver, Michael/Kenneth A. Shepsle (eds.), 1994: *Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentary Government.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Laver, Michael/Kenneth A. Shepsle, 1996: *Making and Breaking Governments: Cabinets and Legislature in Parliamentary Democracies.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mackie, Thomas/Richard Rose, 1991: *The International Almanac of Electoral History.* Fully rev. 3rd Ed. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly.

Marradi, Alberto, 1982: Italy: From Centrism to Centre-Left Coalitions. In: Eric C. Browne/John Dreijmanis (eds.), *Government Coalitions in Western Democracies.* New York: Longman, 33–70.

Martin, Lanny W./Georg Vanberg, 2004: Policing the Bargain: Coalition Government and Parliamentary Scrutiny. In: *American Journal of Political Science* 48, 13–27.

McCubbins, Mathew D./Michael F. Thies, 1997: As a Matter of Factions: The Budgetary Implications of Shifting Factional Control in Japan's LDP. In: *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 22, 293–328.

Mershon, Carol, 1996: The Costs of Coalition: Coalition Theories and Italian Governments. In: *American Political Science Review* 90, 534–554.

——, 1999: The Costs of Coalition: A Five-Nation Comparison. In: Shaun Bowler/David M. Farrell/Richard S. Katz (eds.), *Party Discipline and Parliamentary Government.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 227–268.

——, 2001: Party Factions and Coalition Government: Portfolio Allocation in Italian Christian Democracy. In: *Electoral Studies* 20, 555–580.

——, 2002: *The Costs of Coalitions.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Müller, Wolfgang C./Kaare Strøm (eds.), 1999: *Policy, Office, or Votes? How Political Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Choices.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Müller, Wolfgang C./Kaare Strøm (eds.), 2000: *Coalition Governments in Western Europe.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nousiainen, Jaakko, 1994: Finland: Ministerial Autonomy, Constitutional Collectivism, and Party Oligarchy. In: Michael C. Laver / Kenneth Shepsle (eds.), *Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentary Government.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 88–105.

Ramseyer, J. Mark / Frances McCall Rosenbluth, 1993: *Japan's Political Marketplace.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Riker, William, 1962: *The Theory of Political Coalitions.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Schofield, Norman / Michael J. Laver, 1985: Bargaining Theory and Portfolio Payoffs in European Coalition Governments 1945–1983. In: *British Journal of Political Science* 15, 143–164.

Strøm, Kaare / Wolfgang C. Müller, 1999: Political Parties and Hard Choices. In: Wolfgang C. Müller / Kaare Strøm (eds.), *Policy, Office, or Votes? How Political Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Choices.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1–35.

Thies, Michael F., 2001: Keeping Tabs on Partners: The Logic of Delegation in Coalition Governments. In: *American Journal of Political Science* 45, 580–598.

Woldendorp, Jaap / Hans Keman / Ian Budge, 2000: *Party Government in 48 Democracies (1945–1998).* Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Recent Titles in the Publication Series of the MPIfG

MPIfG Discussion Papers

DP 04/8
M. Höpner
Unternehmensmitbestimmung unter Beschuss: Die Mitbestimmungsdebatte im Licht der sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschung

DP 04/7
S. Avdagic
Loyalty and Power in Union–Party Alliances: Labor Politics in Postcommunism

DP 04/6
P. Manow, A. Schäfer, H. Zorn
European Social Policy and Europe's Party-Political Center of Gravity, 1957–2003

DP 04/5
P. A. Hall, D. W. Gingerich
Varieties of Capitalism and Institutional Complementarities in the Macroeconomy: An Empirical Analysis

DP 04/4
R. Mayntz
Organizational Forms of Terrorism: Hierarchy, Network, or a Type sui generis?

DP 04/3
C. Trampusch
Von Verbänden zu Parteien: Der Elitenwechsel in der Sozialpolitik

MPIfG Working Papers

WP 04/5
A. Schäfer
A New Form of Governance? Comparing the Open Method of Coordination to Multilateral Surveillance by the IMF and the OECD

WP 04/4
W. Streeck
Globalisierung: Mythos und Wirklichkeit

WP 04/3
P. Manow
'The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly' – Esping-Andersen's Regime Typology and the Religious Roots of the Western Welfare State

WP 04/2
F. W. Scharpf
Der deutsche Föderalismus – reformbedürftig und reformierbar?

WP 04/1
R. Mayntz
Governance Theory als fortentwickelte Steuerungstheorie?

MPIfG Books

J. Beckert, J. Eckert, M. Kohli, W. Streeck (Hg.)
Transnationale Solidarität. Chancen und Grenzen
Campus, 2004

S. Ganghof
Wer regiert in der Steuerpolitik? Einkommensteuerreform zwischen internationalem Wettbewerb und nationalen Verteilungskonflikten
Campus 2004

H. Enderlein
Nationale Wirtschaftspolitik in der europäischen Währungsunion
Campus 2004

C. Crouch, P. Le Galès, C. Trigilia, and H. Voelzkow (eds.)
Changing Governance of Local Economies. Responses of European Local Production Systems
Oxford University Press 2004

H. Kitschelt, W. Streeck (eds.)
Germany: Beyond the Stable State
Frank Cass 2004