

# Proposals in electoral party manifestos in time of crisis: Commitment issues?

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## Abstract

The present paper analyses the proposals presented by the political parties in their manifestos for the electoral campaigns in the general elections in March 2008 and November 2011 in Spain. For this reason, we study the proposals of the parties which obtained parliamentary representation in both elections, namely: PP, PSOE, CiU, IU, PNV, and UPyD. The main work hypothesis assumes that the electoral manifestos of the parties without chances of forming a government are more specific than those with possibilities of achieving a parliamentary majority. Using the content analysis as main methodology, the proposal of these parties to fight the crisis (essentially the proposal related to economic matters and employment), assessing their concreteness and depth. Results confirm our starting hypothesis, showing that the largest parties present broader proposals than those with less chances of obtaining a parliamentary majority.

**Keywords.** content analysis, elections, party manifestos, political parties, electoral campaigns

## 1 Introduction

Citizens' trust on political parties has decreased in the last years. According to the polls conducted by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS)<sup>1</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup>The CIS is an independent entity assigned to the Ministry of the Presidency and one of its main functions is carrying out public opinion surveys (electoral studies, monthly public

citizenry's appraisal of the general political situation in Spain is quite negative. Just before the 2008 elections, 40.2 percent of the interviewees defined it as 'fair', and 25 percent considered it to be 'bad'. Spanish political parties and politicians were considered as the seventh biggest problem, after unemployment, economical problems, terrorism, housing, immigration, and security. Meanwhile, in the last poll before the 2011 elections, most of the interviewees' appraisal of the political situation was 'bad' (37.3 percent) and 'very bad' (30 percent). And politicians and their political parties were seen as the third biggest problem (7.6 percent), just after unemployment (65.3 percent) and economical problems (16.6 percent).

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

The aim of this paper is to present a systematic analysis of the electoral manifestos promulgated by six Spanish political parties prior to last national elections in 2008 and 2011. Using content analysis, we hand-coded the manifestos in order to classify the economic-related proposals depending on its specificity by means of a specificity index.

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

## 2 Spanish Electoral Context in 2008 and 2011

In this paper, we will test a series of hypotheses related to the way Spanish political parties expose their proposals in their party programmes in the last two general elections held in Spain in 2008 and 2011. The study covers six major Spanish parties, namely, those who obtained parliamentary representation and the largest percentage of votes in both general elections, in November 2011 and March 2008: People's Party (PP), Socialist Party (PSOE), Convergence and Union (CiU), United Left (IU), Basque National Party (PNV) and Union, Progress and Democracy (UPyD). In 2011, the amount of the votes that all these parties obtained represent 90.4 percent

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opinion barometers and monographic studies). CIS, largest, official, most relevant, 18.000. The surveys made by the media (newspapers, radio and television stations) showed similar results.

of the votes, and, altogether, they have 333 members of the Congress out of 350. In 2008, the amount of votes was 94.15 and they had 345 members of the Congress.

	2008		2011	
	Votes	MP	Votes	MP
PP	39.94	154	44.6	186
PSOE	43.87	169	28.73	110
CiU	3.03	10	4.17	16
IU-LV	3.77	2	6.92	11
PNV	1.19	6	1.33	5
UPyD	1.19	1	4.69	5
Total	92.99	342	90.44	333

Table 1: 2008 and 2011 Spanish General Election Results. Percentage of votes and number of Members of the Parliament. Own elaboration with data from the Ministry of the Interior.

Despite the fact that Amaiur obtained seven seats and 1.37 percent of votes, this party is not included in our study since they did not participate in the 2008 elections. Moreover, for the 2011 elections, they did not present an electoral programme, but only a list of four commitments to the Basque society.

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

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

PP to win the elections.

We focus on the proposal that parties presented related to economic issues in the general elections in 2008 and 2011. As we mentioned before, the CIS polls showed that economic problems and unemployment were considered as the two most important problems by the citizens just before both general elections took place. The global financial crisis which started in 2008 became systemic, “affecting productive activity, the labour market, public revenues and household economies” (Laparra and Perez Eransus, 2012), and Spain has been especially sensitive to these effects, which are lasting longer, achieving record unemployment rates in 2013 <sup>2</sup>.

Taking this into account, we consider that voters would pay more attention to the proposals oriented to improve the economic situation and job creation.

### 3 Studying Party Manifestos

The election manifestos, also called programs or platforms, are complex and lengthy documents, published at the beginning of the campaign for maximum media coverage. According to Budge, party manifestos set themes to be emphasized by party spokespersons, which will be then taken up by the media, and they can be considered the only statement of policy issued authoritatively on behalf of the whole party, since there are extensive debates over the contents of the document and for this reason, they are the “only fully authoritative statement of the party policy for an election” (Budge, 1994: 450-55).

In this vein, Harmel et al state that parties’ platforms are written for two audiences, one internal and other external: “Political parties have two faces, a public face turned towards the media, the voters and the rest of the world, and an inward-looking face reserved for the initiated, activists, elected representatives and leaders” (Harmel et al, 1995: 1). In other words, as Charlot states: “manifestos are, obviously, written in part (and perhaps in large part) for the external audience of potential supporters in the next election. But they are also written, at least in some small part, to satisfy current members and activists, and to attract new ones” (Charlot, 1989: 361). Other scholars consider that parties tries to shape their images to the public expectations, especially when they formulate their party programmes prior to an election campaign (Janda et al, 1995: 172).

Therefore, party platforms are relevant and worthy to study, since these documents can serve as issue profiles that contain valuable information about parties’ images and identities (Harmel et al, 1995:1). An interesting fact

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<sup>2</sup>The Guardian: Spain unemployment soars to record high, 25th April 2013: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/25/spain-unemployment-soars-record-high>

about studying manifestos is that they provide more objective and bias-free information than expert surveys, mass media agenda or interviews (Klein-nijenhuis and Pennings, 1999). Also, manifestos are easily accessible and available and they are issued by the whole party and not by party factions (Pogorelis et al, 2005: 994), thus we can consider that the statements contained in the programmes present their real policy intentions and stances.

## 4 Theoretical Approaches

There is a number of studies that have attempted to explain party competition and the strategies used to attract voters. One way of analysing these phenomena is the study of the political texts that parties generate. Most of these studies have focused on national parliamentary elections and to a lesser extent regional elections (Alonso et al, 2012; Pogorelis et al, 2005). However, they attempt to explain changes in party identity (Janda et al., 1995), changes in issue profiles (Harmel et al, 1995), issue emphasis (Pogorelis et al, 2005), issue competition (Green-Pedersen, 2007), among others. Also, many studies have focused on how parties change through the time. For instance, Janda et al. (1995) inquired about how parties try to change their identity images via their election manifestos from one election to the next. In the present paper, our aim is to analyse the differences between the manifestos of parties with chances of winning a parliamentary majority and those without such chances.

Anthony Downs' work 'An Economic Theory of Democracy' (1957) is a compulsory starting point in this kind of studies. According to Downs (1957: 11; 35), every government in democratic societies seeks to maximize their political support, and their primary goal is reelection in the periodic elections held. For parties out of power, the goal is to be elected. For this reason, all their actions are aimed at maximizing votes, and policies are just means towards this end. Downs' axiom considers that citizens act rationally in politics, casting their votes for the parties they believe that will provide them with more benefits than any other (Downs, 1957:36). The rational voter can only make estimates of the utility income of the current government policies and what it would be if an opposition party were in power. (Downs, 1957: 46).

Literature on spatial modelling of voting behaviour assumes that parties 'formulate policies in order to win elections' (Downs, 1957:28). In this vein, Downs' spatial voting theory considers that politicians know voters' preferences and electors are informed about party policies (Downs, 1957: 114-41 ff). Polls give information about preferences to the parties and media and party manifestos give information about party policies to the electorate.

Moreover, Downs also introduced the proximity theory in his seminal work (Downs, 1957). This theory is the traditional approach to party com-

petition and voting analysis. It assumes that parties compete by taking different positions along a set of issues. Thus, voters with a particular position on an issue will be more likely to vote for the party whose position on an issue is closer to theirs. As Pogorelis et al. (2005: 994) indicate there are alternative approaches to party competition study, like the salience theory proposed by Robertson (1976) and restated by Budge and Farlie (1983: 23).

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

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

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

Regarding parties, it also relevant to note that the parties we study are vote-seeking or office-seeking when competing at the national level, none of them is policy-seeking. We hypothesise that this can determine the kind of proposal that parties include in their platforms.

According to Strom (1990: 566-567), rational theorists have developed three models of parties attending to their competitive party behaviour: vote, office and policy-seeking parties. Vote-seeking parties seek to maximize their electoral support for controlling the government, but depending on the context, parties can look for maximizing pluralities or the chances of winning

a majority of seats; whereas office-seeking parties seek to maximize their control over political office and policy-seeking parties seek to maximize their effect on policies. Vote-seeking concept derives from Downs work, and office and policy-seeking party concepts derive from coalition studies. Despite the fact that there is a large debate and critics to accurate the scope of these models, these broad concepts fit perfectly in our research work. As Share (1999: 89 ff) analyses, PSOE shifted from being a vote-seeker to an office-seeker. Similarly, in this study we consider PP as an office-seeker party, and all the rest as vote-seeking parties, since they aspire to obtain seats in the Congress but not to obtain a majority of votes to govern. Based on the distinction between office-seeking and vote-seeking parties, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 4.1** *Parties with options of obtaining a Parliamentary majority will act as office-seekers and, therefore, will present less specific proposals than parties with no real chances of winning a majority in the Parliament (vote-seekers).*

One of the problems that makes the adoption of a particular strategy difficult is that polls only identify important issues to electors, but not provide information on what really influences voting (Budge, 1994: 445). Parties are intentionally ambiguous as the polls and last elections results do not provide enough information to interpret it to define their policy stands in order to attract voters. According to Ian Budge (1994: 446), parties adopt the alternative strategy that ideology can provide, namely, “a way of defining and partitioning policy space and of indicating the broad area within which a particular party should take its position”.

Other theoretical approach to take into account is the salience theory. The Party Manifesto Project (PMP) relied heavily on saliency theory in its research on party platforms. This theory suggests that, contrary to Downs (1957), parties don't really alter their issue positions when they are competing for elections so such as “selectively emphasizing or de-emphasizing issues in their policy inventory” (Klingeman, Hofferbert, and Budge, 1994: 24). The extent to which these issues are emphasized in a party manifesto indicates their 'salience' in the platform and thus to the electorate (Harmel et al 1995, 4).

## 5 Methodology

The research on party manifestos has used a great variety of methods. The most well-know line of research has been implemented by the Party Manifesto Project (PMP), that approaches the study of manifestos by means of content analysis (Budge, Robertson, and Hearl, 1987; Budge et al., 2001). The project uses hand-coding to generate party positions on 56 issues that are grouped in seven categories. Codifiers must count the “quasi-sentences”

included in the manifestos that fall into each issue, then, an “issue salience” score is calculated simply dividing the sentences for every issue by the total number of manifesto’s sentences (Slapin and Proksh, 2008). A different methodology utilized in this kind of studies is the computer-based content analysis. This technique has been developed in the last years and applies quantitative analysis to the study of political manifestos. With this method, the hand-coding needed in the case of the PMP is avoided. Recently, Slapin and Proksh (2008) used this method to study the positions of German parties in the left-right scale and found that their results were consistent with the ones obtained applying the PMP methodology. In the present paper, we use a hand-coding approach to codify the manifestos. However, our codification is made in a different way than the PMP, since our research question differs from the PMP. Here we are not interested in issue salience or party positions, but in the specificity of the proposals presented by the parties.

In particular, the aim of this work is to analyze the economic-related proposals made by the parties in their manifestos. A broad review of the parties manifestos evidence the lack of a common criteria to structure the manifestos. For example, it is possible to find proposals about issues such as high education or pensions included in the economic sections, and proposals about the regulation of the single market in the Public Administration section.

To be able to compare electoral manifestos (among different parties, but also within the same party and different elections), firstly we define what an economic-related policy can include and then we screen the manifestos searching for the proposals on these issues. We do not take into consideration if the proposals are concentrated in one economic section or dispersed throughout the manifesto. The strategy followed by the parties in the structure of their manifestos would matter if we would be analyzing the actual content of their proposals or the priority setting given by the parties to every issue, but our research objective is measuring the specificity of the proposals. For this reason, we assume that the place given to the pledge does not have a significant effect on our results.

The proposals included in the analysis are those related to the following issues:

- Fiscal reform (taxes, fight against fraud...).
- Macroeconomic accounts (deficit, public debt, inflation...).
- Single market reforms (regulatory committees, red tape hindrances...).
- Employment and labour market.
- Measures to increase productivity
- Financial market regulation.

- Entrepreneurship.

Sectoral policies, as for instance I+D+i policy or industrial policy, are not included in the analysis.

What can be considered as a proposal or pledge? This question is not minor for our analysis since it will define our main object of study. In party manifestos, it is possible to find a lot of content that may not be considered as pledges. In this sense, Royed (1996) has established the difference between a “pledge” and a “rhetorical statement”, and there would be a difference in terms of specificity. Rhetorical statements would be ambiguous “and could rise to implementation or not implementation, or even reversal of policy”.

The operational definition of pledge/proposal used in this study is the one proposed by Rallings (1987) : “a specific commitment on behalf of a party to act in a certain area following a strategy also mentioned”. In this sense, we would only take into our analysis assertions made by the parties in their manifestos that include a commitment. For example, the situation diagnosis usually elaborated by the parties as a preface for the proposals, are not taken into consideration. In order to classify the pledges based on their degree of specificity or concretion, we used the classification proposed by Barra (2005) in her analysis of the proposals made by the two main British parties between 1987 to 2001. Although Barra’s classification of pledges is useful as a starting point, we have detected some problems. The categories proposed, “Vague”, “General”, “Specific” and “Detailed” needed in our opinion a better definition in order to avoid overlapping errors. For this reason, in this analysis we use the same categories, but with some variations in the definition in order to facilitate potential problems when codifying the proposals made in the party manifestos<sup>3</sup> . The definitions followed for every category are:

- *Vague*: it stipulates a commitment to a particular course of action but this is defined weakly because it only reflects a general objective.
- *General*: it commits the party to a particular course of action but lacks precise specification or detail of either the intended outcome or means of implementation. The proposals contain a general objective and a concrete action, but lack mentioning how to be implemented.
- *Specific*: it outlines precisely what intention and what action is to be taken and refers to the implementation, at least, in a non-specific way. Therefore, it mentions a policy instrument.
- *Detailed*: their pledges are extended versions of specific pledges but differ in terms of providing precise information about intended action

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<sup>3</sup>For example, we find Barra’s definition of a “Vague” pledge (“one which stipulates a commitment to a particular course of action but this is defined weakly”) difficult to apply in operational terms. It would be necessary to define what considered as “weak” in order to codify the proposals in a systematic way.

or target focus. It includes information about the general intention, concrete actions, implementation means and economic figures and/or a deadline to accomplish it.

The four categories of proposals are exemplified in the following four commitments:

- *Vague*: “Promoveremos la existencia real de competencia en todos los sectores estratégicos: energía, comunicaciones, transporte, distribución comercial y servicios a empresas”(PP, 2008).
- *General*: “Creación del Comité de Auditorías en todas las empresas públicas, con participación de los representantes de los trabajadores y de los órganos de control del sector público” (IU, 2008).
- *Specific*: “Modificar el Impuesto de Sociedades para redistribuir los beneficios de las deducciones del impuesto, desde las empresas grandes a las empresas pequeñas y medianas, de tal forma que ambas paguen tipos efectivos similares y más cercanos al tipo nominal” (PSOE, 2011).
- *Detailed*: “Reducción de la presión fiscal por el IRPF al nivel de 2004 mediante una indexación generalizada de las bases impositivas. Ello supone un beneficio para todos los ciudadanos, con independencia de su nivel de renta. Además, en una coyuntura de bajo crecimiento en la demanda de consumo, supondrá un alivio para ésta. Se estima que esta reducción en el IRPF implicará un coste recaudatorio de unos 6.200 millones de euros. Para no incurrir en déficit presupuestario, tal coste puede compensarse mediante la supresión de las transferencias implícitas en la estimación del Cupo Vasco (2.060 millones de euros) y de la Aportación Navarra (644 millones de euros), la reducción a la mitad de los gastos publicitarios del Estado (150 millones de euros), la supresión de los programas presupuestarios establecidos con fines electoralistas —cheque bebé, vivienda verde, alquiler de vivienda, ampliación de prestaciones sanitarias— o de compensación a los partidos nacionalistas de Cataluña, País Vasco y Galicia (3.037 millones de euros), la reducción de la subvención del Estado a RTVE (300 millones de euros) y la racionalización de la Administración Central y la supresión de las Diputaciones Provinciales (120 millones de euros)”. (UpyD, 2008).

In order to be able to compare the party manifestos easily, we have constructed a 'Specificity Index', based on the distribution of the pledges among categories. For every manifesto, the percentage of „vague“ proposals is multiplied by one, the percentage of „general“ proposals is multiplied by 20, the percentage of „specific“ is multiplied by 40 and the percentage of

„detailed“ proposals is multiplied by 50. Then, all the scores are added and divided by 5000, which is the highest score possible for every party manifesto (in case that 100 percent of the proposals are classified as „detailed“).

$$SI = \frac{V + 20G + 40S + 50D}{5000} \quad (1)$$

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

The weights proposed are based on a qualitative reasoning. The vague proposals are given the lowest weight (1) and the detailed, the highest one, 50. On the other hand, the weight given to the general proposals is 20 and the the weight for the specific, 40. Thus we consider that there exists the same qualitative difference between „vague“ - „general“ and „general“ - „vague“. Our analysis of the manifestos shows that the difference between „specific“ and „detailed“ proposals is smaller and is frequently difficult to distinguish between both. For this reason, in order to avoid bias, we have decided to separate both categories only with 10 points in the scale.

## 6 Results

In this section we analyze the proposal specificity for the political parties that obtained parliamentary representation in the Spanish general elections of 2008 and 2011. The first political party analyzed is “Union Progreso y Democracia” (UPyD) a national-wide party that run for the first time in the 2008 elections obtaining 1.19 percent of the valid votes and one congresswoman. In the elections of 2011, the party improved significantly its results, obtaining 4.7 percent of the votes and 5 members in the Congress.

As we can see in Table 1, in the 2008 elections, UpyD presented a manifesto with 41 economic-related proposals, the majority of them classified under “vague” and “general” categories (46.3 percent and 34.1 percent respectively). Only 9.8 percent of the proposals were “specific”, the same amount than for “detailed”. In the manifesto presented in 2011, UPyD presented 67 economic-related proposals, being most of them were classified under the “general” category (46.3 percent) and the “specific” (40.3 percent). Only 11.9 percent of the pledges were “vague” and 1.5 percent “detailed”.

In the 2008 elections, PNV obtained 1.19 percent of the votes and 6 representatives in the Congress. A total of 48.9 percent of the proposals were classified as “general”, 26.7 per cent as “vague”, 22.2 were “specific” and only 2.2 percent were considered “detailed”. The same pattern is found in the 2011 elections. PNV obtained 1.33 percent of the votes and 5 representatives presenting a party manifesto with 48.4 percent of the “general” proposals,

35.5 percent of “vague”, 12.9 “specific” and 3.2 “detailed”. In total, PNV presented 41 economic-related proposals in 2008 and 35 in 2011.

In 2008, Izquierda Unida (IU) obtained 3.77 of the votes and 2 representatives in Congress. For this election the coalition presented a party manifesto with 24.3 percent of “vague” pledges, 34.6 of “general”, and 11.5 percent of “specific” and “detailed”. For the 2011 elections, when the party obtained one of its best electoral results with 6.92 percent of the votes and 11 representatives, the specificity of the party manifesto presented a complete different pattern. This time, the “detailed” category was the one with more pledges (36.6 percent) followed by the “specific” category (22.5 percent), “general” (21.1 percent) and “vague” (19.7 percent).

The Partido Popular (PP) is the main conservative party in Spain. In the elections 2008, as polls predicted, PP could not win the majority needed to form a government and had to stay in the opposition. In this occasion, 47.1 percent of the economic-related pledges fall into the “vague” category, 27.5 in the “general”, 11.8 in the “specific” and 13.7 in “detailed”. The electoral situation changed in 2011, all surveys predicted a majority for the PP and the party presented itself during the campaign as the next party in government after the elections. The manifesto presented increased the amount of “general” pledges (up to a 43.7) that, put together with the “vague” proposals (43.7), represented more than 85 percent of the economic-related pledges. The specific ones and detailed were marginal (8.5 and 4.2 percent respectively).

As predicted by experts and polls, the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) won the 2008 elections with 43.87 percent of the votes and 169 representatives. The economic-related pledges in its manifesto are classified as follow: 56.3 percent „vague“, 12.6 percent „general“, 25.3 percent „specific“ and 5.7 percent „detailed“. In 2011, PSOE expected to lose the elections, as it happened with one of the worst electoral results of the party’s history (28,73 percent of the votes and 110 of representatives). The 37.7 percent of the proposals made in its manifesto were „vague“, 24.6 percent were „general“, 36.1 percent were „specific“ and 1.6 percent were „detailed“.

Convergencia i Unio (CiU) is the other regional party included in the analysis. This party only presents candidates in the Catalan Region and, similar to the PNV, its main objective is not to form a government in Spain, but to achieve an influential role in national policy. In the 2008 elections (when CiU obtained 3.05 percent of the votes and 11 representatives), 63.2 percent of the economic-related proposals were „vague“, 15.8 percent were „general“, 10.5 percent were „specific“ and 10.5 were „detailed“. In the elections of 2011 (when CiU received 4.17 percent of the votes and obtained 16 representatives), the party manifesto presented by the party was composed by 55.5 percent of „vague“ economic-related proposals, 24.2 percent „general“, 8.8 percent „specific“ and 11.5 percent „detailed“.

<b>PARTY</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>VAGUE</b>	<b>GENERAL</b>	<b>SPECIFIC</b>	<b>DETAILED</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
UPyD	2008	46.3	34.1	9.8	9.8	100.0
UPyD	2011	11.9	46.3	40.3	1.5	100.0
PNV	2008	26.7	48.9	22.2	2.2	100.0
PNV	2011	35.5	48.4	12.9	3.2	100.0
IU	2008	42.3	34.6	11.5	11.5	100.0
IU	2011	19.7	21.1	22.5	36.6	100.0
PP	2008	47.1	27.5	11.8	13.7	100.0
PP	2011	43.7	43.7	8.5	4.2	100.0
PSOE	2008	56.3	12.6	25.3	5.7	100.0
PSOE	2011	37.7	24.6	36.1	1.6	100.0
CiU	2008	63.2	15.8	10.5	10.5	100.0
CiU	2011	55.5	24.2	8.8	11.5	100.0

Table 2: Own elaboration. Classification economic-related proposals based on specificity

The previous analysis is helpful to see the temporary differences between manifestos of the same party, but it gets confusing when it comes to make comparisons between different parties. For this reason, we have calculated an Specificity Index (SI) that composite all the categories in one single score for each manifesto. As Table 2 shows, the two minority parties, UPyD and IU, have Specificity scores higher than PSOE and PP, the two main parties and the ones with chances of being in office. UPyD had SI score of 32.15 percent in 2008 and in 2011 elections 52.48 percent. The difference could be explained probably because UpyD was created short before 2008 elections and did not have the resources (time and expertise) needed to develop a complete manifesto. In 2011, UPyD had already 5-year experience, more resources and also institutional presence in national and regional institutions. That could explain the significant improvement in the SI score. Izquierda Unida also experimented a significant change in the IS score. In 2008, its party manifesto obtained a score of 35.46 and in 2011 of 63.49.

In both elections, PSOE and PP, the two largest parties, always scored below the minority parties. In 2008, PSOE had a score of 32.16 and PP slightly higher, 35.06. In 2011 elections, PSOE scored 41.08 and PP 29.32.

Finally, the regional parties, CiU and PNV, do not present a consistent pattern. In 2008, PNV obtained a SI score of 40.09, the highest among all parties. On the contrary, CiU scored 26.53, the lowest. In the 2011 elections, the PNV scored was 33.61 and CiU 29.35, again one of the lowest (closer to the 29.32 of PP).

<b>PARTY</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>SPECIFICITY INDEX</b>
UPYD	2008	32.15
UPyD	2011	52.48
PNV	2008	40.09
PNV	2011	33.61
IU	2008	35.46
IU	2011	63.49
PP	2008	35.06
PP	2011	29.32
PSOE	2008	32.16
PSOE	2011	41.08
CiU	2008	26.53
CiU	2011	29.35

Table 3: Specificity Index Scores

## 7 Discussion

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

To answer our research question we have analyzed the economic-related proposals presented by PP, PSOE, IU, UPyD, CiU, and PNV for the general elections 2008 and 2011. We have constructed a Specificity Index that allow us to compare, not only among manifestos presented by different parties for the same elections, but also among parties in different times.

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

On the other hand, UPyD and IU present higher scores in the Specificity Index than PP and PSOE. The only exception is UPyD's score for 2008, probably because the party was recently created and did not have the time and resources to present a full-developed manifesto. For the two regional parties, CiU and PNV, it was not possible to find a clear pattern and further analysis would be needed.

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

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

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