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Foreword¹

There is clearly a need for the identification and positioning of political parties and their stances. This need is both of a societal and of an academic nature. Socially it seems that traditional voting patterns have dissolved and information sources have diversified exponentially. Voters no longer vote primarily according to their community identity, such as class or religion (Franklin et al. 1992), but they make their choice independently. Accessible information about party positions on the social structure in general as well as on specific issues is therefore imperative to inform the public so that they can cast an informed vote.

Academically, identifying policy preferences and positions of political parties and their actors is primarily a concern for political scientists. When analysing the behaviour of political parties over time or across countries (political) scientists need reliable and valid measures to establish positions. The search for such estimates has resulted in a range of analytical methods ranging from expert surveys, opinion polls and roll-call behaviour to various forms of content analysis (Krouwel and Van Elfrinkhof 2013). Each of these methods has its advantages and disadvantages, resulting in more or less reliable, valid and transparent measurements that might be improved by adopting cross-disciplinary research designs.

This volume contributes to the literature of party positioning by focusing on political text analyses with wide variety of approaches from political science, linguistics and discourse analysis. Political texts in particular function to articulate and to communicate ideas persuasively to a broad audience. For this reason, political texts seem to construct political positions in a process of creating a coherent party identity from which goals and policies seem to unfold. These ideas can be constructed in a broad ideological context, for example in favour or against state interference in the Economy, or in more specific policy measures such as pro/contra gay marriage. As such, texts are an excellent source of political positions and their rationale. Furthermore, the sheer abundance and availability of political texts make it an attractive source for the analysis of collections of texts which are often available digitally. The chapters in this volume discuss methods to analyse a variety of political text genres that are designed to establish and communicate party positions: from newspapers, election manifestos, campaign and parliamentary speeches, to online documents, blogs, and interviews (see Table 1).

The purpose is to find regularities in how stance is encoded in political texts and how such characteristics can be gauged on political dimensions. Simply reading and interpreting a text will not do, as meaning making and the social implications of policies are subject to their dynamic and diverse contexts, as analysed in qualitative studies. Another approach is to analyse large amounts of political text to find variations in content, linguistic and discursive aspects that can be linked to positions on political dimensions. Current types of analysis apply qualitative and quantitative methods, or combinations thereof. Such attempts at modelling political text analysis for party positioning reveal the complexity of sense making. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are pursued in many of the contributions in this volume.

We have tried to divide the variety of approaches into meaningful parts that give an impression of the division between qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as attempts to converge them with reflections on the flaws and advantages of mixing methods. As an introduction to the problematics addressed, Kleinnijenhuis and Van Atteveldt (Chapter 1) describe the evolution of political text analysis from the early concept of political thought (Machiavelli) to modern advances in the domains of knowledge representation, natural language parsing, automated content analysis, and semantic-web technologies. The chapter

¹ Kaal, B, I. Maks and A. van Elfrinkhof. 2014. Foreword. In B. Kaal, I. Maks and A. van Elfrinkhof (Eds), *From Text to Political Positions: Text analysis across disciplines*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, pp. vii-xi.

then focuses on conceptualisation through the logic and structure of semantic networks and discusses the sophisticated *NET-Method*, developed at The Network Institute (VU University Amsterdam). Part I, introduced by Piek Vossen, is a collection of discussions about automated, quantitative methods to identify characteristics and variation in political texts. Part II, introduced by Veronika Koller, focuses on qualitative methods, some of which apply quantitative analysis as evidence of the existence of linguistic and discursive aspects of meaning making. Part III is introduced by Alan Cienki and includes two chapters on projects attempting to mix and match qualitative and quantitative methods for better results and best practice. The purpose of this book is to present the variety of considerations and applications of text analysis for political party positioning, and to inform scholars of the wide range of available methods that have their advantages and disadvantages under different conditions. More ambitiously, this book aims to trigger cross-disciplinary research in which methods are combined in order to refine research methods for the analysis of stance taking, and for more accurate results overall.

However, attempts to converge quantitative and qualitative methods of content analysis run across the three parts, as shown in Table 1. For instance, the chapters by Kleinnijenhuis and Van Atteveldt, Collette and Pétry, and Krouwel and Wall show the ability and the promise of quantitative methods for the analysis of large amounts of texts vis-a-vis the in-depth analysis of qualitative methods. In Linguistics, various quantitative methods have been developed for expressions of subjectivity and sentiment in party documents, and their rhetorical affordances. The chapters by Gryc and Moilanen, Dahlberg and Sahlgren, and Grijzenhout, Marx and Jijkoun show how adding knowledge of linguistic features can enhance the potential of quantitative methods. The focus of Discourse Analysis is on extracting constructions of meaning and analysing the persuasive nature of political discourse in its social context. Montesano Montessori, Eleveld, Filardo Llamas, and Van Leeuwen show how linguistic formulations and conceptualisations relate to the social context.

Table 1. *Qualitative and quantitative methods and genres across chapters.*

Ch.	Authors	Data Source	Methodology	Quant/ Qual
1	Kleinnijenhuis & Van Atteveldt	Newspapers	NET Method	Quantitative
2	Collette & Pétry	Election manifestos	Wordfish, Wordscores	Quantitative
3	Gryc & Moilanen	Political blogs	Entity-centric document-level sentiment classification	Quantitative
4	Dahlberg & Sahlgren	Blogs, websites political parties	Random Indexing	Quantitative and Qualitative
5	Hirst, Riabinin, Graham, Boizot-Roche & Morris	Parliamentary proceedings	Machine Learning	Quantitative
6	Grijzenhout, Marx & Jijkoun	Parliamentary proceedings	Sentiment analysis Machine Learning	Quantitative
7	Wesley	Political texts	Qualitative document analysis	Qualitative
8	Montesano Montessori	Speeches and declarations	Critical Discourse/narrative analysis	Qualitative
9	Eleveld	Interviews and other documents	Discourse/narrative analysis	Qualitative
10	Filardo Llamas	Speeches	Critical discourse analysis	Qualitative
11	Van Leeuwen	Parliamentary speeches	Stylistic analysis	Qualitative
12	Boyd	Text comments on political videos	Critical discourse analysis	Quantitative and Qualitative
13	Krouwel & Wall	Election manifestos, party documents	Content analysis	Quantitative and Qualitative
14	Van Elfrinkhof, Maks & Kaal	Election manifestos	Wordscores, subjectivity analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis	Quantitative and Qualitative

Whether assessing political texts quantitatively or qualitatively, researchers are confronted with strategic and creative language use: “politicians are creative language users, and political language as a result changes fast” (Grijzenhout et al., page 130) and these

functional aspects also deserve attention. Filardo Llamas stresses the ambiguity and vagueness of political language which allow for multiple interpretations of the same texts that can divide or unify parties, as was the case with the peace settlement in Northern Ireland. The possibility of multiple interpretations is also the topic of Eleveld's chapter that discusses how one common policy narrative can be supported by different political parties and lead to 'unusual coalitions'. Hirst et al. discuss unexpected and hidden structures, where polarization is not an ideological opposition, but rather a pragmatic attack and defense dichotomy. These examples of political text analyses give evidence of the researcher's challenges and opportunities.

With a view to make the collaboration between disciplines tangible, we organised the workshop 'From Text to Political Positions' at the VU University Amsterdam, in April 2010. This led to discussions on work in progress and the challenges of the complexity of the material to be analysed for relations between language and politics and to find solutions in converging qualitative and quantitative methods. This volume includes a selection of the projects presented at the workshop that have since been revised and updated. The result is a representative variety of approaches to political text analysis across genres, languages, theories and methods. It brings together state-of-the-art political, discourse and linguistic analytical models that are making links between linguistics and the social sciences. The chapters present top-down and bottom-up methods and applications using a variety of texts, each with their own communicative function. Each chapter reflects on advantages and disadvantages of the methods that were chosen in view of their relation to the data and the reliability of results.

Developments in the field of political text analysis have been recorded in this volume with the aim to take notice of the challenges of cross-disciplinary analytical models and the complexity of the relationship between content, language use and different motivations for political action.

Amsterdam, November 2013

Bertie Kaal
Isa Maks
Annemarie van Elfrinkhof
(The Editors)

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