

**Same same but different: National influences on Volt's first
election campaign**

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Abstract

The elections of the European Parliament represent the only direct democratic legitimation of the European Union. Nevertheless, the legal construction of those elections, mainly national discourses, weak euro parties, a lack of European identity and a low voter turnout lead to isolated elections per member state. The lack of a real European or supranational component is often criticised and suggestions for introducing transnational lists or pan-European solutions are increasing.

In 2019, the new pan-European party Volt entered the transnational arena of European politics and took part in the elections for the European Parliament, referring to one manifesto in all participating member states. This was a novum. The intention of this Master Thesis is to analyse the campaigns of Volt in four different member states in order to analyse whether and to what extent national factors influenced the campaigns. It thus aims at closing a research gap about pan-European and transnational parties, as Volt was not part of the scientific discourse yet. The study consists of an analysis of Volt's pan-European manifesto and the individual country campaigns. The results of the qualitative content analysis present that Volt's campaigns, although based on one supranational manifesto, differentiated from each other because of national economic, cultural and historical factors.

Keywords: *European Union; Elections of the European Parliament; Transnational Party Systems; Salience Theory; Campaigning*

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List of abbreviations

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
<i>AISBL</i>	Association internationale sans but lucrative (Luxemburgish NGO)
<i>ALDE</i>	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
<i>BeNeLux</i>	Political union of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg
<i>BREXIT</i>	“British Exit”; the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union
<i>CDU</i>	Christlich Demokratische Union
<i>COM</i>	European Commission
<i>CZEXIT</i>	The withdrawal of the Czech Republic from the European Union
<i>EP</i>	European Parliament
<i>EPP</i>	European Peoples Party
<i>EU</i>	European Union
<i>GAL</i>	Green/Alternative/Libertarian
<i>Green/EFA</i>	Fraction of Green and European Free Alliance in the European Parliament
<i>MEP</i>	Member of the European Parliament
<i>MS</i>	Member state / member states
<i>NGO</i>	Non-governmental organisation
<i>PES</i>	Party of European Socialists
<i>S&D</i>	Socialists & Democrats
<i>SPD</i>	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
<i>TAN</i>	Traditional/Authoritarian/Nationalist
<i>TEU</i>	Treaty on European Union
<i>TFEU</i>	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
<i>UK</i>	United Kingdom (Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>USA</i>	United States of America
<i>WWF</i>	World Wildlife Fund for Nature (NGO)

1 Introduction

In 2019, the European Union (EU) was once again at a crossroads, ironically just on time for the European Parliament (EP) elections. Dramatic events, such as the lengthy recover from the euro crisis, the refugee crisis or the BREXIT referendum shook the EU like several waves of an earthquake and raised Euroscepticism in most Member States (MS). In addition, the challenges of climate change awareness among citizens increased to unprecedented levels and made it a top political priority both on national and EU level, while important values of the EU¹ are violated by some MS. The erosion of the EU by post-material issues is becoming increasingly visible. For years, the ‘inner design’ of EU politics has been repeatedly questioned, now even its facade is crumbling. In 2020, the EU's common problems extended with a pandemic, a recession and a humanitarian crisis on the Greek islands. ‘Going it alones’ and MS who are left alone: both are not rare. Despite ongoing integration and despite a directly elected European Parliament, the national influence of MS on EU politics is still extremely high. This is reflected not only by exceptions and special policies for individual MS, but also in the fact that the EU has difficulties to find its common identity, this being true for both EU citizens and actors within transnational politics.

Repeatedly the EU is criticized because of insufficient democratic legitimacy. Although the EP is directly elected, the party system in which the parliament is anchored, is inadequate compared to the policy areas in which the EP has an impact. Primarily national parties predominantly run national election campaigns for the EP elections – leading to complete isolation of political campaigns between the MS and increases substantial discrepancies of political messages or policy goals promoted by parties within the same political group. In addition, the EU elections are not considered important in many MS and the voter turnout is low. In 2019 the voter turnout was the highest since 1994 with only 50,66%². Not only the voting systems are legally diverging from state to state, also the political systems within the EU are fundamentally diverse due to historic and also socio-economic factors that shaped them over years. None of this contributes to enhancing the reputation and democratic legitimation of the EU.

The EU institutions and many national parties engaged in pro-EU campaigns to strengthen the European identity for the 2019 elections, to mark the importance of the elections, to defend the

¹ Particularly the rule of law.

² <https://europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en/turnout/> [accessed on 27.07.2020]

European community of values and to legitimise its existence. However, each actor engaged separately, which contradicts the idea of the EU and the actual promoted values. A real democratic legitimisation of the EU could, however, be accomplished by introducing a genuine transnational party system and real transnational elections (White, 2014, p. 379). Transnational parties and families are already existing on EU level. They were formed out of national parties, sharing an equal identity, but those organisations do not exercise a lot of power and merely organise the parliamentary structure. The existing transnational political parties, which were founded through coalitions, tend to play a supporting role in the EU elections, or perhaps even the role of a ‘side kick’, while the national parties are the protagonists of the election campaign. Therefore, a first step to achieve European elections embedded in a more transnational arena, would be conclusive transnational parties that exist in all MS. Transnational parties, that are founded on supranational level and then stringently develop into national parties and therefore sharing the same identity, values and guidelines could contribute to more ‘European’ elections by circumventing the current national voting system.

Out of the frustration over the rising Euroscepticism and the lack of EU-wide responses, a new transnational and pan-European party was formed and ran for the first time in the European Parliament election campaign in 2019. Volt – the measuring unit of electricity and tension, a term which is the same in every European language and since 2017, the name of the first genuinely pan-European party in the European Union. Within the scope of this master thesis, the phenomenon of Volt will be used to analyse transnational parties and their challenges in European elections.

1.1 Who is Volt?

“In a time of great political tensions, a group of Europeans from all walks of life decided it was time to stand up for what they believed in. It was time to act; Volt was born. We came together to fight for a better society, to express our commitment towards cooperation, and to outline our belief in a shared future. Ours is a message of hope, of courage, and of solidarity. A message for all to see that divisions will not tear down what our parents have built. Volt was created to re-energise Europe and to solve the issues we all have in common. Volt offers Europeans a new vision for Europe, one that embraces the EU’s common aspirations and that faces its shortcomings head-on” (Volt, 2019a, p. 1).

This quote includes the first sentences of Volt's manifesto. Volt was founded in 2017 by three friends and colleagues who watched the BREXIT vote together. In response to the shock of the UK's withdrawal, the Italian Andrea Venzon, the French Colombe Cahen-Salvador and the German Damian Boeselager founded a pan-European movement with a very pro-European attitude to counteract the split of Europe³.

Volt first emerged at supranational level and gradually expanded into individual EU MS, into their cities and later even beyond the borders of the EU. Moreover, Volt developed relatively quickly: within two years the number of their supporters has reached 25 000. Today Volt has 5000 members and 10.000 active volunteers who accompany campaigns and are part of the movement, but do not have the right to vote. A big share of the party's members are young students and graduates who belong to the so-called 'Erasmus generation' and, surprisingly, Volt is made up in equal numbers of people over 60 who have not previously been involved in politics but who see the EU as it has been built in danger and thus want to engage. In all EU MS as well as in Norway and Switzerland, Volt is active on several levels. On European level, Volt is an AISBL⁴, as there is not yet a legal framework in place for pan-European parties. On national and regional level, Volt acts as political party registered in law. All in all, the pan-European party is still in a 'start-up phase', promoting low hierarchies and respectful but informal communication. To be able to stay in close contact across borders, Volt set up an intranet platform, in which all internal communication, group building, debates, policy determination, and even elections can take place. Volt represents the three so-called 'P's': 'pragmatic, progressive, pan-European'. These three principles are used throughout all statements, posts, interviews, policies and appearances in each national chapter⁵. Thereby, it is important that each action is based on the jointly negotiated "Mapping of Policies" which serves as a common positioning basis. Next to the mapping of policies, the Amsterdam Declaration formulates the election programme and manifesto of Volt – at European to local level.

With these guiding pledges inside the manifesto, Volt took part in the European Parliament elections in 2019, in eight MS and won one seat in Germany. Damian Boeselager was elected as a Member of the European Parliament (MEP). He considers himself not to be a German

³ <https://www.volteuropa.org/> [accessed on 30.07.2020]

⁴ An association according to Luxemburgish law.

⁵ In this research, the terms 'chapter' or 'national chapter' represents the national groups of Volt, while the name 'Volt' represents the pan-European party and movement Volt Europa.

MEP, but the first real European MEP who represents all Volt members from the entire transnational party. In particular, a tangible example for this unitary and inclusive party management is the decision making process, which determined Volt's group affiliation in the parliament: Boeselager had the possibility of staying non-attached or to form a coalition with Alliance for Liberals and Democrats (now Renew Europe) or GREEN/EFA. Instead of deciding unilaterally, a democratic online vote including all Volt members was set up, which determined the further course of action. Thereafter the first pan-European MEP joined the GREEN/EFA family in the EP. However, Volt's long-term strategic goal is to create a separate group in the EP.

Volt is new – full of energy, almost electrifying for both young and old fans of Europe. The party seems to be very united and internally convergent. It looks fresh, with zest for action and a wealth of ideas to transform the peace project 'EU' from a project into a solid federal democracy. Volt seems to have been founded at exactly the time when there was an urgent need to inspire the citizens for European unity and to increase their participation. With its pragmatic, science-oriented and pro-integration positions, Volt seems to claim a unique selling point. Because of its concrete positions and the pan-European structure, Volt occurs as a new phenomenon in comparison to the state of the art of the research about transnational parties. It is hence worth to take a closer look at Volt with regard to the transnational party system and its challenges.

1.2 The aim of this thesis

Since the European Parliament elections are not held on a supranational but on a national level, the campaigns of the parties and the discourses are also merely of a national determination. As Volt is the first true pan-European party⁶ to campaign with only one common manifesto, it is worth observing Volt's election campaign more closely. Given the fact national influence in EU elections is so significant, it is relevant to acquire knowledge to what extent transnational parties adapt to national impact. In order to explore this phenomenon closer, the guiding research question of this master thesis is: *“What influence did national factors have on the EU campaigns of the Volt Party?”*. Based on pertinent literature and political sciences theories,

⁶ There are other transnational parties, for instance DiEM25, but usually those are mergers out of individual persons and national parties or party-wings, while Volt was formed from top-down on European level and only individual persons can join.

hypotheses on the research question were developed, which firstly predict that even a transnational party having the same manifesto may run different campaigns due to different national influences. As the transnational party competition moves away from ideological Left/Right parameters and increasingly towards issue competition (Green-Pedersen, 2007, p. 609), Volt will be examined in depth along these dimensions. It is assumed that the national chapters of the Volt party even operate in different party-political and ideological dimensions due to certain national historic, economic and socio-cultural differences.

In order to conduct this research properly, at first a literature review will introduce the reader into the state of knowledge and some crucial theories about transnational politics, party positioning, issue politics and salience as well as party convergence. On this base concrete hypotheses about Volt's election campaigns will be formulated to answer the research question. Afterwards, the qualitative methodology guiding this innovative thesis will be explained in detail. The analysis of Volt, its common manifesto and its campaigning is split into two analytical parts: Firstly, Volt's manifesto will be analysed in order to be able to assign it into a certain structure of ideology and party politics. This first empirical part will serve as a groundwork. Secondly, the formulated hypotheses will be answered by analysing the campaigns of four different Volt chapters, e.g. Volt Germany, Sweden, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic in detail. This will be followed by the Discussion chapter, in which the findings of the analysis will be interpreted, explained and brought into a broader context. Summarizing that, as well as elaborating on the impulses of the introduction, the thesis is concluded with an outlook.

2 Literature

In this literature review, concepts regarding transnational politics, transnational parties, as well as transnational campaigning will be outlined. Within the chapters, the problems of the European party system will be analysed and elaborated in order to draw conclusions about which challenges transnational parties face during elections. On the basis of the collected findings from the literature, in a theoretical chapter, hypotheses on Volt and the differences during campaigning will be developed.

2.1 Transnational party politics

Political parties act throughout different spheres of politics. These can be local, national and also supranational levels (Braun and Schmitt, 2018, p. 1). With globalisation, increasing interdependence and growing complexity of our world, a supranational or transnational sphere of politics has become more and more important, as several issues cannot be covered or decided on a nation-wide basis. The supranational political level in Europe, emerged primarily in the field of economic co-operation and over the years transformed itself into a real democratic political arena institutionalized by the treaties of the European Union. Transnational politics are defined by the notion, that states and their parties come together in a certain setting and agree on democratic decisions. Meaning, that from national spheres, certain policy fields are brought to a multilateral level. In the case of the EU, those policy fields are established by the Treaty of the European Union (TEU) and the Treaty of the Functioning of the EU (TFEU). This rulebook, signed by all MS, statutes the EU's legal and political order. Depending on their political attitudes, parties have different views on the necessity of multilateral cooperation. While the radical right and left camps share Eurosceptic views and thus perceive the multilateral approach as the wrong one, most parties in the centre of the political spectrum, including the more left or conservative ones, recognize multilateralism as a necessity to achieve and secure the desired policy objectives (Hooghe *et al.*, 2002, p. 968).

Following this, the EU has evolved into a “fully-fledged political system” and deals with critical issues that are defined as European policies (Peglis, 2015, p. 22). These cover around 290 policy areas, including the common agricultural policy, foreign policy, banking regulation, competition, food and safety policies, public procurement and human rights⁷. This list, which does not even come close to covering the scope of the EU's policies, shows that their impact has wide ranging effects on EU citizens. Interdependence and co-operation between the MS' parties are prerequisites to the emergence of common interests and political will to find consensus and pursue further integration. The political system of the EU seems to work well at first sight. There are laws that set out a framework, citizen participation, separation of powers, in short, direct elections of the EP: a democratic system at multilateral level.

Despite these features, the EU does not seem to function well as an arena for transnational politics, which reflects the criticism the EU faces since decades: a democratic deficit and high

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies_en [accessed on 09.07.2020].

national interference within the EU. The reasons for this and the challenges the EU and the parties face, will be examined in more detail below in order to explain the extent to which national influence manifests itself in the EU.

2.1.1 The EU as arena of transnational politics

The EU institutions represent different arenas of transnational politics, as they act from different perspectives. While the European Commission (COM) is the “Guardian of the Treaties” as well as having the right to initiate legislative processes. The Council of the European Union (Council) instead represents the MS from a nation state perspective and is thus more intergovernmental (Barnard and Peers, 2017, pp. 37–70). The institution, where elected parties have the most influence and where citizens have an impact on politics through direct elections, is the European Parliament (Lefkofridi and Katsanidou, 2018, p. 1465). The EP has 705 seats, distributed on a proportionate basis (Kröger and Friedrich, 2013), consists of eight political groups and is elected every five years by the citizens of the MS. The political groups are organised by ideology, not by country or citizenship and consist of coalitions formed by national parties.

The European elections “were intended to establish a direct link between the individual citizen and decision-making at the European level” (Marsh and Mikhaylov, 2010, p. 5). Nevertheless, the EU is criticised for having a democratic deficit, through elite-driven policies and the parliament’s lack of competence of initiative or to vote for a government (Kröger and Friedrich, 2013, p. 178). The outcome of the European elections does not have a direct impact on the formation of an ‘EU government’. This was tried to resolve by introducing the Spitzenkandidaten system, which was levered out after the EP elections in 2019. Furthermore, the scope of action of the EP has increased in the past years to the extent that national elections and de facto seconded national politicians to the plenary seem disproportionate and illegitimate for citizens (Kröger and Friedrich, 2013, p. 179). Also, the voter turn-out on EU level is traditionally lower as for national elections, which is rooted in the fact, that EP elections are traded as second-order elections (Kröger and Friedrich, 2013, p. 178). For instance, following Schakels assumption, in EU elections there is “less at stake” for the voter, than in national elections (Schakel, 2018, pp. 689–690). Having separate national elections for the same supranational one already indicates problems as differing voting-systems and inconsistent party offers (Camia and Caramani, 2011, p. 49). Looking into EU policies, the “EU is the product of party-political actors on the Centre-Right, Centre, and to a lesser extent, the Centre-Left who

have dominated decision making in Europe during the past half century” (Hooghe *et al.*, 2002, p. 969). That clearly speaks for the mentioned effect of second-order elections. Following some political scientists, another shortcoming in the EU concerning transnational politics is, the “no-demos thesis. According to Wolkenstein, a supranational democracy, and thus also real party-political engagement is ineffective as long as the people act as national and not as European voters (Wolkenstein, 2018, p. 285). He sees the EU more as a “demoicracy”, what is a sphere of transnational politics governed by several different nationals, rather than by one European electorate (Wolkenstein, 2018, p. 285). Furthermore, he claims that the EU identity is not strong enough and one pan-European people does not exist. He states, that famous political scientists like Nicolaïdis, Cheneval and Bellamy see a European people “out of reach” (Wolkenstein, 2018, p. 286). Braun and Schmitt go even further and suggest, that European elections would not work without national discourses (Braun and Schmitt, 2018, p. 1). Party campaigns for the European Parliament are more concentrated on and aligned to national issues (Braun and Schmitt, 2018, p. 2), while EU issues are avoided in national campaigns (Senninger and Wagner, 2015, p. 1336). This becomes clear by the fact that most parties put much more emphasis on EU issues in EP elections than in national elections (Braun and Schmitt, 2018, p. 6) although the impact of EU policies on national politics is tremendous.

The introduction indicated, that the EU is confronted with burning issues that are mere of a post-material nature: “the past two decades have seen the rise of issues concerned with lifestyle, ecology, cultural diversity, nationalism, and immigration” (Hooghe *et al.*, 2002, p. 976). This not only increased the scope of the arena of transnational politics but also the potential for conflict. EU issues can empower radical opinions, as mainstream parties across the MS do not agree about serious issues on the supranational level (Parsons and Weber, 2011, p. 386). According to studies, the salience of EU issues in EP elections seems to be high (Braun and Schmitt, 2018, p. 2), yet the whole party system in the European Parliament is linked to national lines (Kröger and Friedrich, 2013, p. 178).

According to the above-presented points, the European Union definitely represents an arena of transnational politics. Some of the criticisms that prevail are the democratic deficit, the second-order elections of the EP and its low power, all of which originate in the problem of no-demos and the high national impact on European level. The prevailing question is: How come that national impact seems to dominate the party system in the EU and how do transnational party groups deal with that?

2.1.2 Transnational parties and movements

As described in the preceding section, the EU is one of the most popular and best examples for an international governmental organisation (van der Heijden, 2006, p. 33), with common goals and values, democratic structures as well as a multicultural people. “Multiculturalism aims to recognize the rights and values of ethnic, religious, and other forms of groups and identities within larger political collectives” (Fiala, 2019, p. 49). This form of multiculturalism also developed in the European Assembly and later the EP, where national and regional parties ‘europeanised’, formed coalitions basing on their ideologies, and in sum represent the European people across borders by overstepping the frontiers of a nation with their policy decisions (White, 2014, p. 393). “Political parties establish a crucial link between citizens and the government” (Braun and Schmitt, 2018, p. 2). This was made clear in the passages above and with growing Europeanisation also counts for the European level. In this thesis “Europeanisation is [...] understood as a process by which domestic actors and institutions adapt to the institutional framework and logic of the EU” (Poduntke *et al.*, 2007, p. 748).

According to Hix, a real transnational European party exists, when “certain transmissional functions in the political system” are fulfilled (Dietz, 2000, p. 202). Niedermayer formulates it more precisely: As criterium for being a real transnational party, only transnational interaction or cooperation are insufficient. He suggests that a truly European party is only existent if national parties transmit their sovereignty to the party family on EU-level (Niedermayer, 1983, p. 27). According to an article Dietz published in 2000, the party families on EU level didn’t accomplish this criterium of integration and thus were not counted as “real European parties” (Dietz, 2000, p. 207).

When researching on transnational parties at EU level, two kinds of political mergers can be observed: the party groups, working in the European Parliament and the extra-parliamentary party federations. The first ones bring together political parties from several MS that share the same ideological party-political background as a basis for building transnational coalitions. The eight groups existing at the moment have a certain proportion of seats in the EP and with superordinate offices for their administrative and advising staff, the groups act as umbrella organizations for the national parties (Peshenkov and Zhukovskiy, 2016, p. 100).

The party federations provide an element of “extra parliamentary coordination of the electoral platform of national parties” in EU elections (Hix and Lord, 1997, p. 2) and thus form a more

independent association, to which mainly national parties are members (Hix and Lord, 1997, p. 57). This transnational party cooperation is not a *sui generis* principle associated with the EU only. There are many examples, as i.a. the socialist partisans, who cooperated throughout borders (Wolkenstein, 2018, p. 296). Also, the now existing European party families emerged long before they were formalized in the Maastricht Treaty (Peshenkov and Zhukovskiy, 2016, p. 101). But although there are party families created across national borders, the national member parties share their ideological values to different extents, especially on topics as EU integration (Marks *et al.*, 2006, p. 160). Further and equally to national parties, positions on certain issues can vary between party members, whereas they tend to have more uniform standpoints on topics that represent the focus of the party (Klüver and Spoon, 2015, p. 555).

The variation of positions and convergence in a transnational party could have different backgrounds: important to be listed are ideological interpretation, but also culture, language background, different linkages of issues to the own national history and the citizenship (Wahlen und Dynamik des österreichischen Parteiensystems seit 1886, pp. 30–31). Party federations are the official supranational organizations of the party groups, that are independent of national parties. “Like the national party organisations and the EP groups, the party federations have their own statutes, decision-making mechanisms, leadership structure, budgets, and secretariats that are legally separate from the EP groups and the national parties.” (Hix and Lord, 1997, p. 63). The first four were established between 1974 and 1976 for the first direct elections in 1979 (Hix and Lord, 1997, p. 63) and since then one could observe different phases of party federations: At first stage, in the beginning, the birth of party federations brought optimism and made politics capable of acting. Then, party federations tended to stagnate having no clear role apart from existing legally (Hix and Lord, 1997, pp. 167–170).

The European Peoples Party (EPP) is the political family of the centre-right parties from all MS and also beyond. The Christian and conservative national parties’ first steps towards Europeanization happened already in 1926, when the International Secretariat of Christian Inspiration was founded. With the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community and later-on the European Communities, the European Union of Christian Democrats was developed by i.a. Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer – today treated as the founding fathers. In preparation for the first direct elections of the European Parliament in 1979, the EPP

was founded in 1976 and today counts 83 member parties and partners from over 43 countries. The EPP acts as party federation and as EP party group at the same time⁸.

The latter does not hold true for the social-democratic party family: The party family consists of the Party Federation called Party of European Socialists (PES) and the Socialists & Democrats (S&D) group that brings together all MEPs from social-democratic national parties. The first commitment for a European cooperation of social-democratic parties was given with the “Socialist International”, an attempt for a common manifesto in 1961 and the foundation of PES with a shared election programme in 1978 as a confederation. In 1992 PES was transferred into a transnational party with 33 member parties and twelve associate parties from the EU and UK as well as Norway⁹.

The liberal party merger was founded by 14 parties in 1976 as European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party, changed its name and legal structure into the party federation ALDE by 2012 and since 2019 established a new co-operational party group with Macrons Movement “La Republique en Marche” called “renew europe”. The party federation ALDE today consists of 67 member parties¹⁰. Also, younger party-political movements as the green parties, who appeared in the 80s in all western European countries acknowledged the need of transnational cooperation in early stages. In 1984 the first green MEPs joined the EP and formed 1989 their first parliamentary group. The associated federation was formed by 2004 and today counts 29 member parties from 34 European countries and four associate members. The Green/EFA acting in the EP was founded in 1999 by bringing together the green group and the European Free Alliance. The group today has 68 MEPs from 15 countries, that are mostly from green national parties. Some exceptions are MEPs from pirate parties, the German satirical party “Die Partei” and Volt¹¹.

Through describing the ways of Europeanisation of the mainstream parties in the EP, it becomes perceptible that this process was firstly a needed step in European democracy. Later, when the decision-making role of the EP was increased, the Europeanisation of parties was not only a question of co-operation between the national parties but also a question of power and

⁸ <https://www.epp.eu/parties-and-partners/> [accessed on 15.05.2020].

⁹ <https://www.pes.eu/en/about-us/history/> [accessed on 15.05.2020].

¹⁰ <https://www.aldeparty.eu/about/the-alde-party>; <https://reneweuropengroup.eu/fr/> [accessed on 15.05.2020].

¹¹ <https://europeangreens.eu/>; <https://www.greens-efa.eu/de/> [accessed on 15.05.2020].

competition between the different party families. Until today no clear structure of transnational federations and their party groups seems to exist, which does not facilitate the tangibility of transnational party organisations. Since the Rome Council in 1990, when the phrase “Political Parties at the European level are important as a factor for integration within the Union” was manifested in Article 138A of the Treaty of Rome, transnational parties also enjoy legal legitimacy (Hix and Lord, 1997, pp. 167–170). Not even scholars agree completely about what each “euro parties”, “euro groups” and “party federations” represent. For instance Peshenkov defines euro parties as “an umbrella organization bringing together national parties committed to a common ideology and program”. These are financed by EU funds and structured by what she calls “two-tier structure”, consisting of national and supranational components (Peshenkov and Zhukovskiy, 2016, p. 100). Whereas Gabel and Hix suggest that “Euro-parties are federations of national parties that organize according to political families (Gabel and Hix, 2002, p. 936) that are not simply “arbitrary groupings of national parties”, but coalitions with equal constituencies that nevertheless also can work distinct from the federation (Gabel and Hix, 2002, p. 954). Kröger and Friedrich do not see euro parties as full parties and refer to Lord in this context (Kröger and Friedrich, 2013, p. 178). He describes transnational parties as “epiphenomena [...], that may accelerate the co-ordination and aggregation and preferences here and there, but which otherwise remain ‘sub-system’ dominant” (Lord, 2010, p. 9). According to Hix and Lord, the indirect independency to national parties and the fact that federations cannot be elected by the European people makes them to unreal parties (Hix and Lord, 1997, p. 63). The party federations act more as coordinating structures, like central offices of domestic parties and are more regarded as “permanent presence”. Further, they all have certain organs as a president, an executive committee and the euro parties acting in the European Parliament. Also a Party Congress is held every two years where main guidelines and a manifesto is adopted (Hix and Lord, 1997, pp. 63–64). This shows that federations have a framework in which they exercise power, but this framework is not as visible as the euro groups are for citizens.

To complicate matters: In the European arena of transnational politics there are also transnational parties that do not fit into the presented structure of “euro groups” and “party federations”. Pan-European parties with a centralized leadership on EU-level and EU-wide policy position coordination merged in recent years. Instead of building up due to the Europeanisation process of national parties who over the years became more coherent by sharing positions and ideology (Homeyer and Kolster, 2019, p. 1), transnational parties also

arise directly on a European level or from one MS and then spill-over to other countries. Examples of these phenomena would be DiEM25 and its “European Spring”¹² or the “Young Federalists Party”¹³.

2.1.2.1 Movements and movement parties

The will to form transnational alliances and thus to create solidarity and participation among borders, either as structured parties or as loose movements, has a long history. But historically, transnational movements came were first and politized as parties in the aftermath, when their impact and popularity had increased (Hein, 1996, p. 71). Popular examples would be the labour movement, which developed to social democrat parties, or far-right movements with political active components. Also environmental movements gained popularity and sympathised across borders over the past 40 years (van der Heijden, 2006, p. 28) and are having their revival with the youth movement “Fridays for future”. Hein suggests, that especially liberals and left-liberals are historically entitled to claim the term ‘movement party’ for themselves (Hein, 1996, p. 81). Also, by considering examples as “Fridays for future” or “Pulse of Europe” one can see, that movements easily spread throughout countries in the EU and form active groups with a political impact that are considered and heard by the Commission and the EP.

Equal to popular European parties as “Podemos”, the 5-stars movement or Macrons movement “La Republique en marche” (Klimowicz, 2017, p. 120), Volt emerged from a political movement that was founded first, before its members registered Volt as a party. Party comes from the latin noun ‘parti’, what describes a democratic and strict structured, election-oriented political group formation, while the term ‘movement’ remains more general, more comprehensive and also more indeterminate without strict organisational structures (Hein, 1996, p. 70). High flexible content alignment is an important feature of new movement parties (Kitschelt, 1986, p. 62). Despite this flexibility, movements often arise having concrete goals that can be flexible in their implementation (Hein, 1996, p. 73). Often it is about cross-cutting issues such as peace, health, anti-war movements or the desire to be heard (Hein, 1996, p. 73). This does not imply that all movements are radical and seeking for changing the democratic system as such, but sometimes the goals of movements can result from the common wish of more participation and engagement (Priester, 2018, p. 66). Also, movements are often

¹² <https://diem25.org/main-de/> [accessed on 15.05.2020].

¹³ <https://www.jef.de/> [accessed on 15.05.2020].

recognized as “transitional phenomena” (Minkenberg, 2018) that arise out of periods of social change (deMartini, 1983, 210). As Muis and Immerzeel state, the political space “left open by political competitors” offers opportunities for movements to settle there (Muis and Immerzeel, 2017, p. 912). This unoccupied political space is then accessed by new political movement parties and, if applicable, an electoral success over “old politics” (Passarelli and Tuorto, 2018, p. 129) can be achieved. “Social movements are linked to the public expression of a social conflict” (Diani, 2004, p. 3): for movements, collective identity and similar values are important (Hilson, 2002, p. 240), which could be understood as a sign of integrity. At the same time a shared identity quantitatively restricts a potential electorate.

While movements are described as flexible and progressive, traditional people’s parties are more described as parties, that represent only themselves, stagnate (Dettling, 2005, p. 81), and become weaker with every election (Dettling, 2005, p. 23). At this point, movements have the possibility to gain attention: “Movements disprove elitist visions” calling for changes (Klimowicz, 2017, p. 118) and van der Heijden even states that decentralized state systems simplify the access for new movements (van der Heijden, 2006, p. 31). Especially young people seem to be receptive for this kind of new politics, because of commonly developed understandings through shared experiences, as the BREXIT or the financial crisis (deMartini, 1983, 119; Klimowicz, 2017, p. 117). Further, as Dettling already described in 2005, disorientation, pessimism and fear of the future are still rampant in Europe. The established parties and the political class did not show the slightest understanding about the mood of atmosphere of departure or optimism, why people tend to orientate towards more dynamic movements (Dettling, 2005, p. 23).

To be able to participate in the political daily business, social movements often transfer into parties as those have more effective power in different arenas (Wolkenstein, 2018, p. 295), (Minkenberg, 2018, p. 13). According to Priester, those parties do not have traditional characteristics, but as they have a deeper link to the society and are more bottom-up, she designates those party-movements as political party of ‘a new type’ (Priester, 2018, p. 60).

2.2 Transnational party campaigning

After describing the effects of the Europeanisation of national parties and explaining the state of research concerning transnational party organisations, the next step is to discuss how transnational parties do campaign. Following Muis and Immerzeel, there are three strategies for

mainstream parties to campaign: Either the party stays silent on an issue, what they call “dismissive”, the party distances itself from nativist viewpoints, they named this “adversarial”, or the party adopts a similar positions from other parties, what would be “accommodative” (Muis and Immerzeel, 2017, p. 913). For new party-movements, especially direct communication via tools as Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp play a “viral role” internally as well as externally (Nagraj, 2013, p. 15). Moreover, through social media and direct communication, generating a range of coverage of voters is easier and less expensive for small, new movement parties (Nagraj, 2013, p. 13). Election campaigning has kind of become a permanent state for political parties and movements, as there are frequent elections on different levels, coalition negotiations tend to last longer and in course of the digitalization politicians are able to use more channels for their campaigns (Petithomme, 2012, p. 152). In contrast, at EU level, campaigning times are still somewhat more disaggregated. Sasmatzoglou gives a rough overview: “The first period, October to February, is the pre-campaign period in which the main European political parties [are] focused on selecting their presidential candidates“ (Sasmatzoglou, 2013, p. 72). The second and more intense period extends from March to May, where “the candidates will be travelling across the EU to campaign in the Member States, to promote the electoral programmes of the euro-parties, and to support the campaigns of the national parties and their national lists“ (Sasmatzoglou, 2013, p. 73).

With the view on the European elections taking place in an only partly transnational arena the question arises how transnational parties position themselves on issues and how they campaign. Due to the architecture of the EU elections, transnational party families are facing two main obstacles: firstly, as already explained in the previous chapters, the EU elections are mainly national. This means, that not only the election as such, but as well the election campaigns are held on national level, with mere national actors and differing debates during campaigning. Secondly, transnational party families not sharing the same positions or focus can develop inner conflicts due to incoherence. Different concepts such as party positioning, issue salience and convergence theories will be evaluated in order to identify challenges transnational parties face especially during their campaigning periods. Since the 1970s, transnational party positioning and European elections are high frequented and well explored fields. That is why only those concepts that deal with both national and transnational components will be discussed in the following.

2.2.1 Party positioning of transnational parties

By diving deeper into transnational elections, the question of how parties with transnational components position themselves concerning concrete issues and policies arises. Positions of parties and movements are primarily found in their manifestos – also on EU level. Manifestos are written as appeal and to maximize votes, although they are not singularly written for voters, but also to set an agenda and guidelines on positions for the party and the party members. Further, manifestos can also be seen as statements of the party's identity and philosophy or act as contract between voters and the party members (Harmel, 2018, p. 234).

Thus, manifestos have several purposes at the same time (Harmel, 2018, p. 232): Informing voters, stating the party's ideology and making promises, as well as being a reference for the media. The “euro parties” and the party federations set up manifestos on which the party members vote. These manifestos do not vary too much from the national party manifestos the electorate of the MS votes on, as national parties being member of the same group tend to have (more or less) coherent positions on EU issues (Braun and Schmitt, 2018, p. 6). But, to be able to present a common sense on which the national parties agree, the euro manifestos are traditionally broad and vague (Gabel and Hix, 2002, p. 936). By looking at “how these parties position themselves against each other in their manifestos for European elections, we can gain a fairly accurate picture of the terrain of politics in, and relating to, the EU” (Gabel and Hix, 2002, p. 938). This works well, especially because of several comparative manifesto studies, where data sets of manifestos were conducted (Veen, 2011a, p. 268). The manifestos of euro parties are supranational manifestos of the groups and mostly indeterminate, but less precise than their national by-products. Still, all manifestos are to be treated as “accurate statements of the positions that European political elites take on issues on the EU agenda” (Gabel and Hix, 2002, p. 937).

Of course, positions of transnational parties will not only be found in their manifestos but also in speeches, horizontal communication, position papers on individual topics, statements by politicians, and their general classification in a structure compared to other transnational parties. Traditionally, parties are placed on a scale from left to centre to right, what originates from the period after the French Revolution in 1789. Left and right were used to reflect the physical position of parties in the National Assemblies. Groups that were sitting far apart from each other also were ideologically (Hinich and Munger, 2004). Moreover, in a study by Gibowski about 50 percent of voters stated that they think about a classification in a Left/Right pattern during

the election process (Gibowski, 1977, p. 621). The left and right location traditionally depends on economic factors and is reflected in the ‘invented u-curve’. This means that both extreme Left and extreme Right parties share Eurosceptic ideologies concerning certain EU-issues, while centre-left, centre and centre-right parties support certain EU-policies with regard to the economy (Hooghe *et al.*, 2002, p. 985, 2002, p. 968). According to Gibowski, the space of left and right is more used to differentiate between different wings in one and the same party (Gibowski, 1977, p. 623). Over the past years and with growing transnational issues, the political dimensions in the EU changed from only “Left/Right” and “pro-/ anti-integration” to more issues, forcing the European parties to place themselves on a Left/Right scale on EU level (Hix, 1999, p. 71).

There are different models of party positioning about which political scientists do not entirely agree. In general, there are three leading theories of how party positioning is to be structured in dimensions: The regulation model, the Hix-Lord model and the Hooghe-Marks model (Hooghe *et al.*, 2002, p. 971). According to Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks there are two dimensions in which parties determine their position: “a Left/Right dimension ranging from social democracy to market liberalism and a European integration dimension ranging from nationalism to supranationalism” (Marks and Steenbergen, 2002, p. 887). They claim that these two dimensions do not merge but suggest that issues of European integration can be “absorbed into the Left/Right dimension” (Marks and Steenbergen, 2002, p. 887). Hence there is a clear correlation between the two dimensions. Due to growing transnational post-materialist issues, a pure ideologically driven Left/Right dimension or the mere question of ‘more or less integration’ is no longer sufficient. Therefore Hooghe and Marks determine another dimension, which they call “new politics” dimension, “ranging from Green/Alternative/Libertarian (GAL) to Traditional/Authoritarian/Nationalist (TAN)” (Hooghe *et al.*, 2002, p. 966). In this dimension deeper fields, as asylum policy, environmental policy and the question of sovereignty of the MS is anchored (Hooghe *et al.*, 2002, p. 976). The positioning of parties on European integration, is created through economic and noneconomic Left/Right concerns and divides the parties according to their views on political integration. This forms Left/Right cleavages (Parsons and Weber, 2011, p. 386) which also can be observed easily in the EP.

The two dimensions provide means of clustering parties in terms of their views. This makes comparisons easier to structure, both in science and by citizens. I.a. according to the decision to join the Green federation, Volt would be assigned to left and GAL on the two-dimensional

model. Whether this holds true, will be investigated by identifying the positioning through an analysis of the euro-manifesto. However, the dimensions proposed by Hooghe and Marks must still be considered with circumspection: The domestic dimension of Left/Right and GAL/TAN differ in the MS even if the parties share the same ideology and are members to the same euro groups (Marks *et al.*, 2006, p. 170). Moreover, while new parties seem to focus on the GAL/TAN dimension, the established party families direct their attention on the Left/Right and thus on the socio-economic dimension which they consider to be more important (Hix, 1999, p. 79). According to the model, parties are assigned to the dimensions based on their positions on individual issues. This procedure ensures comparability between them. Furthermore, this leads to another effect: parties occupy certain issues (Green-Pedersen, 2007, p. 609; Guinaudeau and Persico, 2013, p. 145), just as the Greens occupy all environment issues. By occupying certain issues, the issues obtain a left/right or GAL/TAN connotation. For example, the issue ‘Renewable energies, to be implemented as soon as possible’ is GAL and certainly occupied by Green parties.

A challenge seen by Hooghe and Marks, but also Hix, who developed an only slightly different model and called the GAL/TAN dimension “integration/independence” (Hix, 1999, p. 73), is the problem of a uniform position definition in euro parties. Especially differences between the western European and the eastern ‘new’ Member State’s parties are discovered (Marks *et al.*, 2006, p. 169). Typically, Western parties are either to be assigned to the left and GAL or to the right and TAN dimension, while in Eastern parts also left and TAN parties exist (Hooghe *et al.*, 2002, p. 971). The theory and the model are applicable to eastern and central European parties and movements, but the definitions of the ideologically charged terms ‘left’, ‘right’, ‘liberal’ and ‘authoritarian’ differ for both the parties and voters (Gibowski, 1977, p. 600; Marks *et al.*, 2006, p. 170). Bressanelli goes even further and states, that “the left-right scale fails to discriminate the eastern parties among the European groups”.

Further, the bigger a “euro group” and its party federation is, the more ideologies differ between the different parties and wings are built within the fractions. Even the level of EU support and thus very essential issues on EU level differ from state to state. While newer parties and parties with weaker national governments tend to be more supportive and in favour of further integration, the main parties and big nations with sovereign governments want the opposite (Polk and Rovny, 2017, p. 363). For this reason, differences in positioning within the same party families can arise, especially between Western and Eastern Europe. However, even within

Western Europe, some positions differ depending on the nation state. For example, the German Left is very pro-European, while the Swedish Left is extremely Eurosceptic (Hooghe *et al.*, 2002, p. 975). A common manifesto can to some extent resolve those problems of uniform position and dissent, as it can untangle internal problems with compromises (Harmel, 2018, p. 231).

2.2.2 Saliency Theory

As explained in the previous part, the positioning of parties usually depended on their classification in a Left/Right structure, which was institutionalized connection with the formation of traditional political lines of conflict (van Deth, Jan W. et al., 1990, p. 234). Especially mainstream parties tend to stay in their accustomed party political spectrum and deal with core topics the voters expect, while new-orientations are mostly connected to inner-structural changes (Franzmann, 2008, p. 94). Yet over the years, the historical focus on mainly economic Left/Right issues evolved to a more open issue competition (Green-Pedersen, 2007, p. 611), meaning that not only the classical Left/Right, or post-material GAL/TAN positions are valuable in party competition but that issue competition reigns the party system nowadays. The new questions that guide election campaigns are: ‘Which issues are important? Which parties are in this respect regarded as competent by the voters?’ (Wahlen und Dynamik des österreichischen Parteiensystems seit 1886, p. 26). Issue competition has become more and more important in Western European countries (Green-Pedersen, 2007, p. 607) showing that a simple one- or two-dimensional schema is not sufficient to explain the positioning shades of transnational parties. Parties do not always distinguish themselves by fixed positions, but decide anew per issue which position they take, to what extent they include the issue in their agenda and how much emphasis they place on it. New issues arise when either the public discourse about problems pursues a new topic, when internal inequalities of previous voter alliances are shattered or when parties and politicians focus strategically on several issues (Wahlen und Dynamik des österreichischen Parteiensystems seit 1886, p. 29). Thus, issues do not only appear but also can be strategically encouraged to dominate discourses (Wahlen und Dynamik des österreichischen Parteiensystems seit 1886, p. 27). Hence, national parties from the same party family differ more strongly in terms of issue emphasis than in terms of position and opposing statements about the same issue (Budge, 1982, p. 149, 2001, p. 82). Practically the phenomenon of issue politics and thus salience and convergence differences can be discovered on EU-level.

In a transnational context, party families focus on different issues, while sharing some less salient issues with each other (Green-Pedersen, 2007, p. 623). Since a transnational party system like that of the EU adds one dimension more than national party systems, salience theory also has another dimension: Issue salience made by transnational parties is depending on the national context (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2009, p. 300). “Parties [...] respond to national conditions – not by repackaging issue positions on multiple dimensions but by altering the salience of issues” (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2009, p. 303). Thus, “country conditions affect ethnic [and for sure also more] divisions in party competition” (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2009, pp. 304–305). According to studies, “parties facing similar national-level contexts and challenges tend to make issues salient in directly comparable ways” (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2009, p. 307), showing that national influence and different national circumstances – which are numerous in the EU – affect the salience of issues in transnational party politics. This can particularly cause internal party problems. In their research, Klüver and Spoon suggest that high salience on an issue for a national party results from the distance to the position of the EP group (Klüver and Spoon, 2015, p. 556). As an example, the distance between the German Christlich Demokratische Union (CDU) and the EPP on agricultural issues, as well as between the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) and the PES on environmental issues is confirmed (Klüver and Spoon, 2015, p. 554). Moreover, in the last years several parties, such as those from Nordic MS and Greece or Malta repeatedly campaigned on immigration but with different priorities: The Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark regarded the issue as salient because of welfare and foreign affairs, while Greece, Malta and Italy campaigned because of their immediate dismay (Guinaudeau and Persico, 2013, p. 163). In addition, different issues, such as democracy, are of different salience throughout the EU: While in western MS parties do not seem to put any emphasis on democracy as issue, Eastern parties from less affluent regions still regard democracy as a salient issue worth a focus in campaigns (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2009, p. 306).

Issue competition theories and the related saliency theory is based on David Robertson’s theory of “selective emphasis” and was further developed by Ian Budge and Dennis Farlie in the 80s (Budge, 1982; Budge and Farlie, 1983; Green-Pedersen, 2007, p. 609) Following their perspective issue competition means, “that political parties will emphasise issues which they would like to see dominate electoral competition” by focussing on for example environmental, human rights or economic policies (Budge and Farlie, 1983, pp. 23–24). Party behaviour thus is not only driven by the parties positioning “but also by the importance they attach to these

policy issues” (Klüver and Spoon, 2015, p. 554). According to Budge, parties prioritize issues strategically instead of confronting each other in the same issues (Klüver and Spoon, 2015, p. 555). They do not always have concrete answers to an issue, that is why they try to shift the electorate’s attention to another issue by making it more salient (Dolezal *et al.*, 2014, p. 59). Hence, one could argue that issue salience mainly is used to attract voters (Veen, 2011a, p. 278) and that parties present the issues they traditionally “own” as the most important ones to be perceived as competent for dealing with that particular issue (Dolezal *et al.*, 2014, p. 62). According to the literature, issue salience needs not always to be of strategic origin. When specific issues become urgent in the public discourse, political parties are forced to deal with them, while avoiding them would disadvantage them in competing with other parties having the issue on their agenda (Green-Pedersen, 2007, p. 611). If this is the case, the saliency theory suggests that parties have the possibility to reframe salient issues by putting emphasis on one specific aspect while ignoring the rest (Lefevere *et al.*, 2019, p. 507). Other parties consider an issue to be very important, but strategically it does not attract many voters (Lefevere *et al.*, 2019, p. 516). Moreover, in some political arenas, especially in two-party but also in multi-party systems (Lefevere *et al.*, 2019, p. 517), issues are already owned by one specific party and thus not unoccupied for a party to take it up as salient issue (Guinaudeau and Persico, 2013, p. 145).

Regarding the European Union, issue salience can be monitored from two different perspectives: On the one hand, issues as ‘European integration’ or that are of exclusive competence of the EU can be analysed in how salient those issues are for national parties and their transnational party families. On the other hand, the salience differences between transnational parties and their national members, as well as the impact national parties can have on the salience of issues in the transnational party system are worth a closer look. Since the mid-80s, EU issues enjoy increasing salience (Guinaudeau and Persico, 2013, p. 145). Especially in the last decade EU issues became more salient, through more integration in different areas and for instance the euro crisis (Miklin, 2014, p. 1200; Lefkofridi and Katsanidou, 2018, p. 1467). Still, the salience of EU issues in national programmes is considered as rather modest compared to other issues (Guinaudeau and Persico, 2013, p. 162). Neither left nor centre or right European national parties “dedicate a high proportion of their programmes to EU-related issues” – only about ten to 15 percent seem to be the average (Guinaudeau and Persico, 2013, p. 155). The most salient issues for national parties are “European integration in general, the common monetary policy, the common social policy, fair

competition and free market, Eastward enlargement, the common agricultural policy and the common defence policy” (Guinaudeau and Persico, 2013, p. 161). Moreover, the national mainstream parties having mainly Christian and social-democrat ideologies and thus differing not much in their positions, which leads to completely different emphases on the core topics (Franzmann, 2008, p. 87).

2.2.3 Convergence of party families in the EU

This section explores how homogenous transnational party chapters are on European level, “as national differences may still be very strong pointing to persistent national factors” (Camia and Caramani, 2011, p. 51). In order to be able to identify a transnational party’s position and inner-party divergences, as for instance differing salience on issues because of national impact, one must first take a look at the theories about inner convergence or divergence of party families, as “the extent to which ideologies and programmes are ‘comparable’ across borders, both at elite and mass level, is a crucial premise for the structuring of a supranational political space along non-territorial European-wide functional alignments” (Camia and Caramani, 2011, p. 49).

The more similar the ideological views of parties of a European party family, the more "Europeanized" they are (Ennsner, 2012, p. 156). At the same time, however, this does not mean that national differences have no influence on the positioning or salience of issues of party families (Camia and Caramani, 2011, p. 51). Moreover, national parties will always seek to be a member of the euro party whose ideology matches best in terms of the most salient issues (Bressanelli, 2012). Within their cleavage theory Marks and Wilson state that party political ideology prevails over national ideologies in European politics, and thus political parties have more in common with their transnational party families than with other parties from their MS (Marks and Wilson, 2000, p. 459). Hence, “competition between and coherence within” parties indicate transnational partisanship (Lefkofridi and Katsanidou, 2018, p. 1463). Although transnational parties may have similar ideologies, “EP party groups are characterized by a high degree of internal ideological diversity” and “policy positions of national parties can differ considerably from the positions of their party groups” (Klüver and Spoon, 2015, p. 555). Possible criteria for internal contradictions are sectoral conflicts as economic shocks, gender conflicts, migration and refugee issues, environment and EU-integration (Wahlen und Dynamik des österreichischen Parteiensystems seit 1886, pp. 30–31).

As mentioned above, the social-democratic party family is the oldest political movement. It is typically placed on the left side of the class cleavage and with its support for equality, social welfare spending and higher political control, it is considered "exceptionally homogeneous because it arose in response to a deep and relatively uniform cleavage across advanced capitalist societies" (Marks and Wilson, 2000, p. 442). The highest standard deviation took place in the 1970s (Franzmann, 2008, p. 93). Nevertheless, the party family is not seen as entirely uniform: for example, social-democratic parties from Scandinavia and the UK are more Eurosceptical than the more Southern parties (Marks and Wilson, 2000, p. 442). Both in Western and Eastern Europe, however, the social-democratic family is constantly converging and has a high level of convergence (Camia and Caramani, 2011, p. 63). According to Franzmann this convergence could root in the common and also historically transnational labour movement, whereas other parties as the conservatives are more influenced by the historical peculiarities of their MS (Franzmann, 2008, p. 94).

At the same time, the EU has more and more developed into an arena of social policies, what made the transnational level a "more propitious arena" for social-democrat parties (Marks and Wilson, 2000, p. 447). Concerning EU issues in EU elections, the mobilization of national parties happens only selectively (Senninger and Wagner, 2015, p. 1347), while for euro parties the salience on EU issues is obviously higher (Braun and Schmitt, 2018, p. 7). A party mobilizes fully on EU issues if those topics are the most important part of the campaign. This can surely be assumed for all "euro party manifestos". In both the conservative and liberal party families, the party convergence is feeble (Camia and Caramani, 2011, p. 64, 2011, p. 66), while left-wing families seem to be more homogeneous (Camia and Caramani, 2011, p. 71). Towards EU-integration issues, Christian democratic national parties seem to be very coherent because of their economic ideology (Marks and Wilson, 2000, p. 451), while on other topics, as i.a. same-sex marriage or the refugee crisis, the national ideologies seem to have a high impact on the EPP's position. Liberal party families form "the most ideologically diverse of the major party families" (Marks and Wilson, 2000, p. 448), as ALDE consists of three different veins: liberal-radicalism, where the Danish and the Dutch liberals are located, liberal-conservatism, consisting of i.a. Belgian liberal parties and agrarian or centre parties, to which Scandinavian liberals count (Marks and Wilson, 2000, p. 448, 2000, p. 449). In line with the findings by Camia and Caramani, who stated that the more leftist euro parties are more homogenous, the EP group Green/EFA has a significantly higher convergence than the other mainstream parties (Klüver and Spoon, 2015, p. 560). This leads to the assumption that party groups made of

similar niche parties are more convergent than party families who unite “a wide variety of different parties” (Klüver and Spoon, 2015, p. 560).

The question now, however, is what criteria are used to determine this homogeneity and why national influences can still have a strong impact on party families. Firstly, the literature usually either examines the general ideology of a party family, or an economic and a socio-cultural dimension are considered separately. Secondly, it can be assumed that, as Hooghe and Marks have already described, different cleavages arise in the general positioning of a party. Internal divergences such as the different definitions of left and right, west and east gaps and therefore resulting distance between parties within families defines the territoriality of cleavages (Camia and Caramani, 2011, p. 51).

2.3 Challenges for transnational parties

In order to gain attention before elections, parties agree on manifestos, set agendas on their focus and position themselves on issues – as mentioned in the previous chapters – also strategically. As citizens tend to not always read manifestos, even if they are informed about those existing documents (Harmel, 2018, p. 230), parties also need other campaigning strategies, that increase the share of appealed voters. Unfortunately, there is a lack of literature about transnational approaches concerning campaigning strategies. This has several reasons: Firstly, European elections are fought on national level and do not have direct impact on the formation of an ‘EU government’. Secondly, the policy agenda of the Union is limited, and national politicians still dominate the political processes. Thirdly, transnational parties do not always share approaches concerning European integration and other European issues internally either. What complicates campaigning for transnational parties even more, is the lack of a common media platform in the Union (Gaffney, 1996, pp. 184–285).

In general, transnational parties nowadays face challenges resulting from the national impact lowering the scope of action of transnational parties in European election campaigns and also later during the legislative period. As is known, euro parties and their federations neither are very powerful, nor do they seem important (or even familiar) to EU-citizens. In the EU, national politicians who won the EP-elections are stuck between “euro groups”, that have capacity to act, party federations that form independent umbrella associations and their national party. Hence, transnational mergers can be expected to face arising problems and challenges of different natures. The existing transnational parties cannot be regarded isolated from their

national member parties. Moreover, the transnational party families are hard to compare as they do not share the same (legal) structure. Transnational parties always will have the internal conflict between national influences and the ideology followed by the party. This becomes visible through selective mobilization of national parties when discussing about serious EU issues (Senninger and Wagner, 2015, p. 1347), or when internal dissent about concrete positions arises in transnational parties (Gabel and Hix, 2002, p. 954). Domestic contestation, mainly impelled by “sectoral economic interests” (Marks and Steenbergen, 2002, p. 881) have an influence on the transnational party-political framework and political margin. Transnational parties consequently suffer from the impact of states, their own domestic member parties and their dependence from MS. At this point one should allow the perception that this issue could be related again to the problem of "no-demos". Since there are no purely European elections based on a pan-European people, and during EU elections there is almost no interaction between the campaigning MS (Sasmatzoglou, 2013, p. 67), transnational parties have less power over their national partners.

Because of their two-dimensional, sometimes more-dimensional structure, transnational alliances with a high share of consensus are harder to form (Hix, 1999, p. 77). Hence, euro parties are weaker than national parties by only having a small consensual margin beyond national borders (Peshenkov and Zhukovskiy, 2016, p. 101). Various positions that result from national influence or distinct national parties' positions lead to convergence problems on transnational level. Not only concerning positioning, but also with regard to issue competition and the saliency decisions on issues, transnational parties face the challenge to agree. Issue competition is mainly carried out on national level (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2009, p. 305), which already implies that there are considerable differences in issue salience.

According to Marks' and Wilsons cleavage theory, the salience of issues in EU elections depends on cleavages between east and west, poor and rich as well as between weaker and stronger governments (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2009, p. 306; Marks and Wilson, 2000, p. 458, 2000, p. 437). Thus, different topics are more important in the MS and “the more salient an issue is to a national party, the stronger [is] the effect of the ideological distance between that national party and its EP group” (Klüver and Spoon, 2015, p. 554). Hooghe and Marks see problems of a uniform allocation to their model of transnational politics because of the different approaches and histories in Eastern and Western Europe (Hooghe *et al.*, 2002, p. 971). This east-west cleavage is often treated as a new north-south divide today (Veen, 2011b, p. 65). The

still existing differences between east and west, such as economic, cultural and historical, seem to have an impact on the emphasis and campaigns in the respective national parties. For instance, in the Czech Republic, Poland and Bulgaria EU campaigns about average wages, cohesion and food security prevail over questions about climate change and the environment¹⁴. Furthermore, corruption issues are more important to Eastern and Southern states than to Western and Northern ones (Wineroither and Seeber, 2018, p. 495). However, in Germany economic issues are i.a. still dominating all other debates, while in most enlargement countries, also non-economic or cultural issues gained strength (Marks *et al.*, 2006, p. 157). Moreover, pre-election periods tend to differ from MS to MS, especially from east to west, because of the historically determined and still existing differences in the connotations of 'left' and 'right' in the MS (Gibowski, 1977, p. 600). Euroscepticism in Western MS is mainly owned by the radical right and traditionalist parties, while in the Eastern MS the radical left, post-communist and thus also traditionalist parties are the most Eurosceptic parties (Marks *et al.*, 2006, p. 166).

Due to some crucial events in the last legislative period, such as the refugee crisis, the rule of law problems in some EU countries, the looming climate crisis and BREXIT above all, the 2019 European elections were very special and important elections. Moreover, another low voter turnout would not have been conducive for the EU's legitimacy and support. In the past, European elections were mainly about the question of 'more or less integration', even though the EP's decision-making capacity and scope of action has expanded by many issues with the Lisbon Treaty. Especially in 2019, the EU was again at a crossroads with the question of "more or less EU" in its baggage, where national impact and national dimension discussions were inevitable. The problem of national influences and weakness only arise, because transnational parties are existing next to their pendants in nation states, which are bigger, more powerful, richer and receiving more attention. Thus, the assumption can be made, that if the EU would further integrate and more competences would shift to an EU level, also transnational parties would become stronger and less influenced by the nation states.

¹⁴ The importance of the issues listed was clearly visible on the MS election posters.

3 Theory and hypotheses

The literature review demonstrates that transnational parties, even if they are ideology-based party associations, struggle with the national influence of their members. The different national situations that exist within the EU lead to different positions or different emphasis on issues within the party families and sometimes resonate in inner party conflicts or standstills. As the European elections are held on national level, national differences in election campaigns do indeed exist, but nevertheless the party families in the EU display a relatively high degree of convergence after all. In general, convergence in party families is defined by ideological and by territorial convergence, while due to studies the ideological convergence is much higher in party families in the EU (Lefkofridi and Katsanidou, 2018, p. 1465). Although, transnational parties are only indirectly elected, as citizens are only able to vote for the parties that exist in their states. With this background and in this context, the question arises as how a pan-European party campaigns for the EP with regard to Volt. For Volt the current EP election architecture means, that the new party – even if it is actually pan-European – is only permitted to campaign nationally in each MS with different conditions.

Party families are defined by their (1) origins and sociology, (2) transnational links, (3) policy and ideology, and (4) party name (Ennsner, 2012, p. 152). All these conditions apply to Volt and prove that Volt is indeed one single political party and thus needs to be distinguished from other transnational party families, such as euro parties or federations. While reviewing the literature, it is important to keep in mind that Volt and other party families were created in the opposite way. As a pan-European party, Volt has some fundamentally different prerequisites compared to other transnational parties: Volt was founded at the supranational EU level and established ‘national chapters’ in the MS of the EU, mainly for legal reasons. As described in the introduction, Volt developed from the European level to national and further to the local level. According to the literature, the various chapters of transnational parties act similar to franchise brands, hence according to a common line (Braun and Schmitt, 2018, p. 4) and with high ideological cohesiveness (Camia and Caramani, 2011, p. 71). Thus, Volt is not a coalition of national parties but a seemingly homogeneous party across all MS. On European level, the Volt chapters adopted a common overarching manifesto like other transnational parties – though having different origins – in which the party’s ideology and policies for the EU elections are anchored. Any political position that Volt takes in any MS and at any level is based on the same

party statute and programme. Also, for Volt's first attempt at the EU elections, all national election campaigns and positions were based on the same manifesto.

Therefore, this thesis raises the question of whether and why the situations in the MS influenced the Volt campaigns, even though the party was founded purely at a supranational level and shares one and the same manifesto. It is assumed that even a pan-European party cannot escape the national impact described in the literature review because of the national and largely isolated nature of the election campaigns. Given the common manifesto at European level, it can be assumed that Volt's policy positions will be very convergent across the national chapters. As already mentioned in the literature review. However, national impact can be expressed not only through different positions but also, and especially, through varying emphasis on different issues. This leads to the assumption that the national Volt chapters not only, for example, adjust the language of the overarching manifesto to increase participation, but also include their own additional points on the agenda, which are important to their electorate and which are part of the current national discourse. In addition, some points of the euro-manifesto that might already be established in the respective country anyway, or to which other parties are already committed might be neglected. The already different conditions in the MS suggest that the issue salience could also vary from MS to MS without changing positions. An initial assumption was formulated for this and will be specialised by two hypotheses in the following: *Even though Volt's campaigns are based on the same manifesto, the Volt chapters will adjust the salience on policy issues from the manifesto according to national circumstances.*

By researching on this assumption, the question of national influence on the first purely pan-European party is somewhat closer to being answered. Still it is also necessary to answer directly why such national influence occurs and on the basis of which parameters. Issue differences always prevail where fundamental – i.e. economic, socio-cultural and historical – circumstances differ (Green-Pedersen, 2007, p. 609). Those circumstances differ most between the 'old' and the 'new' MS, what is proved by the existing cleavages (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2009, p. 306; Veen, 2011b, p. 65). Therefore, it can be assumed that Volt will emphasise other issues in Eastern MS than in Western MS. Furthermore, and also coinciding broadly with this, there may also be differences to existing EU-attitudes: Depending on how positively or negatively the EU is already established or perceived in a certain MS, issues concerning the EU are discussed more generally (thus, pro-/anti-EU) or more diversified (Boomgaarden *et al.*, 2011, pp. 242–243). Volt can be considered as fully mobilised for its

campaigning, as EU issues are discussed “extensively, involve national-level political actors and address a variety of EU issue types using a range of frames” (Senninger and Wagner, 2015, p. 1337). Surely, fundamental opinions such as Volt’s support for ‘pro-EU’ campaigns will not split up but different approaches are assumed to be discovered, for example due to differing history or the presence of different national governments (Braun and Schmitt, 2018, p. 6).

EU issues are the most important topic in EU elections. In particular, the question of more or less integration has the highest salience and demands a clear position from each party. It is therefore interesting to look at the Volt party – which was founded on a common ‘pro-EU’ basis and with the aim of creating a “Federal State of Europe” – to find out which pro-EU issues are particularly pushed. Embedded in the structure discussed in the literature section, the question here would be whether the various Volt chapters focus more on left or right-wing owned issues. The assumption that national events such as the EU-attitude of the citizens and their government, and the MS’ history have an influence on the emphasis of issues in Volt’s election campaigns can already be guessed with regard to a recent example of Volt. In May 2020 there was an internal and of course pan-European vote on the positioning on nuclear power. This vote caused tensions, as it was a very decisive one: if Volt were to speak out in favour of nuclear power, the party could no longer be considered a green party in many MS such as Germany, Austria and Italy, but could attract positive attention in France and Belgium. If Volt were to speak out against nuclear power, the party would appear “unelectable” in many MS, but would be considered as unrealistic in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. This essential GAL/TAN issue shows that the national level can have considerable influence on individual policy issues, even if the party is convergent on EU issues as a whole. Therefore, the following expectations are formulated.

Volt is completely associated with GAL on the GAL/TAN axis, because it is a genuinely pro-European party. It is assumed that Volt will engage more generally in pro-EU issues where this arena is more unoccupied, while Volt will emphasise more diversified GAL issues where the pro-EU arena is already played out by established mainstream parties. This means, that a MS in which other parties already cover strong pro-European issues, other issues as climate change, cosmopolitanism, human rights and the rule of law will be additionally emphasised to broaden the chapter’s position. Moreover, depending on the historic legacy – thus either communist or capitalist – the connotations and correlations of Hooghe and Marks’ dimensions differ: while in Western MS ‘Left’ tends to stand more for liberal policies, in Eastern MS equal policies are

allocated to the ‘Right’ (Marks *et al.*, 2006, p. 170). GAL and TAN issues are connotated similarly but correlate differently. Therefore, comparing the Eastern and Western perspectives, Left and Right behave almost inversely to each other on their axis. Consequently, GAL and TAN have a different correlation to the Left/Right dimension (Marks *et al.*, 2006, p. 158). Depending on which topics are more effective and left open by other parties in a given country, the Volt members will probably work out even more precise contents and still remain flexible in terms of content, just as the characteristics of party-movements suggest (Kitschelt, 1986, p. 62). Beyond that, Volt enters the political arena both on European and national level, where the arenas are of different sizes, groups, fair play and salient issues (Sasmatzoglou, 2013, p. 67; Braun and Schmitt, 2018, p. 1). Thus, different political spaces are left open for Volt to step in – also strategically (Muis and Immerzeel, 2017, p. 912): In some countries the attention and awareness for a pro-European party-movement is bigger than in others. Where the pro-EU political field is already occupied, it is harder for Volt to gain and establish its unique selling point. Also, the pro and anti-EU attitudes and the general sensitiveness as well as susceptibility differ in the electorate of the MS. As follows, along the dimension of different issue salience in the MS, which was established by setting up the initial assumption, the following hypotheses will test the variance and the reasons for different campaigns in Volt’s chapters. Depending on the historical legacy and the EU-attitudes of established mainstream parties in the party-political arena of the MS, Volt will put different emphasis on Left-, Right-, GAL- or TAN-owned issues. This leads to the hypotheses:

H1: Depending on the historical development of the MS, the Volt chapters emphasise either more on right or left issues.

H2: Depending on the coverage of pro-European issues by other parties in the MS, the Volt chapters will focus more diversified on other GAL issues

In concrete terms and referring to Volt’s ideology, this means that it could make strategically sense, to push for left-wing Western MS and emphasise more on several GAL issues, where many pro-European parties exist. At the same time in the post-communist MS, more right-wing issues could become more salient for Volt and fundamental pro-European positions could be emphasised by Volt, because of a lack of established pro-European parties.

Summarized, the expectations on the Volt manifesto and Volt’s campaigns will be formulated as the following: The general expectation is that the national chapters will run different

campaigns, also in terms of content because of a high national impact. More specifically, the national chapters will emphasize different EU issues, because of east-west cleavages in party positioning, the national party-political landscapes, the MS' historic legacy and in connection therewith the cultural and economic situation.

4 Methodology

4.1 Research Question and its relevance

Volt appeared in public for the first time in 2017, shortly after the party movement had been founded. Volt had been formed by three founders and intended to take the place of the first pro-European overarching movement – a movement and a party that stands for more Europe and collective solutions at all levels. Volt has not yet been considered in scientific discourse, but this would be worthwhile, as Volt is a new phenomenon. The party movement received some media attention before the election, but its popularity grew following the successful European elections. Nevertheless, Volt is not yet an established party but – in some MS more than in others – still in its infancy. Since Volt, unlike other transnational parties, has been formed on European level, Volt is difficult to anchor in the current literature.

As Volt has a very different dynamic compared to established transnational parties, it can also be assumed that internal processes such as manifesto creation, elections, organisation and communication, function differently from mainstream parties. Moreover, one must always keep in mind that although Volt is a transnational party, it is not an association of many individual national parties as in the case of the euro parties and their federations. Although Volt is now a new phenomenon without any possible comparison, the party movement is still bound to the system of EU elections. As the EU elections are held on a national rather than a European level, it is interesting to see how a pan-European party behaves and campaigns on national level. Elections should never be studied isolated from other levels (Braun and Schmitt, 2018, p. 2), why the analysis here will take into account national and transnational aspects like Niedermayer suggests (Niedermayer, 1984, p. 235). As already described above, other parties use their existing national network and deal with more EU issues during the pre-election phases than normally. Each national party has its own programme, which is in line with the party federations, but still isolated. The procedure should be similar for Volt but one can assume that Volt will indeed have a very EU-focused election campaign, yet will address different issues

within the national borders. In order to grasp the extent and the reasons of different campaigns between the national chapters, although having the same manifesto, the overarching research question of this thesis is the following:

“What influence did national factors have on the EU election campaigns of the Volt Party?”

This question will be assessed by firstly analysing the pan-European electoral programme as well as the chapters campaigns¹⁵ and later-on by bringing them together with the statements of interviewed Campaign or Country Leads¹⁶. When a descriptive framework is outlined, describing how the campaigns differed, the question of why different campaigns had been conducted in different MS, whilst all Volt chapters have the same origin and the same election programme, will be addressed.

The research question is highly relevant to the scientific discourse about EU elections, because it is intended to normatively conclude why Volt, a pan-European party that is obviously trying to circumvent the strongly nationalized electoral system, have some differences in their campaign implementation. The first scientific examination of Volt should contribute to expand the discourse on transnational parties in the EU by a pan-European party movement. In addition, Volt as a novum and as a new actor in European politics will be examined more closely for the first time.

4.2 Research Design

4.2.1 Qualitative Methods and reasoning why they are used

This research is intended to contribute to the field of transnational politics by applying qualitative methods and a rather deductive approach, still with an inductive component as hypotheses resulted from the theories in the literature part before the empirical part was started. Qualitative methods are particularly common in comparative and international politics (Levy, 2007, p. 196). A qualitative approach was chosen, because Volt’s first election campaign is a single event that should be understood comprehensively. In the previous sections, the existing literature and some hypotheses were formulated. During the research process beginning in January 2019, many expectations and vague hypotheses were made and were deliberately kept

¹⁵ By analysing the chapter’s flyers, posters, and posts on social media.

¹⁶ The position of the president of a Volt chapter is called ‘Country Lead’ and the campaign leader is called ‘Campaign Lead’ in Volt jargon.

flexible in order not to hinder the inductive side. In feedback loops, individual factors were constantly brought into an explanatory connection with the literature and the theories addressed in chapter three (Mayring, 2015, p. 22).

In the course of the research, the first step is to analyse the common pan-European manifesto. Manifestos are regarded as suitable data material for the analysis of election campaigns (Braun and Schmitt, 2018, p. 4). The analysis is intended to provide a first overview of the content, choice of topics, accuracy and objectives of the party. Furthermore, it should also reveal whether the pan-European manifesto can be classified as a “supranational manifesto” in the series of euro party manifestos (Gabel and Hix, 2002, p. 936). Of course, it will not be possible to find differences between the Volt chapters in the manifesto, as it serves as a common programme for all chapters. Nevertheless, the step of analysing the election programme is an important one to be able to work out differences afterwards, to gain insights of Volt’s campaigning groundwork, the party’s positions and values. Finally, in order to be able to identify the maybe correctly expected differences in the election campaigns, interviews with the Volt campaign leads¹⁷ will be conducted on the base of the preceding analysis and an initial categorisation, in order to work out national or chapter-specific differences.

4.2.2 Case selection

For this master thesis, four different Country or Campaign Leads from four different Volt chapters were interviewed. The reason for choosing four different countries, is the required creation of comparability to test the hypotheses. In order to test them, four out of 28 Volt chapters, and three out of eight chapters which were actually campaigning for the EP elections, were chosen. The reason that only eight¹⁸ out of 28 were running for the EU elections had mainly national legal and internal capacity causes. For the 2024 elections – insofar as Volt continues to grow – a more comprehensive analysis would certainly become relevant. There is also a very strong Volt chapter in the United Kingdom, which attracted attention especially during the BREXIT period. Due to the ended BREXIT negotiations and the passage of the UK MEPs, the UK is excluded from this research. However, Volt had been a very active campaigner

¹⁷ “Volt campaign leads” are the heads of the campaigning groups in the respective Volt chapters.

¹⁸ The Volt chapters from Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, Germany, Bulgaria, Spain and UK were running for the European Parliament in 2019.

in the pre-election phase with strong remain-voice, inspired many other Volt members, and still exists after BREXIT.

The selected countries had to meet the following four criteria: Their national party systems should differentiate, they should be historically and culturally apart from each other, they should have had a Volt chapter which was campaigning for the EP elections and the representatives of those chapters would share data and their memories. The hypotheses imply the comparison of MS with different historical legacies, as well as evident pro-European and traditionally more Eurosceptic MS. As the hypotheses predicted cleavages in a comparability between Western and Eastern Volt chapters needed to be created. A comparison between the BeNeLux countries would therefore, for example, have yielded little insight due to their obvious political, cultural, economic and historical proximity to each other. Thus, respecting all those parameters, the Volt chapters from Germany, Sweden, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic were selected for this research.

Concerning the first hypothesis, the historic legacy of the four countries should be clarified: The Czech Republic and Bulgaria became EU members with the ‘Eastern Enlargement’ in 2004 and 2007¹⁹ and have a communist and thus different historic legacy²⁰ than the Western MS. The communist period in Eastern Europe ended with the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989. Though the democratisation of Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia (separated in 1992) was achieved differently (Krapfl, 2013, pp. 6–10; Borissov, 2008, p. 46), the communist period bore equally profound cleavages between West and East. Supposing to create comparability between the campaigns of the Volt chapters, two MS with a capitalist and two with a communist history were chosen. However, Sweden represents not only the ‘West’, but also the ‘North’. Similarly, the Czech Republic stands not only for Eastern Europe but strictly speaking for Central Europe, sharing a similar historic legacy as Bulgaria. Of course the clusters and patterns of party positioning in the EU go beyond ‘East vs West’ and ‘North vs South’, especially depending on the debated issue, but for this research about issue salience during EP elections, especially

¹⁹ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/167/the-enlargement-of-the-union> [accessed on 22.07.2020].

²⁰ Strictly speaking, East Germany shares a different history legacy than West Germany. This also has an influence on elections, as the East-German citizens tend to vote more Eurosceptic: <https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/> [accessed on 22.07.2020]. This will not be part of this thesis, as Germany is traditionally perceived as a Western MS in the EU.

cleavages between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ MS, and therefore between West and East are expected.

In order to test the second hypothesis and be able to measure the coverage of pro-European issues by other competing parties, the respective party landscapes in the four MS will be explained referring to the Chapel Hill data set from 2019 and 2014²¹. In Germany, the overall position on the EU is positive by all parties, except for one Eurosceptic party. Pro-European standpoints are covered by almost all parties, while the salience of those issues is ‘medium’ and left/right issues prevail. In Sweden, both the Left/Right and GAL/TAN dimensions have a high salience, the eurosceptic positions are higher than in Germany and especially Left parties are more Eurosceptic than in Germany. According to the data set, Bulgarian parties have the most Eurosceptic positions, while and the salience on GAL issues is very low. In the Czech Republic, the Eurosceptic positions are almost as high as in Bulgaria, with the difference that GAL issues were slightly more salient than in Bulgaria. The data set clearly indicates that the coverage of pro-European issues is more guaranteed in Western MS than in Eastern MS. Furthermore, it is evident that, as described in the literature chapter, the party systems differ with regard to the correlation of the Left/Right and GAL/TAN dimensions and their salience.

Based on these explanations and parameters, the four countries were selected to analyse Volt's campaigns in these MS to determine the differences and national influences. Actually, the Czech chapter did not run for parliament, but nevertheless campaigned for Volt in the pre-election phase. As Volt is pan-European and sees itself as a unified party anyway, even if it is structurally and legally anchored in different countries, Volt Czech Republic, which was not admitted to the elections²² also campaigned and positioned itself on issues. Consequently, Volt Czech Republic will be included in the campaign analysis. Additionally, its special situation will be delved in detail in an excursus.

²¹ Ryan Bakker, Liesbet Hooghe, Seth Jolly, Gary Marks, Jonathan Polk, Jan Rovny, Marco Steenbergen, and Milada Anna Vachudova. 2020. “2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey.” Version 2019.1. Available on chesdata.eu. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. And Polk, Jonathan, Jan Rovny, Ryan Bakker, Erica Edwards, Liesbet Hooghe, Seth Jolly, Jelle Koedam, Filip Kostelka, Gary Marks, Gijs Schumacher, Marco Steenbergen, Milada Anna Vachudova and Marko Zilovic. 2017. "Explaining the salience of anti-elitism and reducing political corruption for political parties in Europe with the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey data," *Research & Politics* (January-March): 1-9. Refer to the table in the Appendix on page 79-80.

²² Volt Czech Republic did not meet the national criteria to be admitted to take part in the EP elections 2019.

4.2.3 The data

In order to collect an adequate amount of data, in addition to the pan-European Manifesto, its translations were screened for differences. At this point, no differences could be detected by reading the versions, only pure literal translations. Therefore, the chapter's campaign material such as flyers, election posters, social media posts, guest contributions in newspapers and statements of the four chapters were collected, analysed and structured. The material differs, especially in the latter case, in quantitative terms. Nevertheless, it is possible to measure proportionally and ultimately also compare which issues were emphasized to what extent. After collecting and structuring the data, it was compared with and allocated to the pledges in the Amsterdam Declaration and tabulated. This table was later expanded by the data from the conducted interviews.

The four interviews were conducted as a combination of open-ended surveys (Behnke *et al.*, 2010, pp. 233–234) and guided interviews (Behnke *et al.*, 2010, p. 238). The open interview method was chosen because the topic has not yet been researched, complex interrelationships were to be worked out, detailed recording of the individual case played a major role and similarly authentic information could not be obtained elsewhere (Behnke *et al.*, 2010, pp. 234–235). Since very specific questions have to be asked in order to work out differences and thus the correct selection of the interviewee is essential, one could also speak of expert interviews here, as the possible group of people involved is very small (Lauth, 2015, pp. 166–167). The interview guide comprised about 35 questions, which were asked according to the flow of speech of the interviewee. The questions ranged from open personal questions as “*Tell me about the election campaign in 2019, how were you involved?*” to concrete questions as “*Which topic apart from a united Europe was most discussed?*”. A total of four interviews were conducted in the period from 11 to 14 June 2020. They lasted about one hour and were conducted via skype in English²³ for reasons of simplicity and comparability, even if no one in the study was a native English speaker. In this research, the interviewees were anonymised, but their Volt positions can be stated. The positions of the interviewees differed, but it was ensured beforehand that they were involved closely in the campaigns for the EP elections: The German interviewee was the second candidate at the time of the campaign, the Czech interviewee is the

²³ Only the interview with the German representative was conducted in German.

current unofficial²⁴ Country Lead, the Swedish interviewee was the Swedish Country Lead at the time of the campaign, himself a candidate²⁵ and strongly active at EU level. The Bulgarian interviewee was himself a candidate and Country Lead²⁶.

In narrative interviews and in qualitative research in general, it is always important to reflect that the researcher herself is working on the analysis as a subject and that it can therefore never be viewed completely objectively. Therefore, a high share of structural knowledge about Volt is subjective knowledge, the researcher gained by being in the field for over a year. In addition, it is also important to reflect on the fact that the election campaign has already taken place some time ago and the experts were, therefore, sharing information out of their memories. However, this information transfer out of the experts' memories does not pose any problems for this qualitative research, as the interviews are sufficiently underpinned and supported by other materials, such as the country-specific flyers, posters and written statements. Moreover, since narrative interviews were conducted, the Volt members did not comment on all issues equally but focused on the issues they considered important. Therefore, after creating the table, the interviewees were asked concretely about the unoccupied issues and information was added if the chapter had campaigned on these issues but didn't mention them at first place. After conducting the interviews, they were directly transcribed in detail²⁷ according to Schmidt (Schmidt, 2000, pp. 448–449) before being categorised and evaluated.

4.2.4 Qualitative Content Analysis according to Mayring

For the evaluation of the collected material, the method of “qualitative content analysis” was chosen. Besides some predecessors, the content analysis in its present form was developed in the USA at the beginning of this century. At that time, the systematic analysis of large amounts of text data from the expanding mass media was in focus. Initially, quantitative methods were developed, with little systematic approach, whereupon the qualitative content analysis was developed (Mayring, 2000, pp. 469–470). Kracauer then invented the term “qualitative content analysis” in the early 1950s (Kuckartz, 2019, p. 4). An advantage of qualitative content analysis

²⁴ Unofficial because there have not yet been any internal elections in the Czech chapter, but he takes on all the duties of a country lead without being elected.

²⁵ He had the anchor position at the end of the list.

²⁶ More detailed information about the interviewed experts can be found in the Appendix as well as in the transcripts.

²⁷ All transcripts are available on request.

is that the procedure is rule- and theory-based (Mayring, 2015, p. 59) and that the dichotomization of the quantitative and the qualitative method can be overcome (Mayring, 2000, p. 474). This is appropriate for this work insofar as different questions and expectations are to be compared with a large amount of collected material coming from different sources.

This work will be based on the qualitative content analysis according to Mayring. The aim of his very structured and regular evaluation method is the systematic processing of communication material (Mayring, 2000, p. 468). In this case, Volt's manifesto, the campaign material and the interviews. The qualitative content analysis according to Mayring "is research question oriented" (Mayring, 2019, p. 3), which is suitable for this inquiry, since the research questions were already defined before the material was collected. Nevertheless, it will still be possible to change, expand or further narrow down the research questions in detail through feedback loops and an inductive approach. The advantage of the Mayring analysis is that it follows pre-defined process models and is therefore comprehensible and easily transferable. This is particularly useful for multi-part analyses and different material (Mayring, 2000, p. 474) as it is the case here. The principles for developing a qualitative content analysis are hence firstly the systematic approach, secondly that the material always remains in its context, thirdly the construction of categories and fourthly the review (Mayring, 2000, pp. 472–473, 2015, p. 29). The focus of the qualitative content analysis is the construction of categories from the material (Mayring, 2015, p. 51). These categories are to be developed inductively from the collected material and in accordance with the questions and expectations made (Mayring, 2015, p. 85). "Categories refer to aspects within the text, which put the meaning of those aspects in a nutshell" (Mayring, 2019, p. 3). The categories are formulated after reading the transcript several times and reducing it to the essentials of what is said (Mayring, 2015, p. 62).

For this research, the transcripts were categorised separately to answer the broad Assumption about national influences and the resulting differing salience of issues for Volt and then, as a second step Hypotheses 1 and 2. The categories were the following: 'different reference on the Amsterdam Declaration' (the common manifesto), 'emphasis on pro-European issues', 'emphasis on non-EU-issues', 'campaigns'. Later, they were shortened and summarised in three categories, which are going to be used in the analysis part and which are dedicated to the hypotheses: 'Pro-EU issues', 'Economic issues' and 'Other pro-EU issues'. For those categories, inductively formulated through reading the transcripts but having the hypotheses in

mind, under-categories were developed and condensed in a table²⁸. After this process, the table consisted of 46 policy issues, to which the individual Volt chapters made different or the same references. For the sake of clarity, it should be mentioned that although only the issues mentioned in the interviews are mentioned, not all of these 46 issues are included in the Amsterdam Declaration, but some occurred out of national contexts. This will be discussed in chapter 6.

5 Empirical part I: Volt's manifesto

Subsequently, the manifesto of Volt will be presented and to a certain extent also analysed and the reader will be introduced to Volt's policies and pledges. 'Where could lines of conflict arise?', 'how detailed is the manifesto?', 'what is the focus and the goal of the young party' – all these questions will be clarified in this chapter and serve as a basis for the guided interviews. Of course, no differences between the individual country chapters can yet be worked out in this section, as only this one manifesto on the European elections exists. Therefore, this chapter serves as a groundwork for a deeper understanding of the issues Volt refers to.

5.1 Analysis of Volt's manifesto

When first reading Volt's election manifesto, one thing immediately catches the eye next to the professional sounding name "Amsterdam Declaration" and the purple colour is the length. The short program indicates that it is dedicated to the voters because of its designed layout and with ten pages it is of an interesting length. A second supporting document of 63 pages whereas is of a remarkable length when compared to other European manifestos in English: the EPP²⁹ and Greens/EFA³⁰ manifestos have 16 pages each, the PES³¹ only 4, Renew Europe/ALDE³² 12. The length alone could indicate a spectacular accuracy, which established transnational parties do not have at their disposal. Even smaller parties, such as the Pirate Party have adopted a euro

²⁸ The tables are available on request.

²⁹ <https://www.epp.eu/papers/epp-manifesto/> [accessed on 11.07.2020].

³⁰ <https://europeangreens.eu/priorities-2019-what-european-greens-fight> [accessed on 11.07.2020].

³¹ <https://www.pes.eu/en/manifesto2019/> [accessed on 11.07.2020].

³² <https://teameurope.eu/our-manifesto/> [accessed on 11.07.2020].

manifesto, which is twelve pages³³. The same with DiEM25: the manifesto of the transnational left-wing party, which is specially indexed with the headline “long version”, is nine pages³⁴. Length can vary across parties “but even over time within a given party. Differences in length may reflect different purposes to which manifestos are put, different ideologies, or even differences in the size of parties and/or of government” (Harmel, 2018, p. 234), states Harmel. In this connection, one could also interpret that for the majority of citizens, and also for mainstream parties, the EU elections are considered as “second-order” elections (Kröger and Friedrich, 2013, p. 178). Therefore, less effort is put into the election programmes because every campaigner drives campaigns and makes promises based on him- or herself. Volt, as a pan-European party, of course, considers the EU elections as first-order elections, which could in thus explain why the manifesto has a significant length. In addition, Volt is a new party and therefore had to establish itself first of all.

The Amsterdam Declaration, which bases its name on the fact, that Volt adopted it at its first official General Assembly in Amsterdam, is divided into three sections: “#1 Fix the EU”, “#2 Make Europe an economic powerhouse” and “#3 Build a just and sustainable society”, each with short introductory paragraphs and subsections. The Declaration consists of a foreword and 67 individual pledges, which are assigned to different thematic issues: “Governance”, “Economy and finance”, “European Parliament”, “Inclusion”, “Participation”, “Deliberation”, “Security”, “Transparency”, “Corruption”, “Create Jobs”, “Entrepreneurship”, “No One left behind”, “Innovation”, “Future of Work”, “Education”, “The Volta Programme”³⁵, “Smart Energy”, “Circular Economy”, “Sustainable agriculture”, “Asylum Seekers and Refugees”, “Labour migration”, “Equality and Anti-Discrimination”, “Public Sector”, and “Inclusion” with specific goals under the three main headings (Volt, 2019a, pp. 4–12).

Harmel suggests that the number of pledges should not necessarily be seen in correlation to the number of pages, the accuracy or content strength, instead he states that the number of pledges can vary (Harmel, 2018, p. 234). Rather, he explains that the “detail of pledges” is to be distinguished in vague, general and detailed (Harmel, 2018, p. 235). “It is reasonable to assume that older, more “institutionalized” parties will have had more opportunity than very young

³³ <https://european-pirateparty.eu/programme/> [accessed on 11.07.2020].

³⁴ <https://diem25.org/manifesto-long/> [accessed on 11.07.2020].

³⁵ The Volta Programme should provide comprehensive financial support for all training activities, including the reskilling and upskilling of people.

parties to not only develop a formalized process for producing manifestos but also to formulate an agenda of specific policy objectives broad and deep enough to constitute a truly policy-oriented manifesto” (Harmel, 2018, p. 236). However, it becomes visible, that Volt has used a special method to produce a professional manifesto that addresses nearly every burning issue and debate, shows clear positions and gives precise suggestions for how new ideas could be implemented. To explore the method on how Volt developed, a deeper dive into the communication structure Volt established when being founded is necessary: Volt internally communicates over an online platform that works like an intern social media platform. Via this intranet, pan-European, national and local groups are built, as well as policy, campaigning, communications and lead groups. In those groups, combined with ‘Open Documents’, policies, pledges and new ideas are commonly developed, changed and reviewed. At the General Assembly in Amsterdam, the members adopted the Amsterdam Declaration as a common pan-European manifesto per vote. Afterwards, the short version of the manifesto, which also held as ‘standard version’, was translated into German, Dutch, French, Spanish, Italian, Swedish, Bulgarian and Czech. These languages indicate three interesting points: First, all the countries that ran for Parliament made the Declaration available in their mother tongue. Second, the Italian and the Czech version exist, despite not being able to run for parliament. And thirdly, with this selection of languages, Volt covered nearly all language families that are spoken on the European continent.

When reading the short version more closely it is noticeable that most of the important EU issues are mentioned and Volt formulates clear positions on them. Thus, topics like the democratic deficit, economic asymmetry, EU-Army, research, sustainability and Climate Crisis, the right to equal treatment and many more are indicated with clear pledges (Volt, 2019a, pp. 4–12). In addition, Volt describes itself as pragmatic and science-based, which is also visible through the longer Supporting Document, where the pledges are noted in a scheme with questions “What?”, “Why?”, “How?” and “Funding?”. In particular the “How?” often mentions direct treaty provisions that could be used to implement the pledge.

According to Volt’s manifesto, the pan-European party definitely comments on all important issues that dominated the public discourse before the EP elections. This can directly be detected to a young party-movement, which was founded out of frustration about growing uncertainties in the EU. By knowing exact treaty provisions and referring equally to burning issues, Volt appears more pragmatic than naïve. At the same time, Volt seems to drive a more programmatic

orientation (Harmel, 2018, p. 237), than one of pragmatic nature, as its focus is more on innovative ideas, than on enthusing the electorate with meaningless phrases. Moreover, a content-based detailedness allocation of the manifesto becomes easy after this example: Volt's manifesto can be described as a detailed one, as it is an „extended version[s] of ‘specific’ pledge[s] but differ[s] in terms of providing precise information about intended action or target focus” (Harmel, 2018, p. 235). Thus, for a new party-movement, Volt seems to have a relatively detailed and programmatic manifesto which reads sometimes liberal and at times rather restrictive.

With its positions on topics such as the nationally influenced EU elections, MS's sovereignty, climate change and digitalisation, Volt does not want to subordinate itself to a political science model about party-political spaces and has therefore not officially placed itself on a Left/Right scale, but rather wants to be classified issue-based. Although, taking into account the theory of the inverted U-curve in a Left/Right and pro/anti-EU structure of Hooghe and Marks (Hooghe *et al.*, 2002, pp. 968–969), it allows an easier programmatic classification of Volt's pledges. Since Volt's most important key characteristic is a pro-European attitude and, since common pan-European solutions are preferred in every pledge, according to the U-curve Volt can be classified centrally, thus in the middle. However, in recent years more and more post-materialistic EU issues have been added to the question of ‘more or less EU integration’, which is why the theory has been extended to a more complex two-dimensional structure. All the examples of “new EU issues” given by Hooghe and Marks, such as “EU environment, migration policy, EP powers” and of course the familiar maxim “EU integration” (Hooghe *et al.*, 2002, p. 978) are focal points in the Volt manifesto, expressing strong support for common solutions on EU level (Volt, 2019a, p. 1). In this respect, and as a contrast to all Eurosceptic parties, Volt can clearly be assigned to GAL and less to TAN. Volt holds typical GAL positions such as increasing the EPs' power by granting it the right to initiative, increasing the transparency of the EU, fighting climate change with a CO² tax, extending Erasmus+ to secondary educational sectors, agreeing on a common compulsory asylum policy as well as investing in modern entrepreneurship and research (Volt, 2019a, pp. 3–12). At the same time, Volt is not consistent with all characteristics of left or green and thus typical GAL-parties, as Volt has a much more liberal view on the economy and the European single market. This reflects both the issue centrality that applies to newer parties and that a clear classification into the traditional Left/Right scheme is not plausible in this respect.

Another characteristic mentioned in the literature for new party movements is flexibility in content. Given the pragmatic and realistic nature of the manifesto, no particular flexibility or related vague expressions can be identified in this context at first glance. At the same time, Volt admits in its very first pledge of the supporting document of the Amsterdam Declaration, that this one is a very motivated and ambitious long-term goal: Volt formulates as the first item on its agenda to “establish a Federal Europe with a European Government, headed by a Prime Minister elected by the Parliament, and with a President elected by the people. This will create a strong, open and transparent European parliamentary democracy” (Volt, 2019a, p. 3). The statement can thus be perceived as the most important and elementary point of the whole manifesto, as well as Volt’s pan-European unique selling point. At the same time, this pledge seems to be the least realistic one to implement. This is not covered in the short version, but is addressed in more detail in the supporting document: *“This is admittedly a very bold commitment, as it needs broad support from EU citizens, but it is a paramount requirement in order to achieve real democracy in Europe”*, it says before Volt explains how it wants to implement this pledge. In order to achieve this rather as long-term goal for “fixing” the EU, Volt is seeking a Treaty revision procedure under Article 48 (2) TEU³⁶, initiated by the EP. In an ordinary revision process the Laeken Declaration, establishing a European Convention to draft a Treaty to establish a Constitution for Europe, is to be amended to allow the adoption of a Convention for a European Constitution for a Federal Europe (Volt, 2019b, p. 3). Volt is thus already drawing a route that makes this goal seem achievable from a legal and pragmatic perspective. Furthermore, Volt pleads for many points, which on the one hand aim for more EU integration and at the same time point out that by founding a pan-European party movement, Volt wants to circumvent the nationally influenced electoral system of the EU. For example, the party wants to allow the foundation of real EU parties, to introduce equal conditions for the EU elections (Volt, 2019a, pp. 3–4) and in this context uses the Pan-European manifesto as a first step.

As a result, the pan-European and thus exclusively pro-European component of the young transnational party can be seen as a unique selling and focus point – presumably in all MS. Hence a very high convergence can be expected with regard to these issues, similar to the convergence of liberal parties on liberal issues and green parties on green issues. In general, such a young party and such a detailed common manifesto, as already described in chapter

³⁶ Consolidated version of the Treaty of the European Union [2008] OJ C115.

three, can be expected to achieve a high degree of internal convergence and fewer positional deviations. However, this also leads to the assumption that the emphasis on particular other and more indirectly EU-related issues may vary.

After taking a closer look at the Amsterdam Declaration, which allowed Volt as a party to be better positioned in the European party landscape, the second step of this empirical study is to test the hypotheses set out in chapter three and to examine the question of national influence on the Volt chapters.

6 Empirical part II: Volt's campaigns

In this part, the actual core of the work, namely the results of qualitative research are to be compiled and described. In order to be able to offer a concise comparison of the interviewed Volt chapters in the following, the hypotheses set up in chapter three will be approached one after another by describing the election campaigns in the different countries. As already mentioned in the methodological chapter four, there were a total of 46 policy issues on which at least one country put emphasis. Hence, according to the analysed interviews and the additional campaigning material, there were 46 salient issues with different emphases per country. For 40 of those 46 issues, pledges can be found in the Amsterdam Declaration. This means, that on those issues concrete positions were determined in the common manifesto and the chapters have the same source of reference. Seven issues arose out of different contexts as national discourses or issues that were not or only indirectly mentioned in the manifesto. Those issues were the 'BREXIT', 'right-wing populism', 'being progressive', 'Eastern Europe in the EU', 'the rule of law', 'the EU as an instrument of compliance' and the 'EU mobility package'. In order to maintain an overview of all topics in Volt's campaigns, the policy issues are sorted and presented by topic family in the subchapters 'pro-EU issues', 'economic issues' and other EU-related issues'. Strictly speaking, all pro-European issues are of course part of GAL, but here a distinction is explicitly made between two categories in order to make it easier to test the second hypothesis. 'Pro-EU issues' in this case are general issues describing pro-Europe and 'other EU-related issues' are further GAL issues like climate change, cosmopolitanism, asylum, or equality. To ensure comparability, comprehensibility and clarity the issues were listed in a

table under those categories and were ‘quantified’ with the parameters ‘high’, ‘medium’ and ‘low’³⁷.

Since the analysis of the three categories is more of a descriptive function, in which the results are first presented in detail, as a next step in the discussion chapter the results are embedded and interpreted in a higher theoretical structure of meaning.

6.1 National influence on Volt: Pro-EU issues

As already described in the previous parts, the pan-European party Volt was founded with the outcome of the BREXIT referendum in the background and is striving for deeper European integration and therefore pursuing the establishment of a European federal state. Hence, it is probably no surprise that the Volt chapters of the different MS are particularly united on pro-European issues, which form the basic values of the party. In the interviews therefore no significant deviations or divergences in this respect could be observed. In addition, all chapters had a clear and strong focus on pro-European issues. Two reasons for this were described: Firstly, Volt’s focus is basically on European solutions and therefore also on pro-European issues. Secondly, as described in the literature chapter, national topics dominate the European election campaigns, but questions of ‘more or less EU’ and the EU institutions play a crucial role in national debates. Thus, debates on EU issues do take place, but not across national borders and rather independently. Volt tries to connect these stand-alone debates by referencing on a common manifesto, especially with regard to the pro-European discourse.

All the surveyed chapters named their highest focus on pan-European and pro-European issues such as the goal of founding a federal state, restructuring the EU, increasing citizens’ participation and enable the creation of real transnational parties. A strong common ground over all chapters is visible here, which also represents the unique selling point of all Volt chapters: The pan-European unity about the future for Europe, previously agreed and recorded in the common programme. According to the interviewed experts, the fact that not only one national party alone, but all other chapters in each MS support the exact same position was a line of argumentation that made Volt particularly interesting in discussions and on the streets. Generally, the highest emphasis of all chapters lay on promoting the party’s pan-European approach as well as on the pledge of increasing the EU’s ability to act and to decide on more

³⁷ The content of the table will be presented in the following and is available in the appendix on page 80-81.

European solutions on all levels. Some differences in dealing with EU issues became nevertheless evident: while in all countries a lot of explanatory work on the EU, its institutions and a pan-European party was done, Volt Germany and Sweden emphasised the importance of promoting a federal state, stressing that “the EU needs to be fixed”. Bulgaria rather emphasised that the EU should be supported, as this international organisation serves as a reliable problem-solving instrument in the MS. By this, Volt Bulgaria educated the citizens about monitoring mechanisms and the effects of infringement procedures to ensure the MS compliance with EU law. Volt Bulgaria wanted to show that a higher engagement of the EU would solve deep problems in the country. The headline “Fix the EU”, under which the pledges concerning general debates on the EU and its institutions are listed in the Amsterdam Declaration, was the central and recognisable reference for all Volt campaigns from the 2019 election campaign. The sentence “Fix the EU” serves the pro-European party not to act as an unrealistic or naive pro-European party, but more as a party which recognises, names and deals with the serious obstacles of the EU. This sentence expresses the will to rebuild and repair, while at the same time criticising the current state of the EU. The Bulgarian chapter for example rephrased it as “I love the EU, so let’s fix it!”, the German chapter had a variation of “No Brexit, No Ixit, but Fix it!”. According to the interviews, this headline on flyers and posters, in Germany, Sweden and Bulgaria, had the effect of attracting attention and being encouraging. However, according to the Swedish interviewee, Volt Luxembourg struggled with the verb “to fix”, as the term implies something was damaged which, in the proudly pro-European Luxembourg, would make Volt join the Eurosceptic parties. This misunderstanding shows how much difference a single word can have on the classification and perception of a party in the different MS.

Next to that, other general pro-EU issues, as increasing the citizens’ participation in the EU policy making processes, were emphasised by every chapter. This topic was of a special importance in the Czech Republic and Germany, where the chapters criticised particularly the EU’s back room deals. In Sweden and Bulgaria, the engagement on that topic was medium. All chapters supported the position to set out a legal framework to enable the creation of real EU political parties. The problem about the creation of real pan-European parties is that a legal framework for the creation of a party on supranational level is not given. Volt needed to register as NGO in one MS and as separated party in all MS. This point went hand in hand with promoting the idea of a pan-European party elected by a European people.

Also the BREXIT was part of many campaigns, discussions on the streets or podiums: In Germany, the discussion about BREXIT was often connected with the growing right-wing populism and Euroscepticism in all MS, while the chapter from the Czech Republic addressed it from a national perspective with the rise of racism and an aspiration to CZEXIT of a part of the Czech society. The issue of right-wing populism, which has probably become a growing topic in most MS, was also addressed mainly – together with a historical perspective and the discourse of Germany’s accountability – in Germany and was described in the other surveyed chapters as “*addressed, but not discussed in detail*”.

Still, in conjunction with the problem of right-wing populism, the principle of the rule of law is a high frequented discussion in the EU. The rule of law – one of the most important values within the EU, which is becoming more threatened especially in Central Europe – was also discussed in Germany, and in Bulgaria, mainly due to its political and geographical proximity to Poland and Hungary. During the campaign phase before the EP elections in 2019, especially in Germany, a high focus was put on the Article 7 dilemma³⁸ at podiums with high-profile politicians to which Volt candidates were invited. The issue of the rule of law and justice had a special component in the Czech Republic, as the multi-millionaire owner of an agricultural company and Prime Minister since 2017 was accused of a conflict of interest, especially with regard to the EU’s common agricultural policy, which initially was not subject to any legal action or prosecution. In response to this, many irritated citizens, including Volt members, demonstrated to draw attention to this grievance and to call for his resignation.

In this section a high convergence in positions, but as well in salience could be elaborated. Nonetheless also differences in the way campaigns on pro-European issues were implemented, in which way topics were discussed could be observed. It became clear that national discourses and debates also have an influence on the salience on very general pro-EU issues and that Volt adapts to those situations. Although the salience of all the so far mentioned issues was relatively high and convergent throughout the MS, differences especially in the interpretation of several issues were already discovered. Moreover, pro-European issues are multi-layered and therefore have different shades (Hooghe *et al.*, 2002, p. 967). As a result, the Volt chapters dealt differently with the same pro-European issues and the same positions, anchored in one

³⁸ Poland and Hungary are blocking infringement procedures for breaching the rule of law in their countries by backing each other.

manifesto. Referring to the manifesto, another extremely interesting point was expressed by the Bulgarian expert: actually, Volt Bulgaria did not use the Amsterdam Declaration as the only and main document of reference. The reason for this was that the actual manifesto was “*to a large extent not valid for Eastern Europe and too far away*”³⁹ because of being of a too Western European characterised core. Of course, Volt Bulgaria did not disagree with any pledge or value that was determined on Volt’s supranational level – the Amsterdam Declaration was merely not suitable as a document to be reproduced in Bulgaria. That is why Volt Bulgaria and other Central and Eastern European chapters followed the Mapping of Policies, Volt’s value-based program. Also according to the Czech Expert, the common manifesto is too far-fetched for the Czech Republic and reads almost “*ridiculous, because it deals with completely different problems. For being progressive in the Czech Republic one has to set a much lower goal than in Germany or the Netherlands*”. In the Czech manifesto, there are partly more concrete pledges, which however are always oriented on the Amsterdam Declaration without contradicting it. For example, the headline instead of “fix the EU” is “Volt as your entry ticket to Europe”, or a concrete demand refers to more investment in education and the payment of professors. Through these explanations, (also internal) cleavages between East and West already become visible. In the following section they will be elaborated in detail by presenting the findings about the different emphases Volt put on different issues. The hypotheses established in chapter three will be tested in order to find out whether and why national factors could influence a pan-European campaign.

6.2 Hypotheses 1 & 2: Different emphasis on different issues

The preceding chapter established that different campaigns have been run on the most convergent category, namely the “Pro-EU issues” and that the national differences of the MS influenced the salience of different EU-issues. This chapter will now explore the categories ‘economic issues’ and ‘other EU-related issues’. However, it is not worthwhile to examine the pro-EU issues once again, as the chapters surveyed did not deal differently with these issues, but mere with a very high degree of convergence and as first priority. In general, hypothesis one and two do not aim at classifying pro-EU issues, since they are classified as GAL according to Hooghe’s and Marks’ system through the prefix “pro” (Hooghe et al., 2002, p. 967). For this reason, only the categories ‘economic issues’ and “other EU-related issues’ will be discussed

³⁹ In the following, direct citations from the interviews will be visualised in italic words.

below, since both of these are, strictly speaking, also already closely linked to the question of more or less integration.

The salience of each issue and the extent to which these topics are politically occupied in different ways and are therefore perceived differently by the Volt chapters and voters will be in focus in this chapter. The first hypothesis is based on the assumption that Volt tends to occupy left-wing issues in MS with a Western historic legacy and more right-wing issues in a MS with a post-communist historic legacy. Simultaneously, according to the second hypothesis, in those countries where pro-European opinions are more likely to be part of the consensus of the competing parties, Volt is more likely to focus on diversified GAL issues. Concerning the interviewed Volt members of the new transnational party, it is thus assumed, that in Germany rather Left and many GAL topics, in Bulgaria rather Right and more general pro-EU topics, in Sweden rather Left and more general pro-EU topics and in the Czech Republic rather right and more general pro-EU issues are commented with pledges and positions from the manifesto. In the following, the categories are examined in terms of positioning and interpretation, in order to be able to use these results in the discussion to interpret why also a transnational party is adapting to issue salience in national contexts.

6.2.1 Economic issues

The second category into which the 46 pledges were divided, includes economic issues. The first thing to notice here is that only two out of eleven topics were covered by more than one chapter. Thus, the salience of economic issues varied extremely, what may have its reason in the way those issues are ideologically connotated. Germany and Sweden set a strong emphasis on a Eurozone Budget, the completion of the Banking Union and the proposal to introduce a European Finance Minister. In Germany, this is an issue which is more supported and more salient to left, centre and liberal parties, while in Sweden it is only salient to liberal parties⁴⁰. Germany, for example, focused on the fact that digital tax and corporate income tax saving models do more harm than good to the EU and that common guidelines therefore would have to be found and on the proposal of a European Employment Agency and. In Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Sweden these issues were only marginally addressed, if at all. According to the theory, left-wing parties prefer more market regulation and cohesion, while right-wing parties

⁴⁰ Ryan Bakker, Liesbet Hooghe, Seth Jolly, Gary Marks, Jonathan Polk, Jan Rovny, Marco Steenbergen, and Milada Anna Vachudova. 2020. "2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey." Version 2019.1. Available on chesdata.eu. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Refer to Appendix page 79-80.

are principally market liberal, but can at the same time be protectionist (Marks *et al.*, 2006, pp. 156–157). From this point of view, the issues raised in Germany, namely the consolidation of the unemployment market through a European employment agency, a common digital tax, which was i.a. blocked by the German government coalition, and a common corporate tax are more left-wing dominated issues.

Another widely discussed topic was the introduction of a European minimum wage, proposed by Volt. Since the minimum wage in Bulgaria is around 1.90 €, such an European launch would probably be accompanied by an increase in the minimum wage in this MS. This is different – with regard to Sweden, where there is no minimum wage due to decades of social-democratic governments, but a well-functioning interplay between employers and labour unions. Even the lowest wages in Sweden are very high compared to the EU. Volt Sweden therefore reinterpreted the point of the European wage minimum into the pledge for fair and high average wages. Volt Sweden believes that the European MS should have a common minimum wage and at first sight, this question does not seem to be the most essential in the EU election campaign. But at the Swedish national level, it would have been non-strategic to promote a minimum wage, because one would have “*stomped on some highly sensitive political nerves*”. In this regard, it becomes evident how differently the same issues can be addressed. According to the national discourses, Volt Sweden adapted and set a rather low emphasis on the issue of a minimum wage, while in Bulgaria, this topic was one of the top issues to promote the advantages of the EU. Although the introduction of a European minimum wage is, viewed holistically and because of the improvement of low wages and the prevention of exploitation, rather preferred by left-wing, socialist and social-democratic parties, the Swedish system seems to work well without a minimum wage. Since the blunt pledge about a common minimum wage has not included any discussion about indexation or fixed hourly wages in absolute numbers for the entire EU, and especially in Sweden EU-political debates do not go into depth, Swedish workers fear a potential reduction in wages and standards. Therefore, the introduction of a minimum wage is more likely to be a project preferred by economical liberals than by the traditionally Eurosceptic Swedish left and socialist parties. Since Volt as a pan-European party already stands for European-wide solutions by its name, Volt Sweden put a rather low focus on this issue, but always stood for fair wages throughout Europe. Concerning Bulgaria, the EU’s economically weakest MS, there was a particularly strong focus on the European single market, its advantages and therefore the possibility of a European minimum wage, which could bring an extreme improvement for Bulgarian workers. With Western glasses, this issue would be

defined as a left-wing issue, as in the last sentences, but caution is advised here: in post-communist Eastern Europe, right-wing parties tended to stand for liberal economic policy, free trade and international market competition while left-wing parties traditionally stand for protectionism.

In Germany, the richest MS, Volt did not put an emphasis on a substantial issue as minimum wages, but therefore on policies making the EU a leading country in Artificial Intelligence and making it available and accessible for everyone. In general, Germany was extremely engaged in the field of digitalisation in combination with the economy, what can be clearly dedicated to rather left than conservative issues. This means that Volt Germany's emphasis tends to be on issues promoted and supported by left-wing parties, while more conservative and right-wing parties reject or ignore these issues. The topic of boosting the EU's economy by pushing research in Artificial Intelligence is anchored in the Amsterdam Declaration (Volt, 2019a, p. 7) but was not emphasised by any other chapter appearing in this survey.

Instead, Bulgaria put the issue of structural and cohesion funds high on its list of priorities, because being one of the largest recipient countries of the EU. The structural funds were mainly emphasised to prove to citizens that the EU sends monetary support apart from directives and regulations. In Bulgaria both outer edges, hence left and right parties, are developing in an extremely Eurosceptic direction. Therefore, according to the expert, economic pro-European issues, as the internal market, cohesion policy and the Eurozone, have become more the preserve of liberal academic and entrepreneur, thus more centre-right, parties. In Western MS cohesion policies are mainly occupied and favoured by leftist parties⁴¹, who demand solidarity between the MS, while in Bulgaria, a beneficiary, all parties seem to see the advantage of those funds. Obviously, Volt shares this ideal, but only Volt Bulgaria emphasised this issue during its campaign.

Only in Sweden, a debate was held about exporting goods in the EU internal market, but it had a deeper core referring to national and cultural identity. According to the Swedish expert, the EU election campaigns in Sweden are conducted rather superficially, with national debates that recur every five years and do not allow for a deeper and more fundamental debate about the

⁴¹ Ryan Bakker, Liesbet Hooghe, Seth Jolly, Gary Marks, Jonathan Polk, Jan Rovny, Marco Steenbergen, and Milada Anna Vachudova. 2020. "2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey." Version 2019.1. Available on chesdata.eu. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Refer to Appendix page 79-80.

EU. For example, the debate on the oral tobacco product ‘snus’, which is popular in Sweden, was on the agenda once again. Snus, a chewing tobacco with a long tradition in Scandinavia, has been prohibited from sale since 2001 by a Directive of the European Parliament and the Council on the sale of tobacco products⁴². In order not to jeopardise Sweden's accession and with reference to national identity, Sweden has been exempted from the sale ban on snus. During the election campaign, Volt Sweden as a pro-European party, was often confronted with the issue of an export ban on a Swedish product. Thus, the chapter emphasised the benefits of the derogation for Sweden with the benefits of snus, based on the fact that the EU makes exemptions grounding on national identity and snus reduce at least passive smoking. At the same time, Volt Sweden was promoting the tobacco restrictions and high standards of health within the EU. Here again, it becomes clear that national influence has resulted in the salience of some Volt policies of the common manifesto. According to the Chapel Hill Survey⁴³, no party strongly favours the internal market, but only the two left parties oppose it strictly. The issue of ‘snus’ was hence a mainly Eurosceptic left debate to criticise the EU’s interference in the liberal market and the Swedish culture and presumably also to criticise the liberal market as such – isolated from the EU.

Coming back to the Eastern countries, Volt Czech Republic did not elaborate on any pledges of the Amsterdam Declaration regarding economic issues, although Left/Right economic issues are considered as salient in the Czech Republic⁴⁴. Instead, the chapter added the demand of joining the Eurozone, which does not occur in Volt's manifesto. This issue would be classified more as a market-liberal and therefore more right-wing issue in view of the post-communist Czech Republic and the fact that the MS has been fulfilling the convergence criteria for a long time.

Another economic topic that is also to be classified right-wing was solely occupied by Volt Bulgaria and the approach was criticized by other chapters. Volt Bulgaria criticized that the

⁴² Directive 2014/40/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States concerning the manufacture, presentation and sale of tobacco and related products and repealing Directive 2001/37/EC Text with EEA relevance [2014] OJ L150/24.

⁴³ Ryan Bakker, Liesbet Hooghe, Seth Jolly, Gary Marks, Jonathan Polk, Jan Rovny, Marco Steenbergen, and Milada Anna Vachudova. 2020. “2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey.” Version 2019.1. Available on chesdata.eu. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Refer to Appendix page 79-80.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

EU's mobility package⁴⁵ would have a negative impact on Eastern European transport companies and their truckers. The legal innovation, planned by the COM, would particularly be damaging Bulgarian and other Eastern European logistics companies and fleets. The fact that the mobility package was praised by the right-wing conservative governing party was criticised by one Bulgarian Volt member, who explained to voters "*that Bulgarian nationalists jump into bed with Western managers*" and if the voters would want to elect really good nationalists, Volt would be the better option, as this party would defend the rights of Bulgarian truckers. It is evident here that the issue mobility package has several dimensions: There are economic, climate policy and social aspects under which the issue is dealt with within the EU. In Bulgaria the focus was the social rights and economic perspective. Of course, promoting being nationalist in such a way as the Volt member did in Bulgaria – even if it was an almost satirical approach – would not be possible in a country as Germany, which has a completely different historic association with the term 'nationalist'. From a Western perspective, also the phrase "I want a strong Bulgaria in a strong Europe"⁴⁶ which was promoted by Volt Bulgaria, would be critical and more interpreted as a clear right-wing and Eurosceptic phrase. In contrast, in Bulgaria this sentence promotes to strive for more pro-European engagement by the MS.

6.2.2 Other EU-related issues

This section includes all issues that belong to other topics such as equal rights, environmental policy, education or migration – i.e. topics where the EU cannot exercise exclusive competences, but which determine GAL-issues. GAL and TAN seem to be easier to define as dimensions. This may be because Hooghe and Marks give direct issue examples or because the post-materialistic problems that the new politics dimension reflects, are more tangible than pure economy-dependent ideology. As Volt, as a party does not want to be classified as right or left, it is therefore easy to detect that one single dimension is no longer sufficient, but that a y-axis with the treatment of post-materialist issues becomes necessary not only in theory, but also in practice. In this category, also large salience discrepancies were observed. In contrast to the economic Left/Right category, many issues were salient in several MS but rarely to the same proportion. Overall, 24 issues – 23 of them anchored in the Amsterdam Declaration – were emphasised by Volt Germany, Sweden, Bulgaria and Czech Republic. Moreover, all in all Volt

⁴⁵ This has been adopted in the meanwhile: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/04/07/mobility-package-council-adopts-truck-drivers-reform/> [accessed on 23.07.2020].

⁴⁶ Original: Искам силна България в силна Европа!

Germany put an extremely high emphasis on several GAL issues, while the other chapters rested rather moderately and only emphasised on GAL issues additional to pro-European ones, that were very salient in the national discourse.

A very national problem which was extremely emphasised by Bulgaria and on which there were no reports from Germany and Sweden was corruption. Corruption is a very popular problem especially in Central and Eastern Europe, which is also tackled by the Amsterdam Declaration. In the manifesto, Volt spoke out for setting up a conditionality on counter-acting corruption for receiving EU funds and to stop corruption by granting new investigating powers to the Public Prosecutor's Offices (Volt, 2019a, p. 5). More specifically, Volt Bulgaria argued that the EU's monitoring mechanisms were not sufficient, but that stronger measures and procedures needed to be introduced, as well as the extension of the European Ombudsman's or -woman's competences. Moreover, the Bulgarian chapter indicated in every flyer and posts on social media, as well as on posters that "buying and selling votes is a crime"⁴⁷, because of the Bulgarian problem of electoral fraud. In the Czech Republic, the Central European country in this survey, the problem of corruption was also mentioned, but with a low emphasis.

Concerning education, all countries surveyed were on the same line: cosmopolitan education should be promoted, and education standards should be heightened European-wide. There was, however, one slight difference: In Germany, Volt argued for the Erasmus programme to be extended to other educational levels, while in Sweden and Bulgaria the number of young citizens who had already lived and worked abroad, and the positive outcome for the MS was stressed. Generally, for Volt Germany and Bulgaria, this topic was only of medium importance, in Sweden of none, but in the Czech Republic it was the main issue, having a particularly strong focus on it. The Czech chapter pledged to invest four billion euros in order to raise the education system. According to the interviewed expert, the reason for this is that the Czech school system is hardly comparable with that of its neighbouring countries, the teachers are underpaid and therefore education is not a high priority.

Next to cosmopolitanism also environmental protection is clearly dedicated to GAL. In Germany, Volt happens to be a very green party, whereas in Bulgaria and Sweden this facet does not have the same importance. In Germany, the discourse on climate change and

⁴⁷ Original: Купуването и продажбата на гласове е престъпление!

sustainability clearly increased with the EU elections and the growth of the Fridays for Future movement. According to the Amsterdam Declaration, Volt believes that a green and sustainable climate policy is one of the highest targets on the agenda. Associated with reaching the goals set out in the Paris Climate Agreement, smart energy innovation, circular economy and a sustainable common agricultural policy are promoted (Volt, 2019a, p. 9). In Germany, Volt placed particular emphasis on levying taxes on kerosene, carbon dioxide and single-use plastic products as well as on investing in a sustainable future. In Bulgaria, a “sustainable future” was sometimes mentioned on posters or social media, but all in all the issue of climate change did not seem very salient in Bulgaria. In Sweden, climate change was also taken up in debates with the background of the Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, who considers the closure of coal-fired power plants to be overdue but does not consider the shutdown of nuclear power plants a priority from a climate-political perspective. Even before the EP elections, the issue of nuclear power led to internal tensions within Volt and could only be solved in 2020. Since the German general consensus supported by the government, is in favour of decommissioning nuclear power plants – but in France, Belgium and certain Eastern MS the exact opposite is the case – Volt had positioning problems for agreeing on a supranational stance. Promoting different standpoints was not an option, because due to far-reaching effects, pragmatically only a common nuclear power policy makes sense. The Amsterdam Declaration therefore does not contain a pledge on this issue, but only promotes to end “subsidies on fossil-based fuel” (Volt, 2019a, p. 9). During the elections, the individual chapters proceeded in such a way that Volt advocated a rapid decommissioning in Germany but emphasized the importance of climate neutrality and thus remained relatively neutral on nuclear power. In the Eastern chapters surveyed there was no discussion on nuclear power at all.

In addition to climate policy, the growing right-wing populism and racism also made the refugee crisis and migration in general a topic of discussion. Volt Germany spoke out against the Dublin II system and pleaded for a fair and rapid redistribution of refugees and the imposition of penalties on MS that would not cooperate. Moreover, one of the most popular posters became the poster which said “So that people no longer sink in the Mediterranean Sea”⁴⁸. In Bulgaria there was no focus on climate policy issues or migration, but on social rights and health. The issue about the EU’s asylum policy and the low acceptance of refugees was openly criticised by Volt Czech Republic. In the Central European MS, as well as in Bulgaria,

⁴⁸ Original: Damit Menschen nicht mehr im Mittelmehr untergehen.

almost every other party did not favour a common asylum solution, while in the Western MS this was the exact opposite⁴⁹. Next to asylum law, also the protection of domestic but especially foreign workers “against the negative effects of economic migration” (Volt, 2019a, p. 10) was emphasised by Germany, even if not very much. Volt Bulgaria campaigned, specifically on bringing Western health and insurance systems due to pan-European solutions to Bulgaria. The chapter was thus promoting Western standards and policies, by creating alignments o the West and thus a European solution.

In Sweden, due to the high social-democratic affinity of the citizens, a fair European social policy was the second big mainstay alongside pan-European issues. Social rights issues are very salient in Sweden, which has been a social-democratic country for decades. Therefore, Swedish parties and citizens tend to react with reluctance to European solutions. The expert said exaggeratedly: “*Sweden loves the EU as long as it is an export market for Swedish policies, because we have a system – we solved it*”. Next to European-wide social and equal rights, also women’s rights and the pledge to legally enforce “the representation of women on publicly-listed corporate boards” (Volt, 2019a, p. 11) was emphasised by Germany, especially by horizontal communication via social media. Next to that also Bulgaria emphasised women’s rights by stressing Volt’s overarching candidates list structure: On every candidates list, women and men are listed alternately. This strict rule implemented by every Volt chapter on every level is a novum.

To sum up, following the analysis of the interviews and the additional campaigning material extreme discrepancies in the implementation of the election campaigns were discovered. Those differences became visible by the varying salience of the individual issues per MS as well as by how the Volt chapters approached the issues. According to the analysis, the research question and also the hypotheses can be answered positively.

6.3 Differences in Campaigns

As elaborated in the last three chapters, the individual national chapters set different priorities for some issues, which were without exception connected to different national influences or circumstances. Both hypotheses can thus be confirmed to some extent. But before heading to

⁴⁹ Ryan Bakker, Liesbet Hooghe, Seth Jolly, Gary Marks, Jonathan Polk, Jan Rovny, Marco Steenbergen, and Milada Anna Vachudova. 2020. “2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey.” Version 2019.1. Available on chesdata.eu. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Refer to Appendix page 79-80.

the next chapter, where the outcome of the Hypotheses is going to be discussed in detail, different campaigns not only in terms of content but also in terms of structure could also be discovered.

First of all, the greatest difference that could be observed is, that three of the four surveyed Volt chapters were running for elections, while Volt Czech Republic was not. The party drove campaigns nonetheless, mainly out of solidarity with one's own party and as support for the other chapters, but also because of strategic reasons: because many EU citizens live in other MS, a pan-European recognition value could be created, which is particularly noticeable for mobile people. Some chapters, such as Volt Italy, Austria, Portugal or France tried, but in the end did not manage to meet the necessary requirements to run for election. In the Czech Republic, on the other hand, the personnel capacities were not sufficient at that time to even enter the elections. Nevertheless, the Czech chapter campaigned and positioned itself on several burning issues. Since this seems to be an interesting phenomenon in the context of the pan-European movement, the salience of the topics in a Central European MS could be interesting and also have an influence on the discussion of the results, in the following Volt Czech Republic will be examined in more detail. Volt Czech Republic organized several events during the election campaign to meet Volt members, network and educate about European politics. This was especially necessary as the voter turnout in the Czech Republic has the highest drop and the second lowest turnout in the EU with 28% in 2019⁵⁰ compared to 60% in national elections 2017⁵¹. In addition, Czech Volt members attended political events as demonstrations against the government or events by other parties in Prague to show their presence, campaigned in the streets and had conversations with citizens or tourists.

In addition, also structural differences in campaigns between all four chapters were discovered: on the one hand, posters, flyers and other advertising material were ordered and paid for per chapter. On the other hand, Volt relied on a common branding in order to have a recognition value. Especially by people living in two EU MS this was perceived positively. Hence, different campaigns were run under the same umbrella. However, the chapters were in weekly contact to exchange discrepancies and uncertainties or to inspire each other. As an example, where the chapters inspired each other, a major campaign from Germany was taken over by almost all the

⁵⁰ <https://europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en/turnout/> [accessed on 13.07.2020].

⁵¹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/electoral-assistance/elecdata-czech-republic> [accessed on 13.07.2020].

chapters that ran for election. The campaign “Marry a brit to save the EU”, was a humorous and almost satirical approach to show disappointment with the BREXIT vote, without joining the many theatrical parties. This campaign attracted a lot of attention because of the idea and the amateurishly produced purple cardboard posters, carried by Volt Members in the streets overall the EU. Another small campaign which nearly all chapters took part in was the ‘Earth Hour’, which is a global day initiated by WWF and takes place in March every year. On that day, all Volt chapters called to turn out the lights for one hour to take a political stance on climate change. In other areas, however, spill-over effects or best-practice approaches were not possible, such as for the case of Volt Germany’s action brought against the most established election orientation program⁵². The German chapter saw a disadvantage for unestablished parties due to the limited choice of parties for comparison and did not only win but also gain huge media attention. Such nationally based and very specific structural differences are of course not based on content as in the last three chapters, but should be mentioned nevertheless, as they have an impact on the public perception of Volt and their involvement in national debates.

7 Discussion

7.1 Findings

Following the analysis, all the hypotheses put forward in chapter three can be answered positively in a wider sense. As became clear in the previous part, although referring to one and the same manifesto, Volt carried out thematically different election campaigns, that were influenced by national factors. In MS with a post-communist history Volt emphasised more Right issues, while in Western MS more Left issues were emphasised. In MS where the party-political arena is already pro-European, Volt focused on several GAL-issues, while in MS with more Eurosceptic mainstream parties, Volt specifically placed a focus on general pro-EU issues. Anyway, the fact that the chapters’ focus differs per issue due to national circumstances, does not mean that the Volt chapters take different positions, but only that the importance of the

⁵² Volt brought action against the election orientation program “Wahl-O-Mat” of the Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung. Only eight parties can be selected at a time to compare positions. Therefore, the mainstream parties, which are listed first, are usually chosen for comparison, which discriminates small parties. Volt won the case with an out-of-court settlement. <https://www.zeit.de/news/2019-05/23/wahl-o-mat-nach-zwangspause-wieder-online-190523-99-351206> [accessed on 13.07.2020].

individual discourses is perceived differently. As Budge already stated, policy disagreements are not translated into opposing statements but are reflected in salience (Budge, 2001, p. 82). Ultimately, however, different positions within Volt can still be identified, because where different priorities are set, different interests exist. As the analysis showed, these interests can be both of substantive and tactical nature. For example, a content- and policy-based interest could be discovered behind the strong emphasis on climate issues in Germany. Instead, it was rather a tactical interest of Volt Sweden to also refer to social policies in order not to appear too one-sided. Of course, Volt tended to focus on GAL issues, mainly because the party is naturally and uniformly pro-European. Therefore, the chapters are most convergent about pro-European issues and the support of a real European state. By promoting the pan-European movement, clear pro-European commitment became Volt's unique selling point in all chapters. By being transnational and pledging for a European State, Volt was considered a persistent owner (Guinaudeau and Persico, 2013, p. 145) in some MS, such as Germany, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, while in Austria and Sweden other parties, especially liberal parties were in favour of a common European state. Hence, Volt had a unique selling point everywhere but did not own this issue exclusively throughout the Union. Although the concept of 'issue uptake' is more tailored to two-party systems, it is still possible to identify parties in multi-party systems, such as in the EU elections, that own an issue which is not occupied by other parties in this form (Lefevere *et al.*, 2019, p. 517).

Regarding Volt, which is a new and still very small party, it becomes evident that modern parties attach greater importance to issue politics and competition than to straight Left/Right issues, such as mainstream parties do (Green-Pedersen, 2007, p. 611). The traditional dominance of the economic dimension is diminishing due to post-materialist issues and the "growing complexity" because of transnational party systems and globalised policies (Green-Pedersen, 2007, p. 611). Those actually are reflected by the GAL/TAN dimension (Hix, 1999, p. 73). This is also demonstrated by the figures: Volt emphasised ten economic issues and in sum 36 GAL-issues. Despite the national imbalance and the resulting adjustment of issues by Volt, the pro-European issues that form the basis of the Volt Party, could not be changed or adapted either in salience or in any other form. The fact that Volt is more convergent in the GAL/TAN dimension than in the Left/Right dimension shows that, like Hix implies, for new parties the GAL/TAN dimension is itself more important than a Left/Right structure (Hix, 1999, p. 79). Moreover, it could reflect, that the MS's cleavages are higher with regard to economic Left/Right factors than about post-materialist issues and consensus about them.

The preceding analysis of the interviews and the presented findings on the salience of issues in the respective Volt chapters reveals an East-West cleavage. Of course, there were also differences between Germany's and Sweden's campaigns, but the differences on issues and their salience are much more profound between the Eastern and Western MS. First, the emphasis on economic issues is very different, which is related to the Left/Right dimension, i.e. the different economic situations coming from a different historic development. Because of the post-communist history in Central- and Eastern MS, the connotations of Left and Right differ and therefore the same issues are sometimes interpreted differently, depending which cultural background the respective citizens, MS or party has. Moreover, resulting from decades of Socialism and planned economy in the East and capitalism in the West, the economic situations and connected debates still differ from each other. As Volt is a very pro-European and economically liberal party, the chapters from the West emphasised more Left issues, i.e. fair tax shares, cohesion policy and more market regulation for a sustainable future. At the same time, chapters from the East emphasised and praised the liberal market economy, which stands in contrast to the past for freedom. Secondly, the Volt's issue occupation of GAL issues differed in the MS, what has its reason in the differing national party-political arenas. The hypothesis was that Volt would emphasise more general pro-European issues, where those topics are not occupied by many pro-European parties, while in MS where those issues are part of the 'general consensus' Volt would diversify its focus. This holds true to some extent: In Germany, this hypothesis was tested positively. Volt Germany was of course focusing on general pro-EU statements, but also on climate change, international education, asylum and gender equality. Sweden also to some extent was emphasising more diverse issues, but those always had much lower salience than in Germany. In the Eastern MS Volt also positioned itself on those issues but focused mainly on general EU-topics as 'being pro- and pan-European', 'plead for more EU integration' and educate about the EU's advantages. Next to that specifically national debates were focused by specific Volt chapters. It seems like, that every chapter which was mainly focusing on the pro-EU issues emphasised one more salient issue from a national debate. In Bulgaria this 'additional issue' was corruption, because it is a deep problem in the state as well as (not surprisingly) unoccupied by the established parties. In the Czech Republic, the GAL-issue with the highest emphasis next to being pro-European was education.

Thus, it is evident that the Volt campaigns for the elections of the EP in 2019 were differing because of different national influences and different issue salience in the MS. In these chapters, mainly the findings from the analysis were presented, but one could already grasp some of the

reasons for those different national factors. Although, the reasons for the different emphases and thus the different election campaigns are going to be discussed in more detail in the following.

7.2 Reasons for different emphasis

According to the theory, it is common that national parties of the same euro party set different emphases on issues. This often happens because of the distance between the actual national parties and their alliance on supranational level. Volt's experts could observe this as well: In Bulgaria and Sweden, candidates of other parties are more Eurosceptic during the campaigns than when they are posted to Brussels as MEPs. For Volt, occupying purely pro- and pan-European issues in many chapters, the distance to their European Board and Volt Europa is not a problem, because this distance is of another type. With the organisation 'Volt Europa', Volt Germany, Sweden, Czechia and Volt Bulgaria are not just alliancing under one umbrella, but developed from supranational level, Volt is one party. Of course, Volt agrees about and prioritises issues about the necessity of supranational elections for the EP, more sovereignty shifted to the EP and the EU and more citizen participation in the EU. But as it became visible in the analysis, the emphasis on other issues differentiated a lot. How does that come? Firstly, the Left/Right and GAL/TAN dimensions correlate differently in the MS, what resonates in the divergent occupation of issues by national parties. As an example from the interviews, in Sweden pro-European positions are occupied by liberal parties, in Germany also by the social-democrat and leftist party. In the Czech Republic, more funding for education is more occupied by centre-right parties, in Germany and Sweden this issue is considered to be occupied by the centre-left. Secondly, discourses and burning issues, to which parties have to position themselves, vary from MS to MS. This mainly has to do with the socio-economic differences existing throughout the EU and how political debates are culturally conducted. According to the analysis, the interpretation of issues by voters and parties, and the socio-economic conditions that result from historical developments preponderantly go hand in hand. To discuss the concrete reasons for different interpretations and resulting issue emphasis economic, cultural and historical reasons are now to be discussed in detail.

In Eastern and thus post-communist MS, more conservative-right issues were focused by Volt, because those topics were more pro-European. According to the interviewees, in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, the EU means "*no more Communism, it means free trade, it means entrepreneurial spirit*". Generally, the profits of being part of the EU are perceived differently

in the MS. While the economic stable Germany is one of the major beneficiaries even during crises, the financial crisis in 2009 or the refugee crisis in 2015 were much more present in MS like Italy or Greece. Thus, profiting by the EU and the citizens' perception of the EU correlate to each other. Therefore, on the one hand, citizens in Bulgaria see their profits, which are cohesion and structural funds as well as the free movement of workers within the EU. On the other hand, they experience deep cleavages in wages and health standards. Hence, one can see that different economic situations that resonate from the differing historic legacy throughout Europe, determine the perception of the EU as well as the interpretation of issues.

Concerning the issue of nuclear power, Volt was actually unable to pledge for a very fast decommissioning not only because of pro-nuclear countries as France or Belgium, but also because of eastern MS who would be 'frozen without nuclear energy. As nuclear policies only make sense if they are EU-widely agreed on, and economic weak MS like Bulgaria only can afford nuclear energy at their rural regions, pragmatic compromises due to economic situations had to be made. The central and eastern European Volt chapters criticised the Amsterdam Declaration – the common manifesto – because of being “*too Western European*” and therefore partly “*invalid*”. As the manifesto was mainly developed by Western Europeans from more stable countries, the development of the East was not included as much as needed for to provide an overwhelming manifesto. Following the analysis, economically unstable MS focus more on issues that are occupied by centre-right parties, what shows that different issues are interpreted as important than in more affluent countries. Thus, the economic conditions in MS obviously influence the salience of issues.

As always when interpreting and discussing findings from analyses, there is not just one reason or several reasons that can be listed separately but the phenomenon of different salience is embedded in a construct of deeper meaning: everything sticks together and every single thread is crucial. Thus, economic reasons cannot be regarded isolated from socio-cultural and historical components.

The differing interpretation Left/Right and the differing salience of GAL issues can have economic reasons but also deeper and less measurable logics. As Volt is a pan-European party and has pro-European policies as its main characteristic, the impression of the party goes nearly hand in hand with the perception of the EU. In Sweden for example, people tend to be pro-European but always with “*a latent Sonderweg-mentality*”, as the Swedish expert said. This

means, that Sweden is genuinely pro-Europe but without being an active part of it. Thus, every MS has its own cultural identity that is linked – more or less – to the European Union. While Luxemburgish people are extremely proud Europeans, British citizens voted for a leave. And while the Czech Republic is geographically the centre of Europe, the Czech expert heard French people saying in Prague, that they were *“flying back to Europe”*. In consequence, those examples make visible, that having the same cultural attachment to the EU and its burning issues is just impossible. Moreover, also cultural and social issues face different situations per MS: While the “Doppelspitze” is a frequent model in German party politics to ensure gender proportionality, the “Volt-scheme” made history in Bulgaria and got attention by media because of this structure. The Volt-scheme in this respect means that on all candidates lists throughout Europe male and female candidates alternate.

Coming back to the differences in emphasising issues and the West-East cleavage, pro-European or Eurosceptic ideologies differ from East to West for historical reasons (Gibowski, 1977, p. 600). By analysing Volt’s campaigns, the historic reasons for issue differences became very visible. As already described in the literature, Left/Right and to a lesser extent GAL/TAN dimensions mean the complete opposite in post-communist countries than in Western MS. This fact became extremely visible by interviewing the Czech Volt member who was questioning one of the three main characteristics of Volt. Volt is pan-European, pragmatic and progressive. Concerning the term ‘progressive’ he said: *“I mean – progressive – I will never know what that actually means. People have tried to explain it to me, but I still don’t know what progressive actually means, and I will never be able to understand the thing about being progressive. You’re liberal, you’re economically or politically liberal, the people see you want to bring progress, but the communists said they would bring progress years ago and it didn’t go pretty well”*. This quote firstly makes clear, that the communist era still influences not only the culture and the economic situation of Central and Eastern Europe but also the interpretation and determination of fundamental semantic contexts. Secondly, it shows again how negatively left parties are perceived by pro-European people in post-communist Europe, which is comparable to how right-oriented parties are declined by German citizens. When Damian Boeselager was elected as first Volt MEP in Germany, Volt was aiming for accession negotiations with the Green/EFA, ALDE and the S&D. For the last one, discussions were terminated quickly when Volt Bulgaria pulled the emergency break: While for Western Europeans the S&D fraction is perceived to be centre-left, the ancient Bulgarian Socialist party, which was not declared illegal after the fall of the iron curtain, also form a coalition with that EP group. Hence, as those party members were

oppressing Bulgaria and are clearly Eurosceptic in some areas, Volt adapted to that fact and stopped the negotiations. At the same time, on local level, Volt's first City Council in Munich formed a coalition with the governing social-democrat party, which is part of the S&D on EU level. For sake of completeness, the East-West cleavage became the most visible in this study, but concerning the social democrats and socialists in the EU, also the socialist Swedish party and the German SPD are not convergent concerning several EU policies (Hooghe *et al.*, 2002, p. 975). This is a perfect example for the history-related incoherent and incomparable party system throughout the EU and that generalisations are not sensible.

Next to differing interpretations of party politics and issues also different country alignments became visible. *"In Bulgaria, in 1944 we were liberated from the fascists by the Russians, and therefore we have a big Russian influence on Bulgaria. About two-thirds of the people are pro-Russian, they feel close to Russia – I mean we share the same alphabet – and during Communism our countries were very close"*, explained the Bulgarian expert. Therefore, the sanctions the EU imposed on Russia would be rejected by many Bulgarians. Those differing alignments did not tempt Volt to support different positions, they just demanded different emphases on issues, to which the chapters knowingly adapted.

To sum up, even though Volt was able to agree on a common manifesto to promote its ideology, the debates are too different throughout the Union to run a completely equal campaign. Because of the actual national-centred campaigns for the EP elections, every Volt chapter kept a focus on salient issues in their countries. For Western European MS the focus was laying more on left issues, for Central and Eastern MS, the focus was more on right issues. For the GAL/TAN dimension, every chapter set more emphasis on concrete, direct pro-EU – and thus – GAL issues. At the same time, for mainstream parties in Western European countries, economic issues still tend to prevail new politics issues, while in several Eastern European countries, the new politics dimension is equivalently weighted (Marks *et al.*, 2006, pp. 156–157). Moreover, in economically as well as socially unstable MS, Volt's portfolio of pledges and its arena of debate was limited and concentrated on fundamental discussions. It became evident, that the ongoing debates in Western MS and in post-communist MS are on completely different levels: In Germany and Sweden post-material issues were much more occupied by Volt than in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, where economic issues and the implementation of fundamental EU values were salient. These differences have several reasons as which are mainly politics-related and of economic, socio-cultural and historic nature. But next to this, also

legal and structural reasons for differing campaigns occurred during the analysis and should not be neglected. In general, Volt simply mobilised selectively per MS, as did other parties do as well (Senninger and Wagner, 2015, p. 1337). However, because believing in the EU, its values and its transformation into a federal state are the political and ideological basis of Volt, the transnational party fully mobilised on pro-European issues in all MS.

7.3 Structural reasons

In the interviews, several reasons that were not connectable with political and content-related national influences but led to different campaigns, became evident. This also revealed East-West divisions, which, in contrast to those described above, led to different thematic characteristics to a lesser extent, but rather to structurally different campaigns. For example, the party member structure differs in two ways throughout Volt. Firstly, in Western countries, Volt chapters tend to be proportionally bigger than in the East. Secondly, the Western chapters' members are more often young academics, while in eastern chapters more self-employed mature entrepreneurs engage for Volt. Those differences do not demonstrably affect Volt's different campaigns or the differing emphases on issues – still there might be an influence. Moreover, as western Volt chapters tend to occupy rather left issues and Volt chapters in the east more right to liberal issues, there may be a direct link to the more 'idealistic young student generation' and the 'affluent academics'. According to the interviewed Czech Volt member, the uneven member numbers originate from the communist culture. Citizens learned to be politically passive, in order to not be threatened in their existence: *“40 years there was taught you take your head down and if you were too visible the society would have paralysed you”*. This would continue to be reflected to this day and would become very visible in direct comparison with Western countries, even within the pan-European party. Furthermore, the German interviewee explained, that the Volt members in Hungary and also Poland would be rather cautious in their engagement, as the freedom of speech and the expression of opinion would have become more dangerous for their personal life. For example in Poland, the opposition parties are already so diverse that dividing the electorate would harm the whole opposition. Further, another structural problem between east and west is that the political system as well as political arenas work differently: While in Germany constant commenting on national and European issues is expected by the electorate, while according to the Bulgarian expert, Volt members in Bulgaria are less active and sometimes so not speak English. These diverging east-west structures about party political engagement are directly bound to capacity

differences in the pan-European party which in turn correlate with more or less extensive national campaigns. Next to east-west cleavages also other differences that did not fit into a cleavage classification could be observed. In Germany and the Czech Republic, the members are political newcomers to a high percentage, while in Sweden and Bulgaria many ‘defectors’ from mainly liberal and conservative parties have high positions in their new party. Moreover, Volt’s admission to the political arena by media and other parties – whether for the actual match or only for the substitutes’ bench – differed from MS to MS. In Germany, Volt was accepted and sometimes even cited by other parties and the Volt candidates were invited to podiums with high ranking EU politicians like Elmar Brok or Katarina Barley. In contrast, the Swedish chapter did not receive much media attention. Besides burning issues in national elections, it is important and a decisive factor, albeit for the EU Parliament to what extent a new party-movement is being integrated by the society and to what extent it is able to carry out an efficient election campaign in terms of capacity and experience. Another factor is, of course, based on legal differences. Legally, the elections for the European Parliament take place nationally, within the respective national systems. As already mentioned, those systems vary a lot: While in Germany, there is no electoral threshold, in France and Sweden new parties have to pay every single ballot paper if they want to run for parliament. In general, also capital and funding differences influenced the different campaigns. In Germany, Volt’s disadvantageous financial situation was solved from one day to the next with a generous donation allowing for large professional campaigns. Other chapters did not have this advantage, what shows that the possibilities were different.

These structural differences between the individual Volt chapters described by the interviewed experts are also attributable to national circumstances. In this perspective, in particular legal and cultural differences seem to be the cause of the different Volt election campaigns. Comparing the previous two chapters, it becomes clear that the reasons for the different salience of the issues across the chapters had a more serious impact on the diversity of the election campaigns. Of course, legal influences and unchangeable incidents, such as Volt’s man-power, other parties or budget play an important role in the implementation of the transnational election campaigns (Homeyer and Kolster, 2019, p. 7; Niedermayer, 1984, p. 236; Green-Pedersen, 2007, p. 610). Still, the salience differences contributed more significantly to the differences in election campaigns. At the same time, Volt’s adaptation of campaigns to the respective differences in the explained topics, as the economy and EU-related issues, does not mean that ideology varies across the Volt chapters. While the salience of the issues and thus the election

campaigns visibly differed, there were hardly any differences in position during the election campaigns (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2009, p. 303). What became clear in the interviews, was that obviously nationally determined differences in positioning arise in the Volt party and that those cannot be resolved immediately. A particularly recent example was the joint positioning on nuclear power. In this context, Volt decided not to comment explicitly until a compromise had been reached internally. Thus, the joint manifesto may not have resulted in entirely identical election campaigns, but it did ensure the identical ideology and positions in all Volt campaigns.

8 Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to explore how and why a pan-European party was influenced by the different MS's conditions during the campaigning for the EP elections. The following results were ascertained: Firstly, despite having an overarching manifesto, Volt as the first pan-European party was driving different campaigns due to national influences in the respective MS. Not only were the election campaigns conducted in different structures, e.g. in varying languages, with different posters or other actions, but specifically the salience of issues differed significantly from MS to MS. As the discourses in the MS vary on economic, socio-cultural or other topics, it was observed in this study that the Volt chapters had a different focus on different topics despite a common manifesto and its inherent pledges. With regard to the unlike emphases on issues, a relation between the historical legacy of a MS and the emphasis on left or right oriented issues became apparent. Thus, Western MS Volt focused on left-wing issues and Eastern MS rather on right-wing issues. Furthermore, it was recognisable that Volt devoted generally most attention to pro-European issues and in MS where the party-political arena is already very pro-European, more diverse Green-Alternative-Libertarian issues were salient. In the course of this, an East-West cleavage was discovered, which is due to the, i.a., historically determined different emphasis of 'right' and 'left'. The reasons for the different salience of different issues in the respective MS were determined by the interviews: Economic, socio-cultural and historical factors conditioned both the salience of the issues in a MS and the resulting emphasis on individual issues. While EU-related issues, such as the common tax policy, environmental policy, justice or the rule of law are discussed or part of the debate in

each MS, they are discussed within different contexts (Guinaudeau and Persico, 2013, p. 158) and thus framed differently by Volt from country to country.

However, while the campaigns were conducted differently to match with each MS, the issues Volt addressed, differed only in their salience and not in their positioning. Volt's ideology and common base, anchored in the Amsterdam Declaration, was defended and promoted by all chapters. Certainly, a common and entirely pan-European campaign would have been possible with more internal coordination as the common reference and basis was present – but pragmatically a single transnational campaign would not have made sense as the realities of the MS are too different. This becomes evident when looking at the manifestos of the euro parties: these were already described as vague and superficial in the literature chapter, as the common ground is usually too limited for concrete pledges on all issues. This is not the case with Volt, since it, unlike the federations, did not form out of similar national parties, but was founded and developed from the supranational level down to the local level. Volt's manifesto was able to become more specific than the common manifestos of the euro parties for two reasons: First, in contrast to the euro parties, Volt is one single party and therefore is much more convergent and shares one identity. Secondly, Volt is a new and non-governing party, which could polarize and politicize more because of its state as an opposition (White, 2014, p. 386).

As an outlook, it would be interesting to see how Volt further evolves in the coming years. Will it be a phenomenon with a short half-life, or will the party establish more and more? How does the party act on local level? Those questions would be worthwhile to explore, as well as how single chapters evolve and whether cleavages can be overcome to some extent because of the pan-European nature. Here, the Czech Republic with highly motivated members and a pro-European base in Prague and other cities as i.a. Brno, would be interesting to explore further. Especially under the perspective of cleavages between East and West and the solidarity between the Volt chapters, that Volt Czechia expressed and showed, would contribute to the existing scientific discourse with qualitative results. In addition, the existing study could be extended, for instance as a doctoral thesis, to a Comparison of all euro parties and transnational parties taking part in the EU elections over a certain time period.

However, in this research, the problems of the EU and the EU party system have become more visible through this research. The EU is an arena of transnational politics but lacks a transnational party system (Bardi, 2010, pp. 97–98). This is mainly due to the legal situation of

the EP elections. Therefore, Volt, which is looking for space to occupy in the arena as a new and pan-European party, is a challenge for the existing party system.

Two fundamental problems in the EU elections have their origin in the current party system and these also led to the different Volt campaigns: Firstly, the predominant national discourses lead to less European election campaigns, which however in fact should be European election campaigns. Secondly, as the legal conditions of the EP elections are dedicated to the nations, this tears the European people apart and therefore is contra-productive for a direct election of a supranational institution. Through that, Volt's national chapters pragmatically had to focus very strongly on national issues. To name one example, rather drive campaigns as a Bavarian candidate in Northern Germany, than cross the border once for an event in Austria, which is geographically and to some extent also culturally closer. The problem of no-demos, which was discussed at the beginning of this thesis and which is one reason for the low legitimacy of the EU and the EP, is again revealed here. According to Wolkenstein's opinion, a supranational democracy on EU level is only possible when transnational solidarities develop not only between parties and elites but also between the people across the Member States (Wolkenstein, 2018, p. 284). As an existing transnational movement and party, Volt somehow also reflects the willingness of people to participate across borders (Wolkenstein, 2018, p. 295). Such an identity could of course be promoted enormously through real transnational elections and transnational lists. As a further design, Peshenko and Zhukovskiy for example propose to reserve transnational seats for 10% of the EP seats (Peshenkov and Zhukovskiy, 2016, p. 108). This would combine purely European seats with national elections for a share of the EP. A 'europeanised election campaign' would also ensure that European issues that are subsequently important in the EP would be more salient in election campaigns (Hertner, 2011, p. 329). However, such an Europeanisation without changing the existing rules can only be achieved if parties become more transnational and cooperate on several levels across national borders (Hertner, 2011, p. 343). Volt shows how to do that. The change of the nationally shaped electoral system towards transnational elections has been a component of scientific and even sometimes public discourse for a long time. Still, it does not seem realistic. According to Bressanelli, merely the existence of similar manifestos with which national voters are confronted would make the election campaign more European (Bressanelli, 2012). This statement can be confirmed by the election campaign of Volt: Even if different campaigns were run, the positions and the 'Volt spirit' always remained the same throughout the EU. This means that Volt 'europeanised' more than other parties, who simply didn't even display the logo of

their federation or EP group on their posters. So just by being present, Volt contributed to a more European election campaign than it had been before. This could be a good start.

This start is urgently needed or even overdue. Our European Union has become increasingly integrated over the last few decades – both economically and socio-culturally. Through European integration, we have moved from idealistic Left/Right cleavages and purely economic ideologies, into a multidimensional spectrum in which post-materialist issues and new politics play a major role. In general, we have arrived in a time in which post-materialist problems have become transboundary and even life-threatening problems. Issues such as the climate change, a pandemic or the resulting economic recession require transnational solutions. Despite further integration, the realities of the Member States differ significantly due to economic, cultural and historical factors. Even in a pan-European and therefore extremely convergent party, East-West cleavages could be discovered in this study.

In order not to increase these cleavages and instead bring European citizens and politics closer together, pan-European solutions and compromises, supported by genuine and legitimate pan-European parties should, respecting subsidiarity and proportionality, contribute to a more united Europe. A Europe that would be more united, although in its diversity.

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11 Appendix

11.1 Table of Data from the Chepal Hill Data Set

<i>country</i>	<i>party</i>	<i>eu-position</i>	<i>eu-cohesion</i>	<i>eu-foreign</i>	<i>eu-int. market</i>	<i>eu-budgets</i>	<i>eu-asylum</i>	<i>eu-benefit</i>	<i>left/right salience 2014*</i>	<i>GAL/TAN salience 2014*</i>
GE	CDU	6,2	5,2	4,6	4	4	4,7	benefitted	Right	TAN
GE	SPD	6,5	5,4	5,2	5,9	4,8	5,5	benefitted	Left	centre
GE	FDP	5,7	3,8	4,5	6,7	4,7	6,4	benefitted	Right	centre
GE	Grünen	6,7	5,8	5,6	6,1	5,4	5,9	benefitted	Left	GAL
GE	Linke	4,7	5,1	3	3,2	3,5	5	neither nor	Left	GAL
GE	CSU	5,6	4,9	3,6	5,7	3,5	3,5	neither nor	Right	TAN
GE	AfD	1,9	3	3	1,3	3,1	1,3	not benefitted	Right	TAN
SV	V	3,1	4,6	1,6	2,9	1,6	3,5	not benefitted	Left	GAL
SV	S/SAP	5,7	4,8	3,1	5,3	3,1	5,1	benefitted	Left	centre
SV	C	6	5	3,8	6,4	3,8	4,5	neither nor	Right	centre
SV	L	6,8	4,8	5,4	6,9	4,8	6,9	benefitted	Right	centre
SV	M	6	4	6,5	3,7	4,6	7,7	benefitted	Right	centre
SV	KD	5,8	4,5	3,7	6,3	3,5	4,6	benefitted	Right	TAN
SV	MP	5,1	4,9	2,5	4,6	3	3,9	neither nor	Left	TAN
SV	SD	2,2	2,9	1,3	2,5	1,1	1,2	not benefitted	Left	GAL
BUL	BSP	5	6,2	3,4	4,9	3,5	3,2	neither nor	Left	TAN
BUL	DPS	6,2	6,7	5	5,8	4,5	4,4	benefitted	Left	TAN
BUL	BMRO	3,8	5	2,4	3,5	2,3	1,6		Right	TAN
BUL	Ataka Attack	2,2	4,1	1,5	2,6	1,4	1,1	not benefitted	Right	TAN
BUL	DSB	6,8	6	5,7	6,5	5,5	4,9	benefitted	Right	centre
BUL	GERB	6,5	6,6	5,4	6,4	5,2	4,4	benefitted	Right	TAN
BUL	NFSB	3,9	5,1	2,7	4,5	2,7	1,75	neither nor	Right	TAN
BUL	Volya Will	3,5	5	2,7	4,5	2,2	2,5		Right	GAL
BUL	DB	6,8	6	5,8	6,6	5,5	5,3		Left	
BUL	Slavi Trifonov	4,3	4,7	3,1	1,4	3	2,5			
CZ	CSSD	5,7	5,8	4,7	5,4	3,1	2,7	benefitted	Left	centre
CZ	ODS	3,7	3,9	2,2	6,1	1,7	1,7	neither nor	Right	TAN
CZ	KCSM	2,3	4,4	1,6	2,7	1,6	1,8	not benefitted	Left	TAN
CZ	KDU-CSL	6,2	5,9	4,9	4,7	3,2	5,8	benefitted	Right	TAN
CZ	TOP09	6,6	5,7	5,2	6,5	5,4	4,5	benefitted	Right	centre
CZ	ANO2011	4,4		3	5,7	2,7	1,8	neither nor	Right	TAN
CZ	Pirates	6,1	5,2	5	5,8	4,9	4,8	benefitted		TAN
CZ	SPD	1,4	3,5	1,1	2,8	1,1	1,2	neither nor		centre
CZ	STAN	6,5	6	5,1	6,4	4,5	6,2			
CZ	SZ								Left	GAL

This table is relevant for chapter 4, 5 and 6. All numbers are displayed with one decimal place after the point. The entire data set is available under Ryan Bakker, Liesbet Hooghe, Seth Jolly, Gary Marks, Jonathan Polk, Jan Rovny, Marco Steenbergen, and Milada Anna Vachudova. 2020. "2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey." Version 2019.1. Available on chesdata.eu. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. <https://www.chesdata.eu/> [accessed on 24.07.2020].

* The answered question here is "which topics were more salient to this party?". The entire data set is available under Polk, Jonathan, Jan Rovny, Ryan Bakker, Erica Edwards, Liesbet Hooghe, Seth Jolly, Jelle Koedam, Filip Kostelka, Gary Marks, Gijs Schumacher, Marco Steenbergen, Milada Anna Vachudova and Marko Zilovic. 2017. "Explaining the salience of anti-elitism and reducing political corruption for political parties in Europe with the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey data," *Research & Politics* (January-March): 1-9.

11.2 Table of issues, that Volt emphasised during its campaigns

	<i>AMSTERDAM DECLARATAION</i>	<i>GERMANY</i>	<i>SWEDEN</i>	<i>BULGARIA</i>	<i>CZECHIA</i>
	Pro- EU issues				
1	Establish a Federal Europe with a European Government	High	High	High	Medium
2	Enable the creation of real EU political parties	High	High	High	High
3	Ensure the EU's ability to act	High	High	High	High
4	Give the European Central Bank the power to support employment and growth		Medium		
5	Enable Europeans to participate in policy-making		Medium	Medium	High
6	Give Europeans a say in how the budget of the EU is allocated		High		High
7	BREXIT	High			Medium
8	Right-wing populism	High	High		
9	Being progressive	Medium	High		
10	Eastern Europe in the EU			High	
11	Rule of law	High		High	High
12	EU as an instrument to ensure national compliance			High	
13	Ensure that the work of the Parliament is fully transparent and prevent last-minute rewrites and back-room deals	Medium			
	Economic issues				
14	Make our economy stronger and sustainable through a Eurozone+ Budget, a banking Union and a European Finance Ministre	High Centre	High Centre		
15	Ensure multinationals pay their fair share by collecting a minimum European corporate tax of 15%	High Left			
16	Make it easier to find a job across Europe by setting up a European Unemployment Agency	High Left			
17	Ensure decent living standards by introducing a European minimum wage above poverty level		Low Right	High Right	
18	Become smart in Artificial Intelligence	High Centre			
19	Make Artificial Intelligence available and accessible for everyone	High Centre			

20	Cohesion policy			Medium Right
21	Export in goods /single market		High Left	
22	Eurozone			Medium Right
23	EU-Mobility package			Medium Right
	Other EU-related issues (other GAL)			
24	Make EU project funding dependent on national efforts to fight corruption.		High	Low
25	Stop corruption by granting new investigative powers to the European Anti-Fraud and Public Prosecutor's Offices		High	Low
26	Enable more people to experience different European countries by opening Erasmus to secondary education	Medium		Medium Medium
27	Make sure that everyone can keep up with a rapidly evolving society		Medium	High
28	Bring education to the next level			High
29	Establish the EU "Volta Programme"			High
30	Make it easier to study and work anywhere in Europe			High
31	Increase the focus on digital literacy for all ages			High
32	Grow the green economy	Medium	Low	
33	Use energy in a smarter way	High		
34	Truly kick-start the circular economy	High	Low	
35	Stop plastic-based pollution and reduce waste in general	High		
36	Move towards sustainable consumption and government spending	High		
37	Support sustainable agriculture	High	High	Medium
38	Increase product quality and biodiversity	High		Low
39	Manage refugee flows from outside the EU	High		
40	Make the asylum system fair, effective and quick	High		
41	Ensure successful integration of refugees and a benefit for the economy	High		Medium
42	Uphold asylum seekers' and refugees' rights	High		
43	Protect those in need by classifying famine and climate migrants as refugees	High		
44	Protect both domestic and foreign workers against the negative effects of economic migration	Medium		High
45	Break the glass ceiling by legally enforcing representation of women on publicly-listed corporate boards			Low
46	Ensure that women's rights are upheld	High		
47	Guarantee equal rights to all	Low	High	Low Medium

This table is relevant for chapter 6 and to wider extent also for chapter 7. The qualitative results from the interviews and the additional material were quantified with the parameters 'high', 'medium' and 'low' for reasons of comprehensibility and clarity. For the section 'economic issues' the perception of the issue in the respective country was indicated from 'left' to 'centre' to 'right'.

12 Declaration of Authorship

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted is my own unaided work. All sources used are acknowledged as references.

All parts quoted directly or indirectly from other sources have been indicated accordingly. This paper was not previously presented to another examination board and has not been published.

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Johanna Klein, Dachau, 29.07.2020