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German Elections:

Is there a “Grand Coalition Effect” on Länder elections?

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Introduction

Like in all federations, party politics in Germany occurs in a multi-level setting. Parliamentary elections take place at national level (Bund) and in each of the 16 states (Länder) every four to five years¹. As these elections are not to be held on the same date, German parties and voters are exposed to almost ‘permanent political contestation’ (Schmidt 2007, 212). At the same time, the electoral arenas at national and regional levels have been closer intertwined than in most other federal democracies. This is for two reasons. First, the party systems of Bund and Länder have long displayed an unusually high degree of congruence (Hough and Jeffery 2004, 60–65). In the 1960s and 70s nearly all parliamentary seats at both levels of government were won by three statewide parties: the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Free Democratic Party (FDP). The Greens joined them during the 1980s, while other parties remained insignificant until 1990. Second, the idiosyncratic structure of German federalism reinforces multi-level linkages in the party system. In contrast to other federations, the Länder have relatively low autonomy in legislative affairs, but may significantly influence national policy-making via the Bundesrat. The Bundesrat is a second chamber with extraordinary strong veto power. It is composed of delegations of the 16 Länder which are each assigned three to six seats according to their population size². As Bundesrat seats are taken by respective Land governments, they become a ‘major prize’ for the parties winning a Land election (Hough and Jeffery 2006, 119).

The structural connectedness between Bund and Länder has had characteristic effects on party politics at both levels. On the one hand, Länder elections have not been seen as distinct political events determined by regional issues. Quite similar to European, municipal and other regional elections (Reif

¹ The regular electoral term is five years in 14 Länder, whereas the Bundestag as well as the Bremen and Hamburg parliaments have a four-year term.

² Under two millions inhabitants (Bremen, Hamburg, Meklenburg-Vorpommern, Saarland): three seats; two up to six millions (Berlin, Brandenburg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein, Thuringia): four seats; six to seven millions (Hesse): five seats; over seven millions inhabitants (Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia): six seats.

and Schmitt 1980), they have become ‘second order’ contests in which voters return their verdict on the parties of the incumbent federal government (Dinkel 1977, 348). On the other hand, the ‘federalization’ of Land elections has fostered the ‘particization’ of the Bundesrat, because when the opposition parties in the Bundestag gain the majority in the Bundesrat they may ‘blockade’ national legislation for political reasons (Lehmbruch 2000). Therefore, a main impact of regional elections is found at national level, i.e. the extent to which the post-electoral formation of Länder governments alters the party composition in the Bundesrat for or against the federal government.

After reunification the German party system underwent significant changes. At federal level the post-communist Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), renamed Left Party (LP) in 2007, constantly entered the Bundestag since 1990. This not only increased parliamentary fragmentation, but also made the building of politically coherent governments more difficult, as the post-communists were regarded as ‘non-coalitionable’ by all other parties. That way, the ‘two-block party system’ was subsequently transformed into a ‘fluid five-party system’ (Niedermayer 2007). The Grand Coalition formed in autumn 2005 was an indirect consequence of this change: for the first time since the 1950s, no majority coalition of one of the ‘catch-all parties’ (CDU/CSU or SPD) and one of the smaller parties (FDP or Green) was possible. Therefore, a government of the two largest parties turned out to be the ‘last resort’.

At Länder level reunification brought about a considerable increase of socioeconomic and socio-cultural disparities (Sturm 1999, 203–204). These also led to stronger asymmetries between the Länder party systems (Detterbeck and Renzsch 2008): while the CDU/CSU and SPD continued to be represented in all state parliaments, the PDS/LP emerged as a third ‘catch-all party’ in the East where the FDP and the Greens tended to be weaker than in the West. Furthermore, voting behavior became more volatile and, as a consequence, post-electoral changes of Länder governments more frequent than before (Decker and von Blumenthal 2002, 159–164). Regional contexts have therefore gained in importance for party competition in German Länder while the ‘traditional’ influence of federal politics on state elections has not vanished (Burkhart 2005).

This paper investigates the most recent period of multi-level party politics in Germany. More specifically, we want explore if and in what way the Grand Coalition had a characteristic impact on the Länder elections that took place during its mandate. The paper is divided into four sections. It begins by setting out hypothetical effects a federal government of the two largest parties may have on electoral politics at Länder level. This is followed by a comprehensive survey of the various regional contexts, i.e. the political traditions and party systems of individual Länder. In the third section, we analyze the 16 Länder elections held between spring 2006 and summer 2009 with a particular focus on which effects a Grand Coalition may have had on them. On this basis we finally highlight the patterns of multi-level party competition that emerged under the Merkel government.

The Grand Coalition and Länder elections

In order to identify the potential impact of the Grand Coalition on Länder elections we will proceed in two steps. At first we will elaborate how federal politics and electoral outcomes at Länder level are generally intertwined. We will then consider in what way a federal government of the two largest parties constitutes a specific context for such effects and, on this basis, outline respective hypotheses.

According to the relevant literature, multi-level electoral competition in Germany has had two distinct consequences. First, there are characteristic effects on *voting behavior* at Länder level. Because non-statewide elections are considered ‘second-order’, turnout at Länder level is generally lower than at federal level³. Furthermore, as Länder elections have ‘less at stake’, more voters tend to support smaller and ‘non-established’ parties than in the national arena. Last but not least, Länder elections provide an opportunity for voters to ‘punish’ the federal government (Dinkel 1977). Respective losses of government parties and gains for opposition parties have been particularly common at those Länder elections that take place in the middle of the federal electoral term (Burkhart 2005).

The second multi-level linkage can be detected at the level of *government formation*. In Germany, post-electoral coalition-building at Länder level has largely followed the given patterns at federal level

³ Although the debate on second order elections has recently be relaunched and the assumptions of the theory questioned, in this paper Länder elections will be framed in the second order elections theory and therefore considered as such.

(Debus 2008). Apart from the fact that ‘political symmetry’ between Bund and Länder is generally considered appropriate within the ‘unitary’ party system, there is also a major institutional incentive to build congruent coalitions across the levels (Pappi et al. 2005, 434–435). As mentioned above, federal government parties have a vital interest to rely on a majority in the Bundesrat in order to avoid political stalemate by federal opposition parties. However, such ‘congruent majorities’ are all but easily achieved due to the peculiar decision rules in the Bundesrat: there, the votes of each Land ‘may be cast only as a unit’, and respective abstentions are de facto counted as ‘no-votes’. If a Land government is composed of parties that are both in government and in opposition at federal level, the coalition treaty usually stipulates abstention in controversial Bundesrat decisions. Therefore, federal government parties can only secure a solid Bundesrat majority, if they form Länder governments without any of the federal opposition parties.

Under this perspective, another aspect is worth analyzing: the possible *political (in)congruence between Bundestag and Bundesrat*. Following the institutional incentives described above, federal government parties should prefer to build common governments at Länder level. When federal government parties loose ‘midterm contests’ at Länder level they are not able to form corresponding governments. As a consequence, during an electoral cycle the Bundesrat will be subsequently dominated by the federal opposition. This structural tendency to ‘divided government’ can also be observed empirically: Germany has seen longer periods of divergent majorities in Bundestag and Bundesrat during the 1970s and early 80s as well as in the 1990s and 2000s (Wagschal and Grasl 2004, 734–737).

Let us now turn to the question in what way these multi-level linkages are expected under a federal government of the two largest parties. Differently from the more general case, there is little literature dealing with the influence of a Grand Coalition on Länder elections.

Grand Coalitions have not only been historical exceptions in Germany, but may also cause extraordinary problems for representative democracy (Müller 2008, 504–508). Given the structural weakness of the parliamentary opposition, periods of Grand Coalitions should show a low degree of

political contestation. At the same time, federal decision-making should be characterized by ‘centrist compromises’ which make the policy positions of CDU/CSU and SPD almost indistinguishable. This gives citizens a further incentive to support smaller right- or left-wing parties that have more clear-cut, non-centrist profiles. Therefore, a Grand Coalition at federal level should reinforce the ‘second-order effects’ in voting behavior at Länder level. Given the low intensity of political contestation, electoral turnout should even more decrease while smaller parties – among them possibly extremists – should significantly gain in voter support at the losses of the “punished” governmental parties. The first federal government of CDU/CSU and SPD that was in office from 1966–69 provides a telling example: during its mandate both ‘Volksparteien’ saw heavy losses in Länder elections whereas the right-wing extremist Nationaldemocratic Party (NPD) entered nearly all regional parliaments (Hilmer 2008, 93–94).

Concerning government formation, a Grand Coalition may foster the ‘usual’ multi-level effects as well. Although both ‘Volksparteien’ could lose considerable electoral support, together they would remain strong enough to secure a majority of parliamentary seats in any Land and try to build Grand Coalition governments at Länder level. Therefore, even if regional party systems become increasingly asymmetric, the respective governments might become more consistent under the Merkel government. If this logic of governmental symmetry is consequently applied by the Grand Coalition parties, political congruence between Bundestag and Bundesrat should not decrease as it is usually the case, but remain at least stable during the whole electoral term. Federal governance should thus become easier than under ‘small’ party coalitions when instead ‘divided government’ is the likely outcome of multi-level party competition. A most recent example for this was the SPD-Green government under Gerhard Schröder (2002–2005) whose political basis in the Bundesrat continually shrank from Land election to Land election (Zohlnhöfer 2008).

However, the abovementioned hypotheses about Merkel’s Grand Coalition impact only hold under the condition that the ‘top-down’ logic of multi-level competition is (still) more relevant for Länder election outcomes than regional contexts. Hence we will first have a closer look at the party

systems and electoral traditions at Länder level in order to frame some of their peculiarities, before we analyze the respective elections during the Grand Coalition's term.

The regional context: political traditions and party systems at Länder level

From the end of World War II and until the 90s, electoral behaviour in the German Länder featured a long stability and congruence between parties and party systems at the Länder and the federal level was impressively high. After reunification in 1990, instead, a growing regionalization of party systems is at stake (Sturm 1999, Haas et al. 2008, 21ff.) so that a sort of asymmetry is to be detected along with an increasing differentiation in voting behavior among the Länder. These variations however are not without patterns. By borrowing a compounded typology of the Länder party systems (Schniewind 2008, 106) German Länder can be grouped, since 1990 and according (mainly) to their degree of electoral volatility and political fragmentation (Niedermayer 1996, 20-21), as follows: the city-states and the Eastern Länder (Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia), the other Western *Flächenländer* (territorial Länder) (Hesse, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, Schleswig-Holstein), and the "exceptions" (Baden-Württemberg and Saxony, as well as Bavaria)⁴.

The first group encompasses multiparty Länder with both high fragmentation and volatility, as well as a low vote concentration on the two main parties (CDU and SPD) and the strong presence of left parties. The three city-states have long been SPD strongholds during the 70s and the 80s, although they have in time softened this orientation, in particular after 1990. West Berlin has been ruled for decades by a SPD/FDP coalition. After reunification, a ten-year long Grand Coalition was in power. Since 2001, instead, left-wing coalitions have been governing (SPD with, in timeline, Greens, PDS and Left). Bremen was another historical socialdemocratic stronghold, where SPD often reached the absolute majority and has constantly been, since 1946, the first political party in this Land. SPD governed alone

⁴ Data here discussed and mentioned are those provided by the Statistisches Bundesamt (see webpage www.bundeswahlleiter.de/de/links/landes-wahlleiter.html) and by the 16 Länder's official websites.

or with the liberals, whilst from 1995 to 2007 with the CDU in a Grand Coalition. In 2007 the first Bremen red-green alliance went to power. Another SPD fortress was Hamburg, since the 70s usually governed by socialdemocratic single-party executives or by SDP/FDP coalitions. Until 2001, when, for the first time in this Land, the Ole von Beust-led CDU went to power with the populist party PRO and the liberals, and later, in 2004, alone. In 2008 in this city-state, the first black-green coalition (CDU/Greens) of the German history took life.

The Eastern Länder, after reunification showed quite different political orientations although always marked by high fragmentation and volatility. Furthermore, in these Länder a remarkable presence of the PDS, the SED's political heirs, now joined in the Left party, is to be detected: those forces have always been gathering about 20 percent of the votes, while the Greens, differently from the Western Länder, only between three and five percent. Brandenburg tended for SPD, which governed for a decade in left-wing alliances, then formed a Grand Coalition in 1999, replaced in 2009 by a new SPD/Left government⁵. Vice versa, in Thuringia, after a CDU predominance in the first years of reunification, a Grand Coalition ruled from 1994 to 1999, year when a single-party Christian democrat government came again to power, before another Grand Coalition was formed in 2009 after the federal elections. Finally, a substantial equilibrium between the two major parties is to be found in Meklenburg-Vorpommern and in Saxony-Anhalt, where the two main parties went alternatively in power and where since 2006 a Grand Coalition has been ruling.

The second group gathers most of the Western Länder, characterized since 1990 by a two-and-a-half party system with both low fragmentation and volatility, along with high concentration on the two main parties and scarce presence of extreme parties. In Lower Saxony, a cyclic SPD/CDU alternation has taken place: an SPD dominance till the 70s, a CDU prevalence till 1990, then the return of the SPD in power, allied with the Greens. In 1994 the socialdemocrats, led by Gerhard Schröder, new Land prime minister, were able to form a single-party executive which lasted till 2003, when CDU got back in power with a Christian democrats/liberals coalition, confirmed in 2008 and still ruling. In North Rhine-

⁵ To be confirmed within the first two weeks of November.

Westphalia, instead, for nearly four decades – from the second half of the 60s till the second half of 2000s – it was the SPD which ruled, both single-party and in coalition with the liberals or the Greens, which, as in many other Länder, had become during the 80s the fourth political party. The ten-year long red-green alliance ended with the 2005 elections, when a CDU/FDP government went to power. As well, in Hesse, after decades-long preeminence of SPD-led governments, the CDU conquered the power in 1999 and since then this party has been ruling the Land, alone or with the liberals. In Schleswig-Holstein a CDU dominance till the end of the 80s was followed by a fifteen-year SPD rule, alone or with the Greens. However in April 2005 a Grand Coalition went to power and cracked a few months before the federal elections in 2009, opening the way to a CDU/FDP government. A similar evolution can be detected in Saarland, where the CDU had been close to the absolute majority till the mid 80s, and was then replaced by a fifteen-year long period of SPD dominance. In those years the SPD formed single-party governments led by Oskar Lafontaine, the future Left leader. Nevertheless, after the 1999 elections, the CDU returned to power in Saarland, this time alone and for ten years, till the formation of the first Jamaica coalition (CDU/FDP/Greens) in 2009. Only exception to this shift from SPD to CDU in *Flächenländer* governments during the 90s is Rhineland-Palatinate, which was instead a CDU fortress till the early 90s, but then neatly moved towards the social democrats led by Kurt Beck. Since then the SPD has ruled 15 years with the liberals and currently, after the 2006 elections, is in power alone.

The third group includes the exceptions, that is those Länder who show in their party system different features from the patterns visible in the other groups. On the one side Bavaria, with its two-party system, high vote concentration on CDU and SPD and no extreme and no relevant left parties, is the most outlining case. On the other side, Baden-Württemberg and Saxony show a multipartism with a high fragmentation along with low vote concentration and thus a medium degree of volatility, as well as a strong presence of extreme parties but weak left parties.

All three Länder are mostly conservative. In Bavaria the CSU (the sister party of the CDU) had a single-party rule since 1962 with large absolute majorities till the electoral defeat in 2008. In this year

CSU went under the 50 percent for the first time in 40 years and was forced to a coalition government with the liberals. In Baden-Württemberg CDU has been ruling since the 40s both alone and in coalition, mostly with FDP but also in two Grand Coalitions with SPD. Saxony, after reunification, clearly favored the CDU and has been governed, for three up to four mandates, by CDU single-party executives. Since 2004 a Grand Coalition has been in power until a CDU/FDP alliance replaced it after the 2009 Land elections.

Summoning up on the evolution of electoral traditions since 1990, it can be stated that, if it is true that in the 90s, after decades of cleavages freezing, many Länder changed their political orientation (Caciagli 2007, 1993; Haas et al. 2008), these changes also translated into new government coalition options (black/green, Jamaica, red-red, as well as several Grand Coalition especially in the eastern Länder). These options will partly differ from the expected multi-level effect hypotheses presented before and can be therefore explained only by taking into consideration each specific regional context and political and electoral tradition.

Länder elections during the Merkel's Grand Coalition

In this paragraph a comprehensive analysis of regional elections held during the 2005-2009 Grand Coalition's term will be attempted. During this mandate, an exceptional number of Länder elections took place: 15 out of 16 Länder voted and one (Hesse) voted twice. As already pointed out, we will try to give an account for two dimensions - the voting behavior and the coalition formation - trying to single out the possible effects of a Grand Coalition on them. Moreover a look at the (in)congruence between majorities in Bundestag and Bundesrat as a possible compounded effect will be cast. In order to test our hypotheses on voting behavior (particularly low turnout, heavy losses for the government parties and better scores for small/extreme parties under a Grand Coalition government) a comparison with the previous elections in each Land but also with the average turnout and the electoral performances of the parties in the period 1990-2005 will be made, in order to give an account for the short as well as the long term change. The results, by confirming the classic electoral cycle theories, let

also suppose a possible specific impact of the Grand Coalition on Länder elections towards a reinforcement of their second order effects, as claimed in our hypotheses.

As for the coalition formation hypothesis (high government congruence between Bund and Länder) Länder elections showed a rather low congruence rate with less than expected Grand Coalitions taking place at the regional level, even where incumbent.

Finally, concerning the possible compounded effect on the congruence of the two German chambers, the results indicate a growing incongruence, with the progressive loss of the majority for the CDU/SPD executive at the Bundesrat all along the term.

Let us see all these results more in detail. As showed in table 1, Land elections will be grouped according to their timing, following the traditional electoral cycle (Dinkel 1977, Anderson and Ward 1996, Jeffery and Hough 2001, Decker and von Blumenthal 2002, Burkhart 2005) and its expected consequences.

Table 1. Timing of Länder elections.

<i>Timing</i>	<i>Land</i>	<i>Date</i>
Honey time	Baden-Württemberg	3/26/2006
	Rhineland-Palatinate	3/26/2006
	Saxony-Anhalt	3/26/2006
	Berlin	9/17/2006
	Meklemburg-Vorpommern	9/17/2006
Mid-term time	Bremen	5/13/2007
	Lower Saxony	1/27/2008
	Hesse (I)	1/27/2008
	Hamburg	2/23/2008
	Bavaria	9/28/2008
	Hesse (II)	1/18/2009
Pre-election time	Saarland	8/30/2009
	Saxony	8/30/2009
	Thuringia	8/30/2009
Simultaneous elections	Brandenburg	9/27/2009
	Schleswig-Holstein	9/27/2009
After federal elections	North Rhine-Westfalia	Spring 2010 (scheduled)

Source: Adaptation from Bundesrat's official data

(http://www.bundesrat.de/cln_090/nn_9550/DE/struktur/laender/wahltermine/wahltermine-node.html?_nnn=true).

Honey time: the initial consolidation in the Länder

In Spring 2006, at the end of the first-100-days' honey moon (Tenscher and Batt 2008), three Länder held elections (Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saxony-Anhalt). This first electoral test

was positive and the federal Grand Coalition was reinforced both numerically and politically: it obtained a *de facto* pass by the electorate but at the price of low turnout and electoral temperature, without surprises in all three events. In Baden-Württemberg the CDU/FDP coalition government was confirmed but the most interesting fact was the lack of political polarization, showed by the modest turnout (Gabriel 2006, 318-319). *Status quo* confirmation also in Rhineland-Palatinate, where the Greens failed to enter the Landtag and opened the way to the first SPD single-party government of this Land, led by Kurt Beck. This success broke a long period of SPD electoral defeats in all country (Koch-Baumgarten 2008) and most likely prevented an early dissolution of the Grand Coalition (Arzheimer and Schoen 2006, 265), even giving it a propulsive push. Slightly more significant variations in Saxony-Anhalt, where the most relevant data were, along with the low turnout, the small parties' performances. The FDP suffered a heavy loss, losing its role of government ally. The Linkspartei.PDS received instead almost four percent more than in 2002, surpassing the SPD and obtaining, with 24,1% of the votes, its best result ever in a Land election (see table 2). These results determined the formation of the currently ruling Grand Coalition (Detterbeck 2008), led by the incumbent CDU prime minister Wolfgang Böhmer, who was confirmed in charge by both votes and pollings (Neu 2006).

Six months later, in September 2006, two more Länder went to polls: Berlin and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, both ruled by red-red coalitions (SPD/PDS). If in the capital, elections confirmed the left-wing incumbent government, in the deep North-East results did not match the expectations. In Berlin the executive guided by the popular socialdemocratic leader Klaus Wowereit was confirmed, despite the heavy losses of the Left.PDS, the SPD government ally (McKay 2007), and despite post-electoral talks had been conducted also with the Greens. The SPD thus remained the main political force of the city-state and consolidated the first government alliance with the former communists in a western Land. In Mecklenburg, instead of the expected red-red coalition (SPD/PDS) reaffirmation, in power for two terms, a Grand Coalition between the two losers of this election was formed: the SPD lost over ten percent of the votes and the CDU obtained one of its worst performances in this Land

(Heinrich and Schoon 2007). The real winners – the liberals and the extreme right-wing NPD – were, for different reasons, excluded as possible government partners.

2006 Land elections have thus been marked as a whole by a low politicization (Tenscher 2008) and can be defined as routine elections: scarce interest, low turnout, absent polarization. These features went along with a mild but encouraging support for the recently-appointed executive, consistently with the electoral cycle theories, expecting favorable results for the governmental parties in the first months of the term. Data, whose detailed results are provided in table 2, also confirm our hypotheses: in the “honey-time elections” the average turnout decreased 9.4 points compared to the previous elections and 13.4 points compared to the Länder average turnout in the last 15 years. As well, government parties suffered some (although still limited) losses both to the previous performances and to their usual results in these Länder, while smaller parties won some points. In this tension-free political electoral climate, however, the Merkel cabinet reached after its first year in power, the strongest majority at the Bundesrat of the whole term: 47 seats up to 69, having conquered the seats of Rhineland-Palatinate, Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern with the creation, respectively, of an SPD-single party government and two Grand Coalitions (see table 3). In this respect, in the honey-time elections also the trend towards a higher political congruence between Länder and federal governments seems to be confirmed.

Mid-term time: first troubles for the Grand Coalition

Between 2007 and 2008, the two years encompassing the “mid-term time”, five Länder renewed their parliaments. The city-state of Bremen was the only Land to hold elections in 2007, at the very half of the mandate. Therefore, as every mid-term vote, their results were awaited as a sign of the health status of the ruling government. During its second year, the Grand Coalition had progressively lost terrain. The main causes are to be detected in the slow policy-making process, and the long negotiations between the coalition partners upon most of the core issues (immigration, Islam, security) and upon reforms (federalism, health care), but also in the approaching of the second half of the term and the

consequent need for both the CDU and the SPD to distinguish from each other. Electoral results in the smallest German Land, reported as usual in table 2, confirmed the SPD, despite its eight-percent loss, as the first Bremen political party, and showed at least three new features. First, an alternation in power, so that a red-green alliance, the first after the federal one guided by the former chancellor Gerhard Schröder, succeeded to the Grand Coalition ruling since 1995. Secondly, five parties entered the Landtag (Greens, FDP, Linkspartei.PDS, besides SPD and CDU) breaking the traditional Land three-party system. Finally, the Linkspartei first entered a Western Land parliament, furthermore with a remarkable percentage of votes (8.4 percent).

In the first months of 2008 three other states went to the polls. Lying in the North-West backbone of the country, Lower Saxony, Hesse and the city-state of Hamburg were all ruled by CDU governments (in Hesse in coalition with the FDP). In the first two Länder, although similar political conditions and simultaneous elections, the polls led to unexpected, very different results. In Lower Saxony a confirmation for the ruling coalition was assumed, so that the electoral temperature was low and the voter turnout even lower (Broughton 2008). The CDU, despite its losses, held in fact the power with the liberals, while the Left entered the regional parliament with 7.1 percent. In Hesse, instead, after a hot campaign, the CDU and SPD obtained almost the same votes and seats, with the Christian democrats suffering a bad loss and the social democrats performing extremely well. This trend – more than the percentages (provided in table 2) – gave the SPD leader, Andrea Ypsilanti, the chance to form a government, whose composition remained however quite uncertain. The alliance with the Greens was not enough to reach the majority, but a coalition with the Left, which had gained consensus had always been foreclosed by the SPD during the campaign. The whole 2008 was spent in Ypsilanti's attempts to form a SPD/Greens minority government supported by the Left or, later, even a SPD/Greens/Left coalition, while the CDU outgoing prime minister Roland Koch remained in charge for an *ad interim* government (but also maintained the Hesse support to the federal government at the Bundesrat).

A month later, another surprise came from the polls in Hamburg. To the CDU single-party government guided by Ole von Beust, succeeded the first black-green (CDU/Greens) coalition of the

German history. The Left entered also in this Land, reshaping its party system from the traditional three- to a new four-party system. But the biggest shock should however come from the Bavarian election in September. The Christian democrats suffered a dramatic defeat in their oldest and biggest stronghold, loosing the absolute majority for the first time since 1962. With 17 percent less than in 2003 (see again table 2), the CSU imperiled the path towards the 2009 federal elections for its sister party and to the chancellor. This unexpected – at least in quantitative terms – *debacle*, forced the CSU to form a coalition government with the FDP, after more than 40 years of single-party rule. If this is definitely the most relevant result of the Bavarian elections, other data are worth noticing as well. First, also the SPD performed bad with its worst result ever in this Land (18.6 percent), confirming the consensus crisis which began to involve both federal government's parties. Secondly, the liberals returned in the Landtag after having missed 14 year-long the 5% threshold; and thirdly the conservative Freie Wähler grassroots movement become the third party of Bavaria with stunning results: 10.2 percent and 21 seats.

In November 2008 SPD attempts to form a government in Hesse ultimately failed and new Land elections were scheduled for January 2009, nine months before the federal ones. The polls showed, along with the lowest turnout ever registered in this Land, the collapse (13 percent less than in 2008) of the SPD, punished by the electorate for the previous year's long-lasting crisis. On the other side, CDU performed better than in 2008 but still far below the result which in 2003 allowed this party to govern alone (see again table 2). Thus the Christian democrats agreed with the FDP, which benefited from the SPD outgoing electoral flow, to form a coalition government. The Greens gained six points and the Left passed again the threshold, confirming its access to the Hesse Landtag.

Summoning up, the “mid-term time” elections showed some notable features. An electoral and political crisis began to concern both the CDU and the SPD in the second half of their coalitional term, as foreseen both by the electoral cycle theories and our hypotheses. The Christian Democrats lost ground in three out of six elections and the Social Democrats in four. These losses were counterbalanced by better performances by the Greens and, particularly, by the FDP, or even by grassroots movement like

in Bavaria. Moreover, the Left definitely entered as a new political force both the Eastern and the Western Land parliaments. The hypotheses of heavier losses of the ruling parties and bigger consensus for non-centrist forces are therefore largely confirmed.

As for the turnout, it also decreased in all Länder (except for Bavaria) compared both to the previous elections and to the long time average, giving further support to the hypothesis that a Grand Coalition could have discouraged electoral participation.

Finally, in respect to the coalition formation's (in)congruence and its consequences on governability at the federal level, these elections weakened the Grand Coalition. As it can be seen in table 3, no Grand Coalition was formed at the regional level, disconfirming our hypothesis of greater governamental congruence. Moreover, in the Bundesrat the federal government's majority decreased from 47 seats in 2006 to 35 in 2008 and to only 30 at the early 2009. It was with the Bremen elections that this majority began to shrink: the failed renewal of the SPD/CDU coalition caused the loss of three seats at the upper chamber for the federal government, and displayed the first signs of its weakening. Later, the change over in Hamburg between a CDU single-party to a CDU/Greens coalition determined the loss of further three votes, along with the six Bavarian ones. With the 2009 CDU/FDP coalition in Hesse, the federal Grand Coalition lost its already narrow majority in the upper chamber, being then supported only by 30 seats.

Pre-election time and simultaneous votes: towards new coalition options

The last year of the term, 2009, was signed by three pre-election time votes. Already in July the regional Grand Coalition in Schleswig-Holstein fell apart and early elections were called simultaneously to the federal one on September, 27. This event further weakened the tenure of the coalition partners, tenure which capitulated on the "election Sunday" (*Wahlsonntag*), August 30, with the results in Saarland, Saxony and Thuringia. In Saxony the chancellor's party performed its worst result in this Land but held its position as the first political force and its role in the government, though changing its ally from SPD to FDP, which instead performed very well along with other smaller parties (see table 2). In Saarland

and Thuringia, where the CDU ruled alone, this party lost over than 10 points, and in Saarland the Left gained an historical 21.3 percent (plus 19 points), the best result ever in a western Land. In both Länder both the liberals, the Greens and, as said, the Left obtained some of their best results in these states.

On September, 27 the last two Land votes occurred in Brandenburg and Schleswig-Holstein. Their outcomes were partly different from the previous ones but only as far as the turnout concerns. In fact, if the concomitant vote led to a remarkably higher turnout than in the former Länder elections both in short and long time comparison (see again table 2), the parties performances confirmed the already consolidated trends. The CDU and SPD continued to loose votes, whilst the smaller parties - in particular, in this occasion, the FDP - to gain. In Schleswig-Holstein both the CDU and the SPD scored their worst results in this Land (the CDU performed worse only in 1950), counterbalanced by the more than doubled votes for the Greens and the liberals, instead their best result ever. In Brandenburg the differences were not so stunning but surely confirming the main trend.

However, these performances do not properly support the electoral cycle theories, where good scores for the governing parties are expected due to the “last minute” policies aimed at conquering support. But in the case of Grand Coalition, the last months were instead devoted by both main parties to campaign in different directions, instead of trying to gain consensus for the common government activity.

The “pre-election time” and the “simultaneous” votes gave therefore three important hints concerning our hypotheses. First, a renewal of political participation with higher turnouts than in the previous elections, although often still lower than the previous fifteen years’ average, differently from most regional votes in the 2005-2009 term. This is however in line with the electoral timing, being the federal elections approaching and the electoral temperature raising. Nevertheless, and secondly, the two main parties continued loosing consensus, while the liberals, the Greens and the Left gained some. If this not fully fits the electoral cycle, it however reinforces our hypotheses on the Grand Coalition’s impact, whose (negative) consequences on its parties’ performances steadily continued, along with the successes of the non-centrist parties. And this, counterintuitively, despite the high possibility of a renewal of this

coalition, option still running till the very end of the campaign. Thirdly, as for coalition formation, the last year of the term has been already fully projected in the post-federal elections and therefore the (in)congruence hypothesis should be shifted towards the new federal government. In fact, not only no Grand Coalition was formed in this last period, but the Saxon CDU/FDP coalition was built nearly two weeks after the regional vote and was deliberately aimed at launching the black-yellow option at the federal level. In the other two “pre-election” Länder, instead, where the polls had mitigated Merkel’s hopes on a possible CDU/FDP coalition in Berlin, the federal results were deliberately waited for, before a new executive was installed. Finally, as showed in table 3, while in Thuringia a Grand Coalition was formed, in Saarland the first Jamaica coalition (CDU/FDP/Greens) of the German history took place.

As a consequence of the two concomitant Land elections, in Schleswig-Holstein the expected CDU/FDP coalition, compliant to the new federal government was finally built, although after tumultuous negotiations, while in Brandenburg an SPD/Left agreement was reached.

Table 2. Länder elections: turnout [variation from previous elections /from '90-'05 average], votes [variation from previous elections]. Percentages. 2006-2009

<i>Land</i>	<i>Turnout</i>	<i>Votes</i>					
		<i>CDU/CSU</i>	<i>SPD</i>	<i>FDP</i>	<i>Greens-Bündnis90</i>	<i>LP^a</i>	<i>Others</i>
Baden-Württemberg	53,4 [-9,2/-13,3]	44,2 [-0,6]	25,2 [-8,1]	10,7 ^b [+2,6]	11,7 [+4,0]	3,1 [+3,1]	5,1 [-1,0]
Rhineland-Palatinate	58,2 [-3,9/-10,7]	32,8 [-2,5]	45,6 [+0,9]	8,0 [+0,2]	4,6 [-0,6]	2,6 [+2,6]	6,4 [-0,6]
Saxony-Anhalt	44,4 [-12,1/-17,6]	36,2 [-1,1]	21,4 [+1,4]	6,7 [-6,6]	3,6 [+1,6]	24,1 [+3,7]	8,0 [+1,0]
Berlin	58,0 [-10,1/-12,8]	21,3 [-2,5]	30,8 [+1,1]	7,6 [-2,3]	13,1 [+4,0]	16,3 (13,4) ^c [-6,3]	10,9 [+6,0]
Meklemburg-Vorpommern	59,1 [-11,5/-12,8]	28,8 [-1,6]	30,2 [-10,4]	9,6 [+4,9]	3,4 [+0,8]	16,8 [+0,4]	11,2 (7,3) ^d [+6,9]
<i>Average</i>	<i>54,6</i>	<i>32,7</i>	<i>30,6</i>	<i>8,5</i>	<i>7,3</i>	<i>12,6</i>	<i>8,3</i>
<i>Honey time</i>	<i>[-9,4/-13,4]</i>	<i>[-1,7]</i>	<i>[-3,0]</i>	<i>[-0,2]</i>	<i>[+2,0]</i>	<i>[+0,7]</i>	<i>[+6,8]</i>
Bremen	57,6 [-3,7/-8,0]	25,6 [-4,3]	36,7 [-5,6]	6,0 [+1,8]	16,5 [+3,7]	8,4 [+6,7]	6,8 ^e [-2,6]
Lower Saxony	57,1 [-9,9/-15,2]	42,5 [-5,8]	30,3 [-3,1]	8,2 [+0,1]	8,0 [+0,4]	7,1 [+6,6]	3,9 [+1,9]
Hesse (I)	64,3 [-0,3/-2,7]	36,8 [-12,0]	36,7 [+7,6]	9,4 [+1,5]	7,5 [-2,6]	5,1 [+4,9]	4,5 [-0,6]
Hamburg	63,3 [-5,1/-5,5]	42,6 [-4,6]	34,1 [+3,6]	4,8 [+2,0]	19,6 ^f [-2,7]	6,4 [+6,4]	3,3 [-3,9]
Bavaria	58,1 [+1,0/-7,1]	43,4 [-17,3]	18,6 [-1,0]	8,0 [+5,4]	9,4 [+1,7]	4,4 [+4,4]	16,2 (10,2) ^g [+6,9(+6,2)]
Hesse (II)	61,0 [-3,3/-5,5]	37,2 [+0,4]	23,7 [-13,0]	16,2 [+6,8]	13,7 [+6,2]	5,4 [+0,3]	3,8 [-0,6]
<i>Average mid-term time</i>	<i>60,2</i> <i>[-3,6/-7,3]</i>	<i>38,0</i> <i>[-7,3]</i>	<i>30,0</i> <i>[-1,9]</i>	<i>8,8</i> <i>[+2,9]</i>	<i>10,8</i> <i>[+1,1]</i>	<i>6,1</i> <i>[+4,9]</i>	<i>6,4</i> <i>[+0,2]</i>
Saarland	67,6 [+12,1/-5,1]	34,5 [-13,0]	24,5 [-6,3]	9,2 [+4,0]	5,9 [+0,3]	21,3 [+19,0]	4,6 [-4,0]
Saxony	52,2 [-7,2/-10,8]	40,2 [-0,9]	10,4 [+0,6]	10,0 [+4,1]	6,4 [+1,3]	20,6 [-3,0]	12,4 (5,6) ^h [-2,0 (-3,6)]
Thuringia	56,2 [+2,4/-8,8]	31,2 [-11,8]	18,5 [+4,0]	7,6 [+4,0]	6,2 [+1,7]	27,4 [+1,3]	9,1 [+0,6]
<i>Average pre-election time</i>	<i>58,7</i> <i>[+5,7/-8,2]</i>	<i>35,3</i> <i>[-8,6]</i>	<i>17,8</i> <i>[-0,6]</i>	<i>8,9</i> <i>[+4,0]</i>	<i>6,2</i> <i>[+1,1]</i>	<i>23,1</i> <i>[+5,8]</i>	<i>8,7</i> <i>[-1,8]</i>
Brandenburg	67,5 [+11,1/+9,0]	19,8 [+0,4]	33,0 [+1,1]	7,2 [+3,9]	5,6 [+2,0]	27,2 [-0,8]	7,2 [-6,7]
Schleswig-Holstein	73,5 [+7,0/+3,6]	31,5 [-8,7]	25,4 [-13,3]	14,9 [+8,3]	12,4 [+6,2]	6,0 [+5,2]	9,8 ⁱ [+2,3]
<i>Simultaneous elections</i>	<i>70,5</i> <i>[+9,1/+6,3]</i>	<i>25,7</i> <i>[-4,2]</i>	<i>29,2</i> <i>[-6,1]</i>	<i>11,1</i> <i>[+6,1]</i>	<i>9,0</i> <i>[+4,1]</i>	<i>16,6</i> <i>[+2,2]</i>	<i>8,5</i> <i>[-2,2]</i>

Source: Authors' compilation from data provided by the 16 Länder official websites and by <http://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/de/links/landes-wahlleiter.html>; <http://www.wahlrecht.de/ergebnisse>; <http://de.wikipedia.org/>; <http://www.infratest-dimap.de/>.

^a The Left Party – LP (*Die Linke*) was officially born in June 2007 from the fusion between Linkspartei.PDS and the Oskar Lafontaine's WASG. In the elections held before this date, the provided results refer to the WASG (*Wahlalternative Arbeit and Soziale Gerechtigkeit*) in Baden-Württemberg and in Rhineland-Palatinate and to the Linkspartei.PDS in Saarland, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia and Meklemburg-Vorpommern. In Berlin, instead, both parties were present. Variations, if any, refer to the PDS.

^b In Baden-Württemberg the liberal parliamentary group is still indicated with the label FDP/DVP, which mentions also the Democratic Popular Party (*Demokratische Volkspartei - DVP*), born in this Land immediately after World War II and in 1948 merged, countrywide, with the FDP.

^c The 23 seats were conquered by the Linke.PDS with 13.4 percent. The total 16.3 percent includes also the 2.9 percent of the WASG, which obtained no seats.

^d The German National Democratic Party (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands - NPD*), extreme right-wing party born in the 60s, conquered six seats with 7.3 percent of votes. Other minor parties obtained together 3.9 percent and no seats.

^e The German Popular Union (*Deutsche Volksunion - DVU*), extreme right-wing party which already had a seat and whose representative later moved to the independents parliamentary group, won another seat; in by-elections in July 2008 the conservative populist movement *Bürger in Wut* (BIW) created in 2004, won a seat.

^f In Hamburg the Greens are labeled Green Alternative List (*Grüne Alternative Liste – GAL*) which, differently from the other Länder, although maintaining the label GAL, which usually means ecologist lists independent from one another and not organic to the party, is part of the Alliance90/Greens Party and is its regional articulation.

^g With 10.2 percent of votes the *Freie Wähler (FW)*, the most relevant German grassroots movement, which is present in many Länder at the municipal and also regional level, conquered 21 seats. In Bavaria the FW run first at the 1998 elections and in 2008 entered the Landtag. Other minor parties obtained together six percent of the votes and no seats.

^h The German National Democratic Party (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands - NPD*), extreme right-wing party, conquered eight seats with 5.6 percent of votes. Other minor parties obtained together 6.8 percent and no seats.

Table 3. Evolution of Länder government coalitions and of Merkel's Grand Coalition's support in the Bundesrat, per election and per Land. September 2005-September 2009

Land	September 2005 (after federal elections)		2006		2007		2008		2009		September 2009 (just before federal elections)	
	Parties in power	N. of BR votes for the GK	New government	N. of BR votes for the GK (variation)	New government	N. of BR votes for the GK (variation)	New government	N. of BR votes for the GK (variation)	New government	N. of BR votes for the GK (variation)	Parties in power	N. of votes at the BR for the GK
<i>Honey time</i>												
Baden-Württemberg	CDU FDP/DVP		CDU FDP/DVP	(-)							CDU FDP/DVP	
Rhineland-Palatinate	SPD FDP		SPD	(+4)		4		4			SPD	4
Saxony-Anhalt	CDU FDP		CDU SPD	(+4)		4		4			CDU SPD	4
Berlin	SPD PDS		SPD Linke.PDS	(-)							SPD LP	
Meklemburg-Vorpommern	SPD PDS		CDU SPD	(+3)		3		3			CDU SPD	3
<i>Mid-term time</i>												
Bremen	CDU SPD	3		3	SPD Greens	0 (-3)					SPD Greens	
Lower Saxony	CDU FDP						CDU FDP	(-)			CDU FDP	
Hamburg	CDU	3		3		3	CDU Greens	0 (-3)			CDU Greens	
Bavaria	CSU	6		6		6	CSU FDP	0 (-6)			CSU FDP	
Hesse	CDU	5		5		5	CDU (ad interim)	5 (-)	CDU FDP	0 (-5)	CDU FDP	
<i>Pre-election time</i>												
Saarland	CDU	3		3		3		3			CDU (later CDU/FDP/ Greens)	3
Saxony	CDU SPD	4		4		4		4	CDU FDP	0 (-4)	CDU FDP	
Thuringia	CDU	4		4		4		4			CDU (later CDU SPD)	4
<i>Simultaneous</i>												
Brandenburg	CDU SPD	4		4		4		4			CDU SPD (later SPD LP ?)	4
Schleswig-Holstein	CDU SPD	4		4		4		4			CDU SPD (later CDU FDP)	4
<i>No elections</i>												
North Rhine-Westphalia	CDU FDP										CDU FDP	
Total		36		44 (Mar.) 47 (Sep.)		44		44 (Jan.) 41 (Feb.) 35 (Sep.)		30 (Jan.) 26 (Sept.)		26

Source: Authors' compilation on the basis of Poguntke (2008, 986).

First (tentative) conclusive remarks

In this section we will try a comparative summary on the Länder elections held during the Merkel's Grand Coalition term and some tentative remarks on the Grand Coalition's impact. Are general patterns on party politics at the Länder level to be singled out or are there only idiosyncratic effects in individual Länder? Is there an influence of electoral cycle or has the Grand Coalition mixed up the scene and how?

At this stage of the analysis, a first overview on the data lets us suppose that the Grand Coalition has played a role on the Länder elections and that this role has worked towards a reinforcement of the second order effects, as claimed by our hypotheses. In fact, as for voting behavior, the turnout steadily decreased all along the term except for the simultaneous elections, in line with the second order elections' features. As well, governmental parties have been regularly punished, often in an unprecedented way, in almost all Länder elections of these years. And above all, they continued to be so also in the pre-election time, contradicting the electoral cycle theories and letting us suppose in this case a specific (negative) effect of the Grand Coalition. On the contrary – and confirming this claim the other way round - smaller, minor and extremer parties have performed better than usual, in many cases than ever.

Nevertheless, it seems that the federal Grand Coalition had no other particularly strong effect on the regional elections. There was no higher political symmetry and no more congruent coalitions between federal and regional level (only in 2 up to 15 elections), and thus no higher (not even stable) congruence between Bundestag and Bundesrat, which instead decreased as usual, if not more.

It is true that the only other Grand Coalition at the federal level was that of '66-'69 and therefore data are available only for these two cases and generalizations are not possible. However, it can be assessed that also in that occasion the impact of a federal government by CDU and SPD was not particularly strong or clear. In those years turnout did not even decrease. The two governmental parties (CDU and SPD) suffered some losses, especially in some Länder like BW and Bremen, although not so heavy and widespread as in the 2005-09 term. And if smaller parties did not raise as in the 05-09 case (FDP did

not perform equally well and the Greens were not present yet), it was the extreme right party NPD who did and entered many regional parliaments. As for coalition formation, in the '66-'69 case, only a Grand Coalition took place (in BW) at the regional level while a CDU/SPD federal government was in power.

The question could be thus why federal Grand Coalitions do not exert such a great impact on Länder elections. A first tentative explanation could be that in both occasions Grand Coalitions have been perceived, although for different reasons, as temporary solutions and not as a stable configuration or a possible, usual coalitional option for the federal governments. Going back to the Merkel's term, the formation of 3 CDU/FDP coalitions in 2008 and 2009, foreseeing and launching the new federal executive (against the 2 CDU/SPD formed from 2006 to 2008) seems to confirm this explanation.

In this perspective both parties, governmental and opposition, and electors are projected, and consequently act – and that is exactly what happened in Germany during the Merkel's mandate - on what will follow the Grand Coalition rather than on what the Grand Coalition could offer and realize.

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APPENDIX 1. Electoral results per Land. 1990-2009(%)

Honey time (2006)

Baden- Württemberg	<i>CDU/CSU</i>	<i>SPD</i>	<i>FDP</i>	<i>Greens-B90</i>	<i>LP</i>	<i>Others</i>
1992	39,6	29,4	5,9	9,5	--	15,7 (Rep 10,9)
1996	41,3	25,1	9,6	12,1	--	11,7 (Rep 9,1)
2001	44,8	33,3	8,1	7,7	--	6,1 (Rep 4,4)
2006	44,2	25,2	10,7	11,7	3,1 (Wasg)	5,1 (Rep 2,5)
Aver. 90-05	41,9	29,3	7,9	9,8		10,2
Diff last/av90-05	+2,3	-4,1	+2,8	+1,3	+3,1	-5,1
Rhineland- Palatinate	<i>CDU/CSU</i>	<i>SPD</i>	<i>FDP</i>	<i>Greens-B90</i>	<i>LP</i>	<i>Others</i>
1991	38,7	44,8	6,9	6,5	--	3,1 (Rep 2,0)
1996	38,7	39,8	8,9	6,9	--	5,7 (Rep 3,5)
2001	35,3	44,7	7,8	5,2	0,04	7,0 (Fwg 2,5) (Rep 2,4)
2006	32,8	45,6	8,0	4,6	2,6 (Wasg)	6,4 (Rep 1,7)
Aver. 90-05	37,6	43,1	7,9	6,2		2,6
Diff last/av90-05	-4,8	+2,5	+0,1	-1,6	+2,6	
Saxony-Anhalt	<i>CDU/CSU</i>	<i>SPD</i>	<i>FDP</i>	<i>Greens-B90</i>	<i>LP</i>	<i>Others</i>
1990	39,0	26,0	13,5	5,3	12,0	4,1 (Dsu 1,8)
1994	34,4	34,0	3,6	5,1	19,9	3,2 (Rep 1,4)
1998	22,0	35,9	4,2	3,2	19,6	15,0 (Dvu 12,9)
2002	37,3	20,0	13,3	2,0	20,4	7,1 (PROSchill 4,5)
2006	36,2	21,4	6,7	3,6	24,1	8,2 (Dvu 3,0)
Aver. 90-05	33,2	29,0	8,7	3,9	18,0	
Diff last/av90-05	+3,0	-7,6	-2,0	-0,3	+6,1	
Berlin	<i>CDU/CSU</i>	<i>SPD</i>	<i>FDP</i>	<i>Greens-B90</i>	<i>LP</i>	<i>Others</i>
1990	40,4	30,4	7,1	9,4	9,2	3,6 (Rep 3,1)
1995	37,4	23,6	2,5	13,2	14,6	8,6 (Rep 2,7)
1999	40,8	22,4	2,2	9,9	17,7	7,0 (Rep 2,7)
2001	23,7	29,7	9,9	9,1	22,6	4,9 (Rep 1,3)
2006	21,3	30,8	7,6	13,1	16,3 (Wasg 2,9)	10,9 (3,8 Graue 2,6 Npd)
Aver. 90-05	35,6	26,5	5,4	10,4	16,0	
Diff last/av90-05	-14,3	+4,3	+2,2	+2,7	+0,3	
Meklemburg- Vorpommern	<i>CDU/CSU</i>	<i>SPD</i>	<i>FDP</i>	<i>Greens-B90</i>	<i>LP</i>	<i>Others</i>
1990	38,3	27,0	5,5	9,3	15,7	4,3 (Rep 0,9)
1994	37,7	29,5	3,8	3,7	22,7	2,4 (Rep 1,0)
1998	30,2	34,3	1,6	2,7	24,4	6,8 (Dvu 2,9)
2002	31,3	40,6	4,7	2,6	16,4	4,4 (Schill 1,7)
2006	28,8	30,2	9,6	3,4	16,8	11,3 (Npd 7,3)
Aver. 90-05	34,4	32,9	3,9	4,6	19,8	
Diff last/av90-05	-5,6	-2,7	+5,7	-1,2	-3,0	

Mid-term time (2007-2008)

Bremen	<i>CDU/CSU</i>	<i>SPD</i>	<i>FDP</i>	<i>Greens-B90</i>	<i>LP</i>	<i>DVU</i>	<i>Others</i>
1991	30,7	38,8	9,5	11,4	--	6,2	3,4 (Rep 1,5)
1995	32,6	33,4	3,4	13,1	2,4	2,5	12,8 (AfB 10,7)
1999	37,1	42,6	2,5	9,0	2,9	3,0	2,9 (AfB 2,4)
2003	29,9	42,3	4,2	12,8	1,7	2,3	7,0 (Schill 4,4)
2007	25,6	36,7	6,0	16,5	8,4	2,7	4,0 (Schill 2,6)
Lower Saxony	<i>CDU/CSU</i>	<i>SPD</i>	<i>FDP</i>	<i>Greens-B90</i>	<i>LP</i>	<i>REP</i>	<i>Others</i>
1990	42,0	44,2	6,0	5,5	--	2,2	0,7 (NPD 0,2)
1994	36,4	44,3	4,4	7,4	--	3,7	3,7 (Statt 1,3)
1998	35,9	47,9	4,9	7,0	0,2	2,8	1,3 (Statt 0,7)
2003	48,3	33,4	8,1	7,6	0,5	0,4	1,6 (Schill 1,0)
2008	42,5	30,3	8,2	8,0	7,1	--	3,8 (NPD 1,5)
Hesse (I)	<i>CDU/CSU</i>	<i>SPD</i>	<i>FDP</i>	<i>Greens-B90</i>	<i>LP</i>	<i>REP</i>	<i>Others</i>
1991	40,2	40,8	7,4	8,8	--	1,7	1,1 (Graue 0,6)
1995	39,2	38,0	7,4	11,2	0,1	2,0	2,1 (Graue 0,4)
1999	43,4	39,4	5,1	7,2	0,1	2,7	2,2 (TS 0,5)
2003	48,8	29,1	7,9	10,1	0,2	1,3	2,6 (TS 0,8)
2008	36,8	36,7	9,4	7,5	5,1	1,0	3,4 (FW 0,9) (NPD 0,9)
Hamburg	<i>CDU/CSU</i>	<i>SPD</i>	<i>FDP</i>	<i>Greens-B90</i>	<i>LP</i>	<i>Dvu</i>	<i>Others</i>
1991	35,1	48,0	5,4	7,2	0,5	--	4,3 (Rep 1,2)
1993	25,1	40,4	4,2	13,5	--	2,8	14,0 (Statt 5,6) (Rep 4,8)
1997	30,7	36,2	3,5	13,9	0,7	5,0	9,9 (Statt 3,8)
2001	26,2	36,5	5,1	8,5	0,4	0,7	22,2 (Schill 19,4)
2004	47,2	30,5	2,8	12,3	--	--	7,2 (Schill 3,1)
2008	42,6	34,1	4,8	9,6	6,4	0,8	2,5 (Kusch 0,5)
Bavaria	<i>CDU/CSU</i>	<i>SPD</i>	<i>FDP</i>	<i>Greens-B90</i>	<i>LP</i>	<i>REP</i>	<i>Others</i> <i>FW/Ödp</i>
1990	54,9	26,0	5,2	6,4	--	4,9	2,7 (Odp 1,7)
1994	52,8	30,0	2,8	6,1	--	3,9	4,3 (Odp 2,1)
1998	52,9	28,7	1,7	5,7	0,0	3,6	7,5 (FW 3,7)
2003	60,7	19,6	2,6	7,7	--	2,2	7,2 (FW 4,0)
2008	43,4	18,6	8,0	9,4	4,4	1,4	14,9 (FW 10,2)
Hesse (II)	<i>CDU/CSU</i>	<i>SPD</i>	<i>FDP</i>	<i>Greens-Bündnis90</i>	<i>LP</i>	<i>Others rep</i>	<i>Others</i>
1991	40,2	40,8	7,4	8,8	--	1,7	1,1 (Graue 0,6)
1995	39,2	38,0	7,4	11,2	0,1	2,0	2,1 (Graue 0,4)
1999	43,4	39,4	5,1	7,2	0,1	2,7	2,2 (TS 0,5)
2003	48,8	29,1	7,9	10,1	0,2	1,3	2,6 (TS 0,8)
2008	36,8	36,7	9,4	7,5	5,1	1,0	3,4 (FreiW 0,9) (NPD 0,9)
2009	37,2	23,7	16,2	13,7	5,4	0,6	3,2 (FreiW 1,6)

Pre-election time

Saarland	CDU/CSU	SPD	FDP	Greens-B90	LP	REP	Familie	Others
1990	33,4	54,4	5,6	2,6	0,1	3,4	0,2	(Npd 0,2)
1994	38,6	49,4	2,1	5,5	--	1,4	0,5	2,4 (Graue 0,6)
1999	45,5	44,4	2,6	3,2	0,8	1,0	1,1	1,2 (FWG 0,7)
2004	47,5	30,8	5,2	5,6	2,3	--	3,0	5,6 (Graue 1,4 Npd 4,0)
2009	34,5	24,5	9,2	5,9	21,3	--	2,0	2,6 (Npd 1,5 FW 0,9)

Saxony	CDU/CSU	SPD	FDP	Greens-B90	LP	Npd	Others
1990	53,8	19,1	5,3	5,6	10,2	0,7	5,4 (DSU 3,6)
1994	58,1	16,6	1,7	4,1	16,5	--	3,0 (Rep 1,3)
1999	56,9	10,7	1,1	2,6	22,2	1,4	5,2 (Rep 1,5 ProDM2,1)
2004	41,1	9,8	5,9	5,1	23,6	9,2	5,2 (MUT 1,6)
2009	40,2	10,4	10,0	6,4	20,6	5,6	6,8 (MUT 2,1)

Thuringia	CDU/CSU	SPD	FDP	Greens-B90	LP	DVU	Fwt	REP	Others
1990	45,4	22,8	9,3	7,2	9,7	--	--	0,8	4,8 (DSU 3,3)
1994	42,6	29,6	3,2	4,5	16,6	--	--	1,3	2,3 (Forum1,1)
1999	51,0	18,5	1,1	1,9	21,4	3,1	--	0,8	3,0 (VIBT 0,9)
2004	43,0	14,5	3,6	4,5	26,1	--	2,6	2,0	3,9 (NPD 1,6)
2009	31,2	18,5	7,6	6,2	27,4	0,4 Oedp	3,9 Fw	0,4	4,3 Npd

Simultaneous elections

Brandenburg	CDU/CSU	SPD	FDP	Greens-B90	LP	DVU	Others	
1990	29,4	38,3	6,6	9,3	13,4	--	2,9 (Rep 1,1)	
1994	18,7	54,1	2,2	2,9	18,7	--	3,3 (Rep 1,0)	
1999	26,5	39,3	1,9	1,9	23,3	5,3	1,6 (NPD 0,7)	
2004	19,4	31,9	3,3	3,6	28,0	6,1	7,8 (Fam 2,6)	
2009	19,8	33,0	7,2	5,6	27,2	1,1	6,1 (NPD 2,6)	
Schleswig-Holstein	CDU/CSU	SPD	FDP	Greens-B90	LP	SSW	DVU	Others
1992	33,8	46,2	5,6	5,0	--	1,9	6,3	1,2 (Rep 1,2)
1996	37,2	39,8	5,7	8,1	0,0	2,5	4,3	2,3 (FW 1,9)
2000	35,2	43,1	7,6	6,2	1,4	4,1	--	2,3 (NPD 1,0)
2005	40,2	38,7	6,6	6,2	0,8	3,6	--	3,9 (NPD 1,9)
2009	31,5	25,4	14,9	12,4	6,0	4,3	--	5,5 (Piraten1,8)

APPENDIX 2. Turnout (%) in Länder elections per Land. 1990-2009

	Election dates					Turnout last election GK06/09	Turnout Average 90-05	Difference Last election / average
BW	1992 70,1	1996 67,5	2001 62,6			2006 53,4	66,7	-13,3
Rhineland- Palatinate	1991 73,9	1996 70,8	2001 62,1			2006 58,2	68,9	-10,7
Saxony-Anhalt	1990 65,1	1994 54,8	1998 71,7	2002 56,5		2006 44,4	62,0	-17,6
Berlin	1990 80,8	1995 68,6	1999 65,5	2001 68,1		2006 58,0	70,8	-12,8
Meklemburg- Vorpommern	1990 64,7	1994 72,9	1998 79,4	2002 70,6		2006 59,1	71,9	-12,8
Bremen	1991 72,2	1995 68,6	1999 60,1	2003 61,3		2007 57,6	65,6	-8,0
Lower Saxony	1990 74,6	1994 73,8	1998 73,8	2003 67,0		2008 57,1	72,3	-15,2
Hesse (I)	1991 70,8	1995 66,3	1999 66,4	2003 64,6		2008 64,3	67,0	-2,7
Hamburg	1991 66,1	1993 69,6	1997 68,7	2001 68,7	2004 71,0	2008 63,3	68,8	-5,5
Bavaria	1990 65,9	1994 67,8	1998 69,8	2003 57,1		2008 58,1	65,2	-7,1
Hesse (II)	1991 70,8	1995 66,3	1999 66,4	2003 64,3	2008 64,6	2009 61,0	66,5	-5,5
Saarland	1990 83,2	1994 83,5	1999 68,7	2004 55,5		2009 67,6	72,7	-5,1
Saxony	1990 72,8	1994 58,4	1999 61,1	2004 59,6		2009 52,2	63,0	-10,8
Thuringia	1990 71,7	1994 74,8	1999 59,9	2004 53,8		2009 56,2	65,0	-8,8
Brandenburg	1990 67,1	1994 56,3	1999 54,3	2004 56,4		2009 67,5	58,5	+9,0
Schleswig- Holstein	1992 71,8	1996 71,8	2000 69,5	2005 66,5		2009 73,5	69,9	+ 3,6