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COLD PRAGMATISM, WARM RADICALISM: IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RADICAL LEFT PARTIES FROM NORDIC AND SOUTHERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

PRAGMATISMO FRIO, RADICALISMO QUENTE: DIFERENÇAS IDEOLÓGICAS ENTRE OS PARTIDOS DA ESQUERDA RADICAL DOS PAÍSES NÓRDICOS E DO SUL DA EUROPA
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In loving memory of Vítor Lourenço. Eternally grateful for the unconditional love and support.
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Acknowledgements

To my supervisor, Professor Varqa Carlos Jalali, for the scientific rigor, the permanent incentive and the infinite availability (well beyond reasonable levels).

To my teachers at the Universities of Aveiro and Minho, for the kindness and for everything they taught and shared with me.

To my political science colleagues at Aveiro and Minho, for the long hours of conversation and companionship.

To all my friends, for the true and lasting friendship.

To Susana, whose support and affection were fundamental in this journey.

To my family – Fátima, Inês and Maria – for everything and beyond.
Keywords

political parties, radical left parties, European politics, ideological dimension.

Abstract

The 2008 economic crisis brought an increasing support for some Western European radical left parties (RLPs) and renewed academic attention to this party family. Still, there is a lack of empirical knowledge on the ideological differences among RLPs – particularly across countries and regions. The present work conducts for the first time a systematic and direct cross-regional comparison of the ideological differences between RLPs from two different European regions (Nordic and Southern European countries). Manifesto and expert survey data are used for measuring and comparing party positions along several ideological dimensions and to evaluate to what extent a region-based ideological classification of RLPs finds empirical support. The results show that while some important ideological differences are found between Nordic and Southern European RLPs, these do not appear to be significant enough to classify them into two distinct ideological subgroups. Moreover, the results also suggest that, to compare the ideological differences between RLPs, we need more precise empirical instruments adapted to the study of its most characteristic ideological traits.
Palavras-chave

partidos políticos, partidos da esquerda radical, política europeia, dimensão ideológica.

Resumo

A crise económica de 2008 trouxe um crescente apoio a alguns partidos da esquerda radical (PER) da Europa Ocidental e uma renovada atenção académica a esta família partidária. Contudo, existe ainda uma falta de conhecimento empírico sobre as diferenças ideológicas entre os PER – particularmente entre países e regiões. O presente trabalho conduz pela primeira vez uma comparação sistemática e direta das diferenças ideológicas entre PER de duas diferentes regiões europeias (os países nórdicos e do Sul da Europa). Dados de manifestos eleitorais e inquéritos a especialistas são usados para medir e comparar as posições dos partidos em várias dimensões ideológicas e avaliar até que ponto uma classificação ideológica regional de PER encontra suporte empírico. Os resultados mostram que, embora sejam encontradas algumas diferenças ideológicas importantes entre os PER nórdicos e do Sul da Europa, estas não parecem ser suficientemente significativas para os classificar em dois subgrupos ideológicos distintos. Além disso, os resultados sugerem também que, para comparar as diferenças ideológicas entre PER, são necessários instrumentos empíricos mais precisos e adaptados ao estudo dos seus traços ideológicos mais característicos.
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AKEL:</td>
<td><em>Anorthotikó Kómma Ergazómenou Laoú</em> (Progressive Party of Working People, Cyprus)</td>
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<td>Ap:</td>
<td><em>Arbeiderpartiet</em> (Labour Party, Norway)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BE:</td>
<td><em>Bloco de Esquerda</em> (Left Bloc, Portugal)</td>
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<td>CHES:</td>
<td>Chapel Hill Expert Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMP:</td>
<td>Comparative Manifesto Project/Manifesto Project Dataset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNA:</td>
<td><em>Det norske Arbeiderparti</em> (the former name of the Norwegian Labour Party, Ap)</td>
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<td>ECB:</td>
<td>European Central Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>EL:</td>
<td><em>Enhedslisten De Rød-Grønne</em> (Red-Green Alliance, Denmark)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU:</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAL-TAN:</td>
<td>Green/Alternative/Libertarian vs Traditionalist/Authoritarian/Nationalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUE/NGL:</td>
<td>European United Left/Nordic Green Left</td>
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<td>IMF:</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>IU:</td>
<td><em>Izquierda Unida</em> (United Left, Spain)</td>
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<tr>
<td>KKE:</td>
<td><em>Kommounistická Kómma Elládas</em> (Communist Party of Greece)</td>
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<tr>
<td>KS-EDEK:</td>
<td><em>Kinima Sosialdimokraton</em> (Movement of Social Democrats EDEK, Cyprus)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEPs:</td>
<td>Members of European Parliament</td>
</tr>
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<td>NATO:</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRLPs:</td>
<td>Nordic radical left parties</td>
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<tr>
<td>PASOK:</td>
<td><em>Panellinio Sosialistiko Kinima</em> (Panhellenic Socialist Movement, Greece)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCP:</td>
<td><em>Partido Comunista Português</em> (Portuguese Communist Party)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PD:</td>
<td><em>Partito Democratico</em> (Democratic Party, Italy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEL:</td>
<td>Party of the European Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS:</td>
<td><em>Partido Socialista</em> (Socialist Party, Portugal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSOE:</td>
<td><em>Partido Socialista Obrero Español</em> (Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC:</td>
<td><em>Rifondazione Comunista</em> (Communist Refoundation, Italy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RILE:</td>
<td>The Standard Right-Left Scale of the CMP</td>
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<td>RLPs:</td>
<td>Radical left parties</td>
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<tr>
<td>S:</td>
<td><em>Samfylkingin - JafnaðarmannaflokkuÍslands</em> (Alliance – Social Democratic Party of Iceland)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAP:</td>
<td><em>Socialdemokratiska Arbetarepartiet</em> (Social Democratic Workers’ Party, Sweden)</td>
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SDs: Social democratic parties
SEL: Sinistra Ecologia Libertà (Left Ecology Freedom, Italy)
SF: Socialistik Folkeparti (Socialist People's Party, Denmark)
SRLPs: Southern European radical left parties
SYRIZA: Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás (Coalition of the Radical Left, Greece)
SV: Sosialistisk Venstreparti (Socialist Left Party, Norway)
TTIP: Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
V: Vänsterpartiet (Left Party, Sweden)
VAS: Vasemmistoliitto (Left Alliance, Finland)
VG: Vinstrihreyfingin-grænt framboð (Left-Green Movement, Iceland)
Chapter 1

Introduction

The 2008 economic crisis brought an increasing support for some Western European radical left parties (RLPs) and renewed academic attention to this party family. Even though they have been in decline in several Northern European countries (Eskelinen, 2015), there was a popularity surge for RLPs in the countries most affected by the crisis: from the Greek government of SYRIZA (Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás, Coalition of the Radical Left), to the Portuguese Left Bloc (Bloco de Esquerda, BE) or the Spanish protest movement-based Podemos (We Can). In the 2014 European parliament elections, the European United Left/Nordic Green Left group\(^1\) (GUE/NGL) increased its vote share from 4.8% to 6.4% and elected an all-time maximum of 52 MEPs. However, and despite this new relevance, RLPs are still under-researched from an academic point of view when compared to other niche parties such as the greens or the radical right (Fagerholm, 2016, p. 2; March, 2011, p. 4).

This renewed interest on RLPs has resulted in a series of new studies. But as March notes (2011, p. 4), most of these studies have been “single country studies or limited cross-country comparisons” (see, for example, Damiani & De Luca, 2016; Dunphy & Bale, 2007; Mudde, 2017; Ramiro & Verge, 2013), or focus on single aspects such as government participation (viz. Bale & Dunphy, 2011; Dunphy & Bale, 2011), Euroscepticism (Charalambous, 2011) or electoral support (e.g. Beaudonnet & Gomez, 2016; March & Rommerskirchen, 2015). Other important features, such as the study of their ideological differences (Gomez, Morales, & Ramiro, 2016, p. 369) or how their “(ideological and strategic) positions differ across countries and regions” (March, 2011, p. 7), have received considerably less attention. Few studies have actually attempted to address this gap. Some notable exceptions are the works of March (2011), Gomez et al. (2016) and Fagerholm (2016). Nevertheless, this remains a largely unexplored field of

\(^1\) The GUE/NGL is the group of radical left parties in the European parliament.
study and, to the best of our knowledge, no study has yet attempted to perform a direct cross-regional ideological comparison between RLPs from two different European regions.

The aim of this dissertation is thus to address the lack of empirical knowledge on the ideological differences among RLPs and across European regions, by performing a comparative study between Nordic and Southern European RLPs. Nordic and Southern European countries are two of the regions where differences between RLPs have been acknowledged: Nordic radical left parties (NRLPs) are often described as being more pragmatic (March, 2011, pp. 95–96), de-radicalized (Eskelinen, 2015; Fagerholm, 2016) and willing to participate in government (Bale & Dunphy, 2011; March, 2011, pp. 95–96), than the more radical and “street-protest-oriented” Southern European radical left parties (SRLPs) (Eskelinen, 2015). However, the extent to which these translate into significant ideological differences and allow for a distinct classification of these two region-based groups of RLPs has not been empirically addressed.

We therefore examine the ideological positions of RLPs from Nordic and Southern European countries in a comparative perspective, since the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989). This empirical analysis uses electoral manifesto (Comparative Manifesto Project, CMP) and expert survey data (Chapel Hill Expert Survey, CHES) for measuring and comparing party positions (issue positions) on the most relevant ideological dimensions of the European political space. In addition, complementary analysis is made on the relevance given by RLPs to different policy issues (issue salience). We extend the existing literature by using the latest up-to-date databases and by integrating data from the new emerging RLPs that are yet to be included in this kind of studies (e.g. Podemos and the Italian Left Ecology Freedom – Sinistra Ecologia Libertà, SEL²). By doing this, we expect to answer our main research question – are there two different ideological subgroups of radical left parties, a Nordic and a Southern European one? – and give an important contribution for the comparative study of European RLPs parties, following recent work by March (2011), Gomez et al. (2016) and Fagerholm (2016).

This dissertation starts with an overview of the European radical left and the reasons why it deserves fresh academic attention (Chapter 2). The same chapter describes the diversity within this party family and explains why Nordic and Southern European

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² In December 2016, the SEL dissolved into a new radical left party – Sinistra Italiana (SI, Italian Left) – but played a major role in the Italian radical left between 2009 and 2016, having run for several legislative and European elections.
RLPs are a good case study for such a cross-regional comparison. Then, a brief review of the recent research on RLPs is made and a framework for the study of political parties’ ideological positions is presented, with several theoretical hypotheses to distinguish between Nordic and Southern European RLPs being developed (Chapter 3). The methodological chapter (Chapter 4) describes and critically discusses the data, methods and measurements used in our study. In the discussion of results (Chapter 5), we present a descriptive analysis of the disaggregated data, followed by the presentation of our statistical analysis and the comparison between the aggregate results for each RLPs group, explaining how these answer our main research question. Finally, we conclude by briefly reflecting on the implications of our study to the future research agenda on RLPs (Chapter 6).

Overall, the main conclusions of this dissertation can be described as two-fold. First, we show that while some important ideological differences are found between Nordic and Southern European RLPs, they do not appear to be significant enough for a classification of these parties in two distinct region-based ideological subgroups. Second, in order to measure the ideological differences within this party family, we can not use the instruments commonly used to compare different party families in the same way, since a comparison between RLPs seems to require finer instruments to look more closely at its most characteristic ideological traits.
Chapter 2
Radical Left Parties: Nordic and Southern Europe as a case study

The study of the ideological differences between RLPs – especially “across countries and regions” – remains an important gap of the literature about this party family. In this chapter, an explanation is given as to why Nordic and Southern European countries provide the interesting context for a comparative study on RLPs’ ideological differences and how this can be helpful in addressing some of the existing gaps on the radical left’s literature. In the following pages, a brief characterization of the European radical left is provided, as well as its current political agenda and how this parties recently earned a new academic attention. Then, a description is made on the existing diversity within RLPs, the several classifications that have been developed over the years and the knowledge gaps that still exist nowadays on their ideological differences. Finally, a closer look is given to Nordic and Southern European RLPs and to what is known about their main ideological characteristics. But first, we should start by answering to the following question: what is then the European radical left?

2.1. The European radical left

The radical left is a political family defined as being “to the left of” social democracy (March, 2011, p. 1) and opposing the current social, economic and political status quo. In his seminal work, March (2011) characterizes RLPs by their rejection of the “socio-economic structure of contemporary capitalism”, along with the promotion of “collective economic and social rights” and radical wealth redistribution (pp. 8–9). RLPs’ critique of neoliberal capitalism ranges from a strong anti-capitalist rhetoric to a more reformist neo-Keynesian approach (Amini, 2015, p. 12; March & Rommerskirchen, 2015, p. 41) that puts them to the left of the social democrats (SDs) and the greens (Gomez et al.,
But despite being critical of certain aspects of liberal democracy and demanding systemic change, most RLPs are nonetheless pro-democratic forces that advocate for a more participatory democracy (March, 2011, pp. 10–11).

The characteristics of the contemporary radical left, however, to be better understood, must be seen in the light of its historical past and that of the political movements that originated it. Moreover, recent political events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, the alterglobal movement and the Great Recession have had a major impact in the landscape of the European radical left, shaping their political agenda and bringing them an unexpected new public and academic attention.

From the Russian Revolution to the post-communist era

The origins of RLPs in Europe trace back to the divisions in the international socialist movement of the 1910s. The conflict between its moderate and radical wings over World War I and the Russian Revolution of 1917 ultimately led to a split into two distinct political families – the social democrats and the communists – and the formation of the first communist parties (Chiocchetti, 2017, pp. 29–32). Some decades later, the radical movements of the 1960s – and the spirit of May 68 – would activate “the political and intellectual universe of radicalism” that inspired a new wave of “New Left and Left Socialist” parties, created in rupture both with social democratic and traditional communist parties (Cardina & Soeiro, 2014). These two “waves of party formation” gave origin to the predecessors of most RLPs that exist today (Gomez et al., 2016, p. 352).

The collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989-91 was another decisive historical moment for the European radical left. The fall of the Berlin Wall and of the communist regimes had an earthquake-like effect on RLPs – especially to the communists – leading to an identity crisis and a decline in support that forced them to begin a new phase of reconstruction (Chiocchetti, 2017, pp. 60–63). In the late 1990s, the landscape of the European radical left had significantly changed. Some minor parties dissolved (e.g. the Communist Party of Great Britain, CPGB) or became almost irrelevant (e.g. the Communist Party of Norway – Norges Kommunistiske Parti, NKP), while other switched to distinct party families, like the Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano, PCI) who abandoned its communist identity and fully transformed into a social democratic party, the Democratic Party of the Left (Partito Democratico Della Sinistra, PDS).
Many of these parties also abandoned their communist identity but reinvented instead as non-communist RLPs, like the Finnish Left Alliance (Vasemmistoliitto, VAS) or the Swedish Left Party (Vänsterpartiet, V) – rebranded from the Finnish SKDL (People’s Democratic League) and the Swedish VPK (Left Party – the Communists), respectively. Other RLPs resulted from the merger between old radical left groups (e.g. the Portuguese Left Bloc; the Danish Red-Green Alliance – Enhedslisten De Rød-Grønne, EL) or from alliances of old RLPs with dissidents from social democracy (e.g. the French Front de Gauche and the German Die Linke) (Chiocchetti, 2017, pp. 62–63; March, 2011, pp. 45–46). This reconfiguration also had the important contribution of the alterglobal movement of the late 1990s as it opened the political space for a strong reaction against neoliberal globalization – around the slogan “Another world is possible” – and brought together a galaxy of activists (environmentalists, trade unionists, students, peasants, etc.) and political demands that would re-shape RLPs’ policy agenda and relationship with social movements (Cardina & Soeiro, 2014, pp. 36–37; March, 2011, p. 6).

Thus, although many thought RLPs would become irrelevant after the fall of the Berlin Wall and of the Soviet Union (March & Mudde, 2005), several were able to adapt to the post-communist era and became part of an important European party family (Chiocchetti, 2017; Dunphy & March, 2013; Keith & March, 2016; March, 2011; March & Rommerskirchen, 2015). In the last two decades, RLPs managed to stabilize their levels of electoral support (March, 2011, p. 4), participated in several government experiences (e.g. Finland, France, Iceland, Italy) and attracted a new generation of political activists and voters (Eskelinen, 2015, pp. 121–123; Ramiro, 2016). New RLPs were even created with remarkable success (e.g. Podemos in Spain). These RLPs eventually helped “transcend the old division of the left” between social democratic, communist and green parties (Dunphy & Bale, 2011, p. 489), and brought new forms of organization (e.g. the movement party – Kitschelt, 2006), new ties with civil society (Tsakatika & Lisi, 2013) and – perhaps most importantly – new issues to the political agenda (Cardina & Soeiro, 2014).

**Current political agenda**

Over the last two decades, the political agenda of RLPs has mostly focused on the opposition to welfare state retrenchment (e.g. privatization of public services, cuts in social security) and the protection of workers’ rights (March, 2011, pp. 201–203). New
politics/post-materialist issues (Inglehart, 1990; Knutsen, 1988), such as minorities’ rights, environmental protection and feminism, have also been embraced and became an important part of their “progressive social agenda” (Amini, 2015, p. 12; March, 2011, pp. 18, 95). RLPs value extra-parliamentary activism and linkage to civil society groups, as they try to preserve and nurture their ties with trade unions and social movements, as part of their fight for “long-term transformation” of society (Dunphy & Bale, 2011, pp. 490, 497; Tsakatika & Eleftheriou, 2013; Tsakatika & Lisi, 2013).

At the international level, RLPs joined efforts fighting against international free trade agreements (e.g. TTIP – Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, CETA – EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement), military interventions (NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and the role of “neoliberal” financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the European Central Bank (ECB) (Amini, 2015, p. 24; March, 2011, p. 202). But even though these parties see the European Union (EU) as a stronghold for neoliberal policies and have traditionally opposed to the process of European integration, most RLPs have moderated their positions over the years and now seek for a change within the European institutional framework (Charalambous, 2011).

Some of the issues that occupy the political discourse of contemporary RLPs have been relegated to the margins of the political discussion for years. However, they were brought to the heart of the political debate as RLPs have been conquering, in the last decade, a new relevance in the European political space and a renewed public and academic interest.

**New political and academic relevance**

The 2008 economic crisis seems to have been a “turning point” for much of the European radical left and its anti-austerity/“anti-neoliberal” agenda (Tsakatika & Lisi, 2013, p. 5). In 2017, RLPs seemed to have become more relevant than ever: in addition to having reached an all-time maximum support in the 2014 European elections, they were part of new government solutions in countries like Greece (major cabinet party, SYRIZA) or Portugal (parliamentary support parties, the Left Bloc and the Portuguese Communist Party – *Partido Comunista Português*, PCP), and achieved strong national representation in countries like Spain or Iceland, where the Icelandic Left-Green Movement
(Vinstrihreyfingin-grænt framboð, VG) became the major opposition party in parliament.³ On the other hand, in countries like Italy or Norway, RLPs did not capitalize on the new political context and other populist/anti-establishment parties emerged. In this context, it is also important to refer the unexpected success of some individual figures coming from the left-wing of the social democratic camp. The enthusiasm around UK’s Labour Party new leader – Jeremy Corbyn – or the 2016 US Democratic presidential primary candidate – Senator Bernie Sanders – can also be a symptom of a new relevance for left-wing radicalism.

Being considered an under-researched party family, we should give some justification as to why radical left parties deserve new public and academic attention. March & Rommerskirchen (2015) have recently summarized four main reasons for the study of RLPs: first, unequal attention has been given to RLPs when compared to other party families with approximate levels of electoral support (e.g. the radical right, the greens); second – and as noted above – the influence of European RLPs in government has significantly increased over the years; third, the Great Recession has provided fertile political ground for the success of more radical parties from all sides of the political spectrum; and finally, there are still significant gaps in the literature on European RLPs (p. 41). To these four, we would add an additional one: in some countries (e.g. Greece, Iceland), it looks like RLPs are on the brink of occupying the empty space left by the collapse of center-left/social democratic parties as the major left-wing forces of their respective party systems. In addition, with the euro crisis, Brexit and the rise of populist and anti-EU parties, there has been an ongoing debate about an alleged failure of the European project and – more broadly – a “capitalism crisis” (Mason, 2016) that would fit the radical left’s call for an alternative socio-economic structure.

2.2. The diversity among European RLPs

The European radical left has established itself as a “relatively distinct and coherent political space to the left of the socialist and green party families” (Chiocchetti, 2017, pp. 9–11). But despite sharing a common political identity and being now considered

³ Expressive results of RLPs can also be found in the Netherlands, Germany or Ireland.
a consolidated party family, there is still a great diversity among RLPs with several typologies and classifications having been developed. RLPs can differ in aspects such as their historical background, ideological positions, party organization, ties with civil society or government experience. And the study of the ideological diversity among these parties is still – as we have highlighted – one of the important gaps in the literature on RLPs.

**Ideological positions**

We have already mentioned some of the origins of the contemporary RLPs, with some having departed from their traditional principles and reinvented themselves to a certain extent, and others being the result of alliances between other pre-existent left-wing political forces. But from an ideological perspective, RLPs can range from the orthodox Marxism-Leninism of the Greek and Portuguese communist parties – KKE (Communist Party of Greece, Kommounistická Kómma Elládas) and PCP – to the non-dogmatic socialism of the Nordic radical left (March, 2011, pp. 18–19). RLPs have also adopted new politics values in different degrees (Fagerholm, 2016; Gomez et al., 2016): while some embraced and combined post-materialist issues in their discourse (e.g. most Western European RLPs), others preferred to preserve the traditional socioeconomic and materialist issues of the old radical left (e.g. orthodox communist parties – Gomez et al., 2016). Their attitude towards the process of European integration and the EU is also an important source of variety among them. We can find the so-called Eurorejects who advocate for an EU withdrawal – like the orthodox communist parties and the Swedish V – but also more moderate Eurosceptic RLPs who do not oppose further international integration but simply the “neoliberal” nature of it – the German Die Linke or the Finnish VAS (Charalambous, 2011). These “fundamental ideological/strategic disagreements” are also reflected in a differentiated participation in the international cooperation groups of the European radical left, namely the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) and the Party of the European Left (PEL), weakening the ability of these groups “to influence politics across the EU” (Dunphy & March, 2013, p. 535).

**Organization and government participation**

In terms of party organization, the radical left combines parties with the “old” democratic centralism organization and procedures – i.e. “eradication of open internal
party dissent and concentration of power in the hands of the party oligarchy” (Dunphy & Bale, 2007, p. 290) – and a more open and dynamic *movement party*-like structure (Kitschelt, 2006; Lisi, 2009), “a specific type of political organization half way between a party and a social movement” (Damiani, 2011, p. 379). Close articulation with civil society is an important part of RLPs extra-institutional activity, even if some parties favor cooperation with more traditional actors like trade unions, than with the new “inorganic” social movements of which some RLPs are somewhat suspicious (Lisi, 2013; Tsakatika & Eleftheriou, 2013; Tsakatika & Lisi, 2013).

RLPs have also been differently available for participating in government experiences, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall. They have participated in cabinet governments in countries like Cyprus, Finland or Norway, and given parliamentary support in Denmark or Sweden (Bale & Dunphy, 2011; Dunphy & Bale, 2011; Olsen, Hough, & Kob, 2010). The novelty in this matter are the recent government experiences in countries where these parties have been traditionally averse to any compromise with social democratic parties (BE and PCP in Portugal) or had not previously been the most voted parties in legislative elections (SYRIZA in Greece). In a way, this has somewhat challenged the public perception of RLPs as mere “protest parties” unwilling to assume any kind of governmental responsibilities. However, whether this strategic change is lasting or merely contextual will have to be confirmed in the coming years, as well as its eventual consequences for the ideological matrix of these parties.

**Typologies and classifications of RLPs**

The need to address the ideological diversity among RLPs has led to the development of several typologies and classifications (Backes & Moreau, 2008; Botella & Ramiro, 2003). March (2011, pp. 18–20) classifies RLPs in five distinct subgroups based on “ideological affinities”: *conservative communists, reformist communists, democratic socialists, populist socialists* and *social populists*. Conservative communist parties are “relatively uncritical” of the Soviet experience and try to “conserve” their traditions, Marxist-Leninist principles and modes of organization (e.g. the Greek KKE). Reformist communists retain some elements of communism but “have discarded aspects of the Soviet model” and embraced some of the *new politics* agenda (e.g. the Italian Communist Refoundation – *Rifondazione Comunista*, RC). Democratic socialists are the subgroup that
comprises most of successful European RLPs (e.g. the Greek SYRIZA, the Icelandic VG, the Portuguese BE); these parties “define themselves both in opposition to ‘totalitarian’ communism and ‘neo-liberal’ social-democracy” and combine “old left” socioeconomic issues with “new left” post-materialist concerns. Populist socialists share the “ideological core” of democratic socialists but “with a stronger anti-elite, anti-establishment appeal” (e.g. the German Die Linke); this discourse is also developed by Social populist parties, which have an “essentially incoherent ideology, fusing left-wing and right-wing themes behind an anti-establishment appeal” (March, 2011, pp. 18–19). March (2011) also subsequently places RLPs in an additional two-category classification based on “degree of radicalism or extremism”: the radical left parties with an anti-capitalist critique of the Washington consensus and aiming for political system reform though accepting some aspects of liberal democracy and a “mixed market economy”; and the extreme left parties with a more self-styled “revolutionary” attitude, demonstrating far greater hostility towards liberal democracy, market economy and capitalism (pp. 16–18).

Keith & March (2016) recently review these classifications and exclude two of March’s previously developed subgroups (populist socialists and social populists) due to the growing academic understanding of populism⁴ as a neutral political ideology, adding a new one: the revolutionary extreme Left (p. 9). This adaptation of March’s typology seems to be a reasonable one and has our agreement since – as referred by these authors – “so many RLPs now use populist anti-establishment appeals that having populism as a separate category seems otiose” (p. 12).

These classifications and subgroups are useful to understand some of the most important divisions among RLPs but they should not be seen as strict and immutable categories. In fact, some RLPs share elements of more than one subgroup and “move between categories over time” (Keith & March, 2016, p. 9). Furthermore, differences between RLPs are frequently revealed not in terms of their “ideological affinities”, but rather in their attitude towards specific policy issues (Keith & March, 2016, p. 9). Gomez et al. (2016) therefore proposes a different classification based on RLPs attention to socioeconomic and new politics (non-socioeconomic) issues, with the New Left RLPs adopting a “New Politics/New Left discourse” that mixes the radical left’s traditional

⁴ For a definition of populism, see Mudde (2004, p. 543).
economic themes with more post-materialist concerns, and Traditional RLPs that essentially keep the “classical radical left discourse” based on materialism and class.

These two classifications – March (2011) and Gomez et al. (2016) – overlap to a large extent since Traditional RLPs essentially correspond to the conservative communist subgroup of March’s classification, plus the Danish EL and the Cypriot AKEL (Progressive Party of Working People, Anorthotikó Kómma Ergazómenou Laoú), while most of the remaining RLPs are classified as New Left RLPs. However, we prefer to use March’s (2011) typology as it focuses on “long-term identity” rather than more contextual characteristics like policy preferences. Regardless of this choice, our study uses the broad concept of radical left parties (RLPs), ranging from the proto-Stalinist Greek Communist Party (KKE) to the quasi-social democratic Icelandic Left-Green Movement (VG), although sometimes we refer to the conservative communists as a distinct subtype among SRLPs due to their particular positions on some ideological dimensions.

Gaps in the literature

Despite receiving fresh academic attention, there are still some important gaps in the literature on RLPs’ diversity. Although several ideological or policy-based classifications have been recently developed (e.g. Backes & Moreau, 2008; Gomez et al., 2016; Keith & March, 2016; March, 2011), the study of the “ideological differences among RLPs” remains a largely unexplored field of study (Gomez et al., 2016, p. 369).

Although March (2011) classifies RLPs according to their “ideological affinities” and “degree of radicalism or extremism”, the extent to which those categories correspond to different positions in the main ideological dimensions of the European political space (i.e. economic left-right, new politics (GAL-TAN), European integration – Bakker, Jolly, & Polk, 2012) remains to be empirically addressed. One may wonder if the Italian RC and the Cypriot AKEL – both categorized by March as reformist communists – take similar positions in the new politics dimension, as some studies classify them distinctively as Traditional and New Left RLPs, respectively (Gomez et al., 2016). The way these categories and subgroups of RLPs relate to different positions over specific policy issues and ideological dimensions is a line of research that could be further expanded.

Other authors note that despite the significant overlap of existing classifications, future research should focus on “the evolution of RLPs over time in their ideological and
policy positions” and the “incorporation of New Politics issues within and across parties” (Gomez et al., 2016, p. 369). In fact, longitudinal studies could be helpful to analyze the evolution of RLPs’ ideological and policy positions over the years, as well as the impact of specific political events. Fagerholm (2016) partially addresses this issue and demonstrates how European RLPs de-radicalized since the fall of the Berlin Wall and now give greater emphasis to post-materialist issues – particularly Nordic RLPs. However, to the best of our knowledge, this is the only systematic study of this kind about the radical left party family. Other important avenues of research that can be further developed are the study of alternative “underlying” ideological dimensions such as the “different degrees of populism (that) can be found among RLPs” (Gomez et al., 2016, p. 370).

The ideological diversity of RLPs can also be observed throughout different European regions. For example, Eastern European RLPs – with their “state-socialist legacy” – are significantly different in terms of ideology from those in Western Europe (March, 2011, p. 8). These regional differences are often recognized by the literature and, sometimes, some of these RLPs are even grouped together suggesting the possibility of well-defined region-based ideological subgroups (e.g. the Nordic Green Left). However, few studies have directly compared the ideological positions of RLPs “across countries and regions” (March, 2011, p. 7) and – as noted above – most studies have been “single country studies or limited cross-country comparisons”. Therefore, there is still a lack of empirical knowledge on these differences and the existence of such region-based subgroups is yet to be demonstrated.

Thus, the comparative study of the ideological differences among RLPs – particularly across countries and regions – is still an important lacuna in the radical left’s literature. As Keith & March (2016, p. 2) argue, “vital work could be done simply by updating, broadening and deepening the existing empirical base and in analyzing and critiquing the categorizations and hypotheses already advanced”. We follow on their suggestion and therefore attempt to extend this knowledge by comparatively studying the ideological differences between the RLPs from two European regions: Nordic and Southern European countries.
2.3. Nordic and Southern European RLPs

The literature acknowledges significant differences and affinities between the RLPs from two of the regions where they have been most successful, Nordic and Southern European countries; whether in terms of ideology (Fagerholm, 2016; Gomez et al., 2016; March, 2011), participation in government (Bale & Dunphy, 2011; Dunphy & Bale, 2011) or even international cooperation (Dunphy & March, 2013). The Nordic and the Southern European RLPs are often grouped and analyzed together as the subject of several political science studies (e.g. Charalambous & Lamprianou, 2016; Eskelinen, 2015; Tsakatika & Lisi, 2013), suggesting the possibility of two distinct and well-defined region-based subgroups of RLPs. The comparative study of their ideological differences can thus contribute to better understand the ideological diversity of the European radical left.

Nordic and Southern European countries

Nordic and Southern European countries provide an interesting political context for the comparative study of RLPs ideological differences. Nordic countries are often grouped together as they share identical political systems, geographical and linguistic affinities (Arter, 2016; Johansson & Raunio, 2001, p. 231; Lane & Ersson, 2008), but the same also happens with the countries from Southern Europe (Charalambous & Lamprianou, 2016; Colomer, 2008; Pasquino, 2008; Tsakatika & Lisi, 2013). Nordic countries are known for their strong welfare state, public services and low income inequalities (Eskelinen, 2015, p. 115; Lane & Ersson, 2008) and it is easy to find them topping successive Human Development Indexes. On the contrary, nowhere has the 2008 economic crisis been as profound as in Southern European countries like Greece, Cyprus, Portugal or Spain (Tsakatika & Lisi, 2013, p. 5). Having a weaker welfare state tradition, these countries have some of the lowest wages and highest unemployment levels of the European Union. But despite these differences, the two regions share the fact that they have provided consistent levels of electoral support to RLPs like few other European regions in the last three decades (Keith & March, 2016, p. 30).

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5 In 2013, unemployment levels went up to 27.5% in Greece, 26.1% in Spain and 16.4% in Portugal (Eurostat).
Nordic radical left parties (NRLPs)

Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden – are an interesting case study for RLPs due to their strong social democratic and “welfare state tradition” (Eskelinen, 2015, p. 115). In fact, economic liberalization at the hands of successive right-wing governments in the late 1980s and early 1990s has led to an increase in inequalities and was perceived as an attack on the Nordic model (Eskelinen, 2015, pp. 115–116; March, 2011, pp. 95–96). Another reason is the fact that the support for far-right populist parties has increased in almost every Nordic country6 while, at the same time and with a few exceptions (Iceland and Denmark), there has been a retreat in the electoral support for RLPs (Eskelinen, 2015, p. 118). This suggests that, unlike other European countries (notably in the South), it was the far-right – not the radical left – who capitalized on the dissatisfaction with welfare state reduction policies and the global economic crisis.

Nordic radical left parties – the Nordic Green Left – are often described as being more “pragmatic” (March, 2011, pp. 95–96), de-radicalized and oriented towards post-materialist issues (Eskelinen, 2015; Fagerholm, 2016) than their counterparts from the South (Eskelinen, 2015, p. 117). Their willingness to participate in power has led them to experience government participation either by integrating cabinets (Iceland, Norway and Finland) or by being part of parliamentary coalitions of support to governments (Denmark and Sweden) (Bale & Dunphy, 2011; Dunphy & Bale, 2011; March, 2011, p. 96). Nordic RLPs are known for a more institutional and reformist approach to political intervention that contrasts with the more “street-protest-oriented” attitude of Southern European RLPs (Eskelinen, 2015, p. 117). However, European integration is a considerable anathema for the Nordic Green Left, as these parties share an identity of “Nordic exceptionalism” and strong Euroscepticism that distinguishes them from some other more pro-european RLPs, like the Greek SYRIZA, the Spanish IU (Izquierda Unida, United Left) or the Cypriot AKEL (Charalambous, 2011; Eskelinen, 2015, p. 120; March, 2011, pp. 95–97).

Southern European radical left parties (SRLPs)

Southern European RLPs, on the other hand, are often seen as mere “protest parties” (Eskelinen, 2015, p. 117; Tsakatika & Lisi, 2013, p. 8). AKEL’s long-time

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6 In recent polls (December 2016), far-right parties were up to 24% in Sweden, 17% in Denmark and 10% in Finland.
dominance of the Cypriot left and the participation of the Italian Communist Refoundation (RC) in the government led by Romano Prodi, were nothing but a rarity in the recent history of the Southern European radical left (Bale & Dunphy, 2011; Dunphy & Bale, 2007). The strength of SRLPs has been their ability to capitalize on political dissatisfaction (Ramiro, 2016, p. 7) and their ties with trade unions and social movements (Tsakatika & Lisi, 2013). Terms such as “radical” or “populist” are often used to describe these parties (Mudde, 2017; Ramiro & Gomez, 2016; Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014), that seem to be more oriented towards the traditional socioeconomic issues of the “old” left than their counterparts from the North (Fagerholm, 2016).

Following the Great Recession, and as harsh austerity measures were being imposed upon countries in financial difficulties, the perceptions about RLPs slowly started to change. In a context of strong electoral dissatisfaction with traditional parties, SRLPs assumed a new and unexpected protagonism and electoral success in some countries: SYRIZA won the two Greek legislative elections of 2015 and now leads a coalition government with a nationalist and Eurosceptic right-wing party; in Spain, the newly-born Podemos achieved 21% in the 2016 national election and was close to becoming the biggest left-wing party in Las Cortes Generales; and in Portugal, the Left Bloc and the Communist Party are now supporting a minority executive of the center-left Socialist Party (Partido Socialista, PS). These developments confirm what March & Rommerskirchen had hinted a few years ago when they suggested the post-crisis political context was ideal for the flourishing of RLPs (2015, p. 40). The same context, however, did not provide the same electoral success for Nordic RLPs as they were frequently outpaced by the rise of the radical right parties that stormed their national party systems.

Addressing the gaps in the literature

As we have shown, the differences that the literature acknowledges between Nordic and Southern European RLPs, suggest that they can be classified into two ideologically distinct subgroups of RLPs. However, the extent to which those differences find empirical evidence and allow for such a classification, is not yet clear and remains to be addressed. Therefore, a comparative study between Nordic and Southern European RLPs can not only empirically analyze this suggestion raised by this literature review, but also address what we have identified as one of the main gaps in radical left parties’ literature: the lack of
comparative study of the ideological differences among RLPs – particularly across countries and regions. In addition, a comparative study like this can also expand the existing knowledge on RLPs by providing new and up-to-date information on the ideological positioning of these parties, including those that had not yet been included in previous studies on RLPs (e.g. the Spanish Podemos, the Italian SEL). We thus formulate our main research question as follows: are there two different ideological subgroups of radical left parties, a Nordic and a Southern European one?

In order to answer this question, we must first understand how ideological differences between political parties can be studied and review some of the most important theoretical concepts behind the study of ideology. These are the issues that the next chapter discusses, before proceeding with the elaboration of the theoretical hypotheses of our dissertation.
Chapter 3
Studying ideological differences between Radical Left Parties

In order to address our research question, we engage on a direct cross-regional comparison of the ideological differences between RLPs from Nordic and Southern European countries. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first attempt to perform a systematic and comparative examination of the ideological positions of RLPs from two different European regions and to evaluate whether a region-based sub-classification of RLPs finds empirical support. However, to carry out such an enterprise, it is first necessary to review the literature regarding the ideological comparison between political parties.

In this sense, the present chapter discusses the general theory and main concepts behind the study of political parties’ ideology, presents the main dimensions of party competition in the European political space and explains how these can be applied to the study of the ideological differences between European RLPs. It then proceeds with a review on how Nordic and Southern European RLPs are expected to behave in terms of three main ideological dimensions of competition – the Economic left-right, the new politics/GAL-TAN and the European integration – which eventually leads to the development of a series of theoretical hypotheses that will guide our empirical analysis on the ideological differences between NRLPs and SRLPs.

3.1. The “ideology” in political parties

The study of parties as “politically purposive” organizations expressing certain “ideological values” has been one of the main foci of recent research on political parties (Luther & Müller-Rommel, 2002, p. 6). These values are a fundamental part of the identity of political parties and determine important features such as their policy proposals, relationship with supporters and with each other (Luther & Müller-Rommel, 2002, pp. 5–
6). The “ideological and identity dimensions” of parties are of central importance in representative democracies as they play a relevant role in “anchoring” citizens’ preferences and structuring the party systems (Lisi, 2015, p. 123). The study of the ideological features of political parties is thus essential to better understand their political identity and ‘who they are’.

**Dimensions of identification and competition**

The “long-term identity” of political parties can be captured by the dimensions of *identification* and of *competition* (Lisi, 2015, p. 123). The first one – *identification* – relates to the ideological traits and values shared by identical political parties and is traditionally associated to specific *spiritual families*: the christian democrats, social democrats, communists, the greens, etc. (Lisi, 2015, p. 40). These are the “core identities” of parties that “provide the principles” serving as “domains of identification” for party elites, members and voters (Volkens & Klingemann, 2002, p. 144). The other dimension – *of competition* – is related to the “(ideological) divisions” arising from “the main cleavages in society” (Lisi, 2015, p. 123) and structure the lines along which political parties compete in the political system (Bakker & Hobolt, 2013, pp. 27–28). These cleavages – grounded on Lipset & Rokkan’s (1967) *cleavage theory* – were initially based largely on religion and class but have been progressively replaced by other economic, social and cultural-based cleavages (Henjak, 2010). Political parties tend to adopt, emphasize and take different positions along the “dimensions of (policy) competition” in order to compete for electoral support (Freire, 2015, p. 49).

**Analyzing the ideology of political parties**

Nowadays, ideology is thought to be less relevant for the electorate and for distinguishing political parties, calling into question the validity of an ideology-based approach for their comparative study (Lisi, 2011, pp. 14–15). But while it might be less relevant for the study of party families that are considered to have become more de-ideologized, this approach may still be useful for the comparison of (at least) political

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7 Concepts developed by Sani & Sartori (1983)
8 See the theory of the cartel party in Katz & Mair (1995).
parties that are considered to be “highly ideological”, like radical left parties (March, 2012, p. 331).

The dimension of competition seems to be the one that best captures parties’ ideological differences. As Freire (2015, p. 49) notes, the dimension of identification is relatively stable and “unresponsive” to changes in policy positions on different issues, making it less useful for a longitudinal comparison between parties’ ideological differences. In addition, an analysis based on RLPs’ dimension of identification (i.e. the “traits (...) traditionally associated to specific spiritual families”) has, in our opinion, already been reasonably addressed by March (2011). Lisi (2011) states that “using empirical data about parties’ positions evolution, it is possible to examine the ‘political space’ of party competition and the ideological traits associated to the main parties” (p. 10). Indeed, the use of empirical methodologies that measure ideological positioning allows information on party positions in the main ideological dimensions over time and a degree of quantification that goes beyond March’s in-depth qualitative analysis. Following this perspective, we engage in the study of RLPs’ ideological differences by focusing on the evolution of their positions along the most important “dimensions of (policy) competition” (Freire, 2015, p. 49). But first, and in order to perform this, we have to find out which of those dimensions are the most relevant for structuring party competition.

Main dimensions of competition in Europe

Bakker, Jolly, & Polk (2012) explored dimensionality in the European political space and point out the relevance of three “distinct dimensions of political contestation”: the traditional economic left-right, social left-right (new politics) and European integration dimensions (pp. 220–221, 231).

The economic left-right is arguably the reference dimension and the most used for “summarizing the broad positions of parties and voters” (Dalton & McAllister, 2015, p. 764). It is based on traditional socioeconomic issues and “concerned” with economic distribution, welfare state, market regulation and the role of government in the economy (Marks, Hooghe, Nelson, & Edwards, 2006, p. 66). In general, left-wing parties are more supportive of government intervention, the promotion of economic equality and advocate for a wider welfare state, while right-wing parties tend to defend economic liberalism, less state intervention and lower taxes (Lachat, 2017, p. 2). And although the left-right scale
“may vary across countries and over time” and is “based on the class cleavage” (Bakker & Hobolt, 2013, p. 27), party positions along this dimension help explain a great deal of “party competition, coalition-building and policy outcomes” (Jahn, 2011, p. 2). But as the traditional left-right cleavage seems to be weakening in terms of its “mobilizational capacity” for parties, other dimensions have become increasingly relevant “to mobilize and retain supporters” (Luther & Müller-Rommel, 2002, p. 13).

The new politics dimension – also known as the GAL-TAN (Green/Alternative/Libertarian vs Traditionalist/Authoritarian/Nationalist) or the social left-right dimension – is one of those dimensions and captures the positioning on non-economic issues related to new cultural attitudes and post-materialist values (Inglehart, 1977, 1990; Knutsen, 1988). These are the so-called “life style” issues, such as environmentalism, feminism, pacifism or minorities’ rights, and became a new source for political cleavages as they entered political parties’ agendas during the last decades of the twentieth century (Inglehart, 2008; March & Mudde, 2005; Zilliacus, 2001). Parties considered to be more libertarian or post-materialist – i.e. closer to the GAL axis – are more in favor of pacifism, environmental protection and the expansion of “personal freedoms” (e.g. abortion rights, euthanasia, same-sex marriage), while the more traditional and authoritarian parties – i.e. closer to the TAN axis – tend to value more “order, tradition, and stability” with the government assuming a role of “moral authority” on some of these issues (Bakker et al., 2015, p. 144).

The European integration dimension has also been described as one of the new important cleavages for party competition in Europe (Bakker et al., 2012; Hooghe, Marks, & Wilson, 2002; Kriesi, 2016; Marks & Wilson, 2000). European integration is here understood as the ongoing process of economic and political supranational integration between EU member states (Marks & Wilson, 2000, p. 436) and this dimension structures party preferences “for more or less European integration” (Bakker & Hobolt, 2013, p. 28). The process of European integration is closely related to the concept of Euroscepticism. Euroscepticism is conceptualized by Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008) as consisting of two different strands of hard and soft Euroscepticism: hard Euroscepticism defined as a “principled opposition to the project of European integration”, while soft Euroscepticism does not include a “principled objection” to this process but rather an opposition to its current state or trajectory (pp. 247–248). Kopecky & Mudde (2002) propose a different
classification and distinguish between two dimensions of “support for European integration” (p. 300): one related with a more ‘diffuse’ support for “general ideas of European integration” (Europhiles and Europhobes), and the other with the ‘specific’ support for the EU “as it is developing” (EU-optimists and EU-pessimists). Following this framework of analysis, they develop a four-category classification for political parties’ attitudes towards the EU: Euroenthusiasts (Europhile and EU-optimists), Eurosceptics (Europhile but EU-pessimists), Eurejects (Europhobes and EU-pessimists) and Europragmatists (Europhobes but EU-optimists).

The relevance of these dimensions for party competition has been referred and addressed by several authors (e.g. Bornschier, 2010; Kriesi, 2016; Proksch & Lo, 2012; Rovny & Edwards, 2012) and they are frequently used for the comparative study between political parties (see, for example, Burean & Popp, 2015; Carroll & Kubo, 2017; Lisi, 2015; McElroy & Benoit, 2010; Wagner & Meyer, 2017). In the following section, we explain how these dimensions will be used for the ideological comparison between RLPs.

3.2. RLPs in the main ideological dimensions of competition

Significant differences between RLPs are expected to be found along the main ideological dimensions of competition. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 2, RLPs express different levels of Euroscepticism (Charalambous, 2011; Dunphy & March, 2013) attention to post-materialist issues (Fagerholm, 2016; Gomez et al., 2016), and take distinct positions in several policy issues related to these dimensions. Although not very extensive, the literature on RLPs ideological positions allows us to develop and formulate some theoretical hypotheses that may establish the relevant ideological differences between Nordic and Southern European RLPs.

**Economic left-right dimension**

Contrary to other party families, no significant variation has been found within left party families along the left-right dimension (Volkens & Klingemann, 2002). In fact, there is a great knowledge gap on the relative positions of RLPs in this dimension, which significantly increases the need to assess this empirically. Moreover, the lack of studies on
this subject only makes it more difficult to advance with the formulation of hypotheses on the ideological differences between RLPs on the economic left-right. In order to develop more educated guesses on these differences, we thus have to look into more subjective considerations about these RLPs and their stances on socioeconomic issues.

Southern RLPs are often referred in the literature as being more “radical” than Nordic RLPs, not only because they have been more averse to compromise and participation in government experiences but also because of their less institutional approach to politics, often more oriented towards extra-parliamentary activism and street protest (Eskelinen, 2015, p. 117; Tsakatika & Lisi, 2013). On the other hand, the Nordic Green Left is thought to be more “pragmatic” (March, 2011, p. 95), which can be both due to its greater availability for compromise or to less radical stances on socioeconomic issues. In addition, it is also known that the Southern European radical left includes two conservative communist parties – the Greek KKE and the Portuguese PCP – which usually focus more on “core socioeconomic” issues (Gomez et al., 2016; March, 2011) and take more radical left-wing positions on this dimension. This suggests that RLPs from Southern Europe may be more “radical” and “leftist” than Nordic RLPs.

Fagerholm (2016) demonstrates that most European RLPs have been de-radicalizing and progressively moving towards the center of the left-right scale, since the fall of communism (1989-91). He shows that this process is “particularly clear among (...) democratic socialist parties in the Nordic countries” (pp. 11–12), but seems to have been recently reversed in some of the countries most affected by the 2008 economic crisis and austerity policies, i.e. Southern European countries. A “re-radicalization” of SRLPs apparently took place in the early 2010s, in contrast with the reported evolution of Nordic RLPs along the left-right scale (Fagerholm, 2016). We want to empirically assess these perceptions and thus hypothesize that SRLPs not only take more radical positions on socioeconomic issues, but that they have also re-radicalized since the Great Recession:

**H1a:** Southern European RLPs take more leftist positions in the economic left-right dimension than Nordic RLPs.

**H1b:** Southern European RLPs have “re-radicalized” in the economic left-right dimension since the 2008 economic crisis.
An assessment of the ideological differences between RLPs should not be exclusively based on the examination of *issue positions* – i.e. the positions they take on the different ideological dimensions. We must also analyze the emphasis given to different programmatic issues as done by Gomez et al. (2016) – *issue salience* – and how these have evolved over time (Fagerholm, 2016), as we consider that ‘ideology’ is a function of both *issue positions* and *salience* (Rovny, 2012, p. 275). Therefore, we look for empirical evidence that establishes a clear distinction between NRLPs and SRLPs in terms of salience given to issues related to the main dimensions of party competition.

The literature on the subject gives consistency to the idea that the great majority of RLPs have embraced and now give greater emphasis to post-materialist issues since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and particularly in the case of the Nordic Green Left (Fagerholm, 2016, p. 6). RLPs from Southern Europe, even if some have extensively adopted post-materialist values in their discourse as well (see, for example, Gomez et al., 2016), seem to have recently re-focused on socioeconomic issues due to the economic crisis and the impacts of austerity in their countries (Fagerholm, 2016). Plus, following Inglehart’s original hypothesis (1977), Nordic societies should be more post-materialist than Southern European ones, given their more developed welfare states and higher economic prosperity (*the scarcity hypothesis*). This suggests that SRLPs may now give more emphasis to materialist/class issues than NRLPs and we thus hypothesize that issue salience on socioeconomic issues is stronger among Southern European RLPs:

\[ H1c: \text{Southern European RLPs give more emphasis to traditional socioeconomic issues than Nordic RLPs.} \]

**New politics (GAL-TAN) dimension**

The GAL-TAN dimension seems to be particularly relevant for the study of RLPs, as it is reported by some authors as the one that best captures differences among this party family (Gomez et al., 2016). As noted above, Nordic RLPs are said to be more focused on post-materialist issues and adopting more libertarian positions than Southern European RLPs (Fagerholm, 2016; Gomez et al., 2016, p. 361; March, 2011, p. 95), who in turn give greater emphasis to traditional socioeconomic/materialist issues (Fagerholm, 2016, p. 18) or simply do not go as far as their counterparts from the North in these issues. This seems
somewhat consistent with the distinct political and cultural contexts of these two regions: Nordic societies are said to be the most post-materialist societies in the world (Inglehart, 1997, p. 22), while Southern European countries have just recently lived under authoritarian regimes for a great part of the last century and are known to be socially more conservative in terms of personal freedoms (Colomer, 2008; Lane & Ersson, 2008). This may reflect in their RLPs’ ideology and suggests that NRLPs may take more libertarian positions on the GAL-TAN dimension and focus more on post-materialist themes. We thus hypothesize that NRLPs take positions closer to the GAL axis of this dimension and give greater emphasis to non-socioeconomic issues than SRLPs:

\[ H2a: \text{Nordic RLPs take more GAL (green/alternative/libertarian) positions in the GAL-TAN dimension than Southern European RLPs.} \]

\[ H2b: \text{Nordic RLPs give greater emphasis to non-socioeconomic issues than Southern European RLPs.} \]

**European integration dimension**

The radical left is a Eurosceptical party family that strongly criticizes what it perceives as the neoliberal nature of the EU (Charalambous, 2011; Hooghe et al., 2002; March, 2011). And even if there is a growing debate about the relevance of the European integration dimension for distinguishing political parties (Proksch & Lo, 2012), the literature acknowledges that Euroscepticism and the support towards the process of European integration are a great source of diversity among RLPs and their electorate. While some of these parties are strong advocates of the withdrawal from the EU, others fight for a change from within (Charalambous, 2011; March, 2011; March & Rommerskirchen, 2015, p. 43). And, for example, the voters of New Left RLPs seem to be less Eurosceptical than those of Traditional RLPs (Gomez et al., 2016, pp. 367–368).

Charalambous (2011) uses two frameworks – developed by Kopecky & Mudde (2002) and Szczerbiak & Taggart (2008) – for the study of party-based Euroscepticism and concludes that a more moderate stance on these issues can be detected among different subtypes of RLPs. However, no conclusion is made in terms of its geographical distribution, opening the space for the empirical study of the differences among Nordic and
Southern RLPs in terms of their levels of Euroscepticism and their positions on the European Integration dimension.

The Euroscepticism and sense of “Nordic exceptionalism” of the Nordic Green Left has been described by the literature (Eskelinen, 2015; Johansson & Raunio, 2001; March, 2011, pp. 95–96), in contrast to the more pro-European stance of some SRLPs (Beaudonnet & Gomez, 2017; Charalambous, 2011). But with harsh austerity measures being recently imposed by EU institutions on some Southern European countries since 2010 (Greece, Portugal, Spain), we may expect an increase in their anti-European discourse that we do not find in Nordic countries, as they were not as affected by the crisis. In addition, Greece and Portugal have two strong orthodox communist parties (KKE and PCP), who are hard-Eurosceptics and support an withdrawal from the EU (Charalambous, 2011). These ideological differences towards European integration and cooperation at the international level are also reflected in RLPs’ unequal participation in transnational platforms like the Party of the European Left (Charalambous, 2011, p. 299; Dunphy & March, 2013): for example, Nordic RLPs are very skeptical of this organization and only the Danish EL and the Finnish VAS are members of this European political party (Dunphy & March, 2013). Thus, even if it is unclear where all these parties stand at the moment – due to the possible impacts of the European crisis – we put forward the hypothesis that Nordic RLPs are nevertheless more Eurosceptical than Southern RLPs, with the latter having become more Eurosceptical since the 2008 economic crisis.

**H3a:** Nordic RLPs take stronger Eurosceptical positions in the European integration dimension than Southern European RLPs.

**H3b:** Southern European RLPs have been taking more Eurosceptical positions in the European integration dimension since the 2008 economic crisis.

**Ideological distances**

The consequences of the ideological distances between political parties were extensively examined by Sartori (1976). This author relates *ideological distance* with the “polarization of the party system” and the dynamics of “inter-party competition” (1976, p. 44). The existence of radical parties – located in the extremes of the political spectrum –
acts as a “centrifugal force” that enlarges ideological distances in the national party systems, as opposed to those where their absence makes the existing parties compete for “voters in the center of the ideological spectrum” (Volkens & Klingemann, 2002, p. 144).

Radicalism is a frequently used term in the studies on RLPs. Not only is it included in their name – the radical left parties – but it is also used for their adjectivation. But RLPs seem to have de-radicalized and abandoned much of their radicalism since the fall of the Berlin Wall (Fagerholm, 2016; March, 2011). March (2011, p. 10) argues that the radicalism of the radical left is mostly “situational” and based on “articulating issues radical in the party’s national context”. This suggests that RLPs’ radicalism can be better understood by analyzing the relative distance of its positions from the political center (i.e. from status-quo parties’ positions) rather than the specific positions they hold on certain issues. For instance, advocating for abortion rights can be seen as something “radical” in a conservative country like Poland, but not in the Nordic countries. Or, the defense of same-sex marriage was seen as something “radical” in the late 1990s in Portugal, but certainly not in 2017. Therefore, we seek to explore and analyze the ideological distances between RLPs and their main center-left competitors in order to explore differences in radicalism between Nordic and Southern RLPs as perceived in their own national party systems.

The ideological distances between RLPs and SDs may explain important features of their party systems such as government participation and coalition potential (March & Freire, 2012, p. 219; Olsen et al., 2010). As Nordic RLPs are thought to be more pragmatic and de-radicalized (see H1a and H1b) than Southern European RLPs, we expect them to be ideologically closer to their social democratic competitors. And, in fact, RLPs participation in government has been more frequent in Nordic countries than in Southern Europe except for the last few years (Bale & Dunphy, 2011; Dunphy & Bale, 2011). Of course one could argue that a shorter ideological distance between these parties can be due to the center-left party being more radicalized and not because the RLP is more moderate. But what we here want to address is not RLPs’ radicalism per se or how radical their positions are on the economic left-right dimension – which is already addressed by H1a – but rather their ideological distance to social democratic parties as a measure (a ‘proxy’) of a perceived “radicalism” in their own national context. We thus expect Nordic RLPs allegedly more “centrist” positions and availability for government participation to make
them closer to social democratic parties in the economic left-right dimension – the main
dimension of party competition:

\[ H4: \text{Nordic RLPs are ideologically closer to the major social democratic party of their countries in the economic left-right dimension than Southern European RLPs.} \]

**Conclusion to the chapter**

The present chapter started by reviewing the theoretical framework that structures our study of political parties’ ideology and ended up identifying some of the main ideological differences we expect to find between Nordic and Southern European RLPs. This led to the development of seven theoretical hypotheses related both with the positioning of RLPs in the main ideological dimensions of party competition and with salience given to economic and non-socioeconomic issues. To these more intuitive hypotheses, we add an additional one based on the ideological distances to social democratic parties as a ‘proxy’ for the study of RLP’s “situational” radicalism in their own national contexts. When tested, these hypotheses are expected to allow us to analyze to what extent those ideological differences find empirical support in the data and can give an answer to our research question. The following chapter describes and critically discusses the methodological framework and empirical methods that will be used for the operationalization and testing of these hypotheses.
Chapter 4
Methodological approach

At the heart of this work is a longitudinal examination and comparison of RLPs’ positions along the three most relevant ideological dimensions for party competition in European countries: the economic left-right, the new politics and the European integration dimensions (Bakker et al., 2012). This methodological chapter begins by presenting the period of analysis and the criteria used for the selection of countries and parties that are included in this study. It then provides a critical discussion on the empirical methods used for measuring party positions, presenting the main advantages and disadvantages of the two datasets (CMP and CHES) that are used in our analysis.

This chapter also explains how the ideological scales will be constructed from the CMP and CHES datasets in order to measure and compare between party positions, as well as how the additional analysis on issue salience and ideological distances will be performed to complement the comparative study of the ideological differences between Nordic and Southern European RLPs. Finally, the chapter concludes with the presentation of the criteria for the confirmation of our theoretical hypotheses.

4.1. Period of analysis & case selection

Our study focuses on the radical left parties from Nordic and Southern European countries. Still, we must acknowledge and clarify the timeframe of our study and the criteria used for the selection of countries and parties that are included in our analysis.

Period of analysis

The timeframe of our study is the period between 1989 and 2017. Our analysis starts from the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) due to the fact that this event is regarded as a paradigm shift in RLPs’ identity and has operated major ideological transformations on
these parties (March & Mudde, 2005). The collapse of communism is said to have significantly changed RLPs’ “left-right policy positions and their preferred policy issues” (Fagerholm, 2016, p. 4). This period of almost three decades also includes another major event for RLPs – the Great Recession (2008-2012) – and is large enough to capture the evolution of their ideological stances.

**Selection of countries**

‘Nordic’ countries are here considered to be the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) plus Finland and Iceland, as the literature often refers “strong links with each other”, both “economically and politically” (Lane & Ersson, 2008, p. 246). ‘Southern European’ countries include the Mediterranean countries that are usually referred in the study of RLPs – Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece and Cyprus (Charalambous & Lamprianou, 2016; Tsakatika & Lisi, 2013) – and have been the most affected countries by the 2008 economic crisis. All Southern European countries had economic bailouts with the exception of Italy, despite having also received considerable support from the ECB and the EU, in exchange for commitments to reduce its debt and deficit. Although Malta is also a Mediterranean country and an EU member-state, it has no relevant radical left party; and France, even if sometimes is considered to be ‘Southern’ (e.g. Hobolt & De Vries, 2016; Jalali, 2007), it is usually excluded in the existing studies on Southern European countries (viz. Lisi, 2010; Lobo & Lewis-Beck, 2012; Verney, 2011).

**Selection of parties**

The selection of parties is made according to their relevance in the respective countries. This can be done as in Fagerholm (2016, p. 7), where the author selects RLPs with “governmental relevance in the coalition-forming arena” or “with blackmail potential”, namely those with representation in the national parliaments; or as in March & Freire (2012), where only RLPs that had “moderate” (between 3% to 10%) to “good success” (more than 10%) were selected to be studied. We opt to use March & Freire’s criterion: RLPs are included in our analysis if they have had more than 3% in at least one national election since 1989. This decision allows us not to exclude RLPs that are currently not present in national legislatures but are still relevant within this party family (e.g. the Italian Communist Refoundation, RC).
Table 1. Radical Left Parties (RLPs) included in the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>AKEL - Progressive Party of Working People (Anorthotikó Kómma Ergazómenou Laouí)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>EL - Unity List – Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten – De Rød-Grønne)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SF - Socialist People’s Party (Socialistik Folkeparti)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>VAS - Left Alliance (Vasemmistolliitto)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>KKE - Communist Party of Greece (Kommounistikó Kómma Elládas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SYRIZA - Coalition of the Radical Left (Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>VG - Left Green Movement (Vinstrihreyfingin-greint framboð)b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>RC - Communist Refoundation (Partito della Rifondazione Comunista)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SEL - Left Ecology Freedom (Sinistra Ecologia Libertà) (2009-2016)b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>SV - Socialist Left Party (Sosialistisk Venstreparti)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>PCP - Communist Party of Portugal (Partido Comunista Português)d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>IU - United Left (Izquierda Unida)f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Podemos - We Can (founded in 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>V - Left Party (Vänsterpartiet)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* as Synaspismós (SYN – Progressive Left Coalition) until 2004; b as People’s Alliance (AB) until 1995; c dissolved into the Italian Left (SI – Sinistra Italiana) in 2016; d as the electoral coalition CDU (Unitary Democratic Coalition) with PEV (Ecologist Party “The Greens”); e founded in 1999 as a merger between the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR) and People’s Democratic Union (UDP); f a political coalition whose largest member is the Communist Party of Spain (PCE).

With this criterion, our study includes a total of 15 RLPs from 10 different countries (Table 1), which is a quite good number of parties for a cross-regional comparison: we get six RLPs from Nordic countries and nine RLPs from Southern European countries. In Nordic countries, we have the so-called “Nordic Green Left”, which includes the Swedish Left Party (V), the Norwegian Socialist Left Party (SV), the Finnish Left Alliance (VAS), the Danish Socialist People’s Party (SF)⁹ and Red-Green Alliance (EL), and the Icelandic Left-Green Movement (VG). In Southern European countries, the RLPs that are included are the Greek Communist Party (KKE) and SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left), the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and Left Bloc (BE), the Spanish Podemos and United Left (IU)¹⁰, the Italian Communist Refoundation (RC) and Left Ecology Freedom (SEL), and the Cypriot Progressive Party of the Working People (AKEL).

⁹ The Danish SF is considered to be a RLP until 2014, when it joined the European Green Party (Keith & March, 2016, p. 5).
¹⁰ In the 2016 Spanish legislative elections, Podemos and IU ran together as the electoral coalition Unidos Podemos (United We Can).
4.2. Measurements

To test our hypotheses, we measure and compare the ideological positions of RLPs in three ideological dimensions of party competition – economic left-right, GAL-TAN and European integration – over a 29-year period. In this section, we address the empirical methods that are most frequently used for measuring party positions, issue salience and ideological distances, and how we apply them for our study on NRLPs and SRLPs.

Methods for measuring party positions

The measurement of the ideological positions of political parties can be done using a variety of techniques. Manifesto content analysis, expert, voter and elite/representative surveys, or legislators’ voting behavior analysis, are some of the sources of data that are available for estimating party positions in the political space (Bakker & Hobolt, 2013; Laver, 2014):

a) Party manifestos: content analysis of party manifestos is arguably the most used technique for measuring and estimating party positions over time (Bakker & Hobolt, 2013, p. 28; Lima & Silva, 2015, p. 51). Electoral manifestos are considered to be a good summary of ‘who parties are’, as they reflect the “issues and policy positions that parties want to strategically emphasize” at a specific point in time (Gomez et al., 2016, p. 356). The main source of party manifesto data is provided by the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP), which is based on the manual coding of ‘quasi-phrases’ units according to 56 issue-categories, measuring party positions on different issues and policy dimensions (Budge, Klingemann, Volkens, Bara, & Tanenbaum, 2001; Klingemann, Volkens, & Bara, 2006; Volkens, Bara, Budge, McDonald, & Klingemann, 2013). The CMP has the advantage of covering a long period of time that spans since World War II, and has been extensively used in similar works that map and compare political parties’ positions (Fagerholm, 2016; Gomez et al., 2016; March & Freire, 2012; Volkens et al., 2013; Wagner & Meyer, 2017). The advantages and shortcomings of this dataset are discussed in more detail below.
b) **Expert surveys:** in these type of surveys, the placement of political parties is done by national experts. Several “cross-national expert surveys” that position parties along different ideological scales have been developed (e.g. Bakker et al., 2015; Benoit & Laver, 2006; Ray, 1999). Sometimes, the judgment made by experts is better in capturing issues that are part of parties’ public discourse and actions, but might not be reflected in their manifestos. In addition, these measurements can be made in any point in time and not only during election-years, as is the case with the comparative manifesto data (Gomez et al., 2016, p. 369; Lima & Silva, 2015, pp. 50–51).

c) **Voter surveys:** data from mass surveys of voters can be used for measuring both party and voter positions. These surveys estimate positions on the left-right scale according to the perceptions of voters and have shown to be “congruent” with the placements provided by experts (Lima & Silva, 2015, p. 51). However, voter surveys present several disadvantages that they share with other survey data, namely the subjective assessment, excessive stability in party positioning and asymmetric information on political parties (Bakker & Hobolt, 2013, pp. 36–37).

d) **Elite surveys:** these surveys ask political representatives (especially MPs or candidates) on how they position themselves and their parties in relation to the different policy issues and ideological dimensions. This provides information directly from the political elites, instead of making an indirect assessment based on voter or experts’ perceptions, which can be ideologically biased (Carroll & Kubo, 2017; Krouwel & van Elfrinkhof, 2014, pp. 1460–1461). On the other hand, elite surveys provide lower response rates and suffer from the permanent “suspicion” that politicians may be answering strategically and based on self-interest, thus biasing the results (Krouwel & van Elfrinkhof, 2014, pp. 1460–1461; Laver, 2014, pp. 213–214).

e) **Legislators’ voting behavior:** this technique determines party positions based on the MPs’ voting behavior records in parliaments. Although it allows the collection of large amounts of information on representatives’ positions on several issues, it

Bakker and Hobolt (2013) review some of these methods in order to get “valid and reliable measures of party positions” and concluded that party manifests, expert and voters surveys, result in “very similar” measures of party positions, even if “these datasets are constructed very differently” (p. 44). And despite the disadvantages and limitations of each of these methods, the use of more than one of these datasets in our measurements allows a cross-validation of the results and is expected to help us overcome some of its limitations, as has been suggested (Bakker & Hobolt, 2013; Krouwel & van Elfrinkhof, 2014) and done by some authors (e.g. Gomez et al., 2016; Marks et al., 2007; Polk et al., 2017). Therefore, we will use two of the most commonly employed empirical methods for measuring and comparing party positions across countries: the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) Dataset and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES). These sources are used to construct the policy scales that we use for the comparison of RLPs positions on the three ideological dimensions of party competition. We leave aside voter survey data because much of this data is dispersed in several sources and its inclusion in our analysis would greatly increase the size of this dissertation.

The Comparative Manifesto Project dataset (https://manifestoproject.wzb.eu) (Volkens et al., 2017) is probably the most used source for measuring party positions and it is the only one that entirely covers all the timeframe of our study (see Table 2 below). Besides having the longest time-series on party positions, this dataset has several other important advantages such as its objectivity in estimating positions (as it is based on party official manifests) or its high validity, having been extensively used in several studies (Bakker & Hobolt, 2013, pp. 30–32; Benoit & Laver, 2007). But important methodological critiques have also been made on the use of this dataset and how it analyses manifests, and we have to consider some of its shortcomings (see, for example, Benoit, Laver, & Mikhaylov, 2007; Ejnar Hansen, 2008; Gemenis, 2013). The fact that it provides no measures of uncertainty, the high volatility of party positions provided (Bakker & Hobolt, 2013, pp. 30–32), or the lack of reliability and possibility of coding errors due to some manifests being coded by only one coder (Krouwel & van Elfrinkhof, 2014, pp. 1462–
are just some of the main criticisms directed at this dataset. As mentioned above, we attempt to overcome these disadvantages and ensure the consistency of our results by cross-validating our results across the two datasets.

Table 2. Datasets time series and country coverage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>since 1996</td>
<td>since 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Not included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>since 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The CHES can be merged with the Ray-Marks-Steenbergen dataset (Ray, 1999; Steenbergen & Marks, 2007) which provides data on European integration positions since 1984.

The Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) ([https://www.chesdata.eu](https://www.chesdata.eu)) is the source of expert survey data we use in our measurements as it provides the “longest time series of party positions” for this type of surveys (Bakker & Hobolt, 2013, p. 35), starting from the 1999 to the 2014 survey wave, and has been extensively used for the examination of party positions on several policy issues (e.g. Adams et al., 2012; Gomez et al., 2016; Hobolt & Tilley, 2016; Meijers, 2015; Rovny, 2013). Although it does not entirely cover the period of analysis of our study (see Table 2), the use of the 1999-2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey trend file (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017) can be combined with the Ray-Marks-Steenbergen dataset (Ray, 1999; Steenbergen & Marks, 2007) that merges the CHES with Ray’s (1999) dataset to obtain information on European integration since 1989 to 1999 (i.e. for the 1992 and 1996 European elections). Expert survey data provides “high face validity and internal consistency among experts” as these rate the positions of parties based on a large number of sources of information (Bakker & Hobolt, 2013, p. 35). On the other hand, the use of expert surveys also presents several shortcomings: no expert-based dataset
covers the period of time that the CMP does, expert’s assessment is rather subjective and tends to “exaggerate the stability of party positions” over time (Bakker & Hobolt, 2013, p. 36). These two sources of data – CMP and CHES – are used to construct the policy scales for the comparison of RLPs positions on the three ideological dimensions of party competition.

When looking at Table 2, it is also important to note that the two datasets do not provide information about some countries for the entire period under review. This is the case of Norway and Cyprus – that have only recently been included in the CHES survey waves – and Iceland, which has not even been included in this database yet. In addition, there are cases of RLPs – such as the Portuguese BE, the Spanish Podemos or the Italian SEL – that have only recently emerged and whose positions will only “count” for the overall positioning of the Southern European radical left for the latest periods of time. However, despite this limitation, we decided to include all these cases in our measurements even though this may have an influence in our results, since we consider that a party family is by nature dynamic and its ideological positioning is also subject to this type of changes.

**Issue positions (and constructing our ideological scales)**

The **economic left-right** and **GAL-TAN** dimensions allow us to position and compare RLPs on socioeconomic (**H1a**) and liberal-authoritarian (non-socioeconomic) issues (**H2a**). In terms of the CMP data, our main challenge is to select the most adequate scales from the several that have already been developed. One of the most popular is the general right-left scale (RILE) developed by the Comparative Manifesto team, which is a “standard measure” that aspires to position parties according to an “holistic analysis” of their manifestos (Budge, 2013, p. 2). But this scale has been severely criticized over the years, either in terms of its validity (Bakker & Hobolt, 2013, p. 32; Lowe, Benoit, Mikhaylov, & Laver, 2011), its “comprehensiveness” (Fagerholm, 2016, p. 6) or even because it is used as a kind of “superdimension”, implying a certain understanding of the “unidimensionality” of politics (Prosser, 2014, p. 89).

Budge (2013) defends the use of RILE on the basis that it is “the best summary indicator of policy tendencies over the whole of the party programme” (p. 1) and that it correlates with most of the proposed alternative scales. However, we conceptualized our left-right dimension as an exclusively economic dimension, and although RILE is mainly
based on economic issues, it also includes some non-socioeconomic CMP categories (e.g. law and order, traditional morality, or peace) which confuses what we want to measure in our ideological dimensions: economic and non-socioeconomic positions, separately. Therefore, we must seek to find a more adequate scale to operationalize our hypotheses based on the economic left-right dimension, in order to better capture the positions of RLPs in socioeconomic issues. The same challenge applies in the case of the GAL-TAN dimension, since the CMP dataset does not provide a policy scale solely based on liberal-authoritarian issues.

Thus, and according to the above mentioned reasons, we will use the economic left-right and social liberal conservative (GAL-TAN) scales developed by Prosser (2014). Prosser’s version of the economic left-right scale uses some of the same CMP categories also used by RILE but is more focused on economic issues, exactly as we need for our analysis (Table 3). It is based on 14 categories that emphasize economic issues such as “free enterprise”, “market regulation” and “social justice”, while its version of the liberal-conservative (GAL-TAN) scale uses further 19 categories that include “political authority”, “environmental protection” or “multiculturalism”. Evans & Tilley (2017) argue that “Prosser’s coding is preferred to RILE, not just on the basis of face validity but because Prosser’s scales make fewer assumptions about what categories ‘should’ go on the left or the right”; in addition, they are more reliable scales than RILE (p. 140).

Party positions in Prosser’s scales are calculated differently from the traditional CMP scales based on the simple sums and subtractions of the sentences related to each policy category (right, left, conservative, liberal). The scales developed by Prosser are constructed using the logit scaling method proposed by Lowe et al. (2011):

$$\theta^l = \log \frac{R + 0.5}{L + 0.5}$$

“where R is the total number of quasi-sentences in the manifesto components on the ‘right’ of the scale and L is the total number of quasi-sentences in the manifesto components on the ‘left’” (Prosser, 2014, p. 92). According to Evans & Tilley (2017, p. 140), this formula “combines the advantages of both additive and ratio-scaling methods for manifesto data, while avoiding the problem of polarization found in ratio scales” and diminishes the “impact of repeated emphasis” on certain issues. The results of these scales range between
-7 and +7 (a 15-point scale) but we harmonize them with the 11-point scales (from 0 to 10) of the CHES dataset, otherwise we would be looking at changes in very different scales, potentially biasing our reading of the results.

Table 3. Prosser’s (2014) modified CMP dimensional scales.

A. Economic left-right dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Right</th>
<th>Left</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free Enterprise:</td>
<td>Positive (401)</td>
<td>Market Regulation: Positive (403)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protectionism:</td>
<td>Negative (407)</td>
<td>Technology and Infrastructure (411)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Orthodoxy:</td>
<td>Positive (414)</td>
<td>Controlled Economy: Positive (412)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare State Limitation:</td>
<td>Positive (505)</td>
<td>Nationalisation: Positive (413)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Limitation:</td>
<td>Positive (507)</td>
<td>Social Justice (503)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Groups:</td>
<td>Negative (702)</td>
<td>Welfare State Expansion: Positive (504)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Education Expansion: Positive (506)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Labour Groups: Positive (701)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. GAL-TAN dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internationalism:</td>
<td>Negative (109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralisation (302)</td>
<td>Military: Negative (105)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Authority: Positive (305)</td>
<td>Peace (106)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Way of Life: Positive (601)</td>
<td>Internationalism: Positive (107)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism: Negative (608)</td>
<td>Freedom and Human Rights (201)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democracy (202)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decentralisation (301)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anti-Growth Economy (416)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental Protection (501)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culture (502)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Way of Life: Negative (602)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiculturalism: Positive (607)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle Class and Professional Groups (704)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Underprivileged Minority Groups (705)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-economic Demographic Groups (706)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of expert survey data, we extract expert placements of parties on the economic left-right and GAL-TAN dimensions from the 1999-2014 CHES dataset (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017). The CHES economic left-right scale classifies parties according to their stances on “economic issues” such as the role of government in the economy and the size of the welfare state, while the GAL-TAN is related with party positions on “democratic freedoms and rights” and the expansion “of personal freedoms”, in opposition to values of “order” and “moral authority” of the government (Bakker et al.,
2015, p. 144). Both of these classifications use an 11-point scale that ranges from 0 (more leftist/libertarian) to 10 (more rightist/traditional-authoritarian).

The third scale – **European integration** – is used to test whether one subgroup of RLPs takes more Eurosceptical positions than the other \((H3a)\) and if Southern European RLPs have become more Eurosceptical since the 2008 economic crisis \((H3b)\). Marks, Hooghe, Steenbergen, and Bakker (2007) cross-validated data of party positions on European integration to find that CMP and expert surveys provide “convergent measures” on this dimension (p. 33). Expert surveys (CHES) provide “high-quality cross-national data” (Hobolt & De Vries, 2015, p. 1169) and despite being considered the “most valid” source for studying party positions on the EU dimension, the combined use with additional data from manifestos (CMP) “produces more valid measures” than its use alone (Marks et al., 2007, pp. 33–34). The data from the CMP is here limited to two categories related with the attitudes of parties towards the European integration (*Table 4*). The positions of RLPs in this scale are calculated using the same logit scaling technique (Lowe et al., 2011) used in the previous two dimensions and its range is also harmonized with the CHES scale for the European Integration (from 1 to 7).

**Table 4.** CMP categories for the European integration scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pro-EU</th>
<th>Anti-EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Community/Union: Positive (108)</td>
<td>European Community/Union: Negative (110)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of the expert survey data, we merge the 1999-2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) trend file with the combined Ray-Marks-Steenbergen dataset (Ray, 1999; Steenbergen & Marks, 2007) in order to extend our coverage period to the 1992 and 1996 survey waves. The combined use of these two datasets is suggested by the CHES team in order to provide a larger time series of party positions on the European integration (Bakker et al., 2015) and is used by several authors (e.g. Hobolt & De Vries, 2015; Meijers, 2015). The CHES asks experts on the “overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration”, with a 7-point scale where 1 means a “strong opposition” and 7 a “strong support” for the EU.
After constructing our ideological/policy scales, and before aggregating the results of each group of RLPs, we begin by making a descriptive analysis of the disaggregated data and of the individual results of each RLPs and their evolution over the years, trying to identify evolutionary trends in their positioning. In this phase of our analysis, we also look at the consistency and internal coherence of each cluster of parties on the different ideological scales. Only then, we proceed with the aggregation of data for both the Nordic and Southern European groups of RLPs.

Then, we average the results for each party for three time points of analysis: 1989-1998, 1999-2008, and 2009-2017. We use these aggregated time periods for two reasons: first, because some literature already uses 10-year periods for the longitudinal study of party positions (e.g. Volkens & Klingemann, 2002); second, because these time intervals allow us to obtain at least two observations from each party for each time point of analysis. Intervals with more than 10 years would be problematic because they would not allow us to detect the changes that occurred during the period under review (1989-2017).

In addition, these three time slots also correspond to historical periods that are expected to be very relevant for the European radical left: the 1989-1998 period corresponds to the post-fall of the Berlin Wall decade, of which we have already written about; the 1999-2008 years have seen the rise of the alterglobal movement, the beginning of the single currency and European politicization; and 2009-2017 is essentially the post-global economic crisis period, whose expected impact on RLPs has been largely discussed. Furthermore, there is also the ‘nice’ coincidence that the beginning of the second period of analysis (1999-2008) ends up matching the first wave of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey. The fact that this dataset provides a shorter time-series than the Comparative Manifesto dataset, constrains our expert survey measurements for the economic left-right and GAL-TAN dimensions to the periods of 1999-2008 and 2009-2017.

It is also important to clarify how the aggregation of data for each period of time is made and how we weigh the positions of each party in those values. It is important to avoid countries with more elections counting more in the aggregated results of each group of RLPs. We avoid this in the calculation of the average position of each RLP group (NRLPs and SRLPs) for each time point of analysis, because we count a single observation

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11 Since 29 is a prime number, we can not obtain three equal periods of time. Therefore, the last period has only 9 years.
by RLP, as we calculate their average position for that period of time. For example, in the 1989-1998 period Greece had 5 legislative elections, while Finland had only 2. However, both the Greek and the Finnish RLPs have the same weight in the aggregated result of their respective group of RLPs for the 1989-1998 period, because only their average position for the total of these elections is used. Therefore, the aggregated results are not biased towards parties that contested more elections on a certain period of time.

The comparison between Nordic and Southern RLPs in each ideological dimension is then performed by comparing their positions in the three ideological scales – economic left-right (H1a), GAL-TAN (H2a) and European integration (H3a) – both by examining linear trends in their individual positions and by using statistical tests to compare between each groups’ average positions. The statistical test we use to compare the differences between the average positions of NRLPs and SRLPs is the independent-means t-test, which is used to compare two means obtained from two different populations (Field, 2009, p. 325) – in this case, different groups of RLPs. Although the size of our sample may be relatively small for the application of a parametric test, our data complies with all the assumptions of the independent-means t-test: normal distribution of sampling, homogeneity of variance and independent scores (Field, 2009, p. 326). Moreover, since the fact that we have a reduced sample size makes it difficult for us to find statistical significance between the two groups of RLPs, we have added a $p \leq 0.1$ significance level to help us detect some degree of statistical significance in our results, albeit smaller.

We also evaluate the extent to which RLPs have re-radicalized on the economic left-right (H1b) and European integration dimension (H3b) since 2008 by analyzing the change on their average positions between the 1999-2008 and 2009-2017 periods. This is the method used by Fagerholm (2016) to analyze the de-radicalization of RLPs after the fall of the Berlin Wall, as he compared their mean values on the left-right dimension for the pre- and post-1989 periods.

**Issue salience**

In order to compare the different emphasis given by Nordic and Southern European RLPs to socioeconomic (H1c) and non-socioeconomic issues (H2b), we measure issue salience with data from both the CMP and CHES datasets, and compare their results. In the case of the CHES dataset, we use the results of the questions on the relative salience given
by each party leadership to “economic” and “libertarian/authoritarian” issues, in an 11-point scale where 0 means “no importance” and 10, “great importance” (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017). These questions, however, have only been asked in the 2014 CHES survey and therefore our results from expert survey data for RLPs issue salience are limited to this year.

In the case of the Comparative Manifesto dataset (CMP), we follow the methods that Rovny (2013) and Wagner & Meyer (2017) use for measuring issue salience. These authors calculate issue salience as “the total proportion of statements” on economic and non-socioeconomic issues in party manifestos regardless of their direction: left or right, libertarian or conservative (Wagner & Meyer, 2017, pp. 90–91). This eventually give us the total space (in %) that each RLP dedicates to these issues in their electoral manifestos, giving us a value for issue salience that is conceptually different from the positions they take on economic (i.e. in the economic left-right dimension) and non-socioeconomic issues (i.e. the GAL-TAN dimension) – i.e. issue positions. The difference between our saliency measurement and the one of these authors is only that we use the socioeconomic and non-socioeconomic CMP categories proposed by Prosser’s scales (2014) (Table 3), while they use, in the case of Wagner and Meyer (2017), the categories suggested by Bakker and Hobolt’s CMP modified measures (2013).

**Ideological distance**

Differences in radicalism between NRLPs and SRLPs are analyzed by exploring their ideological distances to the major social democratic parties of their countries (H4). The ideological distance between RLPs and their national center-left parties is measured for each year both with data from the CMP and CHES and is calculated as the difference between their positions on the economic left-right dimension. We then average those values and aggregate them for each group of RLPs and period of analysis.

The criterion used for the selection of the most relevant social democratic parties was that they were the center-left party that consistently had the best results in the legislative elections of their respective countries. It should be noted that, with the exception of Cypriot KS-EDEK and the Icelandic Alliance (S) – which have been overtaken by their national radical left parties (AKEL and VG) – all these social
Democratic parties have been the most voted left-wing parties in their countries over the last two decades.

**Table 5.** Social Democratic parties (SDs) included in the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>KS-EDEK – Movement of Social Democrats EDEK (<em>Kinima Sosialdimokraton</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>SD – Social Democracy in Denmark (<em>Socialdemokraterne</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>SDP - Social Democratic Party of Finland (<em>Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>PASOK – Panhellenic Socialist Movement (<em>Panellinio Sosialistiko Kinima</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>S – Alliance – Social Democratic Party of Iceland (<em>Samfylkingin - Jafniaðarmannaflokkuð Íslands</em>)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>PD – Democratic Party (<em>Partito Democratico</em>)&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>Ap/DNA – Labour Party (<em>Arbeiderpartiet</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>PS – Socialist Party (<em>Partido Socialista</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>PSOE – Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (<em>Partido Socialista Obrero Español</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>SAP – Social Democratic Workers’ Party (<em>Socialdemokratiska Arbetarepartiet</em>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: parties-and-elections.eu (data retrieved in 12 September 2017).*

<sup>a</sup> as Social Democratic Party (AF) until 1995; <sup>b</sup> as Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) from 1991 to 1998, and Democrats of the Left (DS) from 1998 to 2007.

**Confirmation of the hypotheses**

Finally, and before proceeding to the discussion of results, we must define the criteria for the confirmation of our hypotheses and apply them systematically throughout our analysis. In this case, we consider our hypotheses as “confirmed” when both databases (CHES and CMP) present results that go in the proposed direction with statistical significance (in cases where statistical analysis is performed). In the cases where only one of the datasets confirms the direction of our hypothesis with statistical significance, we will consider the hypothesis as “partially confirmed”, whether the results presented by the other dataset go in the direction proposed by our hypothesis or the opposite.

However, as mentioned above, our work presents an important limitation related to our small sample size (*n*), which makes it difficult to obtain statistical significance in the differences that we may find between the average positions of NRLPs and SRLPs. Thus, and for this reason, in cases where the results are concordant between the two datasets and go in the direction proposed by our hypothesis, we will consider that, although it can not
be confirmed, the results nevertheless “suggest” that our hypothesis may be correct. In all other situations, the hypotheses will simply be considered as “not confirmed”.

Next, and after presenting the methodological approach and the empirical methods that we use for the comparative study of the ideological differences between NRLPs and SRLPs, we will now turn to the chapter that presents and discusses the results of our work.
Chapter 5
Comparing Nordic and Southern RLPs’ ideological differences

This chapter presents and critically discusses the empirical results of this study and how they address the ideological differences between Nordic and Southern European RLPs. It starts with a descriptive analysis of the disaggregated data, describing the individual positions of RLPs in each ideological dimension and how these have evolved over time. This allows us to highlight the most relevant differences between these parties as well as other detailed information that may be helpful for better understanding those differences. It then proceeds with the analysis of each cluster of parties – Nordic and Southern European – both by looking at their consistency and internal coherence, and the implications these may have for a direct comparison between the two groups. Finally, we present the data in the aggregated form, accompanied by the results of the statistical tests and compare between the NRLPs and SRLPs results, responding to our theoretical hypotheses.

This chapter concludes with an overview of the results presenting a hypothesis confirmation summary and a visual map of RLPs’ positions in the different ideological scales provided by each dataset. We argue that despite the existing ideological differences between Nordic and Southern European RLPs, these do not appear to be relevant enough to consider the existence of two well-defined region-based ideological subgroups of RLPs.

5.1. Issue positions

As mentioned in Chapter 3, ‘ideology’ is conceptually a function of both issue position and issue salience (Rovny, 2012, p. 275). In this section, we analyze the issue positions of RLPs and of each regional cluster in the three ideological dimensions that we consider to be the most relevant for the European party space of competition – the
economic left-right, GAL-TAN and European integration dimensions. A description is made on how these positions have evolved over time and in specific periods of time that are expected to have had an impact on RLPs positioning behavior (particularly in the post-2008 economic crisis period). This analysis begins with the dimension that is perhaps the most determinant for distinguishing between political parties’ ideological positions: the economic left-right dimension.

**Positions on the economic left-right dimension**

In hypothesis H1a, we hypothesize that Southern European RLPs take more leftist positions in traditional socioeconomic issues than Nordic RLPs. However, and in order to confirm this, we first need to look at the individual results for each party and their evolution over time in both datasets (CMP and CHES). Figures 1a and 1b show the results obtained with CHES data and reveal a consistent positioning of all RLPs on the left-wing side of the economic left-right scale (from 0 to 2.5 in an 11-point scale), as would be expected from radical left parties. The only unusual case seems to be that of the Greek SYRIZA which takes more moderate positions in this scale between 1999 and 2002 (3.6 and 2.9, respectively) (see Figure 1b).

![Figure 1a. Nordic RLPs’ positions on the economic left-right (CHES, 1999-2014).](image-url)
In the data provided by the CHES dataset, NRLPs’ positions in the economic left-right dimension look fairly consistent over time and do not vary significantly (Figure 1a). In general, their positions are all in a range that goes between 1 and 2.2. The Danish EL and the Swedish V appear here as the most economically left-wing parties of the Nordic Green Left, while the Danish SF confirms the literature and positions as the most ‘moderate’ Nordic RLP over the years.

Figure 1b. Southern European RLPs’ positions on the economic left-right (CHES, 1999-2014).

In the case of SRLPs, their positions vary somewhat more sharply (Figure 1b). In addition to the aforementioned case of SYRIZA between 1999 and 2002, the Iberian RLPs (IU, PCP and BE) also adopted less radical positions back in 1999 and have later moved further to the left (mainly the PCP and the BE). But the most radical parties in the economic left-right dimension appear to be Southern European RLPs such as the Greek KKE, the Italian RC and the PCP, suggesting that our hypothesis that they take more leftist positions than NRLPs (H1a) may find empirical support. This somewhat confirms the idea that conservative communist parties are economically more radical than the remaining SRLPs, which can influence the position of the ‘whole’ SRLP group in this dimension. On the opposite side, the most moderate RLPs appear to be the Danish SF, the Finnish VAS and the Cypriot AKEL – for which CHES only provides data for 2014 – but whose moderate position among SRLPs may be partly explained by the fact that this party had been in government for ten years (2003-2013) right before the 2014 CHES survey wave.
In terms of the internal coherence of the Southern European cluster, these parties too are positioned in a relatively well defined range on the left-side of the economic scale (from 0 to 2), although with somewhat more radical parties than the Nordic group. This coherence allows us to proceed with the aggregation of the data and compare between these two groups without the risk of masking variations that may have a significant impact in our results. In addition, it would have been interesting to also have data on the Icelandic VG as this party is thought to be one of the most moderate European RLPs and its inclusion could help us achieve a clearer distinction between the two groups of parties.

The CMP results are quite different from those provided by CHES. As can be seen in Figures 2a and 2b, party positions in this dataset are less consistent over time and present significant variations between observations (i.e. between the subsequent election manifests of each party). The greater variation in CMP results was already expected due to the nature of this data – as discussed in the methodological chapter – but it should be noted that this makes it difficult to make a detailed descriptive analysis of the RLPs’ positions based on the CMP.

![LR_ECON (CMP) Nordic RLPs](image)

**Figure 2a.** Nordic RLPs’ positions on the economic left-right (CMP, 1989-2016).

Looking at the results of NRLPs in the CMP (*Figure 2a*), it can be seen that, like in CHES, the vast majority of these parties adopt economic positions close to the left-wing side of the economic left-right scale. On average, NRLP positions range from 1 to 3. One
of the trends that seems to happen over the years is the progressive shift of these parties into more radical left-wing economic positions, especially since the second half of the 2000s. The reason why this have happened may be difficult to explain with the available information and, specially, because it is not possible to compare it with the CHES data due to time coverage issues.

In Figure 2a, the Swedish V and the Norwegian SV are again highlighted as the Nordic parties that take more leftist positions on economic issues. On the other hand, the Danish EL – unlike in CHES – appears as one of the more moderate parties of the Nordic Green Left, along with the Icelandic VG and the Danish SF. Another aspect worthy of note is the fact that this dataset indicates, contrary to what is suggested by the literature and by CHES results, a displacement of the Danish SF to the left-wing economic side, when this party is considered to have been de-radicalized over the years and even recently joined the European Greens party family.

![Figure 2b](image_url)

**Figure 2b.** Southern RLPs’ positions on the economic left-right (CMP, 1989-2016).

The CMP results for SRLPs are more difficult to analyze (*Figure 2b*). First of all, because the vast majority of these parties do not present stable positions over time and do not allow an identification of clear evolutionary trends as with CHES data. In addition, some of these results are contradictory with the data from the expert surveys and, in many
cases, are even implausible from the point of view of the existing knowledge about the economic positions of some of these parties.

In particular, in Figure 2b, it stands out the positioning of the Greek KKE, which is considered the most orthodox and radical of the European RLPs. This communist party sometimes adopts some of the most moderate positions among the SRLPs, and even has observations close to the economic political center (e.g. 2009). Another identical example is the positioning of the Greek SYRIZA in the 2015 legislative elections, whose economic policy program in that year was quite radical and proposed a confrontation with the European institutions (and their economic orientations), but which is here classified as quite moderate (4) when compared to those of the remaining RLPs. However, the inconsistency of the positions of a party may correspond to actual changes in its economic manifesto and does not mean that it is not the other database (CHES) that may be ‘incorrect’. Note also the case of the Spanish IU, which in the CMP is presented as economically very radical (average position of 0.8), but that in CHES is portrayed as the least radical SRLP on economic issues (average position of 1.8).

Finally, it is important to underline the positioning of two other RLPs: the Spanish Podemos and the Italian SEL. These are the two most recent RLPs included in our study and are integrated into very few analyzes that measure and compare RLPs’ positions. We proposed their integration into the existing frameworks and analyze how they position themselves in the scenario of the European radical left. The SEL, although it had since dissolved into the Sinistra Italiana (December 2016), played a major role in the Italian radical left during the ‘dark’ years of the Communist Refoundation (RC). In the case of Podemos, as it is known, it is currently the main political force of the Spanish radical left, having surpassed the IU. However, in both databases, these two parties seem to fit within the radical left’s economic ideological spectrum, although in the CMP results they appear as taking more radical economic positions than in CHES.

When we aggregate the data from these two groups of parties, we find that the SRLPs seem to adopt, on average, more left-wing economic positions than NRLPs (Figures 3a and 3b), as suggested by our hypothesis H1a. This happens for the results from both datasets, with the exception of the 2009-2017 period of analysis of the CMP. However, and although these differences are consistent across the two datasets, they only present a slight statistical significance ($p \leq 0.1$) for the CHES period of 2009-2017, which
Figures 3a & 3b. Party positions on the economic left-right. Expert survey (CHES) and Comparative manifesto data (CMP). The levels of statistical significance of the t-test are: ***$p < 0.001$; **$p \leq 0.01$; *$p \leq 0.05$; +$p \leq 0.1$. 
is precisely the one that are contradicted by the results provided by CMP. Thus, and although both the aggregated and disaggregated results suggest that most SRLPs do indeed take more leftist positions in the economic left-right dimension, our hypothesis H1a could not be confirmed.

Re-radicalization since the 2008 economic crisis

Our hypothesis H1b intends to confirm a supposed economic re-radicalization of SRLPs after 2008, due to the unequal impacts of the economic crisis in Southern European countries. Although it is not clear that even if a radicalization has occurred, it was due to the effects of the economic crisis, Tables 6.1 and 6.2 present and compare the average positions of each RLP for the periods before and after the onset of the crisis (2008). We analyze position change in the Economic left-right scale in order to confirm if, on average, they started adopting more left-wing positions since 2008.

Table 6.1. Post-2008 radicalization in the economic left-right scale (0-10). Expert survey data (CHES).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KKE (gr)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCP (por)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AKEL (cyp)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYRIZA (gr)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE (por)</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU (spa)</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podemos (spa)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC (it)</td>
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<td>0.4</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEL (it)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total SRLPs</td>
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<td>-0.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-0.2</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF (dk)</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
<td>+0.2</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAS (fin)</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V (sv)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SV (nor)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VG (ice)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total NRLPs</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All RLPs: 1.6, 1.2, -0.4, yes

n.a. = data not available
The results obtained from CHES (Table 6.1) show that all SRLPs take, on average, more leftist economic positions during the 2009-2017 period, compared to the previous one (1999-2008). The size of this re-radicalization seems to be relevant in all parties for which we have sufficient data to make this comparison. Where this change is smaller – as in the case of the KKE and RC – their positions were already quite radical, which is why this re-radicalization would have always been potentially smaller. In the case of Nordic RLPs, the variations in their average positions are so small that it is difficult to say that significant changes have occurred between the pre- and post-crisis periods. The CHES results therefore suggest the confirmation of our hypothesis H1b.

**Table 6.2.** Post-2008 radicalization in the economic left-right scale (0-10). Comparative manifesto data (CMP).

<table>
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<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>PCP (por)</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
<td>+1.0</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AKEL (cyp)</td>
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<td>-0.5</td>
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</tr>
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<td>SYRIZA (gr)</td>
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<td>+1.1</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE (por)</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>+0.1</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU (spa)</td>
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<td>1.2</td>
<td>+0.5</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podemos (spa)</td>
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<td>n.a.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC (it)</td>
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<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEL (it)</td>
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<td>0.7</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total SRLPs</strong></td>
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<td><strong>1.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>+0.2</strong></td>
<td>no</td>
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<td>1.1</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAS (fin)</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V (sv)</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>+0.2</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SV (nor)</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>+0.1</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VG (ice)</td>
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<td>3.1</td>
<td>+0.7</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total NRLPs</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>-0.2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>All RLPs</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n.a. = data not available

This suggestion, however, looks a bit different if we observe the evolution of the individual economic positions of each SRLPs over the years (as shown in Figure 1b in the previous section). We find that, although parties like the Portuguese BE and PCP have
turned to the left since 2008, a substantial part of that re-radicalization seems to have occurred to a large extent before 2008 and was already reflected in the results of the CHES 2006 survey. This means that, in the event of a change in the average positions of SRLPs between the pre- and post-2008 periods, that re-radicalization may not coincide with the timing of the crisis. However, it should be noted that from 2006 to 2010-2014 (Figure 1b), there were significant movements to the left in parties such as the PCP, BE or the IU.

Apart from the doubts raised by CHES results, in light with the ideological evolution of SRLPs over the last years (Figure 1b), the results obtained from the CMP also contradict the CHES from Table 6.1. In the data provided by the CMP, most SRLPs do not adopt more leftist positions after 2008 (Table 6.2). And if we look at the evolution of the individual economic positions of SRLPs in the CMP (Figure 2b), we find that only the BE and AKEL have slightly modified their economic positions in relation to the years prior to the 2008 crisis. For these reasons, we conclude that, although initially the CHES results may have suggested an eventual re-radicalization of the Southern European radical left after the 2008 crisis, this hypothesis (H1b) is not empirically confirmed by our results.

Although it is difficult to understand why this does not seem to have happened – contrary to Fagerholm’s conclusions (2016) – a possible explanation may lie in the fact that, in the face of an “austeritarian” neoliberal offensive, RLPs may have decided to present more “defensive” economic programs, gathering around the proposals traditionally associated with the old European social democracy (e.g. protection of the welfare state). Or instead, that the real impact of this crisis on their ideological positioning is yet reflected in expert analysis or in the electoral manifestos of these parties. In either case, it would be necessary to study this empirically and in greater depth.

**Positions on the GAL-TAN dimension**

The hypothesis we advanced was that NRLPs would adopt more liberal/libertarian (GAL) positions than SRLPs in the new politics/GAL-TAN dimension (H2a). In this case, both CHES and CMP results seem to confirm the idea that this dimension (and non-socioeconomic issues) are currently one of the major sources of internal diversity among RLPs, even more than the traditional economic left-right dimension. And, according to our results, this diversity (or variety) seems to occur more markedly among the Southern European RLPs, even if it can also be found within the Nordic Green Left.
Figure 4a. Nordic RLPs’ positions on the GAL-TAN (CHES, 1999-2014).

The data provided by CHES for the GAL-TAN dimension (Figure 4a) once again demonstrates a high consistency in Nordic RLPs’ positions over time. In fact, it is only in the 2014 survey that substantial changes in the positions of these parties appear to have taken place in this dimension. If, on one hand, there seems to be a slight moderation on the part of the Danish SF – until then, one of the most GAL of all NRLPs – on the other hand, this is followed by the radicalization of the Finnish VAS and the Swedish V towards the GAL axis of this dimension.

In the GAL-TAN dimension, similarly to what happens in the economic left-right scale, the Danish EL and the Norwegian SV are the Nordic parties with more radical average positions throughout the whole period under analysis. In addition, it is also important to emphasize the internal consistency of the positions among Nordic RLPs, which more easily justifies an aggregation of the data of these parties for a direct comparison with Southern European RLPs.

The CHES positions for SRLPs in the GAL-TAN dimension are much more diverse than those of the NRLPs, and this group presents a much lower internal coherence (Figure 4b). If on the one hand we have a significant number of SRLPs that occupy more libertarian (GAL) positions than any of the Nordic parties – IU, RC, BE, SEL – on the other hand, it is in the Southern European countries that we find the most conservative RLPs (TANs) in this dimension. These results were expected since the literature refers to the conservative communist parties – KKE and PCP – and the Cypriot AKEL as the most
conservative and least connected to post-materialist values RLPs of our study. However, in Figure 4b, it is also important to point out the significant changes that at some point in time, both the Portuguese PCP (since 2014) and the Greek KKE (since 2002) seem to have adopted in their positioning on this ideological dimension – a radical move towards the TAN axis – and whose justification would deserve a more in-depth research.

Therefore, the CHES results suggest that although most SRLPs take positions that are markedly more libertarian than NRLPs’ – contrary to our initial hypothesis (H2a) – the fact that this group includes three parties with rather orthodox and conservative positions, can significantly influence the average position of the whole Southern European group, pulling it to less radical positions in this scale. In this case, data aggregation becomes slightly more problematic as the results may mask, to some extent, the greater internal variety that exists among Southern European RLPs.

In the results obtained with the CMP data (Figures 5a and 5b), the GAL-TAN dimension also presents a large variation of positions for each RLP. This lower consistency of positions over time complicates the analysis of evolution trends in the positioning of each RLP, as mentioned above. In general, since most of the RLPs are considered to be quite ‘libertarian’ parties, it is surprising that we find a reasonable number of observations in which RLPs appear at positions closer to the TAN axis (values above 5) than to the GAL axis. While this might have been expected, to some extent, in some of the
conservative communists’ observations, it was not certainly the case for parties such as the Greek SYRIZA or the Portuguese BE.

Figure 5a. Nordic RLPs’ positions on the GAL-TAN (CMP, 1989-2016).

In the specific case of the Nordic RLPs (Figure 5a), these parties present very different positions and behaviors over the years. It is possible to identify NRLPs whose positions are relatively stable over time – e.g. the Finnish VAS – but also others in which they vary in such a way that it becomes difficult to identify a clear trend – e.g. the Norwegian SV. In addition, great inconsistencies were found among some of these results and the ones provided by CHES, being perhaps the most flagrant case that of the Swedish V, that CHES identifies as the most GAL party of all NRLPs, and here it appears as having largely moderated its position in this dimension.
Figure 5b. Southern European RLPs’ positions on the GAL-TAN (CMP, 1989-2016).

In terms of Southern European RLPs, there are some trends that should be highlighted in these results provided by the CMP (Figure 5b). First of all, the KKE, the AKEL and the PCP are identified as the most distant parties from the GAL axis, when compared to the remaining SRLPs. This confirms not only the CHES results but also our review of the literature. On another level, the existing diversity within the Southern European RLPs allows the identification some other clear evolution trends that are in agreement with the results obtained with CHES: this is the case of the more liberal positioning of parties such as the Italian RC, the Spanish Podemos or the Italian SEL. Finally, it should be noted once again that Podemos and SEL are perfectly integrated in the ideological spectrum of the radical left party family. As in the economic left-right dimension, the Podemos with more moderate positions than those of SEL.
Figures 6a & 6b. Party positions on the GAL-TAN. Expert survey (CHES) and Comparative manifesto data (CMP).
The levels of statistical significance of the t-test are: ***p < 0.001; **p ≤ 0.01; *p ≤ 0.05; +p ≤ 0.1.
In the case of the GAL-TAN dimension, the aggregation of data and the comparison between the groups of NRLPs and SRLPs seems to be facilitated by the fact that CMP results provide far more stable positions than they did for the economic left-right scale. This happens despite the greater ideological diversity of RLPs in the GAL-TAN dimension than in the economic left-right. In fact, the discrepancies between the results of the two groups across datasets are also reflected in their aggregate analysis (Figures 6a and 6b): while in CHES data, the average positions of NRLPs and SRLPs are very close and there are no significant differences between them; in the CMP data, they suggest that Nordic RLPs adopt, on average, more GAL positions than SRLPs in all the periods analyzed. However, those differences present statistical significance only for one of those time periods (1999-2008) and are not echoed in the results obtained through CHES data. It is therefore not possible to confirm our hypothesis H2a and affirm that Nordic RLPs adopt more libertarian (GAL) positions than Southern European RLPs.

In fact, it is difficult to perform a comparison between NRLPs and SRLPs in the GAL-TAN dimension because, as we have seen before, SRLPs do not present an internal coherence in their positions on non-socioeconomic/post-materialist issues, that allows them to be treated as a cohesive and homogeneous group on this dimension. There seems to be a big contrast between the parties with a strong ideological tradition linked to the Soviet world – PCP, KKE and AKEL – and the remaining SRLPs. In addition, both datasets confirm the idea that the GAL-TAN dimension and non-socioeconomic issues are good for capturing the differences between RLPs (Gomez et al., 2016): as we can see, the positions among RLPs in this dimension are wider and more diverse than in the economic left-right dimension, where RLPs are positioned on a narrower range of values, specially in the case of Nordic RLPs.

**Positions on the European integration dimension**

Regarding the European integration dimension, our hypothesis H3a suggests that NRLPs take more Eurosceptical positions than SRLPs. Although the results obtained do not allow the confirmation of this hypothesis, they suggest the existence of a more Eurosceptic tendency among Nordic RLPs and conservative communist parties. The results in this dimension also confirm that the attitudes towards the process of European integration are also an important source of diversity among radical left parties.
Unlike the results for the previous two dimensions – economic left-right and GAL-TAN – in the European integration, the positions obtained from both datasets are more stable over time, allowing a clearer and more detailed descriptive analysis. This difference on the variation and consistency of positions over time may be partly due to the fact that this scale is ‘constructed’ from only two categories of the CMP dataset, a much lower number than the 19 and 14 of the other two dimensions.

In this case, the results from expert surveys (CHES) show a great diversity in the Euroscepticism levels among RLPs and reveal the existence of two distinct Eurosceptic poles within each of the RLPs subgroups, Nordic and South European.

![Figure 7a. Nordic RLPs’ positions on the European integration (CHES, 1992-2014).](image)

In Figure 7a, we can identify a strongly Eurosceptic pole among the Nordic radical left, consisting of three parties whose positions are very Eurosceptic during the whole period under review – the Swedish V, the Danish EL and the Norwegian SV – and a more neutral pole (or more sympathetic) towards the EU – made up of the Finnish VAS and the Danish SF. In both cases, it is possible to detect a tendency of some moderation in relation to European issues over the years, although this is much more pronounced in some cases like that of the Danish SF. While it seems difficult to justify the position change of the
Finnish VAS since 1999 (perhaps due to the adherence to the single currency or the country’s economic success of the late 1990s?), the recent evolution of the Danish SF seems to explain itself with the process of ideological ‘aggiornamento’ that the literature refers that have occurred with this party and eventually culminated with its adhesion to the euro-enthusiastic European party of the Greens.

**Figure 7b.** Southern European RLPs’ positions on the European integration (CHES, 1992-2014).

The range of positions found among NRLPs seems to repeat itself in the case of the SRLPs (*Figure 7b*). If among NRLPs, the average positions in the CHES data ranges from 1.6 and 4.2; in SRLPs, these fluctuate between very similar values (1.1 and 4.6). It should be noted, however, that the breadth of positions towards European integration starts by being much higher in the first years that are covered by the dataset (1992 to 2002), and above all because of the strong pro-European position of the Greek SYRIZA that, throughout the years, has always contrasted with the Euro-rejectionism of the Greek KKE.

The positions of the remaining SRLPs are also interesting to analyze in more detail: with the exception of the KKE, no other SRLP adopts as anti-EU positions as the three most Eurosceptic Nordic RLPs (V, SV, EL). In the case of SRLPs, it is also possible to identify a more Eurosceptic pole consisting of – besides the KKE – the Italian RC, and the
Portuguese PCP and BE. On the other hand, the remaining SRLPs seem to have been moderating their Euroscepticism over the years and now take positions closer to ‘neutrality’ towards the European integration, as we had already suggested when elaborating our hypothesis \( H3a \). This is especially the case of the AKEL, IU and Podemos.

![Figure 8a](image)

**Figure 8a.** Nordic RLPs’ positions on the European integration (CMP, 1989-2016).

The CMP results also seem to confirm that Nordic RLPs adopt, on average, more Eurosceptic positions than Southern European RLPs (Figures 8a and 8b). In the case of the NRLPs, virtually all parties – with the exception of the Finnish VAS – take negative positions in relation to the EU (values up to 4), whereas in SRLPs there are several cases of parties that contain observations above this value (i.e. sympathetic towards the EU).

In relation to the results provided by the expert surveys, the CMP data confirms the existence of the two distinct poles of Euroscepticism. Within the NRLPs, the Norwegian SV, the Swedish V and the Danish EL continue to appear, on average, as more Eurosceptic than the Danish SF and the Finnish VAS. To this, we add the results for the Icelandic VG, which is consistently positioned on the more ‘neutral’ side of the European integration dimension, and therefore in the least Eurosceptic pole of the Nordic Green Left.
In terms of SRLPs’ Eurosceptic positions in the CMP data (Figure 8b), we highlight two aspects that we consider to be the most relevant for their analysis. First, the results confirm the existence of the aforementioned two poles of Euroscepticism: the most Eurosceptic consisting of the KKE, PCP, BE and RC (although the latter appears with an outlier value); and the other, less Eurosceptic, in which we can include the AKEL, IU and Podemos. Second, is the fact that the 2008 economic crisis seems to have had an impact on the attitudes of the SRLPs toward the European integration process: in data from CHES (Figure 7b), almost all SRLPs took more anti-EU positions in the period of 2009-2017 than in 2006 (except for SYRIZA). On the contrary, and as expected, the same did not happen with NRLPs (Figure 7a), whose countries have been less affected by the crisis. These results are here partially confirmed by the CMP, except that, in the comparative manifesto data not all Southern European RLPs have adopted more anti-EU stances after 2008. Finally, and once again, it should be pointed out that the Spanish Podemos and the Italian SEL are ideologically in line with the radical left’s Euroscepticism in both databases (Figures 7b and 8b), albeit within the so-called less Eurosceptic pole.

Figure 8b. Southern European RLPs’ positions on the European integration (CMP, 1989-2016).
Figures 9a & 9b. Party positions on the European integration. Expert survey (CHES) and Comparative manifesto data (CMP).

The levels of statistical significance of the t-test are: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$; + $p \leq 0.1$. 
The results for the European integration dimension appear to be consistent across both datasets. *Conservative communists* (KKE and PCP) are systematically placed as the most anti-EU RLPs in almost all periods of analysis, and are followed in terms of Euroscepticism by Nordic RLPs, with the remaining RLPs being the most “pro-integration” parties of our study. This leads us to believe that the aggregation of data to compare between the two regional groups may suffer from the “pulling” effect of SRLPs to more Eurosceptic positions due to this kind of conservative communist Euro-rejectionism. The reading of the aggregate results must therefore bear this in mind, without ignoring the fact that a diversity of positioning also exists among the Nordic RLPs.

Being aware of this limitation for our analysis, we will now analyze the aggregate results and compare between NRLPs and SRLPs. Figures 9a and 9b show that NRLPs’ positions on the European integration scale are indeed, on average and for both datasets, closer to the anti-EU axis than those of SRLPs. However, these results are only statistically significant for one period of analysis (CMP, 1989-1999), whose direction, moreover, we can not confirm because the CHES does not provide data for the same period. Thus, although the results suggest that Nordic RLPs may on average be more Eurosceptic than Southern European RLPs, hypothesis *H3a* can not be confirmed empirically.

**Euroscepticism since the 2008 economic crisis**

In hypothesis *H3b*, we hypothesized that the Southern RLPs began to adopt more Eurosceptic positions in the European integration dimension since the beginning of the 2008 economic crisis. The justification for this hypothesis was similar to that used in hypothesis *H1b*, namely the fact that these countries have been more affected by the economic crisis. The fact that they had been under strong austerity demands from the European institutions led us to hypothesize that this would be reflected in a more critical position towards the EU and the European integration process.

In Tables 7.1 and 7.2, we compare the average positions of each RLP for the periods immediately before and after the onset of the economic crisis (2008), in order to identify a possible radicalization of SRLPs’ Eurosceptic positions towards a more anti-EU attitude.

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<th></th>
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<td>Podemos (spa)</td>
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<td><strong>3,2</strong></td>
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n.a. = data not available

In Table 7.1, CHES results show that only half of SRLPs adopted more Eurosceptic positions in the period after 2008 and that this was not a generalized trend among these parties. In the cases where it is possible to compare the positions between the two periods, we find that only the Greek SYRIZA, the Portuguese PCP and the Italian RC present more Eurosceptic positions and, in the case of SYRIZA, this change seems to be much more related to the strong pro-European positions this party had until 2002 (6 on a scale of 1-7), rather than due to any post-2008 change (see Figure 7b).

On the other hand, these results hide some other important information for our analysis. In the case of the Greek KKE, its position on the European integration scale has always been very low (close to 1) and it would not have been possible for it to radicalize its position any further. In addition, when looking at the variation of the individual results of each SRLP between 2006 and 2010 (Figure 7b), we do see a change towards more Eurosceptic positions in parties other than those mentioned here (as is the case of the
Portuguese BE). On the contrary, the economic crisis, which has also affected the Spain, does not appear to have had a significant impact on IU’s moderate positions vis-à-vis the European integration process. It should also be added that in the case of the NRLPs, there were no significant changes in terms of Euroscepticism between the two time periods.

Table 7.2. Post-2008 Euroscepticism in the European integration scale (1-7). Comparative manifesto data (CMP).

Change on the European integration (CMP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KKE (gr)</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCP (por)</td>
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<td>AKEL (cyp)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BE (por)</td>
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<td>2.4</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU (spa)</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podemos (spa)</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC (it)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEL (it)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3.1</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
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<td>3.2</td>
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<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF (dk)</td>
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<td>+1.6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAS (fin)</td>
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<td>+0.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>V (sv)</td>
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<td>+1.9</td>
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<td>SV (nor)</td>
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<tr>
<td>VG (ice)</td>
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<td>3.8</td>
<td>+1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total NRLPs</strong></td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>+1.1</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All RLPs</strong></td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>+0.1</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n.a. = data not available

In the case of the CMP results (Table 7.2), they seem to confirm our initial hypothesis of a generalized change among Southern European RLPs in the direction of a greater Euroscepticism between the periods of 1999-2008 and 2009-2017. Among the parties where it is possible to make that comparison, half of them (PCP, BE and IU) present considerable changes in their positioning (between -1.2 and -2.0). On the contrary, among the Nordic RLPs, there are no changes in direction of greater Euroscepticism and all adopt, on average, less Eurosceptic positions than in the post-2008 period.

Looking back at Figure 8b, where we presented the CMP results for the positions of SRLPs in the European integration dimension, we can confirm this increase in
Euroscepticism in parties such as the KKE, PCP, IU, BE. Curiously, it is the parties that have recently emerged (Podemos and SEL) that tend not to adopt such Eurosceptic positions as the rest of the SRLPs, especially in the case of the Podemos which seems to be one of those that takes more pro-European positions despite having been created at the height of the European crisis. If these positions are strategic or will consolidate in the coming years, it will have to be confirmed in future studies.

Having analyzed the results provided by both datasets, and although there are some parties for which these do not correspond to the conclusions we draw from the evolution of their positions over time, we would say that **even if the empirical results do not fully confirm our hypothesis H3b, they strongly suggest** that in fact – and especially when compared to NRLPs – the SRLPs began to adopt more Eurosceptic positions since the economic crisis of 2008.

Next, and since the comparative analysis between Nordic and Southern European RLPs in terms of issues positions is complete, it is now important to understand to what extent these ideological positions relate and correspond to an effective emphasis and salience give to those issues and if they translate into ideological differences between them.

### 5.2. Issue salience

Hypotheses 1c and 2b are related to the importance (salience) given by RLPs to different policy issues. We hypothesize that SRLPs give more emphasis to socioeconomic issues than NRLPs (H1c), and that NRLPs give more emphasis to non-socioeconomic issues than SRLPs (H2b). We recall that socioeconomic issues are those that are related to the economic left-right dimension, while the non-socioeconomic ones are those that relate to the new politics/GAL-TAN dimension.

A major shortcoming for the analysis of these two hypotheses is the fact that the CHES only provides data on issue salience for economic and non-socioeconomic issues since 2014. However, and despite this limitation, the results based on this expert survey dataset suggest that hypothesis H1c may find empirical support (*Figure 10*).
The results for the year of 2014 (Figure 10) confirm that SRLPs give a very significant emphasis to socioeconomic issues and do so to a much greater extent than any of the Nordic RLPs. While the salience given by SRLPs to economic issues varies between the 8.8 values of Podemos and SEL, and the 10 value of the Portuguese PCP; in the case of the NRLPs, these range between the 5.7 of the Norwegian SV and the 7.4 of the Swedish V. These results go therefore in the direction suggested by our hypothesis H1c.

Figure 11. Non-socioeconomic issue salience in CHES (2014).
On the contrary, and in the case of the salience given to non-socioeconomic issues, the results from CHES do not allow the confirmation that the NRLPs give more emphasis to these issues than SRLPs (*H2b*), nor even to make a clear distinction between the two groups of RLPs (*Figure 11*). Among the parties that give greater emphasis to this type of issues in the CHES 2014 survey, we both find SRLPs such as the Spanish IU and the Italian RC, and Nordic parties such as the Norwegian SV and the Finnish VAS. Still, Figure 11 shows that there is a relevant number of SRLPs – the conservative communists and AKEL – whose salience given to non-socioeconomic issues is very low when compared with the remaining SRLPs. This great variety among Southern RLPs makes it difficult to directly compare the aggregate results of these two groups due to the lower internal coherence of this group.

On the other hand, and when we look at the results of these parties in the CMP dataset, it becomes increasingly difficult to make a parsimonious descriptive analysis, since the salience given both to socioeconomic (*Figures 12a and 12b*) and non-socioeconomic issues (*Figures 13a and 13b*) shows a much greater variation (from manifesto to manifesto) and does not show clear trends in the evolution of the emphasis given to each of these themes. These results are (again) not entirely unexpected since it is comprehensible that, from election to election, and depending on the specific political context of each country, parties are more inclined to give more emphasis to some issues than others. As an example, we can here refer the case of the Portuguese BE in the 2011 legislative elections: despite being a party known for its strong inclination towards post-materialistic issues, the BE presented an exceptionally short electoral manifesto almost exclusively focused on economic policy measures for an immediate response to the economic crisis that then affected the country. A simple fact like this explains not only the extraordinarily low salience given to non-socioeconomic issues by BE in its 2011 observation (*see Figure 1b*), but also many other less intuitive results that the CMP results present in this issue, as well as some of its inconsistency throughout the period of analysis. It is with this kind of caution in mind that we now seek to make some sense out of the apparent “chaos” that some of these results seems to bring us.
In the case of the Nordic RLPs (Figure 12a), it seems possible to identify a trend of increasing salience given to socioeconomic issues in the electoral manifestos of these parties over time. Apparently, the Nordic RLPs have been dedicating an increasing space of their electoral manifestos to traditional economic issues, especially when compared with that of the 1990s. In this figure, it should be noted, for example, the evolution in the percentage values of parties such as the Swedish V, the Danish EL or the Finnish VAS, and how they have risen steadily over the years. This tendency contradicts, to a certain extent, our initial expectations and the theoretical argument that we developed for the elaboration of our hypothesis (H1c). We would expect the SRLPs to give more emphasis to these issues than NRLPs. In the same way, these results seem to contradict the data obtained through the CHES dataset and the literature that refers to Nordic Green Left as having been giving increasing importance to non-socioeconomic and post-materialist issues to the detriment of traditional economic themes, particularly since the fall of the Berlin Wall (Fagerholm, 2016).

Figure 12a. Nordic RLPs’ salience on socioeconomic issues (CMP, 1989-2016).
In the case of SRLPs (Figure 12b), the variation across time and across manifestos is much larger than that presented by NRLPs. It is somewhat surprising to see that parties like the Cypriot AKEL or the Greek KKE – which the results from CHES identify as RLPs that give great salience to economic issues – do not appear portrayed in the same way in the CMP results. In addition, some important methodological doubts are raised with regard to some specific observations: for example, when we find that the KKE presents highly divergent values between the observations for the 2004 (17%), 2007 (64%) and the 2009 (0%) elections. This inconsistency across datasets does not mean that one can be considered as being “more correct” than the other, but it should alert us to the need for further discussion and debate about the use of these empirical methods.

Still, and despite the difficulties found for a descriptive analysis of these results, it is possible to verify parties for which the salience values for socioeconomic themes are relatively stable throughout the period under analysis. This seems to be the case of the Portuguese BE and PCP, or the Greek SYRIZA. The latter seems to have substantially increased the emphasis given to this type of issues in their manifestos especially since the 2011 election, which is certainly not unrelated to the insolvency crisis that the Greek state was already facing at that time. Finally, Figure 12b also states that, on average, SRLPs seem to dedicate less space of their manifestos to socioeconomic issues when compared to the space dedicated to them by Nordic RLPs. This is contradictory with CHES results for
2014 and suggests a refutation of our initial hypothesis that these parties would give greater emphasis to socioeconomic issues than their counterparts from Northern Europe (H1c).

Figure 13a. Nordic RLPs’ salience on non-socioeconomic issues (CMP, 1989-2016).

In terms of issue salience given by NRLPs to non-socioeconomic themes (Figure 13a), we seem to find the reverse of the results for socioeconomic issues. The CMP results show that the Nordic RLPs dedicate less and less space from their electoral manifestos to these issues. And if, on average, each NRLP spent between 40 to 50% of their manifestos on socioeconomic issues; here, non-socioeconomic issues occupy only between 30 to 40% of their electoral programs. This is again the opposite of what the results from CHES had suggested, indicating that the NRLPs would be the RLPs more focused on non-socioeconomic issues.

Looking at the individual results for each RLP it is possible to see that sometimes the CMP results show some agreement with the CHES dataset – for example, when it identifies the Norwegian SV as the Nordic RLP that gives more emphasis to non-socioeconomic issues – and sometimes contradicts them, as when it places the Finnish VAS as the one in which this salience is lower. Still, and in conclusion, it seems that there is some degree of internal coherence in the salience given to non-socioeconomic issues by
the whole Nordic Green Left group, which allows us to move to the analysis of the aggregate data with some degree of security.

**Figure 13b.** Southern European RLPs’ salience on non-socioeconomic issues (CMP, 1989-2016).

In the results of SRLPs for non-socioeconomic issues (**Figure 13b**), we again find the same variation and inconsistency that had already been presented in the case for economic issues (**see Figure 12b**). However, we will not repeat over and over again the implications that this brings to our descriptive analysis of the disaggregated data. In this particular figure, we would though emphasize the small space that the two Portuguese RLPs – PCP and BE – dedicate to non-socioeconomic issues in their electoral manifestos, in a way that seems to be consistent over time. These values suggest a confirmation of the CHES results for these two parties. On the other hand, the same CHES datasets also assigns low salience values in the cases of the Greek KKE and AKEL, however these values do not find confirmation in the results here provided by the CMP. To a certain extent, this demonstrates how the results between these two datasets can be contradictory.

Where there seems to be some agreement across the two datasets is in the identification of the Spanish IU and the Italian RC as the Southern European RLPs that
give more emphasis to non-socioeconomic issues, and the fact that the results for Podemos and SEL once again show them fitting in the general landscape of the Southern European radical left, as it has already happened in terms of their positioning on the three main ideological dimensions of competition.

Finally, the analysis of the CMP (Figures 13a and 13b) show that the percentage of manifesto space dedicated, on average, to non-socioeconomic issues does not seem to present great differences between Nordic and Southern European RLPs, which is precisely what we analyze next, by comparing the aggregate data of each group of RLPs.

![Figure 14a. Issue salience. Expert survey data (CHES, 2014). Data only available for the year 2014. The levels of statistical significance of the t-test are: ***p < 0.001; **p ≤ 0.01; *p ≤ 0.05; +p ≤ 0.1.](image)

When we dive into the aggregated data, in terms of the CHES results (Figure 14a), in fact, and on average, SRLPs give more emphasis to socioeconomic issues than NRLPs (9.2 vs 6.6, with strong statistical significance); and NRLPs give more emphasis to non-socioeconomic issues than SRLPs (6.2 vs 5.2, with no statistical significance). However, when we look at the detailed results (Figures 10 and 11), we find that there is an unbalanced contribution of the two conservative communist parties and AKEL for the average values of SRLPs: while sharing similar values with other SRLPs on economic issues (9.6 vs 9.2), the same does not apply to non-socioeconomic issues (3.0 vs 5.9). This means that, in fact, if we excluded conservative communists from this analysis, the
differences between NRLPs and SRLPs on non-socioeconomic issues would be even narrower than the ones shown in Figure 14a.

Figure 14b. Issue salience. Comparative manifesto data (CMP). The levels of statistical significance of the $t$-test are: $***p < 0.001$; $**p \leq 0.01$; $*p \leq 0.05$; $+p \leq 0.1$.

As in some of the hypotheses already analyzed, the CMP results for issue salience are again contradictory with those from CHES and end up discarding hypotheses $H1c$ and $H2b$. Here, Figure 14b shows that greater emphasis is placed on socioeconomic issues by NRLPs (with statistical significance for all periods) and no significant differences are found in the salience given by both groups of RLPs to non-socioeconomic issues. It is also interesting to note that, in this same figure, NRLPs significantly increased their emphasis on socioeconomic issues in the period of 2009-2017, contrary to our expectations: Fagerholm (2016) describes an increasing emphasis on socioeconomic issues, but on the part of SRLPs, which could be due to a reaction to the 2008 economic crisis that affected most of the Southern European countries. That increased emphasis, however, was not found on our empirical results. For the above mentioned reasons, it is not possible to confirm our two salience-based hypotheses ($H1c$ and $H2b$) nor draw any definitive conclusions on issue salience differences between Nordic and Southern RLPs.
Although these results do not confirm our initial expectations, it would be important to try to advance with some possible explanations for the different results obtained from the two databases. In our opinion, this can be due to the fact that these datasets may be actually measuring different things. While the CHES survey asks experts to rate the salience given by a party to “economic” and “libertarian/traditional” issues; in the case of the CMP dataset, issue salience values are given by the space that the CMP categories related to those issues occupy in party manifestos. Well, it is not at all implausible that a party can still give high salience to certain issues in its political discourse and party ideology without it necessarily corresponding to a large space of their manifesto dedicated to them. This could also help to understand the greater variation found among the CMP results, since both the size and structure of manifestos can vary significantly from election to election, greatly influencing the results obtained on this scale.

5.3. Ideological distance to social democratic parties

Hypothesis 4 states that Nordic RLPs “are ideologically closer to the major social democratic party of their countries in the economic left-right dimension” (H4) and that this can be a possible explanation to why they are perceived as being less radical than Southern European RLPs in their own national context. However, the results obtained from the two datasets follow in different directions and do not allow their cross-validation.

The results from CHES (Figures 15a and 15b) identify a clear difference in the ideological distances between NRLPs and SRLPs, relatively to social democratic parties. As can be seen over the whole period under analysis, in most cases NRLPs are ideologically closer to social democratic parties (Figure 15a) than SRLPs (Figure 15b), in terms of the economic left-right scale. Whereas for Nordic parties these differences are always in a range between 1.1 (VAS in 2006) and 3 (EL in 2010); in Southern European parties, this range is wider and goes from 1.7 (SYRIZA in 2002) to 5.5 (KKE in 2010). This suggests that the hypothesis that NRLPs are ideologically closer to social democratic parties (H4) and can therefore be perceived as being less radical, may be correct.
Figure 15a. Nordic RLPs’ ideological distance to social democratic parties in the economic left-right (CHES, 1999-2014).

In the individual results for NRLPs (Figure 15a), we find a relative stability in the distances that each of these parties maintain with their respective social democrat adversaries over time. In this figure, the Danish EL appears as the most ideologically distant RLP (which, to a certain extent, reinforces the results already discussed for hypothesis H1a), and the Finnish VAS and the Danish SF as the Nordic RLPs that are economically closer to the center-left of their respective countries.

Figure 15b. Southern European RLPs’ ideological distance to social democratic parties in the economic left-right (CHES, 1999-2014).
The variation in the ideological distances of Southern European RLPs across time is higher than those presented by Nordic RLPs (*Figure 15b*). In this particular figure, it is worth highlighting the increase in the ideological distance that occurred in the Greek RLPs (KKE and SYRIZA) after 2008 (in this case, since 2010), which may show – in a certain way – a possible consequence of the polarization that the economic crisis brought to the Greek party system. The KKE is in fact, and by far, the most ideologically distant party from social democracy, among the SRLPs; but, in reality, there are a number of other SRLPs with average ideological distances higher than any Nordic RLP: PCP, SYRIZA, BE, RC, Podemos and SEL. On the other hand, the SRLPs that appear to be the closest to the center-left parties appear to be the Spanish IU and the Cypriot AKEL, but their values are nevertheless surpassed by only one of the NRLPs: the Danish EL.

When we turn to the analysis of the CMP results (*Figures 16a and 16b*), in addition to the significant variation and inconsistency of the observations, some results stand out as they are somewhat unexpected in light of the theory. There are several observations where RLPs appear as economically less left-wing than social democratic parties or, at least, they...
appear very close to that. Take the case of the Danish SF (in 1990 and 1994), the Icelandic VG (in 2007), the Greek SYRIZA (in 2009) or – perhaps the most implausible and unexpected of them all – the Greek KKE (in 2009). Of course, these results may not be only due to the “moderation” of a particular RLP electoral manifesto, but also to the positioning that a social democratic party may decide to adopt at a given election. In this case, and looking at the database of our work\textsuperscript{12}, we can give an example of PASOK – the main party of the Greek social democracy – that presents an extremely left-wing position for one of the years in question (0.9 on a 0-10 scale, in 2009).

![Figure 16b. Southern European RLPs’ ideological distance to social democratic parties in the economic left-right (CMP, 1989-2016).](image)

Like the aforementioned example (PASOK, 2009), many other observations were found in which social democratic parties adopted rather leftist positions in the economic left-right scale, even when it did not seem plausible that they were more leftist than RLPs, nor did appear to correspond to their real position on this dimension. This is only a sign of what may be one of the problems of using CMP data for measuring ideological distances between parties over time. For this reason, researchers sometimes resort to other ways of

\textsuperscript{12} Of our own development from the CHES and CMP datasets. For the sake of brevity of this work, it is not available here but can be made available on request.
measuring party positions, such as experts and voters’ surveys, which are based on perceptions instead of more objective data like this.

Moreover, in general, the results obtained from each of these datasets do not seem to confirm each other, showing that there may be something wrong with some of these datasets. It is with this caution and being aware of some of these limitations that we proceed with the comparative analysis of the aggregate data for NRLPs and SRLPs in terms of their economical ideological distances for the main social democratic parties of their party systems.

**Figure 17a.** Ideological distance to social democratic parties on the economic left–right. Expert survey data (CHES).

The levels of statistical significance of the *t*-test are: **∗∗∗p < 0.001; **∗∗p ≤ 0.01; ∗∗p ≤ 0.05; +p ≤ 0.1.

As the disaggregated data suggests, the results from expert survey data are more consistent with our hypothesis (H4) as it is confirmed with statistical significance for all the periods of analysis: 1999-2008, 2009-2017 and total (1999-2017). This shows that the greater ideological distance between SRLPs and their center-left competitors may be a possible explanation not only for a perceived greater radicalism of these parties, but also for the smaller number of government coalitions with social democrats in Southern European countries (compared to the Nordic countries). These results also reveal that the
ideological distance between SRLPs and SDs has increased between the 1999-2008 and the 2009-2017 periods, mainly due to a shift in SRLPs to more leftist positions in the economic left-right scale (this shift did not happen for SDs and NRLPs). This suggests a possible impact of the economic crisis and austerity measures on the polarization between the Southern European radical left and the social democratic parties of these countries (which is not the case for Nordic countries). This suggestion has been discussed in the previous sections.

**Figure 17b.** Ideological distance to social democratic parties on the economic left-right. Comparative Manifesto Data (CMP).

Although the results from CHES confirm our hypothesis with statistical significance, the same does not happen for the CMP results (Figure 17b). In fact, in this dataset, NRLPs appear ideologically more distant from democratic social parties in at least two time periods. However, and since the CHES data confirms the direction of our hypothesis with statistical significance and the CMP results only refute it without statistical significance, according to our criterion, in this case we consider our hypothesis H4 as being partially confirmed.
Finally, and in addition to the partial confirmation of this hypothesis, it should be pointed out that one of the main conclusions of this section is that the most ‘radical’ RLPs in their national contexts are, in addition to the Greek KKE and the Portuguese PCP, the Portuguese BE, the Italian RC and the Danish EL, while the less ‘radical’ appear to be the Danish SF, the Finnish VAS, the Norwegian SV and the Swedish V. This can partially explain why the Southern European RLP can be perceived as being more radical, than the more ‘pragmatic’ Nordic Green Left (although some part of that perception eventually also has to do with their commitment to government participation).

The greater relative ‘radicalism’ of RLPs (i.e. ideological distance to the political status-quo) may be due to the more radical positions they take, and to the more centrist positions adopted by the social democrats. But the fact is that ideological distance has not only consequences at the cooperation level between these parties and coalition formation – although this is no longer a problem in the case of ‘radical’ parties such as the Danish EL, the Italian RC or the Portuguese RLPs – but also (and perhaps above all) it has consequences in the public perception of a certain radicalism of each of these parties in the specific context of their countries. This argument would obviously need to be better developed and empirically supported, as well as the possible consequences that these ideological distances between RLPs and SDs may have on the specific political context of each country. In this case, we have in mind the Portuguese case in which, for many years, ideological distance was pointed out as one of the main reasons for the lack of governmental cooperation between the radical left (PCP and BE) and the major center-left/social democratic party (PS) (March & Freire, 2012, pp. 218–225), thus appearing to be an important dimension of the ideological study of RLPs.

5.4. Overview of results

This chapter concludes with an overview of results, presenting a brief summary of the confirmation of our hypotheses and a series of visual maps with the current ideological positions of the RLPs that integrated this study. In this section, we make a series of more global considerations about the empirical results obtained in this dissertation and on the main ideological differences found between Nordic and Southern European RLPs.
Confirmation of hypotheses

Throughout this chapter, it was possible to realize that the great majority of our hypotheses did not find confirmation in the empirical results. Either because the datasets did not present concordant results among each other, or because the detected ideological differences did not find statistical significance. In the following table we present a brief summary of the final results for each of these hypotheses:

Table 8. Hypothesis confirmation summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>CHES</th>
<th>CMP</th>
<th>Final Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Left-Right dimension</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( H1a ): Southern RLPs take more leftist positions in the economic left-right dimension than Nordic RLPs.</td>
<td>Yes (–)</td>
<td>Yes (–)</td>
<td>Suggested but not confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( H1b ): Southern RLPs have “re-radicalized” in the economic left-right dimension since the 2008 economic crisis.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( H1c ): Southern RLPs give more emphasis to traditional socioeconomic issues than Nordic RLPs.</td>
<td>Yes (+)</td>
<td>No (+)</td>
<td>Not confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New politics (GAL-TAN) dimension</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( H2a ): Nordic RLPs take more GAL (green/alternative/libertarian) positions in the GAL-TAN dimension than Southern RLPs.</td>
<td>No (–)</td>
<td>Yes (–)</td>
<td>Not confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( H2b ): Nordic RLPs give greater emphasis to non-socioeconomic issues than Southern RLPs.</td>
<td>Yes (–)</td>
<td>No (–)</td>
<td>Not confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>European integration dimension</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( H3a ): Nordic RLPs take stronger Eurosceptical positions in the European integration dimension than Southern European RLPs.</td>
<td>Yes (–)</td>
<td>Yes (–)</td>
<td>Suggested but not confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( H3b ): Southern European RLPs have been taking more Eurosceptical positions in the European integration dimension since the 2008 economic crisis.</td>
<td>Partially Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Suggested but not confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideological distance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( H4 ): Nordic RLPs are ideologically closer to the major social democratic party of their countries in the economic left-right dimension than Southern European RLPs.</td>
<td>Yes (+)</td>
<td>No (–)</td>
<td>Partially confirmed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ with statistical significance; – without statistical significance.

In terms of the economic left-right dimension, the results did not confirm the hypothesis \( H1a \) but suggested that Southern European RLPs may indeed adopt more left-
wing positions than Nordic RLPs, although this may be partly due to the particular contribution of the *conservative communist* parties. However, it has not been possible to confirm either a supposed economic re-radicalization of SRLPs since the economic crisis of 2008 (*H1b*), nor a greater emphasis given by the Southern European parties to socioeconomic issues when compared to the Nordic RLPs (*H1c*).

In the hypotheses related to the *new politics/GAL-TAN* dimension, the results were contradictory across datasets. It was not at all possible to confirm the hypothesis that NRLPs take more libertarian positions (GAL) than SRLPs in this dimension (*H2a*), nor that this group of parties gives greater emphasis to non-socioeconomic issues (*H2b*), as suggested by our literature review.

It was in the European Integration dimension where the differences between Nordic and Southern European RLPs appeared to be clearer. Although neither hypothesis has been fully confirmed due to lack of statistical significance, the results suggest that not only the Nordic RLPs are in general more Eurosceptic than SRLPs (*H3a*), but also that the latter have adopted more Eurosceptic positions since the beginning of 2008 the economic crisis that has so deeply affected their countries (*H3b*).

Finally, and in terms of the ideological distances between RLPs and their social democratic adversaries, the results partially confirmed the hypothesis that the Southern European radical left is ideologically more distant from social democratic parties in terms of economic left-right dimension, with all the consequences that may arise from that fact, namely at the level of the perceptions on RLPs’ radicalism in their national party systems.

However, although not all the results corresponded to our initial expectations, both the descriptive analysis and the comparative statistical analysis that were carried out allowed us to obtain relevant information on some of the main ideological differences between Nordic and Southern European RLPs and can be undoubtedly explored in the future.

*Visual mapping of the current ideological positioning of RLPs*

In this last part of the discussion of our results, we map the party positions for the last period under analysis (2009-2017), in order to visually analyze the current ideological positioning of the RLPs in the three main ideological dimensions. We have gathered the results obtained from both the CHES and the CMP datasets, which also allows us to better
understand the usefulness of each method to distinguish between these two region-based groups of radical left parties. In these figures we also include the average results for social democratic parties (SDs) in order to allow us to verify to what extent each of these tools also allows a clear distinction between the two European party families. The analysis of these visual maps eventually leads us to some brief parallel reflections on some other aspects related to our research.

![Figure 18. Map of party positions on the economic left-right vs GAL-TAN. Expert survey data (CHES, 2009-2017).](image)

In the results provided by CHES expert survey data (Figures 18 and 19), it is much easier to draw conclusions and distinguish the current positioning of the two European party families. Both radical left and social democratic parties have very well-defined areas in the three ideological dimensions of our study: SDs are positioned in the center-left of the economic left-right scale, assume moderate liberal positions on the GAL-TAN and are extremely pro-integration on the EU integration scale; on the other hand, RLPs take more radical left/liberal positions in the first two dimensions (except the conservative communist parties) and are on the neutral/anti-integration side of the European integration scale (for EU integration results, see Figure 19 below).
When we compare the positions of Nordic and Southern European RLPs, we find that they fit perfectly into the same ideological space and share the same political family. However, there are some interesting differences that should be highlighted in these results: in most cases of the CHES results, it is the SRLPs who adopt more radical leftist/liberal positions on these two scales. This is even clearer if we consider that conservative communists are kind of special parties among SRLPs, especially in terms of the GAL-TAN scale (they are more conservative/TAN). Through these results, we can also confirm that the newly formed Spanish Podemos and the Italian SEL fit perfectly into the ideological spectrum of the European radical left – particularly that of the Southern European countries – and that their ideological classification as RLPs is therefore confirmed empirically, if any kind of doubt remained.

The results on the GAL-TAN scale (Figure 18) also raise the following question: is it not strange that the most ‘liberal’ social democratic parties are the Southern European when it is the Nordic societies that are traditionally known to be more liberal? We personally would expect the Swedish SAP or the Norwegian DNA to be the SDS that take more liberal positions on this scale, rather than the Italian PD or the Spanish PSOE. The answer to this question, however, would have to be answered empirically and would lead us to a reflection on the cross-national comparability of expert survey data.

That leaves us with another important question about the CHES dataset: to what extent do the differences between SRLPs and NRLPs reflect their actual positions on policy issues and not a possible expert bias? That is, to what extent are the Spanish and Italian experts classifying the PD and the PSOE as ‘more liberal’ than the Nordic social democrats simply because this classification occurs in the specific context of their countries (more conservative), when that could not be so much the case if these parties were analyzed in the more liberal political context of a Nordic country, by a Nordic coder? Unfortunately, we do not know the answer to that question.

In the European integration scale provided by CHES data (Figure 19) it is also possible to detect clear differences not only between SDS and RLPs, but also within the radical left itself. It is clear that the Greek KKE is an outlier in terms of positions regarding the European integration process (and the GAL-TAN), but we can see that the most Eurosceptic parties are three Nordic RLPs: the Danish EL, the Swedish V and the Norwegian SV. The Finnish VAS can be considered as some sort of Nordic outlier as it is
Figure 19. Map of party positions on the economic left-right vs European integration. Expert survey data (CHES, 2009-2017).

consistently positioned differently (much more pro-integration) from the rest of the NRLPs in the European integration dimension. The Danish SF is a different case, since some authors no longer consider it to be a RLP since 2012 or 2014 (it is now closer to the European Green party family). However, as we have already pointed out in this chapter, we can almost identify the existence of two poles of Euroscepticism both within the Nordic and the Southern European radical left. In this case, the Spanish Podemos and the Italian SEL, once again, fit into the ideological positions of the more euro-enthusiast pole of the radical left party family. Let us then see if the same scenario repeats in the case of the Comparative Manifesto data.

The first and most obvious conclusion to be drawn from the visual maps of the CMP results (Figures 20 and 21), is that they do not allow for such a clear distinction between the two European party families – the radical left and the social democrats – except perhaps in the case of the European integration dimension. The positions of RLPs and SDs in the economic left-right and GAL-TAN dimensions, overlap to a large extent and it is not uncommon to see some SD parties taking more leftist positions on socioeconomic issues than RLPs, for example (e.g. the Italian PD, the Swedish SAP). As it
is very unlikely that these results match the actual positioning of these parties, this should make us question the utility of this method to perform a comparison between the ideological differences between NRLPs and SRLPs (i.e. between parties of the same party family). Of course, it can be argued that social democratic parties could be more emphatic in defending left-wing economic policies in their manifestos. However, this explanation does not appear to be plausible since there is extensive literature cross-validating the results of comparative manifesto and expert survey data over the years. And if they don’t concur, it could also be the case that the CHES is wrong, and not necessarily the CMP.

One of the explanations that seems to be more plausible to justify some of these (sometimes so significant) differences is related to some of the methodological choices we have made and the way we have applied the comparative manifesto dataset, which may not have been the most appropriate for our study. Not only are there many other ways of building ideological scales from the CMP dataset, but they also might have led to different results from the ones we got. These methodological issues would certainly deserve a more in-depth discussion and are already the subject of intense academic in this academic field, but they do not fit within the scope of this dissertation.
In terms of the European integration dimension (Figure 21), CMP allows a clearer differentiation between RLPs and SDs, although their positions still overlap in many cases, which is not consistent neither with expert placements nor with countless studies on radical left parties’ Euroscepticism. The results obtained in this dimension may be due to the fact that it only uses two categories from the CMP dataset, when the other two economic left-right and the GAL-TAN use 14 and 19, respectively. In any case, it is still interesting to note that comparative manifesto data identified the Greek KKE, the Portuguese PCP and the Norwegian SV as some of the most anti-EU radical left parties; and the Portuguese PS, the Spanish PSOE and the Italian PD as the most pro-European integration parties, which are pretty plausible results according to the literature.
Chapter 6
Conclusions

The aim of this dissertation was to address and comparatively study the diversity of European radical left parties (RLPs). We conducted a cross-regional comparison between Nordic (NRLPs) and Southern European radical left parties (SRLPs) in order to evaluate to what extent their ideological differences find empirical support and allow for a region-based ideological sub-classification of these two groups of parties. Data from comparative manifesto (CMP) and expert surveys (CHES) was used to compare and validate RLPs’ positions along the three main ideological dimensions of the European political space: the economic left-right, the GAL-TAN and the European integration dimensions. In addition, complementary analysis was made on the emphasis given by these parties to different policy issues and on their ideological distance to their main social democratic competitors (as a proxy for “radicalism”).

Before answering our research question – are there two different ideological subgroups of radical left parties, a Nordic and a Southern European one? – we need to refer some of the difficulties presented by the methodology approach that was used. Most of the time, the results provided by the two datasets were conflictive, making it very difficult to draw clear conclusions on the hypotheses that were advanced. Particularly in the case of the Comparative Manifesto dataset, the results were generally inconsistent over time and their wide variation made it difficult to make a descriptive analysis and compare these parties on the ideological scales that were constructed from the categories of this dataset. A cross-validation of the results was therefore not achieved most of the time.

The empirical findings of our study confirm that the ideological differences between RLPs are mostly noted in terms of their positions (issue positions) in the GAL-TAN (i.e. non-socioeconomic issues) and European integration dimensions, and not so much on the economic left-right (i.e. socioeconomic issues). However, in the comparison between the two groups of RLPs, although it was not possible to consider any of the hypotheses as “confirmed”, it was possible to draw some conclusions on the economic left-
right and European integration dimensions (although without statistically significance). These results suggest that RLPs from Southern Europe seem to take more leftist positions on socioeconomic issues and are less Eurosceptic than Nordic RLPs. In terms of the so-called new politics/GAL-TAN dimension related to non-socioeconomic issues, no relevant differences are found between these two groups. But the group that seemed to consistently position distinctly from the remaining RLPs in most ideological dimensions was that of the conservative communists (the Greek KKE and the Portuguese PCP): they are the RLPs that usually adopt more leftist positions on the economic left-right, more conservative in the GAL-TAN and more anti-integration on the European integration dimension. Another interesting result, even if we found no evidence of an economic re-radicalization of SRLPs since the onset of the 2008 economic crisis, is the support for an ideological shift on the Euroscepticism of the Southern European radical since 2008. SRLPs seem to have adopted increasing Eurosceptical positions after this year, confirming that the crisis may have had an impact in their attitudes towards the EU, as their countries were the most affected by austerity (i.e. Southern European countries).

On the other hand, no conclusions can be made on the different emphasis given by each group of RLPs to economic and non-socioeconomic issues. These results were inconsistent across the two datasets and neither of our two hypotheses could be confirmed. In the case of the expert survey data, it was possible to find solid evidence (with statistical significance) that the Southern European RLPs give more salience to economic issues than Nordic RLPs; however, these results were contradicted by the CMP data which indicates (also with statistical significance) that the NRLPs devote more space of their electoral manifestos to socioeconomic issues. On the contrary, in non-socioeconomic issues, the differences between NRLPs and SRLPs do not seem to be relevant, except in the case of the conservative communists and the Cypriot AKEL, which seem to give little relevance to these issues. Empirical support was also found for the hypothesis that SRLPs are ideologically more distant than NRLPs to the social democratic parties of their countries (“partially confirmed”). This may be a possible explanation to why they are frequently perceived as being more radical in their national contexts, and to the lower number of coalition experiences between RLPs and SDs in Southern European countries. This ideological gap was expected to be particularly significant in the case of the conservative communists, but could only be confirmed in the CHES expert survey data.
As we have described, the empirical findings of our research allow us to identify several important differences between Nordic and Southern European RLPs. Some of these are very relevant for a better understanding of the existing diversity within this party family. However, it was also possible to demonstrate that NRLPs and SRLPs essentially occupy the same ideological space (especially in the economic left-right scale), and that those differences may not be significant enough to consider the existence of two well-defined region-based ideological subgroups of RLPs, as our research question formulated. In fact, we still find a variety of positions and exceptions even among each group: e.g. the Finnish VAS is much less Eurosceptical than the rest of the Nordic Green Left, and the Greek KKE is much more conservative than the remaining Southern European radical left. We thus conclude that there does not appear to be enough empirical evidence (yet) to positively answer the main research question of our work and that more empirical research is needed in order to draw different conclusions on this matter.

In this chapter of the conclusions, we should also briefly reflect on the impact of some methodological decisions on our results. Perhaps we should begin by raising the question of whether the construction of our scales – based on Prosser’s (2014) – and the calculation method of the logit scale (Lowe et al., 2011) were the most adequate for our measurements. It is not possible to answer this question without a thorough methodological discussion, but we know that other types of scales could have also been tested and used for our measurements: Bakker & Hobolt (2013) consider that some issues have more relevance in certain countries and suggest the construction of specific scales for each country based on factor analysis; other authors have adapted specific scales for measuring and comparing some of the most specific characteristics of RLPs (e.g. Fagerholm, 2016; Gomez et al., 2016); and other have even used trend lines that are statistically “smoothed” rather than the exact calculations of party positions, in order to avoid the impact of the excessive positional variation of some datasets (e.g. Wagner & Meyer, 2017). Maybe the distinction between RLPs would be better identified using specific RLPs’ scales than more general ones, in order to focus into more radical left’s policy issues. Other possible solution can be the already existing attempts to correct expert bias by using ‘anchoring vignettes’, a method that helps to assure the cross-national comparability of expert surveys positioning (i.e. “whether a 7 in Sweden is a 7 in the United Kingdom” – Bakker et al.,
2014, p. 2). All these methodological challenges have deserved a large academic attention and stimulated the debate in this area. This proves how difficult it is to reach consensus about the better solutions for measuring and comparing party positions across countries. In addition, the information that is gathered from measuring party positions can also be complemented with other sources of information such as voter and elite surveys, or even with the analysis of more qualitative data such as party official statements, elite interviews or even parliamentary speeches.

The analysis of our results and the confirmation of our hypotheses, tell us two things about the main conclusions of this work: first, that although Nordic and Southern European RLPs occupy the same ideological space – as we mentioned above – it is still possible to identify differences that suggest some distinct ideological traits among RLPs, even though they may not be sufficient to consider the existence of two distinct region-based ideological subgroups of RLPs – a Nordic and a Southern European. Second, that the fact that we are trying to measure ideological differences in parties that belong to the same (ideological) party family naturally has its problems, since we are using instruments commonly used to distinguish between different party families. This leads us to conclude that in order to better compare the ideological differences between RLPs, we can not use in the same way the existing empirical methods and need, at least, more precise instruments adapted to the study of the most characteristic ideological traits of the European radical left parties.

The contribution of this work for the literature is therefore twofold: first, it helped to clarify some of the ideological differences between RLPs, which were often referred to by some works but had not been empirically tested. This dissertation gives a small contribution to fill this gap in the radical left literature and to extend the knowledge on the diversity of the European radical left party family. It also integrated newly-formed RLPs into the existing frameworks, such as the Spanish Podemos and the Italian SEL (now part of the Sinistra Italiana), demonstrating that they fit into the ideological spectrum of the European radical left and confirming the consistency of their classification as RLPs. Second, it applied two of the most widely used datasets for measuring party positions, allowing us to verify to what extent they present similar results for the same parties in the same periods of time (which they did not, most of time). For these and the above mentioned reasons, we are confident that our purpose of contributing to extend the
knowledge on the ideological positions of RLPs was accomplished. Future studies can continue to extend this knowledge either through the analysis of new ideological dimensions that are still under-researched on RLPs (e.g. the degrees of populism, anti-elitism and anti-globalization sentiments), the study of how several policy issues have been incorporated into each party’s ideology over time (e.g. environmental protection, LGBT rights, etc.), or simply by going beyond the mere analysis of their ideological differences and focusing on the study of other features such as their organizational differences and behavioral strategies.


Integration in the East and West: Different Structure, Same Causality. *Comparative Political Studies, 39*(2), 155–175.


