Thesis Proposal

The Value of Values:

Communicating Party Political Values within Coalition Governments

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1. Introduction

The overall purpose of this thesis proposal is to present the current state of my research which focuses on how participation in a government coalition affects the inclusion of core party political values in the communication of coalition party leaders and the challenges faced by political parties in strategically communicating their values and overall master narrative within a coalition government.

The communication of political values is a critical issue in connection with coalition membership as values are a defining component for a political party, representing its very *ideological identity* defined as the party's "most deeply held values and core commitments*"* (Panebianco, 1988: 53). Buckler and Dolowitz (2009) emphasise that this identity and thus the values of a party:

"*will be tied to a party's history and provides its moral raison d'etre. (…) is important as a focus for loyalty and a means of mobilization and may also play a significant part in the development of rhetorical strategies in the context of party competition.*" (p. 13)

Political values serve a host of internal and external functions in a political party and should be communicated coherently in order to create a meaningful master narrative – or "big picture story" (Weston, 2007: 151) – differentiating the party from its political competitors (e.g. Bonotti, 2011; Buckler and Dolowitz, 2009, 2012). However, a central assumption in this project is that this presents a considerable challenge for parties in coalition governments in which a common ground and shared values must be found (e.g. Timmermans, 2006). In other words, coalition membership can lead to an unclear and "diluted" master narrative detrimental to the electoral support and internal stability of the party (Bonotti, 2011; Buckler and Dolowitz, 2009, 2012; Martin and Vanberg, 2008).

The challenges of communicating a clear set of political values within the context of a coalition government represent the overall focus of my dissertation which is planned as a compilation of articles exploring the topic from three different but interrelated angles:

1) Do coalition party leaders in their individual speeches communicate their unique party values or the shared coalition values?

2) Is it possible to detect a change in what political values feature in the descriptions of the parties by party leaders before and after entering into the coalition?

3) How do political values feature in the strategic considerations of coalition parties?

The thesis proposal also serves to present how I have progressed within my first year as a PhD student and the plan of action for the final two years of my PhD project.

Until now, I have focused on exploring the theoretical fields of political communication, political public relations and political values. Furthermore, I have worked on narrowing down the scope and purpose of my research and have conducted my first empirical study of a selection of political texts from the three current Danish government coalition parties. Here, I inductively analysed the party programme of each coalition party in order to determine the parties' core political values. These I compared to the values communicated in the coalition agreement and in a selection of party leader speeches made after the coalition was formed. This study forms the basis of my first article which is almost completed and will shortly be submitted to the International Journal of Strategic Communication.

The structure of the thesis proposal is as follows: First, I will discuss my motivation for the choice of research topic and the research gap which justifies the study. This is followed by an introduction to the overall purpose and research questions of the dissertation and a brief overview of the theoretical framework. Then, I introduce my overall research design and methodology and the content and structure of my three articles. Finally, I will present two key questions to be discussed in the oral presentation of the thesis proposal.

2. Choice of research topic

Politics has been called the "art of the possible," and it actually is a realm akin to art insofar as, like art, it occupies a creatively mediating position between spirit and life, the idea and reality. Thomas Mann, speech at the U. S. Library of Congress, May 29, 1945

This sums up one of the central aspects of political life i.e. that there is often a long way between vision and reality, between political promises and the actual realisation of these promises (e.g. Henneberg and Ormrod, 2013). Thus, the quote points towards one of the central challenges of political parties in coalition government systems namely the challenge of communicating a clear and consistent set of values and ideological identity in an environment of institutional limitations, political negation and compromises (E.g. Martin and Vanberg, 2008).

These overall considerations form the backdrop of my research which explores how coalition parties communicate their core political values within the context of a coalition and how the political values feature in the strategic considerations of political communicators in coalition parties.

2.1. Motivations for the research topic and case selection

When choosing my research topic, I was initially motivated by real-life events surrounding the current Danish coalition government formed in September 2011 by the Socialist People's Party (SF), which became member of a Danish government for the first time, together with the Social Democratic Party (S) and the Social Liberal Party (R).

Since its formation, the coalition has gone through turbulent times. S and SF in particular have been heavily accused by both internal and external stakeholders of acting against their core political values and have experienced considerable membership decline, different degrees of internal party dissent and decreasing electoral support (Ib, 2012; Rehling, 2013; Østergaard, 2012; Krasnik, 2012). Indeed, while SF gained 9.2 per cent of the votes in the 2011 election, the party now stands to get only 4.9 per cent of the votes while S have gone from 24.8 per cent to 18.9 per cent in the same period of time (dr.dk 26/9/13). In August 2012, almost a year into the coalition, leading politicians put the blame on poor communication rather than poor politics (Rasmussen, 2012) to suggest that communication rather than political actions is vital in ensuring electoral support.

In the same month, Copenhagen University published a study of Danish voters' political party associations which also pointed towards the importance of communication rather than actual political actions. The study indicated that strategy and spin topped the list of voter's associations, implying that voters are increasingly aware of the professionalisation and the strategic focus of political communication (Bræmer, 2012). According to the study, only 11 per cent of Danish voters associated political parties with a specific ideology and 14 per cent with value orientation while political content accounted for only 6 per cent of voters' associations. However, noticeably, associations to value orientation and ideology had increased along with the increased associations to strategy and spin which could indicate that the former two concepts are indeed perceived by voters to be used strategically. A final interesting point in the study was that entering into the coalition, SF was now less associated with actual politics (5 per cent) and much more with strategy (30 per cent) (Bræmer, 2012).

The somewhat fragmented results of this study suggested to me that becoming a member of a coalition can have a strong – and not necessarily positive – effect on how a party is perceived by the voters. While this may not be surprising, the study also pointed towards how values and ideology, according to voters, seemingly play a minor role in the communication of political parties. It made me wonder – and want to explore - what the connection is between entering into a coalition government and the strategic communication of a party's core political values.

In my dissertation, I have chosen to focus on the current Danish coalition for two overall reasons:

First of all, the Danish case consists of three rather different parties in terms of government experience and who also seemingly enter into the coalition with somewhat different ideological starting points.

The Socialist People's Party (SF) is an inherently socialist party formed in 1959 as a breakout party from the Communist party and one has which has never before been part of a Danish government (www.ft.dk; www.stm.dk). Formed in 1871, the Social Democrats (S) is one of Denmark's largest parties and has traditionally been regarded as a worker's party and the founder of the modern welfare state (www.ft.dk). The party has often been the leader of coalition governments holding the Prime Minister seat. This is also the case in the current coalition where the Prime Minister is the Social Democratic leader Helle Thorning-Schmidt. The Social Liberal Party (R), formed in 1905 as a breakout party from the Danish Liberal Party, have collaborated in coalition governments along with both the Liberal and the Conservative Party in the 1980s and the Social Democrats in the 1990s (www.ft.dk; www.stm.dk).

Second of all, the notion that the coalition has experienced such severe a crisis as described above and that elite party members have explicitly pointed towards poor communication as a reason for this crisis makes the Danish coalition interesting to explore from a communicative perspective. Thus, the case is theory-driven (Neergaard, 2007: 26) as I am exploring a theoretical concept (the communication of political values) and how it is applied in a real-life context.

2.2.   Filling a research gap

Having zoomed in on my overall research topic, I delved deeper into the areas of political communication, political values and coalition governments. Here, I encountered a surprisingly limited number of studies focusing on the actual communication of political values by political parties per se and by coalition parties in particular – a research gap which helped me clarify and shape the focus of my research.

Traditionally, political values have been explored mostly from a political science perspective often with a focus on locating the parties on a left-right scale in terms of traditional political ideologies such as liberalism and socialism (e.g. Budge et al. 2001; Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006; Gabel and Huber, 2000; Pennings and Keman, 2002; Wilson, 2004); on uncovering the connection between personal values and personal values (e.g. Schwartz et al. 2010); and on exploring the relationship between personal values and electoral choice (e.g. Goren, 2005; Jacoby, 2006). However, recent years have seen political values and ideology become the object of attention from a more strategically oriented perspective allowing a party to position itself against others (e.g. Buckler and Dolowitz, 2009, 2012; see also Strömbäck and Kiousis, 2011). In short, political

values are increasingly regarded as not only representing a system of beliefs and assumptions categorising the political party's visions of a "better society" (e.g. White and Ypi, 2010), but also as central parts of the party's communication toolbox (Knudsen, 2009) and its actual "product offering" (Henneberg and Ormrod, 2013; Ormrod et al., 2013).

I found it striking that despite a growing interest in political values in various research fields and a growing focus within communication studies on how strategic communications encompass *all* types of organisations, including political parties (e.g. Hallahan, 2007; Frandsen and Nielsen, 2013), there is still limited empirical research into the specific challenges of strategically communicating political values as a coalition party and even less empirical research into how coalition government parties actually communicate their political values.

Political parties face an important challenge when it comes to strategically communicating a consistent and clear set of values and ideological identity (Panebianco, 1988). Occupying a unique position between state and society (Bonotti, 2011), political parties constantly balance on the tightrope between their ideological and institutional identities (Buckler and Dolowitz, 2009) and between the fluctuating demands of various stakeholders and fixed institutional premises (e.g. Bonotti, 2011; Lees-Marchment, 2001; Strömbäck et al., 2010). However, this balancing act is perhaps particularly poignant in multi-party systems such as Denmark where coalition governments are the norm, and consensus and negotiation constitute the basic institutional premises of democratic rule (e.g. Martin and Vanberg, 2008). Owing to the realities and limitations of the political system, there is often a wide gap between what a coalition party promises before an election and what it can deliver when elected to government (Henneberg and Ormrod, 2013).Coalition parties each with their own ideological identity and set of values are obliged to cooperate and negotiate a shared value system which is often explicitly communicated in the coalition agreement (e.g. Timmermans, 2006). They may also at times make decisions which conflict with or even contradict their party values and ideals.

Communicatively, coalition parties thus represent an extremely interesting object of study as they operate and communicate in a particularly complex environment of negotiation and compromise. Although traditionally explored with a focus on the more institutional aspects of coalition formation and agreements (e.g. Strøm and Müller, 1999; Timmermans, 2006), recent years have seen a growing number of studies exploring the more communicative aspects of coalition membership (e.g. Martin and Vanberg, 2008; Paun, 2011; Quinn et al, 2011). In their 2008 study, Martin and Vanberg explored how coalition parties – by focusing on certain issues – attempt to communicate that their political compromises within the coalition do not conflict with their electoral promises, while Paun (2011) offered a broad view on the topic commenting

on the challenges of the UK coalition government in trying to gain support for the change in policies after a party's entry into a coalition. Also in a UK context, Quinn et al. (2011) carried out a content analysis of the coalition agreement between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats in order to determine "Who won" in terms policy areas represented in the agreement.

It is noticeable that none of the above studies focus on how coalition membership affects the actual communication of the parties' core political values. Summing up, while scholars agree that a party's political values constitute a unique part of the party's ideological identity and should be communicated so as to differentiate the party from others and contribute to creating a consistent master narrative (e.g. Bonotti, 2011; Buckler and Dolowitz, 2009; Strömbäck and Kiousis, 2011), there is limited empirical research exploring this issue from a coalition perspective. With my research, I hope to contribute to filling this gap.

3. Purpose statement

In light of the above considerations, the overall purpose of my research is to conduct a tri-part qualitative case study exploring the role of core political values in the external communication of coalition government parties in a Danish context.

More specifically, the project seeks to uncover how party political values are communicatively affected by a party's entry into a coalition and whether coalition parties communicatively negotiate and adjust their political values to such an extent that it creates an inconsistently communicated ideological identity and master narrative of the party. Also, I aim to explore how entering into a coalition government affects the strategic considerations concerning the communication of party political values in coalition parties. To what extent do political party communicators regard values as part of the communicated ideological identity of the party? And how does a coalition party attempt to create a clear communication of core values in an environment of negotiation and compromise?

4. Research question(s)

Summing up my overall considerations, my research questions are as follows:

How does coalition membership affect a party's political value communication and how do a party's political values feature in the strategic considerations of political party communicators in connection with communicating a clear ideological identity and master narrative?

To be able to provide an answer to these overall research questions, I explore the issue from three different perspectives which allow the following three sub-research questions:

1) **Communicating party or coalition values in the coalition**: Do coalition party leaders communicate their parties' core political values within the context of a coalition or do they rhetorically fuse/readjust their values to accommodate the shared values of the coalition?

2) **Applying values in the parties' self-description in and out of power**: What political values are applied in the party leaders' description of the parties and is it possible to detect a change in what political values feature in the description of the parties before and after entering into the coalition?

3) **The strategic considerations of ensuring a coherent master narrative**: How do political party communicators seek to ensure a coherent master narrative in an environment of negotiation and compromise and how do they perceive the role of political values in this narrative?

This set of questions allows me to explore the actual communicative events, i.e. the texts, in depth and supplement my findings with a more strategic take on the texts via in-depth interviews with central political communicators in the third study.

5. Theoretical perspective

In the following section, I provide a brief introduction to the theoretical framework of my study and my project's positioning within this framework.

Since my research deals with the communication of values in political parties, positioning my research in a specific research field proved somewhat challenging as my research is located in two major research fields i.e. communication studies and political science within the vast, fragmented and inter-disciplinary field of political communication. Political communication not only encompasses a plethora of scientific fields such as communication, political science, psychology and sociology (e.g. Graber, 2005; Ryfe, 2001); it is also a highly "dynamic and ever-changing" practice (Miller and McKerrow, 2010:61). This is illustrated by the emergence of several new cross-disciplinary fields such as political marketing (e.g. Lees-Marchment, 2001; Ormrod et al., 2013) and political public relations (Strömbäck and Kiousis, 2011). Thus, in order to further position my project, I need to pinpoint the main focus of my research.

Overall, I see my research as primarily communicative rather than political in nature, as I am taking a communicative and strategic look at political values rather than treating them through the eyes of a political scientist who might focus on their deeper ideological meaning. In short, my focus is on the strategic communication of values within a political sphere with the political party merely as the object of study. Thus, although my object of study is essentially political in nature, and I explore how political parties negotiate and

change their values, this is carried out from a communicative rather than an ideological perspective. This means that while the political context and institutional premises constitute the overall *contextual framework* of my dissertation, the more ideological aspects of political values play a peripheral part of my research.

This distinction is important in terms of delimiting my research as one of my main concerns has continuously been how to focus on the actual communicative – rather than ideological – aspects of political values. The distinction also helps me position myself within the field of political communication, where I tentatively position my project within an emerging sub-field of political communication i.e. political public relations which takes a broad and relational view on political communication and focuses on parties communicating an overall coherent master narrative (Strömbäck, 2011).

Following these deliberations on the positioning of my project, I will now elaborate on the concept of political communication and on the emerging field of political public relations (Strömbäck and Kiousis, 2011). This is followed by a brief discussion of the concept of political values and recent developments within the communication practices of political parties.

5.1.   The strategic nature of political communication

Scholars argue that strategy and politics are highly intertwined since politics concerns problem-solving and gaining support through "discussion and persuasion" (Chilton, 2004: 4; see also Hague et al. 1998). Owing to its inter-disciplinary nature, however, political communication is a difficult concept to define with definitions varying from a ''simple exchange of information and persuasion to an array of definitional contexts within which communication plays a key role in politics" (Miller and McKerrow, 2010; 61-2).

Recent years have seen an increased interest in the strategic communication efforts of political parties, and indeed many definitions now seem to include a goal-oriented or strategic focus emphasising that political messages have an "effect" and an "influence" on the receiver (e.g. Denton and Woodward, 1998; Nimmo and Simons, 1981). This also comes across in Graber's (2005) definition of political communication as a field which:

encompasses the construction, sending, receiving, and processing of messages that potentially have a significant direct or indirect impact on politics. The message senders or message receivers may be politicians, journalists, members of interest groups, or private, unorganized citizens .(Graber, 2005: 479)

The notion of strategy is further captured by McNair (2011) who defines political communication as the "purposeful communication about politics" entailing "all forms of communication undertaken by politicians

and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objective" (McNair, 2011: 4). Blumler and Coleman (2010) take the notion of strategic one step further by referring to politics as a "game" in which politicians are not shy of applying "Machiavellian strategies designed to discredit opponents and achieve contingent goals" (Blumler and Coleman, 2010: 143).

Thrassou et al. (2011) emphasise how the increasingly competitive political environment enhances the need for political parties to "embrace strategically focused political market communication in order to market ideological "products", party brands, ideas and people." (Thrassou et al., 2011:285). They see communication as a "strategic resource" which plays a significant part in this process as it helps "in adopting shared values and goals between an organization's internal and external stakeholder groups, be it voters, members, or the general public." (Thrassou et al., 2011: 285). Values thus constitute a main aspect of communicating strategically as they contribute to creating a bond between the party and its stakeholders.

A further conceptualisation of strategy within political communication is associated with the emerging concept of political public relations (Strömbäck and Kiousis, 2011) which takes a broader and more relational view on political communication and is defined as:

a management process by which an organisation or an individual actor for political purposes , through purposeful communication and actions, seeks to influence and establish, build and maintain beneficial relationships and reputation with its key publics to help support its mission and achieve its goals. (Strömbäck and Kiousis, 2011: 8)

One of the defining features of political public relations is that it acknowledges that political parties operate in a complex environment – or different arenas – where multiple stakeholders must be considered as they all have varying demands and information needs (Strömbäck and Kiousis, 2011). While this is arguably also a concern in traditional political communication research, it is often studied with a greater focus on issues of power and conflicts between the different stakeholders, which is not the main concern of my project or political public relations research (Strömbäck and Kiousis, 2011).

Summing up, while political communication and political public relations share many features, Strömbäck and Kiousis argue that one of the main differences between the concepts is that political communication is not necessarily purposeful or a management function (Strömbäck and Kiousis, 2011: 5-6). Key concerns within political public relations are thus the notions of "purposeful" communication and that political parties should seek to establish an overall "master narrative" (Westen, 2007) in all its communication efforts (Strömbäck, 2011). The master narrative is defined as "the "big picture story" that defines its [the party's]

principles" and which must be "clear, coherent, and emotionally alive, allowing flux and change at the level of specific attitudes and gradual change at the level of values" (Westen, 2007: 151).

As the focus of my research fits well with the focus of political public relations, I see my research logically positioned within this framework. Thus, I align myself with the notion of political public relations although I do not, in this dissertation, aspire to cover all aspect of the public relations efforts of the coalition parties. Rather I focus on the notion of purposeful communication, as this concept supports the purpose of my research i.e. to explore whether coalition parties communicate coherent master narratives expressing their core values and ideological identity in a complex environment of compromise and negotiation.

5.2. What do we know about political values?

Defined as "overarching normative principles and belief assumptions about government, citizenship and society" (McCann, 1997:554), political values are key aspects to explore when attempting to define the identity of political parties and also highly relevant within the context of multi-party systems where parties with different sets of values must cooperate and find a common ground (Timmermans, 2006).

If we combine the functions of political values as identified by different scholars, we see that political values serve a plethora of internal and external communicative functions for political parties which make them highly relevant to explore in connection with communicating a coherent identity within a coalition government.

As political parties are typically founded on values which members largely agree on and adhere to, political values provide the moral "raison d'etre" of the party (Buckler and Dolowitz, 2009:13) and form a core part of its ideological identity (Bonotti, 2011). It follows that the values serve an important function of identification amongst the internal stakeholders which should be carefully considered by parties entering into coalitions.

Political values also provide a point of differentiation between parties – both internally and externally (e.g. Buckler and Dolowitz, 2009, 2012). Schwartz et al. (2010) note that there is no general agreement as to the number and content of political values, and several scholars have thus presented their own political value taxonomies. These include Jacoby's (2006) liberty, equality, economic security, and social order and Feldman's (1988) equality of opportunity, economic individualism, and free enterprise. Bonotti (2011) argues that often the differences between parties – at least those in modern democracies – are not so much found in the actual value labels to which the parties adhere (e.g. freedom and equality), but rather in the interpretation of these values. Furthermore, some parties may promote specific values such as patriotism and sustainability which set them apart from others (e.g. Inglehart, 1997, 2007). In connection with coalition

membership, these can represent central differences which will have to be considered by the coalition parties as they strive to maintain a unique identity within the constraints of the coalition.

Some scholars argue that the decline of the class system has resulted in a move from class voting to issue voting and has thus decreased the importance of traditional ideologies (e.g. socialism and liberalism) and the related political values (e.g. Evans and Tilley, 2012; Harrits et al. 2009; Inglehart, 1997, 2009; Kirchheimer, 1966; Knudsen, 2007). However, although not necessarily rooted in traditional ideological systems, political values still represent key determinants in electoral choice due to the close relationship between personal and political values (Schwartz et al., 2010). Thus, ideology and political values are still important to communicate as they contribute to creating a link between the party and the constituents and also motivate party loyalty and mobilisation (Buckler and Dolowitz, 2009, 2012).

Although the decline of class voting might not render political values irrelevant, several scholars argue that it has had an effect on the communication of political values. Parties can no longer rely on a loyal set of voters but now have to compete for the same group of middle ground voters who are increasingly regarded as consumers on a political market shopping between the parties to decide which one has the best "product" (e.g. Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999; Esbensen and Lund, 2009; Goul Andersen and Borre, 2003; Lees-Marchment, 2001; Slothuus, 2003; Vigsø, 2004). This increased competition means that political values have recently been regarded as having a more product-oriented function with a party's values and ideals, representing the actual product offering of the party (e.g. Henneberg and Ormrod, 2013; Ormrod et al., 2013).

From a communicative perspective, the increased competition underlines why parties may need to pay close attention to communicating an overall master narrative through their values and indeed, communicating a specific set of political values is increasingly regarded as part of the strategic communication and branding processes of political parties (Knudsen, 2009). Indeed, several scholars (e.g Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999; Farell et al., 2001) argue that political parties are in a communicative sense increasingly professionalised making use of central communications departments, communications specialists and are thus in many ways increasingly similar to more corporate entities in their communication efforts (e.g. Knudsen, 2009; Lees-Marchment, 2001).

These macro-societal changes emphasise the importance of strategically communicating a party's political values, and thus they are vital to consider as part of the contextual framework of my research and of the contextual reality of the political party communicators which I aim to include in my third study.

Having presented my overall theoretical framework, I now introduce the overall research design of my dissertation as well as my methodological considerations.

6. Research design and methodology

The overall research design of my dissertation is that of a qualitative case study in which I explore a social problem (i.e. the challenges of communicating values within coalition governments) and how it is interpreted by key participants (i.e. political communicators) (Creswell, 2009). By conducting a series of qualitative analyses of multiple sources of data (texts and interviews), the case study approach allows me to explore a phenomenon in depth within its "real-life context" (Guest et al. 2013: 14).

My research design thus reflects my ontological and epistemological position as a moderate social constructivist believing that reality is something which is constructed by the actors involved (Nygaard, 2005). In this case, the actors are the political parties or more specifically the political communicators. I fully acknowledge that I am not able to provide a universal answer to social phenomena since "their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors (…) and are in a constant state of revision" (Bryman, 2001: 16-18). My aim is rather to gain an increased insight into how key actors approach the phenomenon – or challenge - of communicating values within a coalition government and how this challenge may be handled (see Bickman and Rog, 2009).

Qualitative research is characterised by a number of features amongst which are 1) data is collected in the field and by the researcher herself, 2) the researcher makes use of multiple data, 3) the analyses are interpretive and 4) the design is emergent meaning that it can change as the researcher dives into the data (Creswell, 2009: 175). All of these characteristics fit well with the overall approach in my dissertation which will be described in further detail in connection with the three articles below.

In the following, I introduce the overall structure of the dissertation as well as the three articles. As article 1 is almost finished, it will be described in more detail than article 2 and 3.

7. The overall structure of the dissertation

As mentioned, the dissertation is planned as a compilation of articles which each contribute to answering the overall research question by exploring the communication of values in coalition governments from a different but interrelated angle. The overall structure of the dissertation is planned as follows:

1) A general introduction to the fields of political communication and political public relations
2) The research question and the three sub-questions

3) The research design and the methodologies applied

4) Introduction to the three articles

5) The three articles

6) Presentation and discussion of the combined findings of my three articles and their contribution to answering the overall research question

7) Conclusion

7.1. Article 1: Communicating party or coalition values in the coalition

Purpose

The overall purpose of my first study was to explore whether political party leaders in speeches made within the coalition mainly communicate their party political values or the shared values of the coalition agreement.

In order to answer this question, I conducted a two-step analysis of central party documents by comparing the parties' core political values and ideological identities as expressed in party programmes and on party websites to the political values and ideological identities expressed in the coalition agreement and in speeches given by party leaders within the context of the coalition

Finally, by comparing the analyses of the party leader speeches, the study attempts to answer if a "fusion" of values was taking place in the individual communication of the coalition parties, or if the political leaders succeeded in communicating the party's unique values and ideological identity.

Selection of data

The parties' individual core political values and ideological identities were identified through formal party value statements i.e. the party website and party programmes.

The pages taken from the party websites represent the short texts which offer a brief introduction to the parties and their core values and thus the parties' communicated ideological identities (i.e. S "*Our Values*" and SF "*SF in brief*" and R "*What we believe in*". Websites are useful in the analysis of party identities as party websites offer party elites the opportunity to "present unfiltered party messages to members and voters – messages not distorted by journalists" (Pedersen & Saglie, 2005:362).

The party programme constitutes the core ideological statement of the party and its values and visions (Bonotti, 2011). Typically, the programme must be approved by members of the party at the annual conference and thus represents the collected political values and ideological identity of the party. Party

programmes are not normally aimed at a specific election as are party manifestos and they are often of a more longitudinal nature (Smith & Smith, 2000).

The data for the second part of the analysis consisted of the two introductory pages to the coalition agreement and three speeches from each coalition party leader.

The coalition agreement represents the central document of the coalition expressing its political values, goals and specific policy suggestions (e.g. Timmermans, 2006). As pointed out by Laver (1992), coalition agreements are common agreements which focus on issues on which the parties agree and "do not, for obvious reasons, draw attention to outstanding points of difference"(Laver, 1992:45). Thus, the coalition agreement represents the shared negotiated values of the coalition.

Party leader speeches are relevant to explore in connection with communicating party values since it is often the responsibility of the party leader to communicate to the constituents that the party has stayed true to its values even within the confines of the coalition. More specifically, to persuade the constituents that the party has "successfully defended their interests and that it has been able to secure favorable compromise policies as part of coalition negotiations - in other words, that the party has stayed true to its principles" (Martin and Vanberg, 2008: 505).

Method of analysis

The identification of the core party values and ideological identity of each party was carried out through a general inductive analysis of the two types of formal value statements inspired by Thomas (2006). From this analysis I developed my own taxonomy of the political values in the coalition parties (see appendix 1).

The general inductive approach allowed for the main themes (i.e. values) to emerge from the data a priori rather than from an existing value structure or classification system. Through repeated readings of the text, the general inductive analysis aims for a limited amount of themes which summarise the main meaning of a text according to specific evaluation criteria (Thomas, 2006). In this case, the evaluation criterion was that the categories reflect the political values of the party i.e. the party's "overarching normative principles and belief assumptions about government, citizenship, and society" (McCann, 1997: 564).

In practice, identifying the core political values involved careful and repeated readings of each text and identifying and coding the values via declarative and evaluative statements about society, citizenship and government e.g. "*The Danish society is and should be an open society in constant development*" and explicit expressions of the party's goals and values e.g. "*man's welfare is our political goal*" and "*Our core values are freedom, equality and solidarity*".

Some values were explicitly defined by the parties and thus easy to identify e.g. "*Solidarity is the will to unity and an expression of responsibility towards others*", while others were implicitly expressed. To identify values implicitly embedded in the discourse involves looking for synonyms, inter-textual linkages, and making logical inferences between concepts as in: "*Members of cultural minorities must be ensured the same possibilities as others*"– which I would code under "equality" and also "openness and global outlook". Through repeated rounds of coding, the values were grouped together in overall clusters summing up the content of the texts and the overall values of each party which were then summarised in an overall value taxonomy of the three parties (see appendix 1).

The value taxonomy provided the analytical framework against which the coalition agreement and the party leader speeches were juxtaposed and qualitatively analysed through a rhetorical analysis on sentence level.

The rhetorical analyses had two purposes. First of all, to explore what values were expressed in the coalition agreement and in the speeches – and second of all, to explore whether these values reflected shared characteristics or unique party characteristics.

In practice, this meant searching for which core values were communicated in the coalition agreement and the individual speeches by applying the framework of my value taxonomy. Each time a shared value was identified, it was determined if the value was expressed via shared characteristics or party specific features.

Finally, by comparing the values and ideological identity expressed in the speeches to the values and identity of the coalition agreement and the formal value statements, it was possible to determine whether the party leader speeches expressed the unique ideological identities of the individual parties or the shared coalition identity and thus if a "fusion" of values had taken place.

Findings of the study

Via the analysis of the parties' core political values and ideological identities as identified in the formal value statements, I found that we are dealing with three parties who largely communicate the same overall political values and share a total seven values i.e. *democracy, welfare, equality, freedom, solidarity/unity, openness and global outlook,* and *sustainability*.

However, the analysis also shows that although the parties share certain values and also agree on many of their core characteristics, they also imbue the values with their own specific interpretations which add to the unique ideological identity of the party. One example of a shared value with unique party interpretations is *equality* which by all parties is described with words such as "*tolerance", "equal opportunities,* and *"limited financial and social gap*". However, for SF *equality* also implies "*common ownership*" and "*spreading out*

ownership to the means of production", while for R it involves the "*removal of ranks, titles and order system*". Another example is the value of *sustainability* which for SF connotes a complete transferral of the economy into a "*green, qualitatively controlled economic growth*", and where S are more moderate and focus on creating sustainability via "*investments into education, research, welfare, environment and nature*".

Apart from the shared values, the analysis also shows that parties emphasise their own unique values in their formal value statements – values which thus serve as points of differentiation between the parties and thus also contribute to their own unique ideological identities. The unique party values identified are *socialism* (SF), *responsibility, open-minded patriotism,* and *development* (S) and *education/enlightenment, financial responsibility and dignified integration* (S).
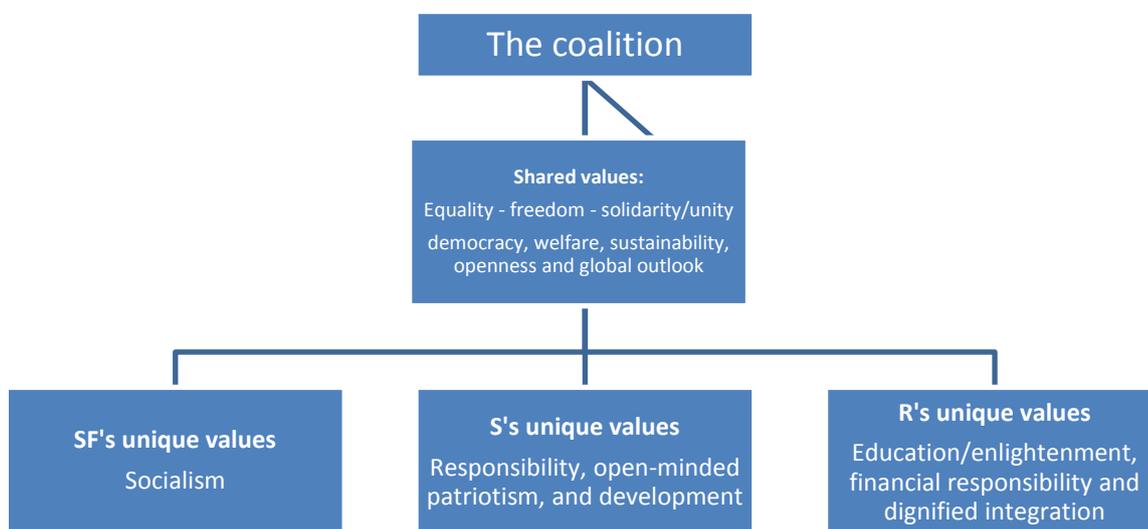
Figure 1 - Overview of the values in the coalition.

Applying the value taxonomy developed in step 1 of the analysis, the analysis of the coalition agreement shows that the coalition agreement mainly refers to the shared values of *equality, freedom, solidarity, welfare, openness and global outlook,* and the party specific values of *development and responsibility* (S) and *financial responsibility, dignified integration* and *education/enlightenment* (R). The agreement highlights how the coalition will work for "*limiting inequality and ensuring that everyone gets equal opportunities*" and how Denmark must be modernised via new reforms. Creating jobs is essential, as is modernising the school system and creating equal access to the health service. Regarding *sustainability*, the coalition agreement argues for a "*green transferral of the economy*" which was an individual interpretation of the value for SF. Overall, the agreement portrays the coalition as responsible, visionary and a coalition for "*all of Denmark*".

Applying the value taxonomy to the speeches, we see that all party leaders a) communicate a very similar set of values to those included in the coalition agreement and b) mainly refer to the shared characteristics of these values and not the party specific interpretations, which adds to the impression of a shared coalition identity.

All party leaders focus mainly on the shared values of *equality, solidarity, freedom, welfare* and *sustainability* and also the party specific values of R i.e. *financial responsibility, dignified integration, education/ enlightenment* and those of S i.e. *responsibility* and *development.* In all the speeches, the party leaders focus on a "*strong*" and "*robust*" economy as a key driver for creating welfare and opportunities, while education and jobs are continuously highlighted as the main aims of the coalition as these are the prerequisites for equality and welfare.

As the key values of R and S feature in all three party leader speeches as well as the coalition agreement, the ideological identities as communicated by the R and S party leaders are largely coherent with the ones communicated in the formal value statements as well as the coalition agreement. Although the coalition agreement does include SF's overall aim of a "*green transferral*" of the economy, the party whose ideological identity is the least coherent across the genres is that of SF since the party has omitted almost all references to the value of socialism which features prominently in the party programme. Thus, while the ideological identity communicated in the speeches of the SF party leader coheres with the common identity of the coalition, it is significantly different to that of the party's formal value statements.

Overall, the study finds that coalition party leaders to a great extent communicate the same values and a shared coalition identity mirroring the identity established in the coalition agreement. However, the study also shows that while two out of three coalition parties (R and S) manage to communicate an ideological identity largely coherent to the one communicated in the party's formal value statements, the ideological identity of the third party (SF) changes significantly as the majority of references to socialism are omitted from both coalition agreement and the speeches made by the SF party leader. This suggests that in order to create a common coalition identity and a unified coalition agreement, all parties must eradicate their most "extreme" values and value interpretations, and while this may not be surprising as coalition parties strive to reach common ground, it still indicates that coalition membership may lead to a significant and perhaps critical "watering down" of the ideological identity of a party.

7.2. Article 2: Values in party descriptions before and after entering the coalition

Having almost completed my first article, the second study attempts to build on these findings and delve deeper into the representation of party values in the communication of the coalition parties. Whereas the

first study focused on exploring speeches made only within the context of the coalition, this study attempts to take a more longitudinal look at how the political values have featured in connection with statements made about the party itself before and after entering into the coalition.

The purpose of the study is thus to explore how party leaders define their parties through political values and to examine the development in terms of which values are applied to define the parties before and after the coalition. The overall question which the study attempts to answer is:

What political values are applied in the party leaders' description of the parties in a 12-year period, and is it possible to detect a change in what political values feature most in the description before and after entering into the coalition?

By exploring the relationship between the communicated political values and expressions of party identities by political leaders over time, the analysis should help me uncover how values contribute to creating the party's overall master narrative "big picture story" (Westen, 2007: 151) and how this relationship might have changed after entering into the coalition. Taking a more longitudinal approach thus enables me to provide a richer answer to how coalition membership actually affects the parties' value communication.

Again the empirical data will consist of party leader speeches but within a much longer time period; from November 2001 when the former Liberal/Conservative coalition took power from the S and R coalition up to now. Thus the time period reflects 10 years of the parties being in opposition and two years of being in a coalition.

The study takes its outset in the value taxonomy developed in study 1. A central question here is whether I can simply apply the values from study 1 as two of the party programmes on which the taxonomy is based are relatively new. I would argue, however, that I can, since I do not expect major changes within the values communicated in the party programmes within this rather limited period of time. However, this is definitely a question I will have to consider.

I am still unsure of what method of analysis to apply in the second study. I am currently contemplating narrative analysis as this is increasingly applied in connection with social sciences in connection with how organisations narratively construct their sense of self and their strategic intent (Landrum, 2008; Patterson and Monroe, 1998).

7.3.　Article 3: The strategic considerations of key political communicators

With an outset in my findings from the two previous studies, I will conduct personal interviews with relevant key political party communicators e.g. party leaders and relevant press officers in order to uncover the strategic considerations behind the communication of values in coalition parties.

I have identified two overall challenges in this connection which I will have to give serious thought before I embark on the study.

1) Owing to the longitudinal nature of study 2, there is no guarantee that the people currently employed as communicators in the parties are in fact the ones responsible for the analysed texts.

2) I cannot be sure that the political party communicators will actually divulge the secrets of the "trade". I will have to frame my approach so that the interviews are mutually beneficial (Kvale, 2007).

Naturally, the overall design and research question of study three will need to be developed and refined significantly in the time to come.

8.　Final aspects for discussion

This thesis proposal very much represents a work in progress, and there are many aspects on which I am still undecided. Two of the main aspects are 1) whether to include the receivers in the study and 2) to what extent the political actions of the coalition should feature in my analysis.

Re. 1): A central premise of my study is that I do not consider the reception of the political texts although I fully acknowledge the interaction paradigm of communication which sees communication a two-way process in which meaning is created by both sender and receiver (e.g. Heath and Bryant, 2008). However, as I choose to take a purely outcome and production oriented approach to the communication of values this might suggest a more transmission-based view of communication (e.g. Laswell, 1948; Shannon and Weaver, 1949) which to me could present a problem. However, I do believe that focusing on in-depth analyses of the texts and the internal strategic considerations behind the texts represents the most appropriate approach to providing an answer to my research question. If I did include the receivers in my study, I believe I would have to take a more media-based perspective which is not the main area which I want to explore.

Re 2): I decided after lengthy deliberations to only focus on the actual communication of values rather than the political actions, although I am fully aware that organisations "express their values both in their ideology

and through their actions" (Abravanel, 1983 in van Rekom et al., 2006:176). In short, I do not explore whether the political values of the parties cohere with or contradict the actual political steps taken by the coalition, but take a purely communicative approach on the values focusing only on the espoused rather than the enacted values (see Schuh and Miller, 2006). However, since Strömbäck and Kiuosis (2011) emphasise that it is almost impossible to separate politics from communication (Strömbäck and Kiuosis, 2011: 5-6), I am unsure whether I can actually provide a comprehensive answer to my research question if I do *not* consider the political actions of the coalition parties. If I include them, however, the focus may shift from communication to political science, which is not the intended focus of my research.

9. Conclusion

Overall, this thesis proposal has given me the opportunity to present my deliberations on my PhD-project as it has progressed within the first year. Writing this document has been a welcome challenge and has given me a chance to reflect upon several key issues of my research. I have also had to make some decisions e.g. regarding my overall research design and the overall content of the articles. However, there are still many decisions and delimitations to be made and so working on my PhD-project represents an on-going and continuously challenging, but also very rewarding, process.

Overview of research process

Year 1				
Autumn 2012				
PhD Thesis	Courses	Teaching etc.	Conferences	Other
Worked with the theoretical framework of the thesis Studied literature on political communication and political values Worked on pinpointing and narrowing down theories, methods, structure and final research design	*Doing Political Discourse Analysis*. 5 ECTS. *Introduktionskursus til NVivo 9*. 1 ECTS.	External examiner in written exam: Media, Markets, and Consumers		Internal workshop: "*Doing analysis – approaches and experiences*"
Spring 2013				
PhD Thesis	Courses	Teaching etc.	Conferences	Other
Elaborated and clarified overall research question and sub research questions Continued reading of literature within political communication and values Started, and almost completed, writing the first article for the PhD compilation.	*Publish or Perish: Preparing, Writing and Reviewing Business Research*. 5 ECTS. *The Research Process and How to Get a PhD Out of It: Introduction Course for PhD Students*. 5 ETCS. *Introducing the Philosophy of Science: A Multi-Perspective Approach*. 5 ECTS.	BA-Project supervision and exam External examiner in written exams in: Media, Markets and Consumers Cultural Studies		Internal workshop: How to present your PhD-project.

Year 2				
Autumn 2013				
PhD Thesis	Courses	Teaching etc.	Conferences	Other
Finish writing the first article for the compilation. The article will be submitted to The International Journal of Strategic Communication Collect and analyse data for the second article and start writing up the second article Arrange meetings with relevant interviewees	None planned	Corporation, Communication, Context (Master course) Textual Persuasion (BA-course) Examiner in written exam: Knowledge Communication	18 – 21 September 2013: *7th International Political Marketing Conference*. Stockholm University School of Business. Stockholm.	
Spring 2014				
PhD Thesis	Courses	Teaching etc.	Conferences	Other
Finish writing up the second article Collect third set of data (interviews with political senders) Start transcribing third data set	None planned	None planned	None planned	Visiting PhD-at the Amsterdam School of Communication Research (ASCOR). 6 weeks. Planned.

Year 3				
Autumn 2014				
PhD Thesis	Courses	Teaching etc.	Conferences	Other
Finish transcribing third data set Analyse the third data set and start writing third article Write introductory chapters for the compilation on political communication, political public relations, and methodology	None planned	None planned	None planned	
Spring 2015				
PhD Thesis	Courses	Teaching etc.	Conferences	Other
Finish writing third article Write up compilation Write up concluding chapter synthesising my findings Proof-read	None planned	None planned	None planned	

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Shared Values and Core Characteristics	SF's unique interpretation	S's unique interpretation	R's unique interpretation
DEMOCRACY Equal rights to speak and be heard; Equal opportunities for influence own life and society (equality); Room for everyone; free and influential citizens; rights and duties for all (solidarity); Access to knowledge and information	Democratisation of economy: democratically control-led, socialist and green market economy; People's influence on financial development in society; Decentralised and democratic structures in public institutions; municipal autonomy; company democracy: workers influence on own place of work	Democratisation and democratic control of international financial institutions; Economic democracy: People having influence on overall financial development; Danish values; Violations against democratic values will be opposed (also Nazis etc)	Principle of Proximity (decisions must be made as close to those they concern as possible): New constitution must ensure a strict division btw. legislative, executive and judicial powers.
WELFARE Welfare society, welfare and prosperity for all, free and equal access to welfare benefits (equality), opportunities for realising dreams and obtaining good life (freedom), rights and duties for all (solidarity), strong helping the weak (solidarity); security	Financed through progressive taxes, strong public sector; security; internal party democracy; citizens, not clients	Ability to choose individual solutions; Money not defining factor but weakest groups must be prioritised; Financed through progressive taxes; Personal responsibility – not everything can be solved by society; consequences if duties not respected; good wage and working conditions.	Largely funded by socially balanced taxes re. expenditure of natural resources and properties; Respect for personal dignity; outsourcing used but under democratic control; public services effective and provide quality; goal of welfare: to enable people to take care of themselves; builds on financial responsibility of self-reliant part of society; all contribute to ensuring welfare society
EQUALITY Tolerance; respect; diversity; gender equality; equal rights and opportunities, limited financial and social gap; room for everyone, free and equal access to welfare; breaking the negative social "spiral"	Public ownership of central sectors; removing privileges from the wealthy; spreading out ownership to the means of production; common ownership; strong public sector; working for the interest of the "broad population"	Full employment; requires goal-oriented integration with clear rights and duties; Does not equal agreement btw. cultures; free and equal access ensured by a state regulation of the market	Prevention of unemployment; Removal of ranks, titles and order system; dignified integration; cultures living and unfolding themselves in mutual respect
FREEDOM Opportunities in life; influence on own life and society; fulfilling your life and dreams; diversity; freedom and human rights; access to information.	Created through a socialist society and strong communities i.e. the public sector and through financial and company democracy	Individualism and the desire and ability to choose best solution (however never against the common good)	Ability to improve own situation and take care of yourself; Flexible labour market provides freedom; Freedom and responsibility intertwined
SOLIDARITY/UNITY Solidarity; Responsibility; humanism; unity; obligation towards others; putting common good before own interests; shared responsibility; strong civil society; voluntary work; communities; respecting and fulfilling rights and duties; contributing to society	Goal **is** unity-based society; wealthy giving up privileges and power; spreading out means of production; common ownership; public ownership; working conditions; curbing capitalism	Not just society helping the individual, but the individual being solidary to society; Giving something without expecting something in return; consequences if you fail to take your responsibilities seriously, The wealthy showing solidarity with the less wealthy; Ensuring a sustainable development.	Individual aspirations necessary for developing unity and vice versa; personal responsibility; builds on the self-reliant and fortunate part of society showing financial responsibility; we must all work together to ensure the welfare society
Social, environmental and economic SUSTAINABILITY Living in balance with nature, fighting climate change and contamination, limiting use of natural resources, biological diversity, leaving a sustainable society for future generations.	Complete green transferral of the economy; complete green transferral to green energy; a driver for creation of future workplaces; Financial sustainability: effective use of resources when producing, social progress, high level of education, sound national economy; private sector creating value for society	Investments in maintenance of schools, housing and infrastructure; paying off debts; investing in education, research, welfare and environment	Responsible economy – ensuring a healthy state economy and sustainable development; stable financial framework; Promoting green solutions in state, municipalities, private households and businesses; Developing poor countries without destroying global ecological balance; Rich countries showing abstinence; Measured through "ecological scope"(økologisk råderum)
OPENNESS AND GLOBAL OUTLOOK Openness to the world and other cultures; global solidarity; Part of the global world; Strong international institutions working for welfare, peace of other nations.	EU should work prevent nationalism, ensure workplaces, welfare, green growth and unite Europe and prevent unregulated capitalism	Globalisation; Strong international cooperations regulating global market; A strong and larger EU - prerequisite of strong welfare society; "Strong foreign policies"; political leadership;	Globalization; Duty for rich countries to offer help the poorer; Collective security system
Unique party values	**SOCIALISM:** Equal society; free from social and financial oppression; wealthy minority sharing power, resources and privileges with less wealthy; Decentralized and democratic; Marxist view on society; Shared ownership of means of production and common resources; Public ownership; Curbing capitalism; Companies' social responsibility;	**OPENMINDED PATRIOTISM:** Openness, respect and understanding other cultures while protecting own values which represent democracy and are opposite of intolerance and self-sufficiency; Opposing violations against democratic values; Strong self-awareness of own culture and identity; Other cultures an enrichment but must be integrated and adher to democratic values.	**EDUCATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT:** Access to information; Insight and knowledge; Engaged and critical public; Education necessary to create active and critical citizens; Knowledge and experiences through education; Diverse cultural activity to challenge and develop people's understanding of life; Political and spiritual freedom
		RESPONSIBILITY: Respecting and fulfilling rights and duties; Obligation and responsibility towards yourself, others and society; Personal responsibility: not everything can be solved by society; Global responsibility; Political leadership; Companies responsible to society	**FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:** Responsible economy – ensuring a healthy state economy and sustainable development; stable financial framework: welfare builds on self-reliant and fortunate part of society showing financial responsibility
		DEVELOPMENT: education, research and development necessary for ensuring welfare. We must all contribute to own and society's development (local, national and global). Creating a new and better world main challenge for mankind	**Dignified integration:** dignified integration; cultures living and unfolding themselves in mutual respect

Appendix 1: Taxonomy of the core political values in the Danish coalition government parties