

Labels and Jurisdictions: An Empirical Critique of Standard Models of Portfolio Allocation in Political Science

Introduction

This chapter seeks to add an important empirical dimension to the study of coalition and executive politics. In particular, it deals with the value of executive offices in coalition formation and governance and thus contributes to the evaluation of theories of portfolio allocation (Laver & Shepsle 1996) and governing in coalitions (Martin & Vanberg 2011). The key contribution of this article is the following: Empirical and formal scholarship dealing with the allocation of portfolios has made invaluable contributions to our understanding of the motivations for parties to join governments, but it has generally not considered ministerial organization below the cabinet level. Due to the limited cross-fertilization between formal coalition theories and academic scholarship on ministerial organization, coalition theories have remained unspecific about the precise nature of the 'prize' parties are believed to pursue when entering government. At the same time, students of public administration have done little to build on recent advances in formal coalition theories to study the strategic context of administrative change.

Our contribution builds on such work but ultimately seeks to constitute a first step towards a closer marriage of these distinctive traditions of research. The focus of the present piece is empirical. We will go beyond previous work on portfolio allocation by studying variations in the organization of government departments across a sample of German regional state governments during the past two decades and demonstrate that these variations below the cabinet level are too significant to be ignored in empirical studies of portfolio allocation. While we do not wish to generalize too strongly from our sample, our main conclusion – namely that meaningful assessments of the 'value' of ministries in bargaining over government formation require more accurate empirical information on the actual jurisdictions behind the names of ministries than has been used by scholars of coalition politics in the past – is clearly in line with empirical work on ministerial organization in other countries (e.g. Pollitt 1983; Rose 1987).⁵³

⁵² We would like to thank Nathalie Behnke, Stefanie John, Margret Hornsteiner and Kutsal Yesilkagit for their very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper and, above all, Simon Fink, for some invaluable advice on measurement and computing. All remaining errors are our own responsibility.

⁵³ In a next step we are planning to investigate the extent to which variations in the jurisdictions of ministries across states could be said to reflect differences (a) in the composition of governments (by party) and (b) in the governing parties' policy agendas across parties and time. In other words, we will try to improve not only the empirical content of coalition theories but also our understanding of the strategic and political dimensions of ministerial organization.

Traditional approaches to the study of portfolio allocation and ministerial organization

In this section we will review the extant literature and argue that both the academic scholarship on coalition formation and governance and on ministerial organization have coexisted almost in isolation, although marrying both traditions would clearly contribute to a better understanding of patterns of portfolio allocation.

Payoffs, parity norms and bargaining power

The first major studies of the interaction between coalition politics and government organization focused strongly on the quantitative aspects of portfolio allocation, treating departments of state as units over which parties bargain. Government offices were considered to be the most important payoffs that party leaders receive when they get into government. As Laver and Schofield put it (1990: 164): office '... payoffs represent the bottom line of the political process.' In the process of allocating offices '... some politicians get control over key government positions and some get the chance to turn their policy packages into reality.' Therefore, these payoffs '... are real and tangible expressions of the outcome of the political process.'

Initial research focused on the quantitative share of portfolios political parties expect or receive when bargaining for coalition membership. Gamson (1961) is credited to be the first scholar to have observed a high level of proportionality between the parties in portfolio allocation in a systematic comparative study. A decade later, Browne and Franklin developed this idea and suggested that the empirical proportionality of portfolio allocation could be explained by the existence of a 'parity norm' in most coalitions: 'The percentage share of ministries received by a party participating in a governing coalition and the percentage share of that party's coalition seats will be proportional on a one-to-one basis' (Browne & Franklin 1973: 457). They also found that deviations from this norm were due to a frequent slight bias of portfolios allocation in favour of smaller parties in the government and a slight reduction of the share of offices typically obtained by the party of the prime minister. Despite these relatively minor modifications of strict proportionality, the parity norm is 'one of the most striking non-trivial empirical relationships in political science' (Laver & Schofield 1990: 193). The intuitively plausible proportionality norm is not trivial, because formal theories of bargaining would not always predict a 'fair division' between the parties concerned as regular outcome of negotiations (Brams & Taylor 1996).

A number of further studies sought to refine the initial quantitative framework for the study of portfolio allocation. A number of authors (e.g. Browne & Feste 1975; Budge & Keman 1990: 89-131) highlighted the observation that members of particular party families have had typical and long-standing preferences for particular portfolios. Druckman and Warwick (2005) criticized that early quantitative accounts of portfolio allocation did not take the general salience of particular portfolios in the relevant countries into account. Building on this work, Bäck and her coauthors (2011)

developed an explanation of portfolio allocation which is not merely driven by the number of portfolios but also by the assumption that vote-seeking and policy-seeking parties will seek to capture the ministries that allow them to put their pre-electoral policy commitments into practice. All of these studies get progressively closer to models that refine our understanding of the link between office and policy benefits.

The critical point from the perspective of the present chapter is that practically all of these studies either merely count ministries or tend to take the name of ministries at face value in assigning them to particular policy areas. They do not investigate the extent to which these ministries actually have similar jurisdictions and powers. To our knowledge, Pappi and his coauthors (2008) have produced the only systematic attempt by scholars of coalition politics to disaggregate the labels of ministries using German regional state governments as their source of data. Based purely on the names of the ministries, they disaggregate the main policy responsibilities (Geschäftsbereiche) of 2,478 ministries in 273 regional state governments between 1946 and 2005, identifying 83 main areas of responsibility and creating an empirical classification that demonstrates that these 83 responsibilities tend to cluster around 14 broader policy areas. These areas, rather than the original names of the ministries, are then used in their further analyses of portfolio allocation. The value of this analysis for our purposes is the evidence it provides about the extent to which responsibilities for often quite disparate policies are combined in regional state ministries. Yet, by focusing on the names of the ministries and re-aggregating the data in an empirically meaningful way, they do not fully use the information about variations and shifts in the precise jurisdictions of ministries. In our empirical part we will demonstrate the value added to this approach by our organizational analysis.

Controlling policy and keeping tabs

Many recent formal accounts of coalition formation and governance – usually theories based on the assumption of government parties as policy-pursuing actors – predominantly attribute instrumental value to ministries. In other words, parties care not merely about seats around the cabinet table *per se*, but about the utility of ministries in their attempts to achieve policy goals. A brief review of some of this literature demonstrates the importance of our key point, the benefits of going beyond labels in analyzing portfolio allocation in empirical work.

Laver and Shepsle's (1990, 1996) portfolio-allocation model is one such model where portfolios are relevant for parties to influence policy in a particular area and deliver benefits to constituents. The authors assume that ministers *de facto* have nearly full control over the formulation, passage and implementation of policies in their respective departmental jurisdictions. In equilibrium (according to Laver and Shepsle a state where each portfolio is controlled by the party that includes the median legislator in the relevant policy area) parties have divided up policy responsibilities through the process of portfolio allocation optimally (given the distribution of preferences in a policy outcome space) *before* the formation of the coalition and the ministers

are subsequently 'policy dictators' in the relevant area. But what precise jurisdictions do ministers actually have control over? In their empirical analyses and computer simulations, Laver and Shepsle's assume a close match between the names of ministries and the parties' policy positions calculated for selected dimensions in the policy space (for a critique of this point see Pappi et al. 2008). Our contribution will show that this assumption can be challenged empirically.

We would argue further that similar criticisms can be directed at the new generation of rigorous and fruitful formal work interested in ex-post controls *after* the formation of coalitions. Such accounts usually agree that the head of government and individual ministers are able – and may have incentives – to exploit their agenda-setting powers in order to formulate (or influence) government policy in line with their own preferences rather than in strict compliance with the coalition agreement (as far as the coalition agreement permits discretion). Martin and Vanberg (2004) describe this risk as 'ministerial drift'. Martin and Vanberg (2011) argue that coalition parties use institutional rules of their respective parliaments (e.g. the disclosure of information in the legislative process) to contain the potential policy costs of ministerial drift. Nevertheless, we would argue, changes in the precise definition of the jurisdictions of portfolios themselves could be an important strategy of coalition parties to control the risk of ministerial drift. The extent to which executive organization is used to contain ministerial drift needs to be studied in more depth. Our empirical study below seeks to provide some foundations for such an endeavour.

The point of ministerial organization below the cabinet level has not been dealt with comprehensively beyond single case studies even where scholars have analyzed the organizational structure of selected ministries. For example, a number of authors have produced systematic analyses of the organization of prime ministers' offices in the context of government efficiency and policy coordination (studies of the German case include Mayntz 1980; Müller-Rommel 2000; Knoll 2004; Fleischer 2009; Florack & Grunden 2011). Other authors have focused on the allocation of junior ministerial positions as means of 'keeping tabs' on partners (Thies 2001; Linsmeyer & Pierce 2011) where junior ministers of one coalition party are assigned to a department controlled by another coalition party. Nevertheless, we will demonstrate in this article that further, more detailed analyses of ministerial organization may provide important additional insights relevant not only to the efficiency of ministries but also to problems of coalition governance.

Ministerial organization in public administration

Overwhelmingly, formal coalition theories have made strong simplifying assumptions about the nature of the prize coalition parties are believed to bargain over. Even in the field of Public Administration, empirical work on jurisdictional allocation is scarce and mostly dates back to the late 1970s or early 1980s. Many of these contributions have a functionalist flavor and are dominated by issues of effectiveness and modernization. March and Olson (1983) provide an overview of case studies of government

reorganizations in the USA. Similar studies on Germany are summarised by Bruder (1981). Both contributions try to categorize the vast amount of empirical material. But it turns out that there are limits to drawing an overall picture or to identify patterns of jurisdictional changes. Much the same can be said for Great Britain where the study of ministerial jurisdictions has been particularly detailed: studies of the allocation of jurisdictions within and between ministries often remain descriptive (e.g. Rose 1987). Only a few studies look for explanations. In their book *Bureaumetrics*, Hood, Dunsire and Thomson speak of 'putting like with like' (1981: 20) when they deal with reasons for allocating particular jurisdictions to portfolios. Pollitt (1984) focuses on the process of jurisdictional changes and identifies some patterns drawing on analogies between a biological 'life cycle' (birth, marriage, divorce and death of portfolios) and organizational changes. In his study on Germany, Derlien (1996) builds on the British literature and concludes that coalition bargaining and the preferences of parties seem to play an important role among other case-specific reasons for certain jurisdictional constellations. Nevertheless, it remains unclear how he defined and identified the policy jurisdictions in methodological terms.

Critique

Both research traditions, the study of coalition politics and of ministerial organization have made significant contributions that help to understand the importance of portfolio allocation and ministerial organization in coalition politics. Overall, the scholarly literature originating from the field of Public Administration is precise in terms of valid and reliable measurement but frequently remains descriptive. In theoretical terms, normative functional approaches are dominant, often neglecting the political and strategic dimension of ministerial organization. Political Science is richer in providing theoretical explanations, while the engagement with the empirical dimension of ministerial organization is limited. Above all, the formal theories of coalition formation and governance treat the portfolio itself as the smallest unit of analysis and a kind of 'currency' in the bargaining game between parties (Gamson 1961; Riker 1962; Browne & Franklin 1973; Saalfeld 2014b). More sophisticated analyses based on the salience of particular portfolios for particular parties (especially Bäck et al. 2011; Falcó-Gimeno 2014; Pappi et al. 2008) often infer more information from the names of ministries than is justified, because they do not capture variations in the jurisdictions of the portfolios accurately.

This critique is the point of departure for the present study. We will seek to break down ministries into smaller units of analysis (e.g. divisions and subdivisions within a ministry) to show that such sections get moved between ministries at a surprising rate. This finding of considerable diachronic and cross-sectional variation of ministerial jurisdictions has obvious empirical implications for the study of portfolio allocation. Empirically accurate descriptions of the real jurisdictions of ministries will help to improve the accuracy of models of the role of government organization and institutionalized monitoring in coalition politics. It will also contribute to the field

of Public Administration by isolating more accurately political and strategic factors influencing the particular set of policy jurisdictions allocated to individual ministries.

Our approach, data, case selection and methods

One case may suffice to illustrate the importance of the point made in our review of the literature. In 2013, a change in government composition in Germany led to a largely proportional allocation of portfolios between the Christian Democrats (CDU and CSU) and the Social Democrats (SPD). With its three seats in the cabinet Merkel III, the CSU seems to have been rewarded over-proportionally in terms of its three cabinet positions. Applying a strict proportionality norm, the party should have received two portfolios only. This higher-than-expected payoff was largely achieved at the expense of the CSU's sister party, the CDU (Saalfeld 2014a). However, this quantitative observation conceals a number of significant changes to the jurisdictions of various ministries controlled by the CSU. These changes were not purely driven by a functional logic. The responsibility for consumer protection, for example, was moved from its former 'home', the Federal Ministry of Agriculture (controlled by the CSU), to the Ministry of Justice (controlled by the SPD). Although the Ministry of Transport (headed by a CSU minister) was given the additional responsibility for the development of Germany's digital infrastructure, it lost responsibility for (public) construction. The loss of this jurisdiction to the Ministry of the Environment (a department led by an SPD minister) is significant because it also involves a loss in the ability to target 'pork' to particular districts. Arguably, these changes wiped out some of the superficial gains the CSU made during the coalition negotiations in terms of its disproportionately large allocation of portfolios. Yet such politically meaningful alterations to the jurisdictions of individual ministries are not reflected in the vast majority of studies of portfolio allocation. As emphasized above, our study will show that such changes are much more frequent and 'political' as opposed to purely functional causes (see Pollitt 1984) than expected.

Case selection: Thirteen German federal states

Like in many federal systems, the similarity of many institutions and the simultaneous variation of party systems, coalitions and voter preferences across the sub-national units within Germany provides researchers almost with a 'laboratory' for comparative studies. German federal states (i.e. sub-national territorial units) offer very good opportunities for comparative studies for three main reasons. First, the similarity of constitutional and statutory provisions ensures that they are more 'comparable' than cross-national comparisons tend to be. Second, despite the focus on a single country, the number of cases available for analysis is not too small. Between 1949 and the present there have been more than 250 governments available for comparisons. Third, while many contextual conditions can be held constant or nearly constant in a comparison of regional units within one country, one crucial independent variable, the constellation of government parties, varies both across states and across time.

Our sample includes 13 out of the 16 German states. We cover all governments formed during the last four completed legislative periods. In addition, we include some governments formed after recent elections, if they provided sufficient information on their organization at the time of writing. For example, the most recent state governments of Bavaria and Rhineland-Palatinate were formed after the elections of 2013. At the time of writing, their ministerial organizations had been determined and could be analyzed. Hence we included these governments, although the regular legislative term in these two states should run until 2018. In short, our window of observation stretches from the mid to late 1990s to approximately 2013, depending on the electoral cycle of the respective state. We exclude the three city states of Berlin, Bremen and Hamburg, because their administrative structures combine the functions of a state government with those of a local authority. These have tasks that differ markedly from those of the other 13 states. Hence they also have a different organizational structure, which is hard to compare to territorial states. In the remaining 13 states, we take a snapshot of ministerial organizations at the beginning of each legislative term. In total we thus analyse the organizational structures of 52 state governments. A complete list of governments and periods included in our sample can be seen in Table A.1 in the Appendix.

In order to have a consistent point of reference for all ministries, we considered their organizational structure between the fourth and eighth month after an election. Subsequent changes were not taken into account. The reasons for this choice of time for our snapshot are twofold: First, it usually takes the actors some three months to decide on a government's structure after an election and to effect the necessary changes. Second, the first editions of manuals on ministerial organization in a term are published between four and eight months after the government's inauguration. Since we rely on data from these manuals, this cut-off point also makes sense from a pragmatic point of view. In some cases, a government's structure may change at later stages of a legislative term. In order to generate a coherent dataset, however, we chose not to gather information on such changes.⁵⁴

Analytic focus: Departmental policy jurisdictions

Traditional work on portfolio allocation typically assumes that the name of the ministry characterises all relevant policy jurisdictions. However, this may lead to serious empirical problems as there are no rules for governments with regard to naming portfolios. Empirically, the names of ministries vary in precision and often reveal a certain amount of creativity. In Baden-Württemberg and Hesse, for example, portfolio names are very short and tend to reflect only one major jurisdiction with a number of further jurisdictions not reflected in the title. At the same time, the names given to North Rhine-Westphalian portfolios tend to be more descriptive and usually include several policy domains, if the remit of the ministries spans a number of jurisdictions.

⁵⁴ Checks of the subsequent manuals suggest that there were only very few major changes after our window of observation.

Nonetheless even in North Rhine-Westphalia not all relevant policies are included in the names. In most states, policy areas such as 'buildings and construction' are not included in the name of the ministry, even though they constitute important policy responsibilities of the German federal states. Some ministers label their portfolios in very creative ways. One Bavarian cabinet, for example, included a portfolio called 'Ministry of Life'. Another portfolio in the same state was named 'Ministry of the Future'. Especially in such cases, but also in less extreme ones, it is not obvious which policies or tasks are allocated to the ministry. For the German case, Pappi and his co-authors (2008) made a first attempt to address this problem, with the restrictions pointed out above.

TABLE 1. *Absolute and cumulative frequencies of portfolios in German federal-state governments, ca. 1995-2013.*

Number of portfolios (including Minister President's Department)	Number of cabinets	Percentage of total	Cumulative percentage of total
7	1	2	2
8	6	12	14
9	21	40	54
10	19	36	90
11	4	8	98
12	1	2	100
Total	52	100	

Source: Authors' own count

Our contribution is based on the observation that the organizational plans of ministries reveal a significant amount of information relevant to the evaluation of the political consequences of portfolio allocation. For the purposes of the present chapter we chose an alternative way of capturing the relevant information. A better method of identifying policy jurisdictions in portfolios is to conduct a formal structural analysis of the relevant departments. German federal states in the period under study include between seven and 15 ministries (see Table 1), including the Minister President's Department (Staatskanzlei). Ministerial bureaucracies are organized in a hierarchical line-staff structure. Each ministry consists of several divisions (Abteilungen)⁵⁵ at the highest organizational level. Depending on the size of the ministries, they may contain between two and nine divisions. Larger divisions may include several sub-divisions (Unterabteilungen). Divisions and sub-divisions, in turn, consist of units (Referate), which are located at the bottom of the hierarchy. The number of units per division may vary between three and more than ten. Since the names for the various divisions

⁵⁵ In the official translations of organizational charts, some federal states translate their Abteilungen using the English word 'Division', others refer to them as 'Departments', yet others use the word 'Department' as translation for Ministerium (ministry). We chose the term 'division' for Abteilungen and use 'Department' and 'Ministry' interchangeably for Ministerium.

in the line-staff structure described above vary across observations, we employ a system of generic terms to characterise the '*policy domains*' they are responsible for. We use the following criteria for the identification of such policy domains, which we define as bundles of policy-related tasks:

- A bundle of well-defined tasks amounts to a policy domain for the purposes of this study, if it is located at least at the level of a sub-division in at least one ministerial hierarchy in a given state government.
- In at least one government, this bundle of tasks is located separately from every other bundle of tasks identified. For example, 'climate protection' must be located at least in one ministry other than 'environment' for it to be counted as a separate policy domain – otherwise it would merely be subsumed under 'environment'.
- Bundles of tasks qualifying for a policy domain exclude purely administrative matters of government management (i.e. public relations, internal IT-management, staffing, budgetary and judicial issues).

Based on our definition of policy domains above we were able to identify 37 bundles (plus the Minister President's Office) of relevant tasks (see Appendix, Table A.2).

After having extracted all relevant policy domains from the organizational charts of German state governments in a first step, we examined how these are distributed across the 489 ministries' bureaucratic structures by revisiting the latter's organizational charts. The question in this second step is, thus, what ministry is, or what ministries are, responsible for a particular policy domain – and to what extent are policy domains concentrated or dispersed within a ministry or across ministries of a particular government. We use the term '*jurisdiction*' to capture this bureaucratic dimension of government responsibility. However, we count only instances in which responsibility for a policy domain is reflected in the structure of ministerial organizations at least at the level of one sub-division (Unterabteilung). While this counting rule works well for the fast majority of cases, there are some difficulties. One of those difficulties is that certain 'cross-cutting' policy domains (e.g., women, European affairs or integration of immigrants) are considered important but appear in a number of ministries at relatively low levels (e.g., the level of a unit, or 'Referat' in German). These may, therefore, be 'under-counted'. This risk also applies to policy domains that are not cross-cutting (i.e., they generally apply to many areas of government responsibility) but where significant tasks are located at relatively low levels in the jurisdictions of several portfolios. In order to capture all 'relevant' jurisdictions without inflating the number of jurisdictions within and across ministries, we only count observations that fulfil the following two conditions:

- As mentioned above, we include only those observations that are located at least at sub-division (Unterabteilung) level. Where divisions do not have sub-divisions, the criterion is that at least one-third of a division is responsible for the relevant bundles of tasks. This is to ensure that only those bundles of tasks are included that are located at a sufficiently high level in the ministerial hierarchy.
- Where jurisdictions for certain policy domains are dispersed across several ministries, we seek to avoid over-counting by selecting only the ministry with the highest-ranking location, except where domains are located at an equivalent level. For

example, if the task 'integration of immigrants' is located at division (Abteilung) level in the Ministry of the Interior and at unit (Referat) level in the Ministry of Social Affairs, we count the jurisdiction at division level in the Ministry of the Interior only. Yet if the jurisdiction is located at division level in both ministries, we count both.

This eliminates the myriad of minor tasks that are located at the level of units (Referate) only. Only those observations that meet both criteria spelled out above were counted for the purposes of our analysis below.

Research design, data and methods

This contribution is a comparative study based on a most similar systems design (Przeworski and Teune 1970). The *variable of interest* here is the combination of jurisdictions in a given government department (ministry). We use a novel nested multi-level dataset with 13 federal states at the highest level, the past four complete legislative periods as the second level, and 489 individual ministries (nested by state and legislative period) as the third level of analysis. Our dataset contains information about the governments' organizational structure *within* the ministries and the main tasks carried out in the divisions covered. This requires detailed information about each government's organizational chart which was coded from the governments' administrative manuals. Each organizational chart was analyzed by two coders using the definition of policy domains outlined above. After the first coder had made their decision, a second coder reviewed all decisions to ensure adherence to the coding scheme and reliability.

In the following section we will give a brief description of the dataset and its variables. For the purposes of the present study, the dataset contains 489 portfolios (rows) nested in 52 governments. In other words we disregard the levels 'state' and 'legislative period' and draw on a pooled dataset. All governments save one have at least seven portfolios – plus the Minister Presidents' Departments. The only exception is the (small) state of Saarland with only six ministries. 90 % of the governments use at least nine ministries. One government discharged its duties using as many as 12 portfolios. On the whole, therefore, the average number of ministries per regional government in Germany is smaller than comparable numbers for most national governments in OECD member states (see Derlien 1996: 556; he reports an OECD average of 16-18 ministries for 1994). Like some smaller European states (Austria, Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and particularly Switzerland, see Derlien 1996: 556-557), the combination of several jurisdictions in a single ministry is a necessity for the German federal state governments, especially for the smaller states.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ This clearly limits our ability to generalize from our sample in descriptive terms. Nevertheless, evidence from the German, UK and US national levels suggests there may be a difference in the scale of the propensity to combine jurisdictions, but not in the general opportunities for politicians to determine government organization (see our review of the literature above). Most importantly, the larger propensity to combine jurisdictions is an advantage for our analytic goals.

Our analysis of ministerial organizations revealed the existence of 38 policy domains (columns, see above). In total, our dataset includes 19,101 data points (information on 489 observations across 38 policy domains, plus information on a number of contextual variables). The Minister Presidents' Departments were assigned the 'policy domain' of 'managing government business'. In 84 instances we found policy domains that were simultaneously represented in two different portfolios on a broadly similar hierarchical level. In one case, we even discovered a policy domain that was organized in three ministries: In Lower Saxony, the policy domain 'immigration and integration' was observed to be located at the appropriate levels (see above) in the Minister President's Department, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry for Social Affairs in 2013. Especially 'immigration and integration' turned out to generate two organizational observations in a single government remarkably often. Others were 'buildings and construction' and 'further training and continuing professional development'.⁵⁷

TABLE 2. *Number of policy jurisdictions in a single ministry.*

Number of policy jurisdictions per portfolio	Number of cases	Percentage of total	Cumulative percentage of total
1	68	13.91	13.91
2	78	15.95	29.86
3	109	22.29	52.15
4	93	19.02	71.17
5	53	10.84	82.00
6	35	7.16	89.16
7	20	4.09	93.25
8	23	4.70	97.96
9	6	1.23	99.18
10	3	0.61	99.80
11	1	0.20	100
Total	489	100	

Source: Authors' own calculations

The number of policy jurisdictions allocated to a single portfolio varies greatly. We found that three to four policy domains are pooled in one ministry in more than 40 % of the cases. Ten governments include ministries with nine or more policy domains allocated to them. For example, the Bavarian Ministry of Social Affairs (1998-2003) was responsible for the policy domains 'employment', 'professional development', 'immigration and integration', 'social structure and social insurance', 'youth and children', 'family and civic partnerships', 'gender and women', 'senior

⁵⁷ We did not code internal administrative tasks (personnel, information and communication technology and the like), or – in order to satisfy our criteria outlined above – tasks that were strictly tied to certain other policy jurisdiction. An example for the latter point is local government, a policy domain that is always tied to police matters in German regional governments.

citizens', 'social care for the sick', 'consumer protection', 'health' and 'sports' (11 in total). An accumulation of ten policy domains in a single department can be observed for the Ministry of Social Affairs in Lower Saxony (2003-2008, 2013-present⁵⁸), and the Thuringian Ministry of Economic Affairs.

Comparing ministries across federal states, the Ministries of Social Affairs tend to get assigned the largest number of policy domains. In these ministries, government responsibilities for social welfare are often combined with various other policy domains. By contrast, Ministries of Finance and Ministries of Justice tend to be in charge of a single policy domain, which is also clearly expressed in their names. Impressive though they are, these data should not be taken as indicators of the weight or 'value' of a portfolio. The key point to take away from our data is that *responsibility for some policy domains can be combined more easily than for others*. This needs to be taken into account when evaluating changes to ministerial policy jurisdictions.

Of course another indicator for the importance of a policy domain is the number of cases in which it fulfils the criteria to be counted as an observation according to our definition above. There are three policy domains that are strongly tied to geographical peculiarities of the respective region. Rhineland-Palatine is the only state where we observe 'viticulture and oenology' as a policy domain (4 observations). Similarly, we find 'sea and coastal protection' in maritime states only (7 observations), or 'overcast mining' in some Eastern German states (7 observations). We included those and several other 'rare' policy domains, because they may be substantively interesting. A good example is the policy domain 'climate protection' for which we only have 29 observations (i.e., 29 appropriate units in the ministerial organization of relevant governments). Undoubtedly, most of the 'non-observations' of climate protection occurred because this policy domain tends to be treated as an organizationally undifferentiated part of the larger policy area 'environmental policy' – but interestingly in 17 % of the cases it is not, and 'climate protection' as a policy domain is not located in the same portfolio as environmental policy. A similar picture emerges when we examine 'health' and 'social care for the sick'; 'arts and culture'; 'religion' and 'information technology and data'. Precisely these smaller, more 'movable' policy domains are substantively interesting, and their allocation will be explored in a future paper.

Findings

In the following section, we will present some initial descriptive findings which demonstrate the inadequacy of any formal quantitative assessment of portfolio allocation that does not take the precise definition of the competences into account that each ministry is actually responsible for. The data show that some ministries such as Finance are very big prizes in themselves. Given their specific statutory tasks, they are rarely combined with other policy domains. In other cases, politicians initiate significant reorganizations of ministries after elections. Especially these reorganizations

⁵⁸ For 2008-2013 the total number is nine.

demonstrate the importance of a careful empirical analysis of the organizational structure of the ministries that are allocated to politicians before making judgements about their weight or salience.

Table A.2 in the Appendix lists the 'policy domains' we identified in the first step of our analysis. These 38 competences could be lined up both in the rows and in the columns of a matrix. Table A.3 in the Appendix provides an illustration and gives a matrix for nine policy domains excerpted from the total matrix used for the purposes of this project. We look at every pair of possible combinations between policy domains and record whether these were combined with one another in a single ministry.

We will present our descriptive findings in a series of bar charts illustrating our main empirical point. In general we find some policy domains that are quite regularly combined with certain others (see Figures 1-3), whereas combinations are far more limited in other domains. Amongst those domains that do have a high propensity of being combined with others, some combinations predominantly seem to follow functional patterns whereas others do not.

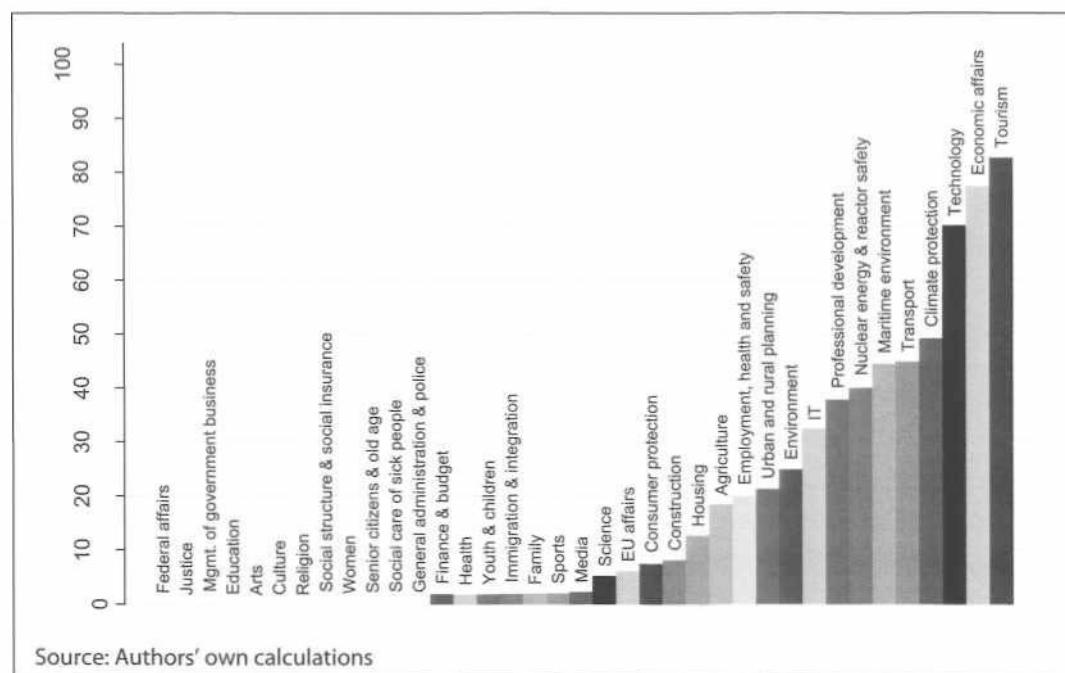


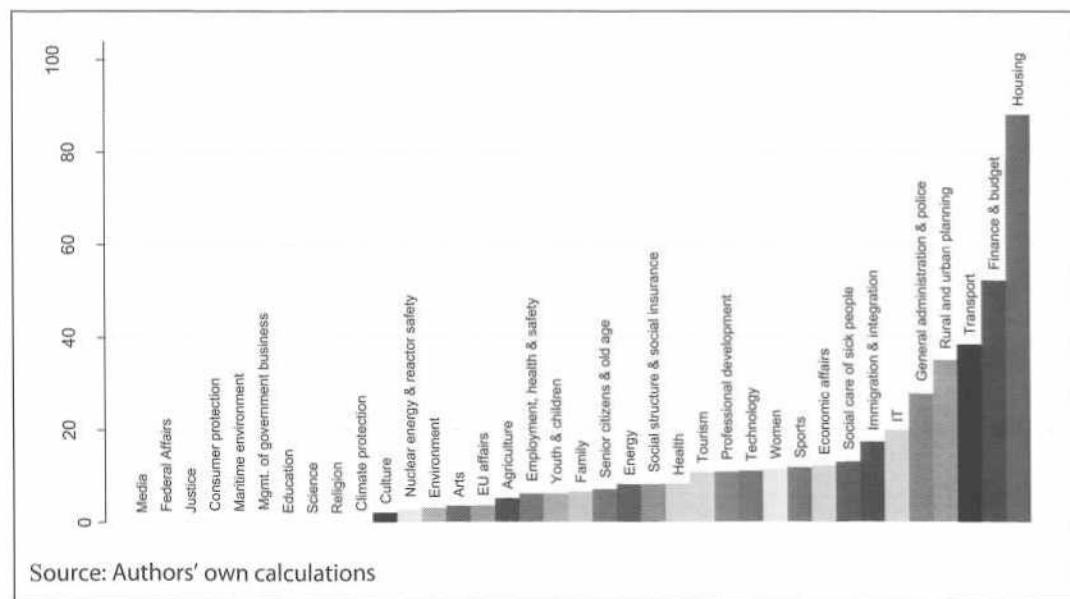
FIGURE 1. *Percent of ministries combining the jurisdiction 'energy' with the jurisdiction.*

Figure 1 focuses on the policy domain 'energy'. The 37 policy domains other than 'energy' are listed on the x-axis of the diagram. The vertical extension of the bars (y-axis) represents – in ascending order of magnitude – the percentages of the respective policy domains that are organized in the same ministry as 'energy' across all 489 ministries in our study.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ We are only counting instances where at least one pair of policy domains could be observed jointly at least once in one single cabinet across all 489 cases (ministries) during our period of observation.

It is evident from Figure 1 that the bars do not necessarily add up to 100. This is due to the fact that most of the ministries in a government contain multiple jurisdictions. Given the small numbers of portfolios some state governments have (see Table 2), it is not unusual for seemingly counterintuitive combinations to occur. Figure 1 demonstrates, for example, that 'energy', 'nuclear energy' and 'finance' were combined in a single department in one case, reflecting the fact (in this instance) that a Ministry of Finance in one particular federal state was merged with the Ministry of Economic Affairs. This merger meant that the policy domain 'nuclear energy', a policy domain previously within the remit of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, was also incorporated into the Finance Ministry.

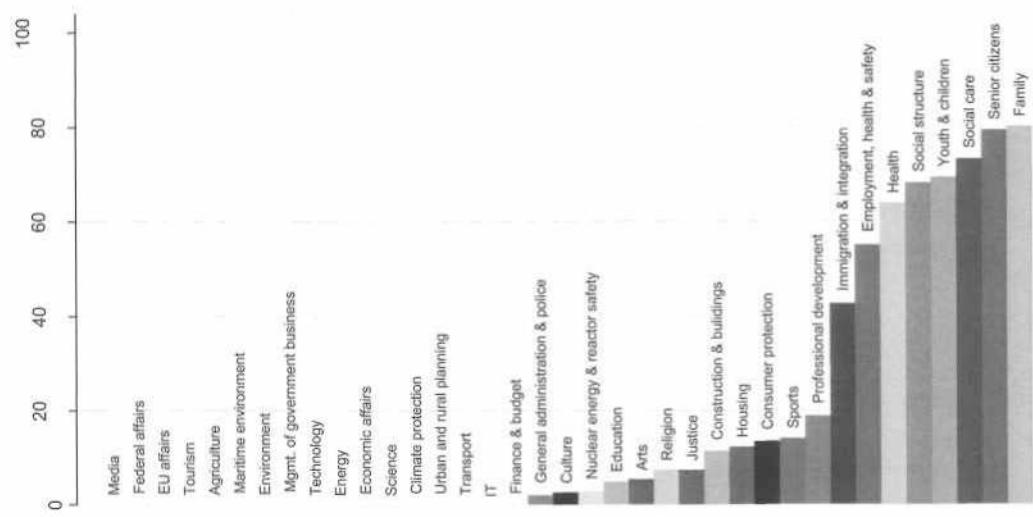
Going to the right of Figure 1 we can see that the policy domain 'energy' was located in the same ministry as the policy domain 'tourism' in over 80 % of the cases. While some of the combinations we observe may have been expected in functional terms, others are more surprising: For example, less than 50 % of the ministries with responsibility for energy also have control over nuclear energy, reactor safety or climate protection.⁶⁰ Even more unusually, the jurisdictions of over one-third of all ministries with responsibility for energy also include information technology, transport and continuing professional training. More than 20 % have responsibility for employment and health and safety. In short, the jurisdictions are not necessarily tailored to ensure functionally optimal policy coordination. In many cases, responsibilities are divided



Source: Authors' own calculations

FIGURE 2. *Percent of ministries combining the jurisdiction 'construction and buildings' with the jurisdiction ...*

⁶⁰ In terms of policy coordination and interest group influence, it may matter a great deal whether important competences in energy policy are divided up between several ministries such as a Ministry for Economic Affairs, the Environment, Agriculture or Energy.



Source: Authors' own calculations

FIGURE 3. *Percent of ministries combining the jurisdiction 'women' with the jurisdiction ...*

and shared within governments. One of our key interests in the longer term will be to explore the extent to which these patterns are aligned with the policy preferences of political parties and coalition partners (both in terms of positions and salience).

Similar to the policy domain 'energy', the domains 'construction' (Figure 2) and 'women' (Figure 3) are combined relatively frequently with other government responsibilities in a single ministry. In the case of 'women' (Figure 3), these combinations frequently seem to be patterned, perhaps following changing policy priorities in state governments (e.g. in the 1990s the domain 'women' was frequently combined with 'family'; later we observe a growing trend to combine it with other domains such as the 'labour market'). For 'construction' (Figure 2), by contrast, the picture is more similar to 'energy' as the bar chart displays a long tail of (individually infrequent) combinations that often do not have any intuitively functional link with this policy domain (e.g. 'professional development', 'social care', 'women' or 'health').⁶¹

There are policy domains that are less likely to be combined with others. 'Justice' is a borderline case. Although responsibility for justice is combined with 12 other policy domains in our sample, those combinations are relatively infrequent. On occasion the Justice Ministry's jurisdiction is extended to include various other domains like 'EU affairs', 'health', 'culture', 'social affairs', and matters relating to 'immigrants' or 'women'. However, this is not done very often. Only the policy domain of 'EU affairs reaches' a level of 15 % of the Justice Ministries.

⁶¹ At this stage we simply state these observations. In a follow-up study, we will seek to provide some explanations for these patterns.

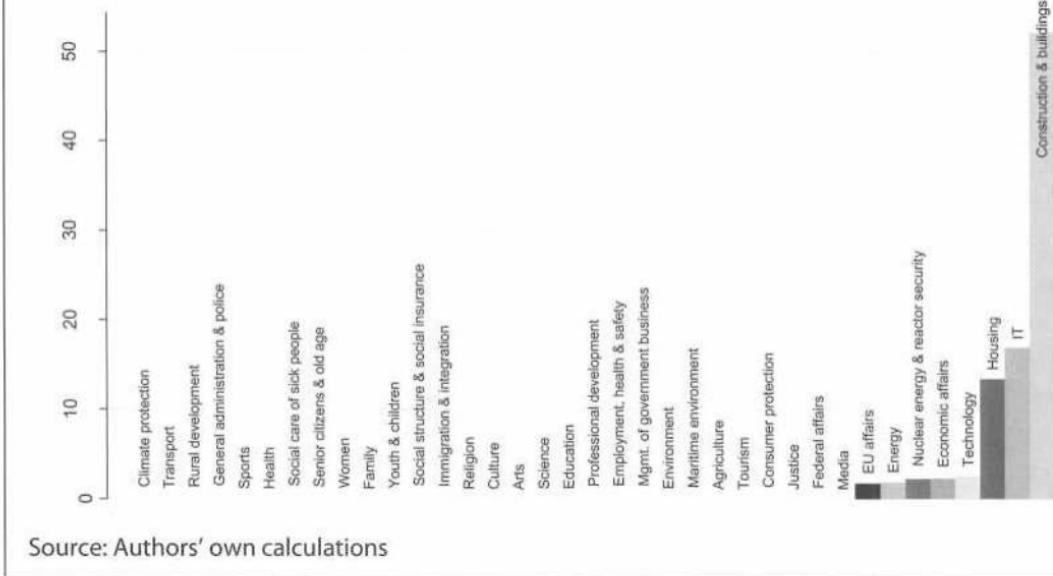
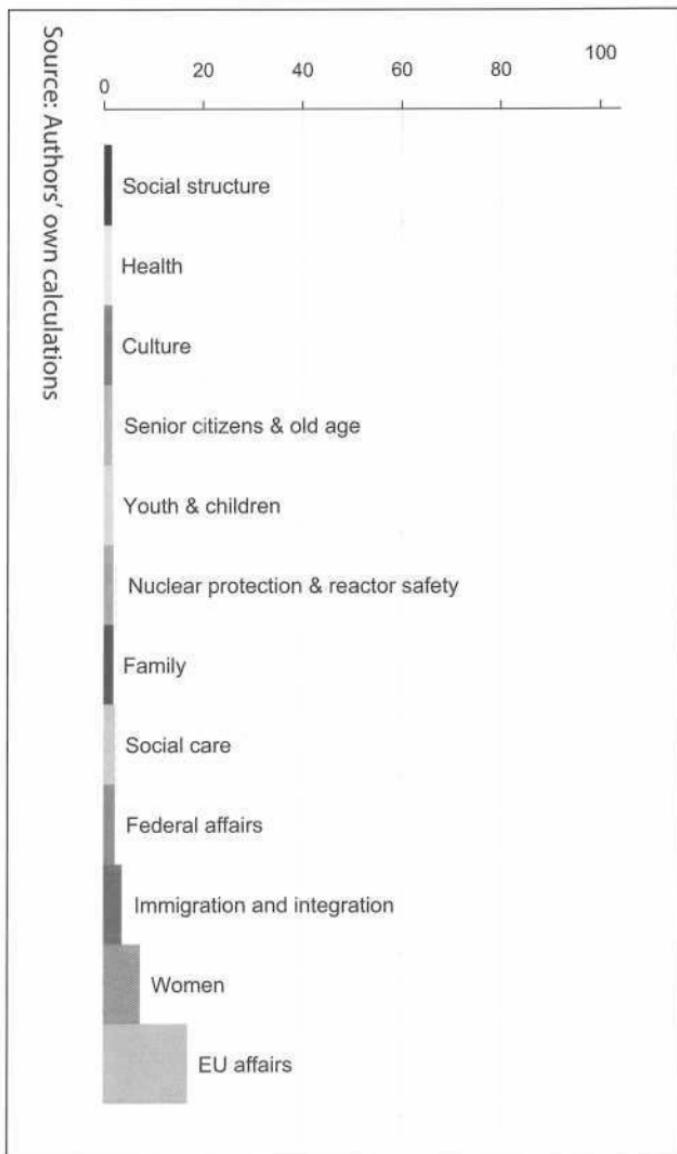
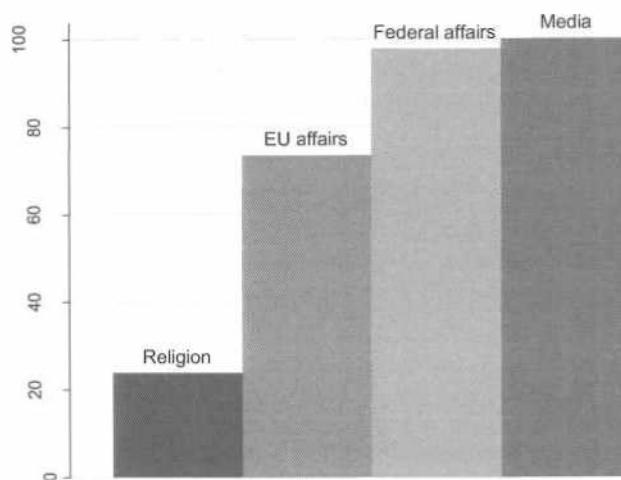


FIGURE 4. Percent of ministries combining the jurisdiction 'justice' with the jurisdiction ...





Source: Authors' own calculations

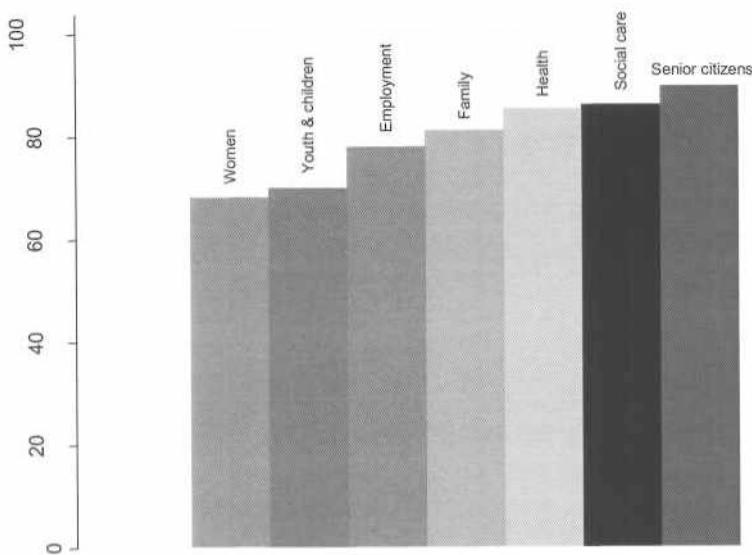
FIGURE 6. *Percent of ministries combining the jurisdiction 'management of government business' with the jurisdiction ...*

Similar to 'justice', the policy domains of 'finance and budget' and general 'management of government business' (typically in Minister Presidents' Departments) have clearly defined constitutional or political tasks and are rarely combined with other policy domains. Figure 5 shows that the policy domain 'finance and budget' tends to be concentrated in a single Ministry of Finance with very few other combinations (except 'construction', allowing Finance Ministries to retain direct financial control over spending on public works) and a large number of zero-observations to the left of the diagram. Having illustrated this point, we drop all zero-observations from subsequent similar Figures and focus on the policy domains they typically do combine.

Minister Presidents jealously guard the responsibility for 'media' as a policy jurisdiction (Figure 6). In most cases, 'federal affairs' (i.e. the state's relation with the German federal government and institutions) and responsibility for 'EU affairs' are also located in the Minister President's Department. In one-fifth of the cases, 'religion' is under the control of the Minister President. Other than that, the Minister Presidents tend not to get involved in particular policy domains.

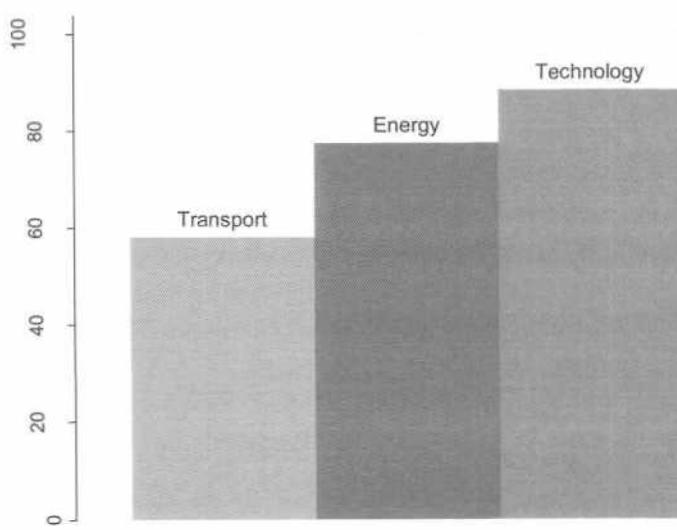
Finally, policy domains such as the 'economy' or 'social services' tend to be relatively concentrated in our sample (Figures 7 and 8) and display few non-intuitive combinations with other domains. For example the combination of 'economy', 'transport', 'technology' and 'energy' suggests that these policy domains are seen as integral to many states' economic strategy.

Figures 1 to 8 lead us to four main conclusions: First, there is considerable empirical support for our claim that the name of a ministry frequently does not allow accurate inferences regarding its actual jurisdiction. In a few portfolios the fit between name and jurisdictions is relatively precise (e.g., Finance or Justice), in others it misrepresents the jurisdictions. This fact has been acknowledged in principle by a number of scholars



Source: Authors' own calculations

FIGURE 7. *Percent of ministries combining the jurisdiction 'social welfare and social insurance' with the jurisdiction ...*



Source: Authors' own calculations

FIGURE 8. *Percent of ministries combining the jurisdiction 'economy' with the jurisdiction ...*

investigating this matter at the national and federal-state level in Germany (e.g. Pappi et al. 2008: 327). Nevertheless, virtually all scholars analyzing the executive dimension of coalition politics retain a relatively simple labeling approach for pragmatic reasons. While this may lead to reasonably accurate approximations for some policy areas (see above), our analyses demonstrate that it certainly does not provide a reliable indicator for all.

Second, we argue that our detailed organizational analysis provides more accurate information on the actual delineation of policy jurisdictions in governments below the cabinet level. The organizational approach taken here has important methodological implications for the study of government organization and portfolio allocation, which we will highlight below.

Third, while some of our findings do suggest a combination of jurisdictions that follows assumed functional considerations, others clearly do not. If, for example, 55 % of all state governments in our sample include ministries that combine responsibility for the domains 'economy' and 'transport', 45 % must have taken different decisions in this context. What, then, are such decisions based on?

Fourth, although there are some typical 'functional' combinations of jurisdictions, governments and the parties forming the governments routinely take far-reaching decisions about the organization of government departments, moving larger divisions and many sections between ministries. This has some interesting implications for portfolio allocation in coalition formation and policy making. In some cases, for example, smaller parties may only receive two portfolios around the cabinet table. However, these portfolios may be 'beefed up' with units from other ministries. It will remain to be seen whether these changes have to be interpreted as some form of 'compensation', or whether parties deliberately seek to retain some partial control over policy jurisdictions which are under the control of a coalition partner's ministry. Another interesting question for further investigation is whether particular parties achieve typical combinations of policy domains under the umbrella of the ministries they control, reflecting a political party's framing of a particular policy issue (e.g. immigration could be framed as a legal, social or law-and-order issue).

Conclusions

In this contribution we sought to show descriptively that traditional methods of conceptualizing and capturing portfolio allocation are often insufficiently informative for the valid and reliable study of coalition formation, payoffs and governance. We also demonstrate that the organizational analysis of ministries may provide a great deal of additional, hitherto uncaptured information, which can be utilized to capture the distribution of policy-making powers in governments and to improve the accuracy of predictions of portfolio allocation where portfolios are instrumental for political parties to achieve policy goals (rather than merely being seats around the cabinet table). Especially where political parties are not conceived of as pure office maximizers without intrinsic interest in policies, or where they are modelled as veto players facing

no significant informational costs in government coalitions, the control of particular ministries becomes important. Laver and Shepsle (1996), Martin and Vanberg (2011) and others have made considerable progress in coalition research by focusing on the institutional constraints of coalition governance in the executive and the legislature. Our chapter is an empirical contribution to this body of scholarship, emphasizing ministerial organization as a further, very important aspect.

Our empirical findings could have important implications for the study of governments, especially coalition governments. If we assume that political parties are motivated by policy goals as well as by the desire to gain public office and maintain their re-election chances, and if we model coalition government as an agency problem (see above), 'ministerial drift' becomes a key concern not only for coalitions but also for single-party governments. There has been a growing literature on the management of risks associated with the delegation of policy-making powers to ministers from a competing party (coalition partner). Coalition agreements have been analyzed as incomplete contracts between coalition parties (Müller & Meyer 2010). In order to keep tabs on coalition partners, parties use the parliamentary and legislative process (Martin & Vanberg 2011; Kim & Loewenberg 2005), the installation of junior ministers in departments controlled by coalition partners (e.g. Thies 2001) and share related portfolios in such a way that a maximum of mutual policy coordination is necessary for functional reasons (e.g. Saalfeld 2014a, 2014b).

Our contribution seeks to add to the empirical discussion in these fields by focusing on an important yet understudied aspect of *ex-ante* control – the 'tailoring' of the jurisdictions of ministries before the government commences its legislative work. We go one step further than previous empirical research by demonstrating the limited informational value the names of ministries carry as an indication for policy jurisdictions. We identified a strategy to use organizational analysis in order to disaggregate the competences in ministries at the level of German federal states and to demonstrate the relative frequency in which – beyond certain classical ministries such as Finance or Justice – policy jurisdictions are dispersed across departments. Given the variety of patterns emerging, there is little reason to conclude that these allocations are (a) random or (b) always based on functional imperatives. The patterns discovered and our reading of further descriptive literature suggests that the organization of government is one of the key parameters of governing, which needs to be taken into account when modeling coalition governance. This requires a much closer integration of coalition studies and the study of public administration than has been achieved in the past.

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Appendix

TABLE A.1: *State Governments Covered, ca. 1995-2013*

No.	Federal State	Government Term	Parties in Government	Cabinet Name	No. of Portfolios
1	Brandenburg	1994-1999	SPD	Stolpe II	10
2	Brandenburg	1999-2004	SPD/CDU	Stolpe III (Platzeck I)	9
3	Brandenburg	2004-2009	SPD/CDU	Platzeck II	9
4	Brandenburg	2009-2014	SPD/Left (PDS)	Platzeck III (Woidke)	9
5	Baden-Württemberg	1996-2001	CDU/FDP-DVP	Teufel III	9
6	Baden-Württemberg	2001-2006	CDU/FDP-DVP	Teufel IV (Oettinger I)	9
7	Baden-Württemberg	2006-2011	CDU/FDP-DVP	Oettinger II (Mappus)	9
8	Baden-Württemberg	2011-	Greens/SPD	Kretschmann	10
9	Bavaria	1998-2003	CSU	Stoiber III	9
10	Bavaria	2003-2008	CSU	Stoiber IV (Beckstein)	9
11	Bavaria	2008-2013	CSU/FDP	Seehofer I	9
12	Bavaria	2013-	CSU	Seehofer II	9
13	Hesse	1995-1999	SPD/Greens	Eichel II	8
14	Hesse	1999-2003	CDU/FDP	Koch I	8
15	Hesse	2003-2009	CDU	Koch II	8
16	Hesse	2009-2013	CDU/FDP	(Koch III) Bouffier I	8
17	Mecklenburgh Upper Pommerania	1998-2002	SPD/PDS (Left Party)	Ringstorff I	9
18	Mecklenburgh Upper Pommerania	2002-2006	SPD/PDS (Left Party)	Ringstorff II	9
19	Mecklenburgh Upper Pommerania	2006-2011	SPD/CDU	Ringstorff III (Sellerling I)	8
20	Mecklenburgh Upper Pommerania	2011-	SPD/CDU	Sellerling II)	8
21	Lower Saxony	1998-2003	SPD	(Schröder III) (Glogowski) Gabriel I	9
22	Lower Saxony	2003-2008	CDU/FDP	Wulff I	9
23	Lower Saxony	2008-2013	CDU/FDP	Wulff II (McAllister)	9
24	Lower Saxony	2013-	SPD/Greens	Weil	9
25	North Rhine-Westphalia	2000-2006	SPD/Greens	Clement I (Steinbrück)	9

No.	Federal State	Government Term	Parties in Government	Cabinet Name	No. of Portfolios
26	North Rhine-Westphalia	2006-2010	CDU/FDP	Rüttgers	10
27	North Rhine-Westphalia	2010-2012	SPD/Greens	Kraft I	10
28	North Rhine-Westphalia	2012-	SPD/Greens	Kraft II	11
29	Rhineland-Palatinate	1996-2001	SPD/FDP	Beck II	8
30	Rhineland-Palatinate	2001-2006	SPD/FDP	Beck III	8
31	Rhineland-Palatinate	2006-2011	SPD	Beck IV	7
32	Rhineland-Palatinate	2011-	SPD/Greens	(Beck V) Dreyer	8
33	Schleswig-Holstein	2000-2005	SPD/Greens	Simonis III	8
34	Schleswig-Holstein	2005-2009	CDU/SPD	Carstensen I	7
35	Schleswig-Holstein	2009-2012	CDU/FDP	Carstensen II	7
36	Schleswig-Holstein	2012-	SPD/Greens/SSW	Albig	7
37	Saarland	1999-2004	CDU	Müller I	7
38	Saarland	2004-2009	CDU	Müller II	6
39	Saarland	2009-2012	CDU/FDP-DPS/Greens	Müller III (Kramp-Karrenbauer I)	8
40	Saarland	2012-	CDU/SPD	Kramp-Karrenbauer II	7
41	Saxony	1994-1999	CDU	Biedenkopf II	9
42	Saxony	1999-2004	CDU	Biedenkopf III (Milbradt I)	8
43	Saxony	2004-2009	CDU/SPD	Milbradt II (Tillich I)	8
44	Saxony	2009-2014	CDU/FDP	Tillich II	8
45	Saxony-Anhalt	1998-2002	SPD	Höppner II	9
46	Saxony-Anhalt	2002-2006	CDU/FDP	Böhmer I	8
47	Saxony-Anhalt	2006-2011	CDU/SPD	Böhmer II	8
48	Saxony-Anhalt	2011-	CDU/SPD	Haseloff	8
49	Thuringia	1994-1999	CDU/SPD	Vogel II	8
50	Thuringia	1999-2004	CDU	Vogel III (Althaus I)	8
51	Thuringia	2004-2009	CDU	Althaus II	8
52	Thuringia	2009-2014	CDU/SPD	Lieberknecht	8

Sources: Authors' own compilation from state parliaments' and state governments' websites.

TABLE A.2: *Policy Domains Identified in the Study*

No.	Policy domain	Sub-domains
1	Media	
3	Consumer protection	
4	Tourism	
5	Agriculture	Forestry, food
6	Maritime environment	Coastal environment, coastal safety and flood control
7	Environment	Protection of natural heritage
8	Climate protection	
9	Reactor safety	Nuclear energy
10	Technology	Innovation
11	Energy	
12	Economic affairs	Crafts, trade
13	Employment	Health and safety
14	Professional development	Further training and continuing professional development
15	Education	Schools
16	Higher education	Science, research
17	Arts	
18	Culture	
19	Religious affairs	
20	Integration of immigrants	Immigration, ethnic German settlers, emigration
21	Social structure ('Sozialordnung')	Disability, social insurance
22	Young persons	Children
23	Families	Civil partnerships
24	Women	Broader questions of gender and diversity
25	Senior citizens	Old age
26	Social care of sick people	
27	Health	
28	Sports	
29	General Administration	Police, domestic intelligence, local government
30	Construction	Construction, management of public construction
31	Urban and rural planning	Rural development, rural spaces
32	Housing	Air, roads, waterways, railways
33	Transport	
34	IT	Data protection, digital infrastructure
35	Federal affairs	
36	EU affairs	
37	Justice	
38	Finance	Public finance, taxation, budgetary matters

¹ General administration (which includes tasks like 'labour agreements for the whole state administration' or 'administrative modernization management') in German Federal States is bound to the Ministry of the Interior. Also the policy jurisdictions 'police', 'domestic intelligence' and 'local government' have to be organized in this portfolio.

TABLE A.3: *Partial Illustration of Our Coding Scheme for the Combination of Policy Domains in a Ministry (Extract).*

		Policy domains								
		Consumer protection	Tourism	Agriculture	Maritime environment	Environment	Climate	Nuclear safety	Technology	Energy
Policy domains	Consumer protection	-								
	Tourism	0	-							
	Agriculture	1	1	-						
	Maritime environment	0	0	1	-					
	Environment	0	0	1	0	-				
	Climate	0	0	0	0	0	-			
	Nuclear safety	0	0	0	0	0	0	-		
	Technology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	
	Energy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-