Revision Letter for ‘Drivers of Political Party Death: Theorizing and Testing Downsian and Sociological Rationales’

We are grateful for the three referees’ positive and thoughtful comments that were extremely helpful to revise the manuscript we originally submitted. Some of the comments that referees made overlap, yet for clarity’s sake we discuss the feedback we got from each referee one by one.

Given word restrictions we tried to keep additions brief and, where appropriate, placed them in footnote. However, if considered useful by referees or editors we are happy to elaborate on the respective issues further and/or move them into the main text. Also note that to be able to accommodate the various additions (and comply with the 10,000 words limit), we removed some footnotes that were helpful but not essential in our view, removed duplicate citations and streamlined the conclusion.

For transparency’s sake, all substantive changes in the manuscript referred to in the following are highlighted in yellow.

Referee 1

1) The referee made the important point that it is essential to make clearer that our definition of party death based on any form of electoral *participation* (local, regional or national) does not favour the Downsian perspective stressing the importance of performance indicators linked to electoral *success* (H1.2, H.1.3). This is done in light of other conceptions of party death, disappearance or exit used in the literature, which use parliamentary representation or a certain level of electoral performance or relevance as yardstick for the boundary between active and inactive parties (footnote 2).

2) The referee asked us to defend our conception of new party better, which we did. Backed up by a range of additional sources, we also included specifications of newly born party and split (pp. 14-5).

3) The insertion of footnote 2 that responded to point 1) also explicitly justifies why our definition (and the corresponding operationalization) was more suitable than other definitions/ operationalizations to test our theoretical framework. As compared to performance-based specifications it avoids a bias in favour of the Downsian approach. We are happy to add another section on this issue in the operationalization section as well or move the new section into the measurement part. But given its importance we felt is best discussed pp. 5-6 when our definition of death is first explicitly introduced in the paper (as its significance transcends technical issues of measurement).

4) To explain the coding of the party family variable, additional information was added in Appendix 1. Most of party family codes are based on the Parlgov dataset, although we also used country-specific sources and communication with country experts to verify these codes.

5) We added additional text on page 20 justifying the use of average district magnitude for measuring electoral system disproportionality. Essentially, while we recognise the problems with using the average district magnitude measure, we feel that alternative measures– such as nationwide thresholds remain (as district magnitude) approximations and are not better suited given the purposes of our research. We therefore follow the pre-dominant trend in the literature on new parties and electoral systems (e.g. Tavits 2006; Biezen and Rashkova 2013; Carey and Hix 2011) and use district magnitude.

6) While the reviewer is entirely correct that a standard practice is to include interaction effects only if they are explicitly theorised, when using the Cox model a standard practice is to include interactions with time for the explanatory variables that violate the proportional hazards assumption. We follow this practice in order to achieve non-biased estimates of our predictor variables. This is explained on page 21. The effect of the rootedness of a formation (as well as some other explanatory variables) is time-dependent even if the coefficients of interaction effect variables are not statistically significant. This can be seen in the first differences graph provided in Appendix 7. It shows that the effect of the rootedness is only significant for some values of the time variable. We added a reference to Appendix 7 when discussing the effect of rootedness (p. 25) to make this point more explicit.

7) The referee found the title too intense and negative: We changed it in ‘Perspectives on (rather than ‘Drivers of’) Political Party Death: Theorizing and Testing Downsian and Sociological Rationales’ but are happy for any input on this.

8) We removed the typos from the main text and the appendix.

Referee 2

Referee 2, as Referee 1, asked us to provide a more detailed discussion of our definition of new party as well as party death in light of earlier work proposing alternative definitions and specifications. As detailed in our responses to queries 1), 2) and 3) raised by Referee 1 (see above) we have done so embedding our work (both the theoretical and empirical components) more in the state of the art on new parties citing additional work by, among others, Mair, Deschouwer, Beyens et al, Bolleyer and Bytzek, Enyedi and Ibenskas.

Referee 3

Referee 3 asked us to broaden the foundation our work considering the US literature on party formation and goals, especially Cohen et al (2008) which we now refer to underpin the sociological rationale (p. 6). To Bawn et al 2012 ‘A Theory of Political Parties’ we already referred in the introduction (p. 3) but now use it – together with Cohen et al (2008) – to underpin the sociological perspective when introducing our theoretical framework p. 6 (if another paper by this author was meant, not that one, we are happy to consider it).

Referee 3 asked us to strengthen the theoretical framework. Following the referee’s advice, we made the following changes:

We made more explicit that our framework puts an emphasis on *party agency* (following Enyedi, de Art and Lange etc), the decision of core party actors to continue or cease to invest resources in the ongoing maintenance of their party that can be conceptualized in light of different motivations associated with the Downsian and sociological perspective (pp. 6-7). We have further added footnote 4 to make clear why also with growing party age and institutionalization (that makes persistence increasingly likely) the fundamental inability of a party to achieve its core goal can be expected lead to its death (rather than to party change).

We have specified the causal rationale underpinning H1.2 and H1.3 detailing how the holding of seats/ access to government can be expected to directly invite a decreasing risk of death (i.e. the decision of core party actors to stop working towards the maintenance e of their party). To do so we have merged the sections explaining the rationales of the two hypotheses as the two follow the same logic (pp. 10-11).

In terms of potential omitted variables the referee refers to, we would expect their individual effects on parties’ seat share and participation in government to be of moderate size at best. This is because parties’ electoral success and government participation are linked to a large number of factors, as the relevant literatures convincingly show. It is highly unlikely that all these factors accounting for seat share and government participation would also have an effect on party survival. For example, economic growth, a key predictor variable of parties’ electoral success, is unlikely to affect party survival directly. So, even if some factors affecting seat share and government participation have an effect on party survival as well, omitted variable bias is unlikely to be that large as to eliminate the substantively large effects of seat share and government access participation that we uncover in our analysis. Thus, we would not expect for the substantive effects of these variables to disappear.

We replaced the rationale underpinning H2.2 which indeed was unclear (p. 12).

We have expanded our discussion in footnote 8 to make clearer why H2.3 belongs to the sociological rationale and makes different predictions than a Downsian account would. We have also added a specification in the main text explaining the rationale underpinning H2.3 and how it contrasts with the Downsian rationale (p. 13).