Devolution, "new politics" and election pledge fulfilment in Scotland, 1999-2011

Fraser McMillan
School of Social and Political Sciences
University of Glasgow
Glasgow
G12 8RZ

fraser.mcmillan@glasgow.ac.uk

Abstract:
The institutions of Scottish devolution were designed using the majoritarian Westminster system as a "negative template" with the hope that a more consensual "new politics" would emerge. The electoral system successfully prevented a single-party majority in the first three sessions of the Scottish Parliament. But did this bring about the desired changes in party behaviour? Research on the connection between campaign promises and government actions shows that it is strongest in the United Kingdom - where single-party majorities are the norm - and weakest in countries where multiparty coalitions are common. If new politics had succeeded in its aims, we would expect Scottish governments to fulfil a lower proportion of manifesto pledges than British governments. This study investigates the extent to which the 1999 and 2003 Scottish Labour-Liberal Democrat coalitions and the 2007 SNP minority administration fulfilled their campaign pledges using an original dataset containing 600 individual manifesto pledges. All three parties are found to have fulfilled pledges at a rate comparable to Westminster governments. These findings reinforce the notion that the reality of post-devolution Scottish politics fell short of its designers' ambitions. Supplementary analyses provide further support for inferences made in previous pledge studies concerning the factors which contribute to pledge fulfilment.

Keywords: manifestos, election pledges, party responsibility, devolution, Scottish politics, Westminster system

Introduction

Scotland's first national legislature for nearly 300 years was elected in 1999, the result of a 1997 referendum in which the country's voters overwhelmingly endorsed the devolution of limited powers from the United Kingdom central government to create a "quasi-federal" set of institutions (Cairney 2011). Until this time, Scotland was "the only democratic country in the world to have its own system of law, but no elected legislature of its own to determine or reform that law" (Arter 2004, p. 2). The architects of devolution, the Scottish Constitutional Convention (SCC) and its successor the Consultative Steering Group (CSG), designed Scotland's new institutions in response to what they perceived to be endemic shortcomings of the majoritarian Westminster system (Cairney 2011, p. 9). The mixed-member proportional (MMP) electoral system, the centrepiece of this effort, initially lived up to expectations by preventing any party from winning a parliamentary majority at the first three times of asking.

Shortly after Parliament was reinstated in 1999, however, doubts were expressed about the extent to which political reality at Holyrood matched the substantive aspirations of the new politics (see Mitchell 2000, p. 620). Did the institutional design bring about the desired changes in political culture north of the border during this period? The existing evidence is mixed. But until now attention has not been devoted to the party mandate, which lies at the heart of democratic theory (APSA 1950; Downs 1957). The existing literature on manifesto pledges shows that governing parties tend to carry out most of their campaign promises. This "programme-to-policy linkage", however, is much stronger in majoritarian democracies like the United Kingdom than multiparty consensus systems (Thomson et al. 2017). Had the aims of the SCC/CSG been achieved in the early years of Scottish devolution, the programme-to-policy linkage observed at Holyrood ought to be weaker than the one at Westminster.

This article tests the extent to which the first three Scottish governments between 1999 and 2011 carried out their manifesto pledges. In addition to its contribution to the literature on the early years of Scottish devolution, this study aims to expand on existing pledge fulfilment research by testing the programme-to-policy linkage under different institutional arrangements and levels of governance. The findings of the study are broadly in line with

existing literature on both the programme-to-policy linkage and Scottish devolution, demonstrating high rates of pledge fulfilment and, consequently, limited divergence from Westminster norms.

The political context: devolution and "new politics"

Following the successful devolution referendum, the Scotland Act 1998 made explicit the powers to be retained by the UK government. The "reserved" areas were security and foreign affairs, macroeconomic policy, social welfare and a handful of other competencies (Keating 2005). Devolution therefore handed wide-ranging responsibilities to the new legislature. These included healthcare provision, agriculture, criminal justice, transport infrastructure, local government and education, as well as limited tax-varying powers in accordance with a supplementary referendum ballot proposal which had also been approved (Keating 2005). Some important institutions of Scottish public life—such as the Church of Scotland and Scots Law—had always been distinct, conferring a degree of so-called "administrative devolution" on the country (Cairney 2011). Political devolution therefore gave rise to a highly unusual scenario. An existing Westminster party system, which had taken on an increasingly Scottish flavour since the 1970s (Keating 2005), was "imported" into a new set of institutions which were created to serve a nation with its own long-distinct cultural, social, legal and political context (Arter 2004).

While lobbying for devolution through the 1990s, the Scottish Constitutional Convention stated that a Scottish political system ought to engender a form of politics "radically different from the rituals of Westminster: more participative, more creative, less needlessly confrontational" (quoted in McGarvey and Cairney 2008, p. 12). This statement encapsulates the lofty aims of the SCC and, after the referendum, the cross-party Consultative Steering Group set up to oversee the implementation of the result. These "architects of devolution" sought to introduce "new institutions, new processes and a new political culture" (Mitchell 2000, p. 1). They viewed Westminster politics and the UK more generally as a "negative template" (ibid, p. 2), and looked to Scandinavian-style consensus democracy as an alternate ideal (Cairney 2011, p. 10). This was premised on a conception of Westminster as a system which:

…exaggerates government majorities, excludes small parties, concentrates power within government rather than Parliament and its committees, and encourages adversarialism between government and opposition (Cairney 2011, p. 11).

The centrepiece of Scotland's new politics was the electoral system (Lundberg 2014). The Additional Member System (known to academics as Mixed-Member Proportional, or MMP) had been identified by the SCC as a compromise between the local emphasis of parliamentary elections at the UK level and a recognition of the representative distortions produced by First Past the Post (Mitchell 2000, pp. 607, 608). The electoral system was an immediate success from the perspective of its designers, producing successive Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition governments. Although a single-party majority was achieved by the SNP in 2011, the party narrowly lost it again in 2016, forcing its representatives to informally collaborate with the small contingent of Scottish Green MSPs for a majority on key votes.

In addition to MMP, other measures taken in the attempt to induce consensual politics included an emphasis on powerful parliamentary committees over plenary sessions (Arter 2004, p. 5) and the lowering of barriers to interest group and citizen participation, such as the right to petition parliament—accompanied by a dedicated committee (ibid, p. 8)—and a "Civic Forum" to engage voters across the country in the policy making process (Mitchell 2000, pp. 611, 612).

The political elites in charge of shaping devolution put faith in the ability of these institutions to limit the Westminster model's influence on the incipient Scottish executive and legislative culture. Their success in practice is a matter of debate. The failure of the SCC/CSG to anticipate executive dominance has drawn criticism, as well as its inability to recognise the argumentative, ideological character of political parties (Mitchell 2000, pp. 620, 621; McGarvey and Cairney 2008, p. 225; Keating 2005, p. 217). According to Mitchell, the SCC was mistaken to assume that the electoral system alone would bring about the desired changes. The system also produced unforeseen challenges which exacerbated partisan tensions, most notably the much-studied territorial disputes between constituency and regional MSPs (e.g. Carman and Shephard 2007; Lundberg 2014). But these pessimistic outcomes and judgements may overlook latent shifts in the direction envisaged.

With devolution, the Westminster party system was placed in a new institutional context designed to remake its longstanding traditions. Did the new Scottish institutions bring about the desired changes in party behaviour and executive and legislative culture? This question can be tested, in part, by examining the strength of the party mandate in Scotland in the years following devolution.

Mandate theory

In his seminal volume An Economic Theory of Democracy, Downs (1957) conceived of parties and voters as self-interested rational actors. He expected parties to behave "responsibly", carrying out their campaign pledges as mandated by voters. The idea of party responsibility satisfies the core normative demand of democracy that voters be given a meaningful choice between consequential alternatives (Schedler 1998). Though Downs' original theory has received substantial elaboration and criticism in the decades since its publication, researchers still recognise the electoral mandate as a form of representation (Andeweg and Thomassen 2005; Mansbridge 2003; Pitkin 1967). The idea of the mandate is a "common sense" (Körösényi and Sebők 2018) conceptual starting point for the simple empirical question of whether political parties do as they had promised. In real life, parties persist in issuing manifestos even though few voters consult the documents first-hand (Harmel 2018, p. 229) and representatives perceive electoral mandates (Grossback et al. 2005). As Sartori stated (1976, p. 16), democracy in practice is messy, "determined by a concurrence of events" rather than neat academic concepts.

Though the responsible parties model is strongly linked to majoritarian systems in general and Westminster in particular (Royed 1996), the dynamics are expected to function in a similar way in multiparty democracies, albeit with a "less effective transmission of voters' policy preferences into government actions" (Thomson 2001, p. 173). This hypothesis has been confirmed repeatedly, with the linkage found to be weaker under coalition governments, in which power is shared among multiple parties (Thomson et al. 2017). The extent to which party government in Scotland deviated from the Westminster system can be tested by examining party responsibility at Holyrood.

Previous research on pledge fulfilment

As Budge and Hofferbert state (1990, p. 113), the notion of the party mandate can "be refuted by showing that the program is not related to subsequent government policy". In contrast to their own "saliency approach", which tests the association between the emphasis parties place on issue topics and subsequent government spending, the "pledge approach" (Thomson 2001, p. 193), examines the direct correspondence between party manifesto pledges and their fulfilment by government actions. Most pledge researchers have reached the same conclusion: that parties tend to carry out the bulk of their election programmes in government (Pétry and Colette 2009).

Early studies by Pomper (1968), Rose (1984), Rallings (1987) and Kalogeropoulou (1989), though less refined than subsequent research (Pétry and Colette 2009, p. 71), provided the first indications that political parties' campaign pledges were redeemed more often than political scientists had previously assumed (see Rose 1984, p. 56). These early studies largely talked past one another and, crucially, each lacked a clear operational definition of what constitutes a "pledge" (Pétry and Colette 2009). The first concern of any study of the programme-to-policy linkage is how to categorise the statements made in party manifestos (Mansergh and Thomson 2007). The duty of the researcher is to sort "the wheat from the chaff" (Rose 1984, p. 62) by deciding if a given statement comprises an objective promise. Royed was the first researcher to discuss this at length in her 1996 study of pledge fulfilment in the United Kingdom and United States.

Several pledge fulfilment case-studies followed this example, with researchers investigating the linkage in countries including the Netherlands, Ireland, Spain, Italy, Sweden, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada and Portugal (respectively Thomson 2001; Costello and Thomson 2008; Artés and Bustos 2008; Moury 2011; Naurin 2014; Kostadinova 2013; Praprotnik and Ennser-jedenastik 2015; Duval and Pétry 2018; Moury and Fernandes 2018). Efforts to share data and standardise coding procedures recently resulted in a comparative paper on the topic, the most definitive work on the programme-to-policy linkage to date (Thomson et al. 2017). Some studies have moved beyond the linkage itself to address topics including voter evaluations of pledge fulfilment (Thomson 2011; Naurin and Oscarsson 2017; Pétry and Duval 2017; Thomson and Brandenburg 2018), other features of manifestos (Håkansson and

6

Naurin 2014; Praprotnik 2017; Dolezal et al. 2018) and methodology (Louwerse 2011; Naurin 2011).

The main contribution of this literature has been to demonstrate that parties in government tend to follow through on most of their manifesto pledges; rarely fewer than half. Substantially fewer opposition party pledges are fulfilled, which is crucial from a normative standpoint (Thomson 2001). Government and opposition fulfilment rates vary primarily due to institutional and circumstantial constraints on incumbents, i.e. whether parties rule alone or in coalition, in majority or minority, and whether the economic conditions are favourable (Thomson et al. 2017). Across all cases examined by Thomson et al., the gap between government and opposition pledge fulfilment rates is strongest under single-party majorities, which carry out more than 70% of their pledges on average. Single-party minorities are shown to fulfil slightly fewer in aggregate. However, in many cases they have been shown to perform as well or better than single-party majorities (Artés 2013; Naurin 2014). Parties participating in coalition governments, on the other hand, tend to fulfil just over half of their pledges (Thomson et al. 2017, p. 535). The important difference seems to be whether parties are forced to share power or not.

The strongest programme-to-policy linkage in a single country is found in the United Kingdom, with 86% of manifesto pledges being fulfilled by governments between 1974 and 1997 (Royed 1996; Thomson et al. 2017). In line with the findings about administration types, the rate tends to be slightly lower in countries where single-party minorities are historically common (e.g. Sweden, Portugal, Spain) and much lower in countries where multiparty coalitions are the norm (e.g. the Netherlands, Ireland, Austria). Expectations concerning the strength of the programme-to-policy linkage in Scotland are now developed using previous findings for reference.

Expectations

In the first three sessions of the Scottish Parliament the electoral system met its designers' objectives. Two Labour-Liberal Democrat coalitions (elected in 1999and 2003) were followed by a Scottish National Party minority administration (elected in 2007). The

literature suggests that these electoral outcomes should result in lower rates of pledge fulfilment compared to Westminster, particularly during the coalition years. As Mansergh and Thomson state, "lower rates of pledge enactment can be expected in institutions that compel government parties to share power" (2007, p. 316). This hypothesis has received repeated empirical confirmation. A handful of existing pledge studies contain direct parallels to the Scottish case which are also relevant to this study's expectations. These also suggest that the rate of pledge fulfilment at Holyrood will be lower than that at Westminster.

So far, only a handful of English-language studies have investigated the programme-to-policy linkage at regional level. Of greatest relevance is the evidence from Quebec (Pétry et al. 2018; Duval and Pétry 2019), a Canadian province which is often compared to Scotland due to its cultural distinctiveness and experience of unsuccessful referendums on separation with Canada. Pétry et al. (2018) report that the rate of fulfilment for Quebec's provincial government is substantially lower than that of the Canadian government, with an average of 52% compared to 72% at federal level (ibid., p. 5). The discrepancy is attributed to overlapping jurisdictions in supply and demand. Pétry et al. find that Quebec's nationalist party tends to "over-pledge" by making promises which fall outwith the provincial jurisdiction, hence lowering its rate of fulfilment when in government. Meanwhile, Quebec governments already find themselves constrained by their dependence on federal resources and lack of control over macroeconomic decision-making.

Another recent study reports on the linkage in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia (Matthieß 2019). Though Matthieß focuses on the dynamics of education-related pledge fulfilment for majority and minority coalition governments and does not draw a direct comparison with the national level, the NRW parties' low fulfilment rates in the area—none even reaching 40%—also compare unfavourably to previous German federal governments (Ferguson 2012).

Though we can expect to observe a similar discrepancy between the levels of government in a Scottish/British context, there is good reason to believe the dynamics identified by Pétry et al. (2018) do not directly translate to the current case. The jurisdiction of Holyrood is very clear, with the Scottish government exercising complete control over several areas of policy. Though there is more overlap between competencies now than in 1999, these changes

mostly happened after the time period under consideration here. This compares to significant overlap in functions in the case of Quebec/Canada (Pétry 2018, p. 2). In accordance with this, the current study adopts a research design which minimises the likelihood of jurisdictional overlap (and the interference of macroeconomic/fiscal factors) by restricting the analysis to justice and education pledges. These functions were already distinct in Scotland before devolution, and the Scottish government has exercised complete control since devolution (see the later Methods section for further discussion). Matthieß (2019, p. 130–31) adopted a similar approach for NRW/Germany for the same reason, restricting the analysis to education pledges because that issue area is "the most important policy field whose responsibility lies exclusively with the German states". Though this decision limits the comparability of this study to the more comprehensive findings on Quebec, it is appropriate for the current study's research question, which is the impact of "new politics" institutions on pledge fulfilment vis a vis strongly centralised Westminster governments.

A second salient comparison, in terms of institutional change, is that of New Zealand's adoption of a new electoral system. Public dissatisfaction with politics led to the country's First Past the Post electoral system being replaced from 1996 onwards by MMP (McCluskey 2008), the same one introduced in Scotland three years later. The result was a shift from majority to minority and eventually coalition government. McCluskey reported a substantial drop in pledge fulfilment rates, of up to twenty percentage points, following the switch in electoral systems. All of the available evidence suggests a significantly weaker programme-to-policy linkage will be found in Scotland compared to Westminster. In accordance with these expectations, the first hypothesis is as follows.

> H1: The rate of government party pledge fulfilment in the first three sessions of the Scottish Parliament is closer to that of consensus democracies than the majoritarian Westminster system.

It is also possible to develop expectations concerning differences between the parties. Though one would conventionally expect single-party minorities to be more effective than coalition parties, I expect that Labour obtained the highest pledge fulfilment rate of the three parties for a variety of contextual reasons. Labour governed at Westminster and

Holyrood simultaneously between 1999 and 2007, and the Scottish party retained close relations with the wider British party throughout. Labour were also the senior coalition partner on both occasions, holding 56 and then 50 seats of 127 to the Lib Dems' 17 in each session. Furthermore, the two parties were closely ideologically aligned with one another, resulting in few dramatic disagreements. Though previous studies have not found a pronounced relationship between ideological proximity and pledge fulfilment (Praprotnik and Ennser-jedenastik 2015; Thomson et al. 2017), Labour and the Lib Dems collaborated especially closely in government.

The SNP government of 2007, meanwhile, governed alone as a precarious minority. Comparative research on pledge fulfilment has not identified a significant difference in pledge fulfilment rates between single-party minority and majority administrations, though there is reason to believe this is partly explained by the strength of minority governments in the Swedish and Portuguese cases where that government type is historically common (Thomson et al. 2017). However, when elected in 2007 the SNP were the largest party by just one seat, making their plurality in parliament more tenuous than a typical minority government. Furthermore, they were forced to form an unlikely informal alliance with the Scottish Conservatives to pass legislation (Cairney 2011). The SNP's grip on power was numerically delicate and required regular policy compromises, placing them in a weaker position to enact their promises than Labour in the preceding two terms. Hence, the second hypothesis is as follows:

> H2: While in government, Scottish Labour fulfilled a greater proportion of pledges than its coalition partners and the SNP minority administration.

In addition to these hypotheses, the case presents an opportunity to test the received wisdom of the wider literature within a different institutional context and a "new" sub-national political system. Supplementary analysis enables further expectations to be tested using the subset of pledges made by the coalition parties. Previous studies have identified several factors which contribute to pledge fulfilment, most concerning the impact of institutional and circumstantial limitations on governing parties' freedom to act. In addition to the repeated finding that the type of government matters for pledge fulfilment (especially single- vs. multiparty), researchers have investigated the impact of coalition-

specific constraints on power such as control of the chief executive, control of the relevant ministry, and the presence/absence of pledges in coalition partnership agreements (Thomson 2001; Costello and Thomson 2008).

Given the importance of institutional control, previous studies have investigated the impact of possession of the relevant ministry on the likelihood a pledge will be redeemed. If a party controls the portfolio, the minister should theoretically wield enough influence to prioritise their own party's pledges. Though Thomson (2001) initially found that ministerial appointments made a difference to pledge fulfilment in the Netherlands, subsequent comparative research has not (Thomson et al. 2017). As such, the third hypothesis is as follows:

> H3: Party control of the relevant cabinet post does not increase the likelihood that a pledge will be fulfilled.

In addition to the function of communicating with voters, manifestos are also used by parties to signal to one another in advance of possible government formation negotiations (Harmel 2018). These negotiations in turn tend to revolve around the manifestos, with pledges sometimes used as bargaining chips (alongside ministerial portfolios). Following successful negotiations, coalition partners typically produce a joint statement or programme outlining their shared priorities; these documents are known as coalition or partnership agreements, and the format is reminiscent of manifesto documents. During coalition negotiations, campaign pledges are often used as "bargaining chips". Coalition partnership agreements were published by both of the Scottish Labour-Liberal Democrat governments following their negotiations (Scottish Executive 1999, 2003). Previous studies have found that pledges contained in coalition agreements are much more likely to be fulfilled than those which aren't (Mansergh and Thomson 2007; Praprotnik and Ennser-Jedenastik 2015). As such, the final hypothesis is as follows:

> H4: Pledges included in the partnership agreements were significantly more likely to be fulfilled.

Method

The first stage of the analysis was to identify pledge statements in the five party manifestos. Pledges necessarily contain a "phrase indicating support" attached to a substantive policy commitment, while purely rhetorical statements and "value judgements" are not considered pledges (Royed 1996, pp. 79, 80). The support clause typically comprises firm commitments like "we will" as well as looser ones such as "we favour" (Mansergh and Thomson 2007). Meanwhile, researchers have held that the policy clause of a statement must be "testable" for it to count as a pledge (Royed 1996; Mansergh and Thomson 2007; Thomson et al. 2017). This article draws heavily from the operational definition of a pledge agreed by leading researchers in the field: "a statement committing a party to one specific action or outcome that can be clearly determined to have occurred or not" (Thomson et al. 2017, p. 552). However, I specify one slight difference. Under this criterion, statements which do not include an explicit target or course of action are not counted as pledges. It is possible to argue, however, that an untestable pledge is still a pledge if it is framed that way by the manifesto authors. Citizens can have a reasonable expectation of action to achieve a given policy objective, even if the particular criteria are not specified. As such these statements can be considered to constitute "vague" pledges, but pledges nonetheless.

It is possible to expand the operational definition in this way because pledges in this study are coded according to level of specificity using a modified scheme based on the categories devised by Bara (2005): vague, general, specific and detailed. Those in the vague category have a commitment clause, but the policy clause lacks an objectively verifiable action or outcome. General pledges are those with a statement of intent plus either a measurable outcome target or a course of action specified. Pledges coded as specific contain both an observable action and measureable outcome. Specific pledges with embellished rationales and fulfilment criteria are coded as detailed. The minor operational difference with Thomson et al. (2017) has no impact on the findings, since I exclude vague pledges from the analysis in any case. Theoretically, general, specific and detailed pledges fit those authors' operational definition of a pledge. Pledge fulfilment must also be operationalised. The criteria for pledge fulfilment are "in principle provided by the writers of election programmes, not the researcher" (Thomson 2001, p. 180). In other words, the terms of the pledge define what constitutes fulfilment. Fulfilment therefore can be construed as the

attainment of an outcome or an action taken by the government, achieved in the relevant parliamentary session, which meets the provisions of the pledge.

In accordance with the previous literature, Scottish parties' pledges are coded as either not fulfilled, partly fulfilled or fully fulfilled. Partial fulfilment in the case of action means that some substantive, observable steps were taken by the government in the direction intended but that this was not sufficient to meet the terms provided by the party in their manifesto. Outcome fulfilment is assessed in a similar way, with numerical targets considered partly fulfilled if they amounted to at least 30% of the total pledged and fully fulfilled at 75%. As noted above, the analysis does not include all pledges, but is limited to the policy areas of education and justice. This decision was taken for practical and substantive reasons. Pledge studies are time-consuming, and restricting the analysis to a representative subset of policy areas speeds up the process. This approach has been taken in some previous national-level pledge studies, which focused exclusively on socioeconomic pledges (Thomson 2001; Artés 2013). Given the limited socioeconomic powers devolved to Holyrood, however, this is not an appropriate option here.

Justice and education, meanwhile, are highly salient policy areas in which the Scottish government exercises complete autonomy. These issue areas avoid jurisdictional overlap with Westminster and, crucially, the Scottish government is not likely to gain (or lose) powers on these matters. Since devolution, powers in other issue areas have flowed north of the border, which would render over-time comparisons between Scottish governments problematic. The powers of the devolved legislature on justice and education are a constant, not only between 1999 and 2011, but up to the present day and beyond. The choice to limit the collection of data to these policy areas could theoretically bias the findings, as parties might prioritise the issues differently or find it more challenging to enact pledges in one or the other. However, given the close ideological proximity of the three parties in this analysis and the high salience of the issues in question, there is no reason to believe there is undue cause for concern. Additionally, as stated above, this approach has also been adopted by Matthieß (2019) for the purposes of a regional-level pledge study.

Pledge fulfilment in Scotland during coalition and minority government

600 justice and education pledges were identified across the five manifestos. 229 of these were coded vague and excluded from analysis, with the remaining 371 checked for fulfilment. The rate of pledge fulfilment for each party in the combined policy domains of education and justice is shown in Table 1. The percentage data is visualised in Fig. 1. Table 2 shows Scottish government pledge fulfilment in a comparative context using information from a selection of previous pledge studies. These findings align with the general takeaway from previous studies, which is that election-winning political parties make progress enacting most of their testable manifesto pledges. In aggregate, the parties which entered government in the first three sessions of the Scottish parliament carried out half of their election pledges, with some progress made on roughly another quarter.

Table 1. Scottish manifesto pledge fulfilment

Party and election year	Not fulfilled	Partly fulfilled	Fully fulfilled	Total
Labour 1999	17.0% (9)	22.6% (12)	60.4% (32)	100% (53)
Lib Dem 1999	36.4% (16)	22.7% (10)	40.9% (18)	100% (44)
Labour 2003	14.6% (13)	18.0% (16)	67.4% (60)	100% (90)
Lib Dem 2003	22.6% (21)	32.3% (30)	45.2% (42)	100% (93)
SNP 2007	29.3% (27)	30.4% (28)	40.2% (37)	100% (92)
Total	**23.2%** (86)	**25.9%** (96)	**50.9%** (189)	*100%* (371)
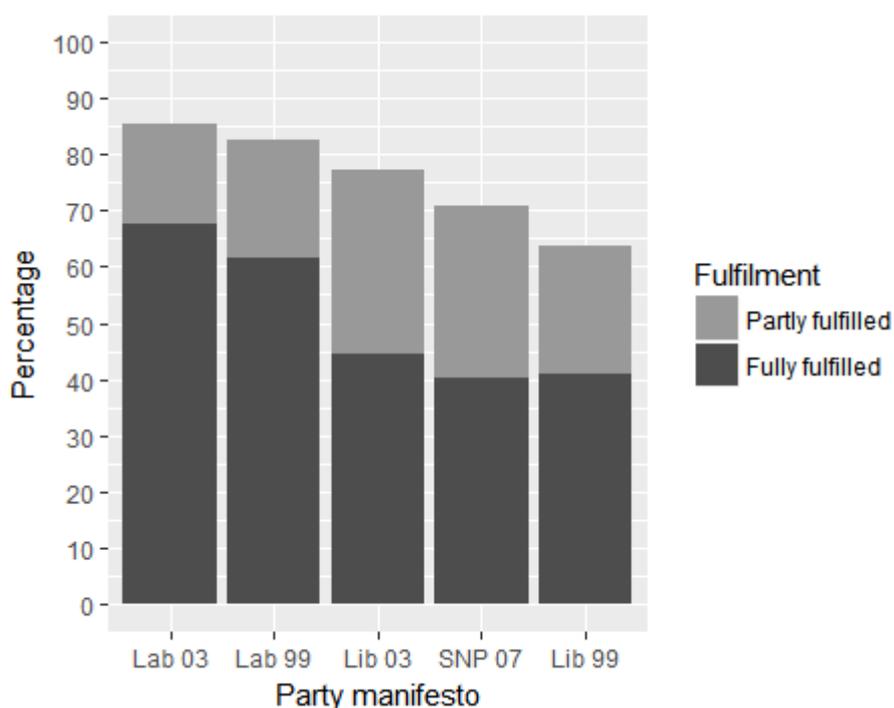
Table 2. Comparative government pledge fulfilment rate

Country/Region	Aggregate fulfilment rate	Govt. type
United Kingdom, 1974-1997	86%	Majority
Sweden, 1994-2014	79%	Minority/Coalition
New Zealand, 1972-1996	78%	Majority
Portugal, 1995-1999 & 2005-2009	78%	Majority/Minority
Scotland, 1999-2011	**77%**	**Coalition/Minority**
Spain, 1989-2004	72%	Majority/Minority
Canada, 1993-2015	68%	Majority/Minority
Germany, 2002-2013	63%	Coalition
New Zealand, 1996-2005*	62%	Minority
United States, 1976-2000	62%	Mixed
Quebec, 1994-2014	60%	Mixed
The Netherlands, 1986-1998	57%	Coalition
Ireland, 1977-2016	52%	Coalition
Bulgaria, 1995-2013	51%	Coalition/Mixed
Austria, 2000-2013	50%	Coalition
Italy, 1996-2011	46%	Coalition

Note: Table adapted from Thomson et al. (2017, p. 535). New Zealand figures taken from McCluskey (2008, p. 443). Quebec figures taken from Pétry et al. (2018, p. 4)

Turning to the study's expectations, H1 receives little support. The level of fulfilment attained by Scottish governing parties is more in line with that observed in majoritarian systems than consensus democracies. Table 2 shows the findings in a comparative context using information from a selection of previous pledge studies. Note that countries' aggregate pledge fulfilment rates are shown rather than average government fulfilment rates, though this makes little difference in most cases. The table demonstrates a clear trend towards higher fulfilment in countries where single-party governments are common, which Scotland upsets slightly. The aggregate Scottish pledge fulfilment rate is more comparable to the one observed by McCluskey before New Zealand's change in electoral system, after which there was a substantial drop. This chimes with Lundberg's comparison of the two countries. He argues that the relationship of Holyrood to Westminster and the constitutional question more generally creates a "centre-periphery cleavage" (2013, p. 6) which has led to less deviation from the Westminster model than observed in New Zealand.

Additionally, though the aggregate rates in Table 2 are in line with one another, the average Scottish pledge fulfilment rate (75%) compares more favourably to the UK one than does Quebec to Canada. However, this could be a function of the limited number of issue areas

used in the present analysis. It might be the case that, in areas with greater jurisdictional overlap than justice and education, Scottish governments fulfil fewer pledges. Nonetheless, it is at least possible to state that, in the areas which Scotland's devolved institutions exercise the greatest authority, the programme-to-policy linkage at Holyrood is of a similar strength to the one observed at Westminster.

The notion that Holyrood politics did not initially stray far from Westminster norms is one shared by other researchers. Early assessments showed that MSPs and their parties did not behave much differently to their counterparts at Westminster (Cowley and Lochore 2000). As Cairney states (2011, p. 39), the first two sessions of the Scottish Parliament were characterised by a style of government "that would not seem out of place in the UK". This claim receives further support here, as shown in Table 1 and Fig. 1. The Labour party attained the highest rates of pledge fulfilment by partly or entirely redeeming 83% of their 1999 pledges and 85% of their 2003 pledges. The equivalent figures for the Liberal Democrats are 64% and 76%, while the SNP made progress on 71% of their 2007 pledges as a minority administration.

These figures confirm H2. As expected, although Labour could not govern with the single-party majority the party was accustomed to at UK level, they did not behave as if they were constrained by coalition politics. Additionally, the Liberal Democrats fulfilled an unusually high proportion of pledges for a junior coalition partner. They substantially increased their pledge fulfilment rate in the second session, despite doubling the number of pledges made in 2003 compared to 1999. Labour also increased the number of pledges made and marginally improved the fulfilment rate in the second session. This is consistent with a previously reported tendency for parties to redeem increasing numbers of pledges with successive terms in office (McCluskey 2008, p. 428), and for the number of pledges made to increase over time (Håkansson and Naurin 2014). Additionally, this supports Cairney's (2011) contention that the second session saw greater executive dominance. It seems that Labour were able to apply experience at one level of government to another, while the inexperienced Lib Dems quickly learned how to improve their effectiveness at turning promises into policy.

The role of the government partnership agreement in the formation of the successive coalitions supports these inferences about governing experience. Official documents outlining the joint Labour-Lib Dem programme for government were released at the beginning of each session. Table 3 shows how many manifesto pledges made it into the relevant agreement. The first partnership agreement, "Making it Work Together", included only 43% of Labour pledges and 25% of Lib Dem pledges. The second agreement 4 years later, however, included 76% of Labour pledges and 63% of Lib Dem pledges, despite substantial increases in the total number of pledges made by each party. This accords with Arter's contention (2004) that the Lib Dems were more satisfied with second coalition bargaining process because the agreement paved the way for greater power sharing within the executive. One Lib Dem negotiator even described the 2003 negotiation as a matter of "merging the two manifestos" (Arter 2004, p. 23). This may have been facilitated by the senior party's slightly weaker parliamentary position.

Table 3. Pledges in coalition partnership agreements

Manifesto	*Not included % (n)*	*Included % (n)*	*Total % (n)*
Labour 1999	57.3 (43)	42.7 (32)	100 (75)
Lib Dem 1999	75.9 (63)	24.1 (20)	100 (83)
Labour 2003	23.9 (33)	76.1 (105)	100 (138)
Lib Dem 2003	36.7 (61)	63.3 (105)	100 (166)

The first 8 years of the devolved Scottish experience, then, were characterised by the continuity of Westminster norms under an unusually unified coalition government. Did this change under a more precarious minority administration? The SNP emerged from the close-run 2007 election as the largest party by a single seat, winning 47 to Labour's 46. At loggerheads with Labour and unable to achieve a parliamentary majority in partnership with any other individual party, the SNP decided to go it alone, bringing about the potential for parliamentary negotiation the SCC had envisioned for the first time. This was something that SNP leader and new First Minister Alex Salmond explicitly acknowledged (Mitchell 2010, p. 112). Although the government occasionally found itself constrained by the parliamentary arithmetic, the reduced-size cabinet operated with a kind of stability that had evaded the coalition (Cairney 2011). The administration also worked around parliament by using policymaking tools other than primary legislation, such as Scottish Statutory Instruments. And despite having ample opportunity, parliament "did not fill the legislative

gap" (Cairney 2011, p. 51), with the executive producing the lion's share of bills and amendments. By the end of the third session, the SNP had passed nearly as much legislation as either of the coalition administrations, and the number of withdrawn or defeated bills compared favourably (Lundberg 2013). When the government did need legislative help they turned to the Conservatives for informal support, with the two parties voting together three quarters of the time (Cairney 2011, p. 53).

The overall impression given, then, is not one of a party paralysed by its position. It is not the case, as Cairney implies (2011, p. 51), that the administration was unable to meet many of its manifesto commitments. Indeed, the SNP government's enthusiastic pursuit of a controversial decentralisation agenda through a deal with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) may have impeded its progress on other campaign promises as councils failed to deliver on marquee outcome promises made in the party's manifesto. The commitment to reduce primary school class sizes is one such example. Unlike the coalition parties' pledge fulfilment rates, however, the performance of Scotland's 2007–2011 minority government is not unusual. As noted above, parties governing alone tend to fulfil a healthy majority of pledges regardless of their minority or majority status, and multivariate comparative analysis failed to identify a significant difference between majority and minority single-party governments (Thomson et al. 2017).

Though the SNP's single-seat majority and inability to formally partner with other Holyrood parties likely impeded their ability to carry out some manifesto pledges, the unexpectedly high rate of pledge fulfilment in Scotland is primarily a result of the Westminster-style governance of the successive coalition administrations, especially the Labour party. This suggests that, despite the intentions of the designers, the Scottish political system inherited the adversarial, majoritarian political norms of Westminster. The following analysis of coalition pledge fulfilment under coalition government below bolsters this impression.

Explaining coalition pledge fulfilment

Here I present a logistic regression analysis of pledge fulfilment under Scotland's coalition governments. Like other explanatory analyses of pledge fulfilment, the dependent variable

in the model is a pledge fulfilment dummy (not fulfilled = 0, partly/fully fulfilled = 1). Compared to previous studies, however, the model is limited by the nature of the case. The SNP government's pledges are excluded for methodological reasons, since typically important explanatory variables like government type, party and session are entirely colinear for these observations. This leaves 278 observations of "testable" pledges made by Labour and the Lib Dems. Various explanatory variables typical of pledge fulfilment analyses are also necessarily excluded here due to a lack of variation or unsuitability, including as economic growth, government type, seat share and cabinet duration (Thomson et al. 2017). These constraints can be considered advantageous, however, because they allow the analysis to focus on a handful of explanatory factors while others are unavoidably held constant.

Party ownership of the relevant ministry (portfolio not held = 0, portfolio held = 1) and the presence of each pledge in the relevant coalition agreement (not in agreement = 0, in agreement = 1) are the explanatory variables used to test H3 and H4. The session of the Scottish parliament (first = 0, second = 1), party (Lib Dem = 0, Labour = 1) and policy area (justice = 0, education = 1) are included as controls to account for the trends identified in the descriptive analysis. A "detailed pledge" dummy created using the specificity categories outlined above is also included for exploratory purposes. Because relatively few detailed pledges were identified, specific and detailed pledges have been aggregated (general = 0, specific/detailed = 1).

The results are shown in Table 4. Party control of the relevant ministry to the pledge's policy area is found to have no effect on pledge fulfilment. The coefficient is negative and relatively large but not close to significance, confirming H3. Though the constraints of the chosen case mean this alone would not be generalisable, it is consistent with the very weak or non-existent effects identified in previous research (Thomson et al. 2017). It also suggests that the Lib Dems' indifference to portfolio allocations was the correct attitude from a policy-seeking perspective (Roddin 2004).

Table 4. Predicting coalition pledge fulfilment (logistic regression)

	Coefficient	*P-value*
Detailed	-0.840**	.035
Education	0.054	.880

Ministry	-0.602	.161
Partnership	**1.393*****	**.000**
Session 2	0.136	.717
Labour	0.875**	.024
Constant	0.583	.134
Observations		287
Log likelihood		-128.442

The findings concerning the partnership agreement confirm H4. Pledges which made their way into the agreement were much more likely to be fulfilled than those which didn't, and it is by far the strongest predictor of fulfilment in the model with a large and strongly significant coefficient. Given the ideological overlap between the Lib Dem and Labour programmes in 1999 and 2003, it is unsurprising that this carried through into fulfilment. This is reflected in the increased proportion of both parties' manifesto pledges which were included in the second agreement and reinforces the descriptive findings. With regard to the control variables, the session variable is not found to be significant. This is surprising given the substantially increased rate of Lib Dem pledge fulfilment. However, the independent effect of governing experience may be absorbed by the massive increase in pledges entering the coalition agreement in 2003. The effects of governing experience and the coalition agreement are difficult to causally separate from one another in this case. Though the parties did not run as a formal "pre-election coalition", they did anticipate a similar result and outcome to 1999.

Table 4 also demonstrates that the policy area is irrelevant to the fulfilment of pledges in this study. Being based on just two policy areas, however, this finding should not be generalised. The party control is moderately significant, with Labour pledges remaining much more likely to be fulfilled when other factors are accounted for. This reinforces the conclusions of the descriptive analysis. Finally, a suggestive novel result has been identified regarding pledge detail, which has not previously been tested in the literature. More detailed pledges are significantly less likely to be fulfilled. When parties set more stringent fulfilment criteria for their pledges, they find them more challenging to redeem. There is scope to replicate this finding and identify interaction effects in other settings, possibly using these coding procedures with existing data where the original pledge text is available. The effect may be weaker under conditions with fewer institutional constraints on government action.

Conclusion

The analysis presented here demonstrates that Scottish governing parties enact their manifesto commitments at a rate comparable to their UK counterparts. The Labour party especially appears to have successfully resisted the ambitions of the Scottish system's designers and governed much like its "big brother" at Westminster. As Cairney observes, "the first 8 years of devolution proved that new powers and institutions were not effective on their own" (2011, p. 41). The Lib Dems and SNP also achieved high overall rates of pledge fulfilment, though these are more in line with what would be expected based on existing comparative evidence.

The findings here come with the caveat that only justice and education pledges are included in the analysis. Though it is wise to be cautious in making generalisations for this reason, there is little difference in fulfilment between the two policy areas, and the patterns of pledge fulfilment identified align well with existing research. As such, it is possible to state with some confidence that the experience of devolved Scottish government until at least 2011 was of responsible parties carrying out perceived mandates to enact their campaign promises. Contrary to the hopes of the SCC and CSG, institutions alone were not enough to distance the incipient Scottish party system from the Westminster culture of strong party responsibility. This conclusion is in line with the existing academic consensus that Scottish politics did not develop a distinctive, consensual executive and legislative culture following devolution, but instead continued in the mould of Westminster (see Mitchell 2000; Arter 2004). This article also represents one of the few attempts to study the programme-to-policy linkage at sub-national level. The main finding suggests that political culture can override institutional arrangements and electoral outcomes which would typically weaken the programme-to-policy linkage. However, the underlying patterns of pledge fulfilment and the results of the supplementary analysis align well with the existing literature.

I propose several next steps for further research. The most obvious is to examine the record of the 2011 SNP majority government. Did the SNP behave like a Westminster majority, or did the independence referendum take up all the policy bandwidth? This question deserves its own in-depth treatment. The manifestos of opposition parties could also be tested, with

the Scottish Conservatives' record from 2007 to 2011 of particular interest given their close informal collaboration with the SNP. Finally, for the field of research more generally, it may be useful to develop a consistent measure of pledge "specificity", either using qualitative coding procedures, a machine learning approach using a training dataset or a reliable proxy (e.g. length). This would help scholars achieve a better understanding of the meaning of the programme-to-policy linkage in a comparative context.

Bibliography

American Political Science Association (1950). Towards a More Responsible Two-Party System: A Report of the Committee on Political Parties American Political Science Association. Washington DC.

Andeweg, R.B., Thomassen, J. (2005). Modes of Political Representation: Toward a New Typology. Legislative Studies Quarterly 30(4): 507-528.

Arter, D. (2004). The Scottish Parliament and the Goal of a New Politics: A Verdict on the First Four Years. Journal of Contemporary European Studies 12(1): 71-91.

Artés, J. (2013). Do Spanish politicians keep their promises? Party Politics 19(1): 143-158.

Artés, J. and Bustos, A. (2008). Electoral promises and minority governments: An empirical study. European Journal of Political Research 47(3): 307-333.

Bara, J. (2005). A Question of Trust: Implementing Party Manifestos. Parliamentary Affairs: 58(3): 585-599.

Budge, I. and Hofferbert, R. (1990). Mandates and Policy Outputs: US Party Platforms and Federal Expenditures. American Political Science Review 84(1): 111-131.

Carman, C. and Shephard, M. (2007). Electoral Poachers? An Assessment of Shadowing Behaviour in the Scottish Parliament. The Journal of Legislative Studies 13(4): 483-496.

Cairney, P. (2011). The Scottish Political System Since Devolution. Exeter: Imprint Academic.

Costello, R. and Thomson, R. (2008). Election Pledges and their Enactment in Coalition Governments: A Comparative Analysis of Ireland. Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties 18(3): 239-256.

Cowley, P. and Lochore, S. (2000). AMS in a Cold Climate: The Scottish Parliament in Practice. Representation 37(3/4): 175-185.

Dolezal, M., Ensser-Jedenastik, L., Mueller, W., Praprotnik, K. and Winkler, A.K. (2018). Beyond salience and position taking: How political parties communicate through their manifestos. Party Politics 24(3): 240-252.

Downs, A. (1957). An Economic Theory of Democracy. New York: Harper and Brothers.

Duval, D. and Pétry, F. (2019). Time and the Fulfilment of Election Pledges. Political Studies 67(1): 207-223.

Ferguson, M. (2012). Pledge Fulfilment in Germany: An Examination of the Schröder II and Merkel I Governments. Doctoral thesis, The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL.

Grossback, L. (2005). Comparing competing theories on the causes of mandate perceptions. American Journal of Political Science 49(2): 406-419.

Harmel, R. (2018). The how's and why's of party manifestos. Party Politics 24(3): 229-239.

Håkansson, N. and Naurin, E. (2014). Promising ever more: An empirical account of Swedish parties' pledge making during 20 years. Party Politics 22(3): 393-404.

Kalogeropoulou, E. (1989). Election promises and government performance in Greece: PASOK's fulfilment of its 1981 election pledges. European Journal of Political Research 17(3): 289-311.

Keating, M. (2005). The Government of Scotland: Public Policy Making after Devolution. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Kostadinova, P. (2013). Democratic performance in post-communist Bulgaria: election pledges and levels of fulfilment, 1997-2005. East European Politics 29(2): 190-207.

Körösényi, A. and Sebők, M. (2018). From Pledge-Fulfilment to Mandate-Fulfilment. Intersections 4(1): 115-132.

Louwerse, T. (2011). The spatial approach to the party mandate. Parliamentary Affairs 64(3): 425-447.

Lundberg, T. (2013). Politics is Still and Adversarial Business: Minority Government and Mixed-Member Proportional Representation in Scotland and in New Zealand. The British Journal of Politics and International Relations 15(4): 609-625.

Lundberg, T. (2014). Tensions Between Constituency and Regional Members of the Scottish Parliament Under Mixed-Member Proportional Representation: A Failure of the New Politics. Parliamentary Affairs 67(2): 351-370.

Mansbridge, J. (2003). Rethinking Representation. American Political Science Review 97(4): 515-528.

Mansergh, L. and Thomson, R. (2007). Election Pledges, Party Competition, and Policymaking. Comparative Politics 39(3): 311-329.

Matthieß, T. (2019). Equal Performance of Minority and Majority Coalitions? Pledge Fulfilment in the German State of NRW. German Politics 28(1): 123-144.

McCluskey, N. (2008). A Policy of Honesty: Election Manifesto Pledge Fulfilment in New Zealand. PhD thesis, University of Canterbury.

McGarvey, N. and Cairney, P. (2008). Scottish Politics: An Introduction. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mitchell, J. (2000). New Parliament, New Politics in Scotland. Parliamentary Affairs 53(3): 605-621.

Mitchell, J. (2010). The Narcissism of Small Differences: Scotland and Westminster. Parliamentary Affairs 63(1): 98-116.

Moury, C. (2011). Italian coalitions and electoral promises: assessing the democratic performance of the Prodi I and Berlusconi II governments. Modern Italy 16(1): 35-50.

Moury, C. and Fernandes, J. (2018). Minority Governments and Pledge Fulfilment: Evidence from Portugal. Government and Opposition 53(2): 335-355.

Naurin, E. (2009). Promising Democracy: Parties, Citizens and Election Promises. PhD thesis, University of Gothenburg.

Naurin, E. (2014). Is a Promise a Promise? Election Pledge Fulfilment in Comparative Perspective Using Sweden as an Example. West European Politics 37(5): 1,046-1,064.

Naurin, E. and Oscarsson, H. (2017). When and Why Are Voters Correct in Their Evaluations of Specific Government Performance? Political Studies 65(4): 860-876.

Pétry, F. and Colette, B. (2008). Measuring How Political Parties Keep Their Promises: A Positive Perspective from Political Science. In: L.M. Imbeau (ed.) Do They Walk Like They Talk? New York: Springer, pp. 65-80.

Pétry, F. and Duval, D. (2017). When heuristics go bad: Citizens' misevaluations of campaign pledge fulfilment. Electoral Studies 50: 116-127.

Pétry, F., Duval, D. and Birch, L. (2018). Do regional governments fulfill fewer election promises than national governments? The Case of Quebec in Comparative Perspective. Party Politics (online first).

Pitkin, H. (1967). The Concept of Representation. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Pomper, G. (1968). Elections in America: Control and Influence in Democratic Politics. New York and Toronto: Dodd, Mead and Company.

Praprotnik, K. (2017). Issue clarity in electoral competition. Insights from Austria. Electoral Studies 48: 121-130.

Praprotnik, K. and Ennser-Jedenastik, L. (2015). Coalition Policy-Making under Constraints: Examining the Role of Preferences and Institutions. West European Politics 37(3): 564-583.

Rallings, C. (1987). The influence of election programmes: Britain and Canada 1945-1979. In Budge, I., Robertson, D. and Hearl., D. (eds.) Ideology, Strategy and Party Change: Spatial Analyses of Post-War Election Programmes in 19 Democracies. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Roddin, E. (2004). Has the Labour Party or the Liberal Democrats Proved More Successful in the Partnership for Scotland Coalition 1999-2003? Scottish Affairs 48: 24-49.

Rose, R. (1984). Do Parties Make a Difference? (Second Edition). London: Macmillan Press.

Royed, T. (1996). Testing the Mandate Model in Britain and the United States: Evidence from the Reagan and Thatcher Eras. British Journal of Political Science 26(1): 45-80.

Sartori, G. (1976/2005). Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis. Colchester: ECPR Press.

Schedler, A. (1998). The Normative Force of Electoral Promises. Journal of Theoretical Politics 10(2): 191-214.

Scottish Executive. (1999). Making it Work Together.

Scottish Executive. (2003). Partnership for a Better Scotland.

Scottish Executive. (2007). Partnership for a Better Scotland: Delivering our Commitments.

Scottish Labour. (1999). Building Scotland's Future.

Scottish Labour. (2003). On Your Side.

Scottish Liberal Democrats. (1999). Raising the Standard.

Scottish Liberal Democrats. (2003). Make the Difference.

Scottish National Party. (2007). Manifesto 2007.

Thomson, R. (2001). The programme to policy linkage: The fulfilment of election pledges on socio-economic policy in the Netherlands, 1986-1998. European Journal of Political Research 40: 171-197.

Thomson, R., Royed, T., Naurin, E., Artés, J., Costello, R., Ennser-Jedenastik, L., Ferguson, M., Kostadinova, P., Moury, C., Pétry, F. and Praprotnik, K. (2017). The Fulfillment of Parties' Election Pledges: A Comparative Study on the Impact of Power Sharing. American Journal of Political Science 61(3): 527-542.

Thomson, R. and Brandenburg, H. (2018). Trust and Citizens' Evaluations of Promise Keeping by Governing Parties. Political Studies, advance online publication 19th March, doi: 10.1177/0032321718764177.