

Working Papers Political Science No. 2006/02
Department of Political Science
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

The Rise of a New Political Class? Emerging New Parties and the populist challenge in Western Europe.

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This manuscript has originally been presented at the *EpsNet Conference* in Paris on 17-18 June 2005.

We also wish to thank the discussants at a Round Table meeting at the VU Amsterdam for their useful comments., in particular Cas Mudde (Antwerp), Peter Mair (EUI, Florence) and Joop van Holsteyn (Leiden).

We are grateful for the support of NWO (# 014-21-720) enabling us the preparation of this paper.

Abstract

Since the 1990s many new parties have emerged in European party systems. These parties have often been labelled as populist, extreme-right or anti-system parties. This paper examines to what extent new parties have indeed adopted a different style of competition and contestation within European democracies. If so, does this imply a trend towards populism and how do these new parties impact established parties and the extant party system? The following questions are examined: Why have new parties successfully emerged? Why do new parties seem to emerge more on the 'right' than on the 'left' of the political spectrum? In addition we discuss their issue profile and their role vis-à-vis party system development. Our findings suggest that many new parties can indeed be considered as populist and rightwing radical. The issue profile of such parties is different from other (traditional) parties and this explains in part their electoral growth. This implies – amongst other things - that new, often populist, parties successfully challenge the power resources of the established 'political class'.

Key words: new parties, populism, re-alignment/de-alignment, electoral competition, party systems,

1. Introduction

The successful rise of ‘new’ political parties and conversely the relative *demise* of *established* parties during the nineties is obvious. What causes these changing patterns of electoral allegiance and party competition? After the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the political unionisation of Europe, mass publics in the West appear to become increasingly more discontent with the political institutions of representative democracy and their ‘ruling’ elites (Pharr and Putnam, 2000). Coupled with the growing de-alignment of existing political loyalties and affiliations (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000), representative governance in its current institutional format is challenged by new types of parties and entrepreneurial politicians that emphasize ‘popular’ democracy instead of ‘representative’ governance (Meny and Surel, 2002). In this article we investigate the following questions:

- What constitutes a ‘new party’ and why are they successful vis-à-vis the established parties and elites, particularly, in the nineties?
- How different are these parties from others and what impact do they have on party system development and representative government?

We will argue that the emergence and success of new parties is not merely coincidental but that their rise represents a significant development within European democracies where ‘old’ forms of contestation (and elite cooperation) within the political class are gradually transformed and replaced by ‘new’ challengers. This development also signals a radicalisation of political competition, which undermines the power base of the traditional political parties (Pennings and Keman, 2003).

We will examine three dimensions of party system change in relation to the rise of this new type of party. First, the *vertical* dimension will be discussed, which is the relation between the political class and the ‘demos’. A shift becomes visible towards populist tendencies with respect to mass political attitudes and involvement of the electorate. We argue that new political entrepreneurs mobilize existing groups and tap into latent discontent of new groups of ‘outsiders’ and disappointed voters in general. These populist ‘entrepreneurs’ include not only new parties *per se*, but also ‘new’ parties that emerged from a former

traditional party, either as a result of a split or ‘refoundation’ (see also Mair, 1999; see Table 1). Second, we will examine how the rise of new populist challenger parties affects the issue ownership of the traditional competitors in European party systems and consequently their competitive strength (Budge and Farlie, 1983). Finally, on the *horizontal* axis – inter-party competition - we assess how these ‘new’ types of ideological competition by new parties are affecting the usual patterns of competition at the party system level both among the traditional parties as well as between traditional and new parties.

2. Emergence and Success of New Parties

Recently, attention has been paid to the concept and impact of ‘new parties’ in political science (see: Müller-Rommel 1998; Hug, 2001; Mair, 2002). Most of their conceptualisations, however, are theoretically confusing and empirically misleading. What is confusing is that researchers often take for granted that new parties are either (extreme) right-wing or post-materialist (see: Ignazi, 1997; Lane and Ersson, 2002). In addition, these studies seem to suggest that parties are ‘new’ simply because they are not old. What distinguishes new parties from old parties and what type of party is emerging? Simon Hug rightly points out that ‘new’ parties (have been) develop(ing) all the time in all forms and formats but that we simply no longer remember most of them (Hug, 2001: 14). One obvious reason is because they had very little impact on the party system as a whole. Another reason is that many ‘new’ parties are often the result of a merger (e.g. CDA, Green Left and Christian Union in the Netherlands), a change of name (e.g. the SenterPartiet in Sweden, the SVP in Switzerland and the Alleanza Nazionale in Italy), a fission within the old party (e.g. the Liberales Forum in Austria and the Democratic Left in Ireland) or of a development of two party systems in one polity (as can be seen in Belgium due to federalisation of Belgium). In some cases it concerns the refoundation of a party (like the FPÖ in Austria and a part of the Communist Party in Italy; Mair, 1999).

In other words: the definition of what constitutes a ‘new party’ varies considerably among students of parties (see: Mair, 2002; Hug, 2001: Ch. 5; Deschouwer, 2004: 3-4). Mair, for instance, defines new

parties as those that first began to contest elections after 1960 (including those parties emerging from a merger or split), which leads to the conclusion that more than 176 new parties emerged across Europe (Mair, 2002: Table 6.4). Conversely, Hug adopts a more restricted definition and includes only ‘genuine’ new parties that emerge without any help of members of existing parties and fissions. Fusions of two or more existing parties and electoral alliances are not considered new since this type concerns merely a reorganisation of established political parties (Hug, 2001: 13). This conceptualisation tends to exclude those parties that are perhaps not ‘genuinely new’ but that nevertheless have transformed themselves radically and can no longer be considered to belong to their original party families. For instance, should parties that have recently undergone significant changes in leadership, thus transforming the cores of these parties, also be considered new parties? Our answer is that if and when such a party has clearly moved out of the bounds of its original party family then it is considered to be a ‘new party’ (Mair and Mudde, 1998). In other words, what is crucial is that these parties emphasize *other* issues than are principally ‘owned’ by the original party.

Thus, in view of these considerations we propose to *define* a ‘new party’ as: those *organisations that autonomously recruit candidates for public office, based on ideas that do not correspond with existing-cum-established party families during two subsequent elections* (see for an overview of these indicators: Siaroff, 2000; Gallagher et al., 2005: 229ff). In addition we propose that in empirical terms a new party ought to have participated in two successive elections after 1975 and gained parliamentary representation. This period is chosen because we argue that since the mid-seventies the de-freezing of party systems (i.e. the Lipset/Rokkan hypothesis; see: Bartolini and Mair, 1990) began to emerge. Below in Table 1 we have listed the new parties that have emerged since 1975 in Europe and we have also indicated whether they are ‘new’, ‘re-born’, the result of a fusion (marriage) or fission (divorce), to what party family they belong, and how successful they have been electorally (or not, i.e. ‘dead’ – see also: Mair, 1999).

Table 1. New Parties in European Party Systems 1975-2003

Country	Name of Party & Foundation Year	Party Family	Vote share 1980-1990	Vote Share 1990-2002	Change Votes NP	Type of party origination
Austria	United Greens [1982] & Green Alternative [1986] FPÖ [1987 - renamed: Freedom Movement - 1995] Liberal Forum [1995]	Green	4.8	6.3	1.5	Birth
		Radical Right	6.9	20.6	13.7	[re]Birth
		Liberal	0.0	5.2	5.2	Divorce
		Total: 3	11.7	32.1	+20.4	
Belgium	Agalev [1977] Ecolo [1978] FN/National Front [1985] Vlaams Blok [1977] Rossem/Banaan [1991-1995]	Green	4.8	5.3	0.5	Birth
		Green	2.5	5.4	2.9	Birth
		Radical Right	0.0	4.2	4.2	Birth
		Radical Right	7.5	13.9	6.4	Birth
		Protest	0.0	2.0	2.0	Birth/dead
Total: 5	14.8	30.8	+16.0			
Denmark	Red-Greens [1989] Progress Party [now:] Danske Folke Party [1995]	Soc. & Green	0.0	3.7	3.7	Marriage
		Radical Right	7.3	9.9	2.6	[re]Birth
		Total: 2	7.3	13.6	+6.3	
Finland	Green League [1983] Leftwing Alliance [DeVa/VAS, 1987] [1990] True Finns [1995]	Green	4.0	6.8	2.8	Birth
		Socialist	4.2	10.3	6.1	Divorce
		Protest[agrarian]	0.0	2.3	2.3	[re] Birth
		Total: 3	8.2	19.4	+11.2	
France	Union Democratic France [1987] Greens [1984] Ecology Generation [1990] Front National [1972, reformed in 1986]	Liberal/Cons.	17.9	16.4	-1.5	Marriage
		Green	0.9	3.0	3.1	Birth
		Green	1.2	5.2	4.0	Divorce
		Radical Right	9.8	14.6	4.8	[re]Birth
		Total: 4	29.8	39.2	+9.8	
Germany	Greens/Alliance [1980/1983] Party of Democratic Socialism [1990] Republikaner [1983]	Green	6.2	6.6	0.4	Birth
		Social Democratic	0.0	3.9	3.9	[re]Birth
		Radical Right	0.0	0.7	0.7	Divorce
		Total: 3	6.2	11.2	+5.0	
Ireland	Democratic Left Party [1992] Green Party [1982] Progressive Democrats [1985]	Socialist	0.0	2.7	2.7	Divorce
		Green	1.3	3.9	2.6	Birth
		Liberal	11.8	6.7	-5.1	Birth
		Total: 3	13.1	13.3	+0.2	

Italy	Green Federation [1987]	Green	0.0	2.7	2.7	Birth
	Democratic Party of the Left [former PCI] [1991]	Social Democratic	28.2	16.1	-12.1	[re] Birth
	Refounded Communists [1992]	Socialist	0.0	6.7	6.7	Divorce
	List Panella [PRI: 1976/1992]	Liberal	2.5	3.1	0.6	[re] Birth
	[MSI, now:] AN [1994]	Radical Right	6.0	11.7	5.7	Marriage
	Lega Nord [uniting diverse leagues: 1991]	Radical Right	0.5	7.8	7.3	Birth
	Forza Italia [1994]	Conservative	0.0	25.2	25.2	Birth
Total: 7			34.7	73.4	+36.2	
Netherlands	Green-Left [1989]	Socialist & Green	2.9	5.6	2.7	Marriage
	Socialist Party [since 1989: electoral & parliamentary]	Socialist	0.4	4.3	3.9	Birth
	Allied Elderly [1993-1998]	Protest	0.0	2.5	2.5	Birth/dead
	Liveable Netherlands [2000]	Protest/Conservative	0.0	1.0	1.0	Birth/dead
	LPFortuyn [2002]	Radical Right	0.0	11.4	11.4	Divorce
	Centre Democrats [1984-1998]	Radical Right	0.6	1.2	0.6	Birth/dead
Total: 6			3.9	26.1	+22.1	
Norway	[Anders Lange] Progress Party [1977]	Radical Right	4.1	12.3	+8.2	Birth
Total: 1						
Sweden	Environments/Greens [1981]	Left/Green	3.5	4.3	0.8	Birth
	New Democrats [only twice in parliament: 1991]	Radical Right	0.0	3.9	3.9	Birth/dead
Total: 2			3.5	8.2	+4.7	
Switzerland	Green Party [1983]	Green	5.0	5.4	0.4	Birth
	Auto Party/Freedom Party [1985/1994]	Protest	2.6	3.0	0.4	Birth
	Swiss Democrats [AN till 1991]	Radical Right	3.1	1.1	-1.0	[re] Birth
	SVP [1971: radicalised in the 90ies]	Radical Right	11.2	16.4	5.2	[re] Birth
Total: 4			21.9	25.9	+4.0	
Gt. Britain	Social Democratic Party [1983-1987]	Social Democratic	10.6	0.0	-10.6	Divorce & Dead
Total: 1						
	Total Green Parties (average vote share)	N = 13	2.8	4.9	+ 2.1	
	Total Radical Right Parties (average vote share)	N = 14	4.3	10.0	+ 5.7	
	Total all new parties (average vote share)	N = 44	13.1	22.6	+ 9.6	

Birth = New Party; **[re]Birth** = fundamental change of party; **Marriage** = Fusion; **Divorce** = Fission; **Dead** = no longer existing. We owe this classification by Peter Mair. *Sources:* Siaroff, 2000; Political Data Yearbook published by *European Journal of Political Research*.

In all of the 13 European democracies, new political parties have emerged. In total, it concerns 44 cases of which 23 can be considered as ‘brand new’, 9 parties are ‘re-born’, 8 are fissions (divorced), 4 are fusions (marriage), and 6 of the new parties do not exist any more (labelled ‘dead’). The most susceptible party systems to renewal are found in Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands (5 or more), followed by France, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Ireland and Finland (3 or more). Party systems in Scandinavia and in the United Kingdom seem less prone to the emergence of new political competitors. Table 1 also indicates that particularly the consensus democracies of mainland Europe seem to allow for the formation of new parties. This may well be a consequence of the demise of depoliticised party behaviour and cleavage led loyalties that characterised many of these political systems after the Second World War.

Two party families are dominant among the new political parties: the environmental or ‘green’ party family and the ‘new’ (often radical) right. With the exception of Norway and the UK, green parties entered all European party systems during the eighties and nineties. In most countries these are newly formed parties, only in Denmark and the Netherlands did the green movement merge into a broader left-wing alliance (Müller-Rommel, 1998; Mair, 2002). The new parties of the radical right are far too heterogeneous to deserve the label ‘party family’. They should rather be seen as an *extended* family with re-founded and radically transformed liberal or conservative parties (for example: FPÖ and SVP), semi-fascist parties (like the Italian AN and the German Republikaner), regionalist radical parties (Lega Nord, Vlaams Blok/Belang) and ‘genuinely’ new parties (Progress Party, List Pim Fortuyn, New Democrats).

In terms of electoral support for these new parties, the figures show that they achieved an average of 22.6 per cent of the total vote in 2003: twice as much as they gained in the 1980s. In particular in Italy, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland have new parties that have accrued substantial electoral support. Growth in new party support is clearly a continental European affair, hardly affecting the UK and to a lesser extent Sweden and Ireland. The most salient finding of Table 1, is that the support for Green parties rose from 2.8 percent in the 1990s on average to 4.9 percent in the following decade,

while the radical right vote increased from 4.3 to 10 percent over the same period. Overall, new parties now attract more than twenty percent of the votes in Europe, half of which is mobilized by the new parties of the radical right. All in all, we have concluded that there has been a doubling of ‘new’ parties since the 1990s for which 1 out of 5 voters choose at present. Further, the ‘new’ Right appears to be the most successful challenger among these parties. These developments are particularly noticeable in consensus democracies. Then what are the factors that can make us understand this development?

3. Understanding the rise of new political parties

Various explanations have been suggested to account for the decline in votes for the established party families and, subsequently, the rise of the new parties. A paradoxical development can be discerned: While – viewed from a long-term perspective – the established party families in most European countries remain more or less stable, overall levels of electoral turnout show a downward trend and electoral volatility increases rapidly in the 1990s. In this section we discuss the changing attitudes of citizens towards the political system, the steady decline in voters’ turn out, and the rise in electoral volatility. We will examine to what extent these factors help to understand the shifting support for ‘old’ and ‘new’ parties.

3.1 System disassociation of citizens

The development of many of the new parties we identified indicates, inter alia, increasing signs of a new ‘anti-politics’ culture emerging within the established western democracies. In the post Cold War era representative democracy is considered almost self evident and – due in large part to Europeanization – decision-making appears to be merely a technocratic regime rather than a political activity on the basis of partisan or ideological motivation. In other words, the gap between the electorate and politics seems to widen. Hence, the so-called ‘political class’, whose members are coming from the (larger) established

party families appear to be detached from the 'normal' life of citizens (Dalton, 2002; Inglehart, 1997). Two 'exit' routes seem to be available for dissatisfied voters: displacement and de-alignment. It seems likely that these options are not only practised, but they may also explain the successful emergence of new political competitors and 'challenger parties' in all European party systems (see Mair, 2005: 8-9; Gunther et al., 2002: 4-5).

De-alignment and displacement are closely linked processes: Traditional political parties find it increasingly difficult to appeal to overarching or shared identities and loyalties of specific social groups. Despite the fact that the traditional parties have transformed their party organisation substantially and have shown a high capability to adapt to changing environments (Katz and Mair 2002; Krouwel 2006), established parties now seem less capable than hitherto in maintaining strong links with voters. This is amply illustrated in the literature on citizens, parties and party system development (see: Franklin, 2003; Dalton, 2002). Dalton and others, for instance, show that levels of electoral participation are in part an effect of displacement. In addition, they demonstrate clearly that the core vote for traditional parties is declining everywhere in Europe (Dalton et al., 2003: 29; see also Table 2 below). Also, established supporter groups have become more diffuse and they have fewer institutional links with party-political organisations, which leads to less loyal voting behaviour. New voter groups (younger generations, de-industrialized labour and immigrants) enter the electorate with even less party-political socialisation and encapsulation (Kitschelt, 1997; Dalton, 2002). Moreover, the traditional channels of communication, party organisations, ancillary organisations and the party press, have almost completely disappeared in all European countries.

In sum, the successful emergence of new (in particular radical right) parties may be due to two types of displacement: one, retreat from 'politics' altogether; or two, using the vote to support 'anti-establishment' parties and a 'new' type of leadership that challenges the extant political class. The effect of the second type of displacement can be considered as a form of 'replacement' of groups of voters (see e.g. the rise of Berlusconi: McCarthy, 1996). Here displacement is transformed into de-alignment, which

subsequently results in electoral shifts. What emerges is a more generalised growth of distrust in, and indifference to, traditional politics, political organisations and traditional leadership (see for example Hayward 1996; Norris 1999; Pharr and Putnam 2000; Katz and Mair , 2002). In other words: dissatisfaction with party politics across Europe is apparent everywhere and seems to result in lower rates of electoral participation, on the one hand, and in electoral replacement, on the other hand. We argue that these factors are important for understanding the rise of new parties and those on the radical right in particular.

Table 2: Electoral Features of European Democracies

COUNTRY	Turn Out	Change TO 1980-2003	Change TO 1960-2003	Electoral Volatility	Change EV 1980-2003	Change EV 1960-2003	Vote Share New Parties	Change NP 1980-2003
Austria	84.30	-7.30	-9.50	21.10	15.60	17.80	32.10	20.40
Belgium*	91.10	-2.80	-.20	12.80	2.80	2.60	28.80	14.00
Denmark	87.10	1.50	-0.20	13.30	3.60	4.60	13.60	6.30
Finland	69.90	-9.10	-15.40	11.00	2.30	4.00	19.40	11.20
France	64.40	-7.50	-12.20	14.00	1.60	1.10	22.80	11.90
Germany	80.30	-6.80	-6.80	7.80	1.50	-0.60	11.20	5.00
Ireland	62.70	-10.20	-11.50	10.70	2.60	3.70	11.60	0.20
Italy*	81.20	-7.80	-11.70	22.00	13.40	13.80	63.60	28.90
Netherlands*	79.50	-4.00	-15.50	23.40	15.10	15.50	24.90	21.50
Norway	75.50	-7.60	-7.30	16.10	5.60	10.80	12.30	8.20
Sweden	80.10	-9.00	-6.30	13.90	6.30	9.90	8.20	4.70
Switzerland	45.20	-3.00	-19.00	8.70	2.30	5.20	25.90	4.00
United Kingdom	59.40	-14.70	-17.30	9.30	6.30	4.10	10.60	-8.30
<i>Europe</i>	<i>71.85</i>	<i>-11.00</i>	<i>-13.40</i>	<i>15,20</i>	<i>10.95</i>	<i>11.00</i>	<i>22.62</i>	<i>9.62</i>

N. B: all data in percentages. *Europe* = Cross-national average [N = 13]. **Sources:** Mair, 2002; Siaroff, 2000; Comparative Political Data Set, 2004; Gallagher et al., 2005: 291-294. * denotes compulsory voting (till 1971 in The Netherlands and 1994 in Italy). **Level** = 2003; **Change** = Absolute differences between periods.

3.2 Receding electoral turnout and rising electoral volatility

One indicator both for the failure of the traditional parties and for the electoral success of new parties across the 'new' Europe since the 1990s are the rise in electoral volatility and the steady decline in turnout, particularly in the 1990s (Mair, 2002). While turnout at national elections remained relatively high and stable until the 1980s, in recent decades a steady decline in voter participation is discernable (minus 13,4 % for all countries since the sixties). From Table 2 we also read that this decline in political participation in all European democracies continued to drop between 1980 and present (-11 %). Particularly citizens in Ireland, the Netherlands and Finland are apparently opting out of the political process. Sharp declines can also be seen in Austria, Germany, and to a lesser extent in Italy and France. Even in countries where turnout was always lower, such as Switzerland and the UK, electoral participation continued to decline. Only in Belgium (as a result of compulsory voting) and Denmark (but is a volatile rate) is the drop in turnout less dramatic. However, the overall trend is clearly down in all European countries and has resulted in the lowest level of electoral participation in the post-war period (see also Mair, 2002: 129). More than 30 per cent of the European electorate now choose to stay away from elections and has apparently displaced electoral party politics altogether.

As Table 2 also shows, the replacement rate – indicated by the level of electoral volatility - is almost inversely related to electoral turnout. In other words: both 'displacement' and 'replacement' occur simultaneously in the 1990s. An increasing number of citizens choose not to show their face in a polling station, and those that do show up seem to have a growing propensity to switch parties from

election to election. Although Gallagher et al. (2005: 290-296) argued that stability across Europe is still prevalent, we beg to differ. First of all, this is because individualisation as expressed in social orientations is changing as well as a decline in religiosity and – for instance – class voting (Nieuwbeerta, 1995: 53). This points to the weakening of the party-voter linkage in terms of loyalty and identification. Second, Gallagher et al's argument is based on the aggregated levels of votes for the party families of respectively the Left and the Right. Electoral volatility would occur mainly within these 'blocs'. However, recalculating these results by taking out the 'New Left' and the 'New Right', it becomes clear that, between 1960 and 2004, the traditional parties lose 13.8 per cent of their vote share. Conversely the increase of the vote share of 'new parties' in the same period is 22.6 per cent (Cf. Gallagher et al., 2005: 292).

In sum: Both the movements in electoral turnout and volatility – in particular since the 1990s - appear to indicate that political dissatisfaction with traditional parties and electoral change are growing together with the success for new parties in general and the 'New (radical) Right' in particular. This conclusion is in part shared by Mair (2002: 132-33) and by Pedersen (1983) when they wrote that the larger European countries still show higher levels of turnout and are less volatile than the smaller democracies of Europe. In the last decade of the twentieth century, however, the growth of electoral volatility has not only accelerated but also widened to the larger democracies as well (see Table 2). We therefore have to conclude that the gradual decline in turnout and party loyalty indicates a disconnection of a substantial part of the electorate from traditional party politics and a growing dissatisfaction with the established political leadership. This general decline in attachment to the political

system explains in large part why new parties can be more successful than ever before.

3.3 Electoral support for new political parties

While links between citizens and traditional political organisations are weakening, voters are also shifting their political preferences and seem to be adrift as well. Given the high levels of electoral volatility new parties will benefit from this. Below in Table 3 we have reported the bi-variate relations between the electoral developments of respectively the new parties (as given in Table 2), on the one hand, and the main parties across Europe: social democracy and Christian democracy – the leading parties in most countries as regards to the left and the right (see also: Keman and Pennings, 2004; Gallagher et al., 2005). As Table 2 has shown, more than twenty percent of European electorates vote for new political parties and this rise is clearly related to electoral volatility. While the relationship with electoral turnout is weaker, there nevertheless seems to be a connection. In addition, although the participation rate has declined less dramatically, the absence of more voters appears to benefit new parties.

Table 3: Bi-variate relations between Voter Turnout, Electoral Volatility and Growth Vote share of Social Democracy & Christian Democracy and New Parties [1980 – 2004]

Variables:	<i>Voter Turnout 1980-2003</i>	<i>Electoral Volatility 1980-2003</i>	<i>Vote Share Social Democracy 1980-2003</i>	<i>Vote Share Christian Democracy 1980-2003</i>
<i>Vote share New Parties</i>	.38	.82**	-.78**	-.52*
<i>Vote share New Right</i>	.41	.77**	-.62*	-.71**
<i>Vote share New Left</i>	-.14	.37	-.50*	-.31
<i>Vote share Other New Parties</i>	.31	.62*	-.43	-.53*
N.B: See Tables 1 & 2 for data and description; all results are Pearson Product Moment coefficient; ** significant at respectively 0.05 and 0.01 level. Source: Comparative Political Data Set (2004) CPD_Set_en.asp#cpdsI ; Gallagher et al., 2005.				

Table 3 again demonstrates that the rise of new parties, particular those of the (radical) right, are highly and significantly associated with the decline of the vote shares for the established parties of both left- and centre-right. Hence, the message is loud and clear: the more volatile the electorate, the stronger the rise of new parties. In particular, social democratic parties are hurt by all types of new parties, whereas the Christian Democrats suffer most from the challenges of the ‘New Right’ (and to some degree from the ‘other’ new parties). New Left parties have a lesser impact and seem to remain within the leftwing party family (see also: Gallagher et al., 2005). Clearly, the electoral decline of both main party families is associated with the rise of the New Right, which suggests that these parties compete successfully on a different issue dimension than the traditional parties. Both Christian democratic and social democratic parties have been haemorrhaging popular support since the 1970s when new parties emerged. Christian democratic parties have lost a considerable share of their popular support since the 1950s when they polled around twenty per cent of the vote across Europe. Since the 1960s this level declined and Christian democratic electoral support in Western Europe is now around or even below the sixteen per cent

level. Parties of social-democratic origin also lost electoral support, from a steadfast average of over thirty percent between the 1950s and the 1970s to around twenty-eight percent in the 1980s and 1990s (Krouwel 1999). In sum, voters are moving away from the traditional party alternatives at an increasing pace and if they do not leave the electorate altogether they are inclined to support new political challengers. Why then are voters moving away from the traditional party families and why are the (radical) right parties in particular so successful in attracting these voters?

4. Polarization and convergence in European party systems

One possible answer is that new parties have more room for electoral competition because since the 1990s traditional parties have tended to move closer to one another in terms of Left versus Right differences (Klingemann and Volkens, 2002; Keman and Pennings, 2004). This would imply a convergence towards the centre of ‘gravity’ of these parties in the respective party systems. Below we will examine to what extent this appears to be the case and – if so – whether or not this is related to the successful emergence of new parties.

4.1 Disappearing party differences and the room for ‘new’ competitors

Firstly, we examine the changes in the range of party competition, which is the distance between the extreme positions within a party system. To this end we have calculated two dimensions of inter-party competition: one, the traditional Left-Right dimension and, two: the Progressive-Conservative dimension of competition (see Appendix for details). We argue that new forms of electoral competition cannot be

sufficiently captured by means of a one-dimensional analysis. New issues and attitudes have developed that appear to be related to other ideas than the socio-economic Left/Right distinction (see also: Laver and Hunt, 1992; Marks and Steenbergen, 2004).

From our calculations of the 13 party systems (N. of parties: 277) it becomes clear that the Left versus Right dimension – although less contested than it used to be - is still relevant for party system dynamics. What can be observed is a minor convergent tendency occurring on the Left-Right dimension (0.3, indicating little change). In addition, we find that average contestation over Progressive versus Conservative stances is growing since the eighties (9.7). However, it should be noted that variation across Europe is large and patterns of competition are quite different within the various party systems under review. For example, at the level of individual party systems, it appears that in six countries the traditional parties are moving closer to one another in terms of Left versus Right: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland and Sweden. In six other countries parties have actually polarized their position on the Left-Right range of party competition: in Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland and Great Britain. On the Progressive-Conservative dimension most party systems show indeed a tendency towards polarization. Eight countries polarise on the Progressive-Conservative dimension: Austria, Denmark, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Great Britain. It is only in Germany and Ireland that there is little programmatic change on this dimension, while parties in Belgium and Switzerland seem to come closer together on this conflict dimension. These findings are noteworthy for two reasons: one, it shows that party competition is indeed *more* complex than the simple Left versus Right type of contestation as such reveals; two, the results also demonstrate that understanding

the success of new parties depends on *how and what* types of issues dominate inter-party rivalry within the different European party systems as such. To make more sense of this pattern of polarisation, Table 4 organises the countries in a two-by-two table.

Table 4: Two-dimensional polarisation in European party systems

		Left-Right		
		<i>Polarization</i>	<i>De-polarization</i>	
Progressive-Conservative	<i>Polarization</i>	Austria (32.1) Norway (12.3) The Netherlands (26.1) Italy (73.4) Great Britain (0.0)	Denmark (13.6) France (22.8) Sweden (8.2)	23.6%
	<i>De-polarisation</i>	Switzerland (25.9)	Belgium (30.8) Finland (19.4) Germany (11.2) Ireland (13.3)	20.1%
		28.3% [33.9 %]	18.2%	

Polarization = total range (distance between the two most extreme parties) of party system increases;
De-polarisation = total range of inter-party differences within the party system decreases.
In brackets are the percentages of votes for new parties; [..] = average *without* Great Britain;
see Appendix for calculation.

This cross-tabulation first of all demonstrates that polarisation, particularly on the Left-Right dimension, is only moderately associated with the electoral success of new parties. Countries with high levels of electoral support for new parties tend to cluster in the cell that indicates polarisation. Second, however, we clearly discern that polarisation per se cannot account for all the cross-system variations in Europe. For instance, in Austria, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway new parties do emerge in a polarising political climate, yet in Belgium, France and Switzerland new parties obviously emerge in a situation of ideological convergence.

Thus, what is most interesting is that collusion or conflict at the party system level is not a necessary condition for the emergence and success of new parties. This

goes against the dominant idea in much of the literature (see for example: Kitschelt's Level III hypothesis, Kitschelt, 1997: 141-43; Betz, 2002: 205ff; Norris, 2005: 192ff, Abedi 2002). Rather it appears that party system level strife is a possible source for the success of new parties, but not the driving force behind it. Table 4 actually suggests two trajectories for new parties to emerge successfully: the opportunity structure for new parties seems to be enhanced where polarisation is decreasing, and conversely a similar opportunity structure is created where polarization grows. It seems that party competition is a Janus-faced phenomenon, which is all too often neglected: where there are strongly contested views the 'centre of gravity' may become vacated and other parties have room for filling the empty space. Conversely, where parties tend to move to this 'centre' there is probably more space and more voters left to gain at the rims of the party system space (see: Pennings and Keman, 2003; Ignazi, 1997: 316-8). In order to examine more closely the 'crowding of the centre-space' in European party systems, Table 5 provides data on the convergence of parties towards the median of the political spectrum (point zero) on both dimensions of party competition.

Table 5: Two-dimensional convergence in European party systems

		Left-Right		
		<i>divergence</i>	<i>convergence</i>	
Progressive-Conservative	<i>divergence</i>	Austria (32.1) France (22.8) Norway (12.3) Great Britain (0.0)		16.8% [22.4]
	<i>convergence</i>	Denmark (13.6) Germany (11.2) Italy (73.4) Sweden (8.2)	Belgium (30.8) Finland (19.4) Ireland (13.3) The Netherlands (26.1) Switzerland (25.9)	24.7%
		21.7% [24.8 %]	23.1%	

Convergence = party distances towards the median of the political spectrum (0-point) become smaller;
Divergence = party distances from the median point (0-point) become larger.

In brackets are the percentages of votes for new parties; [...] = average *without* Great Britain;
see Appendix for calculation.

These results show that, again contrary to what is commonly assumed, in most party systems parties are moving *away* from the centre on either one or both of the dimensions. The overall trend is one of centrifugal movement and not of increasing centripetal competition. Only in Belgium, the Netherlands, Finland, Switzerland and Ireland a centripetal movement of political parties on both dimensions can be observed. Clearly there is little evidence of a secular and linear development towards more contracted ranges of party competition across Europe in the last two decades. The more common centrifugal tendency was most extensive in Austria, Norway, Denmark, Italy and Great Britain and to a lesser extent in France, Germany and Sweden. On the Progressive-Conservative dimension there is more centripetal movement. In Austria, France, Norway and Britain we even see a centrifugal movement of parties on both dimension, while these systems have been far from immune to the emergence of new parties (with the exception of the UK). These centrifugal and centripetal developments of Table 5 enhance the pattern that was already visible in Table 4. The data suggests that both convergence and divergence appear to contribute to the emergence and success of new parties. Party systems where parties diverge at least on the Left-Right dimension also show substantial propensity to new party origin and support. Hence, contrary to what is often argued, our data-analysis shows that new parties emerge under varying conditions of party competition across Europe. New parties emerge in countries where polarization and divergence of party competition can be observed: Austria and Norway (polarization and simultaneous divergence on both dimensions), while systems with polarization and simultaneous divergence on either dimension of contestation have also seen the

rise of new parties as can be seen in France, Italy, the Netherlands and to a lesser degree in Denmark, Sweden and Switzerland.

To sum up: Tables 4 and 5 inform us that there are indeed two roads that bring about new parties: either they emerge where there is increasing party contestation on either or both dimensions of party competition, while new party support is also growing when most of the (established) parties de-polarise and converge towards the centre. This can be demonstrated if we calculate the differences between the average score of Left versus Right and Progressive versus Conservative positions for the party systems as a whole and for new parties in toto: Left versus Right is only 1.54 and for Progressive versus Conservative it is 6.78. This means that the party differences are not that large. However, if we recalculate this for the (radical) rightwing parties the differences are dramatic: Left versus Right = 17.94 and Progressive versus Conservative = 12.49. Hence, the party competition for office is fought out on various grounds and issues. But – given the fact that rightwing parties are more successful electorally than other new parties (see: Table 1) – it also implies that (radical) rightwing parties appear to be particularly capable to make inroads under centripetal as well as under centrifugal conditions. This paradox may well be related with another factor that is more and more discussed, but is hardly examined in more detail: the emergence of new types political entrepreneurial behaviour. This behaviour is associated – as the literature suggests – with ‘populism’ that presents itself inter alia by ‘new’ issues (Betz, 2002; Taggart, 2000; Meny and Surel, 2002).

5. New parties, new issues, new right?

The emergence of new parties should therefore not simply be considered as a one-way causal argument on the basis of party systems' dynamics alone. On the contrary: in addition to this variable, so we argue, the capacity of new parties to successfully appeal to the electorate is particularly due to the development of a fundamentally different set of issues and issue priorities that lie *outside* the confines of the Left versus Right and Progressive versus Conservative dimensions (or are at least not considered as central issues for traditional party families). As we reported already, in all party systems, but particularly in Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland and Finland the new (radical) rightwing parties depart substantially from the party system mean (the relative centre of party competition) and are also more radical in terms of distance from other new parties.

Despite the fact that the new radical right parties position themselves far from the political centre of party competition, they should not be labelled by definition as 'extreme-right' political parties. We will argue that the new radical right must be labelled *populist right* if and when its profile in issue priorities is not only distinctive but also substantively different. Below we will show that the issue priorities of new radical right parties consist of a coherent set of issues that fit quite well with existing ideas on what a populist ideological profile is. Moreover, this set of issue-priorities is different from the issue profile of another successful new party family, the ecological parties.

5.1 Populist ideology and issues

In the literature three core elements of a populist ideology are dominant: (a) the notion of a unified sovereign people whose will can be expressed by – preferably - the actions of one political leader, (b) an aversion against political intermediaries such as political parties and affiliated interest organisations, (c) less institutional and bureaucratic procedures that stand in the way of the direct expression of the people's will (Canovan, 1999; 2002; Taggart, 2000; Meny and Surel, 2002; Mudde, 2004).

First and foremost populism is characterised by the idea that political decisions are made under direct forms of popular control, and that the sovereignty of the people is the point of departure of all political action (vertical democracy). Central to populism is thus the notion of a singular, united and organic people, which is pitted against those ruling in their name. Populists construct two counter positions: one, between the people and the 'political class', and two, between 'the political elite' and the populist leader himself (Schedler 1996). Clearly the populist leader sides with the people on this divide. As Mudde (2004: 543) puts it: populism is 'an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, the 'pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite'. In the eyes of the populist, the established elites have hijacked representative democracy, and the populist leader will bring it back to the people. In addition, in the view of populists differences between opposition and government are meaningless. Populists 'recode the universe of political actors as a homogeneous political class' (Schedler 1996: 295). For populists, the entire political establishment, whether in government or not, is recruited through the same corrupt institutional mechanisms and they all take part in a dishonest system that betrays the will of the people. In this logic representative democracy is perceived

as a malfunctioning system because the ruling class is corrupt, unrepresentative, unresponsive and incompetent (if not 'undemocratic'). The leaders of the major traditional parties are not perceived as 'contenders', but as 'adversaries' (Schedler 1996: 300; Mair, 2005).

Next to the ruling elite, populists also agitate against intermediary political organisations (such as political parties) that stand in the way of the true, direct and unbiased expression of the will of the people: 'that politics should be an expression of the *volonté général* (general will) of the people' (Mudde 2004: 543). In the same way all political intermediary organisations such as political parties, trade unions and interest organisations, the bureaucracy, the press and the 'intelligentsia' are seen to obstruct the will of the people, populist disapproval of representative democracy is a reaction against elitist democracy and its institutional framework like the bureaucratic state (Mair, 2005). In the populist's view, representatives do not represent the people but only themselves. Representative or indirect democracy is attacked in the name of democracy as an ideal. Populism is then, in the words of Kitschelt (2002: 179), 'an expression of dissatisfaction with existing modes of organisation of elite-mass political intermediation'. The populist critique on representative democracy particularly focuses on political parties that are seen as divisive and on the bureaucratic and institutional structures that they create in order to complicate and obscure policy-making. Populists will propagate more direct forms of democracy, such as referenda, popular consultations and direct election of office-holders.

5.2 Analysing populist tendencies among established and new parties

On the basis of these core elements of populism we have selected four issue areas that are derived from the Manifesto-Data Project (see: Budge et al., 2001) and will be used as proxy indicators of a populist stance of political parties. These are: *anti-bureaucracy* (denouncing political efficacy and lack of control by the regulatory state), *anti-EU* (which refers to the idea of a ‘heartland’ and can serve as a proxy for anti-elite sentiments in Western Europe), *pro-authority* (a proxy for strong leadership, more direct rule and anti-intermediary practices) and, lastly, *xenophobia* (an ethnic version of a unified and ‘pure people’). Arguably, these indicators allow for a systematic and comparative comparison of populist tendencies across political parties. In particular this allows us to investigate whether or not new right wing parties are indeed ‘populist’ as well. Table 6 below provides the information of the electoral platforms of established’, newly found and new radical right-wing parties devoted to these populist issues.

Table 6: Populist Issue Profile Comparing Old and New Parties in Europe 1980-2000

	<i>Anti EU</i>	<i>Anti-Buro</i>	<i>Pro-Authority</i>	<i>Xenophobia</i>	<i>Ecology</i>	<i>N</i>
Old parties - 1980-1990	0.7	6.0	3.6	1.0	6.3	101
Old parties - 1990-2000	0.8	6.9	8.2	1.0	7.3	104
New parties - 1980-1990	0.3	7.3	5.3	0.7	18.4	18
New parties - 1990-2000	1.2	4.9	6.4	0.5	16.9	29
Rightwing (radical) Parties - 1990-2000	1.5	9.6	10.6	3.8	4.1	25
All Parties – 1980-2000	0.9	6.7	6.3	1.2	7.9	277

N.B: All figures concern percentages of total text of party platform (= 100%).

Issues representing contestation among ‘new’ and ‘old’ parties as well as producing a ‘populist’ party profile. The issues are:

1. *Anti-EU* (Heartland ideas, anti-establishment) per 109 + 110
2. *Anti-Bureaucracy* (anti-elite and big government) per 301 + 202
3. *Pro-Authority* (strong leadership and effective rule) per 305 + 605
4. *Xenophobia* (nationalism/heartland and anti-foreigners) per 601 + 608

And proxy to serve Post-materialism:

5. *Ecology* (environment & infrastructure) per 416 + 501

NB: derived from: Budge et al., 2001: Appendix (p. 221 ff). Own computations.

Table 6 shows that sentiments regarding ‘big government’, the bureaucratic moloch, have been a salient concern for all parties for the whole period. This concern is also evident in ideas on the efficient and effective ‘state’. However, the anti-EU sentiments and the ‘environment’ are clearly issues that beget saliency in the 1990s. Yet, what is more obvious than everything else is that radical right wing parties clearly have a different and more pronounced issue profile from other – old and new - parties. Radical right wing parties are far more anti-bureaucratic and pro-authority than other parties. Apart from the ecological issue – which they obviously do not ‘own’ – the new right outscore all other parties on the issues that we consider not only rightwing but also a central part of populist rhetoric. In particular the xenophobic sentiment is markedly more salient than with all other parties. Obviously, traditional parties did not put too much emphasis on anti-bureaucratic and pro-authority issues until the 1990s. In fact, during the 1980s new parties used to be not so different from the

traditional parties, but the emergence of the radical right parties has dramatically transformed the political competition into a more populist direction. Hence, our examination clearly demonstrates that the established parties are attacked from two sides: the Green/Left and the Radical Right. These new parties have forced the other parties to compete on issues that were traditionally less salient.

Recall that we have concluded in the foregoing section that apparently party competition follows two trajectories: on the one hand, the emergence of new parties can well be the result of centrifugal tendencies, on the other hand, it also seems to be related to centripetal developments. In fact, when we relate the information in Table 6 to Tables 4 and 5 we can see that different circumstances appear to be conducive to similar effects, namely that under widely varying circumstances rightwing parties are able to mobilise the electorate by means of populist tactics. For example the Belgium Vlaams Blok (now renamed Vlaams Belang), the Lega Nord and Alleanza Nazionale in Italy, Blocher's SVP in Switzerland and the Dutch LPF are staunch anti-bureaucratic parties and 'heartland' oriented in their speech (Kitschelt, 2002). This type of issue framing is even starker when we look at emphasis on the need for more political authority. Radical right wing parties place a stronger emphasis on strong leadership and authority than other parties in their party systems. Especially the FPÖ in Austria, Vlaams Belang in Belgium, the Italian radical right (LN and AN) and the Dutch LPF emphasize the need for more authoritative political action. We also note that the issue of the multicultural society (xenophobia) is relevant but is less pronounced than the other types of contestation. Yet, the emphasis on xenophobia, if and when it occurs, is almost exclusively the domain of the radical right parties (3.8 versus 1.2 on average; see Table 6).

These important findings not only highlight the fact that radical right parties often have a high populist issue profile and thus differ substantially from other established *and* new parties, but it also makes clear why party system change *per se* is insufficient for explaining the emergence and success of these parties. They compete on different ‘terms’, whereby divergence or convergence of the party system appears as a significant but collateral factor. It is therefore crucial to investigate how and in what way the issue profiles of old and new parties are contingent upon each other. In other words: do specific types of contestation exist and are these types indicative for the emergence of different types of new parties or not?

5.3 Different styles of competition: actions & reactions

Table 6 showed that two salient issue profiles emerged during the nineties: a ‘new right populist’ and a ‘new green-left’ profile, both leading to electoral success for a substantial number of new parties. Of course, the established parties have followed suit by emphasizing a number of these issues as well, but merely *sotto voce*. In order to highlight this process of interaction between traditional and new parties, and within the new parties between the radical right and ecological parties, we examine below in Table 7 to what extent the various populist and the ecological issues are related to one another at the level of European political parties. In addition, we inspect in what way these patterned relationships are associated with our measures of party competition at the system level.

Table 7. Correlation matrix of Populist issues within Rightwing parties compared with other parties in Europe (1990-2000)

Variables:	<i>Anti-Bureaucracy</i>		<i>Pro-Authority</i>		<i>Anti-EU</i>		<i>Xenophobia</i>	
Type of Party	Other Parties	Rightwing Radical	Other Parties	Rightwing Radical	Other Parties	Rightwing Radical	Other Parties	Rightwing Radical
<i>Pro-Authority</i>	0.23*	-0.05	-	-				
<i>Anti-EU</i>	-0.21*	-0.38*	-0.05	-0.03	-	-		
<i>Xenophobia</i>	0.02	-0.47**	0.12*	-0.16	0.14*	0.61**		
<i>Environment</i>	-0.24*	-0.16	-0.28**	-0.02	0.20*	0.19	-0.12*	0.57**

N.B: All other parties N = 243, Rightwing Radical parties N = 33 [**/* = significant at 0.01/0.05].

All are Pearson Product Moment Coefficients. Data: see Tables 1 & 6

The table shows that several core populist issues (anti-bureaucratic, anti-EU and xenophobic emphases) are highly and significantly interrelated. Most parties, old and new, put less coherent emphasis on typical right-wing populist issues, compared to the radical right. Particularly striking is that a rightwing radical party's emphasis on xenophobia is interdependent with anti-EU emphasis, on the one hand, and is related to anti-bureaucratic attitudes, on the other hand. To reiterate, new radical right wing parties emphasize much more strongly and more coherent 'populist' issues. In addition, the signs are often in the opposite direction, indicating that the Radical Right has a distinct profile, with the possible exception of EU-attitudes and environmental issues. Most parties are concerned about the environment, reluctant about strong statism and against negative ideas on foreigners and immigration policy, yet the less rightwing and conservative a party is across western Europe the more they appear to differ from the 'new right'. In this respect there is little distance between traditional parties and most of the new parties that are either left socialist, progressive libertarian or green parties (see: Table 1). Yet the odd-one-out seems to be the Radical Right, which shows a distinct issue profile.

We argue that the emergence and electoral success of new parties ought to be understood as a dual development: On the one hand, new parties as such are more successful than before due to general factors like dissatisfaction of many citizens with the established parties *and* voters are more willing than before to switch from one to another party. Recall that the correlations between electoral volatility and the vote share of new parties is 0.82 (and for New Right Parties 0.77). On the other hand, these general features, which manifested themselves during the 1990s, can be considered as conditions under which radical right ideas, transmitted in a populist fashion, appear to

explain the dramatic rise of new radical rightwing parties (particularly in Austria, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and recently in Norway and Switzerland). Taken together this might be an answer to the puzzle when, where and how new parties emerge: there is not a linear relationship here, but rather a conditional framework, a ‘window of opportunity’ that however must be opened at the right time by the ‘right’ persons with the ‘right’ message. Exactly this line of argument becomes visible in the issue profile of those new rightwing parties that have been successful. As Table 7 shows their message is quite distinct from other parties – be it old or new. This may well imply that the combination of two bundles of issues emerging in European party systems boost the competitive power of new parties: the viewing of the world ‘outside’ the own country (or: outside the ‘heartland’) and the dissatisfaction with the ‘inside’ performance of the democratic political system (the ‘failing’ state) (Gabel and Anderson, 2004). And precisely these two bundles are difficult to contest for the established parties as well as for the other, often more progressive new parties. ‘Old’ parties have an undeniable responsibility as parties of government in the eye of many of the voters, whereas the ‘Green & Left’ new parties appear often as pro-statist, internationalist and can be considered as ‘rebels’ with their own agenda that concurs less with the population at large, or with the individual (non-)voter compared to the more ‘popular’ radical right issue profile (Dalton, 2002).

If our observations based on these bi-variate relations are correct, then it appears that not only the ‘window of opportunities’ are more open and better used than before, but also that the modes of interaction within party systems are shifting. We argue that, instead of competing on the basis of contesting issues between parties, the struggle for the voter is increasingly focussed on the *domains* of identification such as the concept of belonging to a ‘heartland’, which seems to relate to nationalist

and anti-EU attitudes (Sani and Sartori, 1983). This would signify that longstanding issues are less central to party competition – the well-known battle ground for the established parties and their elites – but rather a new field is developing: appealing to sentiments and identities of (parts of) the electorate rather than making pledges on policy related issues regarding the public welfare at large (Hooghe et al., 2004). This point, we are inclined to argue, is ignored in much electoral and party system research. Societal developments have not only dramatically changed since the early 1990s, but have apparently impacted seriously on the life of *individual* voters (Van der Eijk and Marklin, 2004), particularly as citizens are far less encapsulated in a fixed socio-political environment and are less politically socialized (see: Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000; Kitschelt, 2002). This signifies a new trend in electoral politics and the politics of mediation. Some political actors appear to understand this better than others.

6. Conclusion

Across Europe, a substantial number of new parties have successfully emerged due to the resignation of twenty percent of the voters to support traditional political parties (after discounting the lower turnout of voters). In particular, the radical right has been able to develop a niche of its own by means of stressing populist issues. Conversely, the established parties and the related ‘political class’ appear unable to counter this new mode and strategy of party competition.

We demonstrated that in many European polities the radical populist right is obviously making inroads into the electoral basis of the traditional parties. It became clear that the rise of the radical populist right is only weakly related to the general

pattern of competition on the main conflict dimensions along which traditional parties compete. Therefore, new radical right parties emerge in situations of collusion and convergence, as well as in periods of polarisation and divergence within party systems. We have shown that the new radical right was able to do this because they compete by means of a distinct and coherent issue profile that can be labelled populist and is indeed very 'popular' among vast groups of voters.

That radical right parties have been successful at the polling stations may well have the result of their exclusion by the traditional parties. This strategy of collusion and cartelisation of traditional parties may hold back the populist forces for some years, but the empirical evidence shows that the populist appeal will only increase because exclusion by the major political actors only feeds into their populist strategy. For instance, the fact that major parties in consensus democracies have been most inclined to respond with cartelisation even more than before in reaction to electoral rise of populist parties, may well account for the success of new parties in these cases. Cartelisation of the traditional parties and blatant exclusion of new parties with substantial electoral support only feeds the discontent and dissatisfaction that seems to characterise modern electorates (Mair, 2005). In consensus democracies, where economic and social change such as de-industrialisation, individualisation and retrenchment of the welfare state have eroded many social and economic securities of citizens, the masses have begun to drift into a radical right and populist direction (Dalton and Gray, 2003). If traditional elites want to survive politically, they need to reconsider their political strategies and restore the crucial link between voters, parties and democratic governance. When the elites only respond with a further retreat into the bastions of the state, Italy may not be the last collapse of an established political system. Hence, the 'political class' would be wise to reflect more on its own

democratic performance and seek ways to re-establish its links with large parts of the electorate (the 'demos'). Instead of only defending its power position vis-à-vis 'new' parties, established parties need urgently to develop new ideas on how to govern *for* the people, which inevitably also implies in a representative democracy: Governing *by* the people!

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Appendix:

Development of Left versus Right and Progressive versus Conservative scales

Data sources:

Both scales used in this paper have originally been published in Keman and Pennings, 2004. They are based on the Manifesto Research Group data set as published by Budge et al., 2001 (see for details pp. 219-28). The countries included are listed in Table 1. The period covered is 1975-1998. Parties are the unit of analysis (N = 277), party systems are aggregates of parties by country.

Scale construction:

The *Left vs. Right* and *Progressive vs. Conservative* dimensions are developed in an interactive way. We have used the original Right-Left scale developed by Budge et al. (see: 228) but confined *a priori* the items for *LvsR* to socio-economic topics mainly. By means of factor analysis using Principal Axis Factoring (*PAF*: Eigen Values > .75) we arrived at 5 positive and five negative categories for each scale (cumulative explained variance for *LvsR* = 75,7% and for *PvsC* = 75,2%) that are meaningfully loaded. The bi-variate relationship between the factor scores of the two scales is, $r = -.607^{**}$.

Scale computation:

The items derived by this procedure have been used to compute the *LvsR* and *PvsC* scores for each party as follows: The scale *LvsR* by computing Left issues *minus* **Right** issues. Likewise, the scale *PvsC* is computed as: Progressive *minus* Conservative issues. The theoretical maximum value of the scale is +100 (all proportional emphases on the Left or Progressive issues by party). The minimum value is -100 (all proportional emphases on the Right or Conservative issues by party).

Overview of the items included in the dimensions of LvsR and PvsC scales			
<i>Left issues</i>	<i>Right issues</i>	<i>Progressive issues</i>	<i>Conservative issues</i>
Democracy [per202]	Individual Freedom [per201]	Anti-growth economy [416]	Law and Order [per605]
Economic planning [per404]	Gov. & Administrative Efficiency [per303]	Environmental protection [per501]	National Way of Life: positive [per603]
Controlled economy [per412]	Free enterprise [per401]	Peace [per106]	Multiculturalism: negative [per607]
Nationalisation [per413]	Incentives to induce enterprise [per402]	Traditional morality: negative [per603]	Traditional morality: positive [per604]
Welfare State Expansion [per504]	Welfare State Limitation [per505]	Military: negative [per104]	Military: positive [per105]

Note: *Perxxx* in brackets refer to the data entries in Budge et al., 2001: 222 ff.

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