



TRIBUNES AND PATRICIANS: RADICAL FRINGE PARTIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

The mid and late 2000s witnessed a proliferation of political parties in European party systems. Marxist parties, Libertarian, Pirate, and Animal parties as well as radical-right and populist parties have become part of an increasingly heterogeneous political spectrum generally dominated by the mainstream centre-left and centre-right. The question this article explores is what led to the surge of these parties during the first decade of the 21st century. While it is tempting to look at structural arguments or the recent late-2000s financial crisis to explain this proliferation, the emergence of these parties predates the debt-crisis and cannot be described by structural shifts alone. This paper argues that the proliferation of new radical parties came about not only as a result of changes in the political space, but rather due to the very perceived presence and even strengthening of what Katz and Mair (1995) famously dubbed the cartelization of mainstream political parties.

Introduction

The mid and late 2000s witnessed a proliferation of political parties in European party systems. Marxist parties, Libertarian, Pirate, and Animal parties, neo-fascists like Jobbik and Golden-Dawn, as well as far-right populist parties such as PVV have all become part of an increasingly heterogeneous political spectrum generally dominated by mainstream centre-left and centre-right political actors. Of course, the appearance of new political contenders is by no means a rare sight. New coalitions and parties form all the time and naturally claim to take on issues that are not addressed by already existing players. The parties mentioned above are hardly new in what they are trying to do—that is, occupy a space the others have left vacant. Jobbik and PVV, for instance, fall within an already existent and quite successful party family, the extreme or radical-right. These parties have taken the vacant space to the right of the statist-individualist or communitarian-libertarian debate. Pirate and libertarian parties generally epitomize an opposite pole emphasizing post-modern values and personal freedom. Ideologically, they could not be further apart from each other.

When it comes to political strategy, however, the parties mentioned above share much in common. All point to the increasing disconnect between existing parties and society. They all attempt to portray themselves in one way or another as *tribunes* of “the people” or advocates of the alienated, the unheard, and the unrepresented. To this end, they often juxtapose their image against that of mainstream established and usually centrist (centre-left and centre-right) parties who are depicted—much like the *patricians* of Ancient Rome—as starting out as popular representatives, but, over time these parties emerge into an elite class of their own as they abandon their original commitments and betray those they were initially supposed to represent.

While adopting completely opposite ideological positions, *tribune* parties rarely admit to being “radical.” The interpretation of their own position vis-à-vis the rest is that of “authentic” societal representatives versus a corrupt and disengaged general political culture that has abandoned ideology and that fails to address or even discuss “real issues.” When asked to place *their* party on a left-right scale, they would reject the left-right dichotomy altogether as unrepresentative of both current parties, as well as current societal cleavages. Consequently, the universe of the *tribune* party is therefore one generally lying on the fringes of political space, located at the meeting point of anti-mainstream discourse and ideological radicalism.

The rise of these new political contenders is not limited to just the handful of parties briefly mentioned above. While parties such as PVV (and possibly SYRIZA and Golden-Dawn following Greece’s 2012 elections) have gained most of the attention in mass media, as well as in some academic works, similar such parties have formed and entered parliaments in a large number of European Union (EU) member countries. This paper has identified over 20 such parties from 13 EU Member States (Table 1). All are new or re-invented parties of the recent decade. While few can boast a success such as SYRIZA’s during 2012 (when the party became Greece’s main opposition), most of them have nonetheless altered their countries’ party-systems following their electoral success. Therefore, fringe and ideologically radical parties that have adopted the *tribune* discourse have not just mushroomed in the second half of the previous decade, but have also been very successful in entering national parliaments or the European Parliament (EP). This is not to say that the current and most recent proliferation is necessarily larger or greater than in other periods, but rather that it represents the latest wave of new political parties in European states. Because it is quite recent, the multiplication of these parties over the

past decade is a phenomenon not yet explored. Thus, the question this paper asks is what led to the proliferation of these parties within such a short period of time during the mid and late 2000s.

This paper will be subsequently divided into two sections. The first will attempt to define tribune parties and will explore their proliferation during the last decade. The second section will attempt to directly answer the central research question mentioned above. The argument put forth is that these new parties emerge not only as a result of changes in the political space, but also due to the *perceived* presence and even strengthening of what Katz and Mair (1995) famously dubbed the cartelization of mainstream political parties. While one may be tempted to look at structural arguments or claim that the recent European financial crisis has been the catalyst for this proliferation, the emergence of these parties cannot be explained by structural shifts. At the same time, it predates the debt crisis. The financial crisis may certainly exacerbate the populist, radical-right or radical-left vote, however, the cause for their recent proliferation and success lies in an already existing crisis of modern representative democracy—one that the late Peter Mair recently referred to as a crisis of democratic legitimacy in European political systems between those political parties that govern but no longer represent, and those that claim to represent but do not govern. A comparison of twelve new parties from six EU Member States (Germany, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Romania, and Sweden) will be used to illustrate the recent changes in Europe's political space.

Tribunes and Patricians

Two terms are introduced, or rather re-introduced, in this paper: tribune parties and patricians. The terminology itself is not completely new, at least when speaking of “tribune parties.” As a concept, the term appeared in the 1960s and was first used by George Lavau (1969) in reference to the French Communist Party. His intent was not to fully theorize the term nor to extend it to other parties but solely to describe the French Communist Party's constant commitment to its original ideological tenets, as well as its inherent role of advocate of specific societal classes (Mitchell and Evans 2009, 152). Since then, however, this classification has almost never been employed in respect of leftist parties or other radical parties and party-families. Occasionally, it is used in the case of intransigent ethnic parties that succeed in promoting themselves as the most credible defenders of the cause. This is the case, for instance, in Mitchell and Evans' (2009, 152–3) work on ethnic parties in Northern Ireland. Aside from this, nonetheless, “tribune parties” as a concept are not often encountered in academic literature.

In this paper, the universe of the tribune party—although including many populist parties such as PVV—is not exclusively one of vaguely defined populist parties. *Populist* is the word often used to describe the wave of newly emergent parties during the 1980s, especially the extremist, xenophobic types. It is not rare in academic texts to find next to the term *radical-right* the disclaimer *populist*. Populism is often hardly adequately defined, however. A generally used definition is that populism is a type of discourse that emphasizes the interests of the *populus*, the ordinary people. It often contrasts the ‘authentic,’ ‘real,’ ‘pure’ people with the ‘hidden’ and ‘evil’ interests of those that lead them. The elites are usually presented as corrupt, greedy, and generally not at all interested in doing what they claim to do—represent.

Although used prior to the rise of the radical-right and certainly not exclusively intended as a term describing radical-right parties, it is around this party family that the term *populist* is mostly encountered in relation to European politics. It is rarely applied in the context of left-wing parties, although many of the newer libertarian-leftist parties make use of a very similar rhetoric

in their election manifestos and campaigns. The negative representation of major parties, mass media, or large corporations that harm the “people” is just as present among Europe’s new left-libertarians (Pirate Party Germany 2011; Pirate Party 2008; Politics-can-be-Different 2011). The term *populism* is quite problematic, however. It refers to a certain discourse that juxtaposes the people against the elite, but it does not say much about what these parties say about themselves, what their position is vis-à-vis mainstream politics, or where they stand in terms of ideological commitments.

Several academic studies have attempted to unpack the name *populism*, as well as classify similar but not identical terms that are often incorrectly used interchangeably (Schedler 1996; Barr 2009; MacDonnell and Newell 2011). Robert Barr (2009), for instance, distinguishes between anti-establishment parties, populism, and outsiders. The nature of appeals, location vis-à-vis the party system, and the linkages emphasized is what reveals a party’s specific nature. Outsiders could be anti-establishment but are not necessarily so. Meanwhile, anti-establishment parties generally favour participatory linkages that entail a measure of citizen input and control over political decision making.

On the other hand, populist parties are defined as outsiders, anti-establishment, and as advocating plebiscitarian linkages that emphasize holding decision makers accountable (Barr 2009, 43–4). Barr, however, seems to ignore that a large number of established politicians and parties may make use of populist rhetoric without being outsiders to the system at all. Furthermore, in this conceptualization, plebiscitarian linkages and participatory linkages are presented as antithetical. They do not necessarily need to be so. A party or politician may speak of participatory linkages but, in fact, project the image of a strong leader.

Moreover, many parties that make use of this type of discourse do not merely state that “the people” are threatened—be it by a corrupt elite, immigrants, scheming corporate interests, or powerful governments bent on taking away individual freedom (Rydgren 2006, 5). Parties employing such discourse actually spell out quite clearly their own role as *tribunes* or “true representatives” and “saviours” of people’s interests. Doing so, often times they provide very simplistic and laconic solutions to complex and intricate societal problems. The Swedish Democrats (SD), for example, give a 99-point answer to all of Sweden’s problems from issues such as taking care of the elderly to maintaining the welfare state under current financial constraints to reducing taxes. To do this, keeping true to its extremist orientation, the SD proposes a stop to current immigration and a reversal of the multi-cultural policies of previous mainstream governments (Swedish Democrats 2011).

The same bullet-point, one-two-three type solutions are present in other cases as well. In three steps, Greece’s Popular Orthodox Rally promises that the country’s economic problems could easily be addressed if only taxes would be cut, all immigrants sent back, and if Turkey would be banned from ever joining the European Union (LAOS 2007). Similarly, Romania’s new People’s Party (but also ATAKA in neighbouring Bulgaria) has a near obsession with keeping everything within twenty points. In just twenty “simple” steps, the Romanian People’s Party promises to deal with increasing debt by lowering taxes while at the same time vowing to increase salaries and pensions. Every Romanian is to receive 20,000 euros while simultaneously every corrupt politician will be placed on trial, and the Hungarian ethnic minority party is to be stopped from entering parliament (PPDD 2012).

For the Dutch PVV, the points are trimmed down by half. Its short ten-point program calls for ending voting rights for “non-nationals,” stopping immigration for five years, lowering taxes, and again, the contradictory social measure of increasing health services for the elderly (Wilders

2006). Similar themes can be found in Jobbik's program which argues that removing Hungary's current politicians, segregating the Roma, as well as expelling multinational corporations would put the country back on track (Jobbik 2010).

This trivialization and tendency to combine seemingly right-of-centre economic measures with outright leftist ones for the sake of appeal is not only exercised by the radical-right; it can be seen in the new leftist-libertarian camp as well. The German Pirate Party, for instance, promotes free flow of information and free enterprise, but promises that once in power, it will immediately institute the minimum wage (Pirate Party Germany 2011). Similarly, the generally leftist-green party, Politics-can-be-Different (LMP), in Hungary promotes itself as a party with "clean hands," made up of individuals who have never been in power and argues that as representative democracy is broken, direct-democracy will be introduced in Hungary upon their party's victory (Politics-can-be-Different 2011).

This type of downplaying the intricate dynamics of politics by offering simplified point-form solutions, which in effect constitute fundamental and complicated changes, is part of the image that these parties try to portray of themselves as *tribunes* of those who need these changes—if only the current disengaged political elites would endorse them. As mainstream political elites have indeed become disconnected with societal demands, the radical parties on the fringes of political space capitalize considerably by making it look like the solutions are readily available except they (the radical-right) are the only ones willing to enact them.

To say that the tribune party attempts to be a party of 'the people' is, however, an oversimplification. The tribune party only claims to be a party of the *plebs*, the ordinary citizen, not the whole of society. The citizen *they* represent is often portrayed by such parties to be misled and thus in direct conflict with a broad class of *patricians* that includes political, but also economic or cultural elites. Schedler (1996, 293) describes such parties as those drawing a triangular political space between a general established political class, the people, and themselves. The *patrician* these parties identify however is primarily but not solely comprised of the mainstream political class. This patrician can include large businesses or the rich as in the case of SYRIZA and Politics-can-be-Different (SYRIZA 2012; Politics-can-be-Different 2012).

Similarly, the patrician does not need to be internal to the state. It can be external such as foreign or multinational corporations. It can also take the form of international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the EU (Golden Dawn 2012; Jobbik 2010; LAOS 2007; PVV 2012; SYRIZA 2012). The patricians are also sometimes portrayed as a conglomerate of political, cultural, and economic interests in a conspiratorial arrangement with other identified "enemies" such as immigrants as in the case of radical-right parties (Mudde 2007). In many Eastern European states, the patricians are understood to include, among others, former communists. Likewise, patricians may include those not yet ready to hear the transformative message of the party as in the case of the Hungarian LMP, 'traitors' to the state as in the case of extremists like Jobbik, or those that attempt at restricting private freedoms such as the government, and surveillance or law enforcement agencies as argued by Pirate parties (Politics-can-be-Different 2011; Pirate Party Germany 2011).

In its struggle with the vast range of patricians of which the political establishment is the most evident, the tribune party—whether extremist or libertarian—will emphasize its restoration of party-societal links as well as its ability to attract those segments of society that are usually thought to be abandoned by the mainstream. LMP, for example, is quite aware, but also proud, to

represent a constituency until recently disenchanted with its political options—Budapest intellectuals. The party makes no secret of its inability to spread the libertarian-green Western European message to poorer north-eastern areas of the country as the poorer North-Eastern arenas are not yet prepared for it (Politics-can-be-Different 2011).

The Swedish Pirate Party prides itself to have managed to tap into a constituency that is often thought to remain apathetic to politics—the youth (Pirate Party 2012). Surprisingly—and contrary to previous academic studies—the extremist Swedish Democrats do exactly the same. They point to the fact that in high-school mock-elections, they were among the most popular parties among students (Skolval 2010). There is an emphasis on appealing to the young as a means to suggest not only that such parties are to be relevant in future elections, but also as a way to illustrate that while the mainstream parties cannot appeal to this group, they, on the other hand, *can*. The implication of their argument is that they are concerned with ‘real important issues’ that engage the youth, while old parties have lost touch with this important element of society.

Another dimension of the *tribune* image is the high membership and strong involvement with significant sections of society that these parties claim. Almost as if to emulate the highly ideological and membership-based mass-parties of the early 20th century, many of these new political contenders boast large memberships that often surpass the membership of long-established parties. In this regard, Jobbik has even incited a legal action against its move to create a large paramilitary wing (Kushen et al 2011). The Swedish Pirates and the Swedish Democrats have attained memberships surpassing that of the Leftist Party or the Swedish Greens (Swedish Democrats 2012; Pirate Party 2011). In the absence of alternative means of receiving finances that may only be available to larger established parties, high membership does somewhat help fulfill this role.

However, high membership serves another quite emblematic role as well. In essence, the message these parties try to underscore is that while the mainstream parties have abandoned ideology and moved towards the centre, turned away from society and towards the state, forsaken their need for societal links and membership, they—that is, the new political competitors—represent not the margins or fringes of political space, but rather the way the current established mainstream once used to be. As part of their claim to be radical, they have reintroduced ideology into the debates, reopened muted issues, re-linked disgruntled members of society to political representation and lastly, re-established the importance of membership in party-dynamics.

Ultimately, all these parties express a very critical view of their mainstream political counterparts and the deterioration of democracy under current party systems. The Romanian People’s Party (as well as New Generation before it), Jobbik, and the libertarian Politics-can-be-Different underscore the corruption of centrist parties and the failure of their neoliberal reforms (PPDD 2012; New Generation Party 2008; Politics-can-be-Different 2011; Jobbik 2010). The Pirates speak of an ever increasingly strong state, led by political monopolies, which has begun to infringe on individual rights and freedoms (Pirate Party 2008). Subsequently, they all call for a reorganization of democratic order. Their call is not for the elimination of democracy *per se* but rather for the abolition of representative democracy favouring established mainstream parties. This feature is something quite common among right-wing populist parties (Rydgren 2006, 5–6). Yet, many of the latest leftist-libertarians and pirates seem to make the exact same arguments.

In essence, the emphasis on individual access to political decision-making, as well as direct democracy as opposed to current forms of representative democracy, is in fact present in all aforementioned parties but quite explicitly elaborated by PVV, Jobbik, the Pirates, Politics-can-

be-Different, and SYRIZA (Wilders 2006; Jobbik 2010; Pirate Party 2008; Politics-can-be-Different 2011; SYRIZA 2012). In their critique of representative democracy, they juxtapose the mainstream established parties (being detached from societal concerns) with the image of *their* party—and often *their leader*—which represent and champion ‘true’ popular concerns and demands.

The leader is often the face of the party—the tribune personified and charismatic populist leaders are often a feature of most such parties. This is most evident in Geert Wilders and the PVV (Vossen 2011, 179). It is also the case for Jobbik and Gabor Vona, Romania’s former New Generation Party and George Becali, the Swedish Democrats and Jimmie Akesson, but also for the Swedish Pirates and Rickard Falkvinge. The only exception to the rule is Politics-can-be-Different as the party attempts to display a pluralist image where decision-making is never held by just one individual. However, even this party relied on the charisma of its founder, Andras Schiffer. Ultimately, the party leader in such cases seeks to personify the ‘hero’ of their constituents, battling a series of enemies ranging from foreign financial interests to immigrants (in the case of the extremist parties) to disconnected mainstream parties who no longer represent citizen demands.

Ultimately, the tribune party phenomenon is not entirely new. Numerous academic works have observed the same general trends among radical-right parties such as Front National in France or FPÖ in Austria ever since the 1980s (Kitschelt 1989; Betz 1998; Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Jackman and Volbert 1996; Mayer 1998). However, the multiplication of newer but similar such parties over the last decade is something not yet explored and it is particularly these newer next-generation radical-right (but also radical-left and libertarian) parties which are the object of this paper.

Moreover, the tendency of new left-wing parties to copy some of the right-wing discourse and vice-versa *is* a novelty. Such parties are not mere sporadic occurrences in the European political landscape. Over 20 such new or re-invented parties can be identified during the last decade in Europe (Table 1). Their proliferation is not merely manifested through their inception, but also through their ability to quickly enter the European Parliament or their respective national parliaments almost immediately after formation, thus significantly altering their countries’ party-systems.

What is equally novel is that their multiplication has occurred irrespective of region. Such parties have generally appeared both in Eastern as well as Western Europe. Naturally, the democratization of Eastern Europe and the enlargement of Europe’s democratic mix would result in a larger number of parties. However, had this proliferation been exclusively emblematic of democratization in the East, their presence would not have been observed in the West. Yet, when considering the 20 or more identified political newcomers, these parties are equally present in Western European countries as in new EU-members from Eastern Europe. Among them, a plurality—about nine of 26 identified parties—are radical-right and occasionally extreme-right parties. Another eight are populist and free-marketeering. Six parties fall within a post-modern libertarian-leftist camp. Finally, only three of these parties are traditional Marxist parties. This is the only party-family identified that did not yet proliferate in both East and West as all three parties are present exclusively in Western Europe.

Ultimately, the argument is not that the proliferation of these parties is necessarily larger or greater than in other historical periods but that it does constitute the latest wave of new political

parties in European states. The universe of these parties is one which combines ideological radicalism (whether on the left, right or new-left libertarianism versus authoritarianism) with a tribune discourse pitting certain sections of society—perceived to have been ignored by the mainstream parties—versus a large range of patricians of which political elites are the primary but not sole members.

Table 1. New Fringe Parties in Europe: Ideology and Electoral Results

Party	Country	Ideology	Formation	First time in Parliament	Latest National Elections	Latest European Parliament Elections (2009)
ATAKA	Bulgaria	New radical right	2005	2005 (8.1%)	9.4% (2009)	11.96%
Lider	Bulgaria	Populist-right	2007	-	3.26% (2009)	5.70%
GERB (Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria)	Bulgaria	Populism, liberalism	2006	2009 (39.7%)	39.7% (2009)	24.36%
Order, Law, Justice	Bulgaria	Populist-right	2005	2009 (4.13%)	4.13% (2009)	4.67%
Public Affairs Party	Czech Republic	Populist-right	2001/2009	2010 (10.9%)	10.9% (2010)	2.4%
Popular Orthodox Rally	Greece	Ultra-religious, populist, new radical-right	2000/2005	2007 (3.8%)	5.63% (Oct 2009)	7.15%
Golden Dawn	Greece	Ultra-nationalist, Neo-fascist	1993/2007	2012 (May 6.69%)	6.97% (June 2012)	N/A
Coalition of the Radical Left	Greece	Radical-left	2004	2007 (5.04%)	26.89 % (June 2012)/ 4.6% (October 2009)	4.70%
Liberal Alliance	Denmark	Populist-right	2007	2007 (2.8%)	5.00% (2011)	0.59%

Fokus	Denmark	Animal-rights, left-libertarian	2010	2007 (split from People's Party)	-	-
Die Linke	Germany	Radical-left	2005	2007 (8.7%)	11.1% (2009 - mostly from East Germany)	7.50%
Pirate Party	Germany	Left-libertarian	2006	-	2.0% (Sep. 2009)	0.9% (June 2009)
True Finns	Finland	Nationalist, Populist-left	1995/1997	1999 (0.99%)	19.1% (2011)	9.8% (in electoral alliance)
Parti de Gauche	France	Radical-left	2008	2009 (split from SD)	6.91 in electoral alliance (2012)	6.47% (in electoral alliance - as part of Left Front coalition)
Jobbik	Hungary	New radical right	2003	2009 (EP)	16.67% (2010)	14.77%
Politics-can-be-Different	Hungary	Left-libertarian	2009	2010 (7.48%)	7.48% (2010)	2.61%
All For Latvia	Latvia	Populist, new radical-right	2006	2010 (7.7%)	7.7% (in coalition 2010)	2.81%
Order and Justice	Lithuania	Populist-right	2002	2004 (11.4%)	12.7 (+1.3) (2008)	11.9 %(+5.1)
Party for Animals	Netherlands	Animal-rights, left-libertarian	2002	2006 (1.8%)	1.3% (2010)	3.46%
Party for	Netherlands	Populist, new radical	2006	2006	15.5%	17%

Freedom	ds	right		(5.9%)	(2010)	
Party for Animals and Nature	Portugal	Animal-rights, green-libertarian	2009/2011	-	1.04(2011) (present only at reg. level)	-
New Generation Party	Romania	Ultra-religious, populist, new radical-right	2000/2004	-	2.27% (2008)	8.65% (in electoral alliance - coalition with Greater Romania Party)
People's Party	Romania	Populist, new radical-right	2011	-	9% (est.)*	-
Ordinary People	Slovakia	Populist-right	2011	2012 (8.55%)	8.55% (2012)	-
Pirate Party	Sweden	Left-libertarian	2006	2009 (EP)	0.65% (2010)	7.10%
Democrats	Sweden	New radical right	1988/1995-2010	2010 (5.07%)	5.07% (2010)	3.30%

(Data obtained from NSD 2012a; NSD 2012b).

21st Century Tribune Parties

Recent electoral results quite evidently illustrate that new tribune and radical political contenders in Europe have been very successful with voters almost immediately after formation (see Table 1). With the exception of a few that had to reinvent themselves such as the Swedish Democrats, these parties are not ones that lingered in the background until favourable conditions propelled them to parliament. Rather, they are parties that have rather thrived on an anti-establishment message as soon as they entered political competition in the mid 2000s, suggesting that such parties have quickly capitalized on increasing voter apathy towards already exiting political choices.

Likewise, these parties made use of strategies circumventing the grip of mainstream parties over national elections by directing their efforts at running either at higher level (EP elections) or lower level (municipal or state elections). In 2009, New Generation and the Pirate Party in Sweden have entered the European Parliament. Also in 2009, the German Pirates attained the

highest vote of all parties outside the Bundestag and thus gained access to public funds. Subsequently, they successfully entered the parliament of the state of Berlin. The reinvented Swedish Democrats received their first breakthrough in the 2010 Swedish national elections, Politics-can-be-Different won over seven percent in Hungarian national elections almost immediately after inception, while Jobbik managed excellent results in the 2009 EP elections and became Hungary's third largest party following national elections in 2010 (NSD 2012a; NSD 2012b). Similarly, PVV more than tripled its share of the votes in the last Dutch elections, making it an unofficial member of the governing coalition (NSD 2012b).

Three major explanations can be identified for the recent arrival of these new parties in the European political space. The first is structural—that is to say, societal changes are held responsible for shifts in preferences, which create a demand for such parties to form. The second, given the success of these parties around the same time as the financial crisis, argues for a strong relationship between socio-economic context and the rise of radical-right and radical-left parties. Lastly, the phenomenon can be attributed to increasing voter apathy towards already exiting parties. While not completely contradicting either the first or second claims, this third explanation best accounts for the particular arrival of new parties as opposed to already existing parties capitalizing on structural changes or times of economic instability. The later have simply lost credibility among significant strata of society.

Structural arguments are among the most powerful in explaining transformations in political spectra. They are, however, much better at explaining changes in demand rather than supply. As a result, they may better account for changes in voters' preferences instead of new actors capitalizing on these transformations. Arguments linking new radical-left and radical-right parties to structural changes identify fundamental changes in the preferences of voters as responsible for the phenomenon. Whereas party competition in the Keynesian Welfare State after World War II was rather centred on economic issues, the transition to a post-industrial economy has compelled voters to shift their preferences from the traditional socialist versus capitalist axis, existent until around the mid sixties. New axes of political competition are formed which include former class-based but also new post-modern issues that deal with the role of the state, migration, identity, individual freedom, and/or the environment. The new political space is often depicted as revolving around two factors instead of one. At one extreme, there is an economically leftist (redistributive) and politically, as well as culturally, libertarian (participatory and individualistic) position. At the opposite pole, an economically rightist and free-marketeering position meets political and cultural authoritarianism (Kitschelt and McGann 1995, 13). As competition in modern capitalism between firms intensifies, employees are prevented from developing their class-consciousness and instead develop a loyalty towards workplace and an interest in the survival of their own firms. As a result, the working class favours a decrease in redistributive policies which might drain away resources from investment and consumption. Moreover, as these actors work in instrumental economic environments guided by rules and orders, they identify with authoritarian versions of decision making. On the other hand, voters who are more educated, work in less exposed non-tradable domestic sectors. They socialize more due to their working environments, which will lead them to identify with a more libertarian idea of politics (Kitschelt and McGann 1995, 7–8). As a consequence, blue-collared workers, petit-bourgeoisie, and residuals such as lower salaried employees or the unemployed are courted by the radical-right while white-collared employees, students, and professionals by the libertarian-left.

Such structural arguments, most extensively and coherently exposed by Kitschelt (1995), have made a breakthrough in the study of the new libertarians and most importantly new far right parties. Nonetheless, while they may explain the demand for these new parties very well, two fundamental problems surround these claims. First, structural arguments only tell half the story. They explain changes in demand and may map the new position of voters. What they do not do is explain how it is that new parties take advantage of these shifts. The same structural arguments could be applied if older more established parties would have taken on the same new issues. In fact, some mainstream parties have attempted just that. Statements by prominent politicians, including those by Angela Merkel or Nicolas Sarkozy vis-à-vis multiculturalism or illegal immigrants, have been made in an attempt to imitate the same messages of these new parties. Their efforts have not, however, been that fruitful. This suggests that although these changes did indeed occur, looking only at structure is not enough. Structure does not explain why some parties, as opposed to others, form or why they become successful as a result of societal shifts.

Second, the right-right and left-left divide may have held true for parties during the nineties, but this is certainly not the case of the most recent arrivals of the mid-2000s. The identity chosen by the most recent political parties definitely still exposes some kind of radicalism. None take positions similar to those of larger centrist established parties. However, while libertarian parties are generally also left on economic issues, the radical-right is not that right on the economy. Many extremist parties are in fact quite pro-welfare state. Such is the case of the Swedish Democrats and Jobbik but also of the PVV in the Netherlands.

The leftist camp neatly fits the post-modern political space model. Pirates in Sweden and Germany spell out their commitment to citizens' rights and free culture. They criticize the control and surveillance subjecting the modern citizen, as well as the abusive patent laws that favour privatized monopolies in their effort at hiking up prices and large hidden costs for citizens (Pirate Party Germany 2011; Pirate Party 2008). Similarly, Politics-can-be-Different (2011) in Hungary advocates for environment-friendly policies, individual freedom, and more direct forms of government as well as social justice, the inclusion of minorities, and equality between citizens.

The position of the extremist parties, however, is only somewhat consistent with previous understandings of shifts towards a right-right pole. Nativism and authoritarian politics are present in all these parties. However, the free-market—the identifying marker which distinguishes the new right from the old right—is not equally present among PVV, the Swedish Democrats, Jobbik, Romanian People's Party, or the former New Generation Party. The Romanian New Generation Party (NGP) is perhaps one of the few cases among new radical-right populist parties in Europe actually fitting the right-right label. The NGP is nationalist, exclusivist, blatantly homophobic, and—much like the Greek Orthodox Rally—ultra-religious (New Generation Party 2008). Yet, despite the acts of charity, social programs, and disaster-relief campaigns of NGP's populist multimillionaire party leader, the party commits itself to supporting private enterprise and a small state (BBC 2007).

The Swedish Democrats clearly take an anti-immigration stance while favouring harsher criminal punishment, as well as an ill-defined “national action plan against Islamist extremism” (Swedish Democrats 2011). Nonetheless, despite its commitment to smaller governmental bureaucracies, the SD refrains from taking a right-wing position on economic issues. In fact, it quite clearly spells out the need for a strong Swedish welfare state (Swedish Democrats 2011). The same issues are stressed by Hungary's Jobbik. The party displays a marked hostility towards minorities and in particular the Roma, an endorsement of a strong totalitarian state, harsher criminal punishment, and finally, an anti-globalization and protectionist position favouring

national industry rather than multinational corporations (Jobbik 2010). Like the Swedish Democrats, Jobbik is thus much closer to a welfare chauvinist party than new radical free-marketeteering as it favours some sort of state intervention in the economy for the benefit of the ethnic majority (Faist 1994, 440). The Romanian Populists and the Dutch PVV combine outright pro-market promises with welfare chauvinism. Yet, they both argue for decreasing taxes while simultaneously calling for extending social and healthcare programs (PPDD 2012, Wilders 2006).

Consequently, most cases of radical-right parties above display similar degrees of xenophobia, nationalism, authoritarianism, and rejection, rather than acceptance of the free market. Effectively, therefore, these cases dispel previous understandings of the new radical-right as authoritarian, but pro-market. In fact, they only seem to confirm more recent studies which claim that despite the neo-liberalism shared by radical-right populists during the late 1980s and early 1990s, many of them have lately drifted towards a position that defends the welfare state (Rydgren 2006, 11). This does not change the radical position all six aforementioned parties adopt. Whether staunchly libertarian or heavily authoritarian, free-marketeteering or in fact—as has been suggested—heavily critical of neo-liberalism and supportive of the welfare state, all avoid centrist positions which may overlap with the established mainstream. Ultimately, what these cases do is challenge previous understandings of the demand for such parties. If post-modern changes as a result of globalization only explain the rise of the greens and radical-right in the 1980s and 1990s but not the recent wave of newcomers, then what does account for their formation?

An alternative explanation for the rise of new marginal yet radical parties in Europe during the mid-2000s lies in the continent's socio-economic context. A large number of these parties have indeed become successful around the global financial crisis and most specifically during the debt-crisis in Europe. Jackman and Volpert (1996, 502) argue that an unhealthy economy coupled with unemployment can be crucial towards the success of extremist parties. This is certainly backed by the historical rise of fascists and Nazis in Europe during the interwar period just as the Great Depression put an end to the economic boom of the 1920s.

Therefore, a valid hypothesis may be that as the financial crisis reached the European continent, support for radical movements, regardless of their radical-right or radical-left orientation, increased. The financial crisis of the late 2000s started in the second half of 2008; however, its impact on European economies only started to make itself felt during 2009. As Table 2 and Table 3 illustrate, the negative Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth experienced was actually during 2009 and in some cases 2010. This coincides with the latest 2009 European Elections. In these elections, however, some parties did consolidate their positions, while others did not. Jobbik, for example, managed its first success after failing to enter Hungary's parliament in 2006. The Swedish Pirates also scored their highest result yet winning two seats in the EP. The German Pirates received only half the votes they did during the country's federal elections, however (NSD 2012a; NSD 2012b). The Swedish Democrats failed to gain any seats, as in any other previous election, thus hardly foreshadowing their success a year later in Sweden's national elections. Greece's Popular Orthodox Rally managed its greatest score since its inception—7.15 percent and PVV likewise got 17 percent. LMP ran for the first time in an election, and despite not passing the five percent threshold, it still managed to get a relatively good result—2.6 percent (NSD 2012a). Linking these results with the financial crisis is a bit problematic, however. First, it is an already well-documented fact that European elections, by virtue of being second order elections, inflate protest-votes against mainstream parties (Reif and Schmitt 1980,

9). Any increase in votes from previous elections may simply be due to the fact that parties have mastered the strategy of going for mid-term elections first and using those as a stepping-stone for national elections.

Second, the degree of economic decline does not really correlate with the success of either radical-right or radical-left in these EP elections. Romania and Hungary's negative GDP growth were similar, and yet both the radical-right and libertarian-left are more successful in the second case than the former. Sweden's negative growth would suggest that some demand exists for radical parties; yet, its radical-right did not capitalize on this demand. Similarly, while the Pirates did make it to the EP, their success may have had more to do with their ability to capitalize on the Pirate-Bay trials at the time rather than some demand actually created by the recession.

Finally, looking at the EP elections just months after the recession made its way to Europe may be problematic simply because voters may not have started to feel the full impact of negative growth. National elections after this time may be more revealing in terms of success or failure for such parties to take advantage of the economic downturn.

Table 2. Economic growth and radical right vote in national elections

Country	GDP growth07	GDP Growth08	GDP Growth09	GDP Growth10	NRR before 2008	NRR after 2008	Diff.
Germany	3.394	0.809	-5.078	3.562	0.5	0.4	-0.1
Greece	4.279	1.023	-2.339	-4.354	3.8	5.6 (june12)	1.8 (3.12)
Hungary	0.773	0.828	-6.693	1.2	2.2	16.7	14.5
Netherlands	3.909	1.769	-3.529	1.634	5.9	15.5	9.6
Romania	6.317	7.349	-7.078	-1.267	15.1	5.5	-9.6
Sweden	3.314	-0.613	-5.333	5.691	2.9	5.7	2.8

(Data obtained from NSD 2012a; NSD 2012b; IMF 2011)

Table 2 illustrates that the link between the radical-right vote in national elections and low/negative growth during the debt crisis does not fully explain success or failure either. The Netherlands (like Germany) was one of the least exposed and affected countries and by 2009 and 2010 it was already experiencing strong GDP growth. Nonetheless, the radical-right there gained ten percent more votes than in the previous elections, increasing its voter share by almost 300 percent. In Hungary, the voter share of the radical-right increased almost eight times, while in Sweden it doubled. In Greece, one of the most affected countries during the 2000s financial crisis, the radical-right increased its performance from 3.8 to 5.6 percent in 2009. Therefore, among the countries where the party family increased its voter share, the Greek radical-right improved the least. In subsequent post-crisis elections (May 2012 and June 2012), the radical LAOS (which supported the EU and IMF-imposed austerity plan) did not manage to pass the electoral threshold. The space of the radical-right was however taken over by the even more radical and anti-austerity party, Golden Dawn, which received a slightly higher percentage (than LAOS in 2009) of almost seven percent. The rise of the Golden Dawn extremists was possible as LAOS' anti-mainstream message was highly handicapped due to its own participation in the unpopular governing coalition at the time. Therefore, capitalizing on LAOS' discredit, Golden

Dawn skilfully portrayed itself as ‘a true radical right party’ that would never partake in centrist government coalitions or austerity measures. Thus, as austerity forced the Greek state to withdraw from its social commitments, Golden Dawn successfully promoted itself as the only restorer of the country’s glorious past. Through its paramilitary gangs claiming to police Athens’ neighbourhoods (often winding up harassing immigrants) and through soup kitchens for native-Greeks organized and funded with the help of public party subsidies, Golden Dawn effectively sought to challenge the ability of the state itself to perform even some of its most basic functions.

In contrast to the particular case of Greece, Sweden—which recovered quickly from the crisis—experienced for the first time a radical-right party entering parliament despite the fact that during the early 1990s when Sweden experienced similar (if not worst) economic decline, the same party was unable to pass the five percent threshold. In Romania, while the country experienced the largest economic decline in 2009 and continued to decline in 2010, the radical-right fell drastically from 15.1 percent to 5.5 percent.

Table 3. Economic growth and left-libertarian vote in national elections

Country	GDP growth07	GDP Growth08	GDP Growth09	GDP Growth10	LL before 2008	LL after 2008	Diff.
Germany	3.394	0.809	-5.078	3.562	-	2	2
Greece	4.279	1.023	-2.339	-4.354	5.04	4.6 (26.89 june12)	-0.4 (21.85)
Hungary	0.773	0.828	-6.693	1.2	-	7.48	7.48
Nether.	3.909	1.769	-3.529	1.634	1.3	1.3	0
Romania	6.317	7.349	-7.078	-1.267	0.3	0.62	0.32
Sweden	3.314	-0.613	-5.333	5.691	0.63	0.65	0.02

(Data obtained from NSD 2012a; NSD 2012b; IMF 2011)

Similarly, with the exception of LMP in Hungary and SYRIZA in Greece (which increased its voter-share by more than 500 percent following the 2012 elections), the left-libertarian parties have not been much more successful. Their results in national elections dwarf those of the radical-right. Moreover, although in most cases they do make some gains compared to elections prior to the crisis, these gains are generally too small to significantly illustrate some sort of left-libertarian capitalization of economic decline (Table 3). Even SYRIZA’s significant success in May and June 2012 has had to do as much with its position vis-à-vis the highly unpopular national coalition of mainstream parties as it did with the crisis itself. While the main issue of the elections was austerity in light of Greece’s dire economic situation, SYRIZA capitalized on its anti-establishment position by challenging both EU and IMF imposed austerity measures, as well as what they perceived to be the docile compliance of most political parties who were incapable or unwilling to stand up for the interests of Greeks. In the end, SYRIZA’s success depended highly on its ability to convince the electorate that (unlike PASOK who were willing to cooperate with the centre-right New Democracy but unlikely to renegotiate austerity measures) *it* was the only ‘true’ leftist party that would not join a right-wing coalition and that was willing to undo the country’s austerity measures and drastically renegotiate Greece’s commitments. This is an exception, however, rather than the rule—where a party essentially combines popular alarm about the economy with concerns over the lack of viable electoral options. Thus, while in few states economic decline is followed by support for radical fringe-parties, a clear link is generally not that evident.

A third and final hypothesis is that the current rise of radical (new-left and new-right) parties is due to an increase in the apathy of voters, as well as a decreasing faith in institutions, political parties, democratic practices, and ultimately, the democratic system in general. Voters are simply disillusioned with the way they perceive and understand democracy. A lack of engagement by mainstream parties and the isolationism of the mainstream from the society it claims to represent have become quite obvious to voters who have started to be more and more aware of the deficit that current modern democracy carries.

Eurobarometer surveys between 2000 and 2004 illustrate a substantial increase in citizen dissatisfaction with current forms of democracy in European Union Member States (Figure 1). When asked about satisfaction with the way democracy works in their state, the percentage of those “very satisfied” has decreased in just four years from 17 percent to 8 percent. Similarly, those generally satisfied have dropped under 50 percent from a peak of 60 percent in 2000.

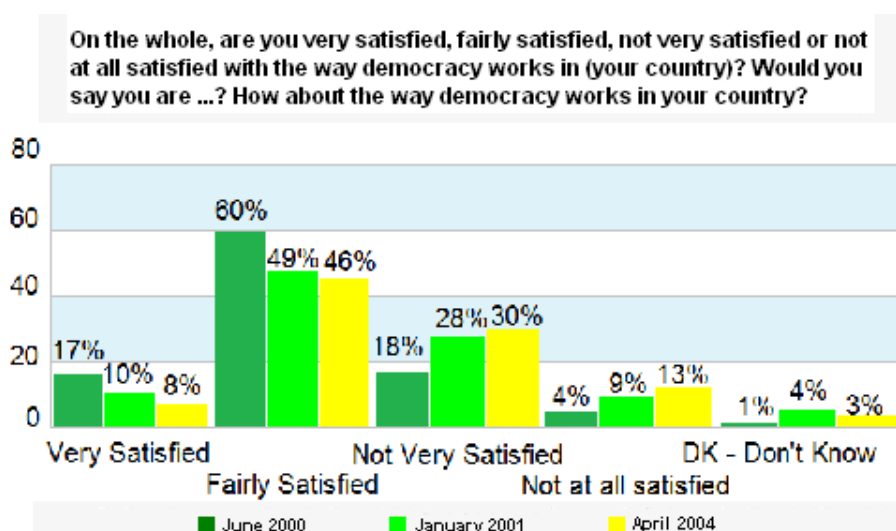


Figure 1. Satisfaction with National Democracy in the EU during 2000-2004.

Adapted from European Commission (2012a, *How about the way democracy works in your country?*).

just one year to 9 percent while reaching 13 percent in April 2004. Also, the survey shows that the number of those claiming that they are “not very satisfied” has almost doubled from 18 percent to 30 percent in the same four-year period. If taken together, the “dissatisfied” group increased from a mere 22 percent in 2000 to almost half the population in 2004. Similarly, while positive views towards democracy were on solid grounds at 77 percent in 2000, they have gradually decreased to barely over 50 percent in April 2004.

What is most alarming, however, is that the percentage of citizens claiming that they are “not at all satisfied” has increased more than three times. While in 2000 only 4 percent declared that they were not satisfied with how democracy worked in their country, the percentage more than doubled in

At the same time, it is noticeable that the percentage of “don’t knows” has likewise increased substantially in the 2000-2004 period. This could be revealing in that respondents may have increasingly more problems in identifying how to measure democracy and what democracy actually is. It may be more difficult for them to effectively pinpoint their expectations about democracy and how democracy in their perception fares against those expectations. Essentially, what this suggests is that these respondents have strongly increasing doubts about their states

On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (your country)? Would you say you are ... ? How about the way democracy works in your country?

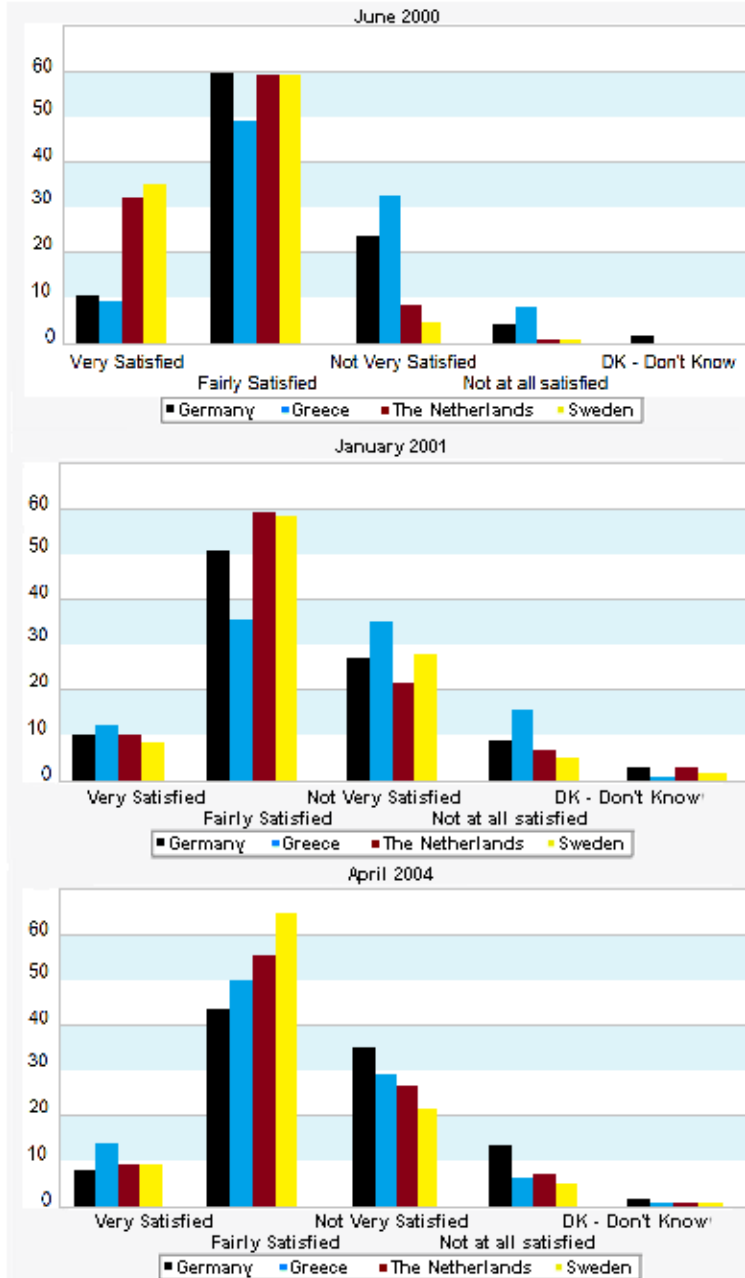


Figure 2. Satisfaction with National Democracy in Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Sweden during 2000-2004.

Adapted from European Commission (2012b, How about the way democracy works in your country?).

being well-functioning democracies but have not yet taken the significant step of explicitly identifying them as being poorly-functioning democracies.

Country data (Figure 2) for the same period is available only for EU-15 Member States. Nonetheless, the picture is quite revealing of the same tendencies in the selected cases of Germany, Greece, Sweden, and Netherlands. Figure 2 illustrates a significant drop in the “very satisfied” group especially in the Netherlands and Sweden in the year between 2000 and 2001 which does not recover by 2004. A less spectacular drop occurs in the “satisfied” group in Germany and Greece from 60 percent and 50 percent to 50 percent and 36 percent respectively. Greek numbers in this case recover somewhat by 2004. In a similar fashion, the “not very satisfied” percentage in the Netherlands and Sweden more than triple in the same four year period from just under ten percent to almost 30 percent. The “not at all satisfied” likewise increase from a mere 1 to 2 percent to 6 to 7 percent in 2001 and 2004. The Greek “not very satisfied” and “not at all satisfied” similarly increase substantially between June 2000 and January 2001 from 30

percent to 36 percent and from 10 percent to 16 percent. However these spikes recede by 2004.

The period analyzed above does not correspond to the beginning of a societal shift as a result of globalization. It likewise does not correspond to the financial crisis. These changes long predate the crisis. It is actually a period characterized by economic growth, relative prosperity, as well as EU integration, and in the case of many central and eastern European states, it is an era of EU accession. This period is not one of economic gloom, but rather it is one of economic promise. It is not exactly the period of Katz and Mair’s cartel-party thesis either. Their seminal work was written about five to ten years earlier and referred to declining politicization and citizen involvement, as well as the collusive manner in which parties captured state resources in the 1970s not the 1990s.

This period is nonetheless one that reveals an awareness of the cartel’s presence—or at least its suffocating effect on electoral choice. Moreover, it is a period that also corresponds to the proliferation of radical libertarian and extremist parties in both Western and Eastern Europe that capitalized on their anti-cartel rhetoric. In the case of Sweden and the Netherlands, this timeframe coincides with the period just preceding the formation of the PVV, the Pirate Party, and the renovation of the Swedish Democrats. In the case of Greece, the spike during 2000 coincides with the formation of Greece’s radical-right Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) party. Finally, in the case of Germany, the volatility between satisfied and unsatisfied in this period is least evident. Although the percentages of the “dissatisfied” have increased in Germany as they did in all other cases, they were already high to begin with, and while in other states the spikes were proportionally significant (three times more in some cases), Germany’s was not. This corresponds with the weak performance of radical parties in this country, the only notable example being the German Pirates’ 2 percent federal vote.

Of course, it is natural to question whether these drastic spikes are illustrative of actual long term changes in citizens’ perceptions or whether they may just be an irregular and temporary disorientation on the part of voters. The implication would be that if the latter is true, more recent data should show a return to 2000 levels. This, however, is not the case. Data from more recent

years (2007–2010) illustrates that the shifts in the early 2000s seem to be quite permanent. More recent Eurobarometers from 2007 onwards (Figure 3) confirm that the 2000–2004 spike in dissatisfaction was not temporary. They indicate that the number of dissatisfied stabilized in the 2009–10 period at about the same 44–45 percent percentage recorded in 2004. This suggests that the early 2000s period was unique in the unusually high

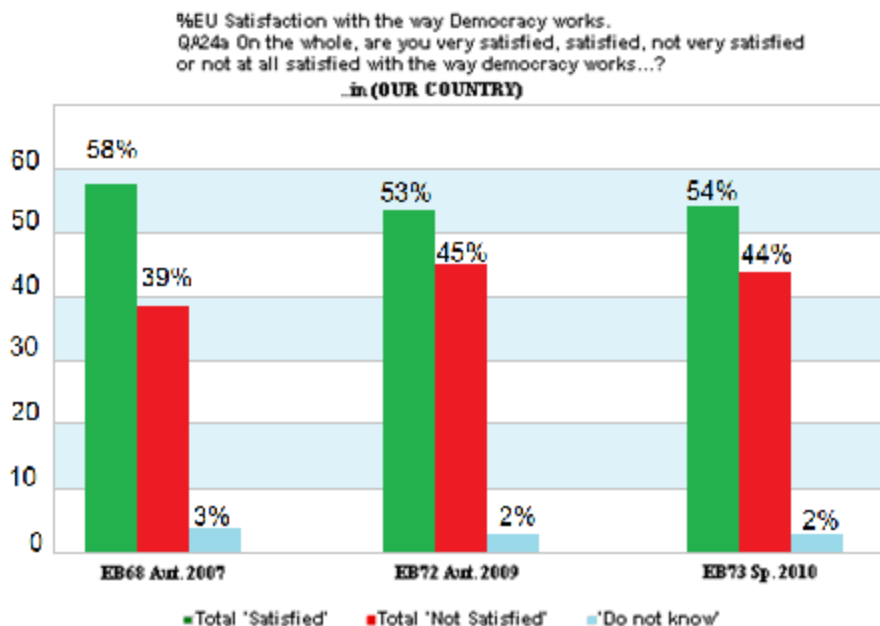


Figure 3. Satisfaction with National Democracy in the EU during 2007-2010.
Adapted from European Commission (2010, fig. 24A).

increase of unsatisfied respondents. What this also shows is that over the entire past decade, these numbers have not receded but rather remained more or less stable following their initial spike.

Naturally, caution is to be exercised when making such connections. Linde and Ekman (2003, 393) warn against misusing the measurement of democratic satisfaction, as it may sometimes show simply a correlation between those whose party won versus those who did not. Nonetheless this would not explain why in just under four years, roughly twice as many respondents saw their party as the losing party. If that were the case here, losers and winners during elections would match with respondents to the democracy question and regardless of the period, respondents should more or less stay within the same percent range. It is the argument of this paper that voter attitude toward democracy (and the way it works) heavily impacts the tribune discourse of parties. Moreover, parties do consult polls and other statistical data as well and often cite it when they think it plays to their advantage. Parties ultimately form, organize, and run for elections at times when they think that they have true chances to win. Few parties in general want to form despite inexistent conditions of electoral success for the fear of being branded 'minor' or 'insignificant' by the electorate. Political parties do not simply free-float in political space for voters to select. Voters are not faced with a myriad countless parties that they could choose from in every election. The choice they have is quite limited to a number of parties which decide to form and run based on a cost-benefit analysis. Therefore, voters may be faced with the same major parties, such as centre-left and centre-right as their almost certain entry in parliament outweighs the cost of running. For smaller parties, fringe parties, or what are often called niche parties, the costs of forming, organizing, and running in elections are not so obviously low.

New parties rarely form and run if the possibility of victory is dim. Parties that overly emphasize an anti-mainstream and anti-elitist discourse are thus much more likely to form when they themselves feel that a demand exists for such an option. Although further research is needed, this paper has attempted to illustrate that the proliferation of radical (left and right) parties during the latter half of the past decade is not only due to structural shifts or economic decline, but rather due to an increasing crisis in modern democracy which primarily involves the way voters perceive already existing political options. Despite the difficulty involved in measuring the true degree of cartel strength in each and every state, the positive perception of representative democracy is evidently decreasing. Ultimately, although diverging in ideology, the latest arrival of niche and fringe parties can be regarded in many ways as a singular phenomenon marked not by new societal issues or cleavages but by the continuing crisis of already existent party systems.

Conclusion

In essence, this paper has drawn attention to a plethora of new political party contenders of the late 2000s in Western and Eastern Europe. It has sought out to outline the self-identity and position these parties adopt, as well as illustrate that their near-simultaneous arrival on the political scene of many EU Member States constitutes the latest proliferation of new parties in Europe. My argument is that such parties, albeit divergent in ideological position, essentially illustrate a common thrust aimed at the established centre-right and centre-left mainstream. It is in response to a perception about the corruption, disconnect, or negligence of the establishment that all these contenders wrap their political message around.

This wave is different from previous waves in that the anti-establishment drive comes concomitantly from both left and right, libertarian and authoritarian positions in both Western and Eastern Europe. Thus the identity of the challenger is one that combines radical positions and strong ideological commitments with a clear *tribune* and anti-cartel party rhetoric. Subsequently, in relation to already existent academic literature on the cartelization of political space, this reveals a reaction to the persistence—or possibly even the amplification—of the cartel (at least in the minds of voters) rather than its weakening. Equally important, this raises two significant questions that most definitely deserve further study. First, given the rise of the tribune party phenomenon, it is worth considering whether we are still living in the cartel-party system. If not, are we indeed faced with two competing party systems—one of those that govern but do not represent, while the other claiming to represent but without governing? Writing in 1966, Otto Kirchheimer pointed towards the transformative nature of European party systems as traditional, ideological member-based parties moved increasingly towards the centre of political space (Krouwel 2003, 24). Almost thirty years later, Katz and Mair (1995) underscored the increasingly limited terms of electoral choice that mainstream parties choose to initiate as well as the collusive manner in which they turn towards state resources. Ultimately, as transformations of party systems are always presented as stages in a dialectic process, are we currently witnessing the next stage?

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