



Waiting in the Wings: New Parties in the Netherlands

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Even in the relatively open political system of the Netherlands, most new parties never pass the threshold of representation and keep waiting in vain in the wings of political power. Since 1989 only 10 out of 63 newcomers gained one or more seats in parliament, owing to a favourable political opportunity structure and significant resources. Three of them disappeared into political oblivion after one parliamentary term. Only two of them have participated in government. In this paper we offer some explanations as regards the variety in origins as well as a typology with respect to their differences in terms of ideology and policy agenda. The analysis shows that however short-lived parties in opposition may be they have an impact on the political agenda, in particular recently.

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Introduction: Why Study New Parties?

Success sells better than failure. New parties receive therefore scant attention from political scientists as long as they remain marginal and fail to win seats in parliament. Yet, new parties waiting in the wings of the political system may maintain the pristine purity of political principles and ideas better than their established rivals in parliament, let alone parties in government. This is one reason to study new parties. Yet, there are other, more compelling reasons.

As traditional parties seem to fragment in the era of ‘post-modern’ politics, new parties potentially play a more significant role. If established parties fail to integrate discontented groups, alternative or immigrant subcultures, new parties may mobilize these groups and integrate them into the political system. In trying to articulate latent interests and ideologies, new parties enhance the range of available political options in a system. In addition, their organization and means of mobilization may shed a fresh light on the political culture. Even if these new parties do not win power, their ideas might be adopted by the established parties of government once they have been tested in public debate



and gained some popular support. Finally, studying new parties can help us to understand the formation process and subsequent evolution of parties and their relation to society. Particularly this genesis of political parties is understudied in political science (Krouwel, 2006).

Political scientists have unjustifiably neglected marginal political parties. Recently, Henson and Kopstein (2005, 91) have pointed out that ‘seemingly marginal politicians and groups can quickly catalyze powerful institutional changes once the global environment changes’, the most extreme examples being Lenin’s Bolsheviks and Hitler’s National Socialist German Workers’ Party.

In terms of studying new party emergence, the Netherlands is a crucial case as the Dutch electoral system is one of the most open and inclusive systems, without an electoral threshold, a nation-wide single electoral district of 150 seats, making it possible to enter parliament with 0.67% of the national vote (Blais and Massicotte, 2002, 45). With such array of opportunities, it should not come as a surprise that in the 1920s and 1930s no less than 120 new parties participated in the five parliamentary elections held after 1918 (Vossen, 2003, 227–233). Between 1946 and 2006 another 157 ‘new’ parties attempted to enter Dutch parliament: 94 in the period until 1989 and 63 since then. The number of newcomers increased especially in the 1960s. This study will focus on the 63 new parties that emerged between 1989 and 2006. Despite the relatively low threshold, only 10 out of the 63 recent newcomers succeeded in winning any seats in Dutch parliament. We will assess the features of these parties and delve into the question why so few succeeded and so many failed. And why did all these individuals or groups attempt to found parties in the first place? What, if anything, did they achieve? Finally, we will discuss the impact and effect these new parties had in the Netherlands using cross-national comparative data. Before answering these questions, however, we need to clarify what is meant by ‘new parties’.

Defining New Parties

This seems a simple question, but the answer is complicated. What differentiates new parties from old parties? We distinguish four degrees of ‘newness’:

- (a) *Transformation*: an established party may transform and renew itself, revise its programme, appeal to new groups of voters and/or change its name.
- (b) *Merger*: established parties might merge into a new political formation.
- (c) *Split*: an established party might split, with at least one of its offshoots taking on a new name and draft a new political platform.
- (d) *Birth*: citizens without ties to established parties may decide to found a new party.



Scholars such as Ignazi (1996) and Hug (2000) regard only the latter two types (c) and (d) as 'new', whereas Mair (1999, 210) excluded only the first category (a). As conceptualizations of what constitutes a 'new party' vary (see: Hug, 2000; Mair, 2002; Deschouwer, 2004, 3–4), so do the numbers of new parties detected. When we take Mair's new party count and include only parties that first began to contest elections after 1960 (including those parties resulting from a merger or split), more than 176 new parties emerged across Europe (Mair, 2002, Table 6.4). On the basis of a more restrictive definition, Keman and Krouwel (2007) count 44 new parties in 13 European democracies since 1975 winning seats in national parliament. These studies show that party systems in consensus democracies are most susceptible to genuine renewal. Particularly Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy appear to be fertile soil for new party emergence, followed by France, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Ireland and Finland, whereas party systems in Scandinavia and in the United Kingdom seem less prone to the emergence of new political competitors. Most of the new parties have an ideological identity that lies outside the established party families (see Von Beyme, 1985), and most are environmentalist or nationalist radical right parties. Only in Norway and the UK, green parties have failed to emerge successfully during the 1980s and 1990s, while the Netherlands and Norway stand out as cases where green parties emerged as a broad left-wing alliance rather than a genuine new party (Müller-Rommel, 1998; Mair, 2002). Obviously the Dutch case can be considered as a theory guiding case study since new party emergence is more visible than elsewhere.

In defining new parties, we adopt an inclusive and coherent approach by also including all parties that did *not* win seats in national elections before 1989, yet fulfil one of the criteria above as 'new'. In other words, the year of foundation is not the main criterion. By way of example: the Dutch Socialist Party (*Socialistische Partij*, SP) was founded in 1971 — albeit under a different name — but only entered parliament in 1994. Hence it is considered as new by us and probably also in the eyes of most voters and journalists. The SP also transformed its programme and party organization substantially during the 1980s and 1990s and attempted to appeal to new groups of voters. As such, the SP fulfils two of the criteria given above and is considered a new party. On the basis of these criteria, we identify 63 new parties in the Netherlands between 1989 and 2006, three of which have been founded in the 1970s, 16 in the 1980s, 17 in the 1990s and the other 27 after 2000. None of these parties had won any seats before 1989. We include the Green Left (*GroenLinks*, GL) and the Christian Union (*ChristenUnie*, CU), both resulting from mergers that took place in 1990 and in 2000 (formally in 2003), respectively. In this sense, the CDA is a new party for it was formally founded in 1980. As the CDA gained seats in parliament well before our 1989 cut-off point, we do not consider it new in this study.¹



Origins of New Parties: A Typology

Despite the crucial role of political parties in modern democracy, no coherent theory exists explaining the patterns and causes of new party formation. Following Lipset and Rokkan, it is suggested that new parties emerge as a result of mobilization around new social cleavages and are either (extreme) right-wing (populist) or post-materialist (Ignazi, 1996; Lane and Ersson, 2002). Such a perspective is too narrow and neglects a large number of new parties that are neither right-wing nor post-materialist — for example senior citizen parties, left-wing populists, parties representing ethnic minorities or regional and local interests. Moreover, a purely structural approach also ignores the agency-aspect of new party formation.

We can refine our criteria of new party emergence using the basic distinction between internal origin — emergence from existing parties — and new parties emerging outside the existing parties. New party emergence from existing parties comes in three types: transformation, split or merger. New party emergence from outside the existing party system — external origin — has also three varieties: branching, realignment and political entrepreneurship. Branching occurs when an international organization decides to found a new national branch in a political system. Examples are the Dutch Humanist Party and the Natural Law Party (*Natuurwetpartij*, NWP) that were set up as national branches of international movements. New party emergence occurs through realignment when social movements or pressure groups decide to transform into a political party by fielding candidates. In the Netherlands, the Women's Party (*Vrouwenpartij*) and the Animal Rights' Party (*Partij voor de Dieren*, PvdD) are examples of parties that emerged from social movements. The third type of external party origin is indicated by Liveable Netherlands (*Leefbaar Nederland*, LN) and the General Senior Citizens' Association (*Algemeen Ouderenverbond*, AOV) that were founded by political entrepreneurs as private initiatives, without direct links to social movements, pressure groups or international organizations. Table 1 provides the classification of the 63 new parties that developed in the Netherlands according to these six different types of party emergence (derived from the Appendix).

In the Netherlands many new parties developed outside the existing political party system: external origin occurred almost twice as often as internal emergence. More than 40% of all new parties emerged from political entrepreneurship, while a quarter of the remainder resulted from a split within an existing party. The Liberal Party, for example, experienced no less than five breakaways in the last decades, including the expulsion from the parliamentary party of Rita Verdonk in 2007. One in seven new parties emerged from social movements or pressure groups. Transformations, mergers and branching are relatively uncommon types of party emergence. Most splits seem to occur on



Table 1 Six types of party emergence

| | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| Internal emergence: from existing parties | Transformation: an old party transforms (new name, new leaders and/or new programme) | Split: breakaway resulting in the foundation of a new party | Merger: between two old parties into a new formation |
| 23 (37%) | 2 (3%) | 18 (29%) | 3 (5%) |
| External emergence: outside existing parties | Branching: an international organization decides to found a new national branch | Realignment: a new party emerges from a social movement or pressure group | Entrepreneur: private initiative: one or more individuals decide to found a party |
| 40 (63%) | 4 (6%) | 9 (14%) | 27 (43%) |

N = 63 (100%).

the right wing of the political spectrum, possibly explained by the fact that the Dutch party system lacks a genuine secular conservative or nationalist party and politicians on the right wing of established parties have been tempted to fill that vacuum.

Motivations of Founders

How can we account for the large number of parties emerging from political entrepreneurship? Why do individuals or groups invest vast amounts of time, money and energy in building a new political party? Why not opt for possible alternatives: joining an existing party or organizing a faction within an existing party, acting as a pressure group or as a think tank, or other forms of political protest? We argue that founders of new parties are driven by basically four kinds of motives:

- (1) ideological motivations, such as ideological purism or transformation;
- (2) personal ambitions, needs or frustrations, such as power and status;
- (3) strategic or tactical considerations: electoral conditions or other opportunity structures are perceived as favourable for founding a new party;
- (4) altruistic-societal goals: the transformation of society, or maintaining the *status quo*.

We based this distinction on the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations from (political) psychology. Intrinsic motivations are related to individual interests and satisfy the innate psychological need for self-determination. This intrinsically motivated behaviour derives from one's sense of self, is largely volitional and fulfils the need for individual freedom and autonomy. Extrinsic motivations, on the other hand, are perceived as instrumental and goal-oriented. They are driven by experiences of external



pressure and control of power structures outside one's self. Extrinsically motivated behaviour is geared towards achieving consequences that would not have occurred without the actions of the actor (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Losier *et al.*, 2001). Ideological motivations and personal needs or frustration are intrinsically motivated, while strategic motivations and societal goals are externally motivated by structural conditions.

When asked about their motivation during face-to-face interviews we conducted, founders of new parties tended to mention above all ideological and altruistic-societal reasons ('make the world more humane'), personal ambitions, needs and frustrations to a lesser extent (Lucardie, 1990, 139–140). Extrinsic motivations related to strategic calculations — winning seats and consequently political power — are mentioned only occasionally. Thus, intrinsic motivations seem more closely related to new party emergence than extrinsic motivations. Clearly, face-to-face interviews may not reveal the deeper reasons why people take political action. Politicians need to avoid looking too power-hungry and only a few may be as frank as the leader of the Dutch Socialist Minorities' Party (*Socialistische Minderhedenpartij*, SMP), who admitted his main purpose was to 'reach the top' and felt frustrated in his attempt to do this in an established party — yet he also cherished some ideals.²

We have seen that most parties emerge through political entrepreneurship, which could indicate under-reporting of more personal ambitions, strategic considerations and electoral opportunism — the perception that substantial numbers of voters are willing to support the new party. Party splits often occur primarily as a result of internal ideological division in the party leadership, which suggests intrinsic motivation. Party leaders who decide to merge their organizations may be primarily motivated by electoral opportunism, when they fear that their old parties will not survive or when they hope to gain seats or achieve participation in government by merging (Voerman, 1992). The necessary information to determine which combination of factors and motivations lead to new party formation is insufficient to draw firm conclusions. What is clear, however, is that all new parties start with a political project.

Political Projects: A Typology of New Parties

Political projects may for example originate from utopian ideals to change the world, from angry senior citizens who are concerned about their pensions, and from dissatisfied backbenchers who decide to break with an established party. Yet all types of political projects require some level of justification by policy proposals in order to ask a mandate from the people. Even before founders of



new parties build any kind of organization or take part in elections, their projects can be categorized according to the kind of objectives they pursue. On the basis of our distinction between — and possible combinations of — ideological motives, altruistic motivations, strategic or tactical considerations and personal ambitions we suggest the following typology of new parties (see also Rochon, 1985; Lucardie, 2000):

- (1) *prophetic* parties aiming to drastically change the political and social system by propagating a coherent set of ideals and values not articulated by established parties;
- (2) *challengers* of established parties that try to maintain or renew the ideology of the latter, possibly in a more extreme or in a more moderate variety;
- (3) *advocates* of particular interests neglected (in their perception) by established parties, (elsewhere also defined as ‘prolocutors’);
- (4) *reform* parties that try to change or purge the political system and political culture without an explicit ideology (*purifiers* or *pragmatic reformers*);
- (5) *idiosyncratic* parties, reflecting the personal inclinations and ideological eclecticism of the founders.

The first two types are basically ideological or policy-oriented projects, while advocates and purifiers may be driven by more strategic or tactical considerations. Idiosyncratic parties often show a high level of personal ambition of particular leaders and tactical motivations, possibly combined with ideological motives. There is an obvious relationship between certain types of party origin and political projects: challengers mainly result from a party split, advocates tend to emerge from a social movement or from a private initiative, while purifiers are often the product of private initiatives. The latter finding is remarkable as one would expect these advocates of particular interests to have stronger links with social movements or pressure groups. Based on our — admittedly rudimentary categorization and indicators — we have grouped the 63 new parties into these five categories (Table 2).

Between 1989 and 2006, 15 *prophetic parties* attempted to gain parliamentary representation, advocating ideas that clashed with the dominant Dutch political ideologies of liberalism, social-democracy or Christian democracy (Voerman and Lucardie, 1992; De Beus *et al.*, 1996; Andeweg and Irwin, 2002, 43–50). Of these parties, only the ecologist Green Left (*GroenLinks*) and the nationalist Centre Democrats (*Centrumdemocraten*) succeeded in gaining seats, whereas all other parties — propagating anarchism, communism, feminism, libertarianism, or ideas inspired by Islam or Hindu philosophy — failed. Whereas in many other European countries Christian democracy faced difficulties in developing into a mainstream political force or evolved into secular conservatism, Dutch Christian democrats kept some distance from conservatism (Keman and Pennings, 2006). Nevertheless, we do not classify



Table 2 Origins and types of new parties (in the Netherlands, 1989–2006)

| Type → Origin ↓ | Prophet | Challenger (of..) | Pragmatic reformer | Advocate (Prolocutor) | Idiosyncratic |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--|---|---|
| Trans-formation | CP'86 | | | NMP ^a | |
| Party split | CD NCPN ^b PSP'92 | Cons.NL (LPF) EénNL (LPF?) KPP (CDA) LDP (VVD) PDS (PvdA) PvN (LPF?) PVV (VVD) SP (PvdA) RN (VVD) | AVD DN LPF ^c | NSOV S2000 | List-Ratelband |
| Party merger | GL | CU (CDA) | | VSP | |
| International (branching) | NWP | SAP ^d (PSP/PvdA) | NT ^e | | HP ^f |
| Social movement (realignment) | Groenen Idealisten LP VP | | ADP ^g List-Poortman | NM PvdD VIP | |
| Private initiative (entre-preneur) | ID ^h LRVP PDA PMR | | ABC CDDP DNP GAP KC LN ⁱ PvdT | AOV AWP BC GVIP ^j PPO SBP SMP Sol'93 Unie55 + VIP VMP | List-Veldhoen MDP/RVP SF SMP ^k TOP |

Names of parties that have won seats in parliament are printed bold.

^aResuscitated in 1995 by one of its founders and renamed Nieuwe Middenpartij in 1998.

^bStrictly speaking, the NCPN resulted from a merger of Communist groups that had split from the CPN at different moments (1985, 1989/91).

^cMight also be regarded as a prophet or an idiosyncratic party.

^dIKB resulted from merger between a group split from PSP (*Proletaries Links*) and the Dutch section of the Fourth International (*Revolutionaire Communistenbond*); later it was renamed SAP, mainly in order to relate to PSP and PvdA (Interview Lindelauff, 28 August 1989).

^e*Nederland Transparant* was an offshoot from *Europa Transparant*; however, both were purely Dutch organizations.

^fMight also be regarded as a prophet.

^gMight also be regarded as an advocate (for farmers).

^hStarted as a local group in The Hague (with the same name).

ⁱFounded by local groups (mainly Leefbaar Utrecht and Leefbaar Hilversum).

^jMight also be regarded as a pragmatic reformer.

^kMight also be regarded as an advocate for ethnic minorities.



secular conservative parties in the Netherlands as ‘prophets’. They are better categorized as ‘challengers’ as their ideology is not substantially different from Christian democracy or liberalism.

Challenger parties have been more successful than prophets. All three major parties, the Christian Democratic Party (*Christen Democratisch Appel*, CDA), Labour Party (*Partij van de Arbeid*, PvdA) and the Liberal Party (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*, VVD), are now facing a relatively strong challenger party. Often, challengers emerged as a breakaway from an established party when their founders felt the latter had compromised its principles, shifted too far to the centre or lost its credibility by internal bickering or other wrong-doings. This was the case with the founder of the Freedom Party (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*, PVV), Geert Wilders, who left the VVD when he felt he could no longer express his rightwing and anti-Islamic opinion within the parliamentary group (*Trouw*, 1 September 2004). Interestingly, Sammy van Tuyl van Serooskerken left the Liberal Party in the same year and founded later the Liberal Democratic Party (*Liberaal Democratische Partij*, LDP) because he regarded the VVD as too rightwing and too populist (*NRC Handelsblad*, 4 June 2004; *NRC Handelsblad*, 12 September 2006). The Labour Party (PvdA) is challenged by the Socialist Party (SP), yet this story is more complicated as it is not a direct split from the PvdA itself. The SP was founded as the (Marxist-Leninist) Communist Party of the Netherlands (*Kommunistiese Partij Nederland*: KPNml) in 1971, before it changed its name a year later into Socialist Party (*Socialistische Partij*, SP; Voerman, 1987, 124–126, 129–132). Gradually it shed Maoism and subsequently its Leninist and Marxist features and eventually evolved into a leftist social democratic party, challenging the PvdA on the left (Voerman and Lucardie, 2007). In this case a prophetic party seems to have evolved into a challenger. The CDA is also challenged by a party with a complicated history. The Christian Union (*ChristenUnie*, CU) resulted from a merger between two (more fundamentalist) protestant parties that had rejected mainstream Christian democracy, but in 2003 it began to challenge the CDA electorally (*Reformatorsch Dagblad*, 18 January 2003; *Nederlands Dagblad*, 22 March 2003). Christian challenger parties seem to be fairly rare outside the Netherlands; the Canadian Christian Heritage Party (CHP) and the German *Partei Bibeltreuer Christen* (PBC, Party of Christians True to the Bible) are quite similar but electorally less successful. Christian parties have been more successful in Finland, Norway and Sweden, where they articulated a new cleavage and might be considered prophetic parties rather than challengers (Madeley, 2004, 223–228). Leftwing socialist parties have challenged mainstream social democratic parties (with some success) in Denmark, Germany and Norway.

Contrary to the relatively coherent and explicit ideology of challengers and prophetic parties, *advocates* do not challenge the dominant values of society



and ideologies of major political forces. These parties merely claim to articulate the interests of neglected social groups. They want to see better representation of the interests of senior citizens, farmers, ethnic minorities, small entrepreneurs, the unemployed or even animals. The two senior citizen parties that entered Dutch parliament in 1994, the General Senior Citizens' Association (*Algemeen Ouderenverbond*, AOV) and the Union 55+ (*Unie 55+*), implicitly accepted liberal and Christian-democratic values like free enterprise and solidarity (Lucardie, 1995, 135). The Animal Rights Party (*Partij voor de Dieren*, PvdD) that won two seats in 2006, aiming at representing the rights of animals, seems more left-leaning, even if it claimed to 'transcend the traditional opposition between left and right' (Partij voor de Dieren, 2006, 44). Somewhat similar parties have emerged in Germany (*Die Grauen* and the *Tierschutzpartei*) but so far they have not managed to win seats beyond the local level (Lucardie, 2004, 205, 208–209). In Luxembourg, however, a rather conservative senior citizens' party has been represented in parliament since 1989.³

Similarly, purifiers or 'pragmatic reformers' do not refer to an overarching ideology either, but rather a limited range of issues related to the functioning of the political system. One example is a party that intends to fight corruption and promote integrity and transparency in the political system — Transparent Europe (*Europa Transparent*), which won two seats in the European Parliament in 2004 and its offshoot Transparent Netherlands (*Nederland Transparent*, NT). Another case is Liveable Netherlands (*Leefbaar Nederland*, LN), which promised to give more power to the people by introducing a binding referendum and having public officials elected by the people. It emerged from local party organizations that were dissatisfied with the control over local policy by the major national parties. In 2001 it elected Pim Fortuyn as leader, but when he voiced strong opinions on immigrants that went against mainstream political mores he was expelled from the party. Subsequently, Fortuyn founded the List Pim Fortuyn (*Lijst Pim Fortuyn*, LPF), which could also be considered a purifier, though its charismatic leader resembled a prophet in some ways. Fortuyn did not propagate an explicit ideology, but combined economic liberalism with populism and moderate (liberal rather than ethnic) nationalism — and mixed these with rather personal memories, in his political manifesto (Fortuyn, 2002; see also Lucardie and Voerman, 2002). Similar ideas were expressed by Hagen's Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*) in Norway or Kjaersgaard's Danish People's Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*, DFP) in Denmark (see Akkerman, 2005, 345–348; Hagelund, 2005). These parties are usually regarded as populist radical right parties, even if they rarely like that label (Keman and Krouwel, 2007).

Finally, we discern parties that merely articulate the idiosyncratic beliefs and interests of their founding father (rarely: mother), often in a way that may seem coherent to insiders but not to outside observers. After the death of Fortuyn,



the LPF came to resemble an idiosyncratic party. However, a more obvious example is the List Ratelband (Emile Ratelband is a well-known entertainer and spiritual trainer in the Netherlands who set up his own party after his break with *Leefbaar Nederland* in December 2002).

When this typology is applied to parties across the world and across time, we can see variation in party types emerging. At least in the Netherlands the numbers of ideologically motivated parties — challengers and prophets — declined since the end of the Cold War, while pragmatic reformers have increased and advocates have remained fairly stable (see the Appendix; about the period before 1989 see Lucardie, 1986; cf. Daalder, 1966). Yet, not all types can be observed in all countries. In the new Baltic states, for example, prophetic parties and advocates seem to be rare, while pragmatic reformers are very common and often successful (Sikk, 2006, 143, 164). In Canada, on the contrary, prophetic and challenger parties are quite numerous and occasionally very successful (Lucardie, 2007). German new parties are fairly similar to the Dutch types, though generally less successful except *Die Grünen* and recently the Left Party (*Die Linke*; Lucardie, 2004). Peculiar to the Netherlands seem to be the large number and relative success of advocates. This might be explained in terms of its consociational political culture and to some extent corporatist institutions, which tend to discriminate against (minority) interests that are not incorporated in or articulated by ‘certified’ institutions.

Electoral Success and Failure of New Parties

The life span of new parties is often short, ‘infant mortality’ is quite high. In order to survive, new parties have to pass four thresholds according to Pedersen (1982, 6–9) (Figure 1).

Firstly, they have to become a party in the formal sense (i.e. passing the threshold of declaration) and officially found a party organization. Secondly, they have to be authorized to nominate candidates at elections, passing the threshold of authorization (in the Netherlands this implies registration by the *Kiesraad* or Election Board). Thirdly, they should win seats in the (national) legislature, passing the threshold of representation and fourthly, they are to pass the threshold of relevance, taking part in government or exercising influence in some other way (see also Herzog, 1987). Once they have emerged and passed the threshold of declaration, new parties are rarely masters of their own destiny, as Hauss and Rayside (1978, 50) observed already 30 years ago. Authorization may be a formality — at least in most liberal polities — but participation in elections is another matter. Electoral success of new parties depends on many factors (see e.g.: Pinard, 1975; Hauss and Rayside, 1978; Rochon, 1985; Hug, 2000; Lucardie, 2000; Carter, 2005, 201–215; Meguid,

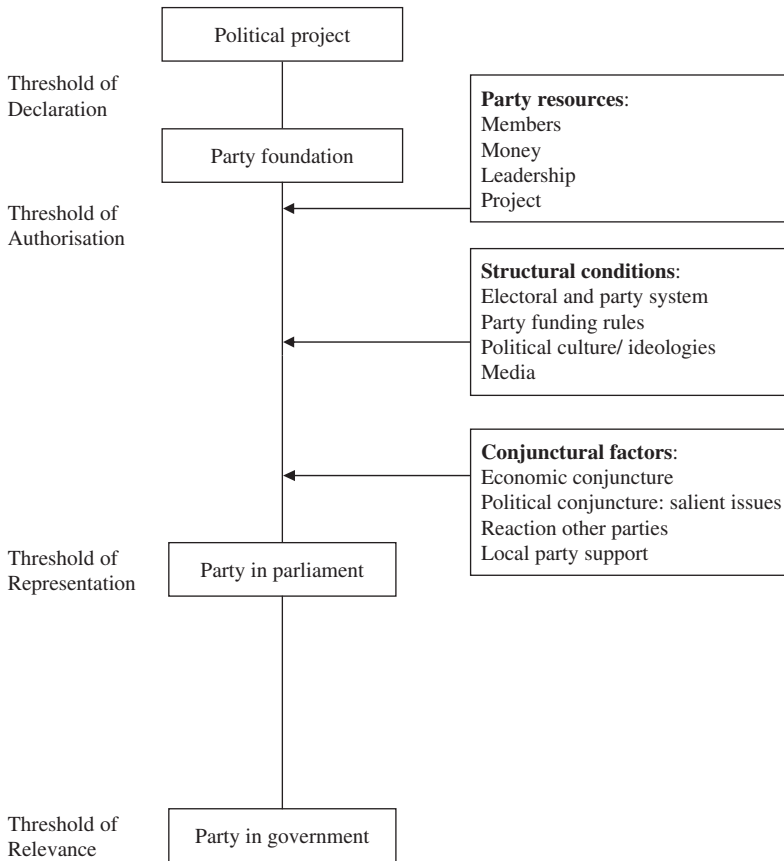


Figure 1 Development of new parties.

2005). In the literature at least three kinds of factors are deemed important for the electoral success of new parties:

- (a) structural and institutional conditions — the electoral system and party funding rules, the political culture (dominant and latent values or ideologies), the configuration of the existing party system and the media;
- (b) the economic and political conjuncture or opportunity structure — and specifically: salient issues that may have escaped the control of established parties;
- (c) internal party resources, such as money, brainpower and active members, effective (and preferably charismatic) leadership and a political project that deals with urgent needs without offending fundamental values of society.



While these factors may help to explain why 10 new parties succeeded in winning seats in Dutch parliament (between 1989 and 2006) and 53 did not, they do not fully explain party success. Indeed, some of the ‘failures’ highly resembled the successful parties. Our survey and interviews do not allow for a rigorous testing of the effect of all these factors, but we can chart a broad pattern of conducive and limiting factors in new party emergence of the different types and their electoral success (Table 3a and b).

Table 3a Number of parties participating in Dutch elections (1989–2006)

| <i>Elections</i> | <i>Total number of parties participating in the election</i> | <i>Number of parties represented in parliament^a</i> | <i>New parties gaining entry in parliament^b (% of parties in parliament)</i> | <i>Parties not winning seats in parliament (% of parties participating in elections)</i> |
|------------------|--|--|---|--|
| 1989 | 25 (100%) | 7 (28%) | 2 (29%) | 16 (64%) |
| 1994 | 26 (100%) | 9 (34%) | 3 (33%) | 14 (53%) |
| 1998 | 22 (100%) | 12 (54%) | 0 (0%) | 10 (46%) |
| 2002 | 16 (100%) | 7 (43%) | 3 (38%) | 6 (38%) |
| 2003 | 20 (100%) | 10 (50%) | 0 (0%) | 10 (50%) |
| 2006 | 24 (100%) | 9 (38%) | 2 (20%) | 13 (54%) |

Source: CBS Election Statistics and www.verkiezingsuitslagen.nl.

^aParties resulting from a split during a parliamentary period or new parties are not included.

^bIncluding mergers, that is, GreenLeft (in 1989) and Christian Union (in 2002); excluding party transformations.

Table 3b Number of parties participating in Dutch elections (1918–2006)

| <i>Elections</i> | <i>Total number of parties participating in the elections</i> | <i>Number of parties represented in parliament^a</i> | <i>New parties gaining entry in parliament^b (% of parties in parliament)</i> | <i>Parties not winning seats in parliament (% of parties participating in elections)</i> |
|------------------|---|--|---|--|
| 1918–1940 | 150 (100%) | 7 (5%) | 19 (13%) | 124 (82%) |
| 1946–1966 | 32 (100%) ^c | 6 (19%) | 5 (16%) | 21 (66%) |
| 1967–1988 | 80 (100%) | 10 (13%) | 9 (11%) | 61 (76%) |
| 1989–2006 | 70 (100%) | 7 (10%) | 10 (14%) | 53 (76%) |

Sources: CBS Election Statistics and Vossen (2003: 227–233).

^aAt the time of the first election in the period indicated, that is, 1918, 1946, 1967 and 1989, respectively.

^bIncluding mergers, for example, Labour Party (*Partij van de Arbeid*, PvdA) in 1946, Christian Democratic Appeal (*Christen Democratisch Appel*, CDA) which participated for the first time in 1977; excluding transformations, like the Liberal Party which changed from Liberal State Party (*Liberale Staatspartij*, LSP) into Freedom Party (*Partij van de Vrijheid*, PvdV) in 1946.

^cRounding makes for an actual total of 101%.



Only two prophetic parties have gained parliamentary representation in our period. The nationalist and xenophobic Centre Democrats (CD) won one seat in 1989 and three seats in 1994 in the lower house, whereas other nationalist parties like the Centre Party '86 (CP'86) and the Patriotic Democratic Appeal (*Patriotisch Democratisch Appel*, PDA) failed to enter parliament. The CD differed from the other two in three respects: it could mobilize more resources; its leader was better known — even if controversial and not quite charismatic — than the leaders of its rivals; and its state nationalism was probably somewhat more in line with Dutch political culture than the ethnic nationalism of the CP'86 (Mudde, 2000, 131–134, 150–153). Differences in resources and ideology also distinguish the Green Left from its smaller rivals, The Greens (*De Groenen*) and the even smaller Party for Environment and Law (*Partij voor Milieu en Recht*, PMR) (Lucardie *et al.*, 1993). Though the leader of The Greens in 1989 was a fairly well-known political activist, with about 300 members he could not mobilize substantial resources whereas the Green Left inherited a professional staff, press contacts, financial resources and 18,000 members from its predecessors. Besides, the ideology of The Greens was more eco-centric, hence more alien to Dutch voters than the more anthropocentric and moderate ecologism position of Green Left.

Challengers seem to be electorally relatively successful in the Netherlands. Three of them clearly took advantage of having well-known leaders as well as financial and human resources. While the Christian Union's first leader may not have been very well known, he was well liked and respected by party supporters (Van Holsteyn and Den Ridder, 2005, 137–145). Moreover, the new formation inherited the resources of its two predecessors, the Reformed Political Association (*Gereformeerde Politiek Verbond*, GPV) and the Reformed Political Federation (*Reformatorische Politieke Federatie*, RPF). In fact, both parties availed of motivated activists and supporters. The Freedom Party did not have any members at all and probably modest (but not publicly known) funds, but their leader, Geert Wilders, was better known in 2006 than the leaders of the Christian Union, the Green Left and even of the VVD (Aarts *et al.*, 2007, 204–209). Many disliked him, but among discontented voters he appeared quite popular. The most successful challenger after 1989 is no doubt the SP. It has attracted a massive membership and substantial funds, while its leader became the most trusted politician in 2006 — quite different from 1989, when he and his party were hardly known to the public. Before the 1990s because of its Marxist-Leninist ideology the SP might be regarded as a prophetic party. Yet by 1994 the Socialists had ceased to refer to Marx and Lenin and began to challenge directly the PvdA (Van der Steen, 1995, 176, 183). At that time, the SP benefited from a favourable political conjuncture or opportunity structure, as the PvdA had alienated substantial numbers of loyal voters by its support for reductions in social security and industrial disability



payments. Other challengers either lacked the resources, the candidates or the issues that could lure voters away from the established parties (see Lucardie, 1990, 132–134; 1995, 138–139; 1999, 134–135).

Only two out of 13 pragmatic reformers were successful: the List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) and Liveable Netherlands (*Leefbaar Nederland*). The LPF benefited from the declining popularity of the ‘purple coalition’ between Liberals and Social Democrats, the resulting convergence between ideological opposites in Dutch politics as well as the charisma of its founder. Yet Fortuyn also managed to appropriate (and exacerbate) an issue neglected — if not suppressed — by the established parties: the problem of integrating a growing number of immigrants from non-European and often Islamic countries (Van der Brug, 2003). More difficult to explain is the electoral success of *Leefbaar Nederland*, the only other purifier or pragmatic reformer that managed to gain seats in the Dutch parliament — at least in this period.⁴ The party had few financial resources; it had only about 1,200 members in 2002 and lost its well-known leader, Pim Fortuyn, only three months before the elections of 2002. It did not really own any issues, apart from a radical reform of the political system. Yet it won two seats in May 2002. One could attribute this to the ‘populist zeitgeist’ (Mudde, 2004) and possibly the resources and support from the local parties that had joined *Leefbaar Nederland*, in addition to the media attention generated by Fortuyn before he left the party.⁵ Other purifiers failed to attract sufficient resources and publicity. However, even if they had attracted more publicity, most of their advocated reforms would probably be perceived as utopian, incoherent or irrelevant.

Advocates more often succeeded in winning seats in parliament — but often lost them again at the next election. The General Senior Citizens’ Association (*Algemeen Ouderenverbond*, AOV) and Union 55+ (*Unie 55+*) took advantage of a rather favourable opportunity structure in 1994, created by a coalition of CDA and PvdA that implemented measures of welfare state retrenchment (Van Stipdonk and Van Holsteyn, 1996, 136–138, 142). Senior citizens had been mobilized by established senior-citizen organizations and unions to protest against reductions of general pensions and homes for the elderly shortly before the elections. Although most organized interests did not support the AOV and Union 55+, these parties could claim the issue during the election campaign. In addition they availed of sufficient funds and members (Lucardie, 1995, 138). Finally, they enjoyed the support from a wealthy, famous and fairly popular Dutch entrepreneur, Frits Philips (Van Stipdonk and Van Holsteyn, 1996, 141). Support from celebrities played an important role in the electoral success of the Animal Rights Party (*Partij voor de Dieren*, PvdD) in 2006. In 2003 the PvdD had come close to a seat with modest resources and an effective campaign, yet without celebrity support; three years later about half of its 30 parliamentary candidates were actors,



novelists or other writers and entertainers — and the party won two seats.⁶ In this case, the political conjuncture seems a less relevant factor. Other advocates were less effective in recruiting celebrities or mobilizing other resources. Only Mobile Netherlands (*Nederland Mobiel*), which was supported by the Foundation Pro Car (*Stichting Pro Auto*) and was led by a fairly successful entrepreneur, came close to a seat in 1994 (Lucardie, 1999, 128–129).

In sum, electoral success of new parties in the Netherlands can be attributed to political opportunities, issue ownership, a coherent political message within the ‘grid’ of Dutch political culture, media exposure and support from outsiders, financial and human resources and the appeal and charisma of the party leadership. Some new party types seem better equipped to get their candidates elected: particularly challengers have been very successful, followed by advocates, prophets and pragmatic purifiers, while idiosyncratic parties have been least successful. Electoral success, however, is not the only goal of a new party; success may be measured in other terms, such as: the impact on the political culture and the political agenda, on the policies of other parties or the political consciousness of new party supporters.

The Impact and Effect of New Parties

As Pedersen (1982) has pointed out, the life of new parties is often nasty and short. Quite a few disappear within a few years, without leaving a trace. Yet some do have an impact on the political system. Mair (2002, 98) has argued that the Netherlands has a comparatively very open structure of party competition in which ‘new parties have been relatively easily incorporated into government (...) and in that innovative formulae have been adopted in almost half of the governments formed since 1951’. In order to compare this supposed Dutch openness with other European countries, we have examined the extent to which established parties have been able to maintain their electoral support and their grip on government control. The cross-national examination shows that the established parties in the Netherlands seem to have experienced two periods of decline, much in line with other countries in North-western Europe (in particular Belgium, Denmark and Norway) (Table 4).

Across Europe, we see a widespread decline in popular support for established parties and a surge in success for new parties. Particularly in the most recent decade popular support for traditional parties dropped more sharply, to the extent that it for example was impossible in the Netherlands to form a two-party coalition in 2002 and 2006. In both cases new parties were included in the coalition — the LPF in 2002 and the CU in 2006. In Europe, new parties accrued almost a quarter of the total vote in the last decade, twice as much as they gained in the 1980s. Particularly in Italy, Belgium, Norway

Table 4 Electoral support of established parties

| | <i>AUT</i> | <i>BEL</i> | <i>DEN</i> | <i>FIN</i> | <i>FRA</i> | <i>GER</i> | <i>GRE</i> | <i>ITA</i> | <i>NET</i> | <i>NOR</i> | <i>SPA</i> | <i>SWE</i> | <i>UK</i> | <i>avg</i> |
|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| 1945–1950 | 94.4 | 88.7 | 85.5 | 98.4 | 100 | 72 | 84.2 | 75.4 | 86.9 | 82.7 | | 93.6 | 98 | 88.3 |
| 1951–1955 | 94.4 | 90.3 | 88.7 | 99.1 | 99.8 | 83.5 | 97.1 | 68.8 | 87.4 | 85.8 | | 95.6 | 99 | 90.8 |
| 1956–1960 | 96.3 | 93.4 | 87.9 | 97.4 | 91.7 | 89.7 | 100 | 70.8 | 92.3 | 87.1 | | 95.6 | 99 | 91.8 |
| 1961–1965 | 96.5 | 87.5 | 88.1 | 94.1 | 89 | 95.4 | 84.6 | 68.3 | 88.4 | 84 | | 93.1 | 99 | 89.0 |
| 1966–1970 | 97.5 | 80.6 | 85.9 | 97.3 | 91.9 | 94.6 | 84 | 62.7 | 84.9 | 85.1 | | 94.6 | 98 | 88.1 |
| 1971–1975 | 98.7 | 70.6 | 76 | 97.5 | 93.1 | 99.1 | 74.8 | 60.2 | 79.3 | 68.5 | | 94.2 | 94 | 83.8 |
| 1977–1980 | 99.5 | 76.1 | 72.8 | 98.1 | 92.4 | 98.6 | 53.9 | 56.4 | 90.5 | 82.6 | 71.6 | 94.3 | 95 | 83.2 |
| 1981–1985 | 95.9 | 75.5 | 77.1 | 97.2 | 98.1 | 94 | 39.2 | 56.4 | 89.6 | 82.3 | 84.2 | 92 | 95 | 82.8 |
| 1986–1990 | 92.9 | 78.9 | 76.8 | 93.4 | 85.9 | 89.4 | 45.8 | 57.3 | 92.8 | 68.2 | 76.3 | 87.9 | 96 | 80.1 |
| 1991–1995 | 86.7 | 71.5 | 82.1 | 88.7 | 67.2 | 84.8 | 39.3 | 63.8 | 84.7 | 65.4 | 75.4 | 85.5 | 94 | 76.1 |
| 1996–2000 | 87 | 64.1 | 79.6 | 86.7 | 64.8 | 82.2 | 40 | 58.6 | 84.3 | 67.5 | 77.6 | 80.9 | 91 | 74.2 |
| 2001–2005 | 88.8 | 73.5 | 78 | 87.6 | 68.6 | 81.8 | 45.4 | 63.8 | 72.9 | 60.7 | 80.3 | 83.6 | 90 | 75.0 |
| | 94.1 | 79.2 | 81.5 | 94.6 | 86.9 | 88.8 | 65.7 | 63.5 | 86.2 | 76.7 | 77.6 | 90.9 | 95.7 | 83.2 |

Data from various sources reported in Krouwel (1999). In all countries the established parties are social democrats, Christian democrats or conservatives and liberals. In Finland also included Keski, SPP and SKDL, in France PCF.



and the Netherlands new parties have attracted substantial electoral support, while in other European countries new parties have made less of an impact. New parties have hardly affected the electoral appeal of the major parties in the UK, Finland and Sweden. Moreover, despite an almost secular decline in popular support of the major party families across Europe, the established parties have maintained domination in terms of government control.

Table 5 shows that only in the 1990s established parties had to begin to share executive power with new parties. Over the post-war period, established parties controlled more than 90% of all ministerial portfolios. In the Netherlands, the decline set in a little later — after the ‘purple’ governments in the 1990s — but in the last decade CDA, VVD and PvdA could not avoid to allow new parties at the government table.

New parties are able to attract support and enter government, because they raise new issues and alter the political agenda. Meguid (2005) has argued that there are basically three possible responses of established parties to the emergence of new competitors. In the first place established parties can adopt an accommodative strategy and incorporate the stances of new competitors in their own political programme. In the second place they can pursue an adversarial strategy and frontally attack the newcomer by increasing emphasis on issues related with or owned by the established parties while downplaying the importance of the issues and policies that new parties advocate. A third strategy is a dismissive reaction: ignoring the existence of new competitors and treating them as irrelevant. In order to cross-nationally examine the extent to which mainstream established parties respond to the emergence of new parties, we focus on the shift in issue emphasis in their party manifestos. For analysing the responsiveness of established parties towards new parties, Huijbrechts (2006) developed the measure of issue saliency difference (ISD). The ISD is the difference between the attention devoted to specific issues by a new party and the attention paid to the same issue by the established party (Huijbrechts, 2006, 27–29). For this purpose, the 10 most prominent issues in the manifesto of the new parties were identified, each constituting minimally 3% of the manifesto for an issue to be included. If the established parties are responsive, and thus take over the issues that new parties emphasize most, the ISD should decline over time (Table 6).

Evidently, we do not observe a decline in the difference in issue emphasis between new and old parties. In fact, we see a relatively high level of discrepancy in issue saliency between old and new parties. Thus, new parties place and maintain different issues on the political agenda. The highest levels of ISD — and thus more difference in issue emphasis between old and new parties — can be observed in Switzerland, Sweden, Austria, Italy, Germany, France and Finland. Conversely, the Netherlands emerge as a case where established parties have relatively similar issue emphasis patterns as new parties. Only in

Table 5 Government control of established parties (percentage of ministries held in five-year periods)

| | <i>AUT</i> | <i>BEL</i> | <i>DEN</i> | <i>FIN</i> | <i>FRA</i> | <i>GER</i> | <i>GRE</i> | <i>ITA</i> | <i>NET</i> | <i>NOR</i> | <i>SPA</i> | <i>SWE</i> | <i>UK</i> | <i>AVG</i> |
|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| 1945–1950 | 88.5 | 79.7 | 94.9 | 93.8 | 91.3 | 85.7 | 88.1 | 80.2 | 78.0 | 100 | — | 85.9 | 100 | 88.8 |
| 1951–1955 | 95.5 | 95.8 | 100 | 92.1 | 81.4 | 89.0 | 77.8 | 99.3 | 91.1 | 100 | — | 82.2 | 100 | 92.0 |
| 1956–1960 | 97.7 | 98.8 | 88.8 | 71.7 | 80.2 | 92.7 | 80.0 | 99.2 | 95.0 | 100 | — | 86.1 | 100 | 90.9 |
| 1961–1965 | 100 | 100 | 96.1 | 77.3 | 55.3 | 100 | 62.8 | 100 | 100 | 90.7 | — | 96.4 | 100 | 89.9 |
| 1966–1970 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 86.2 | 66.4 | 98.4 | 65.3 | 100 | 100 | 80 | — | 100 | 100 | 91.4 |
| 1971–1975 | 100 | 99.1 | 97.8 | 84.9 | 70.4 | 98.4 | 67.7 | 100 | 95.5 | 85 | — | 100 | 100 | 91.6 |
| 1976–1980 | 100 | 95.7 | 100 | 94 | 57.7 | 100 | 100 | 97.8 | 93.8 | 100 | 95.4 | 96.3 | 100 | 94.7 |
| 1981–1985 | 100 | 99.7 | 100 | 92.7 | 97.9 | 100 | 25 | 99.3 | 100 | 92.2 | 95.6 | 97.4 | 100 | 92.3 |
| 1986–1990 | 96.7 | 100 | 98.9 | 95.1 | 97.0 | 98.3 | 35.9 | 100 | 100 | 87.5 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 93.0 |
| 1991–1995 | 93.5 | 98.1 | 100 | 97.2 | 90.8 | 100 | 50.0 | 64.3 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 98.3 | 100 | 91.7 |
| 1996–2000 | 94.7 | 88.9 | 100 | 88.9 | 92.9 | 90.6 | 0 | 49.0 | 94.1 | 92.1 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 83.9 |
| 2001–2005 | 95.8 | 86.5 | 100 | 96.3 | 84.9 | 86.6 | 50.0 | 46.7 | 86.8 | 84.2 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 86.0 |
| | 96.9 | 95.2 | 98.0 | 89.2 | 80.5 | 95.0 | 58.6 | 86.3 | 94.5 | 92.6 | 98.5 | 95.2 | 100.0 | 90.8 |

Data from Krouwel (1999), Woldendorp *et al.* (2000) and Keesings Contemporary Archives.



Table 6 Responsiveness of established parties to new parties 1976–2003

| Country | 1976–1980 | 1981–1985 | 1986–1990 | 1991–1995 | 1996–2000 | 2001–2005 | Average |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Austria | — | — | –19.8 | –31.1 | –39.1 | –31.5 | –31.8 |
| Belgium | — | –14.8 | –16.8 | –7.6 | –6.0 | –11.3 | –10.0 |
| Denmark | –2.2 | +4.2 | –12.8 | –4.9 | –18.1 | –19.9 | –7.9 |
| Finland | — | — | –44.5 | –25.3 | –32.7 | –16.9 | –26.2 |
| France | — | — | — | –24.6 | –17.9 | –39.4 | –25.1 |
| Germany | — | — | –17.5 | –20.2 | –29.5 | –39.3 | –27.4 |
| Greece | — | — | — | — | –12.9 | –26.6 | –19.8 |
| Ireland | — | — | — | –11.6 | –19.4 | –12.4 | –23.1 |
| Italy | –47.3 | –60.6 | –50.4 | –30.4 | –18.5 | –41.4 | –32.5 |
| Luxembourg | — | — | –27.2 | –17.7 | –12.5 | — | –19.7 |
| Netherlands | –14.3 | –18.1 | –3.6 | –14.4 | –20.9 | –17.8 | –14.8 |
| Norway | –40.9 | –24.6 | –20.9 | –14.6 | –22.4 | — | –24.1 |
| Spain | — | — | — | –19.6 | –23.8 | — | –20.4 |
| Sweden | — | — | –29.7 | –29.6 | –39.7 | –49.8 | –37.2 |
| Switzerland | — | –50.4 | –49.8 | –50.9 | –24.2 | –36.9 | –39.4 |
| United Kingdom | — | — | +8.5 | –13.8 | — | — | –2.6 |
| All | –1.6 | –12.8 | –22.0 | –17.4 | –21.7 | –25.1 | –20.3 |

Based on Manifesto Research Group data (see Budge *et al.*, 2001) as developed by Huijbrechts (2006). Negative scores indicate the established parties devote less attention to the 10 most salient issues of new parties, while positive scores mean that established parties give more attention to these issues.

the UK, Denmark and Belgium do old and new parties have more in common in terms of issue emphasis. A closer analysis reveals that established parties are far more responsive to newcomers in times of electoral misfortune. When established parties gain electoral support, they allow more dissimilarity between them and new parties. When established parties face electoral decline, they tend to mimic new parties in issue emphasis patterns. Electoral success of new parties, on the other hand, does not strongly affect the issue emphasis difference between established and new parties.

In sum, successful established parties do not respond to newcomers, only in times of trouble they start copying successful new parties in terms of issue emphasis. This pattern is currently visible in the Netherlands. During the 1980s and 1990s, the Centre Democrats tried in vain to mobilize support against immigration and multiculturalism, but the established parties by and large ignored the issue. Only when Pim Fortuyn and his party were quite successful in putting the issue at the centre of political competition did the established parties react (Wansink, 2004). Even when established parties seem to ‘own’ the issue, they may feel the need to increase emphasis on it when a new party strongly emphasizes the same issue. A case in point is the VVD, where its leader



Bolkestein had put immigration and integration squarely on the political agenda. The party was nevertheless faced with a split on the issue, resulting in the emergence of Geert Wilders and his Freedom Party. Wilders subsequently challenged the VVD on the issue of immigration and integration to an extent that the VVD lost its 'ownership' and had to respond by reformulating its policy and put more emphasis on the issue (see Rosema *et al.*, 2007, 173–175).

Conclusions

Since the Dutch political system is relatively open and accessible to new parties and given its electoral system of pure proportional representation without formal thresholds, it makes for a useful case study to assess the impact and effect of new political parties. We found that, despite the relative low threshold of 0.67% (around 60,000 votes) only 10 new parties achieved parliamentary representation between 1989 and 2006. This constitutes a mere 16% of all 63 parties that entered electoral competition. These new parties differed substantially in terms of origins and type of political project. Most commonly successful new parties originate from splits of an existing party (four times) or a merger between existing parties (twice), while one successful newcomer emerged from a social movement. Three more, and one of the most successful, were founded by 'political entrepreneurs' without experience in other parties. Most new parties either challenge mainstream parties on their own ideological turf or represent neglected social interests. Only two successful newcomers were prophets propagating ideas not articulated by mainstream parties, three new parties ideologically challenged mainstream parties, three advocated special interests, while the remaining two were populist or pragmatic reformers.

Observing substantial cross-time variation, we suggest that the electoral success or failure of new parties should not be sought in system characteristics, but can best be explained by the political opportunity structure, issue ownership and ideological positioning within the 'grid' of the Dutch political landscape, media access, external support from politically relevant actors, as well as material and human resources, not in the least the appeal of the party leadership. As elsewhere in Europe, the success of new parties is limited. Five of the 10 successful newcomers in Dutch parliament lost their seats either at the next election or at the election immediately after that. Two still have to pass this test (having entered parliament only in 2006). Only three new parties have survived three or more elections: the Christian Union, Green Left and the Socialist Party.

In terms of impact, the life span of new parties is not crucial. The Dutch case shows that very short-lived parties — such as Pim Fortuyn's LPF — can substantially alter the political agenda and Dutch political discourse. Success



— even fleeting success — of a newcomer seems to inspire other newcomers as well as actors within established parties. Other newcomers have a lasting impact because they survive and may even achieve realignment of the party system. In the Netherlands the SP might be able to do this if it becomes larger than the PvdA, the traditional main force on the left — some polls in 2007 suggested this is a distinct possibility.⁷ Some of this left-realignment is already visible as for the first time in history the PvdA is smaller than its leftwing rivals combined. Yet for a real impact on policy, new parties need to achieve government participation. Despite the relative openness of the Dutch system and the innovative government formulae that occur regularly, of the new parties only LPF and Christian Union entered a coalition in the period since 1989. The LPF joined a coalition with the CDA and VVD that lasted less than 3 months due to internal squabbles within the new party. The Christian Union joined government after the 2006 elections and may enjoy some longevity at the government table, but it has a real hard time in persuading the PvdA and CDA to adjust their policies to the wishes of their junior partner.

Summing up, even in a very open political system in terms of representation, few new parties pass the threshold of representation. The majority fails to gain even one seat in parliament. And when new parties enter their impact on policy is often minor and they disappear into political oblivion after one parliamentary term. Most new parties are waiting in vain in the wings of political power. Yet, once in a while, a new party enters the political stage and makes a profound impression on the electorate and government policy. That could be another reason why so many keep trying: there is always a chance that your political project resonates with the pulse of society.

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Notes

- 1 For a complete list of new Dutch parties in the period 1989–2006, see the Appendix.
- 2 Interview with C. Mahabier, Hilversum, 28 August 1989.
- 3 At first named 'Action committee for a 5/6 pension for everyone' (*Aktiounskomitee 5/6 Pensioun fir jiddferen*) it changed its name into 'Action Committee for Democracy and Just Pensions' (*Aktiounskomitee fir Democratie a Rentegerechtegheit*) in 1993 and finally into 'Alternative Democratic Reform Party' (*Alternativ Demokratesch Reformpartei*) in 2006; see online: www.adr.lu/partei.html (accessed on 2 December 2007).
- 4 Democrats 66 (D66), a party that defined itself as pragmatic reformer when founded in 1966, entered parliament in 1967 — and has stayed there until today.
- 5 The three Dutch newspapers *NRC Handelsblad*, *Trouw* and *de Volkskrant* published 55 articles about LN in the period between Fortuyn's exit and election day; in the same period they



published only one article about its rival, Sustainable Netherlands (*Duurzaam Nederland*, DN) and none about the Party of the Future (*Partij van de Toekomst*), which might also be considered a pragmatic reformer or purifier party. In 1994 and 1998 purifiers had also attracted very little attention from the media: one article about the General Democratic Party (*Algemene Democratische Partij*, ADP), two about The New Party (*De Nieuwe Partij*, DNP) and two about the Voters Collective (*Kiezers Collectief*, KC).

6 All celebrities were *lijstduwers*, that is, they held lower positions on the party list but had made it clear that they did not want to be elected but only to lend moral support to the party.

7 In early June 2007, Interview/NSS predicted 29 seats for the SP and 28 seats for the PvdA (online: www.politiekebarometer.nl/archief, accessed on 14 October 2007).

Appendix

See Table A1.

Table A1 List of new parties in the Netherlands (1989–2006)

| <i>Abbreviation</i> | <i>Full name</i> | <i>Year of origin</i> | <i>Election results: percentage (and seats, if any)</i> |
|---------------------|---|-------------------------|--|
| ABC | Ad Bos Collectief | 2006 | 2006: 0.1 |
| ADP | Algemene Democratische Partij | 1993 | 1994: 0.1 |
| AOV | Algemeen Ouderen Verbond ^a | 1993 | 1994: 3.6 (6) 1998: 0.5 |
| AVD | Alliantie voor Vernieuwing en Democratie | 2002 | 2003: 0.0 |
| AWP | Anti-Werkloosheid Partij | 1986 | 1989: 0.0 |
| BC | Bejaarden Centraal | 1989 | 1989: 0.1 |
| CD | Centrumdemocraten | 1984 | 1989: 0.9 (1) 1994: 2.5 (3) 1998: 0.6 |
| CP'86 | Centrumpartij '86 | 1986 | 1994: 0.4 |
| CU | ChristenUnie | 2000/ 2003 ^b | 2002: 2.5 (4) 2003: 2.1 (3) 2006: 4.0 (6) |
| CDDP | Continue Directe Democratie Partij | 2005 | 2006: 0.0 |
| Cons.NL | De Conservatieven.NL | 2002 | 2003: 0.0 |
| DNP | De Nieuwe Partij | 1993 | 1994: 0.1 |
| DN | Duurzaam Nederland | 2002 | 2002: 0.1 2003: 0.1 |
| Groenen | EénNL Federatieve Groenen/ De Groenen ^c | 2006 1983 | 2006: 0.6 1989: 0.4 1994: 0.2 1998: 0.2 |
| GL | GroenLinks | 1989/1990 ^d | 1989: 4.1 (6) 1994: 3.5 (5) 1998: 7.3 (11) 2002: 7.0 (10) 2003: 5.1 (8) |

Table A1 Continued

| <i>Abbreviation</i> | <i>Full name</i> | <i>Year of origin</i> | <i>Election results: percentage (and seats, if any)</i> |
|---------------------|--|-----------------------|---|
| | | | 2006: 4.6 (7) |
| GVIP | Groen Vrij Internet Partij | 2006 | 2006: 0.0 |
| GAP | Grote Alliance Partij | 1986 | 1989: 0.0 |
| HP | Humanistische Partij | 1984 | 1989: 0.0 |
| ID | Islam Democraten | 2005 | 2006: 0.0 |
| Idealisten | Jij en de idealisten | 1997 | 1998: 0.0 |
| KPP | Katholieke Politieke Partij | 1998 | 1998: 0.1 |
| KC | Kiezers Collectief | 1998 | 1998: 0.0 |
| LDP | Liberaal Democratische Partij | 2006 | 2006: 0.0 |
| LN | Leefbaar Nederland | 1999 | 2002: 1.6 (2) |
| | | | 2003: 0.4 |
| LP | Libertarische Partij | 1993 | 1994: 0.0 |
| LPF | Lijst Pim Fortuyn / Fortuyn ^c | 2002 | 2002: 17.0 (26) |
| | | | 2003: 5.6 (8) |
| | | | 2006: 0.2 |
| LRVP | Liefde Respect Vrijheid Partij 't Zeteltje | 2005 | 2006: 0.0 |
| | Lijst Poortman | 2006 | 2006: 0.0 |
| | Lijst Ratelband | 2002 | 2003: 0.1 |
| | Lijst Veldhoen | 2002 | 2003: 0.0 |
| MDP/RVP | Milieu Defensie Partij 2000 + /Republikeinse Volkspartij ^f | 1989 | 1989: 0.0 |
| | | | 2003: 0.0 |
| NM | Nederland Mobiel | 1997 | 1998: 0.5 |
| NMP | Nederlandse Middenstandspartij/Nieuwe Midden Partij (NMP) ^g | 1970 | 1998: 0.3 |
| | | 1995 | 2002: 0.0 |
| NSOV | Nieuw Solidair Ouderen Verbond | 1997 | 1998: 0.1 |
| NT | Nederland Transparant | 2004 | 2006: 0.0 |
| NWP | Natuurwetpartij | 1992 | 1994: 0.3 |
| | | | 1998: 0.2 |
| PDA | Patriottisch Democratisch Appèl | 1993 | 1994: 0.1 |
| PDS | Partij Democratisch Socialisten | 1989 | 1989: 0.0 |
| PMR | Partij voor Milieu en Recht | 1993 | 1994: 0.1 |



Table A1 Continued

| <i>Abbreviation</i> | <i>Full name</i> | <i>Year of origin</i> | <i>Election results: percentage (and seats, if any)</i> |
|---------------------|--|-----------------------|---|
| PPO | Politieke Partij voor Ouderen | 1989 | 1989: 0.0 |
| PSP ⁹² | Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij ⁹² | 1992 | 1994: 0.1 |
| PvdD | Partij voor de Dieren | 2002 | 2003: 0.5 2006: 1.8 (2) |
| PvdT | Partij van de Toekomst | 2002 | 2002: 0.1 2003: 0.1 |
| PvN | Partij voor Nederland | 2006 | 2006: 0.1 |
| PVV | Partij voor de Vrijheid | 2006 | 2006: 5.9 (9) |
| RN | Realisten Nederland | 1987 | 1989: 0.1 |
| S 2000 | Senioren 2000 | 1995 | 1998: 0.4 |
| SAP | Socialistische Arbeiderspartij ^h | 1974/1983 | 1989: 0.0 1994: 0.0 |
| SBP | Solidariteit Boerenpartij | 1993 | 1994: 0.1 |
| SF | Staatkundige Federatie | 1986 | 1989: 0.0 |
| SMP | Socialistische Minderheden Partij | 1988 | 1989: 0.0 |
| SMP | Solide Multiculturele Partij | 2006 | 2006: 0.0 |
| Sol ⁹³ | Solidariteit '93 | 1993 | 1994: 0.1 |
| SP | Socialistische Partij / Socialistische Partij ⁱ | 1971/1972 | 1989: 0.4 1994: 1.3 (2) 1998: 3.5 (5) 2002: 5.9 (9) 2003: 6.3 (9) 2006: 16.6 (25) |
| TOP | Tamara's Open Partij | 2006 | 2006: 0.0 |
| | Unie 55 ^{+j} | 1992 | 1994: 0.9 (1) |
| VCN/NCPN | Verbond van Communisten in Nederland/ Partij van communisten in Nederland/Nieuwe Communistische Partij — NCPN ^k | 1985/1992 | 1986: 0.1 1989: 0.1 1994: 0.1 1998: 0.1 2003: 0.05 |

Table A1 Continued

| <i>Abbreviation</i> | <i>Full name</i> | <i>Year of origin</i> | <i>Election results: percentage (and seats, if any)</i> |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| VIP | Vooruitstrevende Integratiepartij | 2002 | 2003: 0.0 |
| VIP | Vrije Indische Partij | 1994 | 1994: 0.2 1998: 0.1 2002: 0.1 ¹ |
| VMP | Vooruitstrevende Minderheden Partij | 1986 | 1989: 0.0 |
| VP | Vrouwenpartij | 1989 | 1989: 0.1 |
| VSP | Verenigde Senioren Partij | 2001 | 2002: 0.4 2006: 0.1 |

Sources: CBS Statistics (1989, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2003), www.verkiezingsuitslagen.nl, Interviews with party leaders (face to face or by telephone or by email).

^aIn 1998: Algemeen Ouderenverbond/Unie 55+.

^bThe merging process was started in 2000, completed in 2003.

^cThe Greens were founded as 'De Groenen', participated in the 1986 elections as 'Federatieve Groenen' and in later elections as 'De Groenen'.

^dThe four founding parties merged in 1990, after having presented a common list in 1989.

^eIn 2006 the LPF took part in the elections as 'Fortuyn'.

^fJohn Gouweloos, who had founded the MDP, took part in the 2003 elections with the RVP; both seem to be basically one-man affairs.

^gIn 1995 Martin Dessing resurrected the NMP ('Dutch Middle Class party'), which he had helped to found in 1970; in 1998 it was renamed 'Nieuwe Midden Partij' (New Centre Party).

^hIn 1974 founded as International Communist League, changed its name in 1983.

ⁱIn 1972 the *Kommunistiese Partij Nederland* (*marxisties-leninisties*) (KPN (ml), Communist Party of the Netherlands (Marxist-Leninist)) changed its name into *Socialistische Partij* (Socialist Party); in 1993 the spelling was modified (into *Socialistische Partij*).

^jThe Unie 55+ (Union 55+) called itself also 'Ouderenunie 55+' or 'Politieke Unie 55+'; in 1998 it presented a common list with the AOV; in 2001 part of it joined the VSP, another part would present in 2002 a common list with the VIP.

^kThe VCN participated at elections in 1986 and 1989 as '*Partij van communisten in Nederland*'; in 1992 it merged with other Communist groups into the New Communist Party (NCPN).

^lA common list with the remnants of the Unie 55+.