Globalization and the transformation of the national political space: Six European countries compared

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Abstract. This article starts from the assumption that the current process of globalization or denationalization leads to the formation of a new structural conflict in Western European countries, opposing those who benefit from this process against those who tend to lose in the course of the events. The structural opposition between globalization 'winners' and 'losers' is expected to constitute potentials for political mobilization within national political contexts, the mobilization of which is expected to give rise to two intimately related dynamics: the transformation of the basic structure of the national political space and the strategic repositioning of the political parties within the transforming space. The article presents several hypotheses with regard to these two dynamics and tests them empirically on the basis of new data concerning the supply side of electoral politics from six Western European countries (Austria, Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland). The results indicate that in all the countries, the new cleavage has become embedded into existing two-dimensional national political spaces, that the meaning of the original dimensions has been transformed, and that the configuration of the main parties has become triangular even in a country like France.

Introduction

In a Rokkanean perspective (see Rokkan 2000), the contemporary process of 'globalization' or 'denationalization' (Zürn 1998; Beisheim et al. 1999) can be conceived of as a new 'critical juncture', which is likely to result in the formation of new structural cleavages, both within and between national contexts. It leads to the lowering and 'unbundling' of national boundaries (Ruggie 1993) to a so far unknown extent (Held et al. 1999: 425). While the political consequences of globalization have most often been studied at the supra- or trans-national level (Zürn 1998; Held et al. 1999; Greven & Pauly 2000; Grande & Pauly 2005), we focus on the political consequences of this process at the national level in Western European countries.

Four assumptions guide our analysis. First, we assume that, paradoxically, the political reactions to economic and cultural globalization are bound to

manifest themselves above all at the national level: given that the democratic political inclusion of citizens is still mainly a national affair, nation-states still constitute the major arenas for political mobilization (Zürn et al. 2000). Next, we assume that the processes of increasing economic (sectoral and international) competition, of increasing cultural competition (which is, among other things, linked to massive immigration of ethnic groups who are rather distinct from the European populations) and of increasing political competition (between nation-states and supra-or international political actors) create new groups of 'winners' and 'losers'. The likely winners include entrepreneurs and qualified employees in sectors open to international competition as well as all kinds of cosmopolitan citizens. The expected losers, by contrast, include entrepreneurs and qualified employees in traditionally protected sectors, all unqualified employees and citizens who strongly identify themselves with their national community. We assume that individuals do not perceive cultural and material threats as clearly distinct phenomena. As Martin Kohli (2000: 118) argues, identity and interests are mutually reinforcing factors of social integration.

Third, we assume that the new groups of winners and losers of globalization constitute *political potentials*, which can be articulated by political organizations. Given the heterogeneous composition of these groups, we cannot expect the preferences formed as a function of this new antagonism to be closely aligned with the political divisions on which domestic politics have traditionally been based. This makes it difficult for established national political actors to organize the new potentials. In addition, the composition of the groups of winners and losers varies between national contexts, making it even more difficult to organize them at the supranational level (e.g., at the level of the European Union). This difficulty reinforces the likelihood that the new political potentials are above all articulated and dealt with at the level of the *national* political process.

Our fourth and final assumption suggests that, paradoxically again, the lowering and unbundling of national boundaries renders them politically more salient. As they are weakened and reassessed, their political importance increases. Generally, we expect losers of the globalization process to seek to protect themselves through protectionist measures and through an emphasis on the maintenance of national boundaries and independence. Winners, by contrast, who benefit from the increased competition, should support the opening up of the national boundaries and the process of international integration. We shall refer to the antagonism between winners and losers of globalization as a conflict between *integration* and *demarcation*.

In this article, we shall discuss in more detail our expectations regarding the political articulation of the hypothetical new structural conflict and present

some first results with respect to the supply side of national politics. In the next two sections, we discuss the transformation of the basic structure of the national political space and the positioning of the parties within the transformed space. The transformation of the basic structure of the national political space and the positioning of the parties within this space are intimately linked to each other (Van der Brug 1999: 151; 2001: 119ff): on the one hand, parties position themselves strategically with respect to new political potentials, which are created by the new structural conflicts, on the other hand, it is the very articulation of the new conflicts by political parties that structures the political space. It is only for expository purposes that we separate the two sides of the same coin. Moreover, we are well aware that, in order to fully understand how new political cleavages emerge from the process of denationalization, it is crucial to focus both on the transformations in the electorate (the demand side of electoral competition) and on the kind of strategies political parties adopt to position themselves with regard to these new potentials (the supply side of politics). However, in the present article, we shall only deal with the transformation of the supply side. After the elaboration of our hypotheses concerning the transformation of the space and the positioning of the parties in the transformed space, we shall present our research design and some key results for the six countries covered by our study.

The impact of the new structural conflict on the structure of the political space

In most countries, the four classic cleavages that have structured the European political space – the centre/periphery, religious, rural/urban and owner/worker cleavages (Rokkan 2000) – essentially came to boil down to two: a cultural (religion) and a social-economic one (class). Class conflicts were omnipresent in Western Europe and structured politics around social-economic policy – the regulation of the market and the construction of social protection by the state. Religious conflicts prevailed between Catholics and Protestants in religiously mixed countries, and between believing Catholics and the secularized in Catholic countries. In the Protestant northwest, Protestant dissidents contributed to religious conflicts. After the Second World War, these traditional cleavages have lost much of their traditional structuring capacity for politics as a result of secularization, value change, rising levels of education, improved standards of living and sectoral change (tertiarization) (Dalton et al. 1984; Franklin et al. 1992; Inglehart 1990; Kriesi 1993). In their place, new structuring conflicts have developed since the late 1960s, which have been variously labeled as expressions of a 'new politics' (Franklin 1992; Müller-Rommel

1984), a 'new value' (Inglehart 1977, 1990) or 'new class' (Evans 1999; Kriesi 1998; Manza & Brooks 1999; Lachat 2004; Oesch 2006) cleavage. The so-called 'new social movements' that mobilized in the name of cultural liberalism and social justice reinvigorated the traditional class cleavage and contributed to the transformation of the cultural dimension from one mainly defined in terms of religious concerns to one opposing culturally liberal or libertarian concerns, on the one side, and the defence of traditional (authoritarian) values and institutions (including traditional Christian religion, traditional forms of the family and a strong army), on the other. Kitschelt (1994; see also Kitschelt & McGann 1995) has perhaps most forcefully conceptualized the effect of this transformation on the structuration of the political space.

The mobilization of the new social movements did not add any fundamentally new dimension to the political space, but transformed the meaning of the two already existing ones. The political space remained essentially two-dimensional, defined by a social-economic and a cultural dimension. What changed was the meaning of the conflicts associated with these two dimensions. In a similar vein, we expect that the new demarcation/integration conflict will be embedded into the two-dimensional basic structure that emerged under the impact of the mobilization by the new social movements, transforming it once again. This is our *embedding hypothesis*. On the social-economic dimension, the new conflict can be expected to reinforce the classic opposition between a pro-state and a pro-market position while giving it a new meaning. The pro-state position is likely to become more defensive and more protectionist, while the pro-market position is likely to become more assertive in favour of the enhancement of national competitiveness on world markets. At the same time, the increasing sectoralization of concerns may drive a wedge between former allies on the pro-market side. On the cultural dimension, we expect enhanced opposition to the cultural liberalism of the new social movements as a result of the ethnicization of politics: the defence of tradition is expected to increasingly take on an ethnic or nationalist character. Furthermore, new issues should be integrated into the cultural dimension. Central among these are the issues of European integration and immigration, which correspond to the new political and cultural forms of competition linked with globalization. The demarcation pole of the new cultural cleavage should be characterized by an opposition to the process of European integration and by restrictive positions with regard to immigration.

Instead of the new conflict becoming embedded into the already existing conflict dimensions, one might, alternatively, expect it to transform the national political space by adding one or even two new dimensions to the two existing ones. The main reason why we do not think that this is going to happen has to do with the adaptive capacity of the existing parties. The mainstream

parties take up the new preferences, identities, values and interests, and inter-
pret and articulate them in their own specific ways (Schattschneider 1960; Mair
1983, 1993: 130; Laver 1989). We suggest that established parties are reposi-
tioning and realigning themselves as a result of the rising new conflict. Accord-
ingly, the increasing volatility in the Western European elections can not only
be interpreted, as is usually done, as the result of increasing issue-voting on the
part of the electorate, but also as a result of this repositioning and realigning of
established parties.

The positioning of the parties within the transformed space

Assuming the validity of our embedding hypothesis, we can now discuss our
hypotheses regarding the positions taken by political parties in this trans-
formed political space. The different combinations of positions on the two
dimensions represent the range of possible interpretative packages or ideo-
logical master-frames that are available to political entrepreneurs for the
articulation of the new structural antagonism in the context of existing politi-
cal divisions. Figure 1 offers a schematic representation of the expected posi-
tions of the major groups of parties: we distinguish between three traditional
party families of which we find representatives in all Western European
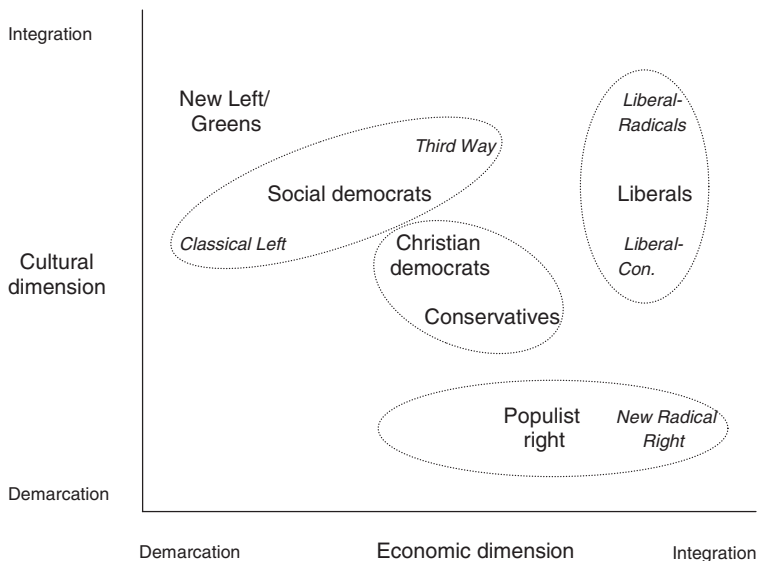

Figure 1. Expected positioning of party families with respect to the new cleavage.

countries – the social democrats, the liberals and the conservatives (often represented by Christian Democrats) – as well as two groups of more recent competitors: the New Left and green parties, on the one hand, and the populist right, on the other. This figure presents a map of the parties' possible positions, which we discuss in more detail below. The exact locations of parties in different countries are likely to vary as they depend not only on the common trends linked with globalization, but also on the parties' strategic decisions and on specific contextual factors (which we shall not discuss here). This figure can be considered a general summary of our hypotheses regarding the transformed structure of the political space and parties' positions within this space.

Typically *mainstream political parties* have thus far taken a rather undifferentiated position with respect to the new cleavage. They seem to be uncertain about it, because (a) they are internally divided with regard to the question of integration, (b) they are divided as Euro-families as a result of their variable insertion into national party configurations, and (c) they are not in a position to form a strong alliance between different sectoral and cultural interests. Broadly speaking, whether on the left or on the right, they tend to view the process of economic denationalization both as inevitable and beneficial for the maintenance of their established positions. Thus, analyzing the main party families – the socialists, liberals and Christian Democrats – at the European Union (EU) level, Hix (1999) has noted that, between 1976 and 1994, all three gradually converged on moderately pro-integration positions. The findings of Hooghe et al. (2002) and Van der Eijk and Franklin (2004) about the general preference regarding European integration of mainstream parties support this point. As a first hypothesis, we would suggest that, in Western Europe, (a) mainstream parties will generally tend to formulate a winners' programme (i.e., a programme in favour of further economic and cultural integration), but that (b) mainstream parties on the left will attempt to combine the economic integration with the preservation of the social protection by the welfare state, while mainstream parties on the right will tend to reduce the role of the state in every respect.

There are, however, variations of this general theme. On the left, mainstream parties face the dilemma that market integration in Europe (and more globally) poses a threat to their national social achievements. Depending on their capacity to defend these achievements at the national level, mainstream left parties may vary with regard to the extent to which they endorse economic integration (Marks & Wilson 2000; Hooghe & Marks 2001). Accordingly, their positions are likely to vary mostly along the economic dimension of the political space. We may distinguish between a 'classical left' position that sticks to the statist attitude and the position of the Third Way, formulated by the

British Labour Party and later also discussed in other countries (especially in Germany), which constitutes a novel attempt to come to terms with the problems posed by the new dividing line; Third Way politics takes globalization seriously, adopts a positive attitude towards it and seeks to combine a neo-liberal endorsement of free trade with a core concern with social justice (Giddens 1998: 64ff). In the transformed political space, compared to the location of the traditional left, parties of the Third Way should be more favourable to further integration, on both the economic and cultural dimensions.

On the right, conservatives also face a dilemma – a dilemma that is precisely the opposite of the one faced by mainstream parties of the left (Marks & Wilson 2000; Hooghe & Marks 2001): economically they tend to endorse liberalization, but socially and culturally they tend to be nationalists and opposed to the opening up of borders. Accordingly, their positions are likely to vary especially along the cultural dimension. Depending on the threat posed by integration to the national identity, the conservatives will be more or less opposed to integration. Given the British fear of losing national identity and culture, a fear that is largely absent in countries such as Germany or Spain (Diez Medrano 2004), it is, for example, not surprising that the British Conservatives are much more eurosceptic than their German or Spanish counterparts.[1]

Compared to the other two main political families, at first sight the opening up of borders seems to constitute less of a challenge for the liberal family. Classical liberalism was both economically and socioculturally liberal (i.e., supported the free market and social and cultural openness and tolerance). At closer inspection, however, we can distinguish between 'liberal-radicalism' and 'liberal conservatism' (Smith 1988). Whereas the former (e.g., the Dutch D66) has been left-of-centre on economic issues, the latter (e.g., the Dutch VVD) has been emphasizing economic freedom and market liberalization and tends to be right-of-centre. Faced with the opening of borders, liberal-conservatives are distinguished by the fact that they tend to put the accent on market liberalization (i.e., on the negative integration with respect to the economy), while they oppose supranational political integration (Marks & Wilson 2000: 448–450).

On the basis of these empirical observations, we can expect two possible developments. The first is an intensification of political conflicts within mainstream political parties as a consequence of their attempts to redefine their ideological profiles. In some cases, these conflicts have been successfully resolved by transforming the party's profile – Britain's New Labour and the Austrian FPÖ being two of the most significant cases. Mostly, however, the mainstream political parties are still characterized by their indecision and

their tendency to moderately opt for the winners' side. For these cases, we suggest a second general hypothesis: in countries in which these parties domi- nate, we face an *increasing political fragmentation* (Zürn 2001) with the strengthening of peripheral political actors, who tend to adopt a 'losers' pro- gramme. Peripheral actors on the right are expected to be *culturally* more protectionist, and peripheral actors on the left to be *socially and economically* more protectionist than their respective mainstream counterparts. The posi- tioning of the parties with regard to Europe may serve as an illustration of this hypothesis: analyzing the *euroscepticism* of political parties in different European countries, Taggart (1998) found that it is the more peripheral parties (on both sides of the political spectrum), rather than parties more central to their party systems, that are most likely to use euroscepticism as a mobilizing issue. The 'inverted U curve' characterizing the shape of the rela- tionship between left-right position and support for European integration has been confirmed by several studies (Hooghe et al. 2002; Van der Eijk & Fran- klin 2004): parties of both the radical left and the populist right are most opposed to European integration.

The radical left's opposition to the opening up of borders is mainly an opposition to economic liberalization and to the threat it poses to the left's achievement at the national level. The populist right's opposition to the opening up of the borders is first of all an opposition to the social and cultural forms of competition and the threat they pose to national identity. The main characteristics of the populist right are its *xenophobia* or even racism, expressed in a fervent opposition to the presence of immigrants in Western Europe, and its *populist appeal* to the widespread resentment against the mainstream parties and the dominant political elites. Right-wing populists are clearly protectionist on the cultural dimension. At the same time, they are populist in their instrumentalization of sentiments of anxiety and disenchant- ment as well as in their appeal to the 'common man' and his allegedly superior common sense. They build on the loser's fears with regard to the removal of national borders, and on their strong belief in simple and ready-made solutions. This 'national-populism' constitutes the common characteristic of all organizations of the Western European populist right. Some, but not all, right-wing populist parties added neo-liberal economic elements to their programme (Betz 1993). According to Kitschelt & McGann (1995), the com- bination of cultural protectionism and economic neo-liberalism constituted the 'winning formula' allowing these parties to forge electoral coalitions appealing both to their declining middle-class clientele and to the losers from the unskilled working class. This position corresponds to the lower right region of Figure 1, where it is labeled 'New Radical Right'. More recently, Kitschelt (2001: 435) noted that populist right parties have moderated their neo-liberal

appeals and started to focus more on the themes of reactive nationalism and ethnocentrism.

We consider those parties that most successfully appeal to the interests and fears of the 'losers' of globalization to be the driving force of the current transformation of the Western European party systems. In most countries, it is these parties of the populist right (Decker 2004) who have been able to formulate a highly attractive ideological package for the 'losers' of economic transformations and cultural diversity. Following Hooghe and Marks (2001) and Diez Medrano (2004), who show the key importance of fears about national identities for eurosceptic attitudes in the general public, we suggest that such fears are generally more important for the mobilization of the 'losers' than the defence of their economic interests. Given the heterogenous economic interests of the 'losers' of denationalization, the defence of their national identity and their national community constitutes the smallest common denominator for their mobilization. This could explain why the populist right's appeal to the 'losers' is more convincing than that of the radical left. Moreover, the mobilization of the 'losers' is particularly consequential because, in contrast to the 'winners', the 'losers' typically do not have individual exit options at their disposal. To improve their situation, they depend on collective mobilization.

While the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s have above all transformed the left, the mobilization by the populist right constitutes a major challenge for the established parties of the right as well as of the left (Kriesi 1999). One of its effects is the transformation of established liberal or conservative parties, who adopt the essential elements of cultural protection of the populist right's programme in order to appeal to the 'losers' and essentially become part of the family of the populist right.

We assume that the new conflict creates comparable political potentials in all Western European democracies. The way these potentials are articulated by the parties in a given country depends, however, on country-specific factors. For our purposes here, these contextual factors are not central since we are mainly interested in the *similarities* of the transformations in the different countries. Given that we consider the right-wing populist parties to be the driving force of these transformations, we suggest that one should pay special attention to those factors that influence the strength of this particular type of party. These factors include national political institutions (electoral systems in particular and type of democracy more generally), the general strategic dynamics of the established parties (convergence versus polarization), their alliance strategies with respect to the populist right in particular (stigmatization versus cooperation) and the specific characteristics of right-wing populist parties themselves (the charisma of their leader and their organizational

capacity) as well as the breadth of their appeal (i.e., the degree to which voters perceive them as normal parties, which, in turn, enables them to mobilize beyond the core constituency of radical right-wing voters) (Van der Brug et al. 2005).[2] The challenge of a successful right-wing populist party is likely to reinforce the relative importance of the cultural dimension with regard to the economic one, and it is likely to move the centre of gravity of partisan competition in the direction of cultural (but not necessarily economic) demarcation/protection.

Research design

In order to analyze the impact of globalization on the national political space, we study *six Western European countries*: Germany, France, Britain, Switzerland, Austria and the Netherlands. These countries are very similar in many respects, but present some systematic contextual variations. Note in particular that Austria, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland, but not Britain and Germany, have experienced the forceful mobilization of a right-wing populist party. Our comparative analysis focuses on *national elections*. We consider these still to be the crucibles for the structuring of national political contexts.[3] We shall analyze three elections of the 1990s and early 2000s and, for each country we add one electoral contest from the 1970s as a point of reference from a period before national politics were undergoing the presumed restructuring effect of globalization. We include several elections of the 1990s in our analysis because we assume, in line with a renewed realignment theory (Martin 2000), that a structural transformation of the national political context may occur across a series of critical elections over an extended period of time. For the analysis of the supply side of electoral competition, which will be the focus of our attention here, we assume that the macro-historical structural change linked to globalization is articulated by the issue-specific positions taken by the parties during the electoral campaigns and by the salience they attribute to the different issues. We also consider that the most appropriate way to analyze the positioning of parties and the way in which they deal with the new issues linked to globalization is to focus on the political debate during electoral campaigns, as reflected by the mass media.

Furthermore, we consider both the saliency with which parties address certain issues and the positions (pro or contra) they take. While extensive research based on party manifestos has shown that parties tend to avoid direct confrontation and that they differ from each other mainly through the selective emphasis of their priorities (see Budge 2001 for a review), we also know that new issues usually do not have a valence character and that direct confrontation

(i.e., parties advocating diverging positions on political issues) is much more pronounced in the media and during electoral campaigns than in party programmes (Budge & Farlie 1983: 281). The voters, too, see the parties mainly in confrontational terms. Furthermore, if we want to relate the parties' preferences to those of the voters, we need to measure them in a comparable way, and, in most election studies, the voters' issue preferences are assessed in terms of position or direction rather than in terms of their salience (Pellikaan et al. 2003).

The obvious disadvantage of this methodological choice is that we cannot rely on existing data, but have to produce our own. In order to identify the salience of the campaign issues for the various parties and their issue-specific positions, we rely on a content analysis of the editorial part of major daily newspapers. For each country we chose a quality paper and a tabloid.[4] For each one of the four electoral campaigns that we analyze per country, all the articles related to the electoral contest or to politics in general have been selected in both newspapers for the two months prior to election day. For the articles selected, the headlines, the 'lead' and the first paragraph were coded *sentence by sentence* using a method developed by Kleinnijenhuis and his collaborators (see Kleinnijenhuis et al. 1997; Kleinnijenhuis & Pennings 2001). This method is designed to code every relationship between 'political objects' (i.e., either between two political actors or between a political actor and a political issue) that appears in the text. For the present purposes, we are only interested in relationships between political actors, on the one hand, and political issues, on the other. Each sentence is reduced to its most basic structure (the so-called 'core sentence') indicating only its subject (political actor) and its object (issue) as well as the direction of the relationship between the two. The direction is quantified using a scale ranging from −1 to +1 (with three intermediary positions).

Political actors were coded according to their party membership. For the present analysis, we have regrouped them into a limited number of categories or analyzed just the most important parties, respectively, from three in Britain to eight in France. These parties or groups of parties are:

- Austria: Greens, Social Democrats (SPÖ), Liberals (Liberales Forum), Christian Democrats (ÖVP), Populist right (FPÖ).
- Britain: Social Democrats (Labour), Liberals (Liberal Democrats), Conservatives.
- France: Radical Left (PCF, Trotskyist parties), Greens, Social Democrats (PSF), the MRG,[5] Conservatives (RPR), Liberals (UDF),[6] Populist right (FN).
- Germany: Radical Left (PDS), Greens, Social Democrats (SPD), Liberals (FDP), Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU).

- Netherlands: Greens, Social Democrats (PvdA), Christian Democrats (CDA), Liberals (D66, VVD), Populist right (LPF).
- Switzerland: Greens, Social Democrats (SP), Christian Democrats (CVP and other minor centre parties), Liberals (FDP and LPS), Populist right (SVP and small parties of the New Radical Right).

We cannot, however, consider all parties in all elections. As a matter of fact, some of them were not present during the whole period we analyze. The *Lijst Pim Fortuyn*, for example, was only present in the 2002 Dutch election. Smaller parties must sometimes also be excluded when we do not have enough information on their issue positions.[7]

For the *political issues*, we used a detailed coding schema distinguishing between 200 or more categories (depending on the country). For the analysis, we regrouped them into a limited number of broader categories. The regrouping into more encompassing categories is important for both theoretical and technical reasons. From a *theoretical* perspective, the specific issues raised during a campaign vary from one election to the other as a result of the policy attention cycle, which in turn depends on the development of the policy-making process in the various political subsystems of a given polity (see also Van der Brug 1999, 2001). Issues may come up on the electoral agenda as a result of internal dynamics in certain political subsystems or as a result of external shocks – catastrophes (such as 9/11, the flood in Eastern Germany in 2002 or the war in Kosovo in 1999) or economic crises. Although the specific issues raised during a given campaign are, therefore, somewhat unpredictable, they still refer to only a limited set of basic structural conflicts, which they articulate in variable ways. The theoretical challenge is to regroup the variable set of specific issues into a limited, but exhaustive, set of basic categories capable of capturing the underlying dimensions of conflict. Technically, we also need a limited set of categories so as to have enough cases per category for all elections covered. It is important to keep in mind that the results of the analysis crucially depend on this seemingly technical operation of regrouping the issues. For our purposes, we propose the following twelve categories:

- *Welfare*: Expansion of the welfare state and defence against welfare state retrenchment. Tax reforms that have redistributive effects, employment programmes, health care programmes. Valence issues such as 'against unemployment' or 'against recession' were dropped if there was no specification of whether the goal was to be achieved by state intervention or by deregulation.
- *Budget*: Budgetary rigour, reduction of the state deficit, cut in expenditure, reduction of taxes that have no effects on redistribution.

- *Economic liberalism (ecolib)*: Support for deregulation, for more competition and for privatization. Opposition to market regulation, provided that the proposed measures do not have an impact on state expenditure – this is the distinguishing criterion from the Welfare category. Opposition to economic protectionism in agriculture and other sectors.
- *Cultural liberalism (cultlib)*: Support for the goals of the new social movements, with the exception of the environmental movement: peace, solidarity with the Third World, gender equality, human rights. Support for cultural diversity, international cooperation (except for the EU and NATO), support for the United Nations. Opposition to racism, support for the right to abortion and euthanasia. Opposition to patriotism, to calls for national solidarity, the defence of tradition and national sovereignty, and to traditional moral values, support for a liberal drugs policy.
- *Europe*: Support for European integration – including enlargement – or for EU membership in the cases of Switzerland and Austria.
- *Culture*: Support for education, culture and scientific research.
- *Immigration*: Support for a tough immigration and integration policy, and for the restriction of the number of foreigners.
- *Army*: Support for the army (including NATO), for a strong national defence and for nuclear weapons.
- *Security*: Support for more law and order, fight against criminality and political corruption.
- *Environment (eco)*: support for environmental protection, opposition to atomic energy.
- *Institutional reform (iref)*: Support for various institutional reforms such as the extension of direct democratic rights, modifications in the structure of the political system, federalism and decentralization, calls for the efficiency of government and public administration, New Public Management.
- *Infrastructure (infra)*: Support for the improvement of the infrastructure (roads, railways, etc.).

The first three categories refer to the traditional *economic opposition between state and market* (i.e., to the class-based opposition between left and right). On this dimension, the left tends to defend the welfare state while the right tends to support economic liberalism and budgetary rigour.[8] More recently, Third Way approaches have come to blur the distinctions, as has the recognition on both sides of the traditional divide that structural budgetary deficits cannot be sustained forever. The next six categories all refer to the *cultural dimension*. We first distinguish between three categories defending a

universalistic, cosmopolitan point of view: support for cultural liberalism, European integration and education, culture and research. Next, we add three categories for the opposing point of view: support for a tough immigration policy, law and order and a strong army. A tough immigration policy is the closest we get to the notion of national protection. There are three additional categories: environmental protection, promotion of institutional reform and support for infrastructural projects. The second of these is somewhat heterogeneous as it may relate to very different types of reforms. While environmental protection has come to be assimilated to the class-based left-right divide in some countries, we do not assume here *a priori* that it is part of this traditional divide. It is an empirical question how strongly ecological and economic concerns are associated.

All categories are formulated in such a way that they have a clear *direction*. For example, the relationship with the category 'Europe' of a party supporting the adhesion of Switzerland to the EU takes a positive value (+1). This kind of data offer valuable information on two central aspects of the supply side of electoral competition: the *positions* of political parties regarding the various political issues and the *salience* of these issues for a given political party. The position of an actor on a category of issues is computed by averaging over all core sentences containing a relationship between this actor and any of the issues belonging to this category. The salience of a category of issues refers to the relative frequency with which a given political party takes a position on this category.[9] It is important to understand that both aspects are relevant for an adequate description of the political space. Parties not only differ from one another with respect to the positions they advocate, but also with respect to the priorities they set. It is also important to note that the salience of issues and parties can be computed in different ways. Here, party-issue relationships are weighted by the number of statements of a given party in a given campaign and by the relative importance of the corresponding issue category for the party in question. This means that, for a given campaign, large parties and key campaign issues determine the configuration of the political space more heavily than marginal parties or secondary issues. Each electoral campaign, however, is given the same weight, even if the amount of media coverage varies from one campaign to the other.

On the basis of these data, it is possible to construct a graphical representation of the positions of parties and issues in a low-dimensional space using the method of Multidimensional Scaling (MDS). MDS is a very flexible method that allows for the graphic representation of similarities or dissimilarities between pairs of objects (Borg & Groenen 1997; Cox & Cox 2001; Kruskal & Wish 1978). In our case, the issue positions of parties give us information on the 'similarity' or 'distance' between a group of parties and a

category of issues. If a party from the Left, for example, strongly supports an expansion of the welfare state, we would expect the distance between this party and the category 'welfare' to be small. If we represent the parties and issues in a common space, this party and the category 'welfare' should be located close to each other. The unfolding technique, the MDS procedure we use here, indeed allows for the joint representation of parties and issues in a common space.[10]

Furthermore, a variant of MDS called 'Weighted Metric Multidimensional Scaling' (WMMDS) allows to account simultaneously for the *similarities* between pairs of objects (parties and issues, in our case) and for the *salience* of these relationships.[11] This means that when representing our data in a low-dimensional space, the distances corresponding to salient relationships between parties and issues will be more accurate than the less salient ones. Distortions of 'real' distances are unavoidable, but with WMMDS, these distortions will be smaller for more salient relationships, resulting in a more accurate representation of the relative positions of parties and issues. Relying on MDS has an additional advantage that is crucial for our argument. With this method, we do not have to make any *a priori* assumption about the structure of the political space. Most analyses of parties' positions start from theoretically defined dimensions (Gabel & Hix 2002; Hix 1999; Hooghe et al. 2002; Klingemann et al. 1994; Pellikaan et al. 2003; Pennings & Keman 2003; Van der Eijk & Franklin 2004). Here, by contrast, we want to test our hypotheses regarding both the dimensionality of the political space and the nature of these dimensions. The structure of the political space that we estimate with MDS is not influenced by any assumption we could make on how the categories of issues should be related to one another.

Results

Before examining the results of our MDS analyses, it is useful to present a few general observations regarding the major political actors in these six countries and the issues that have dominated the different electoral campaigns. Changes over time in the strength of the political parties do not necessarily result from a change in the cleavage structure. Yet as we have argued above, the *emergence of new players* on the electoral scene or *a radical transformation of some established parties* constitute first symptoms of the expected transformation of the cleavage structure. The emergence of green parties during the 1980s is a trend that characterizes all countries considered here – with the exception of Britain. They clearly do not belong to the major parties, but their influence on the structure of party systems may nevertheless be important. As they stand in

direct competition with socialist parties, the latter may change their position on some issues in order not to loose part of their electorate.

Four of our countries have seen the emergence of important new actors of the populist right. The *Front National* (FN) in France is the oldest and probably the most successful new party of the populist right. The *Swiss People's Party* (SVP) and the *Austrian Freedom Party* (FPÖ) are both transformed former mainstream parties – the SVP previously a conservative party, the FPÖ previously a liberal-conservative one. Both changed their profile radically, putting a much stronger emphasis on cultural issues, a change that brought them remarkable electoral success. The Dutch *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF) is the most recent addition to the camp of the new populist right. In Britain and Germany, changes on the right-hand side of the political spectrum were less pronounced. Recently, parties of the radical or populist right have had some success in German regional and local elections, but they are not, for the moment at least, represented in the Bundestag. In the United Kingdom, right-wing populist or nationalist parties, like the British National Party, remain marginal.

We can also look for symptoms of the new cleavage by considering the *salience* of different categories of issues. As we explained above, three of our twelve issue categories correspond to the traditional left-right divide, while six are characteristic of the cultural divide. In Figure 2, we present the develop-
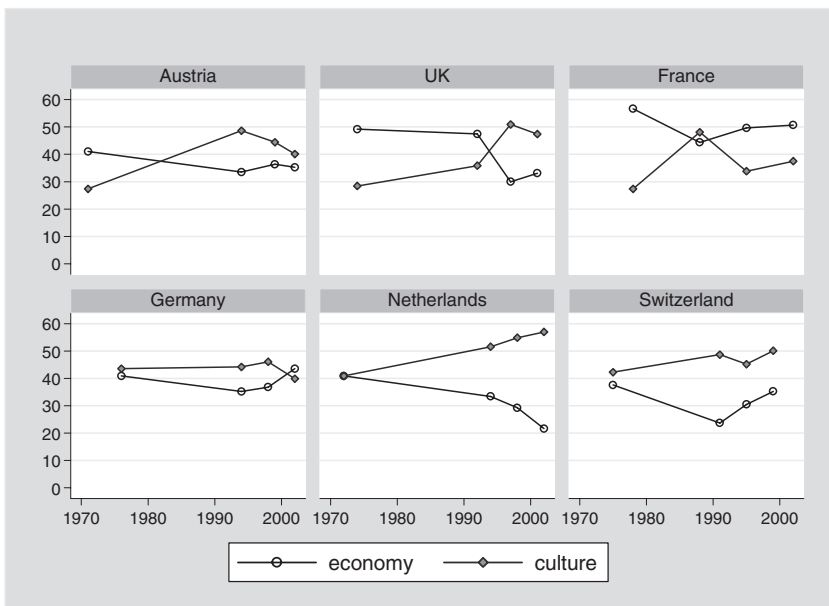

Figure 2. Saliency of economic and cultural issues.

ment of the salience of these two groups of issues. The figure shows a general trend: over the last decades, economic issues have lost in salience in all countries except Germany. In the 1970s, they were more important than cultural issues in Austria, Britain and France, while they were of roughly the same importance in Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands. By the year 2000, France remains the only case where economic issues still are clearly dominant. This points to the expected increase in importance of the new cultural dimension. The German exception conforms to expectations insofar as right-wing populist parties did not have any electoral success in this country. The British result is unexpected, however: in Great Britain, the cultural dimension became more important, *although* right-wing populist parties did not have any electoral success. This can be explained by the fact that the British Conservative Party has been among the most nationalist in Europe and has been deeply divided on the issue of European integration since the 1990s.

We are, of course, mainly interested in the *configuration of the partisan space* and in its transformation from the 1970s to the end of the 1990s. Accordingly, we have performed two MDS analyses for each country – one for the election of the 1970s and another one for the three most recent ballots. The number of 'objects' to be positioned varies between these elections since we have excluded from the analysis categories with a low degree of salience. Moreover, as we have already indicated, we consider only parties or groups of parties for whom we have a minimum number of observations.[12] To allow us to capture changes in the parties' positions, we have computed the distances between parties and issues separately for each election. The resulting configurations for each nation are presented in figures.

The configurations resulting from an MDS analysis can only be interpreted with respect to the distances between the objects. The orientation of a configuration is arbitrary, which implies that it can be freely rotated. To facilitate the comparison of these configurations, we have rotated them in such a way that the issues 'welfare' and 'economic liberalism' lie on a horizontal line, with 'welfare' and 'economic liberalism' positioned on the left and on the right, respectively. We have also drawn two orthogonal axes, which cross at the mid-point of the interval separating 'welfare' from 'economic liberalism'. These axes are not a product of the WMMDS analysis itself; they were simply added to facilitate the interpretation of the results. The configurations were also rescaled so that the range of distances between parties and issues is similar to the range of the original distances.[13] Finally, we have connected the points of the three major parties in each election. On the basis of these triangles, it is easier to follow the evolution of the parties' positions.

In each case, we found *a two-dimensional solution* to be appropriate. On the horizontal dimension, in all six countries, there is a sharp opposition between

support for the welfare state and support for economic liberalism. The distance between the two corresponding points is often among the largest ones. This indicates that, in all the countries compared, the traditional economic conflict remains very salient. The vertical dimension can be interpreted as a cultural opposition in each and every country. The nature of this opposition varies slightly between countries, but by the 1990s, the cultural conflict is typically expressed by the strong opposition between support for cultural liberalism, on the one hand, and support for a more restrictive immigration policy, on the other. While the political space of these six countries was already characterized by the two dimensions in the 1970s, we should note that the cultural dimension was, in part at least, based on different issues. We shall see how the national configurations have been transformed by considering them in more detail.

We start by examining the case of *Germany* (Figures 3a and 3b). The two-dimensional structure is clearly visible, both in 1976 and in the 1990s. In the 1970s, the cultural dimension is marked by the strong opposition between support for cultural liberalism, on the one hand, and support for a strong army and a restrictive budgetary policy, on the other. The poles of this vertical dimension are almost equidistant to 'welfare' and 'economic liberalism'. This shows that the two main conflicts that structure the political space were hardly related to each other. The three main parties (Social Democrats, Liberals and Christian Democrats) take distinct positions that form a triangular structure as has already been pointed out by Pappi (1984). The SPD is located in the upper left-hand corner, supporting cultural liberalism and defending the welfare state rather than economic liberalism. The SPD also favours environmental protection, but opposes budgetary rigour and a reinforcement of the army. The FDP, in turn, supports both cultural and economic liberalism, but is more distant from environmental protection. The CDU/CSU, finally, is also closer to economic liberalism than a strong welfare state. It distinguishes itself from the other parties, however, with respect to cultural liberalism. The Union parties represent the conservative pole of the cultural dimension.

In the more recent elections, we find that the political space is structured by the same two dimensions. In line with our expectations, however, the character of the cultural dimension has changed. Immigration has now become a salient issue, and it is the one most distant from cultural liberalism. Support for the army, for budgetary rigour, culture and environmental protection have become more consensual issues, which is reflected in their more central location in the configuration. Although the CDU/CSU has changed its position several times, it still occupies the same place, while the FDP and especially the SPD have moved to a more centrally located position by the 1990s. They have above all moderated their position on the cultural dimension. As a consequence, the distances between the three main parties have become smaller. As suggested
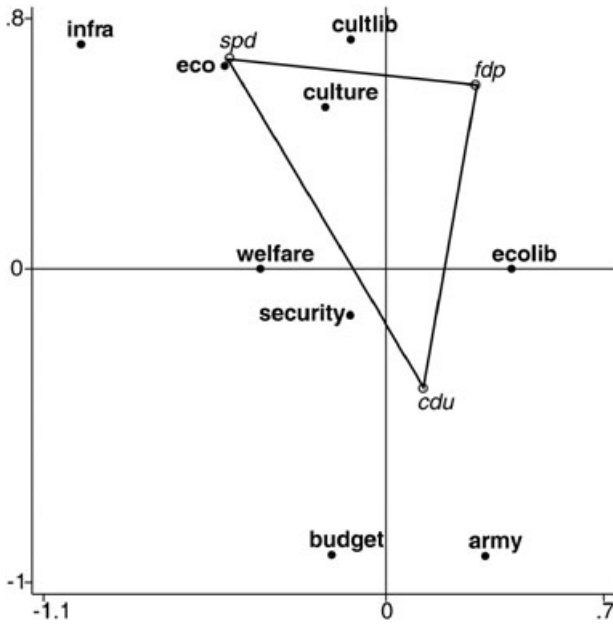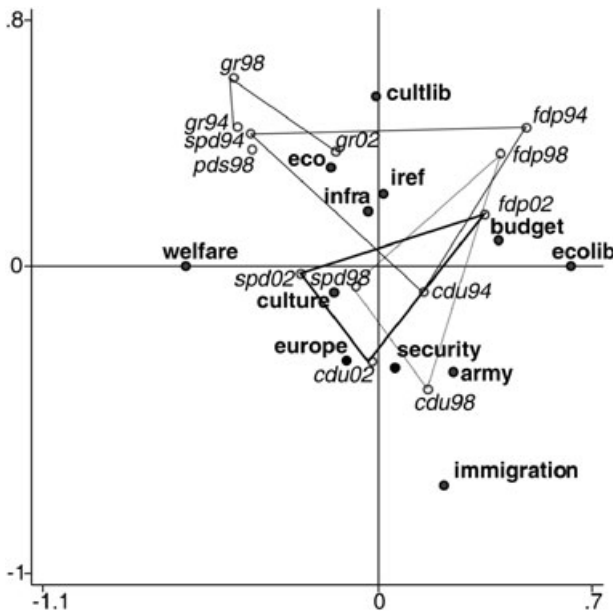
Figure 3a. Germany, 1976.

Figure 3b. Germany, 1994–2002.

by the convergence hypothesis (see, e.g., Abedi 2002), the convergence of the major parties has been compensated for by the emergence of new parties. The Greens and the PDS are located in the upper left corner – close to the former location of the Social Democrats. They defend the welfare state, favour cultural liberalism and are very distant from a restrictive immigration policy. No new right-wing populist party has succeeded in establishing itself as a competitor of the CDU/CSU, however, although the potential for such a party exists as the temporary successes of the radical right in regional elections indicate. Ignazi (2003: 82) concludes that the radical populist right has failed in Germany so far 'because of lack of legitimacy, linkage to the past, and inner structural weakness'. One might add the repositioning of the CDU/CSU as one more explanatory factor: although it has not decisively changed its overall position, in the course of the 1990s, together with its main competitors, the CDU/CSU moved further away from cultural liberalism and closer to a tough stance on immigration.

The configuration of the *Austrian* political space (Dolezal 2005) is quite similar to the German case (Figures 4a and 4b). In 1975, all three parties are quite distant from economic liberalism. Even the two mainstream parties of the right are supportive of the welfare state. They have different profiles, however, with respect to the cultural dimension. Already at that time, the FPÖ strongly opposed cultural liberalism, while the ÖVP took a more moderate position closer to that of the Social Democrats. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, the structure of the political space changed in a way similar to what we observed for Germany. 'Cultural liberalism' still forms one pole of the integration-demarcation divide, but it is now most distant from the new issue of 'immigration'. The transformation of the FPÖ into a right-wing populist party is most clearly expressed in the transformation of the meaning of the cultural dimension and in a general move of the party triangle in a more protectionist direction. With regard to the economic dimension, the ÖVP has taken a more central position and is now much closer to economic liberalism than the Freedom Party. Surprisingly, the FPÖ's position is quite removed from Kitschelt's 'winning formula'. From a liberal-conservative position in the early 1990s, it has, in fact, moved to a protectionist position on both dimensions. As in Germany, the change in the position of the Social Democrats has been accompanied by the emergence of a green party with a somewhat more left-libertarian profile than the SPÖ. Finally, the transformation of the FPÖ has thus far prevented the emergence of new right-wing populist challengers.

In *Switzerland*, we again find a two-dimensional structure in the 1970s (Figures 5a and 5b). Contrary to the previous cases, however, we notice some signs of an integration of the two axes since 'cultural liberalism' and 'welfare' can be found at almost the same location. The Social Democrats (SP) and the
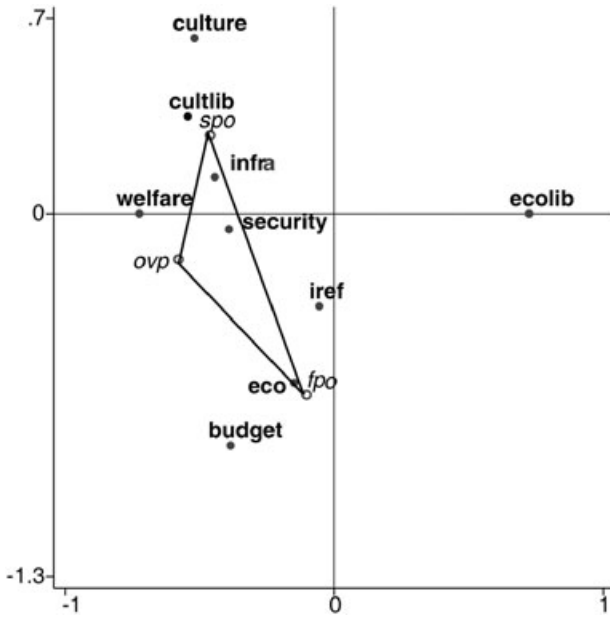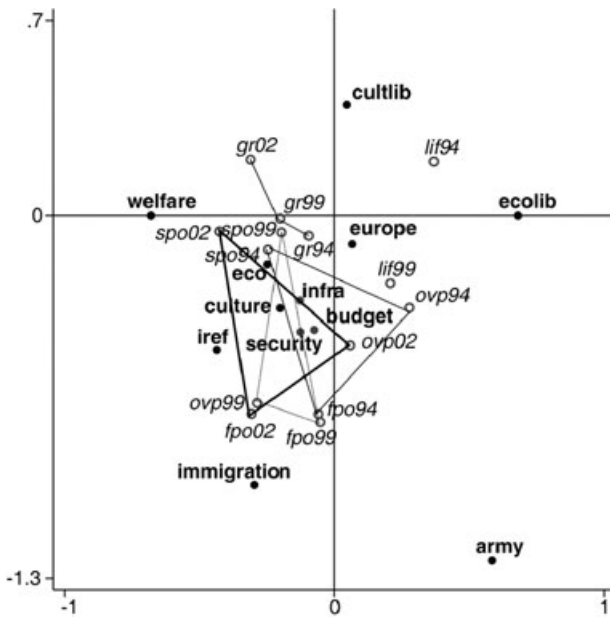
Figure 4a. Austria, 1975.
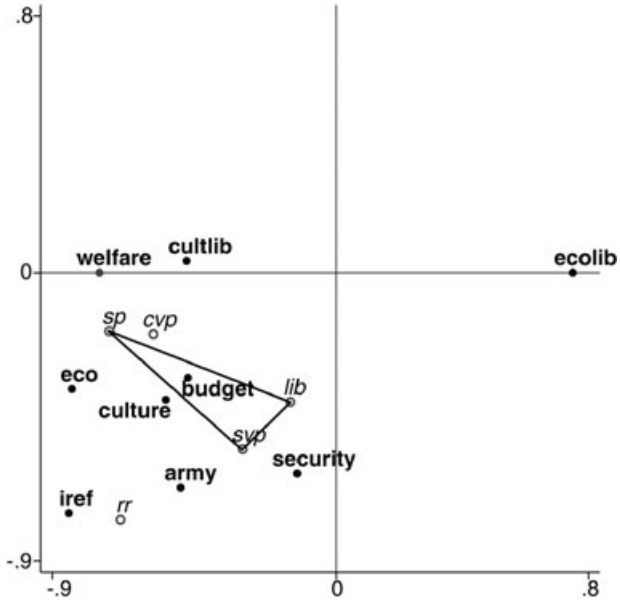

Figure 4b. Austria, 1994, 1999, 2002.
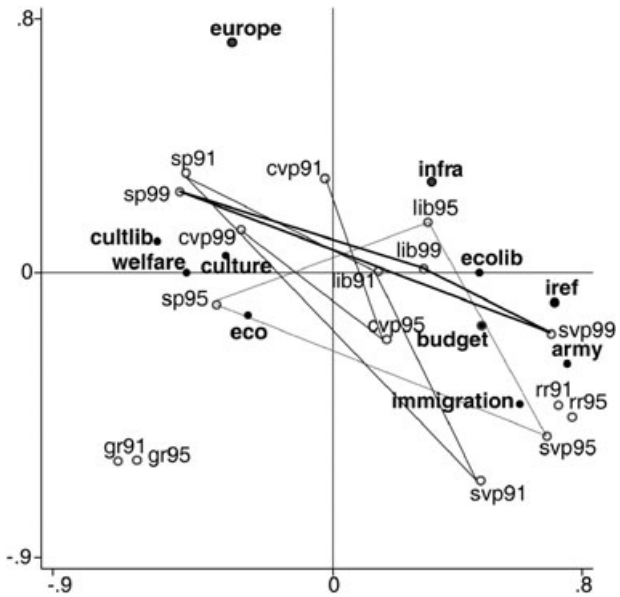
Figure 5a. Switzerland, 1975.

Figure 5b. Switzerland, 1991–1999.

Christian Democrats (CVP) are close to this left-liberal pole, in opposition to the Liberals and the Conservatives (SVP). As in Austria, none of the four major parties fully endorses economic liberalism. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, the structure of the Swiss political space and the parties' positions changed more radically than in the two countries considered previously. The sharp shift in the position of the liberal and conservative parties in the direction of economic liberalism has led to a stronger polarization of the Swiss political space. On the cultural dimension, 'cultural liberalism' and 'welfare state' are still close to each other, but a new opposition has emerged between European integration and a restrictive immigration policy. The transformed cultural dimension remains partially integrated into the traditional left-right divide: on the one side, the parties most favourable to European integration (SP and CVP) are at the same time closer to the welfare state than to economic liberalism. On the opposite side, the SVP and the smaller parties of the radical right defend both economic liberalism and more restrictive immigration policy. Contrary to the FPÖ, the SVP seems to follow Kitschelt's 'winning formula'. This strategy has devastated the radical right challengers in Switzerland as predicted by the polarization hypothesis (e.g., Abedi 2002). In addition, it has allowed the SVP to grow at the detriment of its mainstream competitors on the right. While the major Swiss parties are aligned along this left-integrative versus right-conservative axis, the Greens take a distinct position in the lower-left hand corner. They are closer to the defence of the welfare state than to economic liberalism, but at the same time, they distance themselves from both European integration and a restrictive immigration policy.

The case of *the Netherlands* shares many similarities with Switzerland (Figures 6a and 6b). Here too, the economic and cultural dimensions were already partly integrated in the 1970s. Support for cultural liberalism and for the welfare state are quite closely related and both opposed to economic liberalism, on the economic dimension, and to the army, on the cultural one. With five parties, the party system is more fragmented, but we can still identify three poles. The Social Democrats, along with the Greens and D66, take a left-liberal position. The Christian Democrats, similarly to their Swiss or Austrian counterparts, are also in favour of a strong welfare state and take a moderately liberal position on the cultural axis. The VVD, finally, differs from the latter by its more liberal orientation on economic issues. By the 1990s, a clear transformation of the cultural dimension has taken place. It now opposes 'European integration' and 'cultural liberalism' to the support for restrictive immigration policy. In this respect, the Dutch transformation resembles the Swiss one. Moreover, as in the Swiss case, the two dimensions are more integrated than in Germany or Austria. In the Netherlands, however, the most impressive changes concern the positions of the parties. In 1994, the major
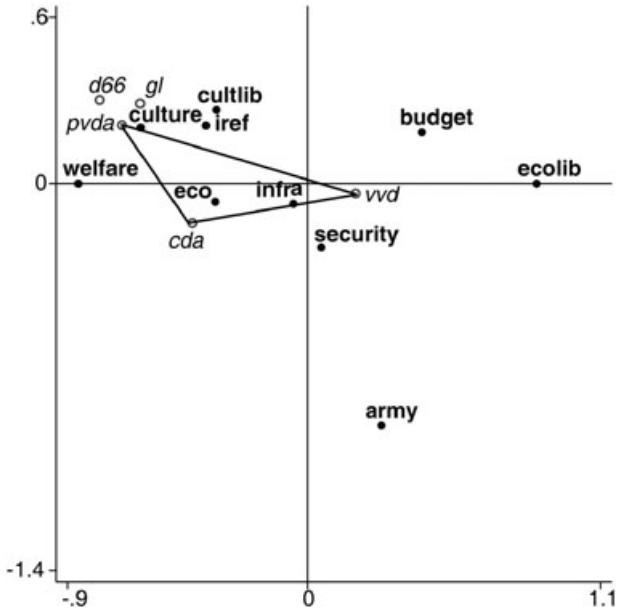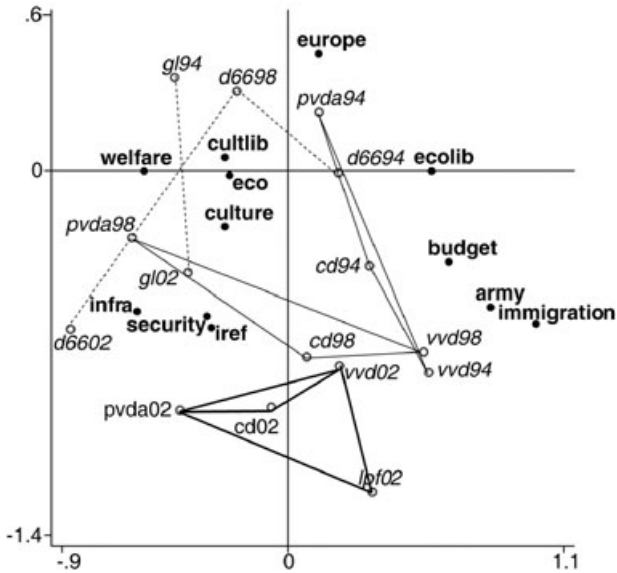
Figure 6a. Netherlands, 1972.

Figure 6b. Netherlands, 1994–2002.

parties were still aligned along a Europe versus immigration axis, with the PvdA and the Greens forming the left-integrationist pole. Over the following years, however, the parties on the left and, to a lesser extent, the Christian Democrats, have radically changed their position. They have become more distant from European integration and cultural liberalism. Such a change is characteristic not only of the PvdA, but also of the Greens and D66. In 2002, these left parties are still closer to the welfare state than to economic liberalism, but at the same time, they oppose both a restrictive immigration policy and European integration. As a matter of fact, their new position shares many similarities with that of the Greens in Switzerland.

The 2002 election, of course, is also the first election in which the List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) made its entry into Dutch politics. The LPF takes a rather undifferentiated position on the economic divide. By contrast, it clearly favours a demarcation strategy with respect to the new cultural conflict, although it has a more differentiated view on immigration than the other right-wing populist parties. It is the party located at the greatest distance from European integration and cultural liberalism. Contrary to the Swiss case, however, the emergence of the LPF has not led to a polarization of the political space, but to a more extreme version of the German development: the established parties have all moved towards each other and in the direction of the LPF, a development that neither the convergence nor the polarization hypothesis is able to predict, but is in line with our expectation that the emergence of a populist party on the right gives rise to a move of the centre of gravity of the party system in the direction of cultural demarcation/protectionism. Note, however, that this move began well before the emergence of the LPF and that convergence has gone well beyond what one might have expected.

The *French* political space of 1978 also shows some signs of an integration of the economic and cultural divides (Figures 7a and 7b). As in Switzerland and the Netherlands, support for cultural liberalism is much closer to the support of the welfare state than to economic liberalism. Similarly, in the 1970s, all the political parties are also quite distant from economic liberalism. At one end of the political spectrum, the Socialist Party supports the welfare state and cultural liberalism. At the other extreme, the Gaullists are quite strongly opposed to cultural liberalism, while taking an intermediary position on the economic dimension. The transformation of the political space has followed the pattern we already know from the other countries. The cultural dimension now opposes cultural liberalism and support for European integration, on the one side, and support for a more restrictive immigration policy, on the other. The French configuration is different from other countries to the extent that European integration and cultural liberalism are more consensual among the
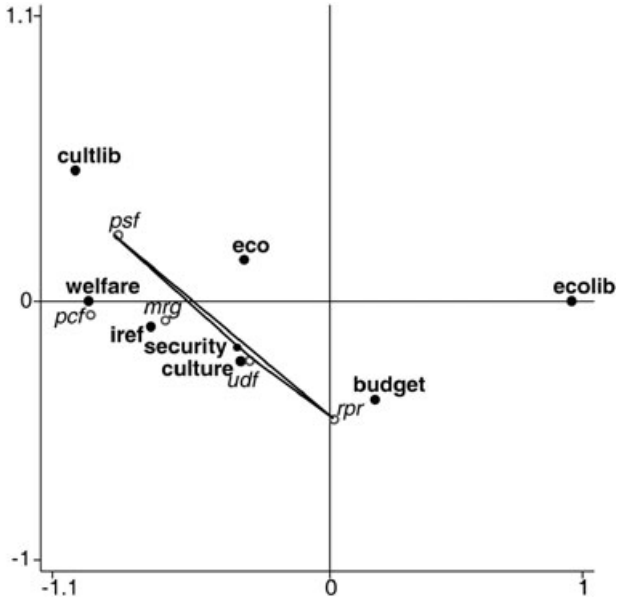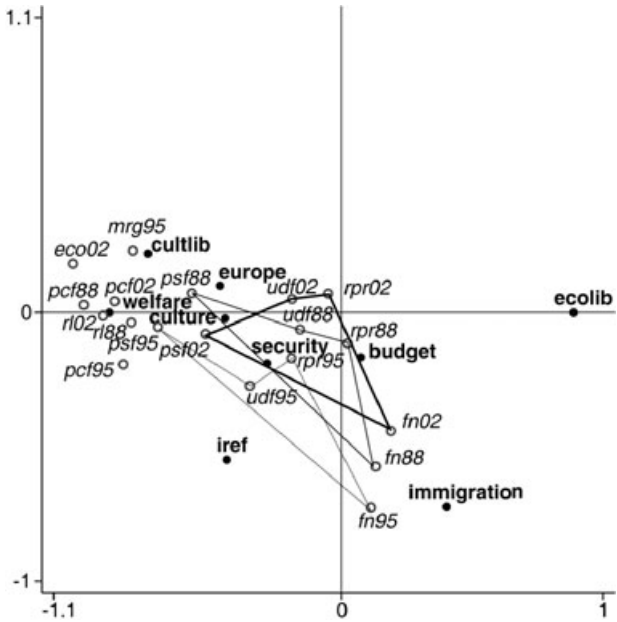
Figure 7a. France, 1978.

Figure 7b. France, 1995–2002.

mainstream parties. With the emergence of the Front National (FN), the structure of the party system is becoming increasingly tripolar, as has already been observed by Grunberg and Schweisguth (1997, 2003). The Socialists have moved toward the centre, but less markedly than the German SPD. They remain strong supporters of the welfare state and cultural liberalism. The RPR, by contrast, has changed its position more substantially. It has moved closer to the integrationist pole of the cultural divide and now occupies a position that can hardly be distinguished from that of the UDF – a result that is not surprising, given the close collaboration of the two forces in the UMP. The two partners (RPR and UDF) differ from the Socialists on the economic dimension and from the FN on the cultural one. The FN has a clear anti-immigration profile. On the economic dimension, it is somewhat closer to economic liberalism than to the welfare state. By French standards, this makes it the most economically liberal party, suggesting that it also tends to opt for Kitschelt's 'winning formula'. However, our data shows that the FN has repeatedly changed its position along the economic dimension, reflecting conflicting preferences within its electorate (Perrineau 1997; Mayer 2002).

Turning finally to *Britain*, we observe a low level of polarization in 1974 (February) (Figures 8a and 8b). The three parties are very closely located to one another. Their positions are rather undifferentiated, especially with respect to economic issues: all three are strong supporters of the welfare state. As far as issues of the cultural dimension are concerned, there is some opposition between the Labour Party and the Conservatives – the former defending cultural liberalism and the latter supporting law and order. Surprisingly, environmental protection and European integration are both located at the periphery of the political space. Both issues are not integrated in a more general division. The amorphous structure of the British political space of the early 1970s has become more clear-cut in the 1990s and early 2000s. Support for environmental protection is now integrated in the major left-right division and Europe forms one of the poles of the cultural dimension, along with cultural liberalism and institutional reforms. Contrary to the other countries, however, the salience of the immigration question remains very low in British electoral contests and we could not include it in the analysis.[14] As far as the positioning of the parties in the transformed space is concerned, compared to the early 1970s, it has become more polarized by the early 1990s, but the polarization has been of only a temporary nature. By the elections of 1997, Third Way politics have moved the Labour Party to the middle ground on the economic dimension, where it stayed in 2001. On the cultural dimension, the Conservatives are strongly opposed to cultural liberalism and especially to European integration, while Labour and the Liberal Democrats take a more integrationist position. However, the Liberal Democrats have moved towards
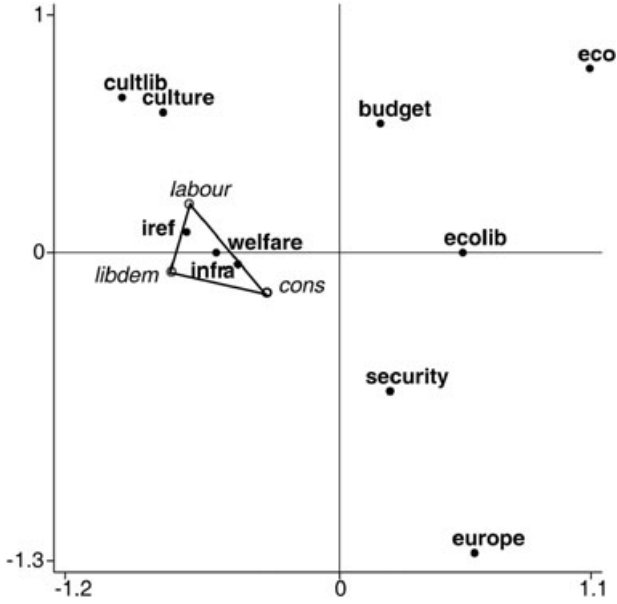
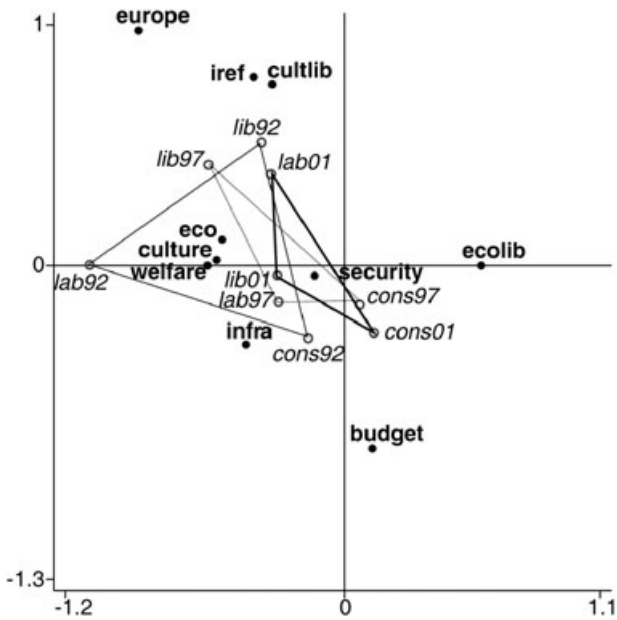*Figure 8a.* Britain, 1974 (February).

Figure 8b. Britain, 1992–2001.

the Conservatives since 1992, while Labour took a more resolute profile in favour of cultural liberalism in the 2001 election. Finally, no challenger worth mentioning has made its entry into the British party space.

Discussion

Taken together, these analyses allow us to identify several common features of the structure of the national political space in the six countries. The first one is its *two-dimensionality*. In all countries considered here, we identified an economic and a cultural dimension, both in the 1970s and in the more recent elections. These two dimensions are in some cases partially integrated (e.g., in Switzerland, the Netherlands or France), but they never coincide. On the one hand, it is thus necessary to go beyond a simple description of the political space in terms of a one-dimensional left-right divide. This contradicts those observers who maintain that European party systems are on their way to bipolarity (e.g., Bale 2003; for Austria in particular: Müller & Fallend 2004). In line with the results of Hooghe et al. (2002) and those of Gabel and Hix (2002), it also contradicts the 'regulation model', which argues that issues linked with European integration are fully integrated into the traditional left-right dimension (Marks & Steenbergen 2002). On the other hand, the new cleavage did not lead to the emergence of any additional dimension. Rather than constituting an additional dimension, the new conflicts were integrated into the existing two-dimensional structure. This is strong support for our embedding hypothesis and contradicts observers who maintain that West European policy spaces are characterized by the existence of three dimensions (Warwick 2002).

The present analysis confirms an earlier MDS analysis of the Flemish political space at the time of the 1991 Belgian national elections that also resulted in a two-dimensional structure with substantively quite similar dimensions (Swyngedouw 1995). Our results also bear some resemblance to those based on factor analyses of party manifestos. Thus, Budge et al. (1987) and Cole (2005) also argue that a two-dimensional structure is most appropriate to describe the political space of a considerable number of countries. However, our results support this hypothesis much more strongly: Budge and his co-authors, as well as Cole, actually obtained more than two factors and arbitrarily limited their analysis to two. By contrast, our analysis only yields two dimensions. Moreover, factor analyses of party manifestos usually require additional assumptions in order to avoid problems related to the small number of observations. Thus, Budge et al. (1987) must assume that the dimensions of the political space have remained unchanged during the period they cover

(c.1945–1980), while Cole (2005) must assume that the structure of the political space is identical in the four countries she analyzes (Austria, France, Germany, Italy). The variations over time and between countries in our results show that both of these assumptions are problematic.[15]

A second important similarity of these national political spaces concerns the *transformation of the cultural dimension*. In the 1970s, this dimension was dominated by issues linked to cultural liberalism. The parties' positions with respect to the army were also structured along this dimension. Over the following decades, new issues have been integrated into the cultural dimension. The most important of these is immigration. This theme was absent from the debate in the 1970s. Since then, however, it has become a salient and much polarising issue. In the two most eurosceptic countries, Switzerland and Britain, and to some extent in the Netherlands too, the question of European integration now also characterizes this second dimension. In spite of a rather high level of euroscepticism it does not do so in Austria because Europe was not an important issue in the observed elections. On the other hand, some older issues have now been integrated into the traditional economic left-right divide. This is especially the case for environmental protection in all countries except Germany. As in the 1970s, party competition is basically structured by an economic and a cultural dimension. However, the character of the two dimensions has changed. This is strong evidence for the structuring capacity of the purported new integration/demarcation cleavage.

Third, the distinction between the two dimensions of the political space is all the more important as the positions of parties usually vary as strongly with respect to the cultural issues as with respect to the economic ones. Both dimensions are polarizing. Furthermore, the *cultural dimension* has been gaining in importance as it has become the primary basis on which new parties or transformed established parties seek to mobilize their electorate. As it turns out, parties of the populist right do not stand out for their economic profile. It is on cultural issues, where they support a demarcation strategy much more strongly than (untransformed) mainstream parties. Similarly, on the left, the Social Democrats and the greens both defend the welfare state, while they have different positions on cultural issues. In Germany, Austria and the Netherlands, the greens still strongly favour cultural liberalism, while the Social Democrats have moderated their position on these issues.

The common features of the transformation of the national political space in the six countries mainly concern the basic structure of the space. Within this common framework, the *configurations of the main parties* have, except for France, were already tripolar back in the 1970s. They remain or have become more or less *tripolar* in all six countries in the course of the

1990s. The populist right constitutes a new third pole in France. In all the other countries, the three poles are still being defined by the parties who have traditionally represented the three most important political camps (i.e., the Social Democrats, the Liberals and the Conservatives, or Christian Democrats), although in Austria and Switzerland one of these parties has definitely changed its character and become the equivalent of the FN in France. In the Netherlands, the LPF has temporarily constituted the third pole, but its precipitous decline resuscitated the traditional triangle whose poles may, as a result of this decline, move apart again. In Germany and in Britain, the traditional Conservative pole has not (yet) met with any serious challenge and still represents the unreconstructed third pole. The basic tripolar configuration of the party systems is an additional indication that we need two dimensions to account for their structuring.

Beyond this important common feature of tripolarity, the configurations of the six party systems present also diverging developments as a result of the variable *contextual conditions*. We have not presented any explicit hypotheses concerning these diverging developments, but we can indicate some factors that are likely to account for them. For example, some of the emerging differences can be traced to the *electoral rules* and the overall *institutional framework*. Thus, it is not surprising to observe that new parties, on the left or on the right, have been more successful in countries with proportional elections. Britain, one of the prime examples of a majoritarian democracy, has not seen the emergence of any significant green or right-wing populist parties.

While we acknowledge the impact of the institutional context, we believe that most of the emerging country-specific differences are attributable to the *strategies* the mainstream parties adopt in the face of the challenges linked to the hypothetical new structural conflict between losers and winners of the opening up of national borders and to the *characteristics of the new challengers themselves*. Contrary to the basic structure of the space, these strategies are not generally predictable, but depend on the decisions taken by political actors. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the related differences in detail for each country. Suffice it to observe that the two pairs of strategies that can be distinguished theoretically – convergence versus polarization and stigmatization versus cooperation – have all been applied in various combinations and with variable success by some parties in our countries at some point in time. In addition, we have also come across an unexpected pattern of reaction – the joint convergence of the three Dutch mainstream parties towards the position adopted by the new challenger – which indicates that the distinctions made in the literature do not exhaust the strategic possibilities of established parties when they are faced with a new challenger.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. In this context, Christian Democratic parties stand out because they are confronted with both dilemmas at the same time. Traditionally, they have been (moderate) supporters of the welfare state and the strongest advocates of European integration (Marks & Wilson 2000: 451–454). Hence, in a transformed political space they need to redefine their position on both dimensions.
2. There is a large literature on these conditions, which, for reasons of space, we do not mention in detail.
3. National elections are more appropriate than European elections as the latter are mostly second-order national elections (Van der Eijk & Franklin 1996).
4. The selected newspapers were *Die Presse* and *Kronenzeitung* in Austria, *The Times* and *The Sun* in Britain, *Le Monde* and *Le Parisien* in France, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Bild* in Germany, *NRC Handelsblad* and *Algemeen Dagblad* in the Netherlands, and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and *Blick* in Switzerland.
5. It is difficult to classify the MRG (Mouvement des Radicaux de Gauche) into one of the major party families. It is rather left-of-centre and was one of the three 'pillars' of the left-wing opposition in the 1970s (with the PCF and the PSF), but it cannot simply be subsumed into the Social Democratic Party family.
6. The UDF has both a liberal and a Christian Democratic component.
7. In each election, we consider only parties for which at least thirty issue positions were coded.
8. Economic protectionism is part of the economic liberalism category (with opposing sign) since there were only few core sentences defending this goal.
9. The positions of the parties on the different categories of issues and the corresponding saliences can be found on the website of our project (www.ipz.unizh.ch/npw/).
10. Van de Brug (1999, 2001) uses another MDS procedure that does not allow for the joint representation of parties and issues in a common space, which renders the interpretation of the results much more difficult.
11. Weighted Metric Multidimensional Scaling can be estimated using the algorithm Proxscal, which is implemented in SPSS.
12. In each election, we have included only parties with at least thirty observations. The only exception to this rule is the case of the Liberal Democrats. As it is an important party, we have included it in all elections – even if we had less than thirty observations in 2001. Categories of issues with less than 3 per cent of observations in one analysis were also disregarded.
13. The rescaling procedure is necessary because the absolute values of the original distances are transformed when performing a *weighted* MDS. This procedure does not affect the relative distances between the points in a given configuration, but it makes possible a comparison of the absolute distances between two configurations. The rescal-

ing was performed by setting the weighted average distance between parties and issues in the final configuration equal to the same average in the original data (with distances being weighted by their corresponding salience).

14. This has changed in the 2005 elections.

15. Van de Brug (1999, 2001) similarly criticizes these assumptions, which do not allow for the possibility that the relevant issues and the dimensions of the space vary from one election and from one country to the other.

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