Chapter 1: Crises and the transformation of the national political space in Europe

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Introduction

In this volume, we shall study the transformation of national party competition in the shadow of the great economic crisis that Europe underwent in the aftermath of the fall of Lehman Brothers in the fall of 2008. We take this event as the beginning of the Great Recession, which, after having hit the United States in the first place quickly spread to Europe. As is well known, almost all European economies contracted in the first storm of the financial crisis. Most countries recovered fairly quickly after this first 'shock', but especially the countries in Southern Europe have been caught in a spiral of stagnation, high unemployment (especially among young people), and public debt ever since. Moreover, the financial crisis soon developed into the so-called Euro crisis. The governments of the weaker economies were unable to cope with the economic crisis and the structural weaknesses of the European Monetary Union (EMU) were revealed. Ultimately, the countries that needed financial assistance had to accept tough conditions by their international creditors. Most importantly, they had to adopt austerity policies with harsh consequences for large parts of society and with important implications for the structuring of the countries' party systems. Our key question in this book is how the multiple crises that Europe faced in the aftermath of the Great Recession have influenced the intensity and structuration of political conflict in the national party systems. In particular, we ask how the cultural integration-demarcation divide that we had seen shaping up in Northwestern Europe before the onset of the Great Recession was affected by these multiple crises and whether this divide was 'traveling' to the European South and East.

To answer these questions, the present volume covers party competition in the national electoral arena of fifteen European countries, including seven cases from Northwestern Eu-

rope (Austria, Britain, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Switzerland), and four each from Southern Europe (Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain) and Central-Eastern Europe (Hungary, Latvia, Poland, and Romania). The study focuses on the years from the early 2000s to 2016, i.e. a period in which Europe faced multiple economic, political, and cultural challenges. In several countries, the economic crisis has been linked to an (emerging or existing) political crisis. When the economic crisis combined with a political crisis, its impact on the structuration of the countries' party systems seems most pronounced. Moreover, the last years of the period covered by this study were characterized by the so-called 'refugee crisis', precipitated by the massive inflow of asylum seekers (especially from war-ridden Syria). These crises did not affect all countries in the same way. Instead, we observe pronounced differences across and within the European regions. Accounting for the different ways in which the crises have been politically articulated not only constitutes a challenging puzzle for comparative political science but is also of utmost social and political relevance.

In our endeavor to come to terms with the political fallout of these crises, we rely on a *dynamic concept of cleavage formation* (see Bornschier 2010; Kriesi et al. 2008, 2012). As in previous work, our structural approach starts from the idea that political parties are constrained to operate within a given competitive space. From the perspective of this approach, new issues and changes in the dimensions of party competition emerge exogenously, i.e., from social conflicts which are the product of long-term social change. In the Rokkanean tradition we link the structure of party competition in Western Europe to the long-term trends in society (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rokkan 1999). Thus, it is crucial for our understanding of the changing national party systems that the potential impact of the multiple crises on European politics has been embedded in processes of change that have been going on long before the onset of the Great Recession (see also Hooghe and Marks 2018). The decisive question is then to what extent the different crises might have led to new divisions in societies or rather rein-

forced tensions that have already been politically articulated and mobilized in the past. At the same time, our approach to party competition considers the dynamics of political conflict and the agency of political actors in structuring new divides. To keep a cleavage alive or to reinforce the relevance of a new social divide, the core issues linked to it need to give rise to publicly visible conflicts. At this point, the more strategic approaches to party competition have a lot to offer as they focus on the strategies used by political parties to expand the scope of conflict, as Schattschneider (1975 [1960)] aptly put it.[1] Most important in this context are strategies of position-taking and issue emphasis (e.g., Hobolt and de Vries 2015). From such a perspective, it is crucial to ask which type of political party might be most likely to exploit the mobilization potentials induced by the crises with what kind of strategy.

Figure 1.1 presents the *heuristic framework* which guides our analyses of the consequences of the Great Recession on the structuration of party competition in Europe. As indicated by the figure, the transformation of national party systems is ultimately driven by long-term processes of structural societal change. These processes refer above all to the changing social conflict structures and the degree of their institutionalization in the national party system in the period before the crisis hit the continent. In addition, the transformation of the party system is constrained by national regime legacies and by the emerging multi-level political system of the European Union. At any given moment in time, including the moment when the Great Recession took off in fall 2018, the structuration of party competition has been decisively shaped by these long-term processes of structural change. An economic crisis like the Great Recession may serve as a catalyst for the transformation of the existing configuration of the party system. The impact of the crisis is likely to depend on its severity and its timing in relation to ongoing processes of change. In the short run, economic crises lead to the punish-

[1] On the difference between structural and strategic approaches, see de Vries and Marks (2012).

ment of incumbents. This is the well-known tenet of the economic voting literature. In a deep economic crisis such as the Great Recession, the voters' disenchantment with the mainstream parties and their embrace of challenger parties may, however, go beyond the narrow confines of economic voting. The economic crisis may undermine the legitimacy of all mainstream parties and even of the democratic system as it has been operating in a given country, i.e. the economic crisis may give rise to a political crisis, which may be at the origin of a profound transformation of the national party system. However, in our heuristic framework, the impact of a crisis situation on the transformations of party competition does not only depend on the antecedent structure and the type and extent of the crises but also on more contingent political conditions at the moment when the crisis hits a country. Most importantly, we also take into account the composition of the incumbents at the time of the crisis, and the strategies employed by the main protagonists in the ongoing political struggles.

<Figure 1.1>

In this introductory chapter, we discuss each element of the heuristic framework. We start with the long-term trends (Section 2) and the structuration of party competition before the Great Recession (Section 3). Next, we focus on the questions of why and under what conditions the crises might act as triggers for the transformation of party competition (Section 4) before we draw more specific implications for the resulting patterns of change (Section 5). Importantly, we stress that the long-term processes of change and the crises experiences have varied considerably between three macro regions of Europe – Northwestern Europe (NWE), Southern Europe (SE) and Central- and Eastern Europe (CEE). While we shall present the developments in fifteen individual countries, we believe that it makes sense to reduce the complexity in a first step by insisting on the major differences that exist between these three macro regions. Thus, what we present in this introductory chapter are stylized accounts of

differences across the three regions which are then used as reference points in the detailed empirical country chapters that constitute the core of this volume.

Embedding the economic crisis in a long-term perspective

As outlined, we first introduce the three long-term structural factors that we consider as having had a decisive influence on the structuration of party competition in the long run. As shown in *Figure 1.1*, these refer to long-term processes of societal change, regime legacies, and the ever more important multi-level system of European governance.

For the conceptualization of *long-term processes of societal change*, we refer back to Rokkan's seminal approach according to which European countries have been profoundly shaped by a series of social and political 'revolutions.' These revolutions resulted in a limited set of clearly identifiable, deep-seated conflicts (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rokkan 1999). The two key conflicts have been the conflicts of religion and class, with a center-periphery or regional conflict taking on some importance in some countries as well. These conflicts have been described in terms of 'cleavages' because they can neither be reduced to social divides ('social cleavages') nor to purely political struggles ('political cleavages'). We agree with Bartolini (2005) that the concept of 'cleavages' properly understood does not come with adjectives attached. A fully develop cleavage includes an empirical, a normative, and an institutional element – that is, a distinct social-structural basis, specific values and beliefs (a political consciousness), as well as their political organization and mobilization (Bartolini and Mair 1990).

In earlier work, we have argued that the deep-seated two-dimensional structure of the Northwestern European party systems defined by religious and class conflicts has been decisively modified since the 1970s by two fundamental societal transformations, which have

created structural potentials that have then been mobilized by political parties. On the one hand, we refer here to the growing impact of conflicts linked to the 'silent revolution' of cultural change in West European societies (Inglehart 1977), which was in turn an expression of processes of deindustrialization, the expansion of tertiary education, feminization of the workforce and occupational upgrading. On the other hand, we refer to processes of globalization or "denationalization" (Zürn 1999), understood as the opening-up of economic, cultural, and political national borders, which have started to accelerate since the late 1980s. Both transformations have fundamentally reshaped European societies. According to our argument, the 'silent revolution' drove a wedge into the new middle class, opposing socio-cultural professionals to the technocrats and mangers (e.g. Kriesi 1989). By contrast, increasing international economic competition, the increasing influx of migrants from ever more distant and culturally more different shores, and the increasing political integration in the European Union created conflicts between what we called the 'winners' and 'losers' of globalization (e.g. Kriesi et al. 2008, 2012). The 'losers' of globalization are people whose life chances were traditionally protected by national boundaries. They perceive the weakening of these boundaries as a threat to their social status and their social security. They are a heterogeneous group, because they may be losing in economic terms (as a result of increasing international economic competition, delocalization and immigration of foreign workers), in cultural terms (because they are not prepared to cope with a multicultural society) and political terms (as a result of supranational integration). The 'winners,' on the other hand, include people who benefit from the new opportunities resulting from globalization, and whose life chances are enhanced. The essential criterion for determining the impact of the opening up of national boundaries on individual life chances is whether or not someone possesses exit options. As we will discuss in the next section, these conflicts have been shaping the party systems of NWE, while their impact on the party systems of SE and CEE is much more uncertain.

Apart from social change, we emphasize in our framework the effects of *regime legacies* on the structuration of party competition. While countries in NWE have been democracies at least since World War II, with the exception of Italy, the larger countries of SE emerged from their authoritarian past only in the second half of the 1970s, and the transition to democracy of CEE countries only dates from the early 1990s. This had significant implications for the institutionalization of the party system in the respective countries. As is well known, such institutionalization takes time. In his 'Reflections on the revolution in Europe', Dahrendorf (1990: 79-93) distinguished between three speeds of the political transition to democracy – the hour of the lawyer, the hour of the politicians and the hour of the citizens. He suggested that the hour of the lawyer, i.e. the formal process of constitutional reform, takes at least six months. After the establishment of the constitution normal politics takes over and sets in motion political and economic reforms. This is the hour of the politicians, which takes at least six years before a general sense that things are moving up is likely to spread. The third speed refers to the citizens, i.e. to 'the social foundations which transform the constitution and the economy from fair-weather into all-weather institutions which can withstand the storms generated within and without, and sixty years are barely enough to lay these foundations' (p. 93). It is the hour of the citizen which is most important from the point of view of the structuration of party system: as a result of their belated democratization, the party systems of SE and CEE were less institutionalized than the party systems of NWE when the Great Recession struck.

These party systems have been less rooted in the social structure and, as a result more easily transformed under the impact of the economic crisis. For the CEE countries in particular, Mair (1997: 192) noted as their most striking feature their 'lack of systemness' in the sense of 'patterned interactions' between parties. In his assessment (p. 192), the 'combination of a weak cleavage structure, an uncertain and volatile institutional environment, and a very

open and unpredictable structure of competition' has constrained the consolidation of the party systems in this part of Europe. In SE, too, the newly emerging systems were organizationally rather weak and much less rooted in the social structure than their NWE counterparts, even if these countries rapidly developed stable party systems when they emerged from their authoritarian regimes (Gunther 2005). Except for the Communist parties and the Spanish Socialists (PSOE), party builders in SE were unconstrained by institutional models and were free to create modern electoralist parties, mainly of the catch-all and the personalistic type. To be sure, in Italy a strong party system had been established as it returned to democracy after World War II. The parties even became the linchpin of Italian politics ('partitocrazia'). However, the Italian party system was swept away in the early 1990s under the joint impact of a deep political and economic crisis. The new system that replaced the old one in 1994 proved to be as weakly rooted in the social structure as the party systems in the other three countries, and just as dominated by electoralist parties of the catch-all and personalistic type (e.g. Bartolini et al. 2004, Newell 2006, Pasquino 2007).

At the same time, the legacies of the previous non-democratic regimes continue to contribute to the structuring of party competition in SE and CEE. In CEE, the legacy of communism served to discredit the post-communist left and the radical left in general. Thus, the first free elections were 'largely a referendum on the discredited communist regime' (Grzymala-Busse 2002: 180). The communist parties were trounced and appeared to be a spent force. Nonetheless, some successor parties successfully broke with the past and made a comeback in later elections. The successful strategy of regeneration of the Left entailed avoiding appeals to nostalgia and socialist ideology. As argued by Tavits and Letki (2009: 556), not only the former communists but also the New Left 'had to stay away from strong socialist policy positions to avoid being associated with the former regime.' In SE, in turn, the parties on the right faced an equivalent problem because of the legacy of previous authoritarian

and/or fascist regimes. Only in Italy, the fascist right had survived the fall of the regime and was able to organize itself openly. But, paradoxically, the Italian neo-fascists started to decline at the very moment when the radical right began its rise in NWE, precisely because of their solid neo-fascist lineage (Ignazi 2003: 52). Only by distancing themselves from this legacy could they make a fresh start.

Finally, we need to keep in mind that, apart from Switzerland, all countries included in our study were members of the *European Union* during the period covered. The embedding of national party competition into the multi-level structure of the EU polity has implications for the structuring of national party systems. First, national politics have become increasingly constrained by supra-national decision-making. This has become particularly apparent in the political crisis management of the Euro crisis. With the shift of decision-making competences to the EU level, the European integration process, which is part and parcel of the new conflict linked to the opening up of national borders, has become more critical for party competition and political representation at the national level. Second, it is important to keep in mind that there are two channels of representation of national interests at the European level – a channel each for the representation of nation states (in the European Council and the Council) and of citizens (in the European Parliament), and that the EU has consistently privileged the representation of nation states over the representation of individual citizens (Schimmelfennig 2010: 220). This implies that, in the EU, the partisan channel is underdeveloped compared to the intergovernmental channel. The representation of nation states prevails, which means that national executives together with supranational executive actors dominate the policy-making process and the public debate at the European level. Again, this has become most visible during the management of the Euro crisis. The prevalence of the intergovernmental channel at the European level does, however, not necessarily imply that the EU polity has been constructed as ‘a protected sphere, safe from the demands of voters and their representatives’, as

claimed by Mair (2013: 100-9). But it implies that the partisan representation is still essentially confined to the national arena and that the politicization of European integration takes place at the level of national politics. Third, the relevance of the multi-level structure of the EU polity for national politics is likely to vary not only between member states and non-member states of the EU, but also among member states. During the Great Recession, it was arguably more important for Eurozone members and, among the latter, for the debtor-states, which became the object of supranational crisis management.

The structuration of party competition at the outset of the Great Recession

We now turn to the impact of the three long-term structural transformations on the structuration of national party competition. From our perspective, party competition is above all programmatic or issue-based, i.e. parties compete with each other by *positioning* themselves on various political issues and by manipulating the *salience* of these issues[2]. We focus on the political actors who have mobilized the structural potentials created by the long-term societal change and on the issues that have come to define the conflicts articulated by these actors.

As argued by Hooghe and Marks (2018: 112), in various ways established parties are constrained in their positioning on major conflict dimensions, which implies that the source of dynamism in party systems in response to major shifts in voter preferences (i.e. in response to long-term societal change) is coming from new political parties. Most importantly, we would argue, established parties are constrained by their distinct programmatic reputation which they

[2] To be sure, this is a restricted view of party competition, as parties may also compete in clientelistic or personalistic terms.

have acquired as a result of their mobilization of past structural conflicts[3]. While new political parties have a significant advantage in mobilizing conflicts arising from societal change, their rise is conditioned by processes of dealignment (i.e. processes linked to the decline of the traditional cleavages of religion and class), by the institutional context (above all the electoral system), and by the strategies of established parties (dismissive, adversarial or accommodating) (see Kriesi 2008). We shall, however, not enter into the details of the rise of the new challengers in specific national context, but present a rough outline of the pattern of party competition at the outset of the Great Recession in a given region. We start out with NWE, where the process of structural change has advanced most and where its articulation in the party system was (with the notable exception of Germany) least impeded by regime legacies.

In NWE, in the aftermath of the 'glorious' post-war period which came to an end in the 'stagflation' of the 1970s, two waves of political mobilizations articulated the new types of social conflicts that were to become crucial for the structuration of the West European party systems. The first wave (the wave of the New Left) was an expression of structural transformations that were endogenous to the European nation-states – the 'silent revolution', which was driven by the socio-cultural segment of the new middle class that articulated its demands in the so-called 'new social movements'. This revolution gave rise to the 'new politics', which have mainly transformed the left (e.g. Müller-Rommel 1989): the new social movements stood at the origin of the rise of the *Green parties* and of the transformation of the West European *social-democratic parties* which, in the process, have become middle-class

[3] This is the sense of 'issue ownership': The parties have what Petrocik (1996) describes as a history of attention, initiative and innovation toward specific issues, which leads voters to attribute them greater credibility on these issues. As Scammel (1999: 729) observes: "Reputation, based on record and credible promises, is the only thing of substance that a party can promote to potential voters."

parties in almost all countries of Western Europe (e.g., Gingrich and Häusermann 2015, Häusermann 2015; Kitschelt 1994).

The second wave (the wave of the New Right) has started in the early eighties with the rise of the Front National (FN) in France and continues to the present day. This second wave refers to social conflicts arising from 'globalization'. As we have argued, the heterogeneous set of 'losers of globalization' have been most successfully mobilized by the radical populist right (Kriesi et al. 2006, 2008, 2012). In this process, these parties of the *populist radical right*, which we label with the broader term the New Right[4], have become the party of the working class in many West European countries (Oesch 2008, 2013; Afonso and Rennwald 2015). Some of these parties have been newly emerging (such as the FN, VB, PVV, LN, FP, DF, or SD), while others (such as the FPÖ, the SVP, or the True Finns) are transformed (liberal-) conservative mainstream parties.

The two waves of mobilization have in common that they concerned above all *cultural issues*. They primarily transformed the meaning of the cultural dimension of the party space, which, in the European context, had traditionally been dominated by issues related to religion. Interpreting the impact of the New Left, Kitschelt (1994, 1995) re-baptized the cultural dimension as 'libertarian-authoritarian' dimension; Hooghe et al. (2002) called it the GAL-TAN dimension; focusing on the impact of the New Right, we chose to relabel it 'demarcation-integration' dimension (Kriesi et al. 2006, 2008). Theorizing the joint impact of both waves, Bornschier (2010, 2010a, 2015) suggests that the reshaped cultural dimension refers to a fundamental conflict between universalistic and traditionalist-communitarian values (traditional-

[4] We use the term 'New Right' to refer to the populist radical right (PPR) party family and some transformed conservative-right parties (in particular, in Central and Eastern Europe) which do not as easily fall under the PPR label but play a functionally equivalent role in their respective party systems (see, e.g., Hanley 2008).

ism invokes the rejection of universalism, while communitarianism makes reference to the populist right's conception of community). As he argues, the crystallization of this conflict has remained partial as long as the New Right did not provide the counter-position of the New Left with a broader and more permanent basis.

Moreover, it is important to note that the cumulated effect of the two waves of mobilization has been a continuous erosion of mainstream parties. To the extent that they were not responsive to the new fundamental conflict, they increasingly lost voters to the challenger parties that mobilized the voters who felt neglected by them (Mair 2013, Kriesi 2014, Hobolt and Tilley 2016). Alternatively, the shift of party competition to the cultural dimension and the erosion of the mainstream parties have been explained by their convergence on the economic dimension which is a result of the decline of the traditional class cleavage and the increasingly restricted options in macro-economic (but not in social) policy-making (Kitschelt 2007). On the economic dimension, the moderate left has been moving to the right, while the moderate right has been moving to the left (e.g. Morgan 2015). However, what these arguments overlook is that in spite of the reduction of polarization of the main protagonists on the economic dimension economic issues have remained salient for party competition. As the mainstream parties' positions on economic issues converge and these issues become 'valence issues', parties are still seeking to differentiate themselves in terms of competence (i.e. the means proposed to achieve the shared goals) (Stokes 1963, 1992). For valence issues, performance and the reputation to be a credible and competent defender of the common goal, i.e. issue ownership, become decisive for a party's success. As issue ownership has proven to be more fluid and contested than initially assumed (Bélanger and Meguid 2008), competition on valence issues may remain intense. Parties may lose their reputation of competence to their main competitors as a result of exogenous shocks (e.g. the British Conservatives in the ERM

crisis 1992 (Clarke et al. 2004)) or they may successfully 'trespass' (Sides 2006) on the opposing camp's preferred territory (e.g. Arndt 2013).

For our argument, it is crucial that the structural transformations and the double wave of political mobilization they gave rise to have been much weaker in the other two regions of Europe. In SE, Greece, Portugal and Spain remained under authoritarian regimes until the mid-seventies. Accordingly, the mobilization by new social movements was comparatively weak or non-existent in SE[5], and there was no significant New Left at the time (e.g. Kitschelt 1988). As the new systems emerged, the moderate Social-democratic parties came to be the main force on the left, while the Communists – who had originally dominated the split left in SE – declined in all four countries. The continued presence of the Communists and the heavy legacy of the deep rift between Communists and Socialists implied, however, that the New Left, to the extent that it did develop at all, remained in the shadow of the 'old left'. Accordingly, Green parties have been weak in SE and the socialists have assumed less of the characteristics of the New Left than they did in NWE. In a way, the mainstream parties of the left have belatedly taken up many of the concerns raised by the New Left in NWE. This is exemplified by more recent struggles over abortion or gay rights in the 2000s (for the Spanish case, see Encarnación 2009).

The second transformation did not have the impact on SE party systems that it had in NWE either. On the right, the party systems that emerged after the rupture in SE were dominated by a moderate center-right party in all four countries. The remaining impact of the traditional conflicts of class and religion as well as the newly introduced electoral systems (in Italy after the referendum of 1993) favored the bipolar party competition between 'catch-all' par-

[5] There are comparative data for Spain in the 1980s, which show the weakness of these movements (Koopmans 1996: 38-40).

ties on each side of the left-right divide[6]: secular parties on the moderate left faced conservative-confessional parties on the moderate right (see Polk and Rovny 2016). In Portugal, exceptionally, the mainstream right stabilized with a division between a dominant liberal-conservative party (PSD) and a minor conservative party (CDS-PP).

The New Right remained weak or inexistent. As already mentioned, the radical right was largely discredited by the authoritarian legacy. In addition, it was weakened by the center-periphery cleavage, by the fact that immigration has hardly been an issue in these emigration countries until recently and by the generally positive attitude of Southern Europeans with respect to European integration (which was seen as a modernizing force and a safeguard against authoritarian tendencies, see Díez Medrano 2003). Neither in Portugal nor in Spain did the New Right get a foot on the ground. In Portugal, the revolution had been dominated by forces of the extreme left and no party dared present itself as a conservative force and thereby risk being linked to the old regime (Gunter 2005: 271). In Spain, too, the rejection of the past constituted a handicap for the New Right as did the salience of the center-periphery cleavage, which implied that 'nativism was to a certain extent already credibly occupied by established parties' – centralist parties of the mainstream right and peripheral-nationalist parties which dominated party competition in the autonomous regions (Alonso and Rovira-Kaltwasser 2014: 8). In Italy and Greece, the New Right did succeed in establishing itself, but remained linked to the center-periphery cleavage (in Italy: Lega Nord) or proved to be a minor force (in Greece: LAOS). Euroscepticism, to the extent that it existed at all, was mainly located on the old Communist left (Verney, 2011).

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[6] Although Greece, Portugal and Spain have proportional systems, the electoral formulas and/or the size of the electoral districts render their outcomes rather majoritarian. In Italy, the new electoral system that was introduced in 1994 favored the formation of bipolar electoral coalitions, although not necessarily the formation of a bipartisan system (D'Alimonte and Bartolini 1997).

In CEE, the two transformations that have had a profound impact on party systems in NWE did not occur to the same extent either. Similar to SE, the 'cultural revolution' of the late sixties/early seventies hardly had an impact at all, given the grip of the Communist regimes on the countries in question, and the effect of 'globalization' was much more closely linked to the economic and political transition after the breakdown of the Communist regimes. From our long-term perspective, as already mentioned, the newly emerging party systems in CEE countries still appear to be less institutionalized than party systems in Western Europe (Casal Bértoa 2014, Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2015). The very high level of volatility in these systems since the democratic transition is the most important empirical evidence for their lack of institutionalization (e.g., Birch 2003; Powell and Tucker 2014; Sikk 2005). Haughton and Deegan-Krause (2015) suggest that there are 'new party subsystems' in the CEE party systems, where in a succession of new parties, one new party is replaced by a still newer party as disillusioned voters migrate from one new party to the next.

The concept of cleavages structuring the party system hardly applies to these party systems. It has been argued that the Communist inheritance left a fragmented society and an unstructured pattern of political conflict. This 'tabula rasa' thesis (Offe 1991) has been contradicted by a 'post-communist continuity' thesis (Kitschelt 1992), which claimed that the socio-economic legacies of the interwar and the socialist era were to define the conflict structure of the newly emerging democracies. Subsequent empirical analyses showed that CEE countries were, indeed, characterized by conflicts of ethnicity (especially in the Baltic countries), religion (especially in Poland), region, class as well as age and education (Evans, 2006; Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2012). But the multiplication of conflicts does not yet make for a clear-cut cleavage structure. Indeed, as Casal Bertoa (2015) has argued, cross-cutting conflicts may constrain party system institutionalization.

Early on, Kitschelt (1992) had suggested some hypotheses for the structuring of CEE party systems. First of all, he proposed a conflict between modernizers, who were at the same time market liberalizers and cosmopolitans, and traditionalist, who were expected to resist both market liberalization and the opening up of the national economy. In other words, contrary to the opposition between new left cosmopolitans and new right nationalists that resulted from the two transformations in NWE, he expected an opposition between right-cosmopolitans and left-nationalists. In addition, and related to this proposition, he expected the transition winners to embrace market liberalization, while the losers were expected to search for protection from market liberalization and market dependence. As a rival hypothesis, he also mentioned the possibility that the losers might resort to patterns of collective identity that lie outside of socio-economic relations, such as religion, nationality, ethnicity.

As it turned out, cultural issues have become more prominent in structuring the CEE party systems than the socio-economic considerations. A major reason for this outcome is that, in addition to claims to social justice, the post-communist left also embraced economic liberal reforms and pro-Europeanism. As is argued by Tavits and Letki (2009), the post-communist left was even more likely than its right-wing opponents to pursue rightist policies of fiscal responsibility and economic reform, because it needed to prove its dissociation from socialism and its ability to operate in a democracy and market economy, and because it also had the opportunity to do so, given the loyalty of its electorate. In other words, even if economic issues were among the most salient ones in CEE countries (see Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2009), they were not highly politicized, given the convergence of the post-communist left and right on a policy of neoliberal reforms. However, the loyalty of the electorate of the post-communist left proved to be less than reliable already in the 2000s. Given that there was nowhere to go on the left – there was no new left in the sense that we know from NWE at all – the transition losers searching for protection from market liberalization and

market dependence turned to political illiberals on the right, who constantly spoke of the economic issues confronting these losers, but proposed non-economic answers to their problems (see Ost 2005: 36).

Accordingly, a recent empirical study suggests that the main dimension of conflict in CEE countries has, indeed, become strongly connected to cultural issues (Coman 2015). However, given the absence of the cultural revolution of the late sixties/early seventies in these countries, and given the absence of immigration and the generally low salience of European integration after accession (Haughton 2014), these are not the cultural issues that have come to structure the party systems in NWE. In line with Kitschelt's rival hypothesis, the common denominator of the cultural issues mobilizing the traditionalist side of the CEE electorates seems to have become a 'defensive nationalism' asserting itself against internal enemies (such as ethnic minorities: Russians, Roma, and Jews) and external ones (such as foreign corporations colonizing the national economy, or the European Union imposing undesired policy measures). This defensive nationalism is embraced by the transition losers (e.g. 'Poland B'), and fueled by the existence of contested national borders (e.g. national diasporas in neighboring countries), by the unassimilated legacy of World War II and the Communist regimes, and by 'more deep-seated vulnerabilities' (Haughton 2014: 80). Given the lack of institutionalization of the party systems, established party leaders in CEE countries have a greater latitude in the mobilization of structural conflicts (see Sitter 2002), and the strategies of the parties on the right proved to be decisive for the way this defensive nationalism has been mobilized (Enyedi 2005).

To summarize this discussion of the national party configurations in the three regions before the Great Recession, *Figure 1.2* presents the *stylized structuration of party competition* before the economic crisis struck for each one of the three regions. This stylized presentation situates the parties in a two-dimensional space which is defined by the issues that structure the

party competition. For all three regions, we assume a two-dimensional space with an economic and a cultural dimension, which means that the issues that structure the party competition are assumed to be linked to two underlying conflicts: an economic conflict that opposes the left (which defends the welfare state) and the right (which defends neoliberal positions), and a cultural dimension that opposes a culturally open (integrationist or secular) position to a culturally closed (demarcationist, religious or nationalist) position. Depending on the region, the two dimensions are more or less associated with each other, and the specific issues associated with the two dimensions vary according to the region, as do the actor configurations that are embedded in the two-dimensional space. The dashed lines inserted into the stylized space indicate the dominant structuring conflicts.

<Figure 1.2>

For *NWE*, the stylized configuration opposes the mainstream parties of the moderate left and the moderate right on the economic dimension, while the challengers from the New Left and the New Right are opposed to each other on the cultural dimension. By the time the Great Recession hit, this cultural dimension mainly referred to conflicts over cultural liberalism, immigration and European integration. Note that the discrepancy between the pair of challengers on the cultural dimension is expected to be much more pronounced than the discrepancy between the pair of mainstream parties on the economic dimension. Note also that on the respective other dimension, the two pairs are expected to be rather centrist. In addition, there may be a radical left (mainly small communist and socialist parties) in these countries whose position is expected to be close to the left-wing pole of the economic dimension.

For *SE*, this stylized configuration opposes a culturally somewhat liberal and economically somewhat interventionist moderate left to a culturally somewhat traditionalist and economically somewhat neoliberal moderate right. The two dimensions are expected to be closely associated with each other, and the actor configuration is expected to be mainly character-

ized by the bipolar opposition between mainstream left and right that amalgamates economic and cultural issues. As argued before, the cultural dimension in SE should to some extent reflect the first transformation related to conflicts over cultural liberalism but hardly at all the second transformation related to conflicts over immigration and European integration. In addition, there are the remains of the Communist party and its allies, which, just as the radical left in NWE, are expected to be located close to the left-wing pole of the economic dimension.

For *CEE*, this stylized configuration opposes a moderate left and a moderate right party on the cultural dimension – a dimension that incorporates conflicts related to ethnic and nationalist issues. By contrast, mainstream parties from both left and right are expected to have economically converged on a somewhat pro-welfare position. The moderate left is defending the rights of ethnic minorities and/or a secular position, while the moderate right is nationalist and possibly also religious. Given the volatile situation, both the moderate left and the moderate right might split and merge in different combinations, but always rearrange themselves into two polar camps, and new populist challengers from the right, but hardly from the left (given the discredited Communist legacy), are always likely to come and go as suggested by the concept of the 'new party subsystem'.

Crises as triggers for party system transformation

As emphasized in our heuristic model, we expect that the political consequences of the economic crisis are the joint result of the antecedent conditions, the characteristics of the crisis and of contingent conditions during the crisis. As for the characteristics of the *economic crisis*, the political consequences depend on its *severity and timing*. As we shall see in Chapter 3, the crisis' severity varied greatly between NWE (with Iceland and Ireland as the important exceptions), on the one hand, and SE and CEE, on the other hand. Thus, the simple fact that

the economic crisis was less severe and less protracted in NWE already goes a long way in explaining why its political impact has been less profound in NWE than in SE. In addition, the *timing* of the Great Recession and the experience with previous economic crises needs to be taken into account. In this respect, CEE differs from NWE and SE. In CEE, the Great Recession came in the aftermath of a deep transition crisis, which arguably had better prepared the Eastern Europeans for the shock experience of the economic downturn than the Southern Europeans, for whom (with the notable exception of the Portuguese) the crisis came in the wake of an economic boom. Thus, as a result of their intense experience with economic hardship in the past, CEE voters had a greater 'pain tolerance' in economic terms (Coffey 2013), a tolerance that, however, may have come to an end the second time around (Beissinger and Sasse 2014).

As is well known, in their first reactions to the financial crisis which initiated the Great Recession, governments focused on the stability of their national banking systems, and on the consequences for the real economy. They adopted bank rescue packages and they countered the economic impact of the crisis by adopting modest fiscal expansionary measures, relying on some version of 'liberal' or 'emergency Keynesianism' (Armingeon 2012; Hall 2013; Pontusson and Raess 2012; Weber and Schmitz 2011). As, under the impact of the Greek crisis that emerged in early 2010, the financial crisis turned into the Euro crisis, governments changed their policies, however, and generally turned to austerity measures. From then on, austerity policies including deep cuts in government expenditures, tax increases and structural adjustment programs (above all labor market reforms and deregulations of some selected sectors) became the only game in town. TINA – there is no other alternative – became the catch-phrase of economic policy.

It is with the turn to the *Euro crisis* that the context of the European Union's multi-level governance structure assumed its full importance. Given the close economic interde-

pendence of the EU member-states, the economic crisis in Europe has developed into the Euro crisis (Copelovitch et al., 2016). This crisis has been mainly driven by economic imbalances between different members of the Eurozone (e.g., Lane, 2012; Scharpf, 2011). The governments of the weaker economies in SE and CEE, in particular, were unable to cope with the crisis, and the EMU governance structures revealed their structural weaknesses (e.g. Eichengreen, 2012; Featherstone, 2011). Importantly, the ensuing crisis management involved above all the EU's intergovernmental channel, and the European governments represented their national interest as 'debtor' (Southern European, plus Ireland) or 'creditor' (Northwestern European) nations in this bargaining process – whatever their partisan composition (e.g., Grande and Kriesi 2016; Laffan, 2016b).

The Euro crisis gave rise to a crisis situation in some 'debtor countries' that greatly reminds us of the Latin American experience of the 1980s and 1990s. Under the pressure from the EU (represented by the 'Troika' and legitimated by the decisions of the European Council), the national governments adopted austerity policies that were harsh for large parts of society. The model case is Greece, where the Troika intervened most heavily and with most dramatic consequences for the country's economy and its party system (e.g. Verney 2014). However, under the impact of the crisis, other countries in our sample became the object of supranational interventions as well.[7] As a result, the governments' maneuvering space

[7] Three of the four CEE countries (i.e., Hungary, Latvia, and Romania) received financial assistance from the EU/IMF. In SE, all four countries became the object of supranational interventions: Greece was the object of three bailout programs and Portugal experienced one bailout program in spring 2011; Spain accepted a bailout of its banks by the ESM in summer 2012 and Italy, even if not formally bailed out, became the object of 'implicit conditionality' when it was hit by the financial storm in summer 2011. In NWE, Ireland was the only country bailed out by the EU/IMF in autumn 2010.

in macro-economic policy-making was severely restricted and they were not able to adopt the reforms they had initially promised.

Importantly, an economic crisis may be linked to a *political crisis*. It may increase the dissatisfaction not just with the incumbents, but with the established party system as a whole. It may exacerbate an already lingering crisis of representation in the party system, and/or it may create a legitimacy crisis of the party system as a whole. The political crisis may result from poor government performance during the economic crisis proper, but the economic crisis may also serve as a catalyst that renders intolerable the generally poor governance that has prevailed at the domestic level already before the crisis. Such generally poor performance may be the result of widespread corruption and partiality, insufficient rule of law, and general ineffectiveness of government. It may aggravate the economic difficulties of a country, and these difficulties, in turn, may reduce the tolerance of the citizens for poor governance. As Royo (2014) argues for the case of Spain, we cannot understand the Spanish real estate bubble, the country's loss of competitiveness or its financial crisis without taking into account what he calls the 'extractive behavior' of Spanish political elites and the general 'institutional degeneration' in Spanish politics. However, as he also argues, the problem in Spain has been both the extractive behavior of elites and that civil society tolerated such behavior. Only when the economic crisis exposed an unsustainable economic model, the public was outraged by the actions of its elites. In the next chapter we shall present indicators for the extent to which the different regions and different countries in a given region experienced a political crisis.

Dissatisfaction with the existing system of party representation and with the way democracy works in a given country is expressed in *calls for democratic renewal and reform* on the agenda of party competition. When calls for democratic renewal become of overriding concern in national elections, we expect them to give rise to a reinterpretation of the cultural dimension of party competition. Such a reinterpretation is typical of a transformation phase of

the party system and is likely to subside once the system has stabilized again. We expect such calls for democratic renewal to be primarily articulated by challenger parties. We suggest that political crises are generally likely to give rise to anti-elitist mobilization, which is the hallmark of populist challengers – populism considered here as an ideology that splits society into two antagonistic camps, the virtuous people and some corrupt establishment, effectively pitting one against the other and claiming to restore sovereignty to the people (see Mudde 2004, Canovan 1999). We should add, however, that a political crisis is not necessarily exogenous to the development of populism. If economic and political crises provide an opportunity for populist mobilization, they are in turn aggravated and brought to a climax by the populists' mobilization strategies (Moffit 2014: 2). Let us also note that the populist challengers' readiness to exploit economic and political crises to their own electoral advantage is considerably attenuated when they are themselves part of the government, when they provide external support to the (minority) government or when they are themselves involved in some major scandal (see Kriesi and Pappas 2015).

Finally, to add even more complexity to the sequence of crises, European governments and the EU institutions had to face yet another major challenge towards the end of the period covered by our study, the so-called *refugee crisis*. This challenge was caused by a massive inflow of asylum-seekers in Europe – especially from war-ridden Syria but also from other countries around the world. According to Eurostat figures, asylum applications gradually increased in the EU from below 200,000 in 2006 to around 335,000 in 2012. Thereafter, their numbers increased to 431,000 in 2013, 627,000 in 2014, and a record-high of almost 1.3 million in 2015[8]. As Börzel and Risse (2016) argue, the refugee crisis has revealed the EU's weaknesses in dealing with major crisis even more so than the Euro crisis. More specifically,

[8] Source: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics (accessed 31 August 2016).

they argue that it has led to 'blatant non-compliance with existing EU laws and decisions' (Börzel and Risse 2016: 5) and to a number of nationalist measures (such as tightening border controls) in the absence of a working European-wide solution. The contestation related to the refugee crisis points to yet another conflict line that divides the EU member states – this time, the 'geographical' divide unites the member states from SE and parts of NWE (especially Germany) against most of CEE and other parts of NWE. Most importantly for our argument, the political contestation related to the refugee crisis taps into the growing resentment against cultural diversity and integration which, as we have argued before, have been at the core of the New Right's mobilization and the restructuring of party politics in NWE long before 2015.

Whether or not the economic and/or the refugee crisis developed into a political crisis, which then gave rise to far-reaching transformations in the party system depended on *contingent conditions*. Among these conditions, it is important to consider *incumbency* (again, see Figure 1.1). In the short run, economic crises may lead to the punishment of incumbents as predicted by the economic voting literature. This literature is based on the assumption of instrumentally rational voters, who will reward the incumbents with their vote, when the economy is good, and punish them when the economy is bad (Duch and Stevenson 2008, Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2007). Empirical studies on economic voting document that it is both pervasive and variable, depending on the context. There is now also a growing literature on economic voting in the Great Recession, which shows that the electoral punishment of the incumbents has been massive and that it is a function of the depth of the recession (Bartels 2014, Bellucci 2014; Hernandez and Kriesi 2016; Indridason 2014; Magalhaes 2014, 2014a; Marsh and Mikhaylov 2012, 2014; Teperoglou and Tsatsanis 2014; and Torcal 2014). This literature has also shown that the punishment has been particularly severe, when the economic

situation had deteriorated in a dramatic fashion (involving ECB/IMF intervention) (e.g., Marsh and Mikhaylov 2012, Hernandez and Kriesi 2016).

However, the vicissitudes of incumbency can have more far-reaching consequences than is typically assumed by the economic voting literature. As we know from Roberts' (2013) analysis of the consequences of the implementation of structural adjustment programs in Latin American economic crisis of the 1980s/90s, outcomes were shaped by contingent alignments or configurations of actors during the economic crisis[9]. Thus, structural adjustments either aligned or de-aligned the party system programmatically, depending on which party was in government and had to implement the program. Anti-neoliberal reactive sequences were moderate where conservative-led market reforms aligned party systems programmatically, stabilized party competition, and channeled societal resistance toward institutionalized leftist parties (rather than into extra-systemic forms of social and electoral protest). By contrast, where traditional centre-left or populist parties implemented the structural adjustment policies, the critical juncture of the crisis de-aligned party systems programmatically and eventually led to their destruction. Reactive sequences produced electoral shifts to the left across much of Latin America in the post-adjustment era, but they spawned very different types of left turns in aligned and de-aligned party-systems. Against this background, it is very important that in three out of the four countries in SE (Greece, Portugal and Spain), the centre-left was in government when the crisis struck. Even in Italy, the centre-left was indirectly involved in the implementation of adjustment programs, given that it supported the technocratic Monti-government that was responsible for the program. In other words, in these countries, the conditions were given for a 'neoliberal convergence' of the major parties and the corresponding programmatic de-alignments.

[9] For related arguments, see Mainwaring (2006), Morgan (2012), Seawright (2012), Lupu (2014).

Moreover, to a large extent the 'neoliberal convergence' of the major parties was imposed by forces *external* to domestic party competition. Accordingly, we should take into account not only the two types of crises (the economic and the political crises), but also the fact that the economic crisis gave rise to two overlapping types of conflict (the conflict with the domestic elites and the conflict with the European elites). The domestic conflict focused on austerity policies (an economic issue), on the one hand, and corruption and democratic renewal (a political issue), on the other hand. The supranational conflict, where it was present, obviously was about austerity, too, but it also turned around the defense of the nation-state, national pride and humiliation, and addressed the democratic deficit at the European level.

Whoever is in government when an economic crisis hits is likely to attempt to shift the public's attention away from the crisis situation. *Avoidance strategies* include the displacement of problems, the shifting of the debate to secondary arenas, the transformation of substantive conflicts into moral ones, personalizing and negative publicity ('negative campaigning') (Kriesi et al. 2009). But although incumbents may wish to avoid economic issues in an economic crisis, they may not be able to do so because, in a situation of deep crisis, such issues become the top priority for the electorate, and because the opposition parties may seize the opportunity to campaign on the poor economic performance of the governing parties. The mainstream opposition is, indeed, likely to seize the golden opportunity to blame the incumbents for the faltering economy and to gain in profile by promising a better future. However, the mainstream opposition still basically has the option between an accommodating and an adversarial strategy[10]. It may seem unlikely for it to choose to cooperate with the incumbents' austerity measures to counter the economic crisis, but it is not excluded. Under pressure from

[10] Meguid (2005) distinguishes between three strategies – dismissive, adversarial and accommodating ones, which mainstream parties can adopt with respect to what she calls 'niche' parties. The same applies, we would argue, to the mainstream opposition parties with respect to the incumbents.

the international community, the mainstream opposition may be forced to act responsibly and to support the government's policies. Or it may support such measures, because they are in line with its programmatic orientation, as may be the case when centre-right opposition parties are confronted with austerity measures taken by a centre-left government. Accommodating strategies of mainstream opposition parties may be implemented in the form of grand coalitions, technocratic governments, or simply by tacit or overt support from the outside.

Nevertheless, opposition parties are more likely to adopt adversarial strategies, especially if it is the centre-left that is in the opposition. In the opposition, the left can benefit from its issue ownership on social issues, i.e. from its reputation and credibility in defending programs in favor of the economically disadvantaged. Provided they find themselves in the opposition, we expect the Social-Democrats and especially the more radical left to distinguish themselves from the more pronounced austerity positions of the moderate right. If they are in the opposition, the economic crisis provides an opportunity for both the Social-Democrats and the radical left to rejuvenate their traditional socio-economic profile. If the left is in the opposition and, indeed, adopts an adversarial strategy, the party system will increasingly polarize on economic issues. Whatever the strategy adopted by the opposition parties, however, economic issues are likely to gain a high salience on the party-system agenda (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010) under the impact of the economic crisis.

The economic voting literature assumes that the economically induced voting-behavior is cyclical without any long-term consequences. Moreover, it essentially assumes that the voters who are dissatisfied with the economic performance of incumbents turn to mainstream opposition parties. However, modern crises 'are increasingly characterized by complexity, interdependence and politicization' (Rosenthal et al. 2001), they generate uncertainty, threat and discontinuity and tend to act as focal points for institutional, policy and political change that leave significant legacies (Gourevitch 1986). Thus, while voters may habit-

ually turn to mainstream opposition parties in normal times, in an extraordinary crisis situation, voters may move beyond mainstream opposition parties and opt for parties not so closely associated with the existing economic and political system. In a crisis situation, the extraordinary punishment of mainstream parties as a whole may (but need not, as we shall see in the case of Ireland) serve as a catalyst for the long-term transformation of the party system.

The transformation of a party system by the reactive sequences unleashed by a political crisis takes time and is likely to occur *in stepwise fashion*. Indeed, as noted by Roberts (2017a: 5), considerable time may pass between the demise of the old order and the consolidation of the new. The demise of the old order may result in a fluid, unstable party competition such that no new equilibrium is reached. In Latin America, some of the most important institutional changes in party systems did not play out during the critical juncture of structural adjustment, but rather in its aftermath or post-adjustment period, when societal resistance to market liberalization strengthened and the region began to 'turn left' politically. We suggest that it takes a series of 'critical elections' for a deep crisis to transform the party system of a given country. At first, the voters who punish the mainstream incumbent are likely to turn to the mainstream opposition. Only in a second step, when the mainstream opposition also proves incapable of improving the situation, the voters are likely to opt for challenger parties (Hernandez and Kriesi 2016)[11]. Such a stepwise scenario may mainly apply to SE and CEE, where the party systems are less institutionalized, while it may be less applicable for NWE,

[11] In his study of the protest vote in CEE, Pop-Eleches (2010) similarly distinguishes between what he calls three generations of elections, which are characterized by different dynamics of party competition: the founding elections, the second generation elections of the 'normal years', when the protest vote punishes incumbents and turns to the opposition camp, and the third generation elections when both mainstream camps have well established, but not altogether positive records and the protest vote turns to previously marginal unorthodox parties and new parties.

where mainstream parties are more resilient. In any case, the stepwise scenario implies that we shall need to study a series of (post-) crisis elections to be able to assess the impact of the economic crisis on the party systems.

Moreover, for the study of the restructuring impact of such a crisis, it is important to keep in mind that, as voters turn to challenger parties, they are likely to take their preferences into account. As van der Brug et al. (2000) have argued some time ago, a vote for a challenger party is not just a protest vote, but also an expression of political preferences. Hernandez and Kriesi (2016), Hernandez (2016) and Hobolt and Tilley (2016) have confirmed this hunch more recently. They have shown that in the Great Recession, the European voters have not only punished the mainstream incumbents, but mainstream parties in general, and that, depending on their political preferences and the European region, they have turned to challengers from either the left or the right.

Implications for the transformation of the party competition in the three regions

From these general considerations, we deduce some ideal-typical scenarios for the impact of the Great Recession on the structuration of national party systems in the three regions – scenarios that will serve as a guide for our analyses in the country-specific chapters. In a very loose sense, these scenarios have the character of guiding hypotheses. They may not apply to all the countries they intend to cover. Even in such cases where the relevant scenario does not apply, it may, however, still serve a useful purpose, because it may direct our attention to possible factors that prevented the development expected by the scenario. Although the crisis which we are focusing on here was a deep economic crisis, we maintain that one of its crucial consequences for the national European party systems was a reinforcement of the non-economic dimension of conflict – in different ways, depending on the region. In NWE, we suggest that the economic crises reinforced the integration-demarcation conflict, while in SE

it gave rise to the emergence of a conflict between ‘old’ and ‘new’ politics, and in CEE it reinforced the conflict between defensive nationalism and cultural and economic openness. In addition, given the depth of the economic crisis, we do not exclude the possibility of a resurgence of the politicization of economic conflicts, especially in the hard hit countries of SE.

We begin with *NWE*, for which we propose a scenario of *continuity*. As we have argued, in NWE the challengers in the party system have come originally from the New Left, but more recently mainly from the New Right. For this region, we shall distinguish between two types of countries – countries, where the New Right has been on the rise since the early 1980s, and countries where the New Right had not yet been established before the Great Recession. In the former countries, where the New Right has already been well entrenched when the financial crisis hit, the economic crisis has most likely had only a limited impact on the party systems. In these countries the economic crisis had not been very severe in the first place, which constrained its structuring capacity. As a result of the Euro crisis, where these countries were on the side of the creditor countries, both the economic and the cultural conflicts are likely to have been reinforced to some extent, given the reluctance of their electorates to support the debtor countries, a reluctance which was justified both on economic and on moral grounds. Similarly, the refugee crisis that intervened at the end of the period covered by our study is likely to have reinforced both the economic and the cultural conflicts in these countries. However, the main reason for the limited structuring capacity of these crises lies in the fact that the party systems of these countries had already been transformed as a result of the long-term rise of the New Left and the New Right before the crises intervened. In other words, the integration-demarcation conflict had already been institutionalized in their respective party systems. In Austria, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland, the economic and the refugee crises may at best have served to reinforce the long-term trends.

However, in these countries the economic crisis may have triggered modifications in the position of the New Right on the economic dimension: while the rise of the New Right in these countries has been mainly due to its positions on the cultural dimension, we should not forget that, according to Kitschelt's (1995) 'winning formula', it originally combined cultural nationalism with economic liberalism. Already before the crisis, the New Right had started to shift its economic position to the left (see Michel 2015), as a result of the declining importance of the anti-state, anti-tax petite bourgeoisie among its electorate[12]. Given that its constituency of 'globalization losers' has been particularly hard hit by the Great Recession, we expect the New Right to increasingly abandon Kitschelt's (1995) 'winning formula' during the crisis, and to adopt a more social-democratic position on the economic dimension. As a result, the alignment between the economic and the cultural dimension should have become even weaker during the crisis period than it already was in the respective countries.

For the countries in NWE, where for different reasons no party from the populist right had already established itself before the onset of the Great Recession, the multiple crises that Europe faced subsequently may have served as the catalyst that allowed them to belatedly catch up with the general trend. With the exception of Ireland (and the UK which was not part of the Eurozone), these countries found themselves among the creditor countries in the Euro crisis, too. In other words, the reluctance of their electorates to support the debtor countries provided a strong incentive for the mobilization of the nationalist Eurosceptics from the New Right, who defended their national taxpayers against the solidarity with undeserving debtors. Moreover, the internal migration within the EU and the refugee crisis served as additional incentives for the mobilization of the New Right. Accordingly, we would expect an increasing restructuring capacity of new cultural issues – European integration and immigration above

[12] Switzerland is a notable exception in this respect (see Afonso and Rennwald 2015)

all, and the breakthrough of new challenger parties that mobilize on these issues. Arguably, this second scenario of continuity applies to Germany and the UK – two cases which are included in our study –, but also to countries such as Sweden (Jungar 2015) and Finland (Ylä-Anttila and Ylä-Anttila 2015) which are not part of it. Ireland is the exception that would confirm the rule: as a debtor country, Ireland experienced the crisis above all in economic terms (similar to the SE countries in this respect), which provided an unlikely basis for the mobilization by the populist radical right.

In stark contrast to NWE, as we shall show in detail in Chapter 3, in *SE*, the Great Recession not only struck hard, but it also unleashed a political crisis of major proportions. In line with these context conditions, the appropriate scenario for SE is one of a *profound transformation* of the respective party systems, of a transformation that we suggest followed the stepwise procedure described in the previous section. As is well known, this transformation was driven by challengers from the New Left. As already mentioned, the New Left benefited from the fact that, in all four countries, the mainstream left was in government (or supporting a technocratic government) at the time when the crisis developed its greatest political momentum. Accordingly, it was the mainstream left which had to implement the austerity measures imposed on SE governments, with the devastating consequences on its electoral fortunes that we know from Latin America. It was up to the New Left to articulate the left's traditional anti-austerity position in the face of extreme economic hardship. In addition, the New Left could most credibly make claims for democratic renewal, which became a key issue in SE as a result of the erosion of the mainstream parties under the impact of the economic crisis. As a consequence of the New Left's double opposition to the mainstream parties on economic and political grounds, economic and political conflicts are expected to become closely aligned in the SE political space. As long as the mainstream left is in government, it is the target of the New Left's call for democratic renewal, but once it rejoins the opposition, it is likely to shift

to the democratic renewal camp, too, which, in turn, facilitates the alignment of the two types of conflicts.

As shown in Chapter 3, with the exception of Poland, *CEE* countries were hard hit by the economic crisis, too, but contrary to the southern European countries they recovered rather rapidly. What distinguishes these countries is that their party systems were already in crisis before the Great Recession struck. This applies both to countries with an already robust party competition (Hungary and Poland in our study) and to countries without such a robust competition (Latvia and Romania in our study)[13]. In the latter group, politics has been far more corrupt and the consolidation of a structured competition appeared to be less likely than in the former group before the onset of the economic crisis. In all four countries we are considering here, a political crisis had preceded the onset of the economic crisis. Given their poor political governance record, these countries had seen political mobilizations against the corrupt elites and for political renewal before the economic crisis struck. These political crises are the expression of the as yet incomplete consolidation of these party systems. As a result of the fact that the political crisis preceded the economic crisis, our heuristic framework needs to be amended for CEE countries.

The scenario we propose for the CEE countries is one of *consolidation* of still fairly volatile party systems. In the case of these countries, the impact of the economic crisis was linked to the pre-existing political crisis. We suggest that, in the wake of the preceding political crises, the overriding contentious issues of CEE party systems during the Great Recession have been of a more narrowly political nature and that the economic crisis, although (with the exception of Poland) very severe, only had a rather limited impact on the restructuring of their

[13] For this distinction, see Grzymala-Busse (2007: 10-15), and Innes (2014).

party systems. The economic crisis may even have contributed to the further consolidation of these party systems by bringing the lingering political crisis to a head. The exception to this scenario is again Poland, where the political crisis had already been resolved (at least for the time being) before the economic crisis struck. In the absence of a New Left, the likely drivers of the expected consolidation were the mainstream parties, although they were still challenged from new parties on the radical right. As a result of this scenario, we expect the key dimension to be the cultural dimension which includes the key issues related to democratic renewal and to the 'defensive nationalism'.

As this summary of the expected ideal-typical scenarios suggests, we assume that the Great Recession has had one common counter-intuitive effect on the party systems in all three regions: we expect that it reinforced the cultural-cum-political dimension across Europe. In NWE, this is the consequence of the reinforced mobilization of the New Right, while in SE and in CEE this results from the political crisis that it initiated or brought to a head.

Outline of the volume

The volume is structured into three main parts. In addition to the present chapter, the first part includes an overview over the design and methodology of our study (Chapter 2) and an empirical assessment of the extent to which the fifteen countries faced both an economic and a political crisis (Chapter 3). The second part (eleven chapters in total) presents detailed studies of how the national party systems have been restructured since the onset of the Great Recession in 2008. This part is split into three sub-parts, each focused on one of the three macro regions in Europe. Chapters 4 to 7 are dealing with the developments in the four Southern European countries; Chapters 8 to 11 with those in Central and Eastern Europe; and finally, Chapters 12 to 14 take stock of the developments in Northwestern European party competi-

tion. Each country chapter is structured in the same way: at first, the authors discuss the key traditional and new divides structuring party competition as well as the institutional setting (especially the electoral system) and the actor configuration. Next, they turn to the crises dynamics and present main developments that left their mark on party competition in the respective countries. In a third step, the empirical analysis based on the media data is introduced and discussed. Given that the six of the countries in NWE have already been presented in earlier studies by Kriesi et al. (2008, 2012), we have decided to devote only two chapters to those cases: Chapter 12 examines the impact of the crises in the countries that already had a strong New Right party prior to 2008 – Austria, France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Chapter 13, by contrast, compares Britain and Germany as the two countries which saw electoral inroads of these parties in the crisis period only. Chapter 14 concludes this part with the case of Ireland. The third part of the books consists of two comparative chapters. Chapter 15 presents a comparative assessment of the commonalities and dissimilarities across the three regions. This quantitative study on the big picture of the partisan offer (measured with our original media data) is complemented by the final chapter, which considers additional features of party systems and takes a more qualitative and country-focused approach to summarize the dynamics and outcomes of the crises. In combination, the two chapters provide an answer to our initial research questions of whether and how the multiple crises that Europe faced in the aftermath of the Great Recession have influenced the intensity and structuration of political conflict in national party systems.

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Figure 1.1: a heuristic framework for the analysis of transforming elections

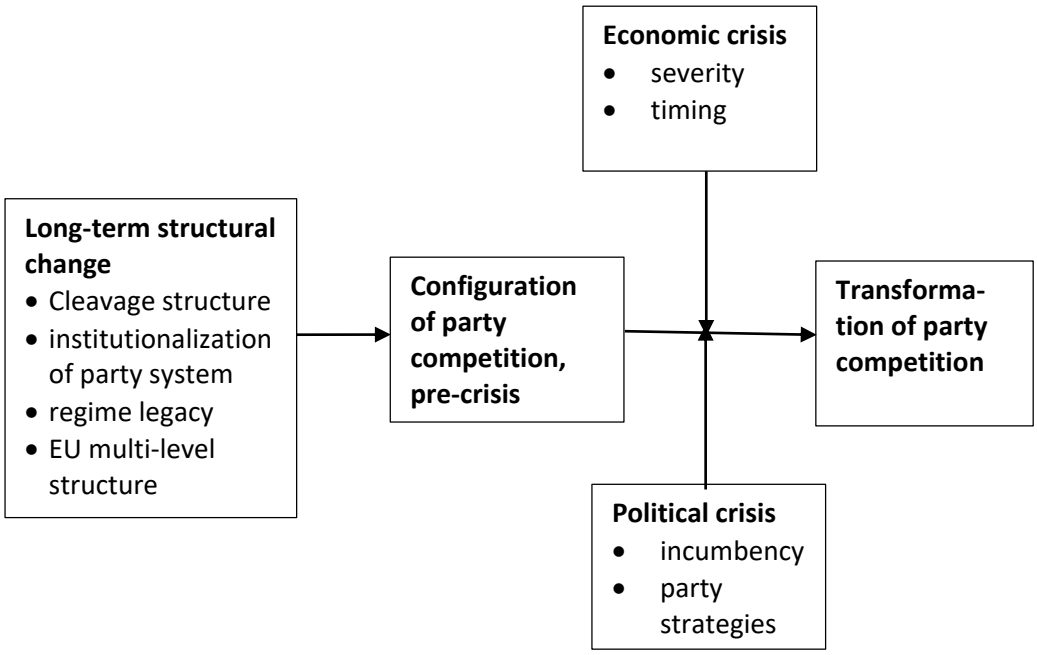

Figure 1.2 Stylized structuration of party competition in the three regions before the Great Recession