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Nomination: Arguments in Favour of "Globalization and the Transformation of the National Political Space

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NOMINATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Globalization and the transformation of the national political space

Globalization and the transformation of the national political space: Six European countries compared *by* **Hanspeter Kriesi, Edgar Grande, Romain Lachat, Martin Dolezal, Simon Bornschier and Timotheos Frey, EJPR 45 (2006): 921-956.**

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.

Nomination: **Arguments in favour of 'Globalization and the transformation of the national political space'**

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No concept has dominated social science studies in the past decades as much as 'globalisation'. Seen as the panacea to all ills of society by some, and the cause of all global misery by others, virtually everyone seems to agree that globalisation is omnipotent, restructuring most aspects of life as we know it. Unfortunately, the concept of globalisation is poorly defined and the various globalisation theses tend to be significantly undertheorised. Also in this sense, globalisation theory is not much more than the most recent iteration of modernisation theory.

This seminal article radically breaks with this ambiguous globalisation literature by developing clear concepts and theories and, even more unusual, empirically testing the

theories on the basis of a comparative and original dataset.[1] Its conclusions, as well as underlying theoretical framework, provide important consequences for the study of European politics and should inspire much new research, which will hopefully not just quote, but also adopt the exemplary quality of social science research of this seminal article.

Globalisation: Assumptions

Ever since the development of Lipset and Rokkan's famous cleavage theory, comparative social scientists have attacked, defended and elaborated upon it. Developing a neo-Rokkan theory of European politics has become the holy grail of European comparative politics. The strongest impetus came from the rise of, first, Green and, later, populist radical right parties in the 1980s (e.g. Inglehart 1977; Ignazi 1992; Kitschelt & McGann 1995; Kriesi 1998), and, more recently, the process of European integration (e.g. Marks & Wilson 2000). All share the essences of both modernisation and Rokkanian cleavage theory:

economic changes $\rightarrow$ sociological changes $\rightarrow$ political changes.

As the causes of the process are fundamental, the changes constitute significant and structural transformations. Kriesi et al. assume that these transformations manifest themselves "above all" at the national level, creating winners and losers, which are "political potentials" that can be articulated by political organisations, and will give way to a process of denationalisation (p.922). These assumptions are pretty uncontroversial and inform most of the other (neo-Rokkan) globalisation studies. A more original assumption is that "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)" (p.922). If true, this could give way to an even greater 'democratic deficit' within the EU, given that the European level gets more and more important in European national politics, but cannot accommodate the most important dimension of politics.

A new cleavage is born? Transforming the political space

Conceptually and theoretically, Kriesi et al.'s two-dimensional integration-demarcation of political space is quite similar to some of the main other attempts (notably Kitschelt 1986; Hooghe et al. 2002). The authors argue that this new political space is embedded in the earlier transformation, as a consequence of the Silent Revolution (Inglehart 1977), and will be able to absorb new conflicts (because of the adaptability of the political parties).

The main innovative value of the article is in the systematic detail of the theoretical model. Most notably, rather than merely suggesting rather vague links between the two-dimensional space and the various party families, as Lipset and Rokkan did, they model all major party families within the political space (see Figure 1 on p.925). With the exception of the lower left (i.e. cultural and economic demarcation) all quadrants are occupied by at least one party family. This might be because the authors fail to include the radical left in the figure, even though they do mention it in passing in the discussion of Euroscepticism (p.928). Given the ongoing economic crisis, and the growing electoral successes of radical left parties (e.g. March 2011), this is not an unimportant omission. The question is, however, whether the two-dimensional model can incorporate the contemporary radical left. No longer simply a type of 'working class authoritarianism' (Lipset 1960), the contemporary radical left combines economic demarcation with an ambiguous cultural position – in many cases (hard)

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[1] To be fair, the concepts and theories are developed and presented in more detail in the accompanying book *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization* (Kriesi et al. 2008).

anti-Europeanism is combined with (soft) pro-multiculturalism (e.g. March 2011). Moreover, reducing radical left Euroscepticism to economic opposition seems to miss important 'cultural' aspects of it (e.g. Halikiopoulou et al. 2012).

More fundamentally, I have two reservations toward the theoretical model advanced in this article. My first skepsis relates to the underlying concept of cleavage. Like in most other neo-Rokkan models, including the original (!), the authors do not develop the concept of cleavage. If it is understood as a combination of three features – i.e. a social division between groups, which are conscious of their collective identity, and organise politically on the basis of that identity (Gallagher et al. 2011) – the model raises some important questions. While 'winners' and 'losers' of globalisation might be useful concepts for social scientists, although they create quite important problems in both theory and practice, they are hardly collective identities on the basis of which groups of people organise politically. In fact, these are not even key categories in the propaganda of political parties, including the alleged voice of the losers of globalisation, the populist radical right.

My second question relates to the two-dimensionality of the model. While not explicitly stated, the theoretical model seems to assume that (1) all parties position themselves on both dimensions, and that (2) both dimensions are (equally) important to all parties. This is not the case, however. For the populist radical right, for instance, the economic dimension is clearly secondary to the cultural – in fact, its positioning on the economic dimension is in essence a consequence of its position on the cultural dimension (Mudde 2007). The same could be said, in reverse order, of the radical left. In fact, it is hardly controversial to argue that all mainstream political parties (strongly) prioritise the economic dimension over the cultural dimension, while the two main new party families (Greens and populist radical right) do the reverse.

Data: A new measure of party ideology

Like most comparative analysis of European politics this article employs the crucial concept of party family, i.e. an international group of political parties that share a distinct core ideology (e.g. Mair & Mudde 1998). The existence of party families is mostly assumed, rather than empirically proven. Given that qualitative studies of party ideology are extremely resource-intensive, comparative studies of party ideology remained very limited in scope until the emergence of quantitative measures in the 1980s. Today, both the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) have publicly available data on most relevant European political parties since the early 1980s.

A substantive discussion of all the pros and cons of the different quantitative measures of party ideology goes well beyond this short article, so I will only focus on the key innovation of this project, i.e. measuring party ideology through the media. More specifically, Kriesi et al. analyse party ideology through "the editorial part of major daily newspapers", i.e. one quality paper and one tabloid in each country (p.922). Unfortunately, the authors do not elaborate upon their choice, which seems to depend on some highly questionable assumptions. To name but a few, it assumes that newspapers present party ideologies accurately, have no own (agenda-setting) agenda, and are still the main media source for people in Western Europe.

I am highly skeptical that newspapers accurately present the ideologies of political parties, in particular of anti-establishment parties. While West European newspapers have become (more) independent of specific political parties in the 20th century, they often remain closely aligned to the mainstream parties. And newspapers in many countries have taken explicit positions with regard to certain issues (e.g. European integration) and parties (e.g. populist radical right). Even when tabloids often push the agenda of the populist radical right,

they regularly openly oppose the parties themselves (e.g. Mudde 2007; Ellinas 2010). But even a mere economical logic could lead to a media misrepresentation of the position and, particularly, salience of the ideology of (some) parties. A good example was the case of (List) Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands, who was virtually reduced to Islamophobia, even though his writings included many more (important) issues (e.g. Lucardie & Voerman 2002).

While this new operationalisation might provide a less accurate picture of the real ideology of (some) parties, it might be a theoretically better measure of perceived party ideology. Few people read party literature and, as with most issues, get their information on party ideologies from the media. Assuming that this media is predominantly national newspapers, or that 'the' media are homogeneous in their presentation of party ideologies, Kriesi et al.'s measure of party ideology might better explain why people ideologically support parties. For example, many left-wing commentators have decried the fact that working class people vote against their economic interests by supporting the populist radical right. While this argument is only partly right (see Mudde 2007, ch.5), it makes much more sense in light of the media representation of populist radical right parties, which hardly ever mention their socio-economic position.

A triangular configuration of party politics

A final innovation of the article is the emphasis on the development of a triangular configuration of party politics throughout Western Europe. The authors claim that "the configurations of the main parties" have become "more or less tripolar in all six countries in the course of the 1990s" (pp.950-1). Unfortunately, the discussion of this aspect is not very clear in the article. Notably, it is hardly mentioned in the discussion of the individual countries. What are the three "poles" and how do they relate to the theoretical framework? It seems that the rise of the populist radical right has caused this third pole, at least in France, but whether this is an indicator of electoral or political (i.e. ideological) impact remains unclear. Is this change structural, relating to the essence of the party system, or more temporal, affecting political competition election by election?

A clarification of "the common feature of tripolarity" (p. 951) would be helpful. It might also be linked to the questions of electoral competition and ideological influence within the two-dimensional space. For example, while some parties compete primarily on one dimension with all parties (e.g. the populist radical right on the cultural dimension), others compete with some parties on one dimension and with others on the other. Moreover, the nature of the competition might be different on the two dimensions. This is the case, for instance, with the Dutch conservative party (VVD), which competes mainly on the economic dimension with the social democratic PvdA (positional), but mainly on the cultural dimension with the populist radical right PVV (valence).

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Reflections: **Globalization and the transformation of the national political space**

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Cas Mudde's comments emphasise some very interesting points regarding our 2006 article and, more generally, the study of the impact of globalisation on national politics. In this short reply, we would like to respond to some of the questions he raises and discuss their relevance for the study of party configurations and electoral competition.

Regarding our theoretical framework, Cas Mudde is perfectly right to underline the neo-Rokkanian framework on which our research project was based. We started from the fundamental assumption that structural changes were driving changes in social groups' alignments and preferences, and that these, in turn, were expected to lead to political changes. This perspective was similar to other seminal studies, for example to the theoretical framework adopted by Kitschelt (1994). However, it is important to emphasise that our account of the consequences of globalisation goes beyond purely economic transformations. From our point of view, political and cultural aspects of the globalisation process were equally important. The process of European integration, in particular, is a central component in the emergence of a new divide. Similarly, cultural aspects linked with immigration and national identity are crucial in the mobilisation of the 'losers of globalisation'.

One of the central critiques made by Cas Mudde is about the nature of the divide opposing globalisation 'winners' and 'losers'. We claimed that this divide could be qualified as a new cleavage. Cas Mudde notes that the underlying concept was not developed enough. It may be true of the 2006 article, but at least in the accompanying book (Kriesi et al. 2008), the concept was developed in more detail. Our conception followed that of Bartolini and Mair (1990), based on a structural, a normative, and an organisational element. This being said, it is probably true that the social categories of globalisation 'winners' and 'losers' do not represent collective identities, or at least not to the same degree as religious groups or social classes did in the past. As we emphasised, these groups are more heterogeneous than those which characterised the traditional class and religious cleavages, and we also pointed out that, for this reason, they are difficult to organise. But still, even if the groups of 'winners' and 'losers' are more difficult to define precisely in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics, we do observe mobilisation on the basis of their common interests and values. The defence of national traditions, of national identity, and of national sovereignty, are central characteristics of the group of 'globalisation losers' and they occupy a key position in the rhetoric of right-wing populist parties. Thus, it may be true that political parties do not attempt to mobilise these new electoral segments by calling them by their 'real name', but we can still observe a mobilisation effort by political parties based on the issues, identities, and preferences that are at the core of the new divide.

Under these circumstances, is it still justified to denote this new divide as a cleavage? If the collective identity is weaker, considering the integration-demarcation divide a cleavage may be stretching the original concept too far. But the corresponding identities may develop over time – among other things as a result of successful political mobilisation. Absent a strong collective identity, it is less likely that the new alliances between globalisation 'winners' and 'losers' and the parties that mobilise them will show the same degree of persistence as, for instance, the traditional alliance between social-democratic parties, trade-unions, and the working class. This new dimension of electoral competition would be thus less resistant to the emergence of new issues and to mobilisation efforts through other parties. In a way, the financial crisis that started in 2008 represents a strong test for our hypotheses. If the integration-demarcation divide is not as strongly rooted as we suggested, the growing salience of economic issues should reduce the appeal of mobilisation efforts based on issues of national identity. It would mean that a new phase of realignment is more likely, with the emergence of new parties or important changes in the social make-up of the party electorates. Though it is probably too early to give a definitive answer to this, we have not yet witnessed such a new realignment process and the parties typically defending the interests of the 'losers' are the only ones that have clearly benefited from the crisis so far.

On a related note, Cas Mudde emphasises that the on-going financial crisis may reinforce the strength of radical left parties, and he questions whether our two-dimensional map can accommodate them. The combination of anti-Europeanism and pro-multiculturalism that he suggests does indeed represent a challenge for the definition of the cultural dimension. Yet, the 'problem' lies rather in the definition of the European issue (a point he also emphasises) than in the general usefulness of the two-dimensional map. In our article, the reduction of European integration to a single issue was driven by methodological and data considerations. Our purpose was certainly not to argue that all aspects of the European integration debate pertain to cultural considerations. This rather undifferentiated definition of 'the' European issue may represent a weakness of our article. But in further work based on that research project, the European dimension was separated into its economic and cultural components (e.g., Bornschier 2010; Höglinger 2012; Höglinger et al. 2012). Distinguishing between the economic and cultural aspects of European integration would certainly facilitate

the reconciliation of the radical left's position with our two-dimensional map of the political space.

Still regarding this two-dimensional map, Cas Mudde criticises that our theoretical model implies that the two dimensions are equally important to all parties. This is, however, not the case. As pointed out by Cas Mudde, salience constitutes an important aspect of electoral competition and the relative importance of economic and cultural issues indeed varies between parties. We were certainly aware of the importance of salience and we did clearly account for it in our empirical analyses. Our maps of the political space in the various countries and time periods, as well as the positions of parties in these spaces, were based on both issue positions and salience. This was in fact one of the main reasons for relying on (weighted!) multidimensional scaling, i.e., a procedure that allows to weight a party's position on a given issue by its salience for the party in question. Thus, the position of the parties of the populist radical right is mainly determined by their position on the immigration issue, because this issue was by far the most salient in its campaign coverage.

Another central point of discussion is the question of which data to use in order to measure party positions. As emphasised by Cas Mudde, this is part of a larger debate in political science, to which we cannot do justice in a short comment. But it is worth highlighting why we decided to focus on media content. One of the central reasons for this decision was the aim of capturing party positions as presented to citizens. As our focus was on national elections and electoral campaigns, we wanted to measure the issue positions of parties as voters were likely to receive them. We did not claim that this corresponds to the 'true' issue positions of parties. Nor did we argue that these positions were identical to those one would obtain, for instance, on the basis of party manifestos.[2] The decision to rely on media data was not driven by the idea that this leads to the most accurate representation of party positions. As suggested by Cas Mudde, it is quite likely that media data distort to some extent the issue positions of anti-establishment parties. But to the extent that voters rely on the media for their information about parties, this information is the one that counts for electoral behaviour, not any kind of 'true' image of the party that one might get if one reads the party manifesto. For our purposes, it was central to match as closely as possible the information on party positions that voters were likely to be exposed to during electoral campaigns.

Cas Mudde also raises an important point when he asks about the tripolar configuration of party politics. There is a close relationship between the two-dimensionality of the political space, thus of the entire system, and the tripolarity of the party configuration. In a bipolar world of party politics, the partisan space is one-dimensional. In other words, we only need two dimensions if the partisan arrangement is at least triangular. Cas Mudde is right to suspect that the third pole is, according to our view, caused by the rise of the populist radical right, which offers a programmatic package that appeals to a specific electoral coalition and that distinguishes it from the packages of the mainstream centre-left and centre-right. Our hypothesis was that this was not a temporal, but a structural feature of European party systems, caused by the increasing importance of the conflict between globalisation 'winners' and 'losers'. The example of the Dutch VVD provided by Cas Mudde is telling: the right is, indeed, divided in cultural terms, while it tends to be united in economic terms. However, in religiously split or Catholic societies, the right has always been divided in cultural, that is, religious terms. But with secularisation having undermined the structural basis of confessional parties, religion no longer constitutes the crucial cultural dividing line on the right. It is the distinction between cultural liberalism/cosmopolitanism and cultural conservatism/nationalism that has become crucial today. In the long run, the VVD might also

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[2] That said, Helbling and Tresch (2011) show that our measures converge with those based on party manifestos in terms of position, while they differ when it comes to salience.

find itself opposed to the PVV on the economic dimension, given that, under the impact of the crisis and as a result of a learning process, the populist radical right is shifting to the left in economic terms. The most impressive example of such a move as of today is the French Front National, particularly under its new leader Marine Le Pen, but it is by no means the only one.

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