# Fortuyn's Legacy: Party System Change in the Netherlands

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This article argues that the entrance of the Lijst Pim Fortuyn in the Dutch Parliament after the May 2002 elections shows the relevance of the Schattschneider–Mair thesis of party system change. Fortuyn introduced a new line of conflict that restructured party competition in the Netherlands. The introduction of this new line of conflict has transformed the Dutch party system abruptly. The Dutch case differs from many other west European countries in which the rise of a successful radical right-wing populist party has changed the party system gradually.
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## Introduction

The 2002 Dutch parliamentary elections were one of the most volatile in the history of Western Europe (Mair, 2002). From 1998 to 2002, the governing Purple coalition commanded almost a two-third majority in the Dutch Lower House, but after the 2002 elections it was left with only one-third of the seats. The *Partij van de Arbeid* (PvdA) lost 22 of its 45 seats; the *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (VVD) 14 of its 38 seats and *Democraten 66* (D66) seven of its 14 seats. The winners of the 2002 elections were the *Christen Democratisch Appèl* (CDA) that gained 14 seats and with 43 seats became the largest party. The new *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF) won 26 seats and entered parliament as the second largest party. The party's result was very impressive; prior to 2002, the record number of seats for a new party in the Dutch Lower House was seven seats, gained by D66 in the 1967 elections.

The electoral outcome of both winners and losers raises an important question: how to explain these extreme changes in Dutch politics? Our analysis

is concerned with this question how to explain both evolutionary and revolutionary party system change. We focus on the supply side of the political system, that is, the parties that manage political conflict lines. Integrating Schattschneider's theory of lines of conflict and Mair's notion of party system change, we attempt to explain under which circumstances party systems remain stable, and under which circumstances they are vulnerable to abrupt profound changes. Our explanation does not address the shift of the parliamentary seats in terms of electoral behaviour, but looks at the transformation of the Dutch party system as a whole.

The core of the Schattschneider–Mair thesis is that electoral competition is structured by some lines of conflict. As a rule, established political parties preserve the existing order, since fundamental change in the existing structure could have damaging consequences for them. New lines of conflict are generally absorbed into old ones, before they become salient and potentially threatening. However, when a (new) party successfully introduces a new line of conflict, established parties have to react and to reposition themselves. As a result, the party system will undergo a (profound) transition.

The relevance of the Schattschneider–Mair thesis is illustrated by the Dutch case. The Dutch party system had been stable for decades, but suddenly changed in 2002. We claim that, until 2002, the Dutch party system revolved around three lines of conflict. Parties attempting to introduce a new line of conflict failed to do so. This changed in 2002, however, when Fortuyn successfully introduced the cultural line of conflict to the Dutch party system. This can be interpreted as an example of an *abrupt* party system change. We will demonstrate that in this respect the Netherlands differ from other West European countries in which the rise of a successfull radical right-wing populist party has more gradually changed the party system (e.g. Belgium, Denmark and Norway).

Before we present the Schattschneider–Mair thesis, we briefly deal with some of the conventional explanations for the electoral success of the LPF. These explanations focus on the protest character of Fortuyn's movement and Fortuyn's opposition to the political establishment in general and the Purple government and its policies in particular (Van der Brug, 2003). This protest explanation has some relevance and can to a certain extent explain why the LPF was so successful at the 2002 elections. In its most extensive form, the protest explanation argues that the socialist party (PvdA) and the liberal party (VVD) were subject to strong centripetal forces during their participation in the purple coalition, which merged naturally antagonistic parties. Several authors have argued that consensus democracy in general, and a leftwards shift of the VVD in particular, would create an electoral niche for a right-wing populist party (Thomassen, 2000; Andeweg, 2001; Fennema, 2001).

This explanation is partly based on the idea of a shift of voters to the right, but this radical shift of voters has not been recorded. Empirical analysis of the data of the self-placement of voters on a left–right scale in 1994, 1998 and 2002 shows that 'in terms of left and right, there is little or no movement in the electorate over these three elections' (Van Holsteyn *et al.*, 2003, 73).

The absence of a major shift in the left–right orientation of the electorate indicates that a left–right interpretation of Dutch politics does not suffice to explain the 2002 elections. An alternative interpretation must be found. This interpretation should take into account the complex position of the LPF. This party propagated a right-wing opposition to the multicultural society, but combined it with a leftist resentment against the neo-liberal economic policy of the governing parties (Pellikaan *et al.*, 2003). The acknowledgement that Fortuyn's policies endorse a mixture of left- and right-wing elements implies the need for a multidimensional spatial model to account for the electoral success of the party.[1] A theoretical foundation for such a multidimensional analysis can be found in the work of Schattschneider (1960).

## Schattschneider's Lines of Conflict

According to Schattschneider, political conflict will always be fought on more than one front, and political competition always takes place on several lines of conflict. The only way for a political party to 'survive' these political conflicts is to have a coherent vision on all of them; such a vision is called a political doctrine or an ideology. However, parties must prioritize some conflicts over others and sometimes it is not possible to have a coherent vision because 'political cleavages are extremely likely to be incompatible with each other' (Schattschneider, 1960, 62–63). Parties have to make up their mind: 'The question is always: Which battle do we want most to win?' (Schattschneider, 1960, 65). What happens in politics also depends on the way the electorate is divided along the various lines of conflict. Furthermore, the outcome of political competition depends on which line of conflict gains the dominant position.

In Figure 1 the circle represents the political universe as a whole and the line is one possible line of conflict 'among an infinite number of possibilities' (Schattschneider, 1960, 60). The vertical line in Figure 1 represents the economic line of conflict that divides the political universe in two parts: in the left half of the circle we find the citizens and parties that prefer a state-led economy and in the right half of the circle we find the citizens and parties that are in favour of a market economy. If the economic line of conflict is the dominant line of conflict in a society, it would be an example of a class society in which the political struggle is between the haves and the have-nots. This economic line of conflict would correspond to a two-party system with a liberal

(or conservative) party representing the haves and a socialist (or social-democratic) party representing the have-nots.

Schattschneider's line of conflict simply divides the circle in two. In his political universe, the parties are either on *this* or on *that* side of the line of conflict. To explain the Dutch multiparty system, we have to use the concept of a dimension. Instead of a single dichotomy, we need dimensions that capture the range of potential policy positions on a specific scale.

In a multiparty system, there are several parties on the left-side of the economic dimension, each with more or less support for a state-led economy, and a number of parties on the right-side of this dimension, each with more or less support for a market economy. In Figure 2, the economic dimension is the scale that has an orthogonal angle with the economic line of conflict. The extremes of the dimension are 'state-led economy' on the left and 'market economy' on the right end of the scale. The division in Figure 2 is the same as in Figure 1; we merely added an ordinal preference scale for more market economy on the one end of the figure and more state intervention on the other end.
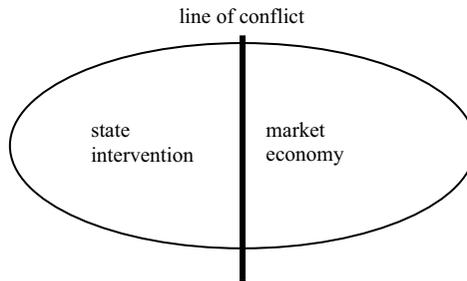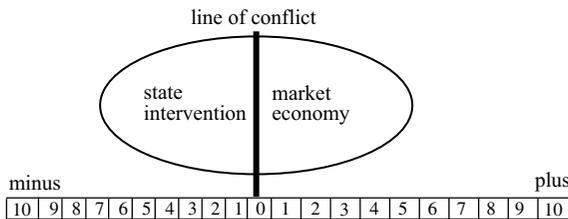


**Figure 1** Economic line of conflict.



**Figure 2** The economic dimension as the Downs' left–right scale.

When a party system is dominated by a single economic line of conflict, the dominant dimension is equivalent to the Downsian left–right political orientation (Downs, 1957). According to Schattschneider's theory, a single line of conflict, such as the left–right political orientation, can only correspond to a two-party system. A multiparty system in Schattschneider's model must be based on more than one line of conflict, although this does not necessarily mean that a society with two or more lines of conflicts will always have a multiparty system.

Established parties will do everything in their power to freeze the existing lines of conflict and to prevent a new line of conflict to arise. According to Schattschneider, there are many potential lines of conflicts, '*but only a few become significant. The reduction of the number of conflicts is an essential part of politics*' (Schattschneider, 1960, 64, italics in original). Schattschneider also states that it is the essence of politics to manage political conflict and that 'all conflict allocates space in the political universe' (Schattschneider, 1960, 69). And in order 'to understand the nature of party conflict it is necessary to consider *the function of the cleavages exploited by the parties in their struggle for supremacy*' (Schattschneider, 1960, 73, italics in original).

Schattschneider's idea that established parties will try to control the dominant political conflict(s) can be related to the freezing hypothesis, which has become well-known through the work of Lipset and Rokkan (1967). The importance of managing conflict for political parties is also stressed by Mair in *Party System Change* (1997a). Mair elaborates on Schattschneider's theory by saying that 'the real essence of a party system may be seen not in the competition between the principal protagonists, be they Labour and Conservative, Christian Democrat and Social Democrat, or whatever, but rather in the competition between those who wish to maintain that principal dimension of competition, on the one hand, and on the other hand, those who — 'the invisible people' — are trying to establish a wholly different dimension' (Mair 1997a, 14).

Schattschneider explains that, although it is in the best interest of the established parties to freeze existing lines of conflict, this strategy runs the risk that the established parties '*may simply freeze obsolete alignments*' and thereby lose their control over the political conflict (Schattschneider, 1960, 73, italics in original). In other words, the reduction and freezing of the number of conflicts is crucial for the survival of the 'old' party system, but if parties do not recognize the call of citizens for new political issues, they will lose their control over the political conflict. And this would mean that the parties fail to do what they are supposed to do, namely to prevent the arrival of new parties. From Schattschneider's theory of lines of conflict and Mair's theory of party system change, we can deduce the following: whenever a (new) party is able to introduce a new line of conflict, all political parties have to reconsider their

views and reposition themselves and as a result the party system will undergo a profound transition.

The Dutch 2002 case demonstrates how a new party (the LPF) was able to introduce a new line of conflict — the cultural line — that had been ignored by the political elite, but was highly salient to the electorate. Because of the long-term discrepancy between public sentiments on the one hand and the structure of the dominant lines of conflict on the elite level on the other hand, the established parties proved unable to absorb the LPF into the traditional format of the Dutch party system. As a consequence, the LPF was not only electoraly successful, but also managed to restructure the dominant lines of conflict.

What sets the Dutch case apart from other West European countries is, according to Ignazi, that 'in no other country has the counter-mobilization against the extreme right proved so vigorous as in the Netherlands, both on the streets (including many violent events) and inside the institutions' (Ignazi, 2003, 172). The second ground for the Dutch case being special is 'the organizational weakness and lack of leadership in both the CD and the CP/CP'86 proved enough to inhibit organizational expansion after the 1984 and 1994 breakthroughs' (Ignazi, 2003, 172).

The post-9/11 discussion over the clash of civilizations made the anti-migrants sentiments acceptable and the established parties, in particular the parties constituting the purple coalition, failed to realize the substantial dissatisfaction with the multicultural society. Pim Fortuyn saw this political opportunity and he was able to put the issues of migrants and the multicultural society on the new political agenda. The coalition parties did not want to make the multicultural society a political issue. It was too late when they realized that their strategy was to *freeze obsolete alignments*. As Schattschneider predicted, they lost their control over the political conflict.

Hence, the Dutch party system transformed in an extremely short period of time from a depoliticized three-way party system to a party system with strong polarization. To understand the abrupt change of the party system, we describe the structure of the old party system in the next section.

## *Verzuiling* and the Ideological Triangle

The politics of accommodation and consensus democracy have long been regarded as the defining characteristics of Dutch politics. Since the late 19th century, four important groups could be identified in the Netherlands: liberals, socialists, Catholics and Protestants (Lijphart, 1968; Daalder, 1971; De Beus *et al.*, 1989; Caramani, 2004). Each group of people formed its so-called own pillar (a broad network of associations, unions and newspapers) that represented by itself only a minority of the Dutch population. Each pillar was represented in parliament by a party family (consisting of one bigger and

one or more smaller parties); making for a multiparty system in which none of the parties had a majority. To come to political agreements, a system of elite cooperation and negotiation was developed. This system, known under the headers 'politics of accommodation' or 'consociational democracy', functioned well after the Second World War (Lijphart, 1968).

During this period of pillarization, competition between parties was kept to a minimum. Political competition was, however, at the basis of the political system. Parties distinguished themselves — and competition was possible — around three main lines of conflict (economic issues varying from welfare arrangements to free market, ethical issues involving questions of pro life *vs* pro choice and issues related to collectivist interest building *vs* individual interest). The economic line of conflict is essentially the same as the one presented in Figure 1 and it divides the political universe into two opposing camps: on the one hand there are the parties that favour a market economy (e.g. the liberal and Christian parties) and on the other hand there are the parties that prefer a state-led economy (e.g. the socialist parties).

The second line of conflict on which the ideological triangle is based is the so-called ethic line of conflict. Again this line separates the political universe into two parts. There is one part where the parties that support a moral state that issues strict legislation on questions such as abortion, euthanasia and same sex marriage can be found and another part where parties that are in favour of a neutral state that leaves moral decisions in the hands of citizens are located. This line of conflict brings the secular parties, that is, the socialists and liberals, on the same side of the divide opposite to the Christian parties.

The third line of conflict is the corporatist or communitarian line of conflict. This line splits the political universe in a half in which parties adhere to the idea of a collectivistic or a communitarian view of society and a half in which we find parties that have a more individualist conception of society. The opposition here is between the Christian and socialist parties at the collectivistic half of the political universe and the liberal parties on the opposite side.

The three lines of conflict divide the Dutch political universe into six parts. To get a detailed idea of the political competition that took place in the period of pillarization, we can transform the political universe with its three dominant lines of conflict in a competitive space with three main dimensions, a configuration known as the ideological triangle.[2] This is done in Figure 3, where the economic, collectivistic and ethical lines of conflict are transformed into dimensions. Each of the dimensions is illustrated with an arrow that has an orthogonal angle with the lines of conflicts. On the basis of their positions on each of the three lines of conflict, the main party families can be situated in the ideological triangle.[3]
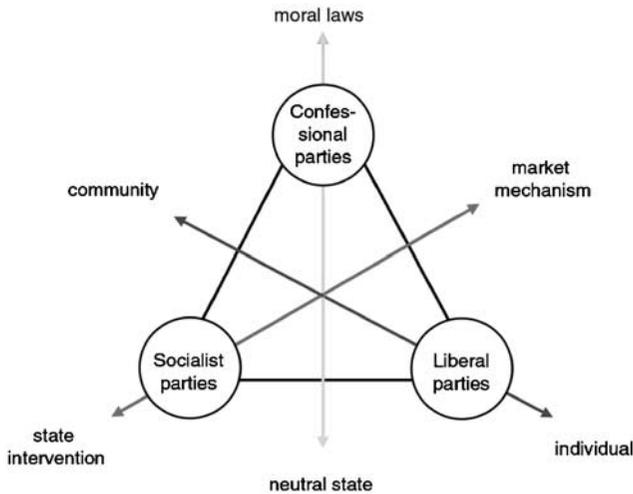
**Figure 3** The Dutch triangle.

The socialist parties are located in the left corner of the triangle. They combine a preference for a state-led economy with that for a neutral state on the ethic dimension and for the community on the communitarian dimension. During the last decade in which the old lines of conflict functioned, this socialist party family is represented in Dutch parliament by three parties. First of all, there is the Labour Party, the PvdA, with relatively moderate socio-economic views. Secondly, there is the GreenLeft, *GroenLinks* (GL), a green party that puts emphasis on environmental issues. When the party was founded in the early 1990s, it tried too hard to fit into the frozen lines of conflict and therefore could not introduce a new line of conflict in Dutch politics. Thirdly, the *Socialistische Partij* (SP) is a socialist party with a Maoist past that occupies the most extreme left-wing position on the economic dimension. Interestingly, this party has some conservative features and it has sometimes been inclined to advocate a moral state instead of a neutral state (e.g. on the question of euthanasia).

The liberal parties can be found in the right corner of the triangle. They prefer a market economy, a neutral state on the ethic dimension and an individualistic position on the corporatist dimension. Two main parties represent this party family in Dutch politics since the late 1960s. First of all, the VVD stands for a classical liberal programme. Secondly, D66 is a party with a social-liberal appeal that was established in 1966 and explicitly stated that its goal was to blow up the traditional party system since this was

considered obsolete. It tried to introduce a new line of conflict centred on issues of a more participatory democracy. However, this line of conflict was not of great saliency to the general public and the established parties were able to maintain the old lines of conflict.

The Christian parties are situated in the top corner of the triangle. Their ideology is based on the primacy of the market economy on the economic dimension, the moral state on the ethic dimension and the collectivist view on the corporatist dimension. After the Catholic and the two Protestant parties merged in 1980, they are represented by the CDA. This party is a broad Christian-Democratic party that has been known for its moderate, middle of the road positions. There are also two orthodox Christian parties, the *ChristenUnie* (CU) and the *Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij* (SGP). The programmes of these parties are more outspoken than that of the CDA, in particular on questions related to the ethic dimension.

The three dimensions in Figure 3 form the ideological triangle that represents the relationship between the party families — the liberals, the socialists and the Christian parties — that have dominated Dutch politics for several decades. Apparently, these party families were able to survive because they could manage political conflicts by unifying the citizens along these cleavages or lines of conflicts. 'The majority is held together by the alignment around which it was formed. It has a vested interest in the old line-up in which it confronts familiar antagonists already well identified in old contests. A new alignment is likely to confuse the majority and new alignments are usually designed to exploit tensions within the majority. Hence, the fight is apt to be between the interests that benefit by the maintenance of the old alignment and those demanding a new deal' (Schattschneider, 1960, 73).

Each of the three party families had a coherent political position on all three lines of conflict and in a joint effort these lines of conflict were frozen. The main parties of each party family, the PvdA for the socialists, the VVD for the liberals and the CDA for the Christians, participated in government coalitions during this period (in various compositions), stressing points of agreement and suppressing points of disagreement. Even when the organizational pillars of the '*verzuiling*' started to crumble the liberal, socialist and Christian parties were able to survive, with the help of the triangular construction based on the three dominant lines of conflict. New parties that did enter the competition adapted to the three-way party system. Even when they initially campaigned on themes that could potentially become a new line of conflict, as D66 did, they were forced by the traditional parties to position themselves in one of the three corners of the ideological triangle and compete within the limits of the three dominant lines of conflict. This way the parties like the democrats of the 1960s and the GreenLeft of the late 1980s and early 1990s were absorbed by the existing policy space.

The election year 2002, however, marked the collapse of the Dutch triangle, and the space of competition changed. This happened in two stages. Firstly, the triangle was weakened by the reaction of the CDA to the ethical policies of the Purple governments. Secondly, Fortuyn successfully introduced a new line of conflict.

## An Old Line of Conflict that Became Redundant

The coalition of PvdA, D66 and VVD came into office after the parliamentary elections of 1994, when the previous coalition parties (PvdA and CDA) lost 32 of their 103 parliamentary seats. D66, in size the fourth party, was necessary as a broker for a majority coalition between any of the three larger parties. It demanded a coalition without CDA, and forced the social democrats and the liberals (until then traditional socio-economical opponents) in one 'Purple' coalition: PvdA, VVD and D66. The coalition explicitly set out to solve several ethical issues that had remained unsolved in the previous governments, in which the CDA was a coalition partner. Euthanasia, for example, was legalized, as well as same sex marriages and the adoption of children by married couples of the same sex. By solving some of the major ethical problems, the secular parties in effect erased the ethical line of conflict. The question was, whether the Christian Democrats would be willing to draw that line again.

The political arrangement of the ethical issues presented the CDA with a dilemma. They could, as the orthodox Christian parties SGP and CU did, simply oppose the legalization of euthanasia and same sex marriage in their party programme of 2002. This choice would have been consistent with their religious beliefs, but would have made any future coalition with the socialists or the liberals very difficult. However, a choice for political power over ideological purity would have consequences for the CDA's trustworthiness. The CDA decided to accept the ethical *status quo*, which left the moral pole of the ethical dimension virtually empty, because the CU and the SGP only have a small number of seats. Without strong support and without new issues that were topic of political debate the ethical line of conflict became obsolete. The unintended by-product of the purple coalition was therefore that the space of competition was reduced to two dimensions, the economic and the corporatist-communitarian dimension. This implies that not Fortuyn, but the purple coalition brought down the structure of the Dutch triangle by eliminating the ethical line of conflict.

Furthermore, in 2002 the content of the communitarian line of conflict changed profoundly. The CDA was the first party to reinterpret this dimension. Throughout their time in opposition, the Christian Democrats had redefined themselves by embracing the philosophy of Etzioni. In *The New*

*Golden Rule. Community and Morality in a Democratic Society*, Etzioni (1996) presents the moral community as the cement of society that prevents the risk of social breakdown due to the atomistic liberal individual with his hedonistic and materialistic wants and needs. Etzioni's communitarian concept is oriented at the micro-level; norms and values are socialized within small entities consisting of a few individuals, the primary example being the family. This reorientation of the CDA has been promoted by Jan Peter Balkenende, the prime minister of the 2002 and 2003 coalitions, but was originally prepared by Kees Klop, a Christian Democratic philosopher (Klop, 1998; Balkenende, 2001).

Fortuyn also used the notion of norms and values, but his communitarianism was based on a macro vision, that is, on a conception of society as a whole. He saw communities as cultural entities with different beliefs and practices. According to Fortuyn, the political debate should address the question how culturally diverse communities could and should live together. Fortuyn believed that West European countries should opt for the monocultural society (the other option being a multicultural society), in which the Christian–Judaic–Humanist culture should prevail over other cultures.

With this position, Fortuyn was associated with extreme right parties that also campaign on cultural issues and advocate for a monocultural society. Like Fortuyn and the LPF, these parties fear that under the pressure of continuous immigration, cultural homogeneity and national identity are being threatened. Immigrants, predominantly Muslims, have 'invaded' West European countries and these immigrants have failed to familiarize themselves with the culture of the host country. According to some of these extreme right parties, the establishment is to blame for this 'multicultural drama' (Scheffer, 2000). Owing to their tolerant or indifferent attitudes and lack of restrictive legislation, the established parties have given immigrants the opportunity to come to Western Europe on their own terms (Betz, 2004).

Although this analysis of the multicultural society in Western Europe might seem straightforward, parties propose different solutions to come to a monocultural society, partly guided by the conception they have of the nation and national identity. On the one hand, there are parties that have an ethnic conception of the nation. Ethnic nationalists believe that one can only belong to a nation 'on the basis of etic criteria, mainly through blood ties' (Mudde, 1999, 188). Most extreme right parties adhere to ethnic nationalism, for example the *French Front National* (FN) and the Flemish *Vlaams Belang* (former Vlaams Blok). According to these parties, immigrants can never be fully integrated into West European societies; therefore, they advocate the repatriation of immigrants to protect the national identity. As long as the immigrant still resides in the host country, they have limited rights, for example, exclusion from social security (Swyngedouw and Ivaldi, 2001).

On the other hand, there are parties that interpret the nation as a cultural concept. For them, a nation consists of those people who are born within the state borders or have acquired citizenship through naturalization (Mudde, 1999). The LPF is a state nationalist party; as is, for example, the *Freiheitliche Partei Osterreich* (FPÖ) of Jorg Haider (Lucardie and Voerman, 2002). The LPF opts for a moratorium on immigration and compulsory integration of the immigrants living in the Netherlands. Values that should be internalized by the immigrant are not typically Dutch, but are part of a Western culture that includes the Enlightenment, the Christian–Judaic–Humanistic tradition, and respect for democratic rules, such as the separation of Church and state, separation of powers, equality between men and women and the acceptance of homosexuality. This position indicates that the LPF, unlike most extreme right parties, has a liberal perspective on the problems of the multicultural society. The party wants to safeguard the liberty of the individual that it deems central to the liberal democracy. It therefore denounces norms, values and practices that are collectively imposed on individuals by other traditions.

## A New Line of Conflict, a New Space of Competition

With the Schattschneider–Mair thesis, we can explain the party system change by the established parties' failure to freeze existing lines of conflict of the Dutch triangle and their subsequent loss of control over the political conflict in May 2002 (Schattschneider, 1960, 73; Mair, 1997a, 14). Lines of conflict became obsolete (the ethical line of conflict) or underwent a change (the corporatist-communitarian line of conflict became the cultural line of conflict). As a consequence, a new space of competition emerged and the Dutch political parties had to reconsider their positions.

Before 9/11 2001, any reference in the Netherlands that alluded to the restriction of immigration policy was associated with the ideological programme of the extreme right. This does not mean that there were no parties that campaigned on an anti-immigration programme. In the late 1980s and the 1990s there was the CD, led by Hans Janmaat, that for a number of reasons (cf. below) was effectively marginalized by the established parties. Since these parties posed no electoral threat, the established parties also felt no pressure to pay any attention to the immigration issue and develop elaborate and coherent stances on this issue.

In the run-up to the 2002 municipal elections, held on March 6, the party leaders of GL (Rosemöller), D66 (De Graaf), VVD (Dijkstal) and PvdA (Melkert) followed a similar strategy vis-à-vis Fortuyn. They tried to disqualify the LPF leader by associating him with other extreme right leaders, such as Le Pen (FN), De Winter (VB) or Haider (FPÖ). Moreover, they stressed that

Fortuyn's propositions with regard to the immigration issue were beyond the pale in the hope that this would discourage the electorate to vote for his party.

What the established parties failed to acknowledge was that the public found the immigration issue one of the most pressing political problems (Van Praag, 2003; Kleinnijenhuis *et al*., 2003; Van Holsteyn, 2004). The immigration issue had already achieved a considerable level of saliency during the late 1990s, in particular in 1994 (Irwin and Van Holsteyn, 1997). However, prior to 2002 there had been no credible party that did advocate the anti-immigration position. The CD had always been hindered by the lack of a (charismatic) party leader and a coherent political programme. This made it easy for the established parties to discredit the party and play down the immigration issue. Since Fortuyn had an elaborate and consistent political programme and was able to present it in a persuasive manner, substantial parts of the electorate expressed their intention to vote for his party. These voters had finally found a way to give voice to their sentiments related to the immigration issue.

After the electoral success of Fortuyn in the local elections of March 2002 — especially his triumph in Rotterdam, the second largest city in the Netherlands — the main parties used a different strategy in their attempt to block him: they followed his lead. The PvdA, CDA and VVD changed their draft versions of the election programmes of 2002 and copied Fortuyn's proposals. This bandwagon behaviour of the main parties further legitimized Fortuyn's programme. The change of strategy also implied that the established parties could no longer present their own campaign with their own items and issues. They now had to explain what their position was on the immigration question in comparison to the views of Fortuyn. In other words, Fortuyn had won the struggle over the political agenda and had succeeded in introducing a new line of conflict and consequently reshaped the Dutch space of competition.

To distinguish Fortuyn's and Balkenende's versions of communitarism, we have labelled the macro version the cultural line of conflict. The horizontal line in Figure 4 represents the cultural line of conflict that separates the political universe into two sections: one can find the monocultural society on the top and the multicultural society on the down side of the line of conflict. The monocultural society is a society in which homogeneity of the population is crucial. As was argued above, this homogeneity can take different shapes or forms. The multicultural society, by contrast, stresses the cultural diversity of society and even sees this as desirable. Orthogonally to the cultural line of conflict, one can find the cultural dimension that measures the parties' cultural positions (Figure 4).

The cultural dimension is one of the two components of the space of competition in 2002. The second component is the economic dimension that was already presented in Figure 2. With the economic and the cultural dimension, we have constructed a two-dimensional space of competition.
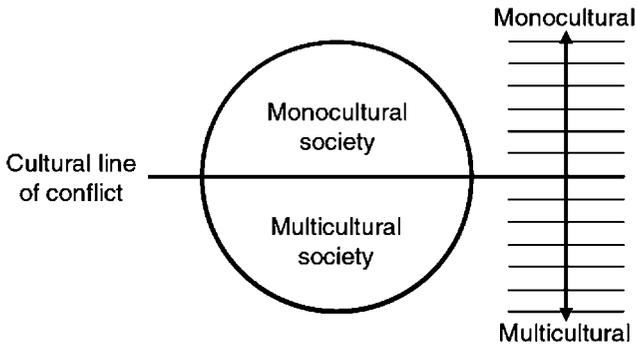
**Figure 4** The cultural dimension as a new line of conflict.

Our view is shared by other scholars in Western Europe, who have shown that in Austria, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, Norway and Switzerland the party competition is structured by two main dimensions, namely the economic and the cultural dimension (e.g. Warwick, 2002; Sniderman *et al.*, 2004; Bornschier, 2005; Kriesi *et al.*, forthcoming; Skjaeveland, 2005; Stubager, 2006). These authors show that both at the mass and the elite level, the economic and cultural dimensions are the main axes around which policy positions have crystallized over the past decade. In these countries, the change of the party system has been gradual, while in the Dutch case the introduction of the cultural line of conflict was abrupt.

In Figure 5,[4] we have depicted the new space of competition for the Netherlands. In this figure, the economic dimension is on the horizontal axis and the cultural dimension is on the vertical axis. The economic dimension is the only one that remained in its original form from the ideological triangle. The vertical axis separates the space of competition into two sections: one can find the supporters of the monocultural society in the upper half of the space and the supporters of the multicultural society in the lower half of the space.

In this new space of competition, the Dutch parties form an ellipse from the left-bottom to the right-top of the two-dimensional space.[5] Figure 5 shows that the LPF is on top of the cultural dimension. The VVD has a high score on the cultural dimension, but not as high as Fortuyn's party. The conservative grass roots of the party pushed it to embrace a more restrictive policy towards migrants and to emphasize Western values. The 'old' party of Fortuyn, LN (*Leefbaar Nederland*) is shown to have the same position on the cultural dimension as the VVD.[6] There are three parties on the other side of this dimension that defend the politics of the multicultural society, the SP, GL and the D66. The orthodox parties, the CU and the SGP, are on the top side of the picture, which means that they moderately endorse the monocultural society.
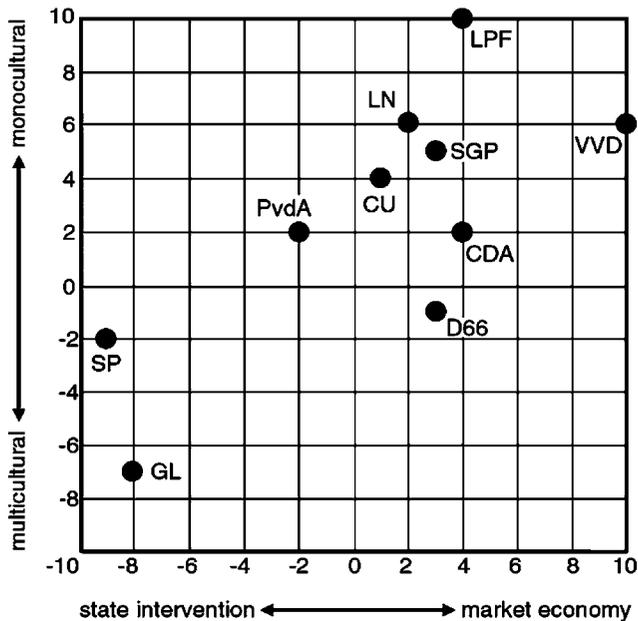
**Figure 5** The space of competition of 2002.

The Labour Party (PvdA) and the Christian Democrats (CDA) have an ambivalent position. On the one hand, they are not against a consociational democracy where the Moslems form their own voluntary associations, that is, a new Moslem pillar in the context of a multicultural society. On the other hand, the PvdA and the CDA also demand that the 'old' immigrants must adapt to the Dutch culture.

This configuration of parties indicates a strong relationship between the two dimensions, and one could therefore argue that the two-dimensional model can be reduced to a single dominant conflict line. However, when one wants to gain insight in the structure of competition after the 2002 elections, the two-dimensional space of competition is of vital importance (De Lange, 2007). A two-dimensional approach highlights that there is considerable difference between the LPF and the VVD, two parties that are often said to compete for the same voters. The LPF takes a more extreme position on the cultural dimension, while the VVD has a more outspoken neo-liberal position on the economic dimension. If the two dimensions were to be collapsed, these nuances would be lost and the distance between the two parties would be reduced significantly. Similarly, the two-dimensional approach sheds light on the differences between the SP (a typical left-wing populist party) and GL (an

example of left-libertarian party). These variations in party positions are important when one wants to address questions of electoral competition or government formation.

## Comparative Implications

The idea of a two-dimensional space of competition, constructed around economic and cultural oppositions, is not new. Both on a theoretical and on an empirical level, these oppositions have been used to describe the political changes that have taken place in Western Europe during the last decade(s). On numerous occasions, scholars have pointed to the importance of cultural questions in the rise of new political parties (most importantly the extreme right parties) and in the reshaping of West-European party systems. In these theoretical frameworks, cultural questions have often been incorporated in more comprehensive dimensions, reflecting oppositions between materialist and postmaterialists (Abramson and Inglehart, 1995) or between libertarians and authoritarians (Kitschelt, 1995). It is only with the emergence of new political parties that the transformation of the cleavage structure has taken place. Established parties have reacted to the agenda set by new parties, formulating positions on cultural questions that had been a taboo before or that had been subjected to elite consensus in support of the multicultural society.

It is worthwhile to notice that in theoretical frameworks and empirical research on new spaces of competition involving economic and cultural questions it is usually asserted that the emergence of a new cultural dimension has led to a rotation of the axis of competition (Kitschelt, 1995; Lubbers, 2001). Political parties have repositioned themselves in such a manner that the competition still takes places on a straight line. The main opposition is between economically left-wing and multicultural parties and economically right-wing and monocultural parties. The extremes of the party system are then formed by Green parties on the one and extreme right parties on the other hand. The established parties are located in the mid-section of the axis of competition, with socialist or social-democratic parties inclined to support economically left-wing and multicultural policies and liberal, Christian-democratic and conservative parties more in favour of economically right-wing and mono-cultural policies.

Our findings show that the Dutch political space has undergone the transformation described in the studies mentioned above. However, we have also argued that it is fruitful to think of the competitive space in the Netherlands in two-dimensional terms. A two-dimensional approach to party competition enables us to analyse complex political processes such as electoral competition and government formation in much more detail.

What sets the Netherlands apart from other West European countries is a fact that in the Netherlands it has been a case of abrupt party system change, whereas in other countries this system change has occurred gradually. The restructuring of the Dutch party system came about unexpectedly and occurred over a very short period of time. For a long time, the traditional parties succeeded extremely well in freezing obsolete alignments, which created an enormous potential for change, as was hypothesized by Schattschneider. Once a new party emerged on the Dutch political scene with sufficient credibility, the old party system broke down rapidly and a new one replaced it. In this respect, the Netherlands differ from other West European countries where the slowly growing electoral pressure of new politics parties has much more gradually transformed the political space.

## Conclusion

In a modern society there are many potential conflicts, but only a few become significant. The established political parties have an important role in managing the reduction of the number of conflicts (Schattschneider, 1960, 64). Sometimes a new party can introduce a new line of conflict as the old parties fail to realize that the continuation of old fights by simply freezing the established alignments does not work. When dissatisfaction with the old alignment is too strong, the new cleavage may become the dominant line of conflict (Schattschneider, 1960, 72–73). This is exactly what happened in the Dutch parliamentary election of 2002. Before 2002 the political and ideological competition between the three major parties, the PvdA, the CDA and the VVD, was frozen. None of the parties could cross the line in the ideological triangle. Electoral competition was more often a fight of domination within a party's own backyard, that is, within its own party family, than a fight against the other major parties. Even though the experience with Fortuyn and the LPF turned out to be short lived — the number of seats of the LPF in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament has sharply decreased at the elections of 2003[7] — it profoundly changed to underlying structure of political competition in the Netherlands. Fortuyn had mobilized a countervailing power against the established parties and by doing so he applied the theory of democracy of the Schattschneider–Mair thesis: it is 'only through democracy, and especially through the competition for political office, that the people can prove (semi-) sovereign' (Mair, 1997b, 948). Fortuyn's legacy is that for the moment the economic and the cultural dimensions are the dominant lines of conflict in the Netherlands, and they may also define the political competition in the next Dutch Parliamentary election of November 22, 2006.

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## Notes

1 On a left–right scale, the right-wing position of the LPF on the immigration question and the party's left-wing views on neo-liberal economic reform would simply cancel each other out.
2 The notion of an ideological triangle is not new. Pappi has used the triangle as a model for explaining the German party system. According to Pappi 'one should give up the simple framework of a left–right dimension underlying the German party system. I suggest instead the model of an isosceles triangle, where the point represents the three parties …' (Pappi, 1984, 12). The three parties in Pappi's triangle also belong to the socialist, liberal and christian party families.
3 See Pellikaan (2002, 2004) and Pellikaan *et al.* (2003) for the details of the positions of parties in the Dutch triangle.
4 Party positions in this figure are based on content analysis of the party manifestos of 2002 by the confrontational method. In these manifestos, the political parties lay down how they wish to change society, and what they wish to keep. Based on these policy proposals, all parties were assigned scores on a number of pre-selected issues (10 issues for the economic dimension and 10 issues for the cultural dimension). For each issue, three scores were possible: $+1$, 0 and $-1$. On the economic dimension, parties scored positively on an issue by making a statement in favour of

a free market economy, negatively by making a statement opposing a free market. On the cultural dimension, parties scored positively on an issue by making a statement indicating support for the monocultural society, negatively by making a statement in favour of the multicultural society. Finally, for each dimension the scores were added up, thereby representing the parties' policy positions. The coding of the parties and the correspondence between a party position and the pages in the election programme can be found in Pellikaan, 2004.

5 Before Fortuyn founded his LPF, he started his political career with LN. He was expelled from this party because he was deemed too extreme.

6 The decline in the success of the LPF was the consequence of the party's loss of its political leader, as well as internal conflict within the party.

7 The configuration of parties in our political space closely resembles the spatial positions measured by other scholars. The correlation between our configuration and the one that can be constructed on the basis of Benoit and Laver's (2006) recent expert survey is very high (0.95), and the correlation with the party scores obtained in the Dutch election survey of 2002 is also very high (0.92). This means that position of the parties in Figure 5 remains by and large the same, irrespective whether their location is based on the data of the expert survey, the placement of parties by voters or by our confrontational method of content analysis of the manifestos.

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