Immigration and the ‘socio-cultural divide’

An inquiry into the nature of the immigration issue in contemporary Western Europe

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Abstract

In contemporary Western Europe, new parties have emerged that aim to mobilize on the immigration issue. The dominant view about this issue is that it is embedded in a socio-cultural dimension of party competition, which is orthogonal to a socio-economic dimension. In this paper, we question this assertion, testing it both at the supply and the demand side of the electoral market.

On the basis of positions of parties and voters in 15 political systems, the immigration issue is found to be neither integrated in a socio-cultural dimension nor orthogonal to a socio-economic dimension. By contrast, the issue is linked to both a traditional economic dimension and the left-right divide. These findings offer additional evidence for explanations of the electoral performance of anti-immigration parties on the basis of party and voter positions in terms of left and right while casting doubts on claims that contemporary Western European party competition is two-dimensional.
Introduction

The surge of anti-immigration parties since the 1980s – such as the former Vlaams Blok in Flanders, the Front National in France, the Danish People’s Party in Denmark and the Lijst Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands – marked some of the largest changes in the party systems of these countries. Previous studies have shown that this type of parties mainly mobilizes on the immigration issue (e.g., Betz 2002; Ivarsflaten 2005; Van der Brug, Fennema, and Tillie 2000). Therefore, we and others have called them ‘anti-immigration parties’ (e.g., Bjørklund and Goul Andersen 2002; Fennema 1997; Gibson 2002; Golder 2003).

The dominant view about the immigration issue is that it is embedded in a socio-cultural dimension of party competition, which is orthogonal to a socio-economic dimension (Kitschelt 2004; Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Kriesi et al. 2006). Different interpretations of this cultural dimension exist. In the operationalisation of Kriesi et al (2006) attitudes towards European integration are important elements of a cultural dimension, whereas Kitschelt’s (2004) conceptualization relates to issues such as abortion and gay rights, as well as law and order. Yet, in all accounts, attitudes towards immigrants are an important part of this dimension, which is seen as orthogonal to the socio-economic dimension. This would mean that party and voter positions on the socio-economic dimension do not predict their positions on immigration. Combined with the common interpretation of the left-right dimension as reflecting –at least in part– socio-economic policy positions, the logical consequence is that party and voter positions on immigration positions are not aligned with those on the left-right dimension either. After all, if left-right positions reflect the socio-economic dimension, and if this dimension is orthogonal to the immigration issue, then immigration and left-right cannot be strongly correlated.

Yet, a recent study by Van der Brug et al. (2005) cast doubt on this view of the immigration issue. Van der Brug et al. showed that the electoral performance of anti-immigration parties can be very well explained in terms of party competition on a left-right dimension. In combination with other studies, mentioned before, which show that these parties attract support on the basis of the immigration issue, this suggests that the left-right dimension generally reflects the immigration policy dimension. This interpretation is, however, not consistent with the notion that immigration would be part of a cultural
dimension, which would be orthogonal to left-right, at least not if left-right is interpreted as a
dimension that structures amongst others- positions on socio-economic policies.

In this paper, we question the predominant view of the immigration issue. We will do
so in three steps. First of all, we will test whether the immigration issue is aligned with the
other main issue usually associated with the socio-cultural dimension, EU integration.
Second, we will assess whether attitudes towards immigration are orthogonal to those towards
government influence in the economy. Third, it will be examined how the immigration issue
relates to the left-right dimension. In doing so, we will distinguish between the supply side of
the electoral market, the parties, and the demand side, the voters (cf. Downs 1957). Unlike in
previous research (e.g., Kriesi et al. 2006), we will take both sides of the electoral market into
account. As the purpose of the study is to arrive at conclusions about the development of new
cleavages, we have to look at both sides. After all, we cannot speak of a cleavage if the
dimensions that structure party policies are not reflected in the attitudes of the voters.

Studying the nature of the immigration issue is important for the explanation of the
electoral performance of anti-immigration parties. If the immigration issue cannot be
distinguished from the left-right dimension, then we have evidence from separate analyses
that there is one dimension specifically important for anti-immigration party success. This
would cast doubts on the explanation Kitschelt (1995; 2004) put forward for the success of
anti-immigration parties, which is that the success of these parties depend on the combination
of positions on two dimensions. Also, such a finding would cast doubts on the findings by
Kriesi et al. (2006) about the two-dimensionality of contemporary Western European politics,
with the immigration issue as orthogonal to a socio-economic axis. If, by contrast, positions
on the left-right dimension turn out to deviate substantially from those on the immigration
dimension and be more strongly related to a cultural dimension, we would have additional
evidence in support of the claim of Kriesi et al. (2006) that a new cultural cleavage has
developed.

This paper will start off by elaborating on previous work, followed by an outline of the
theoretical framework of the study and the hypotheses. After this, the hypotheses will be put
to the test at the party-level on the basis of empirical evidence regarding party positions in 15
political systems in Western Europe. The same hypotheses will be tested for the particular
case of the Netherlands, taking into account party and voter positions on the same set of
policy dimensions at three different points in time. The paper will conclude by placing the
findings in a wider perspective.
New cleavages?

Many studies show that across various European systems the behavior of parties and voters alike is structured largely by a left-right dimension, which until the 1990s remains the dominant ideological dimension in many of these countries (e.g., Fuchs and Klingemann 1990; Hix 1999; Klingemann, Hofferbert, and Budge 1994; Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). In political communication among different actors (citizens, parties and the press) it is quite common to describe policy positions in terms of 'left' and 'right'. To the extent that political actors agree about the meaning of the terms left and right, the use of these terms facilitates political communication. However, this does not mean that the terms left and right have a fixed meaning over time, nor that they have the same meaning in different countries. In some contexts the left-right distinction may pertain to socio-economic policies, whereas in a different context it may pertain to issues that involve individual freedom. It has been argued that the left-right dimension has often assimilated new political issues, so that parties’ left-right positions summarize their positions on a large number of concrete issues in most European countries (e.g., Fuchs and Klingemann 1990). As a case in point, environmentalism has gradually become associated with the political left. Recently, Van der Brug et al. (2005) showed that the electoral performance of anti-immigration parties can be very well explained in terms of party competition on a left-right dimension (Van der Brug, Fennema, and Tillie 2005). This suggests that the immigration issue – which lies at the heart of the rise of these parties – has also become largely absorbed by the left-right dimension.

However, the study of Kriesi et al. (2006) suggests that there are two important dimensions in Western European party competition: an economic and a cultural one. These findings largely confirm Kitschelt (1995), who also distinguishes two dimensions in his landmark study on anti-immigration parties. On the one hand, there is a traditional economic axis, ranging from socialist to capitalist policies. On the other, there is an authoritarian-libertarian dimension, often referred to as a socio-cultural cleavage. According to Kitschelt, these dimensions are orthogonal. Recently, he has added the idea that the socio-cultural dimension has gained importance at the expense of the influence of traditional economic issues (Kitschelt 2004).

Even if Kitschelt (1995; 2004) and Kriesi et al. (2006) are correct in claiming that there is a second dimension that structures party competition, there is some confusion about the nature of this dimension. In Kitschelt’s conceptualisation of what he calls the authoritarian-libertarian dimension, this consists of three building blocks (De Lange 2006). A first building block is inclusive versus exclusive attitudes towards socio-cultural variety. A
second element is the degree to which individuals have a say in collective decisions. A third aspect is individual autonomy versus compliance with collectively shared norms. The description of this dimension is generally in line with that of the Green/Alternative/Libertarian (GAL) versus Traditional/Authoritarian/Nationalist (TAN) distinction by Hooghe et al. (2002). All three elements can also be found in this distinction: GAL-parties are against discrimination (first aspect), in favour of the notion of participatory democracy (second), and are advocates of what is often perceived as individual freedoms and rights, such as the freedom of speech and the right to opt for abortion, same-sex marriage and euthanasia (third).¹

Attitudes towards European integration are a central element in the conceptualisation of the new “globalisation” cleavage by Kriesi et al. (2006), but it is not a central element in Kitschelt’s operationalization of the cultural dimension. The finding of Kriesi and his colleagues that positions on European integration are an element of this second dimension is in line with results of Hooghe et al. (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002), and Hix (1999). These studies have shown the EU dimension to be largely unrelated to the left-right dimension. Van der Eijk and Franklin (2007) also concluded that party positions as perceived by voters on left-right and on the issue of European unification are largely unrelated in most countries. However, in some countries the two dimensions are positively correlated and in other countries negatively. Marks and Steenbergen on the other hand have argued that positions on EU-integration have become embedded in the left-right dimension in most countries (Marks and Steenbergen 2002).

**Hypotheses**

We base this study on the analyses by Kitschelt (1995; 2004) and Kriesi et al. (2006). Their core argument is that the party positions on immigration are integrated in the socio-cultural dimension and therefore similar to those on the EU unification issue. As Kriesi et al. put it, “new issues should be integrated into the cultural dimension. Central among these are the issues of European integration and immigration. The demarcation pole of the new cultural cleavage should be characterized by an opposition to the process of European integration and by restrictive positions with regard to immigration” (2006: 924). We can therefore formulate a first hypothesis:

¹ De Lange (2006) argues, however, that these three elements do not always coincide. In the debate in the Netherlands about immigration, anti-Muslim politicians defend their position often by emphasizing the Islam’s intolerance towards homosexuals and towards the emancipation of women.
**H1a:** party positions on the immigration issue are aligned with those on the issue of European unification

In addition, attitudes toward immigration should be orthogonal to the socio-economic dimension.

**H1b:** party positions on the immigration issue are orthogonal to those on a traditional economic dimension

The assumption that the economic and cultural dimensions are orthogonal to each other in combination with the assertion that the left-right dimension is dominant in contemporary Western European party competition results in a third hypothesis about the immigration issue. Positions on the immigration issue are not expected to be heavily correlated with positions in terms of left and right.

**H1c:** party positions on the immigration issue are not aligned with those on a left-right dimension

Even though the study of Kriesi et al. (2006) focuses on parties only, and not on citizens, their expectations about the development of a new dimension is based on the existence of a structural conflict in society. This structural conflict could then lead to the same kinds of structures in positions of voters as among political parties. In addition, the theoretical arguments made by Kitschelt (1995; 2004) apply to voters as well as parties. So, we may formulate the same hypotheses for the voters as for the parties, which are thus:

**H2a:** voter positions on the immigration issue are aligned with those on the issue of European unification

**H2b:** voter positions on the immigration issue are orthogonal to those on a traditional economic dimension

**H2c:** voter positions on the immigration issue are not aligned with those on a left-right dimension.

Ideally, we would test these hypotheses for a large number of countries, using the same variables to measure positions of parties and voters. However, the measures of party positions that derive from cross-national studies are different ones than the measures that can be obtained from cross-national surveys among citizens, such as the European Social Survey. Therefore, it was decided to proceed somewhat differently. We will first focus on the supply side (the positions of parties in 15 electoral systems) and the overarching conflict dimensions across all countries that we study. It is possible, of course, that cross-national differences exist, but since the new cleavages that Kriesi et al. (2006) describe are rooted in structural
conflicts that exist throughout Western Europe, we would expect the same structures to exist in all countries.

After presenting the cross-national results for the supply side only, we turn to one country, the Netherlands, where positions of parties and voters have been measured on the same scale for a decade now, for the policy dimensions that we want to consider: socio-economic policies, policies on European integration, and attitudes towards immigrants. This will allow us to see within one country whether we can see a new cleavage developing, as predicted by Kriesi et al. (2006).

Data and Method

In order to measure the positions of parties and voters on the different dimensions, we employ different sources of data. We will use data from large-scale surveys and from expert surveys. These data sources are described in the appendix. The four dimensions in this paper are:

- left-right, measured on a scale ranging from left (1) to right (10);
- immigration – scale ranging from "not very restrictive" (0) to "very restrictive" (10);
- economy: scale ranging from maximal government influence in the economy (0) to minimal government influence in the economy (10)
- European unification, measured on a scale ranging from "has gone too far" (1) to "should be pushed further" (10).

See the appendix for the formulation of the questions in the various surveys and a description of these surveys.

In the first part of the paper, data from 15 different electoral systems are employed, using data from two expert surveys and two voter surveys. The data at our disposal pertain to two time points. Party positions regarding the immigration issue by 1999 can be derived from the Expert Judgment Survey of Western European Political Parties 2000, the results of which were published in Lubbers (2001). For the party positions on immigration by 2004, an expert survey is being conducted in the course of this research, replicating the survey by Lubbers (Van Spanje et al. 2006). In order to link the data of the survey to results from the European Election Study 2004, experts were asked to position all parties represented in national parliament in the political system of their expertise on immigration and on a dimension

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2 Flanders and Wallonia are analyzed separately because each part of Belgium has its own party and electoral system. We present data from 14 countries, which represent 15 political systems.
regarding the economy by June, 2004. The availability of data limits the number of parties selected to 137 in 15 systems. Not all the data are available pertaining to each party, so that the number of cases varies across analyses, as will be reported in the results below.

In the second part of the paper we will concentrate on one Western European country over time, the Netherlands, in order to take a more in-depth look at the party and voter positions. For two reasons, the case of the Netherlands between 1994 and 2003 provides an adequate opportunity for an additional test of our hypotheses regarding the supply side as well as tests of our demand-side hypotheses. Not only is this the case about which rich data are available, but it is also a crucial case because of at least two radical changes that happened in this country during this period. First of all, the meteoric rise of the anti-immigration List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) in 2002 was a major departure from the recent past in which several anti-immigration parties emerged (NVU, CP, CP’86 and CD) that were all very unsuccessful. In addition, the LPF joined a government coalition and dominated the news for months on end. Since then, several other political entrepreneurs have tried to copy Fortuyn’s electoral success. In terms of the presence of anti-immigration parties in the media, the Dutch case therefore represents two completely different periods, the time span until fall 2001, and the period after this.

Second – and linked to this – there is quite a lot of variation in the prominence of immigration on the political agenda. In 1994 a small scale debate on immigration was launched by the then leader of the VVD, Bolkestein, but there was a big taboo on discussing problems related to immigration. In 1998 the issue was hardly raised, and in 2002 the taboo was suddenly replaced by an overwhelming attention to the issue. Also in this sense, the Dutch political world has radically changed during the period under study. If anywhere, changes in the linkages between immigration and the other relevant dimensions should appear in this case. If, for example, both voters’ party positioning and their self-placement on the immigration issue turned out to be similar to those in terms of left and right in all of these four contexts, this would be a strong indication that the immigration and left-right dimensions are intrinsically linked - and that therefore the electoral success or failure of anti-immigration parties can be captured in terms of left and right. In addition, it should be noted that the Netherlands is a case explicitly referred to by Kriesi et al. (2006: 943-5).

The Dutch National Election Studies 1994, 1998 and 2002-2003 provide the data adequate for our analyses. In the questionnaires of these three studies, voters were asked to place themselves and the relevant parties in the Dutch political system at the time on the four policy dimensions of interest in this paper. The last three hypotheses will therefore be tested
on the basis of these data sets. All the hypotheses will be assessed in two different manners, by way of bivariate correlations and by way of confirmatory factor analyses.

**Results: supply side analyses across 15 systems**

Are the positions of parties on immigration aligned with those on European unification (H1a)? By 1999, party positions on immigration turn out to be hardly correlated at all with those on a European unification dimension (r=-0.04, N=95, not reaching conventional levels of statistical significance). Five years later the predicted significant negative correlation exists. The correlation is still weak, however (r=-0.34, N=76, significant at p=0.01, one-tailed). This leads us to reject Hypothesis 1a.

Hypothesis 1b entails that the immigration policy positions of Western European parties are orthogonal to party positions on a traditional economic dimension. However, a highly significant and very strong correlation was found between the two dimensions for 1999 (r=0.82, N=99, significant at p=0.01, one-tailed), and a moderate correlation in 2004 (r=0.52, N=112, significant at p=0.01, one-tailed). Hence H1b is rejected as well.

The third hypothesis, stating that left-right party positions differ significantly from those on immigration (H1c), is not confirmed either by our bivariate correlations analyses. The hypothesis does not hold for 1999 or 2004, with very strong correlations of the two dimensions of r=0.83 (N=98, significant at p=0.01, one-tailed) in 1999 and r=0.76 (N=84, significant at p=0.001, one-tailed) in 2004.3 In general, the more right-wing a party is, the more restrictive on immigration it is.4

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3 Similar results are obtained if we weigh the data positioning of the parties according to their electoral performance in the corresponding year. For instance, the weight of the placement of the Austrian social democratic party (SPÖ) was 0.3315, as the party gained 33.15% of the vote in the 1999 national elections. For countries where there were no national elections in 1999, we estimate the electoral performance of each party on the basis of its results at national elections before and after this date, assuming linear increase or decline in-between elections. For example, on the basis of the results of the Danish liberals (V) – 24.01% in 1998 and 31.25% in 2001 – we estimate their electoral performance at 26.42% by 1999. The weight variable that we add is a variable that compensates for the loss of cases caused by weighting the electoral performance, leaving the total number of cases unchanged.

4 The reliability of the two scales, measured by the Cronbach’s alpha, is 0.87 (1999) and 0.85 (2004). These are very high reliability scores, especially because there are only two items involved. Asking the same question twice would probably yield a set of answers with a similar reliability level.
Table 1
Absolute values of correlations of immigration with three other dimensions in 15 European systems, 1999-2004 (Supply side)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1999-2000</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.34**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=95)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(N=76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>0.82***</td>
<td>0.52**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=99)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(N=112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LR</td>
<td>0.83***</td>
<td>0.76***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=98)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(N=84)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*significant at the p<0.05 level
** significant at the p<0.01 level
*** significant at the p<0.001 level

In order to provide a more robust test of Hypotheses 1a, 1b and 1c, we estimated a confirmatory factor analysis model as presented in Figure 1. Figure 1 displays the estimates of the model based on Kriesi et al. (2006) on the basis of the most recent data, those pertaining to 2004. In this model two latent dimensions — classical left-right and a cultural dimension — both have two indicators. Figure 1 presents the standardized solutions. The first indication of the fit of the model is provided by the chi-square, which provides a test of the null-hypothesis that this causal model gave rise to the correlations in the data. With two degrees of freedom, a chi-square of 104, this null-hypothesis should be rejected. A problem with the chi-square test is that it depends upon sample size, which might sometimes lead to the rejection of a well fitting model if the sample size is large. Another measure that is also used is the RSMEIA, which has to be below 0.05 if the model is well specified, according to standards proposed by Browne and Cudeck (1993). In this case the RSMEA is 0.83, so that this model needs to be rejected.

<FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE>

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5 We also tested these three models on the basis of 1999-2000 data. In this case, the model in Figure 1 yields a chi-squared of 57.4, and an RMSEA of 0.543, so that this model must be rejected. Testing the model in Figure 2 on these data yields a chi-squared of 17.3, and an RMSEA of 0.285, which is a clear improvement. However, in 1999/2000 the model in Figure 3 yields no improvement over the one in Figure 2 (chi-square = 14.7, df =1, RMSEA =0.384). Moreover, the positions on immigration in 1999 were not significantly affected by the cultural dimension (the standardized effect was -0.09), whereas the same effect was significant in 2004 (when the standardized effect was -0.48). This shows that party positions on immigration were unrelated to positions on a “cultural dimension” in 1999/2000, but became more strongly linked to this second dimension by 2004.

6 This is not a problem in these analyses, but it may be a problem when we analyze the voter surveys.
Figure 2 presents an alternative model, where positions on immigration are an indicator of the socio-economic dimension, rather than the second (cultural) dimension. This model is more in line with the recent insights from Van der Brug et al (2005), showing that support for anti-immigration parties can be well explained by left-right positions only. The model presented in Figure 2 clearly fits the data much better than the one in Figure 1. With the same number of degrees of freedom (df=2), the chi-square estimate drops from 104 to 47, which clearly is a significant improvement. Moreover, the RSMEA of this model is 0.55, which is better than the RMSEA of 0.83 in the previous model. However, despite the fact that the model in Figure 2 is an improvement over the model in Figure 1, its fit is not yet satisfactory.

In Figure 3 we estimated yet another model, where positions on immigration depend upon both latent dimensions: classical left-right and the cultural dimension. With just 1 degree of freedom and a chi-square of 5.8, this model has a much better fit than the previous model. However, with an RMSEA of 0.25 it is still not a model that fits the data sufficiently well, at least not according to standards proposed by Browne and Cudeck (1993). The model does, show, however, that positions on immigration are much more strongly linked to the first (left-right) dimension than to the “cultural dimension”, which in turn makes the label “cultural dimension” somewhat dubious.

We also tested these three models on the basis of 1999-2000 data. In this case, the model in Figure 1 yields a chi-squared of 57.4, and an RMSEA of 0.543, so that this model must be rejected. Testing the model in Figure 2 on these data yields a chi-squared of 17.3, and an RMSEA of 0.285, which is a clear improvement. However, in 1999/2000 the model in Figure 3 yields no improvement over the one in Figure 2 (chi-square = 14.7, df=1, RMSEA =0.384). Moreover, the positions on immigration in 1999 were not significantly affected by the cultural dimension (the standardized effect was -0.09, which is much weaker than in 2004 when it was -0.48), while the effect of the socio-economic dimension was equally strong (the standardized effect was 0.89 in both analyses). This shows that party positions on immigration
were unrelated to positions on a “cultural dimension” in 1999/2000, but became more strongly linked to this second dimension by 2004.

**Results: Supply side analyses for the Netherlands**

Concerning the case of the Netherlands, we expect – again – that the party positions on the immigration issue are heavily linked to those on the European unification dimension (H1a). However, the correlations are not statistically significant and quite low, especially regarding 1998 and 2002-2003 (r=0.33 and r=0.35, see Table 2). This casts additional doubts on the first hypothesis.

By contrast, the correlation between immigration and a traditional economic dimension (H1b) is considerably higher – ranging between r=0.73 and r=0.94. Notwithstanding the very small N, these correlations even reach conventional levels of statistical significance in 1998 and 2002-2003. Like the analyses regarding all 15 systems, studying the Dutch case leads us to reject the second hypothesis.

The results concerning Hypothesis 1c are suggestive. Party positions on the immigration issue are almost identical to those in terms of left and right. Correlations vary between r=0.92 (significant at the p<0.05 level, one-tailed) and r=0.95 (significant at the p<0.01 level, one-tailed). In the eyes of voters, parties are lined up on an immigration dimension in almost exactly the same way as on a left-right spectrum. Hypothesis 1c can therefore be rejected.

Because of the limited number of cases (n=4 in 1994, and n=6 in 1998 and 2002-2003) we decided not to test structural equation models on these data for the supply side. It is clear, however, that none of the hypotheses can be confirmed on the basis of any of the three contexts examined.
Table 2
Absolute values of correlations of immigration with three other dimensions in the Netherlands, 1994-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Supply</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
<th>Demand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=4)</td>
<td>(n=6)</td>
<td>(n=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.94**</td>
<td>0.85*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=4)</td>
<td>(n=6)</td>
<td>(n=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LR</td>
<td>0.92*</td>
<td>0.95**</td>
<td>0.95**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=4)</td>
<td>(n=6)</td>
<td>(n=6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*significant at the p<0.05 level
** significant at the p<0.01 level
*** significant at the p<0.001 level

Results: demand side analyses for the Netherlands

Now we turn to the demand side of the electoral market – the voters. The results of the analyses suggest a pattern that is similar to that at the supply side. Like party positions, the voter positions on immigration are considerably more heavily linked to the left-right dimension than to the issue of European unification. The correlation between immigration and the issue of European unification is very low, ranging from r=0.08 in 1994 to r=0.22 in 1998. Although these correlations reach high levels of statistical significance as a result of the large sample sizes, this presents no convincing evidence for Hypothesis 2a.

Mixed evidence is found for Hypothesis 2b. In 1994 and 1998, the association between the immigration and economic dimension was even weaker than between immigration and ‘Europe’. By 1994, immigration was virtually orthogonal to economic issues (H2b). Voter positions on the economic dimension have recently become linked to those on immigration, however.

The expectation that the left-right dimension would not be linked to immigration at the demand side (H2c) can be rejected. The correlations, ranging between 0.23 and 0.47 (significant at the p=0.001 level, one-tailed), indicate that the preferences of voters on the immigration issue are, at least partly, structured by the left-right dimension.

In order to provide a more firm test of Hypotheses 2a through 2c, we tested the model in Figure 4 using structural equation modelling. Again, the most recent data are employed, in
this case the Dutch National Elections Study 2002. Like Figure 1, it displays the model based on Kriesi et al. (2006), in which two latent dimensions – classical left-right and a cultural dimension – both have two indicators. Figure 1 presents the standardized solutions. With two degrees of freedom, a chi-square of 84.2 and an RSMEA of 0.17, this model must be rejected. Even though, judging by the RSMEA value, this two dimensional structure describes positions of Dutch voters better than positions of parties across 15 countries (see Figure 1), the model does not fit the data well enough to be acceptable.

The model in Figure 4 shows also that the two dimensions are highly correlated, when positions on immigration are seen as an indicator of the cultural dimension. Therefore, we estimated an alternative model, similar to the one in Figure 2, where positions on immigration are an indicator of left-right, rather than the second (cultural) dimension. This model, presented in Figure 5 is more in line with the recent insights from Van der Brug et al (2005), showing that support for anti-immigration parties can be well explained by left-right positions only. As was the case in the analysis of parties, the model presented in Figure 5 fits the data much better than the one in Figure 4. With the same number of degrees of freedom (df = 2), the chi-square estimate drops from 84 to 44, which is a significant improvement. Moreover, the RSMEA of this model is 0.12, which is a better fit than the RMSEA of 0.17 in the previous model. However, despite the fact that the model in Figure 5 is an improvement over the model in Figure 4, its fit is not yet satisfactory.

In Figure 6 we estimated yet another model, where positions on immigration depend upon both latent dimensions: classical left-right and the cultural dimension. With just 1 degree of freedom and a chi-square of 0.9, this model has a much better fit than the previous model. With an RMSEA of 0.00 it also fits the data very well according to standards proposed by Browne and Cudeck (1993). The model shows that positions on immigration are more strongly linked to the first (social) dimension than to the “cultural dimension”, which in turn makes the label “cultural dimension” somewhat dubious.

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7 As in the models tested for parties, the effect of the cultural dimension on EU policies was fixed at 1 (unstandardized). The rationale is explained in footnote 4 above.
To take into account the over-time perspective, we also tested the model in Figure 6 for 1994 and 1998. The results for 1994 are very similar to those in 2002. The RMSEA is 0.000, which indicates a very good fit of the model. The effect of the social dimension on attitudes towards immigrants is stronger than the effect of the cultural dimension (the standardized coefficients are 0.33 and -0.20, respectively), and the estimated correlation between the two dimensions is very weak (0.11). In 1998 the results were a little different. In that year the model did not fit the data so well (df = 1; chi-squared = 17.1; p = 0.000; RMSEA = 0.101). In 1998 the relationship between the two dimensions was also weak (the estimated correlation was 0.06) and the effect of the cultural dimension on attitudes towards immigrants was stronger than the effect of the social dimension (0.34 versus 0.29). Since the results of 1994 were more similar to 2002 than the results of 1998, there is no linear trend towards the development of a new cleavage in the Netherlands.

Conclusions

The emergence of anti-immigration parties in most Western European countries indicates that the immigration issue has become increasingly salient. According to Kitschelt (1995; 2004) and Kriesi et al. (2006), this means that party politics in Western Europe is, or has become, two-dimensional. In this view, an economic and a cultural dimension of party competition exist, and the immigration issue is embedded in the cultural dimension. However, the results of bivariate analyses as well as confirmatory factor analysis, cast serious doubts on this view.

First of all, among parties in 15 West-European political systems, as well as among voters, there is only a weak relationship between positions on the immigration issue and the other issue that is said to be part of the cultural dimension: European unification (H1a, H2a). Second, the immigration issue is strongly associated both with a traditional economic dimension (H1b, H2b) and left-right (H1c, H2c). If we focus on the supply side (political parties), in all cases the link between the immigration issue and the socio-economic dimension turns out to be stronger than between the immigration issue and the socio-cultural dimension. This was also the case in the Netherlands at the demand side of the electoral market at all time points, except for 1998.

Obviously, as long as highly comparable data on all four relevant dimensions are not available over the 15 systems under study, it cannot be ruled out that the demand side is structured differently in the Netherlands than in the other countries. Yet, the fact that all three demand-side hypotheses were rejected in each of the three Dutch elections, suggests that the
conclusion of Kriesi et al. (2006) that a new cleavage develops as a consequence of structural conflicts, is rather premature. The analyses of Kriesi and his colleagues – in which the Netherlands is one of the three countries studied – are based upon content analyses of editorial sections of newspapers. Apparently, these do not reflect the positions of voters nor of parties. Our findings made it clear that the perception of the immigration issue as a part of (Kitschelt 2004) or “embedded” in (Kriesi et al. 2006) a ‘cultural dimension’ is questionable. Future research should focus on the degree to which the Dutch case is representative for the other cases.

Finally, the comparison over time in the case of the Netherlands allows for an interesting additional insight. Like the linkage with the economic issue, the left-right divide seems to be more linked with the immigration issue the more the immigration issue appears in the electoral campaign. In combination with the widely-shared notion that the left-right dimension is dominant in Western European party politics, this suggests that the immigration issue gains salience in the eyes of voters if the issue is raised. Perhaps as a result of the incorporation of the immigration issue into the predominant left-right dimension, the issue also became more linked to the economic dimension. This suggests that voters try to reduce issues to one dimension rather than to have to deal with the more complex structure of two salient dimensions. In any case, it does not indicate that a separate ‘socio-cultural’ dimension, orthogonal to the economic divide, has become more salient. In this sense, the findings call for a revision of the expectations on the basis of the studies by Kitschelt (1995; 2004) and Kriesi et al. (2006).
References


Appendix: the questions asked in the surveys used in this paper

European Election Studies

The European Election Studies (EES) are stand-alone surveys conducted immediately after each European Parliamentary election between 1979 and 2004, using random samples of voters in each of the member states of the EU. The numbers of interviews carried out vary between the countries, from 500 to over 3,000. The studies are extensively documented on the European Elections Studies web site (http://www.europeanelectionstudies.net). For this study, data from EES 1999 and EES 2004 will be used. These data are very well-suited for comparative research, as has been shown in many studies (e.g., Van der Eijk & Franklin, 1996; Van der Brug et al., 2000).

Answers to the following questions were used in this paper:
European Election Study 1999, Q22a-x:
In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right". What is your position? Please indicate your views using any number on a 10-point-scale. On this scale, where 1 means "left" and 10 means "right," which number best describes your position?
( ..)
And about where would you place the following parties on this scale? How about party A?

Replication questions Q19a-x in European Election Study 2004

European Social Survey

The European Social Survey (ESS) is a survey conducted to investigate beliefs and behaviour patterns in 22 (Round I) Western European democracies. It is funded by the European Commission and directed by a Central Coordination Team led by Roger Jowell, Centre for Comparative Social Surveys, City University. The team applies very robust measures and managed to boost the average response rates to values close to 70%, which is very high compared to other cross-country research of the same kind. The results have been made accessible at http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org.

Answers to the following questions were used in this paper:

8 An exception to this rule is 1984.
Question B28 - “In politics people sometimes talk of “left” and “right”. Using this card, where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?”

Question B43 - “Please say to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement: the less that government intervenes in the economy, the better it is for <country>?”

Possible answers:
Agree strongly
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Disagree strongly
Don't know
No answer

Question D49 - “Please say to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement: the country has more than its fair share of people applying for refugee status?”

Possible answers:
Agree strongly
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Disagree strongly
Don't know
No answer

From the answers to this and forty-nine other questions (all non-factual questions of the D-section on immigration), the main underlying dimension was extracted by way of a principle components analysis. This resulted in one main underlying dimension (Eigenvalue=13.23) that accounts for 26.5% of the variance in the answers and several other dimensions, all of which have an Eigenvalue of less than 3. The variable used in the analysis is the saved result from the principle component analysis.

Expert Judgment Survey of Western European Political Parties 2000
The *Expert Judgment Survey of Western European Political Parties 2000* was conducted by Marcel Lubbers, Department of Sociology, University of Nijmegen. The results have been made available by the Steinmetz Archive in Amsterdam.

Answers to the following question were used in this paper:

Expert Judgment Survey of Western European Political Parties 2000, first question: “Could you please indicate for each of the following political parties its position at the national level towards immigration restriction? Please do so by giving each party a mark from 0 (not very restrictive) to 10 (very restrictive).”

Expert survey concerning political parties in various political systems

The survey has been sent by email to 776 carefully selected political scientists specialized in the research field of contemporary political parties. Their email addresses have been derived from the websites of universities and institutions in 29 countries worldwide. The sample sizes of the experts vary from 16 in Luxembourg to 79 in Germany.

Answers to the following question were used in this paper:

Question 1 – “Thinking back to June, 2004, the time of the last European elections, could you please indicate for each of the following political parties its position towards immigration restriction? Please do so by giving each party a mark from 0 (not very restrictive) to 10 (very restrictive).”


The Dutch National Election Studies were fielded during the weeks before and after the national elections in the Netherlands. A stratified random sample of persons eligible to vote (i.e., over 18) was asked questions on their political behaviour by way of face-to-face interviews. The sample size varied around 2,000.

Answers to the following questions were used in this paper:

Immigration – “There is disagreement in the Netherlands about foreigners and ethnic minorities. Some people and parties think that these people should be able to live in the Netherlands while preserving all customs of their own culture. Others think that these people,
if they stay in the Netherlands, should fully adjust themselves to Dutch culture. Of course, there are also people whose opinion is somewhere in between. At the beginning of this line are the people (and parties) who think that foreigners and ethnic minorities should be able to live in the Netherlands while preserving all customs of their own culture (at number 1); at the end of the line are the people (and parties) who think that these people should fully adjust themselves to Dutch culture (at number 7). Where would you place <party> on this line?”

“And where would you place yourself on this line?”

Economy – “Some people and parties think that income differences in our country should be increased (at number 1). Others think that these differences should be decreased (at number 7). Of course, there are also people whose opinion is somewhere in between. Where would you place <party> on this line?”

“And where would you place yourself on this line?”

European unification – “The European unification is well under way. The countries of the European Union have decided to work more and more closely together. But not everybody holds the same view about it. Some people and parties think that the European unification should go further. Others think that the European unification has already gone too far. Suppose that the people and parties who think that the European unification should go further are at the beginning of this line (at number 1); and the people and parties who think that the European unification has already gone too far are at the end of the line (at number 7). Where would you place <party> on this line?”

“And where would you place yourself on this line?”

Left and right – “Political opinions are often described in terms of left and right. When you think of your own opinions, where would you place yourself on this line? Please mention the number that applies to you.” (1-10 scale)

“It is also said of parties that they are left and right. Would you please indicate the degree to which you think that a party is left or right?” (1-10 scale)
Figure 1: Structural equation model to test hypotheses 1a through 1c for parties across 15 systems

df = 2; chi square = 104.3; p = .000; RMSEA = .0.826; n = 137
Figure 2: Alternative structural equation model for parties across 15 systems

df = 2; chi square = 46.6; p = 0.000; RMSEA = 0.545; n = 137

Social dimension

- 1.02 - Left-right positions
- .77 - Socio-economic policies
- .77 - Immigration
- .89 - EU unification

Cultural dimension

- .10
Figure 3: Best fitting structural equation model for parties across 15 systems
df = 1; chi square = 5.8; p = 0.016; RMSEA = 0.252; n = 137
Figure 4: Structural equation model to test hypotheses 2a through 2c for Dutch voters in 2002
df = 2; chi square = 84.2; p = 0.000; RMSEA = 0.167; n = 1482
Figure 5: Alternative structural equation model for Dutch voters in 2002

df = 2; chi square = 44.1; p= 0.000; RMSEA = 0.119; n=1482

Social dimension

.79

Left-right positions

.37

Socio-economic policies

-.37

Immigration

.56

EU unification

.58

Cultural dimension
Figure 6: Best fitting structural equation model for Dutch voters in 2002
df = 1; chi square = 0.87; p= 0.350; RMSEA= 0.000; n=1482