Hurricane Season and the Winds of Change:

Systems and Sub-Systems of Instability in Central and East European Party Politics

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If not cleavages, then what?’

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Abstract:

The seemingly random triumph and demise of new political parties in Central and Eastern Europe actually represents a durable subsystem with relevance for party systems around the world. This article supplements existing research on volatility with supplementary measures of party age distribution that reveal clear patterns of disruption, turnover and restabilization. These patterns emerge from stable and coherent party subsystems which follow a simple model based on three dynamics: losses by established parties, rapid gains by uncorrupted newcomers, and equally rapid newcomer losses to even newer parties. Confirmed by electoral evidence, computer simulations and voter surveys, this model offers insight into the endurance of these subsystems, particularly since the very mechanisms which generate new parties’ success can preclude their ability to survive in subsequent elections. Central and Eastern European party systems offer a laboratory for understanding trends in party system volatility that are emerging in Western Europe and across the globe.

Keywords: volatility, new parties, party systems, party subsystems, Central and Eastern Europe
For the moment, the byword for political disaster in Central and Eastern Europe is “earthquake.” The list of elections described in seismic terms is long and growing: Bulgaria (2001), Poland (2001), Hungary (2010), the Czech Republic (2010 and 2013), and Slovenia (2011 and 2014). Elections like these can involve swings of over 40% and give pluralities to parties still in their infancy. Even “normal” elections bring tremors as parties come and go, merge and splinter.

As metaphors go, “earthquake” has certain advantages. There are few better images of sudden, massive disruptions, and little expectation of precise predictions. Instead both seismologists and political scientists gather evidence on deeper underlying factors to identify hotspots and generate likelihoods.

But there is need for a new comparison. Earthquakes involve large and coherent structures in tension with one another whereas party politics consists of multiple, independent institutions with their own internal structures. Major shifts in voting patterns depend not only on structural clash, but also on the actions of individual political parties in direct response to one another. The aim of this article is to advance the state of research on rapid political shifts with improved measures of party system change and a new conceptual model that accounts for the rapid changes found in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and other regions as well.

Our new measures confirm current findings that political shifts in CEE depend largely on the entrance of new parties and the exit of established ones and go beyond that to demonstrate significant differences in behavior between newer and older parties, at both the elite and voter levels. Political dissatisfaction sometimes produces flows of voters and elites among established parties, but in CEE the flow is often to new parties. These new parties have more fragile political appeals and organizations and they are even more likely to suffer desertion than their more established counterparts. Since most of those who give up on new parties do not return to the more established parties but instead move on to other new alternatives, the result is a self-reinforcing subsystem of ever newer parties that endures until parties succeed in adopting stabilizing mechanisms. This subsystem model of overall party system dynamics in the Central and Eastern European democracies explains both the variability in the timing of electoral shifts and the
persistence of these internally volatile subsystems once they become established. The model also provides us leverage for understanding potential dangers and evaluating potential remedies, which is particularly important because the changes in CEE appear to be harbingers of a change in party systems that is happening on a much wider geographical canvas.

Beginning with a discussion of current variables on party system change, the article goes on to provide new data on party age, and introduce the variable of age distribution. The article finds an increasingly pervasive pattern of stable, older parties and a subsystem of newer and less stable parties engaged in accelerating party-level cycles of birth, death and replacement. The final section of the article speculates on the proximate explanations of and alternatives to these subsystems and their broader relevance.

**Measurement: Volatility and Weighted Age**

The most widely-used tool to measure the degree of party system change—the Richter scale of electoral earthquakes—is Pedersen’s index of volatility, an easily-operationalized quantitative measurement of the extent of change between elections. But like the Richter scale, which is no longer regarded as a sufficient measure, Pedersen’s index can conceal as much as it reveals. As an aggregate measure, not only does it ignore individual-level party switches which cancel one another out but it also conflates shifts of voters *within* a stable institutional core of parties with shifts of voters necessitated by the institutional comings and goings of parties themselves. Avoiding this conflation, Powell and Tucker find that volatility among established CEE parties has been smaller than the extra-system volatility associated with the appearance and disappearance of parties. But even their revised measure—a huge step forward in systems with fluid political institutions—offers only a partial resolution because it does not account for the component parts of the system or allow simultaneous comparisons across multiple elections. Their measure recognizes that the newness is important and offers snapshots of who goes in and out of the main doors but it cannot tell us (except by accident) how long they have remained inside.
Kreuzer and Pettai’s study of parties in the Baltic states seeks to remedy this gap with the Weighted Party Age Index (WPAI), a supplementary measure of institutional novelty which sets aside questions about shifts among parties and looks instead at the length of time since a party’s establishment.\(^3\) To the extent that “newness” is important, as many scholars including Sikk, Mainwaring, Bollelyer, and Powell and Tucker\(^4\) agree, Kreuzer and Pettai’s measure provides a useful indicator of the relative newness in a system. Figure 1, applying the WPAI to ten CEE countries, indicates extremely wide variation ranging from Romania, whose party system grew older by roughly one year for every year of its existence, suggesting extreme stability, to the Baltic states, where constant replacement and reinvention gave the party systems a perpetual youth. In the beginning of the 2010s, however, the values began a mild convergence. The graph shows that beginning in 2008, the average age range between the highest and lowest stopped growing and actually began to decline as the older systems of Romania, the Czech Republic and Hungary suddenly experienced a drop in average age, while the parties of the Baltics began to survive elections.

From a mathematical perspective, average age and extra-system volatility should be related, at least at the top and bottom of the scales,\(^5\) but between these extremes there is no direct correspondence, since new parties may replace old parties and produce a large drop in age, or they may replace new parties for only a slight shift. Empirically, the average age in Central and Eastern Europe tends to move with extra-system volatility and the correlation for each country is positive (more volatility correlated with younger systems), but the two are not identical, and the correlations for individual countries range between 0.2 and 0.8.

**Classification: Patterns of Disruption, Turnover and (Re)stabilization**

Since summary measures can only tell us so much, it is useful to turn to richer but less simply summarized data—the actual distribution of parties according to age in any given electoral period for any
given country. The graphic depiction of party age in Figure 2 divides the share of votes in each election according to the period in which a party first appeared. An entirely black column represents an election in which all parties receiving votes were founded during the first election under consideration. An entirely white column represents a system in which all parties receiving votes emerged in the most recent election. Shades of grey represent parties of intermediate age; the darker the shade, the earlier the party was founded.

This data reveals additional distinctions. The countries in the middle of the average age range actually demonstrate quite significant differences in configuration. In 2013 both Poland and Bulgaria produced an average age of 11 years, but the Polish system consisted largely of 11-year-old parties whereas Bulgaria’s party system average resulted from a combination of some parties over 20-years-old and others under 5-years-old. Poland’s big changes were system-wide: nearly the entire party system changed radically in the early 2000s as early-generation parties were replaced by middle-generation parties and subsequently developed a degree of renewed stability and fewer newcomers. Bulgaria’s changes cut the system in half: one segment of the party system remained stable while the other half experienced constant churn.
Figure 1 Weighted party average age for Eastern and Central Europe, 1990-2014\textsuperscript{6}
Figure 2. Share of vote for parties of in each election according to age of party founding (darkest = oldest)
While the visual distribution is a useful technique for quickly grasping the differences, it does not permit easy quantitative comparisons between systems. It does, however, identify the variable for which a quantitative measure is necessary: the relative weight of parties from various periods. Fortunately, measurement of distribution is well-established, and we adapt a summary measure for distribution developed by Esteban and Ray as an improvement to basic measures of polarization of income. Because this measure incorporates the relative weights and distances of all data points, it is responsive to widely spaced peaks (bi- and multi-modal distributions) and produces higher values as the peaks move away from one another.

The framework formula as proposed by Esteban and Ray is

\[ P(\pi, y) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \sum_{j=1}^{n} \pi_i \pi_j T(I(\pi_i), a(\delta(y_i, y_j))) \]

which can be adapted to the measurement of party age distribution as follows:

the total share of vote held by parties first appearing in election i \( (\pi_i) \) * Total share of vote for parties first appearing in election j \( (\pi_j) \) * Duration of the period (in years) separating i and j, summed for all i and j.

The panels in Figure 4 graphs the weighted party age index against the age distribution measures for each country at each election, with panels highlighting specific patterns. These patterns are summarized without country detail in Figure 3.

Panel 4a. shows the stability path, in which early-generation parties endure and few new parties emerge, resulting in lines covering significant vertical distance and tending toward the low-polarization side of the graph. As might be expected from its high average age and the absence of major new entrants, the Romanian party system progresses straight upward with age increasing by four years in each four year period and polarization remains low because all parties fall on the “old” end of the spectrum. Hungary,
the Czech Republic and Slovenia followed a similar upward path until the early 2010s, with systems composed almost entirely of old parties. Bulgaria followed this path until 2001.

Panel 4b. shows the *disruption* path, with upward movement stopping or even reversing and significant movement toward the right side of the graph, as new parties emerge to rival enduring older parties and produce a bimodal distribution of ages. The disruption lines are most pronounced where party systems have low initial age distributions. The panel clearly shows the impact of the Popular Party of Dan Diaconescu in Romania; Jobbik and Politics Can Be Different in Hungary; Public Affairs and TOP‘09, in the Czech Republic, and Positive Slovenia, and Virant’s List in Slovenia, each of which disrupted the uniform aging of the party system and split the party system between a substantial but diminished group of old parties and a smaller but significant group of new parties. The same pattern is clear as early as 2001 in the Bulgarian party system, giving a sense of the overwhelming change created by the Movement of Simeon II.

Panel 4c. shows the *turnover* path in which new parties yield to even newer parties. The *partial*-turnover configuration appears in the center right of the graph, reflecting the shift from new parties to newer ones in systems which also retain significant numbers of older parties. The *full*-turnover configuration appears in the lower left of the graph, where the replacements across the board keep both age and polarization relatively low. Bulgaria offers a representative example of partial turnover: support for the new NDSV support gradually evaporated over two election cycles, but other new parties emerged to replace it, so both the average age and the bipolar age distribution stayed essentially unchanged. Slovakia’s political party system after 2006 shows a similar pattern, with new parties emerging to supplant old ones on the country’s right and in its Hungarian minority. Recent elections in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia likewise exhibit partial turnover as some or all of the new parties faded and newer parties emerged with similar levels of support. Latvia and Lithuania come close to full turnover thanks to elections in which new parties of previous elections lose to even newer entrants, resulting in an essentially
new party system every four-to-eight years. Along with their low average age these systems exhibit a narrower distribution of age between young and old simply because few parties survived to enjoy old age.

4d. shows the \((re)stabilization\) path in which turnover stops and new parties survive. The paths of Poland, Slovakia and Estonia (and potentially Lithuania and Latvia) show what happens when new parties survive their early years and allow party age to grow again. These cases are relatively few in number, however, and as the example of Slovakia shows, the restabilization proves to be merely an interlude before the resumption of turnover.
Figure 3. Schematized patterns of party age and party polarization

- **Stability**: Old parties survive
- **Disruption**: Some old parties replaced by new ones
- **(Re) Stabilization**: New parties survive
- **Partial Turnover**: Some new parties replaced by newer ones
- **Full Turnover**: Most new parties replaced by newer ones
- **Juvenilization**: Remaining old parties replaced by newer ones
Figure 4: Weighted party system age and age polarization over time in Central and Eastern European party system.
Conceptualization: Systems, Subsystems and Cycles of Reinforcement

As Kreuzer and Pettai observe, “[i]nstability can have patterns just as distinct as those of stability” and the previous section offers evidence both that the apparently random electoral upheavals in CEE have a discernable, quantifiable shape and that the resulting patterns are fairly stable over time and across the region. The tendency of the same patterns to emerge and persist across the region—even in party systems once thought immune—suggests that rapid political changes in CEE may benefit from a new metaphor. The self-sustaining, cyclical patterns we see here are less like earthquakes than they are like hurricanes. Within the broad framework of the party system, the ever-rotating roster of newcomers has systemic characteristics in its own right and may usefully be understood as a subsystem.

Sartori’s understanding of “systems” provides a useful starting point. His work defines them as “bounded, patterned and self-maintaining interdependencies” and sets two basic conditions: “(i) the system displays properties that do not belong to a separate consideration of its component elements and (ii) the system results from, and consists of, the patterned interactions of its component parts, thereby implying that such interactions provide the boundaries, or at least the boundedness, of the system.” He also sees systems as nested, and refers to parties as constituting a “party subsystem” within the broader political system. While Sartori does not refer to subsystems within party systems, his conceptualization opens space for such entities, as long as they fulfill the same conditions: significant relational elements (which make the whole greater than the sum), patterns and boundedness.

Within the literature on political parties, the notion of a “subsystem” has made occasional appearances to describe the regular interactions among groups of parties sharing a common programmatic (and fairly distinctive) ideology and voting base. Hanley uses it to describe the “semi-permanent constellation of parties” around the French Socialist Party which he refers to as the “plural left.” Strmiska introduces the concept to describe regard to parties in ethno-regional enclaves—Spain’s Basque and Catalanian region’s, Italy’s Sardinia and South Tyrol, Montenegro in Serbia-dominated Yugoslavia—which compete
primarily against one another and without much reference to parties in the rest of the country. These usages fit neatly into Sartori’s framework.

The use of “subsystem” to describe the new-and-newer party phenomenon of turnover requires a bit more explanation. Unlike, the “plural left” or “ethnonational” subsystems, the new-and-newer parties do not always compete directly against one another, since new parties often do not emerge in the space until a previous incarnation is in severe decline. The patterns of competition thus occur not in party space but in party-time, an inter-temporal dimension that is more akin to the notion of “system” as used in discussions of “systems of succession” which establish patterns by which political offices change hands. The notion of a “new party subsystem” thus combines the boundedness of the “minority” subsystem discussed above—multiple parties sharing a common and distinct pool of ideas, voters and elites—but the whole pattern becomes visible only with multiple observations which reveal the relationship between the decline of one party and the emergence of another as more than a series of unrelated parties. The use of the subsystem concept is particularly useful because the inter-temporal change of names and personalities obscures continuity in the appeals and electorates of these parties. Treating the succession of similar but distinct parties as a subsystem is a way of capturing the elements that resemble elements of a single party without making the conceptual stretch of actually treating a succession of new parties as a single undifferentiated unit. It thus neatly fills the conceptual role of “system” by describing something that is neither a unitary actor nor a random collection.

Quantifying the new party subsystems. There are several good reasons for believing that new parties across the region exhibit specific patterns of interaction and continuity in voting base and programmatic position that fits the characteristics of a subsystem. Unfortunately, the main patterns of intra-subsystem flow lack conveniently comparable measurements that would allow comparison of these developments across the region. At the level of programmatic offerings, we are fortunate to have numerous surveys of experts, elite attitudes and party programs, but these surveys consistently omit the programmatic positions most relevant for the subsystem: a focus on corruption. Its omission is understandable since it is only
recently that observers have come to see the question of corruption as something more than a valence issue on which all parties agree, leaving voters to evaluate their sincerity and capacity. In CEE the question of corruption more closely resembles a genuine, if sometimes vague dimension of programmatic competition in which the “uncorrupted but inexperienced” challenge the “tainted but experienced.” Without systematic measures, however, we can hope at best for qualitative assessments of party positions or rely on voters’ perceptions or the desires of party voters to give us a sense of parties’ position on this dimension. At the level of voters, we have numerous surveys of party preferences but almost no panel data that tracks how voters change their minds over time. Again the best we can find is indirect data: ecological analysis of vote flows in local communities, and retrospective survey questions in which respondents specify their current and past electoral choices and even these are surprisingly rare.

Although limited, currently available evidence give strong support to the new-party-subsystem pattern in CEE countries:

- **Bulgaria:** Arguably the first country in the region to experience a full-scale new-party subsystem, Bulgaria experienced the sudden emergence of the new National Movement of Simeon II (NDSV) in 2001 followed by its collapse and the emergence eight years later of the newer Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB). Bochsler notes clear “voter shifts in 2009, when GERB is the big beneficiary of previous anti-establishment votes, winning a substantial part of previous Ataka votes [a radical right party that emerged in 2004] and of previous Simeon votes.”

- **Czech Republic:** Both survey and electoral data show strong links between the “new” parties in 2010—TOP’09 and Public Affairs (VV)—and the “newer” parties in 2013—Action of Dissatisfied Voters (ANO) and Dawn of New Democracy (Úsvit). A significant majority of votes from new parties in 2010 either remained with those new parties, left the electorate, or flowed to the even newer parties of 2013, whereas a significant majority of “old” party voters remained within the “old” camp. It is significant that pre-election opinion polls and ecological inference
based on election results find almost the same results: patterns of voter outflow show about 65% of “old party” voters staying with old parties; while among voters of 2010’s new parties, only about 30% stayed while another 10%-20% left the electorate and 30%-40% opted for a newer party. Likewise, patterns of voter inflow show that newer parties took 30% of their voters from 2010’s new parties and 15%-30% from previous nonvoters.

- Slovenia: Preliminary evidence from the 2014 election indicates a disproportionate share of those who voted for new parties in 2011 subsequently voted for even newer parties (about 60% for the Party of Miro Cerar and about 10% for the United Left). Voter inflow shows the same patterns, with about half of the newer parties votes vote coming from the parties that had been new in 2010.

- Lithuania: Bochsler finds that in 2008 the new Party of National Resurrection (TPP) gained votes across the board both from strongholds of older parties and those of newer ones. When TPP folded, however, many of its voters did not return to the old parties but opted instead for yet another newcomer: Way of Courage (DK). Raimonte’s analysis of retrospective survey data shows that a disproportionate share of voters from the new party voters opted for the newer party, and that the two-thirds of DK voters came from TPP (24%), from the ranks of non-voters (34%) or from the ranks of other small parties (12%).

In addition to evidence from these high-volatility elections that reshaped entire party systems, there is also evidence of smaller, ongoing cycles of “new and newer” in which a series of “clean” parties with a particular programmatic orientation replaced otherwise similar parties with more unsavory histories. Even before the major shifts in 2010, the Czech Republic had already experienced a cycle of party replacement among parties occupying the moderately pro-market, social-liberal space: the Civic Democratic Alliance was supplanted by the Freedom Union, which was in turn supplanted by the Greens which bequeathed many voters to the new parties of 2010. In Slovakia, retrospective analyses of voting show significant shifts in votes from the new party the Alliance of the New Citizen to the newer party
Free Forum between 2002 and 2006 and again from the new party Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) to the newer party OLaNO between 2010 and 2012. Recent evidence suggests a similar flow from OLaNO to the newly created party Net (Siet'). We return to evidence of voter shifts from old to new, and from new to newer parties, in the penultimate section of this paper.

Modeling the new party subsystem. As direct empirical evidence for the existence of voter flow in new party subsystems mounts, it is also possible to demonstrate that outcomes in CEE party competition are consistent with the results that a subsystem would produce. In the subsystem described above disillusioned individual voters opt for new parties, become disillusioned, and then opt for still newer parties, but it is precisely this kind of long-term individual-level tracking data that we lack. It is possible to reformulate this subsystem to describe party outcomes rather than individual behavior. The resulting party-level subsystem can be described with three sets of dynamics:

1. Parties sometimes face the loss of significant numbers of supporters
2. New parties are disproportionately likely to benefit from losses by more established parties
3. The newer a party is, the more likely it is to suffer rapid, significant losses of support.

Figure 5 presents these three rules as a flowchart showing the cascade effect created when all three rules are in operation.
Figure 5. Flowchart of support flows according to new-party subsystem dynamics 1-3.
It is a simple matter to use these three dynamics to create a basic computer model of the emergence of a new-party subsystem that exists parallel to but distinct from the established parties (which together could be conceived of as an “established party subsystem,” though its parties have little in common except their greater age and reluctance or inability to use the appeals based on corruption). Simulations based on the three dynamics (with small amount of random chance shaping the initial relative sizes, and timing of the gains and losses, growth and decline of individual parties) produces patterns indistinguishable from the empirical data above not only in terms of volatility but also party age and even distribution of party age. Not only do the four randomly-chosen simulations in Figure 6 panels A-D follow the hypothesized pattern, but each one comes quite close to resembling a particular country in CEE. The dominance of 3rd election parties in Simulation A (while some 1st election parties endure and new parties continue to replace one another) bears a striking resemblance to Poland and to Slovakia, as does Simulation B (though the major disruption of a new party in the 8th election bears closer resemblance to recent developments in Slovenia and the Czech Republic). The rapid decline of 1st and 2nd election parties and subsequent periodic replacement of much of the party system in Simulation C resembles Latvia and Lithuania. Simulation D, produced with the exact same dynamics, gives evidence of what can happen, as in the Romanian case, when the 1st generation parties do not give way.
Figure 6. Simulations of party system age distribution using new-party subsystem dynamics 1-3 (dynamics held constant, specific party birth, death, growth and decline subject to randomization, first simulation results chosen, none excluded)
These results, furthermore, are highly dependent on all three dynamics working together. Any other combination produces different results. The final three panels in Figure 6 show the results (again the first of a series of random iterations) resulting from incomplete combinations of the same dynamics. Without the outflow from old parties of dynamic 1, Simulation E leaves voters static and produces no significant volatility, (a model common to much of Western Europe during the postwar period.) Without the flow to new parties of dynamic 2, Simulation F produces a simple back-and-forth cycle between established parties E1 and E2. Without the new party fragility of dynamic 3, Simulation G produces a rapid crowding of the party system with parties of all ages rather than the sharp polarization of age distribution that is characteristic of actual cases in CEE.

_Escaping the new party subsystem_

The subsystem model above is useful not only because its outputs bear close resemblance to the existing party system dynamics, but also because it gives us a more precise frame of reference for understanding alternative paths. The model describes party politics in Lithuania or Bulgaria or the Czech Republic in 2013 better than in Estonia or Romania or the Czech Republic in 2003. Such variation is to be expected. The point of the model is not that the dynamics are inevitable but that circumstances make them more likely than alternatives. These subsystems are shaped by actors’ choices, and if underlying incentive structures change (or if actors perceive them to have changed), the model’s paths may become less appealing, alternatives may prevail, and the cycle may slow or stop. The exceptions thus help to illuminate the contours and limits of the rule. The dynamics of the model frame the types of possible deviations.

Firstly, instead of losing significant support, some established parties may retain voter loyalty. Many parties demonstrate that ephemerality is not the destiny of all parties in CEE: nearly all parties in Romania, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia until the early 2010s as well as segments of the Bulgarian left, the Hungarian center-right and ethnic minority communities endured. These parties did not always avoid defeat but they managed always to recover: in the garden of party systems, they are the
hardy perennials that can endure political winters that short-lived annuals cannot survive. Preliminary evidence suggests that these parties’ abilities to enhance their endurance depends on three strategies: investing in organization, becoming a standard bearer on a major issue divide of programmatic competition, and finding ways to balance benefits of a vibrant leader with mechanisms for shedding leaders who have become net liabilities. These strategies work,27 but have unappealingly high up-front costs, requiring significant expenditure and limiting party flexibility in the short run. Nor do these choices bring a guarantee of survival. The collapse of some well-established parties after the 2008 economic crisis reinforce Roberts’s view that electorates hold parties hyperaccountable,28 and voter disappointment can become desertion when poor performance is accompanied by spectacular mistakes: a prime minister's taped secret admission that “We lied in the morning, noon and at night” (Hungary in 2006) or the corruption-related arrest of a top administrative aide who is also the prime minister’s mistress (the Czech Republic in 2013).

The new-party subsystem may also be avoided if newly unattached voters do not flow en masse to new parties. Some of the barriers to new party success are well-known in the literature: party rules, electoral system, and party funding rules29 and have been in evidence in Estonia, Hungary and Romania. Electoral systems (Hungary) and electoral law (Estonia and Romania) impose significant legal or psychological deterrents on those who would like to start new parties, but as the experience of Hungary suggests, these may simply delay new party creation rather than prevent it outright. It is also possible—though so far it seems surprisingly rare—that a string of failures by successive new parties may cause many in the subsystem electorate to move to inactive status and stay there until something can recapture their enthusiasm. The flow of voters to the new party subsystem may thereby leak away after three or four cycles, though there is nothing to prevent another subsystem from emerging in other segments of a country’s political system where voters are less jaded by new-party failure.

Finally, new parties that do break through are not necessarily condemned to a short-life as they can adopt the voter-maintenance strategies mentioned above. But the circumstances under which new parties
emerge are often directly, even intrinsically opposed to those strategies. The rapid startup period of many new parties only allows for rudimentary organizational structures, and electoral success exacerbates the problem since winners must divert their already small membership core away from local- and regional-party building toward filling new staff positions in parliament (and the problem is far worse for new parties participating in government). Furthermore, the anti-corruption appeals that propel new parties are difficult to sustain after electoral success. In an environment in which voters expect politicians to be corrupt, successful new parties may lose their anti-corruption credentials (and again the problem is far worse for those who enter government). In addition, leader-driven parties tend to fall as quickly as they rise. The celebrity leadership that allows some new parties to jump rapidly into contention becomes a liability when party leaders prove corrupt, erratic or ineffective and the infusions of outside cash that allow some new parties to emerge may make the new party visibly reliant on donors and therefore even more prone to corruption allegations. Finally, the young and uncommitted voters who are most available to new parties are also the same voters who are likely to change their mind before the next election.

In countries where the cycles have stopped, the shift can sometimes be traced to particular new parties that have made deliberate choices to eschew short-term gains and invest in party organization and effective ideological positioning (away from short-lived anti-corruption appeals). Some benefit, too, from circumstances that make the hard choices easier. Among the survivors are several parties that failed to make it into government on the first try, found themselves in opposition before subsequent elections (or even maneuvered themselves into an opposition role). It is therefore little surprise that few new parties—perhaps Smer in Slovakia is the best recent example—have made a successful transition from novelty to establishment.

We have sketched out here the characteristics of parties, party systems and sub-party systems in CEE. Lack of space precludes a systematic analysis of why some parties and party systems show a greater or lesser capacity to escape the new party subsystem predicament. Further empirical research is needed, but our research highlights a number of propositions worthy of more detailed and thorough analysis linked to
three key dimensions: appeals, organization and leadership. Firstly, the greater the preponderance parties in the subsystem rely on ephemeral appeals linked to novelty and anti-corruption the less likely the party can escape from the subsystem predicament. Moreover, this trend is only exacerbated if the parties trumpeting their novelty are thrust into government. Novelty does not last forever and few parties prove to be whiter than white angels when accorded the trappings and temptations of power. Secondly, the less parties in the sub-system engage in party building activities, particularly developing and nurturing local party branches, the more likely the party subsystem will endure. Thirdly, the more parties are dependent on their leaders and do not develop mechanisms to facilitate a (relatively) smooth passing of power without the entire edifice of the party crashing down, the harder it is to break out of the cycle of new party birth and death.

The Winds of Change and the Waves of Voters: Micro-level underpinnings of the New-Party Subsystem

Concepts involving political divides depend upon distinctions between sides, involving some combination of demographic, attitudinal or behavioral differences or, in the case of a full cleavage, of all three types of difference together. Elaborations of these concepts also frequently involve conditions of closure (the permeability of the sides) and stability (the endurance of the sides). The main works in the field, however, were written to understand a time period and region in which party longevity could often be regarded as a given. Scholarship on cleavages and other types of divides in post-communist Europe cannot rely on these conditions and it is necessary to introduce additional concepts to make sense of political development and avoid stretching the concepts we already have. In particular, our current framework has difficulty dealing with the phenomenon of distinct but in some ways nearly identical political parties that appear to succeed one another over time and exhibit similar characteristics in terms of political appeals, organizational strategies and voter strongholds. The notion of a new-party subsystem posits inter-temporal relationships between a series of rising and declining parties that make it useful to understand them together, if not as a unitary actor, then at least as a distinct phenomenon with party-like aspects.
Earlier in this paper we elaborated on the characteristics of the subsystems highlighting three dynamics:

1. Parties sometimes face the loss of significant numbers of supporters
2. New parties are disproportionately likely to benefit from losses by more established parties
3. The newer a party is, the more likely it is to suffer rapid, significant losses of support.

We sought to begin the work of establishing empirical support for these dynamics at the aggregate level of party support, but it is also possible to seek evidence at the level of individual voters. The work is surprisingly difficult because of the relative rarity of surveys that address change by covering multiple time periods. Panel studies in the region are extremely rare, and so the only easily-available method involves asking survey respondents to make retrospective judgements about their support for political parties at some point in the past. While these are surprisingly reliable, even questions such as these are relatively rare, and there is considerable variation in the ways such questions are asked which precludes simple comparison across the region. Nonetheless, even if considered illustrative rather than conclusive, these data illuminate significant trends in the movement of voters. The sections below use a variety of types of available data for five post-communist European cases to assess the inter-temporal relationships between new parties highlighting where voters of new parties come from and where they go, especially when the system includes an even newer party.

*Czech Republic*

Comparing the movement of voters from what has dubbed by many in the punditocracy the earthquake election of 2010 to the subsequent election of 2013 also dubbed by many an earthquake, we see that voters tended to stay in the category where they were previously i.e. most of the voters for old parties, most of the nonvoters and even a good part of the “other” voters tended to stick with their previous choice. With the newest parties, however, which lacked a prior base, the sources were split, but the single largest part were previous new party voters. Similarly, new party voters represented the single largest destination category for outgoing voters from new parties. Voters of smaller parties and nonvoters played
a big role here as well, accounting for 1/3 of the newer party voters and going to new parties. The purest cases is that of the Czech party Public Affairs (VV) which ceased to function as a party before the subsequent election. Of this party’s original voters, 50% voted in 2013 for one of the two newest parties, 20% voted for other, smaller parties (including several new ones), and 20% of its voters did not vote at all; only 10% opted for older parties.

Table 1. Outflow and inflow of votes by party-age category in the Czech Republic, 2010 to 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Share of outflowing votes</th>
<th>Destination (2013)</th>
<th>Nonvoter</th>
<th>Old (ODS, KSCM, CSSD)</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>New (TOP, VV)</th>
<th>Newest (ANO, Usvit)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source (2010 vote)</td>
<td>Nonvoter</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old (ODS, KSCM, CSSD)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New (TOP, VV)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Share of inflowing votes</th>
<th>Destination (2013 expected vote)</th>
<th>Nonvoter</th>
<th>Old (ODS, KSCM, CSSD)</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Old New (TOP, VV)</th>
<th>Newest (ANO, Usvit)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Nonvoter</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old (ODS, KSCM, CSSD)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old New (TOP, VV)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Czech Data Archive. 2013.

*Slovakia*

Slovakia in 2012 gives evidence of a slightly weaker connection between new and newer parties but still follows the same pattern. Few voters from old parties opted for the “old new” parties of the 2010 election or the “new new” parties of 2012, but to the extent that they did change, they opted by a two-to-one margin for the most recent new parties. About half of the voters of the “old new” left after a single two-year electoral term, and half of those leaving went to “new new” parties while another tenth did not vote in the next election. Among the voters of new parties, approximately one-third came from old parties,
while sources of the rest were split almost evenly among previous nonvoters, supporters of other, smaller parties, and supporters of the “old new” parties of 2010.

Table 2. Outflow and inflow of votes by party-age category in Slovakia, 2010 to 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source (reporte d 2010 vote)</th>
<th>Nonvoter</th>
<th>Old (KDH, SNS, SMK, Smer, SDKU, KSS, LS-HZDS)</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Old New (SDL, Most-Hid, SaS)</th>
<th>New New (OLaNO, NaS, SSS, 99%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a share of outflowing votes</td>
<td></td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old (KDH, SNS, SMK, Smer, SDKU, KSS, LS-HZDS)</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old New (SDL, Most-Hid, SaS)</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As a share of inflowing votes</th>
<th>Nonvoter</th>
<th>Old (KDH, SNS, SMK, Smer, SDKU, KSS, LS-HZDS)</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Old New (SDL, Most-Hid, SaS)</th>
<th>New New (OLaNO, NaS, SSS, 99%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source (reporte d 2010 vote)</td>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old (KDH, SNS, SMK, Smer, SDKU, KSS, LS-HZDS)</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old New (SDL, Most-Hid, SaS)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Lithuania in 2012 the situation was also similar, though the “new new” party was the relatively small Way of Courage (DK). Supporters of the “old new” Party of National Resurrection (TPP) were four times more likely to support DK than were supporters of older parties. The complete collapse of TPP provides a striking parallel to the Czech Republic’s VV. Nearly 50% of past TPP supporters did not vote in the next election, 20% opted for the immediately preceding generation of new parties, and 16% voted DK. DK for its part drew its largest vote share from previous nonvoters and it second largest share from TPP.

Table 3. Outflow and inflow of votes by party-age category in Lithuania, 2008 to 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As a share of outflowing votes</th>
<th>Destination (reported 2012 vote)</th>
<th>Nonvoter</th>
<th>Old (LSDP, TS-LKD)</th>
<th>Old New (DP, LRLS, TT)</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>New New (TPP)</th>
<th>Newest New (DK)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source (reported 2010 vote)</td>
<td>Nonvoter</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old (LSDP/TS-LKD)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old New (DP, LRLS, TT)</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New New (TPP)</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As a share of inflowing votes</th>
<th>Destination (reported 2012 vote)</th>
<th>Nonvoter</th>
<th>Old (LSDP, TS-LKD)</th>
<th>Old New (DP, LRLS, TT)</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>New New (TPP)</th>
<th>Newest New (DK)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source (reported 2010 vote)</td>
<td>Nonvoter</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old (LSDP/TS-LKD)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old New (DP, LRLS, TT)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New New (TPP)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparing the 2001 and 2005 elections in Bulgaria we also witness similar results. Nonvoters were distributed relatively equally but represented a slightly higher percentage of the incoming voters of newer parties. Supporters of old parties in 2005 tended to remain with old parties, though some opted for the newest parties (which included several splinters form old parties); the new-but-not-newest party, NDSV, received few additional old party votes in this election. About half of the voters of NDSV stayed with the party, but of those who did not half, left for the newest parties and such voters represented a much higher share of the inflow of the newest parties than they did of the inflow of the old parties. A later poll, conducted in 2009, shows an even more disproportional influx of NDSV voters and nonvoters to the then-newest party GERB.

Table 4. Outflow and inflow of votes by party-age category in Bulgaria, 2001 to 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source (reported 2001 vote)</th>
<th>As a share of outflowing votes</th>
<th>Destination (reported 2005 vote)</th>
<th>Old (ODS, BSP, DSP)</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Old New (NDSV)</th>
<th>New New (DSB, EL, KR, BNS, NV, Ataka)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonvoter</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old (ODS, BSP, DSP)</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old New (NDSV)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source (reported 2001 vote)</th>
<th>As a share of inflowing votes</th>
<th>Destination (reported 2005 vote)</th>
<th>Old (ODS, BSP, DSP)</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Old New (NDSV)</th>
<th>New New (DSB, EL, KR, BNS, NV, Ataka)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonvoter</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old (ODS, BSP, DSP)</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old New (NDSV)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A significantly different measurement technique in Slovenia produces extremely similar results, though the actual data make the precise flows unclear. The table below shows the result of “party migration
figures,” recording the share of the declared supporters moving from one category to another in the week before the election, omitting any changes smaller than 0.5% of the surveyed electorate. The focus on change means that there is no ability to look at continuity within blocs, but outside of this limitation, the data prove remarkably similar to other cases: Some supporters of old parties leave, primarily exiting the electorate, while a higher share supporters of new (but not newest) parties leave in about equal parts out of the electorate and to new parties (with only a few moving back to old parties), and returning nonvoters gravitate to the newest parties.

Table 5. Outflow and inflow of votes by party-age category in Slovenia, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source (reported 2011 vote)</th>
<th>Net shift in electorate</th>
<th>Destination (reported 2014 vote)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nonvoter</td>
<td>Old (SLS, SD, SNS, DeSUS, SDS, NSI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonvoter</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old (SLS, SD, SNS, DeSUS, SDS, NSI)</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old New (PS, DL)</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>1.4*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *All figures approximate because shifts of less than 0.5 not listed in source table.
Source: Batagelj, Zenel. 2014. DZ volitve 2014

Overall Assessment

It is difficult to produce a single numerical summary of all of these cases because of the absence of consistent data sources, time periods, and differences in the relative sizes of parties, but the table below offers a broad synthesis of the patterns described above.

Table 6: Voter Linkage and the Destination of Voters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voter linkage</th>
<th>Destination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Nonvoting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonvoter</td>
<td>Very High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old New</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individuals tend to remain within the category in which they have been in before, especially voters of old parties and nonvoters, but where there are shifts, they tend to follow particular patterns: when non-voters and supporters of old parties change their minds, they opt for the supporters of the newest parties rather than last-season’s new parties, already less novel. Supporters of last-season’s new parties are more likely to change their minds than non-voters and old party voters, and when they do change their minds, they tend to opt for the newest parties or abstention rather than for old parties. The data thus comforms closely to the patterns hypotheized in the earlier sections of this paper, and while the relationships are not absolute, they are strong enough to perpetuate a cycle. The role of the nonvote is particularly important here. Voters appear to cycle in and out of the electorate depending on how satisfied they are with the choices. Disillusioned new-party voters may leap immediately to another new party but they may also drop back out of the electorate to wait for a new option. Thus instead of the model 1 in figure 7 below, we find a dynamic looks more like the second.

Figure 7: Movement of Voters from Old, New and No Parties
The micro-level data thus follows the patterns expected for a subsystem, though the level of closure is relatively low. It appears former voters of what were once new parties constitute a consistent one-quarter to one-third of the votes for the newest parties. If we include former non-voters, that total rises to between two-thirds and three-quarters. Perhaps more importantly, in the cases studied here a consistent 40%-60% of the voters of new parties at one election either shift to one of the newest parties or out of the electorate at the subsequent election. Put another way voters of new parties are just as likely to move as to stay, and when they move they almost never move back to existing parties. In cases where new parties disappear entirely (the Czech VV in 2013, the Lithuanian TPP in 2012, the Slovenian DL and PS etc.), the situation is even clearer: half or more of the party’s original voters move on to newer parties while another nearly equal segment simply do not show up at the polls. If nonvoting plays the same role with such voters as it does with voters of established parties, then for all of its ability to shape political outcomes, the subsystem still exhibits relatively low closure and certainly does not approach the level of a cleavage. If, however, our understanding of voting recognizes the decision not to vote as a strong functional alternative to the decision to vote for a new party - akin to the closely-coupled voting alternatives between the individual entities in a left-wing or right wing party bloc as conceptualized by Bartolini and Mair 37 - then the level of closure is considerably higher and the barriers to crossing between the “sides” (in this case acceptance or rejection of “old” or “established” parties) are as high as in any number of other economic or cultural divides in the region or elsewhere.

There is also strong evidence that the electoral choice between “old” and “new-newest-nonvoting” coincides with issue preferences related to corruption. The idea of a “corruption” issue divide does in some ways run counter to standard practice as it is difficult to identify two meaningful programmatic sides ("against corruption" is a clear programmatic position, but its opposite must be something other than “for corruption”) or to see it as more than simply a valence issue in which each side promises the same thing and voters decide which will better achieve the goal. Nearly every one of the “newest” parties above relied significantly on anti-corruption appeals (Usvit and ANO in the Czech Republic; OLaNO and
99% in Slovakia, NV and GERB in Bulgaria; DK in Lithuania; SMC, ZAB and ZL in Slovenia) and few of these actually relied heavily on any other major programmatic commitments or ideological positioning.\textsuperscript{38} Their opponents, by contrast, tended to shy away from corruption issues (because they had less credibility on such questions) or emphasized the dangers of inexperience. The dilemma was especially difficult for the formerly “new” parties (VV in the Czech Republic, SaS in Slovakia, NDSV in Bulgaria, TPP in Lithuania, PS and DL in Slovenia) because they, too, had emphasized corruption issues and had then proven themselves little better (or in some cases much worse) than the parties that they replaced. Like many left-wing parties that adopted pro-market reforms in the region in the 1990s, these parties found themselves with no safe position on their own key dimension, and the electoral situation was even more serious for these parties to the extent that they themselves had helped stake out the dimension on which they were competing. The answer here may not be the squeezing of the corruption question into ill-fitting boxes of “valence” or “non-valence” but to acknowledge a continuum between the two and to explore the characteristics of valence competition may replicate those of spatial competition to understand the circumstances in which it is meaningful to refer to a “corruption” issue divide; a theme which we are working on in our larger book project.

**Extrapolation: The East and the Future of Party Systems**

If the parties of Central and Eastern Europe seem always one step away from disaster, it may provide at least a little comfort to learn that the rapid changes in the region share an approximate shape and a trajectory. Coherent subsystems and cycles of change can guide the research strategies on parties in the region, suggesting more emphasis on party organization and leadership, voter flows between elections and non-standard issue dimensions. For those interested in changing the outcomes in the region, it can also provide guidance as to “what works.” From a party-strategy perspective, that means organizational development, sustainable programmatic positions, mechanisms for ousting changing leaders, and staying out of government until absolutely necessary. From a policy perspective, the new party subsystem might
be reduced with more effective regulation on the source and transparency of party funding and Estonian-style insistence on large numbers of founding members, but the efficacy of these strategies is highly questionable.

Another benefit of the new-party-subsystem model and the related measurements described above is that these approaches can integrate the study of parties in CEE into broader studies of the political changes worldwide. Central and Eastern Europe is not the only region where party systems display evidence of similar subsystems. Emerging democracies in Latin America, Asia, and Africa have witnessed similar patterns as have more established democracies. The patterns in Greece and Italy bear striking similarity to the initial stages of the CEE pattern: significant new anti-corruption parties with celebrity leaders and rudimentary organization. Japan and Israel (and, some would argue, the Netherlands, Belgium and Austria) have already seen the fading of an initial generation of newcomers and the emergence of “newer” parties.

The similarity of patterns across a wide range of democracies calls attention to underlying forces that may help to explain such a widespread (if still uneven) development. The seemingly inexorable underlying trend toward dealignment of voters from parties and the increasing role of celebrity combines in these cases with the growing ease of organizing electronically for one-off events. Major success by one new-party creates the impression that others might succeed as well, and the resulting subculture of political innovation may generate a steady stream of “startup-parties” which bear closer resemblance to their technology-industry counterparts than to traditional political parties. Together, these developments simultaneously make it easier to create a new party and harder to keep a party alive. Nor are these shifts unique to political parties. Naim’s *The End of Power* sees similarly accelerating cycles of disruption and replacement across the world in institutional realms ranging from the software firms to civic associations to religions.

The key to the variability of party system fortunes lies in the interaction between these broader contemporary forces of change and the strength of local institutions. The full effects of the forces
producing party change may not be felt until events that significantly weaken an established party or significantly strengthen a new one. Where these shifts will happen—which country and which political stream within a country—are not easily predictable since the process is not a linear one but proceeds in fits and starts because of thresholds in electoral law and in electoral psychology that differ significantly over time and across borders and the role of accidents and misjudgments. The global forces that push toward new-party subsystems have little impact where established parties are strong enough to restrict new party entry and avoid or recover from accidental damage. In such cases, an opening simply may not appear, or it may not be big enough to create a self-sustaining subsystem. But in systems with a major party collapse or the sudden intrusion of a new party—such as in the Netherlands, Greece, Israel, Japan or Italy—the situation has not returned “to normal” and has experienced higher levels of subsequent volatility, particularly extra-system volatility, and key elements of the new-party subsystem model. Systems of older parties may have an advantage in holding off the forces of change, but they seem to have no particular advantage in sustaining new parties.

So is the world doomed to follow the Central and Eastern European party system into a period of high volatility and ever newer parties? Given the constant possibility of established-party failure and the fragility of new parties, we are likely to see a certain degree of churn in almost every party system over the coming decades. Whether this spells “doom” is a more complicated question. A certain degree of volatility can actually be a welcome relief in systems like those of Western Europe where the inertia has prevented some much needed change and there is no clear evidence that larger new party subsystems fare worse in the short run: the disruption in Bulgaria caused by Simeon II does not seem to have made it worse off than the more stable Romanian system, and volatility in the 2000s did not set Slovakia behind the Czech Republic. More dangerous are the subtle losses inherent in new parties’ shorter time horizons and the difficulty of imposing accountability on a party that knows it might well disappear soon anyway. These problems are by no means insoluble, however, and citizens aware of the problem can try to find
other mechanisms for ongoing accountability and the search for long-term policy solutions. One advantage of hurricanes over earthquakes is that you can see them coming.


3 M. Kreutzer and V. Pettai, “Persistence and Decline Versus Transience and Genesis” (presented at the Joint Sessions of the European Consortium for Political Research, St. Gallen, Switzerland, 2011)


5 Volatility of 0.0 will produce an increase in average age equal to the full period between elections; Extra-system volatility of 1.0 will produce a drop in average age to 0.0.


7 Ibid.


9 Kreuzer and Pettai, 78.


12 Ibid., p. 39


17 D. Bochsler and I. Szekely, “We Do the Same, but We Do It Better. Post-ideological Electoral Competition in Post-communist Democracies” (presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions, Münster, 2010), 21.


21 Bochsler and Szekely, p. 19.


25 The flowchart for the simulation can be found at http://www.pozorblog.com/2014/11/party-replacement-simulation/

26 Bartolini and Mair.


35 For accounts of these elections see Haughton et al, 2011; S. Hanley, “Despite ‘winning’ the Czech parliamentary elections, the Czech Social Democrats have been firmly upstaged by Andrej Babiš”, *LSE EUROPPE blog*.

http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europblog/2013/11/01/despite-winning-the-czech-parliamentary-elections-the-czech-social-

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/


37 Bartolini and Mair.

38 Deegan-Krause and Haughton


