Imitating the newcomer. How, when and why established political parties imitate the policy positions and issue attention of new political parties in the electoral and parliamentary arena: the case of the Netherlands

Otjes, S.P.

Chapter 2: Theorising about new political parties

Josh Lyman: *"I gave up everything for this and you are not even in this to win."*
Matthew Santos: *"Maybe we have a different definition of winning."*
- Dialogue from *The West Wing*, episode *Opposition Research* (Misiano 2005)

2.1 Introduction

In a scene in the American political drama *The West Wing*, a presidential candidate, Matthew Santos, and his campaign leader Josh Lyman have a heated discussion. The candidate makes clear that he does not expect to win the election and that he is in the race to put education higher on the political agenda. The campaign manager says: "I gave up everything for this and you are not even in this to win!" The candidate responds: "Maybe we have a different definition of winning." The difference in opinion between Lyman and Santos is not just a difference between two fictional characters in a political drama. In political reality, too, some candidates do not run to get elected, but because they want to put an issue on the political agenda. Some new political parties may be formed in order to change the policies of established political parties, or bring new issues to the agenda, or change the way politics is done instead of winning office and implementing policies directly. In the literature on new political parties, many studies take the perspective of Joshua Lyman, while only a few take the perspective of Matthew Santos.

Major theorists of political science, like Downs (1957), Lijphart (1968), Daalder (1966) and Mair (1997b, 1997a, 2001), have written about the ability of new political parties to influence the policies of established political parties. They use metaphors such as gadflies, thermometers or pressure valves to describe new political parties: their presence prevents established political parties from straying too far from their ideology, and they can point them towards social problems that they have neglected. Their entry into the political system may form an important shock that forces established political parties to reconsider their policies (Harmel & Svåsand 1997). The entry of a new political party may force established parties to change their positions on certain policies or to find solutions for new problems that the new political parties bring to the table. If established parties change their positions sufficiently, this may lead to a change in the party system: new parties may be able to

introduce a new line of conflict into the political arena, upsetting the balance in politics. It is also possible that the entry of a new political party causes the number of dimensions in the political system to decrease because the new party's entry reinforces competition along the left-right dimension. As Janda (1990) hypothesises, established parties are conservative organisations, unlikely to change their policies unless external factors force them to. Therefore, the patterns of interaction, the lines of conflict and thus also the party system is likely to "freeze" (Schattschneider 1960; Lipset & Rokkan 1967). This means that established political parties might be competing with each other on issues that have lost all relevance to voters. By bringing in new issues and influencing political party positions, new political parties may influence the lines of conflict that structure interaction between political parties. New political parties may have an important role in ensuring that the conflicts between established political parties are salient in society.

According to Harmel (1985, 416) and Norris (2005, 264), the ability of new political parties to influence the policies of established political parties has been discussed often. However, there has only been limited systematic research into it. The case study of Harmel and Svåsand (1997) provides "the most systematic evidence" according to Norris (2005, 264). There has been a small number of studies that attempted to contribute to the understanding of the way new political parties influence established political parties in general (Pellikaan, De Lange & Van der Meer 2007; Huijbrechts 2006; Harmel & Svåsand 1997). It is the goal of this research to chart more precisely the effect new political parties have on established political parties and the party system. Moreover, this study seeks to determine why some political parties were successful at changing the established political parties and the party systems, whereas others failed.

This chapter will outline a number of theoretical distinctions that may help to understand how established parties respond to new political parties, under what conditions this may happen, and how individual reactions can lead to changes in the party system. This chapter will be divided into four sections. In the first section, the state of the art in the study of new political parties will be discussed. Scholars of new political parties appear to be interested in the ability of new political parties to change party systems, but they have almost exclusively focused on the new parties' ability to win representation. In the second section, the term new political party will be defined. The third section will outline a typology of how established parties can respond to

new political parties. Specific hypotheses will be formulated here about the conditions under which established parties are more or less likely to respond to new political parties. In the fourth and final section, these individual developments will be linked to a notion of party system change.

2.2 New political party success

Since the 1970s, new political parties have been the subject of intensive study in political science. Political scientists began to study why some new political parties were successful, while others failed. Most of these studies focused on explaining the electoral success of new political parties: they took the perspective of Joshua Lyman from the quote above. New parties seek to win elections, occupy public office and implement their policy directly. The idea that new political parties could also be successful in other ways played a major role in explaining the significance of their studies. Ever since Downs (1957, 127), scholars have claimed that new political parties could influence established parties to change their policies. New political parties could not just have electoral success; they could also have programmatic success by influencing the policies of established political parties. This was the goal of Santos in the quote. In this way, new political parties could influence the policies of existing political parties, which could in some cases even lead to changes in the party system.

Since the 1960s, more and more new political parties have entered West European parliaments (Hug 1997, 81). Political science picked up on this trend in the 1970s. Scholars of new parties often use the notions of success and failure. Most of the research has focused on identifying those characteristics of new political parties that explain why some political parties are successful, while others fail. The question rises how one defines success or failure. The success or failure that authors appear to be interested in is the extent to which a new political party changes the party system. One can see this in the title of Hug's (1997) book *Altering party systems* or the title of Tavits (2006) article "Party system change. Testing a model of new party entry".

How one defines success and failure depends on one's definition of the party system. In most studies, success has been defined as obtaining (or maintaining) a (relevant) number of seats in parliament (Hauss & Rayside 1978, 36-39; Harmel 1985, 411-421; Rochon 1985, 432; Hug 1997; Mair 1999, 210; Lucardie 2000, 133-134; Krouwel & Lucardie 2008, 288; Van Kessel & Krouwel 2011, 305). Authors

implicitly define a party system in numerical terms: if the entry of a new political party into parliament changes a two party system into a three party system, the party system has been altered.

A large number of characteristics have been identified that contribute to the electoral success of new political parties. Hug (1997, 44) categorises these in four groups: the presence of untapped issues, on which new political parties can campaign; the requirements for forming a political party, such as a required number of signatures to gain ballot access; the importance of the central government, as this would make running for the national parliament more attractive; and requirements for winning a seat, such as electoral thresholds. Other factors that have been identified relate to the new political parties' organisation and leadership and levels of societal diversity, in religious, ethnic and linguistic terms (Hauss & Rayside 1978; Lucardie 2000; Harmel & Robertson 1985; Lowery et al. forthcoming). Hug's (1997) and Lowery *et aliorum* (forthcoming) longitudinal studies show that the electoral system and the presence of new, untapped issues are the most important factors in determining the new political party's formation and their (initial) electoral performance.

Political parties may define success in another way. Some follow Lyman and seek to win a substantial number of votes, enter political office and become a relevant player in government formation. Many minor new parties, however, may run because they believe that they can influence the positions of the more promising candidates and therefore the positions that these candidates take in office. They may take Santos' perspective. New political parties may have the ability to bring new issues into the political arena (Harmel 1985, 405). They may force established parties to reconsider their political positions (Van Kessel & Krouwel 2011, 313). As Downs (1957, 127) claimed, some new parties may only set out to force established political parties to adopt different stances on particular issues. In this way they may be able to influence the way established political parties interact with each other (Harmel & Robertson 1985, 414). Even when they never gain enough support to be a relevant political party in the terminology of Sartori (1976), new political parties can have a lasting impact on the party system in this way.

2.3 Conceptualising new political parties

There is no standard definition of what a new political party is. How one defines a new party depends on one's research question (Barnea & Rahat 2011; Deschouwer 2007). There are two elements that form the definition of a new political party: 'new' and 'political party'. To start with the latter element: a political party can be defined as "an organization that appoints candidates at general elections to the system's representative assembly", as Sjöblom (1968, 12) formulated it. To define 'new', it is necessary to look at the way political parties are formed. Two perspectives are helpful here: Mair's (1999) and Pedersen's (1982).

Mair (1999, 216) made a distinction between the origins of political parties in terms of birth, marriage, divorce, and transformation. Parties that are formed by *birth* are new parties that are formed by *homines novi*, people without a background in other political parties. An example of a party formed by birth would be the Flemish green party Agalev (*Anders Gaan Leven*/To Live Differently). Previously apolitical people who were inspired by a green/progressive Catholic social movement founded this party. Parties that are formed by *marriage,* are formed by the merger of two or more existing parties. The Italian PD (Democratic Party/*Partito Democratico*) is an example of such a new party: the social democratic DS (Democrats of the Left/ *Democratici di Sinistra*), the social-liberal party *la Margherita* (The Daisy) and several other smaller parties form the PD. Parties that are formed by *divorce* are splits from pre-existing parties. The British SDP (Social democratic Party) that was formed by former Labour ministers is an example of this. *Transformations* are established parties that undergo a significant change (Krouwel & Lucardie 2008, 279-280) by altering their name, their leadership and sometimes even their official ideology. Examples of recent transformations can be found in Belgium where between 1990 and 2008 every Flemish party in parliament changed its name at least once. These changes in name were often accompanied by the claim that the party had undergone a major transformation.[4]

As Barnea and Rahat (2011, 308 emphases removed SO) argue, "new-ness is a non-dichotomous quality": it is a matter of gradation. Parties that are formed by birth are most new, as they have no connection to any established party. Parties that are

[4] The PVV was renamed VLD in 1992, the SP was renamed SP.a in 2001, the CVP became CD&V in 2001, AGaLev was renamed Groen! in 2004 and the *Vlaams Blok* became *Vlaams Belang* in 2004.

formed by divorce are less new, because they are related to an established party. Parties that are formed by transformation and marriage are least new: in essence they still are established parties. In order to get a workable definition, it is necessary to draw a line: in this study political parties that are formed by marriage or transformation of established parties are not seen as new but rather as a re-formation of one or more established political parties, formed to maintain their current position within the party system.[5] Parties formed by divorce may not necessarily be new in the sense that some of their members have been MP in the past, but they are new in the sense that they have formed a new party organisation.

Pedersen (1982) recognises different life phases that a newly formed party goes through. These phases are declaration (the public expression of the intention to form a new party); authorisation (the recognition by the authorities that they are a party); representation (winning the first seats in parliament); and finally relevance (becoming a relevant party in government formation). The point at which a party moves from being a new party to becoming an established party depends on the research question (see Deschouwer 2007). The moment studied here, following Huijbregts (2006, 19) and Rochon (1985, 437 n.6, n.10), is the representation phase.

In summary, this study will define new political parties as organisations that have elected representatives in parliament for the first time, except those organisations that were formed as a transformation or a merger of one or more parties that had representatives in parliament.

[5] This definition differs from Rahat and Barnea (2011) in two ways: they define a new party as "a party that has a new label and that has no more than half of its top candidates (top candidates or safe districts) originate from a single party" (Rahat and Barnea 2011, 7, emphasis removed SO). In their definition, a merger of three equally sized parties becomes a new party, because not all top candidates originate from a single established party. If all their top candidates originate from established parties is it truly a new party? Moreover, the definition excludes parties formed by divorce. For the purpose of this study, party divorces are interesting because the established party from which the new party was formed, has good reasons to respond to the new party.

Table 2.1: types of reactions of established parties

Reaction	**Attention**	**Position**
Imitation[6]	Imitating policy priorities	Imitating policy positions
Differentiation	Differentiating policy priorities	Taking stand against policy positions

2.4 Responding to new political parties

Established parties can respond in different ways to the entry of new political parties. This study will only examine the reactions to new political parties in terms of party positions and the saliency of issues. It will not look at changes in campaign style, rhetoric or internal party organisation. These organisational, rhetorical and campaign-related changes may be interesting, but the focus here is on the more substantially significant change in party positions. Several distinctions will be outlined that can help to understand the different reactions. These distinctions and reactions are summarised in table 2.1.

The first distinction is the one between imitation and differentiation. In reaction to a new party, an established party can imitate the new party, or they can distinguish themselves from the new party by decreasing similarities. Different authors have also made the distinction between reactions that increase and reactions that decrease similarities. Downs (2001), for instance, divides these reactions into two categories: the first category he calls disengagement. Established political parties seek to distance themselves from the new political party. The second he calls engagement: established political parties address the issues that the new party brings to the table and cooperate with them. Imitation is an example of an engaging reaction (Downs 2001, 27). The same distinction is caught in the division between increasing and decreasing similarity. The established party can imitate different aspects of the new party. It can take over (parts of) the program of the new political party. It can also address the same issues as the new political party; this is the basic difference between saliency and position. This study differentiates between four kinds of reactions: two

[6] One may question to what extent imitation is the correct term, because it refers to consciously increasing similarity. This study focuses on increasing similarity between political parties. The reasons why they do so are discussed in this theoretical chapter. These theories are all based on conscious, strategic action. Imitation is present where there is increasing similarity and there are theoretical reasons to assume that this action was conscious, exactly as is studied here.

are differentiating, two are imitating reactions; and two are reactions in terms of position and two are reactions in terms of saliency.[7]

Attention imitation: an established political party can devote more attention to the issues that the new political party introduces. It can do so in its election manifesto or in its parliamentary work. This does not necessarily mean that the established political party takes over the specific proposals of the new political party. The established party may emphasise its own proposals concerning the newly introduced issues more than before. For instance, the competition of an animal rights party may force a green party to emphasise its own positions more than before. This strategy seems especially applicable when the new political party is a niche party that prioritises a set of issues that were previously outside of party competition (Meguid 2005, 347-348). By devoting more attention to the issue, the established party may attempt to take over the ownership of the issue from the new party (Meguid 2005, 2007).

Attention differentiation: established political parties can also ignore new parties and their issues (Downs 2001, 26). They remain silent on the issues that the new political party brings to the table (Meguid 2005, 347-349) or, if the issue is already on the agenda, they may actually decrease levels of attention to the issue of the new party (Huijbrechts 2006). This strategy seems especially applicable if the new political party focuses on a particular issue: that is, if the party has a specific single issue, single interest or niche issue that it advocates and that was outside the range of party competition before. By disregarding the issue that the new party raises, the established parties may seek to prevent this issue from becoming the object of party competition. Moreover, the established parties may attempt to deprive the newcomers

[7] Meguid (2005, 2007) uses this difference between saliency and position to introduce a three-fold classification: accommodative reactions, dismissive reactions and adversarial reactions. Established political parties can deal in different ways with the issues a new political party brings to the table. They can take over the issue that the new party raises, as well as its position. Meguid calls this an accommodative reaction. Established parties can also distinguish themselves from the new party by downplaying the new party's issues. Meguid calls this a dismissive reaction. Or they can distinguish themselves from the new party by taking the opposite position on the issues it brings to the table. Meguid calls this an adversarial reaction. This scheme excludes the possibility that a party keeps a low level of saliency on the issue of the new party, but takes over its specific policy proposals. Huijbregts (2006) has attempted to make a more parsimonious taxonomy by only looking at issue attention only. These taxonomies are not used here because they are either inflexible (for Meguid) or attribute to much change to a new party (for Huijbregts).

of political legitimacy. The established political parties may be hoping that the new political party will wither and fade if they ignore it. This strategy seems particularly applicable in cases where the new political party poses no (electoral) threat to the established political parties (Kitschelt 1995, 256; Huijbrechts 2006). There are some dangers to this strategy: the failure to address the new political party and its issues may actually do little to prevent the defection of voters from the established political parties (Downs 2001, 26).

Position imitation: established political parties may take over the policies that the new political party proposes (Harmel & Svåsand 1997; Donavan & Broughton 1999, 267; Downs 2001, 27; Schain 2002, 237-238; Heinisch 2003, 103-109; Bale 2003; Van Spanje 2010; Wilson 1998). For instance, the entry of a green party into the political arena may force a social democratic party to reconsider its position on nuclear energy, or the entry of radical rightwing parties may force established parties to pursue tougher immigration, integration and law and order policies than they otherwise would have done (Wilson 1998, 257).

Position differentiation: established political parties take a stand against the policies of a new political party: the established party moves away from the new party. This strategy seems especially applicable if the new political party takes extreme positions on some issues: for instance, in many countries green or social-liberal parties take a stand against the radical right. They move to more multicultural and cosmopolitan policy position instead.

The idea of policy differentiation has been studied by Meguid (2005, 2007). She identified a political strategy by which established political parties both increase their attention to the new party's issue and emphasise policy differences between themselves and the new party. She called this an adversarial strategy. In this way established political parties legitimise the newcomer by picking a fight with them. Established political parties are likely to pursue this strategy in order to weaken the position of their established competitors. A mainstream rightwing party can lend legitimacy to a green party by focusing more on their pro-growth positions. In this way they force a political conflict with this green party, which then becomes a serious option for those voters who seek a green alternative for the mainstream rightwing party. As the green party is an electoral competitor of the mainstream leftwing party, it is the mainstream rightwing party that benefits here: it is voters of the left who switch parties to the green. This is a way to force a mainstream established political

competitor to lose votes, or, as Meguid (2007, 33) put it: “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”. Different authors have developed different hypotheses for different arenas and for different types of change (for instance in position or in attention). This study will attempt to extend some of the theories somewhat by applying them to different arenas and to different types of change.

2.5 Interacting with new political parties

In addition to adapting their policy positions or policy priorities, established political parties may actively engage with a new party by cooperating with it, for instance in governing coalitions, or they may actually disengage from it by isolating it politically. Though it is not the subject of this study, this form of political engagement or disengagement may be important in determining to what extent new political parties can influence the patterns of political competition in a political system.

Political cooperation: political cooperation is a way in which established political parties engage with a new political party (Downs 2001, 27). The entry of a new party in parliament can increase the number of potential legislative majorities (Donavan & Broughton 1999, 267), which might influence cooperation both in the legislative arena and in cabinet formation. Cooperation in the legislative arena can occur on an *ad hoc* basis. In some countries, minority cabinets rely on more structured support from the MPs of (relatively) new radical right-wing parties. One example can be found in Denmark where various centre-right minority cabinets since the 1980s have been supported by the radical right (Kitschelt 1995, 157; Hainsworth 2008, 111). In other countries, established political parties and new radical right-wing parties have formed coalition cabinets. Research by De Lange (2008) has shown that especially the ideological similarity between new radical rightwing and centre-rightwing parties opens up the possibility of cabinet formation between them. If a new political party becomes part of a governing majority, it can have an impact on government policy (Minkenberg 2001, 14; Rydgren 2004; Van den Brink 2006, 153; Hainsworth 2008). In the case of radical right-wing parties, governments have adopted tougher legislation on immigration and the integration of immigrants, supported by established parties. Becoming part of a governing majority is not necessarily a success for new political parties, whether in programmatic or electoral terms. If the new political party has an anti-establishment, populist message, this may be difficult to credibly combine with government responsibility in cabinets. Many radical right-wing parties have

performed poorly after a period of government responsibility (Kitschelt 1995, 200; Hainsworth 2008, 115; Heinisch 2003). As will be further discussed in section 2.9, integrating new political parties in political alliances or governing coalitions may limit the new parties' ability to create a new line of conflict, and may actually contribute to a reduction in the number of lines of conflict.

Political isolation: a clear strategy of disengagement is political isolation or containment (Downs 2001). This is the case when political parties make an agreement not to cooperate with the new political party. This may happen in the formation of coalition cabinets or even in the legislature. This strategy is likely to be pursued if the new political party is seen as anti-democratic, for instance if it is a radical right-wing, a radical left-wing party or if it is a political arm of a paramilitary organisation. The most prominent example of a political isolation strategy can be seen in Belgium, where all established political parties have formed a *cordon sanitaire* to keep the radical VB *(Vlaams Blok/*Flemish Bloc) out of power (Hainsworth 2008).

2.6 Political attention

Attention plays a role in different studies of the electoral arena and the parliamentary arena. There are different theories on electoral competition. In one of these theories, the saliency theory of competition, attention plays a major role. This theory was pioneered by Robertson (1976) and extended by Budge (2001). These scholars claimed that parties tend to compete which each other by emphasising different issues. Party positions can best be understood in terms of differences in saliency (Budge 2001, 78-85): parties do not compete by offering different solutions for particular issues, but they compete by emphasising different issues. Some issues belong to the left and some are owned by rightwing parties (Budge 2001, 78, 82). In this view, the left prefers talking about social welfare and the right prefers talking about law and order. A candidate is understood to own an issue when he or she is seen by the electorate to be better able at handling that particular national problem than their opponent (Petrocik 1996, 828). Electoral competition concerns the definition of the conflict: the issue that is salient in the eyes of the voter decides the election (Bélanger & Meguid 2008). In essence, a party seeks to make the elections a referendum about an issue on which voters trust their candidates more than the other parties'. Forcing a candidate to address an issue he or she does not own can be seen as an important step to reframe the elections. In multiparty systems, which issues voters

see as owned by particular parties depends (among other factors) on the communication of the party (Walgrave & De Swert 2007). Walgrave and De Swert (2007, 64-65) find a relationship between the issues that parties emphasise in their manifestos and long-term patterns of issue ownership. New political parties may own issues that lie outside the scope of issue competition. They may be niche parties that focus on new issues such as green parties, anti-immigrant parties or ethno-territorial parties (Meguid 2005, 2007). Established political parties may attempt to halt or prevent the rise of a new party by emphasising the issues that new parties own (Meguid 2005, 2007). As will be described in section 2.9, saliency also plays a role in the work of Schattschneider (1960) and Mair (1997a).

In the study of the parliamentary arena, issue attention plays a major role and new political parties may have a special role in changing it. Attention is an important issue in parliamentary politics (2005, 32). Many real social problems exist and political attention is scarce (Jones & Baumgartner 2005, 34-35; Baumgartner & Jones 1993, 10). The issues that parties decide to focus on are the issues on which political action is taken (Jones & Baumgartner 2005, 37; Baumgartner & Jones 1993, 47). The parliamentary agenda is a particular political construct. Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2010, 260-261) propose that there is a two-way relationship between attention individual parties devote to issues and the parliamentary agenda.[8] Parties must engage in the agenda of the party system while at the same time competing over the formulation of the new agenda (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2010, 260). By dominating the party system agenda, some parties may be able to force other parties to focus on the issues that they own (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2010, 273).

Baumgartner and Jones (1993) propose that the parliamentary agenda goes through two phases: long periods of stability on the one hand and sudden changes on the other. In the stable periods, the parliamentary agenda is more or less fixed (Baumgartner & Jones 1993, 6). These periods of stability are interrupted by sudden changes: these changes are the result of external influences, such as real world events, media attention or public protests (Baumgartner & Jones 1993, 10; Walgrave, Varone & Dumont 2006; Walgrave & Van Aelst 2006). In addition to these external influences, factors inside parliament may also matter. Elections can cause shifts in attention, because they upset the balance of power between parties (Baumgartner &

[8] Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2010) use the term “party system agenda”.

Jones 1993, 22). Changes in the formation of parliamentary committees can even lead to a change in that committee's agenda (Alder 2002, 223). New parties like these other factors may cause a change in the policy agenda. Changes in the parliamentary agenda are often sudden and quick, what Baumgartner and Jones (1993) call a punctuation of the equilibrium. Dutch research has indicated that change is more incremental and less punctuated in the Netherlands than in the United States, because of the consensual nature of Dutch politics (Breeman, Lowery, et al. 2009, 20).

2.7 Political positions

In addition to devoting attention to certain issues, parties also take position on these issues. Different parties may offer different solutions for the same problem. There are two ways in which one can think about political positions: first, one can consider policy positions in an isolated way. Parties may approve or oppose the death penalty, and they may approve or oppose nuclear energy. The entry of a new political party may cause established parties to reconsider their policy priorities and to change position on a certain issue. The entry of a new party may also cause parties to take a position on an issue that they were silent or neutral about before. After the entry of D66 in the *Tweede Kamer* (the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament) for instance, parties had to take position on the question of electoral system reform, on which they had been silent before. This is the most basic way in which one can conceive of party positions: an unstructured set of policy demands, which may to a certain extent resemble a new party's positions. One can also aggregate policy positions into a dimensional structure. Policy dimensions are more than an aggregation of party positions on policy issues that share a thematic basis (pace De Lange 2008). This means that one works under the testable assumption that there is some structure in the party positions on issues. One can put party positions on a dimension. One can then conceive of party positions and parties as rightwing or leftwing, because there is clustering or an order of parties and positions.

Decision making in different arenas can be more or less structured. According to Baumgartner and Jones (1993, 19) parliamentary politics tends to be concentrated on one interpretation of the political conflict. It matters which conflict will become significant (Baumgartner & Jones 1993, 19; Schattschneider 1960, 63-64; Green-Pedersen 2007). The significant lines of conflict determine the possible majorities and therefore it fixes the outcomes of political decision-making. By redefining an issue,

one can change the outcomes of political decision-making. Here again, Baumgartner and Jones (1993) propose that policy changes go through phases of stability and sudden change. In the periods of stability, political actors may monopolise the formulation of policy: the median legislator has considerable control over what policies will be pursued (Baumgartner & Jones 1993, 4). If the balance of power between the parties is fixed, the definition of the conflict is fixed as well and therefore the outcomes of political decision-making are pre-determined as well (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2010). These periods of stability are interrupted by sudden changes: external events, elections and the entry of new political parties. Newcomers and outsiders may explicitly seek to redefine the conflict to their advantage. This view fits the perspective of Schattschneider (1960) and Mair (1997a) who propose that the main conflict of politics is between those parties that have an interest in maintaining the current lines of conflict of politics, and new political parties that seek to redefine the political conflict, by introducing a new line of conflict.[9] Consider the issue of the welfare state: there are two different ways to frame a conflict. On the one hand, one may understand a conflict in terms of left and right. Leftwing parties favour measures that extend social solidarity while rightwing parties favour measures that are based on individual responsibility (Claassen 2011). One can also redefine the issue in terms of progressive and conservative: between parties that favour welfare state reform and parties that want to maintain the current welfare state. The same issue still dominates the political agenda, but by redefining the issue, new questions are posed and new majorities may be formed. The entry of a new party may also raise the political profile of an issue. The political conflict on that issue can become more polarised. Instead of redefining the conflict, the entry of a new party may reinforce the existing lines of conflict on that issue, which will then become more polarised.

[9] Baumgartner and Jones (1993) refer to Schattschneider (1960), but only in the context of the contagiousness of the political conflict. For the outcome of political decision-making, it matters which groups are included. Therefore minorities have an interest in expanding the number of participants in a conflict, thus spreading the conflict.

2.8 Hypotheses

The central notion of this study is that the entry of a new party may cause established parties to take more or less similar party positions to the new party or change the focus of their attention. The simplest hypothesis is that the entry of a new political party may in general cause established parties to imitate it:[10]

> **1. New party presence hypothesis:** new parties will elicit imitation of their policies (whether conceptualised in terms of attention or position) by the established parties.

Different new parties may influence different established parties in different ways. Specific conditions and characteristics of both the new and the established parties may have an influence on the way established political parties respond to the proposals made by a new party. Here several factors will be discussed that may influence how established political parties respond to the policy proposals of new parties. These factors relate to the characteristics of the new party, the established party, the relationship between these two and the political arena.

2.8.1 Political arenas

In different political arenas, the effect of a new political party entering the political arena may be different. Bardi and Mair (2008) differentiate between two political arenas: the parliamentary arena and the electoral arena. The electoral arena is formed by electoral campaign. The parliamentary arena refers to parliament, where MPs participate in the policy-making process and hold the government accountable. Political parties have different incentives in different arenas and work under different constraints. The goal that parties have in the electoral arena is clear: win as many votes as possible (Bardi & Mair 2008, 158). In the parliamentary arena, however, the goals parties have may be more contingent: for opposition parties the parliamentary

[10] For reasons of parsimony, all these hypotheses are formulated in terms of imitation. Established parties will imitate new parties under certain conditions. While examining this relationship, one also examines the conditions under which established parties are likely to distinguish themselves from new parties: namely when these conditions are not present. Finally, if the relationships are reversed, because established parties are likely to differentiate themselves from new parties under the specified conditions, this will also show in the analyses of these hypotheses: the relationships will go against the expected direction.

arena may only be a platform that they can use to appeal to the electorate, while for coalition parties, parliament may be a place where policy or office goals can be pursued. In the electoral arena, parties may be more responsive to the electorate, while in the parliamentary arena office-seeking incentives can cause moderation (Bardi & Mair 2008, 157).

The characteristics of the different political arenas pull our expectations about the effects of new parties in two different directions. Following Bardi and Mair, one would expect parties to be more responsive to signals from the voters in the electoral arena: here electoral considerations play a major role. Voting for a new party may be a way for voters to express their concerns. Therefore, parties may feel more inclined to respond to new political parties in the electoral arena than in the parliamentary arena. Moreover, it is easier to respond to a new party during an electoral campaign: initiating a new bill takes more work than writing a line in an election manifesto. However, established political parties can more easily ignore new parties during election campaigns than they can in parliament. Political parties will focus on their own issues in the electoral arena in order to frame the elections in terms of issues that are beneficial to them (Budge 2001). This means that they will be inclined to ignore issues of which other parties, including new parties, have ownership.

In the parliamentary arena, similar concerns pull our expectations about the effects of new parties into different directions: in the parliamentary arena, parties are constrained by the parliamentary agenda. At the same time they participate in creating the agenda. As Jones and Baumgartner (2005) have shown, the parliamentary agenda is path-dependent. It is difficult to change the parliamentary agenda. It is not likely to change when a new political party (often with little experience in the parliamentary handiwork) enters the arena. This is, however, only one side of the story, because the parliamentary agenda is a peculiar political construct. Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2010, 260-261) propose that a two-way relationship exists between the attention that individual parties devote to issues and the parliamentary agenda. Parties must engage in the parliamentary agenda while at the same time competing over the new agenda (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2010, 260). Parties *have* to deal with those issues on the parliamentary agenda. Parliamentary parties are expected by the media and by other parties to have an opinion about issues that are on the agenda (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2010, 261). If a party does not talk about an issue when other parties raise it, it leaves the definition of that issue to other parties. This creates a situation of

dependency that parties will usually try to avoid. It may be possible that, by setting the parliamentary agenda, a new party can force other parties to focus on its issues (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2010, 261).

These mechanisms pull our expectations in different directions. Still one testable expectation needs to be formulated here: the determining factor is the strength of the agenda control by the established parties and the government. In the case studied (the Netherlands), agenda control is relatively weak (Döring 1995, see also section 3.4.1): the agenda is set by parliament. Therefore new parties are likely to have a more marked effect in parliament in the Netherlands than in another country, while for the electoral arena there is no reason to hypothesise a particularly marked effect. Political parties will also be influenced by different incentives in different arenas. It is likely that electoral considerations will play a larger role in the electoral arena than in the parliamentary arena. In the parliamentary arena, control over the parliamentary agenda (exercised through new party activity or government participation) will influence the extent to which established parties will have to deal with those new issues.

> **2. Political arena hypothesis:** a new party will elicit more imitation in established parties' policies in the parliamentary arena than in the electoral arena.
>
> **3. New party activity hypothesis:** the more active a new party is on its own issue, the more imitation it will elicit in the attention that established parties devote to that issue.
>
> **4. Electoral considerations hypothesis:** factors related to the electoral performance of established political parties will have more effect on the imitation by established parties in the electoral arena, than in the parliamentary arena.

2.8.2 Relationship between the new and the established party

It may not necessarily be the case that all new parties influence the policies of all established parties. Rather, specific new parties may elicit reactions from specific established parties that they threaten. In the following section, three relationships between new and established parties will be examined: the relationship between

challenged and challenger parties, between ideological proximate new and established parties and between mobiliser new parties and established parties.

An important typology for understanding the goals of new parties is the difference between mobilisers and challengers (Rochon 1985).[11] Challengers seek to challenge established political parties "on their own turf" (Rochon 1985, 421); they challenge the legitimacy of a particular established political party by claiming that they have abandoned the ideology or the interest that the party used to stand for (Rochon 1985, 421). In the terminology of this study: they seek to compete with the established political parties on the established lines of conflict. An example could be the new leftwing populist parties such as *Die Linke* (The Left), which attack the social democrats on their weak social agenda and their cooperation with economically conservative parties. Mobilisers seek to mobilise voters on a new issue, emphasising how their new politics differs from the politics of the established political parties (Rochon 1985, 421). An example of such a political party is *Die Grünen* (The Greens), which mobilised voters along new cleavages (Bürklin 1985). Lucardie (2000, 176-177; Krouwel & Lucardie 2008, 284) further distinguishes between three types of

[11] The distinction is similar to the typology proposed by Daalder (1965), which was elaborated by Lucardie (1986) for the period of depillarisation and by Vossen (2003) for the Interbellum. Daalder recognised six types of parties. Integralist parties, which seek to "adhere as perfectionistically as possible to a particular dogmatic teaching" (Daalder 1965, 192 translation SO). Integralist parties can be found among religious parties and socialist parties. Ecumenical parties, contrariwise, seek to overcome religious and ideological divides (Daalder 195, 192). The next two types come in a pair: special interest parties (Daalder 1965, 193) and socially dissident parties, which represent the labour or the employers' wing of a particular political family (Daalder 1965, 193). Finally, Daalder (1965, 194) distinguishes between centripetal and centrifugal anti-system parties. These are parties that seek to emphasise national unity and break through all existing divides. It can also occur in a centrifugal fashion, when parties seek revolutionary change of the economic system (Daalder 1965, 194). Vossen (2003, 139-141) only recognises the latter of the two and emphasises that these groups rely on revolutionary means to achieve their goals. Vossen (2003) and Daalder (1965) stress that this characterisation is not exclusive, but that an individual party can be both an integralist party and emphasise the interests of particular groups, for instance. Vossen (2003) adds a personalist party category: with the rise of mass parties and the proportional electoral system, established parties became less open to prominent individuals, who could operate much more freely and independently in the majoritarian electoral system with limited suffrage, and in the elite-parties. They represented a different kind of politics based on trust between voters and parliamentarians, not a defined political program (Vossen 2003, 64-66). Rochon (1985, 424) likewise considers several new parties of the Interbellum period to be "personal vehicles" of their founders.

mobilisers: prolocutors, prophets and purifiers. Prolocutors seek to represent a particular social group that has been neglected by the established political parties, without explicit reference to a political ideology. Prophetic parties seek to mobilise voters on a new political issue with a new political ideology. Purifiers seek to change the political system or the political culture.

Mobilisers are likely to seek to change the attention that established political parties devote to issues, because they mobilise voters on a new issue. By focusing on new issues mobilisers cut through established lines of conflict: therefore, they are likely to influence all parties. On the whole one would expected that mobilisers influence more parties than challengers. Challengers are likely to influence the policy positions or issue attention of the specific established political parties that it challenged. Moreover, the entry of a mobiliser is more likely to result in change in the nature of the political conflict on an issue, than the entry of a challenger would be. The entry of a challenger is more likely to reinforce the existing conflict than the entry of a mobiliser.

In a similar line of argument, one may argue that established parties, which already stand close to a new party on the issue that it raises, might be more likely to respond to a new party than parties that take a different position on the issue. A party may feel challenged by the new party "on its own turf" in this way as well. If a new party enters parliament while it campaigned on the same side of an issue that the established party considers its own, this may be seen by the established party's leadership as a sign that the party has lost credibility on the issue in the eyes of the voter. Harmel and Svåsand (1997, 317), Van Spanje (2010, 567), and Huijbregts (2006, 9), propose that ideologically proximate established parties may respond more to a new party, than ideologically distant parties. Note that Harmel and Svåsand (1997) only examine this hypothesis in the electoral arena, here this hypothesis is examined for both the electoral and the parliamentary arena. Different studies have looked at both ideologically distant and proximate parties and have found reactions from both (Bale 2008; Bale et al. 2010; Van Kersbergen & Krouwel 2008; Van den Brink 2006). There is likely to be more room for improvement in dissimilar parties than in similar parties: if two parties already have similar programs, there are less points they can change to become more similar. As this is most in line with the hypothesis about challengers, this hypothesis will be tested here. One should note, however, that there are good reasons for new parties to try and influence established

political parties on the opposite side of the political spectrum. The entry of a new political party is likely to reinforce the existing political conflict. Meguid (2005, 2007) has taken up this notion: she proposes that, when a new issue is raised, parties that are on opposite sides of the political spectrum may have good reason to raise the political profile of the issue, while at the same time moving away from the established party in terms of positions. By picking a fight with the new party on this issue, the established party may seek to reinforce the ownership of the new party on the issue. The voters of the ideologically opposite new political party are unlikely to switch to the new party, but the voters of ideologically proximate parties are. The underlying reasoning is that "the enemy of the enemy is a friend": by reacting in an accommodating way to a niche party competing electorally with another mainstream party, an established party can seek to increase its relative electoral position. Moreover, if parties are dissimilar, there is more room for improvement. These different notions are tested in hypothesis 7. The ideological similarity formulation is pursued here, but testing that will also yield information for the possibility that ideological dissimilarity matters.

> **5. Challenger hypothesis:** a challenger new party will elicit more imitation in the policies of the established party that it challenged, than in the policies of other parties.
> **6. Mobiliser hypothesis:** a mobiliser new party will elicit imitation in the policies of more established parties than a challenger new party.
> **7. Ideological similarity hypothesis:** the more similar a new party is to an established party, the more imitation that new party will elicit from that established party.

2.8.3 Characteristics of the new party

There are three characteristics of new parties that may influence the extent to which it is seen as a threat by the established political parties. Harmel and Svåsand (1997, 317) claim that parties will only respond to a new party if it "wins enough votes and/or seats to get noticed." If a new party offers a credible threat to the established parties, they are more likely to imitate it than if it is seen as merely a nuisance. Electoral success of the new party is often used as an explanation for established parties reactions in other studies (Van Spanje 2010, 567; Huijbrechts

2006, 8). One can explain this mechanism in two ways: first, electorally successful new parties may be seen as threats to established parties. Second, it may also be the case that established parties attempt to jump on the "bandwagon" of a successful party (Ceci & Kain 1982; Gray et al. 2010).[12] Harmel and Svåsand (1997) only examine the new party size hypothesis in the electoral arena, here this hypothesis is tested in both the electoral and the parliamentary arena. As stated in paragraph 2.8.1 the hypothesis is that electoral considerations matter more in the electoral arena, than in the parliamentary arena.

The extent to which a new political party is seen as a credible threat may depend on its support in the electorate, as Harmel and Svåsand (1997, 317) propose, but also on its level of organisation: if the new political party is not organised, the established political parties may be more likely to consider the new competitor a nuisance or a flash party instead of a real threat. It may, finally, also depend on its participation in government. If a new political party participates in government, it is a sign that established parties consider it a relevant political player (Sartori 1976). Government participation may also be related to agenda control, as discussed in section 2.8.1: these new parties have control over the parliamentary agenda by their participation in the governing majority, through the legislative agenda of the cabinet. One should note, however, that the participation of new (radical rightwing) parties in a cabinet is often *preceded* by a growing similarity between the policy positions of the centre-right and the new radical rightwing parties (De Lange 2008; Bale 2003). This relationship reinforces itself: ideological similarity between the new and the established party is likely to be both a cause and result of their political cooperation. What is the case for patterns in attention, is also likely to be the case for the redefinition of the political conflict: new political parties that enter the political arena with a larger number of votes or a stronger party organisation, or those new parties that actually enter government, are more likely to redefine the nature of the political conflict than other new political parties.

[12] Ceci and Kain (1982) and Gray et al. (2010) do not use the notion of the bandwagon in the context of parties imitating each other: Ceci and Kain (1982) look at voters voting for candidates that are doing well in the polls and Gray et al. (2010) look at policy makers imitating successful policies.

8. New party performance hypothesis: the more votes a new party gets in the election, the more imitation it will elicit from established parties.

9. New party organisation hypothesis: the better organised a new party is, the more imitation it will elicit from established parties.

10. New party government hypothesis: a new party that enters government in its first parliamentary period will elicit more imitation from established parties than a new party that does not enter government in its first parliamentary period.

2.8.4 Characteristics of the established party

Some political parties are more "adaptable" than others (Mair 1983, 414): they are more likely to change due to some external shock, in this case a new political party entering the political arena. In explaining why established parties imitate new parties, most authors emphasise the role of electoral considerations. Political parties might take the entry of a new party that focuses on a new issue as an opportunity to expand its own electorate by taking over the issues of a successful new political party. Parties may seek to prevent their electorate from switching parties by responding to the positions their electorate takes on these new issues (Demker 1997; Norris & Lovenduski 2004). Moreover, established parties may seek to re-gain the votes they lost to the new political party by taking over its positions (Harmel & Svåsand 1997). Harmel and Svåsand (1997, 317, citing Janda 1990) include this element into their theory as well, hypothesising that "parties are conservative organisations, changing only in response to bad elections". In times of instability and insecurity, organisations tend to imitate the behaviour of successful examples (DiMaggio & Powell 1991). If a party has lost in the election in which a new party has entered, it is likely to consider this party to be an electoral competitor.[13] Harmel and Svåsand (1997) only apply this hypothesis in the electoral arena. In this study this hypothesis is also applied in the parliamentary arena. The assumption (discussed in paragraph 2.8.1) is that electoral considerations matter more in the electoral arena, than in the parliamentary arena.

[13] In preliminary research several other specifications of adaptability were tested: such as stability of the internal organisation of the established party, its total electoral result or its participation in government. These factors did not lead to significant results. For reasons of model parsimony, these factors are not tested here.

By taking over the new party's positions, established parties offer the voter of the new political party a better deal: the same policies, but now in the hands of a political party that, because of its experience in the parliamentary and governmental arena, is also able to deliver (Meguid 2005, 349). Thus there can be a relationship between programmatic and electoral success: if a political party is successful in programmatic terms, this may actually undermine its electoral perspectives (Meguid 2005). This may not necessarily be the case: voters may instead stay with the "real thing" instead of some copy made by opportunistic established politicians (Van den Brink 2006, 117). Moreover, if established political parties attempt to deal with the issue that the new political party brings to the agenda but are unable to tackle the issue successfully, the new political party can actually profit from this in electoral terms. By devoting attention to the issue, the established political parties focus media and public attention to the issue and make the issue a legitimate problem in the eyes of the voter (Perlmutter 2002, 213-216; Kitschelt 1995, 272-282). Another problem is that if a new political party enters the political arena, and some political parties choose a strategy of differentiation, other political parties are put in a particularly difficult position: if they differentiate themselves from the new political party, they may lose voters to the new political party, but if they imitate the new political party on its issues, they may lose voters to the political parties that respond in an adversarial way (Kitschelt 1995, 235). This dilemma is particularly clear in Denmark. Here, after the rise of the radical right-wing DF (*Dansk Folkeparti*/Danish People's Party), the social democratic SD (*Socialdemokraterne*/Social democrats) copied the policies of the DF on a number of issues such as immigration. This however did not lead to gains in the following elections: the votes the SD may have won from the radical right were lost again to political parties that voiced opposition against the radical right such as the SF (*Socialistik Folkeparti*/Socialist People's Party) (Van den Brink 2006, 167). In other European countries the politics of immigration in particular also poses a similar dilemma for both the left and the right (Zaslove 2006).

> **11. Established party performance hypothesis:** the worse an established party performed in the elections in which a new party entered, compared to its performance in the previous election, the more it will imitate that new party.

2.8.5 Complications

These relationships may be complicated by interaction effects, by time effects and by characteristics of the political system. Harmel and Svåsand (1997, 317) bring several of these factors together by proposing that "a nearby, established party is likely to change its positions in a new party's direction only (or at least, most dramatically) when (a) the new party is winning a significant number of votes and/or seats and (b) the established party itself is concurrently experiencing what it considers to be bad elections." They propose that only when these three factors are present should one see a "dramatic" reaction. This means that one expects an interaction relationship between these variables. Harmel and Svåsand (1997) only examine this hypothesis in the electoral arena. This hypothesis is tested here in both the electoral and the parliamentary arena, with the qualification that it is hypothesised that electoral considerations matter more in the electoral arena, than in the parliamentary arena.

Additionally, parties may respond to the (possible) entry of a new party at different points in time. They can react after the entry of a new party into parliament, when it is clear how much support the new party has. But they can also act before a new party enters parliament: anticipating the entry of a new party into the parliamentary arena. If a party is expected to enter parliament, because of opinion polling, it may very well be the case that other parties anticipate its entry in parliament, in the elections in which it enters parliament. This idea of anticipation has not been discussed or theorised extensively. In this context the extent to which a party could be reasonably anticipated becomes an important explanation. In addition to the (anticipated) electoral performance of the new party, the history of the party becomes an important explanation: parties formed by divorce are more likely to be anticipated than parties formed by birth, because the divorce is unlikely to have been a quiet affair. One key complication may be that it becomes difficult to distinguish cause and effect, because they are observed at the same point in time: it may be that in anticipation to the entry of a new party, established parties increase attention to an issue, but also that if established parties increase attention to an issue, new parties may benefit from this.

Finally, Norris (2005, 269) hypothesises that the electoral system plays an important role in influencing the relationship between the share of votes a radical right party has and its effect on the positions of established parties. In a system with proportional representation, where new parties can enter parliament more easily,

established parties are more likely to change their policies. In a country with majoritarian electoral system, where it is difficult for parties to enter parliament, established parties are less likely to see new parties as threats, because they are unlikely to enter parliament. These new parties do not fit the definition of new party used in this chapter, which looks at new parties only when they enter the parliamentary arena. The reasoning of Norris can be explicated: high entry barriers prevent new parties from entering parliament. This means that until they enter parliament, parties, even if they perform well electorally, will not be seen as a threat (Norris 2005, 269). However, once these parties do cross the electoral threshold, they immediately form a sizeable parliamentary group, a real threat.

> *"The substitution of conflicts is the most devastating kind of political strategy. Alliances are formed and re-formed; fortresses, positions, alignments and combinations are destroyed or abandoned in a tremendous shuffle of forces redeployed to defend new positions or to take new strong points."*
> Schattschneider (1960, 74 - emphases removed SO).

2.9 Changing the party system

As Schattschneider described in his *The semi-sovereign people*, the substitution of conflict is the most devastating kind of political strategy. If new political parties are able to change the nature of the political conflict they have a profound effect on the party system. The effect on the party systems appears to be the object of so many studies of new political parties. As discussed in section 2.2, these studies have focused on the electoral performance of new parties and have implicitly worked from a numerical definition of new party. This section will propose to understand a party system in terms of the significant lines of conflict and will propose to understand the effect of a new party from this perspective. Two mechanisms will be discussed which explain how the entry of a new political party may change the significant lines of conflict in a political system. Such a change, as will be argued here, is a form of party system change. Because the link between party system change and change in the political space may not be apparent and the study of (the dimensionality of the) political space is in my view complex and is riddled with empirical problems and theoretical misconceptualisations, these mechanisms require more explanation than the previous hypotheses.

The central notion of this section is that a change in the lines of conflict ought to be understood as a form of party system change. Terms like party system and party system change appear to defy definition (Mair 1997b, 48; Bardi & Mair 2008, 150). There is no consensus between political scientists about what the constitutive elements of a party system are, and the extent to which these elements need to change to qualify as a change of the party system. The typologies developed by Duverger (1954), Blondel (1968) and others still inform the current research on party systems (Bardi & Mair 2008, 150). These all focus on numerical characteristics of party systems (Bardi & Mair 2008, 152): specifically the number of political parties and their relative sizes (Mair 1997b, 202).

Mair (1997b, 6), following Sartori (1976, 42-47) dismisses the strictly numerical approach to party systems. He emphasises that a party system is more than the sum of its parts. What sets a party system apart from a group of individual political parties is the *patterned interactions* between them: a party system is characterised by a structure that determines the behaviour of political parties (Sartori 1976, 131-216; Mair 1997b, 21; Bardi & Mair 2008, 153). Authors have added many different criteria concerning the interaction between parties to their typologies of party systems. Sartori (1976) included criteria that concerned the interaction between government and opposition and electoral competition in his typology of party systems. In his own typology of party systems, Mair (1997b) focused on the difference between open and closed patterns of party competition and government formation. This notion of *patterned interaction* between political parties as the constitutive element of a party system plays a role in another approach to party systems. The spatial approach to party systems sees "party systems mainly through the competitive interaction drives among parties, and parties and voters in ideological space(s)" (Bartolini 1998, 40). Adapting Bartolini's description of the spatial approach to party systems slightly, one could propose that the spatial approach to party systems sees party systems as the patterned interaction among political parties in a political space structured by a number of significant lines of conflict. The lines of conflict that underlie the patterned interaction between political parties would in this

view constitute a party system. Therefore, a change in those lines of conflict would *constitute* a change in the party system.[14]

Given that one can conceive of party system change in terms of change in the lines of conflict that structure political conflict, it may be useful to ask what these lines of conflict actually are. The concept 'significant line of conflict' has two components: the line of conflict and its significance. A line of conflict is a set of patterned differences and similarities in opinion between political parties on a set of issues (Bovens, Pellikaan & Trappenburg 1998, 11). This is also referred to as an issue divide (Deegan-Krause 2007, 539). So for instance, in Western democracies, leftwing parties tend to agree with each other on many political issues and disagree with rightwing parties on those issues.[15] Schattschneider (1960) proposes to see a line of conflict as a line dividing political parties in two groups: for instance those who stand on the left side of that line and those who stand on the right. This conception of a line of conflict works great in a two-party system, but in a system with more than two parties it becomes too restrictive.

A line of conflict is *significant* in the sense that it dominates other lines of conflict (Schattschneider 1960, 64). Two kinds of domination can occur: marginalisation (Schattschneider 1960, 65) and absorption (Pellikaan, De Lange & Van der Meer 2007, 283; Mair 2007). Marginalisation means that other issues (related to other lines of conflict) are excluded from the political debate. Marginalisation is an

---

[14] This is not an odd notion of a party system. The interactive patterns between political parties are often put in spatial terms (Smith 1989). Like the numerical approach to party systems this view goes back to first theorists of party system in the mid 20th century, such as Schattschneider (1960). Even Duverger (1954), who proposed the numerical conception of party systems, describes the patterns of interaction between political parties in the French party systems in spatial terms.

[15] It is conceptually important to distinguish a significant line of conflict from a political disagreement, a position divide and a political cleavage. A *political disagreement* (Bovens, Pellikaan & Trappenburg 1998, 11) is on a lower level than the significant line of conflict. A political disagreement occurs when two groups of parties disagree on a particular policy. Only when the same pattern of differences occurs regularly, can one use the term *line of conflict*. A *position divide* occurs in a different realm than a line of conflict. A position divide is difference in interests and identity between particular social groups. It is a division in the electorate. A *political cleavage* is a fusion of a position divide and a significant line of conflict. When there is both a patterned difference in voting behaviour between social groups with opposing interests and different identities, and a patterned difference in political opinions between the political parties for whom they vote, one can speak of political alignment (Bartolini and Mair 1990, 215; Deegan-Krause 2008, 539).

effect of the significant line of conflict on the *saliency* of other lines of conflict. The dominance of the left-right dimension in Denmark, for instance, has prevented the politicisation of moral issues (Green-Pedersen 2007). Absorption means that other party positions on other issues are "forced" into the significant line of conflict, even though they are not an "intrinsic element" of that line of conflict (Mair 2007, 214). An example of how absorption works can be seen in the materialist/post-materialist divide in the electorate. Inglehart (1984) observed how during the 1980s the post-materialist political divide changed. During the 1980s this divide stood perpendicular to the left-right divide. In the 1990s, post-materialist divide coincided with left-right divide. The post-materialist line of conflict was, according to Inglehart, absorbed into the left-right line of conflict. Absorption is an effect of the significant line of conflict on the positions of parties on other lines of conflict. Although well researched on the electoral level (Mair 2007, 212), this phenomenon has not been studied on the party-level. In summary, a significant line of conflict is a set of patterned differences in opinion between political parties that marginalises or absorbs other lines of conflict in a polity. As long as the issues related to both lines of conflict are salient and the party positions on those issues are perpendicular, there are two lines of conflict.

It is important to differentiate this approach from a model of politics in which one assumes that one dimension, for instance the left-right dimension, matters most. One may then, as De Vries et al. (2011, 2-3) have done, look at how the meaning of this left-right dimension changes over time. De Vries et al. (2011) identify two mechanisms similar to those observed here: issue bundling and issue crowding out. By issue bundling they mean that new issues are integrated into the left-right line of conflict, and by issue crowding out they mean that old issues may be pushed out of the left-right line of conflict. Similarly, this study looks at how new issues are integrated or pushed out of the significant lines of conflict. This study, however, is not based on *a priori* assumptions of the dimensionality of the political space. Whether this is one-, two- or three-dimensional depends on how party positions on salient issues relate to each other.

The significant lines of conflict are an important aspect of a political system. These determine political outcomes (Schattschneider 1960, 60). If a particular line of conflict is significant, a particular group may be part of the majority and in control of the political process. If other lines of conflict become significant, this group may lose its allies and find itself in the minority. The question which line of conflict is

significant in politics determines which groups are in the centre of the political arena and which are forced to stay in the margins. The line of conflict also determines the outcome of political decision making because it determines the majorities and therefore it decides also which policies a polity will pursue.

There are two ways in which a new party is able to influence the established lines of conflict: first its entry may introduce a new, significant line of conflict which replaces one of the existing lines of conflict; and second, its entry may cause a reduction in the number of lines of conflict. Following Schattschneider's lead, Mair proposes that the established parties have a shared interest in maintaining the "frozen" lines of conflict (Mair 1997a, 953, 1997b, 16; Schattschneider 1960, 68). By maintaining the existing lines of conflict, established parties maintain their own position in the party system: by making sure that the voters believe that the election is about either a liberal or a socialist future for the country, they exclude those voices that believe that the future of the country should be religious, green or feminist. New parties may explicitly seek to change the lines of conflict: that is, to introduce a new line of conflict in addition to or instead of the existing lines of conflict and so to displace the existing lines of conflict. This is the essence of what Schattschneider has called the conflict of conflicts (Mair 1997a, 951; Schattschneider 1960, 63).

Pellikaan et al. (2007) apply this notion to the effect of the LPF (*Lijst Pim Fortuyn*/List Pim Fortuyn) on the Dutch party system in the electoral arena: before the entry of the LPF, the Netherlands was structured by a triangular pattern of competition and cooperation with a religious-secular, individualist-communitarian and a social-economic line of conflict (Pellikaan, Van der Meer & De Lange 2003b). The religious-secular line of conflict had lost its relevance after the legalisation of gay marriage and euthanasia. The LPF replaced the individualist-communitarian dimension by a monocultural-multicultural dimension concerning immigration and integration (Pellikaan, De Lange & Van der Meer 2007, 298). Kriesi and Frey (2008, 179) have argued that the entry of the LPF into the Dutch political system caused a "disturbance of the dimensionality of the Dutch political space". In their eyes, the entry of the LPF into the political arena accentuated an on-going transformation of the cultural line of conflict into a line that divides cosmopolitan parties from nationalist parties (Kriesi & Frey 2008, 180). Several other scholars have echoed the idea that new political parties may be able to introduce new lines of conflict. Meguid (2005, 2007), for instance, proposes that when political parties react in an adversarial way to

the issues that a new political party brings to the table, they take position on a new issue dimension that may cut through the established lines of conflict (Meguid 2005, 357). By taking a dismissive strategy, by decreasing attention for the issue that the new party raises, an established political party may attempt to downplay the new issue and its crosscutting line of conflict, which could upset the patterned interaction between political parties.

However, as Mair (2001) has pointed out in a study of *Die Grünen* (The Greens), and as Bale (2003) has elaborated, the entry of a new political party into the political arena may also have another effect. It may upset the balance of power that has fostered a particular constellation of lines of conflict and cause a reduction in the lines of conflict. If a new political party forms a political alliance with a political party that has traditionally been on the losing side of a line of conflict, they may shift the balance in favour of that political party (Mair 2001, 111). By emphasising this line of conflict, the new political alliance finds itself in the majority. Therefore they force other lines of conflicts to the margins of the polity. Instead of multidimensional patterns of competition and cooperation, the pattern is brought down to a one-dimensional conflict. In this way, even parties who seek to introduce a new line of conflict may actually cause a reduction of the lines of conflict. The case of the German *Die Grünen* is especially illustrative: before the 1980s the patterns of cooperation between German political parties was "triangular" (Smith 1989). There were three parliamentary parties in the German *Bundestag*: the social democratic SPD (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands/*Social democratic Party of Germany), the Christian-democratic CDU (*Christlich Demokratische Union/*Christian Democratic Union) and the liberal FDP (*Freie Demokratische Partei/*Free Democratic Party). Cabinet cooperation varied between FDP/SPD, SPD/CDU and CDU/FDP. Two lines of conflict played a major role in cabinet: one social-economic line of conflict and one religious line of conflict. A centrist coalition of SPD and CDU, a centre-right coalition of CDU and FDP, or a secular coalition of SPD and FDP were all possible. After *Die Grünen* became a significant political force during the 1990s, the patterns of cooperation changed. Political parties are now structured in two blocks: a cabinet formed by the leftwing block of *Die Grünen* and SPD replaced a cabinet formed by the rightwing block of CDU/FDP in 1998. Although *Die Grünen* had attempted to introduce a new line of conflict concerning the environment into the German political space, their entry into the political arena has actually flattened the political space. This

changed the cabinet formation space from a two-dimensional space into a one-dimensional space. Bale (2003) extended this analysis to radical rightwing parties. He hypothesises that after the entry of the LPF into the Dutch political arena, the pattern of political cooperation flattened: it essentially became one-dimensional. In the Netherlands, as in several other West-European countries, rightwing populist parties were integrated into governing coalitions and/or electoral alliances with political parties of the centre-right. This further reinforced a trend towards a bimodal pattern of political cooperation, already set in motion by the incorporation of green parties into leftwing coalitions (Mair 2001). In those systems where political cooperation was structured by multiple lines of conflict, the co-optation of radical rightwing parties into rightwing alliances has caused a *reduction* of the number of lines of conflict. The significant conflict is now between a bloc of the left and a bloc of the right. The Netherlands is a prime example of this phenomenon, given the formation of a centre-right cabinet of the CDA (*Christen-Democratisch Appel*/Christian Democratic Appeal), the conservative-liberal VVD (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*/People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) and the LPF. The fact that the established parties imitated the issues of the new political parties made cabinet formation easier (Bale 2003, 75).

On the basis of the work of Mair, two different effects of the entry of a new party may be distinguished: sometimes parties are able to introduce their own line of conflict into a political system. Sometimes the entry of a new political party into a political arena can lead to a decrease in the number of lines of conflict. New parties can have a marked effect on the lines of conflict even when their electoral success is limited (as in the case of many green parties) or short-lived (in the case of the LPF). New parties are able to change "the nature of the debate" in a polity (Donavan & Broughton 1999, 267).[16]

[16] There appears to be a tension between Bale and Pellikaan, because they come to different claims about the single case that they study. When Pellikaan et al. (2007) applied the Schattschneider-Mair thesis on the Dutch case, this led them to conclude that, due to the participation of the LPF in the Dutch elections, the nature of the significant lines of conflict changed, but the system remained multidimensional. The claim Bale (2003) makes that is also based on Mair's work, is radically different. Due to the participation of the LPF in government, the dimensionality of the Dutch system changed: from a two-dimensional system to a one-dimensional one. The claims of Pellikaan et al. (2007) however are not an outright contradiction of Bale (2003). Bale's claims specifically concern the patterns of cabinet cooperation, while Pellikaan

The question may rise how the systemic and individual level effects of new political parties cohere. In other words, how the claim that new parties can change the lines of conflict relates to the effects new political parties can have on individual established political parties. A line of conflict is a complex political phenomenon, which is the result of both the saliency of issues and the position of parties on those issues. If parties are differently ordered on two different issues and both these issues are salient, there are two lines of conflict. If, however, there is only one salient issue, or all parties are ordered in the same way on all issues, there is only one line of conflict. A change in the lines of conflict therefore is constituted by a change in the significance of issues or the positions of parties on issues.

There are three ways in which the lines of conflict can change: a new line of conflict can be added to the existing ones (Meguid 2005), a new line of conflict can replace one of the current lines of conflict (Pellikaan, De Lange & Van der Meer 2007, 117-118; Kriesi & Frey 2008; Poole & Rosenthal 2009), or the number of lines of conflict can decrease (Mair 2001; Bale 2003). A change in the lines of conflict may be the result of a change in the saliency of issues: some issues may become more significant and others may become less significant. If party positions on this new issue are markedly different from their positions on the issues related to the established lines of conflict, a new line of conflict might arise. Contrariwise, if the new issue crowds out an issue on which parties positioned themselves markedly different than on the other issues, including the new one, the number of lines of conflict may decrease. If one wants to attribute a change in the significant lines of conflict to a new party, it must be the issue that this new party brings to the table that becomes more salient. The saliency of issues at the level of the party system is a result of the attention individual parties devote to issues.

---

focuses on the patterns of electoral competition. It may be that in two different arenas there are different lines of conflict, unless one claims that the lines of conflict that structure interaction in one arena apply to the other arena as well. Pellikaan et al. (2007, 297) actually does claim that his model can explain the patterns of cabinet formation. This contradicts Bale's claim is that the pattern of cabinet formation became more one-dimensional. The configuration of the parties in Pellikaan's *et alliorum* (2007, 296) two-dimensional spatial model for 2002 indicates that there is a significant relationship between the two dimensions, something which can hardly be said for his model of the pre-2002 space (Pellikaan 2003). One could therefore certainly claim that the space after 2002 is less multidimensional than the space before.

A change in the dimensionality of the party system may, however, also be the result of a change of the positions of political parties on some issues. If, because of the entry of a new party, parties change their position on a significant issue so that it is different from the order on other issues, this constitutes the introduction of a new significant line of conflict. If, because of the entry of a new political party, parties change their position on a significant issue so that it is the same as the order on the other issues, this constitutes a reduction of the significant lines of conflict. If both these things happen at the same time, the nature of significant lines of conflict may change, while their number stays the same.

Political cooperation between parties may also influence the number of established lines of conflict. Parties can cooperate in formal political alliances, in parliament or in cabinet. The entry of a new political party will open up the question of how to deal with this new party as established political party. If parties cooperate, they will behave in a similar way, supporting proposals of their allies and opposing proposals because their allies oppose them. If this cooperation takes place on parties that have a similar position on one of the established significant lines of conflict, it may actually focus the political conflict on less lines of conflict. If the cooperation breaks through the established lines of conflict, this may increase the number of lines of conflict.

In summary, a new party may influence the significant lines of conflict by changing the positions of established parties and the attention of parties on their issue. That is, it may change the significance of some lines of conflict (by influencing their saliency) or it may cause some lines of conflict to be absorbed (or ejected) from the existing lines of conflict. On the basis of this account, one can formulate these hypotheses:

12. New line of conflict formation hypothesis: a new line of conflict will come into existence:

a. if the saliency of the issue that a new party campaigns on increases after its entry into parliament and the party positions on this issue diverge from party positions on the established lines of conflict;

b. if the positions of parties on the issue that the new party campaigns on, change in such a way that they are different from those on existing significant lines of conflict, and the issue remains significant;

c. if, through cooperation, party positions of some parties that are divided on one of the established lines of conflict, become more similar.

13. Line of conflict disappearance hypothesis: the number of lines of conflict decreases:

a. if the saliency of the issue that a new party campaigns on increases after its entry into parliament, and the relative positions on this issue are similar to the party positions on one of two dominant lines of conflict;

b. if the positions of parties on the issue that the new party campaigns on change in such a way that they are similar to the existing lines of conflict and the issue remains significant;

c. if, through cooperation, party positions of some parties that already held similar positions on the established lines of conflict, become more similar.

2.10 What this study does not claim

The central claim in the previous sections was that new political parties could influence established parties. One needs to differentiate this claim from two other effects on public policy: the direct effect of new political parties on policies through their own activity, and the effect of external events on policy

This study does not claim that new parties can only influence public policy indirectly. Like established political parties, new political parties have a range of tools to influence policy directly: they can use parliamentary initiatives, amendments or motions to influence government policy directly. Moreover, when they participate in government, the cabinet may itself propose policies that the new party favoured. This study looks at the indirect effect of new parties on policy: the effect new parties have on established parties, which may in turn influence public policies. Therefore, this study is not a complete survey of the policy success of new political parties.

The claim of this research is not that only new political parties can influence the established political parties and the party system. Groundbreaking work in the analysis of the agenda of political actors has been done by Baumgartner and Jones (1993). They analysed the change in the agenda of the United States government, especially within Congress. Jones and Baumgartner (2005) relate the changes in the legislative agenda of the United States Congress to objective social problems such as crime levels or levels of environmental pollution. They also show that, while politicians may seek to address these pressing social issues because they want to solve

real social problems, they may also address them because in the subjective view of citizens these issues are important. One important informant about what citizens find important may be found in the media (Walgrave & Van Aelst 2006, 89).

Baumgartner and Jones (1993) stress the role that "policy punctuations" play in maintaining the link between public and political priorities. In this view, periods of stability in the political agendas are interrupted by external events that direct the attention of politicians to social issues. External events can be anything: specific events (think of disasters, such as the Fukushima nuclear meltdown after the 2011 Tsunami in Japan) that get considerable attention from the media (Walgrave & Van Aelst 2006) but also by the formation of social movements (Rohrschneider 1993). Applying this framework to a European context, Walgrave et al. (2006, 1035) see a close link between the (stable) priorities of legislatures and the priorities set by political parties in their manifestos. Changes to these priorities, however, are more difficult to predict on the basis of the manifestos of political parties. Walgrave et al. relate this to smaller and larger external shocks.

One distinction that can be drawn from these studies is the one between antecedent causes and immediate causes. While the objective social problems and the perceptions of citizens of these problems may be important antecedent causes of the agendas of political or parliamentary parties, these can only enter into the political arena through policy punctuations. This study focuses on a particular type of these immediate causes: new political parties. These may serve as external shocks, catalysts bringing the political agenda closer to the priorities of the public. If the public feels that a problem is not addressed in the political arena, it will support a political party that does address that issue.