



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Has Flanders Become Normal? The Importance of Left/Right in Flemish Politics

Brug, W. van der

Citation

Brug, W. van der. (2001). Has Flanders Become Normal? The Importance of Left/Right in Flemish Politics. *Acta Politica*, 36: 2001(3), 307-329. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3450771>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3450771>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

- Mohr, Hans-Michael (1986), 'Dritte beim Interview. Ergebnisse zu Indikatoren aus dem Bereich Ehe und Partnerschaft mit Daten des "Wohlfahrtssurvey 1984"', *ZA-Informationen* 19, p. 52-71.
- Podmore, David, David Chaney and Paul Golder (1975), 'Third parties in the interview situation: evidence from Hong Kong', *The Journal of Social Psychology* 95, pp. 227-231.
- Pollner, Melvin, and Richard E. Adams (1994), 'The interpersonal context of mental health interviews', *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 35, pp. 283-290.
- Pollner, Melvin, and Richard E. Adams (1997), 'The effect of spouse presence on appraisals of emotional support and household strain', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61, pp. 615-626.
- Reuband, Karl-Heinz (1984), 'Dritte Personen beim Interview – Zuhörer, Adressaten oder Katalysatoren der Kommunikation?', in: H. Meuleman and K.-H. Reuband (eds.), *Soziale Realität im Interview*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag GmbH.
- Reuband, Karl-Heinz (1987), 'Unerwünschte Dritte beim Interview', *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 16, pp. 303-308.
- Reuband, Karl-Heinz (1992), 'On third persons in the interview situation and their impact on responses', *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 4, pp. 269-274.
- Silver, Brian, Paul Abramson and Barbara Anderson (1986), 'The presence of others and overreporting of voting in American national elections', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 50, pp. 228-239.
- Smith, Tom W. (1997), 'The impact of the presence of others on a respondent's answers to questions', *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 9, pp. 33-47.
- Sudman, Seymour and Norman M. Bradburn (1974), *Response Effects in Surveys: a Review and Synthesis*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Swyngedouw, Marc, Jaak Billiet, Ann Carton and Roeland Beerten (eds.) (1993), *Kiezen is verliezen. Onderzoek naar de politieke opvattingen van Vlamingen*. Leuven: ACCO.
- Taietz, Philip (1962), 'Conflicting group norms and the "third" person in the interview', *American Journal of Sociology* 68, pp. 97-104.
- Van den Bulck, Jan (1999), 'Does the presence of a third person bias estimates of TV viewing and other media use?' *Communications, The European Journal of Communication Research* 1, pp. 107-117.

Has Flanders Become Normal? The Importance of Left/Right in Flemish Politics

Wouter van der Brug

University of Amsterdam

Abstract

Due to the multidimensional character of the Belgian party system, the left/right dimension has never been as dominant in Flanders as it is in other European countries. Consequently, electoral researchers in Flanders pay relatively little attention to the role of left/right distances in party choice, and questionnaires for Belgian election studies do not include items that measure left/right positions. This article argues that there are theoretical reasons to expect that the left/right dimension has become more important in Flanders, and it therefore takes a fresh look at the importance of left/right. It uses European Elections Studies of 1989, 1994 and 1999. The results are somewhat enigmatic. Unfolding analyses provide no support for the hypothesis that left/right has become more important, yet a causal model demonstrates that left/right did become a much stronger determinant of party preference in 1999 than it was in the preceding years. The implications of the results are discussed against the background of recent developments in Belgian politics. Given the strong effect of left/right distances on party choice, more research is needed to investigate the role of left/right in electoral behaviour and to pin down the substantive meaning of the left/right dimension. Therefore, the article recommends including direct measures of respondents' and parties' left/right positions in questionnaires for Belgian election studies.

1 Introduction

In most Western European countries, electoral decisions and social positions have become increasingly independent since the 1960s. Research shows that this decline in cleavage politics is largely compensated by an increase in policy voting (Franklin 1992: 400). Instead of relying on social positions as a 'cue' in deciding which party to vote for, the autonomous citizens vote largely on the basis of their policy preferences (e.g. Rose & McAllister 1986; Dalton 1996). Since left/right positions summarize positions on a large number of concrete issues in most European countries (e.g., Fuchs & Klingemann 1990), voters can express their policy preferences by voting on the basis of their position on the left/right dimension. Ample evidence exists that voters in various European

countries vote largely on the basis of their policy preferences, particularly as summarized by ideological left/right positions (see, for example, Van der Eijk & Franklin 1996).

Just as in other countries, Flemish voters' party choice, particularly that of the younger generations, has become more autonomous from their social background (Billiet & Dobbelaerre 1985; Maddens 1994), even though voters' social positions continue to have a significant effect on their voting behaviour (Swyngedouw & Beerten 1998). This decline in cleavage politics is compensated by policy voting to a lesser extent in Flanders than in other countries. Moreover, in 1989 and 1994 at least, electoral decisions were less constrained by left/right ideology than in all other EU-countries (see, for example, Van der Eijk, Franklin & Oppenhuis 1996; Van der Eijk, Franklin & Van der Brug 1999).

Since the left/right dimension did not appear to be very important in Flanders, it is only reasonable that Flemish scholars of electoral behaviour should have paid little attention to it and that Belgian election studies (most notably the studies conducted by ISPO¹) do not normally include items pertaining to left/right positions of parties and voters. However, there are theoretical reasons to expect that left/right has become more important in Flanders. Therefore, this contribution takes a fresh look at the changes in the importance of left/right in guiding the behaviour of Flemish voters. This contribution is not intended as a criticism of the work of many other scholars who, with the aid of ISPO-data, have provided much insight into electoral processes in Flanders and in the ideological dimensions that structure public opinion (e.g., Swyngedouw et al. 1993, 1998). I will argue, however, that greater insight into the role of ideology in voting behaviour in Flanders could be gained if election studies were to include direct measures of left/right positions, in addition to (and not instead of) batteries of opinion items.

To study the role of left/right in Flanders, I will use three European Election Studies (conducted in 1989, 1994 and 1999), which make available information about voters' and parties' left/right positions. Before doing so, I will elaborate on the notion of left/right and on the theoretical reasons to expect that left/right will become more important in Flemish politics.

2 Left/right ideology and voting

Many studies have shown that across various European systems the behaviour of parties and voters alike has been structured largely by a left/right dimension. This remained the dominant ideological dimension in many of these countries until the 1990s (Fuchs & Klingemann 1990; Klingemann, Hofferbert & Budge 1994; Van der Eijk & Franklin 1996; Hix 1999). In political

communication among different actors (citizens, parties and the press) it is quite common to describe policy positions in terms of 'left' and 'right'. To the extent that political actors agree about the meaning of the terms left and right, the use of these terms facilitates political communication. Moreover, as long as different actors agree largely about the positions of parties on a left/right dimension, and as long as actions are constrained by such positions, future actions of parties become more predictable (see also, North 1990b; Hinich & Munger 1993). So, if left/right positions summarize positions on the relevant issues, voters do not need detailed information about the concrete policies of parties in order to make a reasoned choice (Lupia & McCubbins 1998). They can do so by relying on left/right positions. Such an instrumental use of a left/right typology reduces actors' information costs substantially (e.g., Downs 1957; Van der Eijk & Niemöller 1983; Van der Brug 1997).

The notion of a 'reasoned choice' does not imply that voters are fully informed, or even well informed; it merely implies that they are able to predict the consequences of their actions (Lupia & McCubbins 1998:2). In order to use the left/right distinction to make a reasoned choice, the left/right dimension does not need to have a fixed meaning over time, nor does it have to have the same meaning within each country. The only requirement is that the simple ordering of parties on the left/right dimension summarizes the main differences among parties on the issues that are salient within a specific context. In some contexts the left/right distinction may pertain to socio-economic policies, whereas in others it may pertain to issues that involve individual freedom.

These considerations have three implications, two of which are theoretical and one of which is methodological. The first implication is that a left/right dimension may be dominant in structuring party choice, even though other ideological dimensions exist. As a case in point, public opinion research in the Netherlands demonstrates that opinions on different issues are structured by more than one ideological dimension (Middendorp 1991; Dekker, Ester & Van den Broek 1999). Yet, it is also found that party preferences are structured mainly by one single dimension: left/right (Tillie 1995). These findings do not contradict each other. Because of the information costs, voters are not able to take into account all of their opinions on all issues when they cast a vote. Moreover, a voter who is close to a party on one ideological dimension but distant on another, may not wish to take both into account. If most voters decide that the left/right dimension is more important than other ideological dimensions, then left/right structures their electoral choices. In the words of Sartori (1976: 338): "When the citizen speaks, he may have many things to say. But when he is coerced into casting a (...) vote, he may well have to (...) vote for the party (...) perceived as closest on the left/right spectrum (...)". There is substantial evidence that this is indeed how voters reach their electoral

decisions, at least in contexts in which these left/right positions are informative of positions on most salient issues (Granberg & Holmberg 1988; Van der Eijk & Franklin 1996; Van der Eijk, Franklin & Van der Brug 1999). Also Dekker, Ester & Van den Broek (1999: 165), who have constructed three attitude scales for the Netherlands, conclude that left/right self-placement "is most closely connected to party preference". The fact that Flemish parties compete on different issues that are not structured by one single dimension (see section 3 below), is quite often interpreted to indicate that left/right is not important in Flanders (e.g., Maddens 1994: 374-75). However, this is not necessarily true. It is possible that in Flanders a left/right dimension is important, even though (as in the Netherlands) public opinion is structured by more than one ideological dimension.

The second implication is that questions regarding the most appropriate size of the ideological space that structures voting behaviour, cannot be answered unequivocally. Any statement about the dimensionality of an ideological space that structures voting behaviour should be cast in relative terms. For instance, if party choice is structured mainly by two dimensions and issues structured by one of these dimensions become obsolete, the space will become more unidimensional. If, on the other hand, one dimension is predominant and a new issue comes up that does not 'fit' existing ideological dimension, the space will become less unidimensional. Even when a single left/right dimension is predominant, other issues or ideological dimensions that do not 'fit' the left/right dimension will normally play a role (either for small groups for whom these issues are important, or as tie-breakers when two parties are equally close on the left/right dimension). How important a specific ideological dimension is for voters can only be assessed empirically by estimating how well positions on this dimension help to explain party choice.

The third implication is that left/right positions cannot be measured by survey questions that do not mention the terms 'left' and 'right'. This follows from the notion that left/right will have different substantive meanings in different political contexts. Attitude scales that are constructed on the basis of a large set of items certainly describe voters' opinions on all sorts of issues with more precision than left/right positions. Yet, we can only find out how positions on these attitude scales relate to left/right-positions if we measure left/right positions directly, by asking people to place themselves on a left/right continuum.

3 Left/right in Flanders

In most Western European democracies left/right distances between voters and parties are the strongest predictors of party choice (see, for example, Van der Eijk & Franklin 1996). Flanders is an exception, however. In 1989 and in 1994, left/right positions of voters had a much weaker effect on party preferences in Flanders than it had in any other political system in Europe, including Ireland and Northern Ireland (see Van der Eijk, Franklin & Oppenhuis, 1996: 350; Van der Eijk, Franklin & Van der Brug, 1999: 174).

Until the mid 1960s, political conflicts in Belgium were mainly structured by two dimensions: a religious/secular dimension and a socio-economic dimension. In the mid 1960s, the Volksunie, a Flemish nationalist party, gained electoral success. This party, which has rather moderate stands on socio-economic issues, mobilized support mainly by its plea for a federalist structure for Belgium. Regional and communitarian conflicts became increasingly salient in Belgian politics at that period. More recently, Belgium experienced the rise of ecologist and ultra-nationalist parties. Different ideological complexions (greens, ultra-nationalists, Christian democrats, social democrats and liberals) are represented by two separate parties, a Flemish one and a francophone one. As a result, the Belgian party system has become extremely fragmented (see, for example, Deschouwer 1996; Ackaert, De Winter & Swyngedouw 1996). Fragmentation – i.e., the fact that citizens are represented in parliament by many small parties – does not necessarily mean that a single ideological dimension (such as left/right) is not dominant. In various fragmented party systems (such as the Netherlands, France and Italy) the left/right dimension largely structures voters' party preferences, as well as the behaviour of parties. Therefore, fragmentation is not a good explanation for the fact that left/right was – at least until recently – not the dominant ideological dimension in Flanders.

A better explanation is that party positions on different conflict dimensions do not coincide. In other multi-party systems new issues have often been integrated into a dominant ideological dimension (Mair 1983; Silverman 1985; Laver 1989). An example is the position parties have taken on environmental issues in different West-European countries, such as Germany and the Netherlands. Those positions coincide almost perfectly with the way parties are perceived by voters on a left/right scale. Yet, in Flanders this does not seem to have been the case, at least until recently. Since the 1960s, the Volksunie has mobilized support along the communitarian conflict dimension, on which it was in opposition to the liberals, Christian democrats and social democrats, but it occupied a centrist position on socio-economic issues. The development of the Green party AGALEV, in the 1980s, resembles in many ways that of the Volksunie. The Greens also mobilized support on the

basis of a new policy dimension – ecology – while occupying a centrist position on the socio-economic dimension. The ultra nationalist Vlaams Blok, finally, emphasized the issue of migration and initially also embraced the issue of Flemish nationalism. In the public perception the Vlaams Blok did not have a clear position on socio-economic issues. Moreover, it was immediately stigmatized by all the other parties, who formed a ‘cordon sanitaire’. This term denotes the other parties’ strategy to isolate the Vlaams Blok. All the other parties promised never to collaborate with the Vlaams Blok. As a consequence, migration issues did not fit in with existing ideological dimensions.

The arrival on the scene of these new parties, initiated a lively discussion about new ideological dimensions in Flemish politics. Kitschelt & Hellemans (1990) found evidence for the emergence of a left-libertarian versus right-authoritarian dimension. Swyngedouw (1993) found evidence for a materialist-postmaterialist division, and Elchardus & Pelleriaux (1998) presented evidence for a new division in Flemish politics, a socio-cultural dimension, in addition to a socio-economic dimension. Their findings are confirmed by De Witte & Billiet (1999) who find a similar structure in attitudes. Elchardus & Pelleriaux (1998) argued that the left/right dimension taps elements of both attitude scales that they constructed. None of these studies conducted in Flanders enables us to assess how positions on various ideological dimensions are related to left/right, because direct measures of voters’ and parties’ left/right positions are not available in the ISPO datasets.

Because of differences in the wording of survey questions and in the methods of analysis, it is difficult to summarize these findings. Three ideological dimensions seem relevant for structuring public opinion in Flanders. The first dimension structures conflicts about socio-economic policies. The socialists are at one extreme of this dimension and the liberals at the other. The second dimension structures various issues that concern individual freedom, emancipation and the protection of the environment on the one hand, and stricter rules to hinder migration and to fight crime on the other. On this dimension the Vlaams Blok is at one extreme and the Greens at the other. The communitarian conflict may be interpreted as the third dimension, since stands on this conflict do not fit either of the other two dimensions.

The guiding hypothesis of this paper – that the left/right dimension is becoming more important in Flemish politics – is based on two developments in Belgian politics. The first development is the implementation of a new federal structure in the 1990s, which transferred power from the national level to the regional level. These transfers met many of the demands made by the Volksunie; demands which gave rise to the communitarian conflict. Since these demands have largely been met, I expect the communitarian conflict to have become less relevant to voters. Effectively, this will reduce the

dimensionality of the ideological space that structures voting behaviour in Flanders. We can expect the left/right dimension to become more important if other dimensions decrease in salience.

This brings us to a second development that is relevant for the importance of left/right ideology: the integration of two ‘new’ issues – immigration and protection of the environment – into the left/right dimension. To the extent that the main issues that form the libertarian-authoritarian dimension become integrated in a left/right dimension, left/right will become more important for voters. For a long time, immigration was an issue that the main parties tried to avoid. Moreover, as a consequence of the ‘cordon sanitaire’ strategy, it was difficult for parties to occupy intermediate positions on the issue of immigration. Consequently, the issue of immigration did not coincide with left/right positions. Although the cordon sanitaire is still pursued, the ‘taboo’ on the immigration issue has slowly faded. Now that immigration has become a more widely discussed issue among all parties, positions on this issue are apparently becoming increasingly correlated with left/right positions. Moreover, in the election campaign of 1999, the anti-immigrant party Vlaams Blok, which consistently mobilized support by its opposition to immigration policies, emphasized the fact that it is a ‘right-wing nationalist’ party. Because the Vlaams Blok has emphasized its right-wing character, we may expect two simultaneous developments: 1) an increase in the salience of the left/right dimension; and 2) that positions on the immigration issue become more closely linked to left/right positions.

A similar development can be expected for the issue of environmental protection. There is no iron logic that says that protection of the environment is a left-wing concern. However, in various European countries left-wing parties tend to be more concerned about environmental protection than right-wing parties, as a consequence of which the issue of environmental protection has become integrated in the left/right dimension. It may be too early to see whether this is also true for Flanders, although a study conducted by Elchardus & Pelleriaux (1998) indicates that a similar development is taking place in Flanders. According to them, ethnocentrism and materialism/postmaterialism are indicative of a socio-cultural dimension, and Flemish voters are ‘redefining’ left/right partially in terms of this dimension. If this is indeed the case, left/right positions of Flemish parties will be increasingly informative of their positions in various policy domains, including those on migration and environmental protection. When these issues have been redefined in left/right terms, we may certainly expect the left/right dimension to become more important to voters.

To summarize the discussion so far, two developments lead me to expect that left/right positions have become more informative of party politics in Flanders: 1) the decreasing salience of the communitarian dimension; and 2)

the increasing integration in the left/right dimension of two important issues, environmental protection and immigration. Hence, I expect the left/right dimension to become more important in structuring electoral behaviour.

4 Research topics

In order to analyse whether the left/right dimension has become more important in structuring electoral behaviour in Flanders, I will look at three phenomena that could reveal how important left/right is to Flemish voters and how this has changed in the period 1989 to 1999. First of all, I will investigate how voters perceive parties in left/right terms, and to what extent they agree about these positions. If left/right becomes more important as a frame of reference for voters, I expect that voters will increasingly agree about the positions of parties on the left/right dimension (for a discussion of the importance of perceptual agreement in mass-elite communication, refer to: Converse 1975; Granberg & Holmberg 1988; Van der Brug 1997). Secondly, I will analyse the dimensionality underneath party preferences. I expect that preferences for most parties will be structured increasingly by one single underlying dimension, and that party positions on this dimension will largely coincide with left/right positions. Finally, I expect that the effect of left/right ideological distances on party preferences will become stronger in the 1990s.

5 Data and indicators used

The data for this study are taken from the European Election Studies conducted immediately following the elections for the European Parliament of 1989, 1994 and 1999.² These were cross-section surveys using random samples from the electorates of each of the member states of the European Union. These surveys contain measures of left/right positions of voters and perceptions of the positions of the main parties on this dimension. The Belgian samples contain approximately 1,000 respondents in 1989 and 1994, and 500 respondents in 1999. Of these, the Flemish samples are 611 respondents in 1989, 586 in 1994 and 274 in 1999.³ It was decided to use the European Elections Studies because these contain measures of left/right positions of parties and voters and they contain measures of respondents' preferences for a large number of political parties. Both are essential to assess changes in the importance of left/right in electoral behaviour. A drawback of these datasets is that they contain relatively little information about concrete issues.⁴

Left/right positions of voters and parties are measured by means of a 10-point scale with the extremes labelled 'left' and 'right'. Respondents were asked to indicate their own position on this scale as well as the position of the main parties. In 1989 these were PVV, SP, CVP, VU and AGALEV, and in 1994 and 1999 these were VLD, SP, CVP, VU, VB and AGALEV. Party preferences were measured by assessing the electoral attractiveness of each of the parties. Respondents were asked to indicate for each of the parties in turn (on a scale from 1 to 10) "how likely is it that you 'would ever vote' for the party in question?". Tillie (1995) has demonstrated that this variable measures the current electoral attractiveness of each party. Moreover, he concludes that valid inferences can be drawn about the determinants of party choice by analysing the determinants of party preferences, whereas causal misattributions may occur when only actual party choice is analysed (see also, Van der Eijk & Franklin 1996). Therefore, I will use the variable 'probability of future vote' as the dependent variable when estimating the effect of left/right ideology on party choice.

6 Results

In order to assess changes in the importance of left/right in Flemish politics, I will focus in this section on three elements: 1) voters' perceptions of left/right positions of parties; 2) the structure underneath party preferences; and 3) the effect of left/right distances on party preferences.

6.1 Voters' perceptions of left/right positions of parties

As a first step to assess the importance of left/right, I will describe how voters perceive parties in left/right terms. Respondents in each of the three surveys were asked to indicate for each of the parties where they perceived its position on the left/right dimension. For each party this yields a distribution of perceptions. To summarize these distributions two aspects will be considered: measures of central tendency, and measures of perceptual agreement. As discussed elsewhere in more detail, the interpolated median – which will simply be called the median from now on – is the most appropriate measure of central tendency (Van der Brug 1997). Figure 1 describes changes in the medians of the perceived left/right positions of parties.

Figure 1 Perceived left/right positions of parties

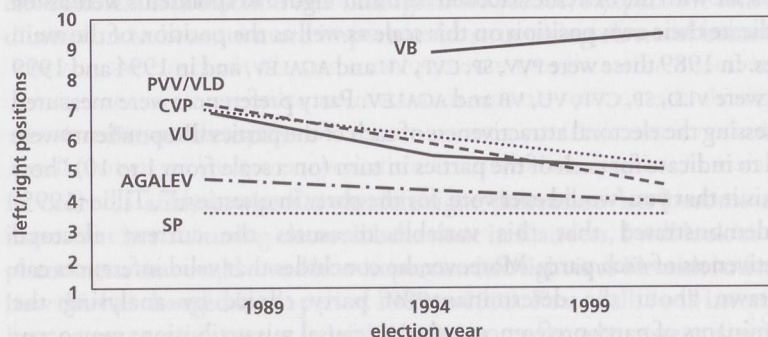


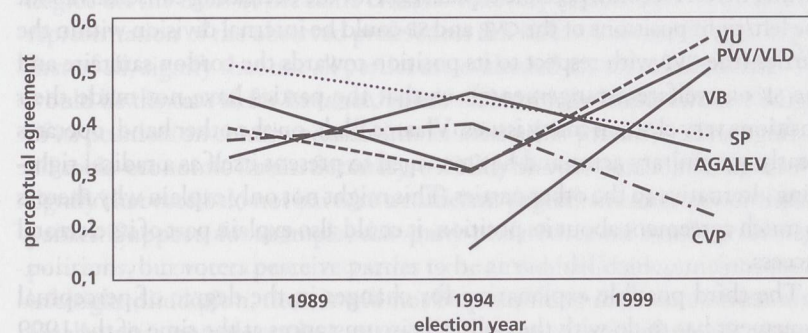
Figure 1 shows clearly that in 1989 the left/right division was mainly used to distinguish between the socialist SP on the one hand and the liberal PVV, the Christian democrats CVP and the Flemish nationalists VU on the other. The rather new environmentalist party, AGALEV, was perceived to be in between these two groups. Since 1994 two things have changed. First, the right side of the spectrum, which had been rather empty, is now occupied by the ultra-nationalist, anti-immigrant party Vlaams Blok, which explicitly presented itself as a right-wing nationalist party in the 1999 campaign. The fact that Vlaams Blok faces hardly any competition at the right of the political spectrum, probably contributed largely to its recent electoral successes. Secondly, the other right wing parties are now perceived to be closer to the centre. This trend continues between 1994 and 1999 by which time the left/right division provides an almost perfect graphical image of the cordon sanitaire of the five other parties against the VB. The latter is now clearly perceived to be an extreme-right wing party by the median respondent.

The data do not enable us to pin down the substantive meaning of the left/right dimension in terms of concrete policy stands or values. However, these changes in party positions suggest that the substantive meaning of left/right was in terms of socio-economic policies in the late 1980s (the division between socialists on the one hand and liberals and social democrats on the other) and in terms of democratic values and immigration in the late 1990s. Although the evidence is rather circumstantial, these findings are in line with the conclusions of Elchardus and Pelleriaux (1998), who argued that left/right has been redefined by the Flemish electorate in terms of a social-cultural dimension.

Figure 1 presented the median perceptions. Another important aspect of how electorates evaluate party positions in left/right terms is the extent to which they agree about these positions. Perceptual agreement is measured with the coefficient A, which was developed by Van der Eijk (1998), and which is

bound between -1 and +1 (see also: Van der Brug & Van der Eijk 1999). It attains its minimum of -1 when half the sample places a party at the one extreme and the other half places it at the other, i.e., a situation of maximum disagreement. When all respondents place a party in the same category of a rating scale the measure attains its maximum value (i.e., +1). A uniform distribution across all 10 categories of the left/right scale yields an agreement coefficient of 0. Figure 2 shows graphically how perceptual agreement about the positions of parties has changed over the last decade.

Figure 2 Agreement about left/right positions of parties



Three conclusions are warranted on the basis of the results in Figure 2. First, in international perspective there is relatively little perceptual agreement about the left/right positions of Flemish parties. Van der Brug and Van der Eijk (1999: 138) present the average perceptual agreement about left/right positions of parties in all EU-countries in 1994. Excluding Flanders, this ranges from .40 (Spain) to .65 (Greece and France). In that year, the average perceptual agreement in Flanders was .32, and for the individual parties it ranged in the period 1989-1999 between .30 and .50. This thus confirms that left/right is indeed a more important common cognitive ordering device in most Western European countries than in Flanders.

A second phenomenon is that perceptual agreement increased between 1989 and 1999 for three parties, VU, VLD and VB, while it decreased for SP and CVP. Between 1989 and 1994 the perceptual agreement about the left/right position of AGALEV increased, but it decreased again between 1994 and 1999. These results do not support my prediction of a general increase in perceptual agreement about the left/right positions of parties. A third aspect of the findings in Figure 2 is that the differences between the parties in terms of perceptual agreement are greater in 1999 than in 1989. There is substantial consensus about the centre positions of the VU and the VLD and about the extreme right-wing position of the VB. However, there is far less consensus

concerning the position of the SP and AGALEV and very little agreement exists about the position of the CVP.

How can these changes in perceptual agreement about left/right positions of parties be explained? A first, possible explanation is that two dimensions underlie party politics in Flanders nowadays, and that some groups of voters relate the substantive meaning of left/right to one dimension and other groups relate it to the other. As a result, as long as party positions on the two dimensions do not coincide, different voters then place the parties at different positions. Since the European Elections Studies contain little information about voter and party positions on concrete issues, this cannot be explored further here. A second, possible explanation for the decreasing consensus about the left/right positions of the CVP and SP could be internal division within the parties (the CVP with respect to its position towards the *cordon sanitaire* and the SP on welfare arrangements), or that the parties have not made their positions very clear on many issues. Vlaams Blok, on the other hand, operates clearly as a unitary actor and has managed to present itself as a radical right-wing alternative to the other parties. This might not only explain why there is so much agreement about its position, it could also explain part of its electoral success.

The third possible explanation for changes in the degree of perceptual agreement has to do with the political circumstances at the time of the 1999 elections. The 1999 elections brought an end to the centre-left coalition cabinet of Flemish and francophone social democrats and Christian democrats that had governed since 1988. Even though the governing parties were successful in achieving some policy goals (De Winter 1999), the political landscape was dominated in the years leading up to the 1999 elections by political scandals and crises, for which the ruling parties were held responsible. Perceptual agreement about the left/right positions of these parties may have decreased because voters used the left/right scheme to a lesser extent to evaluate those governing than to evaluate other parties. The governing parties were evaluated on the basis of their policy record rather than their ideological positions.

6.2 The dimensionality underlying party preferences

In the theoretical section, I hypothesized that preferences for most parties would be structured increasingly by one single underlying dimension and that party positions on this dimension will largely coincide with left/right positions. The party preferences (measured with the probability of future vote items) were analysed using an unfolding model, to assess whether a common structure underlies these preferences. Unfolding models attempt to construct

a single spatial representation of both persons and stimuli, in this case voters and parties (Coombs 1964). The positions of persons and stimuli in this so-called 'joint space' should be such that the distances between persons and stimuli reflect (inversely) the empirically observed preferences of each of the persons individually. In other words, the stronger a voter's preference is for a candidate, the smaller the distance is between the voter and the candidate in the spatial representation. These relations should hold, to a satisfactory degree, for all persons and for all parties.

An interesting aspect of such representations is that, if they can be constructed, they indicate that all voters involved evaluate all parties to a large degree on the basis of the same criteria. Inability to construct such a spatial representation of the observed preferences can indicate several things. It may, first of all, signify that not all parties are evaluated on the same criteria. This would be the case if, for instance, voters evaluated the *Volksunie* on the basis of its position on communitarianism and the other parties by their positions on socio-economic issues. Secondly, inability to construct a joint space may signify that voters do not have (to a sufficient degree) the same perceptions of parties. Suppose, for example, that party preferences are based on left/right positions, but voters perceive parties to be at very different positions on the left/right dimension, then it will not be possible to construct a joint scale. Finally, when no scale can be constructed, this may also signify that preferences given by individual voters are not based on the same criteria. Suppose half of the respondents bases their preferences for all parties on the socio-economic dimension, whereas the other half bases their preferences on socio-cultural issues, then it will not be possible to construct a joint space.

Given the number of stimuli (parties) for which preferences were measured, it only makes sense to investigate the extent to which preferences for these candidates can be represented in unidimensional spaces.⁵ This section reports results from the unfolding algorithm MUDFOLD.⁶ MUDFOLD is capable of analysing preferences that are measured with multi-categorical rating scales, and is thus well suited for the 'probability of future vote' items, which are 10-point rating scales. Another advantage of MUDFOLD over other available programmes is that it provides a goodness-of-fit measure – the H-coefficient – which can be used to evaluate the strength of the scale. However, possible changes over time in the strength of the H-coefficients must be evaluated with caution, because the magnitude of this coefficient depends upon the unknown distribution of stimuli (parties) as well as persons (voters) on the latent dimension. 'H' attains an upper limit of 1 if the constructed scale represents the data perfectly, without any violations. If, on the other hand, a proposed scale yields as many violations with empirical observations as would occur with statistical independence of the stimuli, H is 0.⁷

Table 1 Results of unfolding analyses (scale coefficients *H*) and rank-order correlations between party positions and median positions of parties on left/right.

Order of Parties in 1989	H-coefficient	Order of Parties in 1994	H-coefficient	Order of Parties in 1999	H-coefficient
SP	0.58	SP	0.51	SP	0.46
AGALEV	0.49	AGALEV	0.41	CVP	0.46
VU	0.53	CVP	0.43	AGALEV	0.47
CVP	0.53	VLD	0.44	VLD	0.44
PVV	0.51	VU	0.47	VU	0.47
		VB	0.54	VB	0.45
Scale	0.53		0.46		0.46
Spearman's Rho	0.90		0.83		0.71

Table 1 presents the results of the best MUDFOLD scales that could be formed on the basis of the party preferences for 1989, 1994 and 1999. These results demonstrate four things. The first is that moderately strong unidimensional scales can be constructed for all three election years. In other words, preferences for these parties are structured mainly by one common ideological dimension. The second observation is that the value of the scale coefficient *H* has become slightly lower in each successive year, which runs counter to the theoretical expectation that this structure would have become stronger in the last decade. The differences are too small to draw the conclusion that the structure became weaker, but the analyses certainly provide no evidence in favour of the hypothesis. The third observation is that the relationship between party positions on the unfolding scale and perceived left/right positions of parties has also decreased in strength. The final observation is that the dimension underlying party preferences is not stable. The Volksunie has moved more to the right and Agalev has moved to the centre.

Three general conclusions can be drawn from the results in Table 1. The first conclusion is that in Flanders party preferences are structured predominantly by a single latent dimension. This appears to run counter to the conclusions generally found in Flemish electoral research, that party choice in Belgium is structured by multiple ideological dimensions (e.g., De Witte & Billiet 1999). Apparently voters do not take into account all these dimensions equally when deciding which party to vote for. Given the magnitude of the rank-order correlation *Rho* between party positions on the unfolding dimension and left/right positions of parties, the single dimension underlying party preferences may be labelled left/right for all practical purposes.

The second conclusion is that these analyses do not support the hypothesis that left/right has become more important in Flanders during the last decade.

In fact, on the basis of this evidence the opposite appears to be the case. However, it is dubious to compare the strength of *H*-coefficients over time, since these depend upon the distributions of respondents on the underlying dimension.

The third conclusion is that the nature of the structure underlying party preferences has changed over the last decades. Given the fact that Volksunie and Vlaams Blok are located together at one extreme of the scale in 1994 and 1999, it appears that elements of Flemish Nationalism still constitute important elements of this latent dimension. The centrist position of the Greens suggests that environmentalism is not an important discerning element.

6.3 Determinants of party preferences

In this quest to determine (changes in) the importance of left/right in Flemish electoral behaviour, the final aspect to be investigated is the effect of left/right on party choice. Rational choice theory predicts that voters compare their own left/right position with those of all parties and that their preferences for parties are inversely related to the perceived distances (Downs 1957). However, in order to draw valid inferences about the effect of left/right ideology, other variables that affect electoral decisions and that are correlated with ideological positions need to be taken into account. Although scholars differ in the importance they attribute to different independent variables, the relevant literature tells us that we should control for the following variables: social class and income (e.g., Nieuwbeerta & Ultee 1999), religion (e.g., Swyngedouw & Beerten 1998; Elchardus & Pelleriaux 1998), and party size (e.g., Van der Eijk, Franklin & Van der Brug 1999; Van der Brug, Fennema & Tillie 2000). Party size is a proxy measure of political power. It affects party choice, because it taps the pragmatic consideration of voters that a larger party is more likely to realize its objectives than a smaller party, and this makes larger parties more attractive.⁸

As argued in Section 5, the determinants of party choice will be analysed by taking the probability of a future vote for each of the parties as the dependent variable. Since this variable is measured on a 10-point scale, it can be used as the dependent variable in linear regression. I will do analyses for each of the parties separately, but the patterns of party choice will also be analysed for all parties simultaneously with the use of a 'stacked matrix' (e.g., Stimson 1985). The simultaneous analysis of preferences for a set of parties allows for the inclusion of party characteristics, such as party size, in the analyses. In order to test the effects of the various independent variables on party preferences for a number of parties simultaneously, linear transformations of the independent

variables are needed. The procedures by which the independent variables are transformed, as well as the creation of the stacked matrix is described in detail elsewhere (Van der Eijk & Franklin 1996; Van der Brug, Fennema & Tillie 2000). To test the effects of religion, social class, and income, these independent variables were transformed. As a consequence, the effects of these variables are by necessity positive. Left/right distances are the individually perceived distances between each respondent and each of the respective parties. The proportion of seats in parliament is used as a measurement for party size.

Table 2 Results of multiple regressions to determine party preferences (beta's)

	1989	1994	1999
Left/right distance	-.256	-.260	-.400
Social class and income	.228	.199	.162
Religion	.205	.127	.144
Party size	-.060	.175	.015 ns
Adjusted R-square	.184	.171	.235

Table 2 describes the results of three multiple regressions – one for each of the three election years – to estimate the effects of the various determinants of party preferences. In all three years, left/right distance is the strongest single predictor of party preferences. This is very much in line with the results of the unfolding analyses, which showed that party preferences were structured mainly by a single left/right dimension in these years. Table 2 shows also that the effect of left/right distance is much stronger in 1999 than during the previous two elections.

The results in Table 2 show that the effects of social class and income as well as the effect of religion on party preferences have decreased slightly in this period. Contrary to most political systems, party size is not an important determinant of party preferences in the Flemish context, at least not in 1989 and in 1999. This does not come as a surprise. Party size is a proxy measure of political power. Pragmatic voters are expected to prefer a more powerful party to a less powerful one, because the former is more likely to achieve its objectives. The Belgian party system is so fragmented that even the larger parties have little power. In such a context, party size is apparently not a salient consideration for voters. Some of the changes in the strength of the beta's

presented in Table 2 may be due to the fact that different sets of parties are included in the three analyses. Therefore, Table 3 shows – for each of the parties separately, as well as for all parties simultaneously – to what extent preferences can be explained by socio-economic positions (social class, income and religion) and by left/right distances in 1989, 1994 and 1999.

Table 3 Variance explained (R2-Adjusted) in preferences for parties by socio-economic variables and by ideological distances

	PVV/VLD	CVP	SP	VU	AGALEV	VB	all parties
Socio-economic model							
1989	.066	.236	.101	.038	.130	-	.118
1994	.053	.176	.047	.019	.024	.045	.068
1999	.065	.088	.091	.011	.075	.082	.075
Left/right distances							
1989	.142	.217	.071	.028	.023	-	.086
1994	.035	.084	.055	.013	.098	.099	.090
1999	.227	.333	.198	.065	.166	.110	.191

The results show that the cleavage model does not provide a good explanation of individual differences in party preferences. It only provided a relatively good explanation for preferences for the CVP in 1989. But the support for this party 'depillarized' rapidly in the last decade. Swyngedouw and Beerten (1998) have concluded that the effect of cleavages is quite stable. Given the rapid decrease in explanatory power for preferences for the CVP, as well as the low proportions of explained variance of the cleavage model, their conclusion should be taken with a pinch of salt. The effect of the cleavage model is indeed rather stable, but the model provides a rather poor explanation of electoral preferences (see also, Franklin 1992).

When looking at the results for all parties simultaneously (last column in Table 3), the analyses show that the effect of cleavages decreases slightly, while the effect of left/right distances increased. Between 1989 and 1994 there is no notable change in the effect of left/right distance, but between 1994 and 1999 the increase is rather remarkable. If we look at the different parties separately, it can be seen that the increase in the magnitude of the effect of left/right is not monotonous over time for each party. However, for all six parties the effect of

left/right distance is stronger in 1999 than at the times of the previous two elections. In general, therefore, we can conclude that by 1999 left/right distance had become a quite powerful predictor of party preferences.

7 Conclusions and discussion

Party conflicts as well as public opinion in Flanders have been structured by a number of separate ideological dimensions (e.g., Swyngedouw 1993; Deschouwer 1996; De Witte & Billiet 1999). As a result of the multidimensionality of the ideological space that structures public opinion, the left/right dimension has never become as dominant in Flanders as it is in other European countries. Therefore, it is only natural that electoral researchers in Flanders have paid relatively little attention to the role of left/right distances in party choice. The decision not to include items that measure left/right positions of parties and respondents in Belgian Election studies – items that are nowadays included in national election studies in most European countries – is a rather obvious one. However, there is a drawback to this, namely that changes in the importance of left/right are not easily visible to students of voting behaviour in Belgium. This article argued that there are theoretical reasons to expect that left/right has become more important in Flanders, and it therefore took a fresh look at the importance of left/right.

The main conclusion from this article is that left/right is important in structuring electoral behaviour in Flanders. In fact, given the evidence presented here, we have to conclude that the significance of left/right in Flemish politics is generally underestimated. Unfolding analyses demonstrated that Flemish voters' party preferences were structured mainly by a single dimension in 1989, 1994 and 1999. In all three years, the ordering of parties on this dimension closely resembles their left/right positions. However, the ordering of parties on the dominant dimension has changed over the years, and the linkage with left/right positions of parties has weakened. Regression analyses showed, on the other hand, that left/right distances have become a substantially stronger predictor of party preferences. How can this apparent contradiction be explained?

My explanation is that the breakthrough of the Vlaams Blok has had two consequences for the importance of left/right. First of all, it altered voters' perception of the substantive meaning of the left/right dimension, which became defined partially in terms of the migration issue (for an in depth discussion of such changes in the character of left/right, see Silverman 1985). These findings thus support the conclusions of Elchardus & Pelleriaux (1998), who argue that Flemish voters have 'redefined' left/right partially in terms of a socio-cultural dimension, which structures postmaterial attitudes as well as

attitudes towards immigrants. Secondly, Vlaams Blok explicitly presented itself as a right-wing nationalist party in the 1999 campaign. As is shown in Figure 2, in 1999 voters agreed much more than before about the right-wing character of the Vlaams Blok. Tillie en Fennema (1998) demonstrated that a similar development occurred for the Dutch Centrumdemocraten in the 1980s and early 1990s. The breakthrough of the Vlaams Blok, in combination with its emphasis on its right-wing character, lead to a significant polarization of the party system, which in turn increased the salience of the left/right dimension. As a consequence of the increasing salience, left/right distances have become a more important determinant of party choice.

As a result of the changes in the substantive meaning of left/right, and as a result of changes in positions of parties with respect to welfare arrangements, five parties (VLD, CVP, SP, AGALEV and VU) have, in the public's perception, moved to very similar positions on the left/right dimension (see Figure 1). When parties are located at very similar positions on the left/right dimension, they will be about equally attractive to those voters who take left/right into consideration. Any differences in the attractiveness of parties with similar positions on left/right will then be due to other aspects. It is for this reason that left/right became a stronger predictor of party preferences, whereas the unfolding analyses (in which party positions are computed on the basis of differences in the attractiveness of stimuli) did not demonstrate an increase in the importance of left/right.

Given the fact that left/right has become a stronger predictor of party preferences, there is every reason to include questions about left/right positions of parties and voters in the ISPO-questionnaires. These questions should not replace the batteries of public opinion items that are now included, but should be included in addition to those items. This would enable students of electoral behaviour to link positions on the left/right dimension to positions on concrete issues, and thus to assess how different groups of voters interpret this dimension substantively.

It is beyond doubt that many significant differences between parties, as well as many opinions of voters on various issues, cannot be represented accurately by positions on a left/right dimension. On the other hand, voters are unable to take into account all dimensions of party conflict and all of their positions on all issues. This is because they lack the information and their choice would become too complex. When casting a vote, voters need to simplify their choice. In most Western European countries voters use left/right as a cognitive device to arrive at a reasoned choice. This contribution has demonstrated that the Flemish electorate voted largely in the same way in 1999. Even though it would be premature to draw conclusions about long-term developments from one election, the evidence of 1999 may indicate that Flanders is indeed 'becoming normal'.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jean Tillie and Meindert Fennema, as well as two anonymous reviewers of *Acta Politica* for their constructive comments.

Notes

1. The abbreviation ISPO stands for "Interuniversitair Steunpunt Universitair Opinieonderzoek".
2. These studies are extensively documented on the European Elections Studies' website (<http://www2.trincoll.edu/~mfrankli/EES.htm>). This site not only describes the surveys, but also contains an extensive list of publications emanating from these studies.
3. The data for 1989 and 1994 are available for secondary analysis from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research and various European archives; the data for 1999 will be released in 2001. In all analyses in this article, the units of analysis are weighted in such a way that the samples reflect the results of the 1989, 1994 and 1999 European elections.
4. This is due to the fact that the European Elections Studies focuses on data comparativeness. This is gained at the expense of detailed information about topical issues in each country.
5. Multi-dimensional spatial representations would pose so few restrictions on the data that very different configurations would all fit the data perfectly, which implies that they would be trivial. Unidimensional representations of 3 or more stimuli will not necessarily fit well, so that if they do fit, a relevant empirical result has been attained.
6. MUDFOLD is distributed by ProGAMMA, P.O. Box 841, 9700 AV Groningen, The Netherlands, see also [HTTP://WWW.GAMMA.RUG.NL](http://www.gamma.rug.nl).
7. According to Van Schuur (1988, 1993) an H-coefficient smaller than 0.30 indicates insufficient structure in the data to justify treating the individual items as indicators of a single latent dimension. H coefficients of between 0.30 and 0.40 indicate a weak unfolding scale; between 0.40 and 0.50 a medium scale; and above 0.50 a strong scale. All analyses presented here are conducted on the basis of 10-point rating scales that measure the electoral attractiveness of each party to each respondent. For these analyses all respondents with identical preferences for all parties were excluded from the analyses, because their response patterns cannot reject the hypothesis that a unidimensional latent structure underlies party preferences. As a consequence, the analyses are based on 478 respondents in 1989, 468 respondents in 1994 and 264 respondents in 1999. The analyses were conducted with the Windows version of MUDFOLD 4.0.

8. To some readers the result that party size is a strong predictor of party preference may seem a trivial conclusion in the sense that large parties naturally attract more voters than small parties. This is not the case, however. These studies show that party size is a strong predictor of party preference *sui generis*. Many people prefer – within certain limits – political power to ideological affinity. In that respect nothing succeeds like success. Many voters are political pragmatists rather than political idealists (refer also to Tillie [1995] for a discussion on the interpretation of the effect of party size on party preference).

Bibliography

- Ackaert, J., L. de Winter and M. Swyngedouw (1996), 'Belgium: an electorate on the eve of disintegration', in: C. van der Eijk and M. Franklin (eds.), *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Billiet, J., and K. Dobbelaere (1985), 'Naar een desinstitutionalisering van de Christelijke zuil?', in: K. Dobbelaere, K. Voye, J. Billiet and J. Remy (eds.), *België en zijn Goden*. Leuven: Cabay.
- Budge, I., D. Robertson and D. Hearl (1987), *Ideology, Strategy and Party Change: Spatial Analyses of Post-War Election Programs in 19 Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Converse, P. (1975), 'Public opinion and voting behavior', in: F.I. Greenstein and N.W. Polsby (eds.), *Handbook of Political Science* (4). Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- Coombs, C.H. (1964), *A Theory of Data*. New York/London: John Wiley and Sons.
- Dalton, R.J. (1996), *Citizen Politics in Western Democracies; Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Chatham House, Chatham.
- Dekker, P., P. Ester and A. van den Broek (1999), 'Fixing left and right: value orientations according to Middendorp and Inglehart', in: H. de Witte and P. Scheepers (eds.), *Ideology in the Low Countries: Trends, Models and Lacunae*. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Deschouwer, K. (1996), 'Waiting for "the big one": the uncertain survival of the Belgian parties and party system(s)', *Res Publica* 38, pp. 295-306.
- De Winter, L. (1999), 'The Belgian elections', *ECPR News* 11(1), pp. 23-24.
- De Witte, H., and J. Billiet (1999), 'Economic and cultural conservatism in Flanders: in search of concepts, determinants and impact on voting behavior', in: H. de Witte and P. Scheepers (eds.), *Ideology in the Low Countries: Trends, Models and Lacunae*. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Downs, A. (1957), *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Elchardus, M., and K. Pelleriaux (1998), 'De polis verdeeld - hoe kiezers links en rechts herdefiniëren', in: M. Swyngedouw, J. Billiet, A. Carton and R. Beerten (eds.), *De (on)redelijke kiezer. Onderzoek naar de politieke opvattingen van Vlamingen. Verkiezingen van 21 mei 1995*. Leuven: ACCO.

- Franklin, M. (1992), 'The decline of cleavage politics', in: M. Franklin, T. Mackie and H. Valen (eds.), *Electoral Change. Responses to Evolving Social and Attitudinal Structures in Western Countries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fuchs, D., and H.D. Klingemann (1990), 'The left-right scheme: theoretical framework', in: M.K. Jennings and J. van Deth (eds.), *Continuities in Political Action: A Longitudinal Study of Political Orientations in Three Western Democracies*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Granberg, D., and S. Holmberg (1988), *The Political System Matters. Social Psychology and Voting Behavior in Sweden and the United States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hinich, M.J., and M.C. Munger (1993), 'Political ideology, communication and community', in: W.A. Barrett, M.J. Hinich and N.J. Schofield (eds.), *Political Economy: Institutions, Competition, and Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hix, S. (1999), 'Dimensions and alignments in European Union politics: cognitive constraints and partisan responses', *European Journal of Political Research* 35, pp. 69-106.
- Kitschelt, H., and S. Hellemans (1990), 'The left-right semantics in the new politics cleavage', *Comparative Political Studies* 2, pp. 210-238.
- Klingemann, H.D., R.I. Hofferbert and I. Budge (1994), *Parties, Policies, and Democracy*. Boulder, Col: Westview Press.
- Laver, M. (1989), 'Party competition and party system change. The interaction of coalition bargaining and electoral competition', *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 1, pp. 301-324.
- Lupia, A., and M.D. McCubbins (1998), *The Democratic Dilemma. Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Maddens, B. (1994), 'Kiesgedrag en Partijstrategie. De samenhang tussen de beleidsmatige profilering van de partijen en het kiesgedrag van de Vlamingen op 24 november 1991'. Dissertation Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.
- Mair, P. (1983), 'Adaptation and control: towards an understanding of party and party systems change, in: H. Daalder and P. Mair (eds.), *Western European Party Systems. Continuity and Change*. London: Sage.
- Middendorp, C.P. (1991), *Ideology in Dutch Politics. The Democratic System Reconsidered 1970-1985*. Assen: Van Gorkum.
- Nieuwbeerta, P., and W. Ultee (1999), 'Class voting in Western industrialized countries, 1945-1990: systematizing and testing explanations', *European Journal of Political Research* 35, pp. 123-160.
- North, D.C. (1990), 'A transactions costs theory of politics', *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 2, pp. 355-367.
- Rose, R., and I. McAllister (1986), *Voters Begin to Choose*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Sartori, G. (1976), *Parties and Party Systems. A Framework for Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Silverman, L. (1985), 'The ideological mediation of party-political responses to social change', *European Journal of Political Research* 19, pp. 393-417.
- Stimson, J.A. (1985), 'Regression in space and time: a statistical essay', *American Journal of Political Science* 29, pp. 914-947.
- Swyngedouw, M. (1993), 'Nieuwe breuklijnen in de Vlaamse Politiek? De politieke ruimte van de 18- tot 65-jarige kiezer na de verkiezingen van 24 november 1991', in: M. Swyngedouw, J. Billiet, A. Carton and R. Beerten (eds.), *Kiezen is verliezen. Onderzoek naar de politieke opvattingen van Vlamingen*. Leuven: ACCO.
- Swyngedouw, M., and R. Beerten (1998), 'De "bevroren" invloed van sociaal economische kenmerken en attitudes op het stemgedrag in Vlaanderen', in: M. Swyngedouw, J. Billiet, A. Carton and R. Beerten (eds.), *De (on)redelijke kiezer. Onderzoek naar de politieke opvattingen van Vlamingen. Verkiezingen van 21 mei 1995*. Leuven: ACCO.
- Swyngedouw, M., J. Billiet, A. Carton and R. Beerten (1993), *Kiezen is verliezen. Onderzoek naar de politieke opvattingen van Vlamingen*. Leuven: ACCO.
- Swyngedouw, M., J. Billiet, A. Carton and R. Beerten (1998), *De (on)redelijke kiezer. Onderzoek naar de politieke opvattingen van Vlamingen. Verkiezingen van 21 mei 1995*. Leuven: ACCO.
- Tillie, J. (1995), *Party Utility and Voting Behavior*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
- Tillie, J. and M. Fennema (1998), 'A rational choice for the extreme right', *Acta Politica* 33, pp. 223-249.
- Van der Brug, W. (1997), *Where's the Party? Voters' Perceptions of Party Positions*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam.
- Van der Brug, W., and C. van der Eijk (1999), 'The cognitive basis of voting', in: H. Schmitt and J. Thomassen (eds.), *Political Representation and Legitimacy in the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Van der Brug, W., M. Fennema and J. Tillie (2000), 'Anti-immigrant parties in Europe: ideological or protest vote?', *European Journal of Political Research* 37, pp. 77-102.
- Van der Eijk, C. (1998), 'Measuring agreement in ordered rating scales', in: M. Fennema, C. van der Eijk and H. Schijf (eds.), *In Search of Structure. Essays in Social Science and Methodology*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
- Van der Eijk, C., and M. Franklin (1996), *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Van der Eijk, C., M. Franklin and W. van der Brug (1999), 'Policy preferences and party choice, in: H. Schmitt and J. Thomassen (eds.), *Political Representation and Legitimacy in the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Van Schuur, W.H. (1988), 'Stochastic unfolding', in: W.E. Saris and I.N. Gallhofer (eds.), *Sociometric Research, Vol. I: Data Collection and Scaling*. London: Macmillan.
- Van Schuur, W.H. (1993), 'MUDFOLD', *Kwantitatieve Methoden* 42, pp. 39-54.