

Does party system change matter? The effect of party system change on political claimsmaking on migration and integration in the Netherlands, 1995-2009

What determines whether a potential conflict becomes politicized? In order to explain politicization, scholars have employed the concept of a 'political opportunity structure' (POS), which they borrowed from the literature on social movements (e.g., Kriesi et al. 2006). The POS has often been applied to explain differences between countries. In this study we focus on a single country, the Netherlands, and assess the consequences of a change in the POS for the politicization of immigration. The well-studied 2002 party system change in the Netherlands, that accompanied the rise of the LPF, is a very good case to assess the effect of the change in such a distinct component of the political opportunity structure, while keeping other political institutional components constant. The most likely effect of this change is a rise of political attention to, and polarization on, migration and civic integration issues. While we think that this is a very plausible hypothesis, there are several reasons to expect that the changes in the party system have not been as consequential as assumed or as seems plausible. That is, there have been only minor changes in migration and integration legislation, the policy community has shown substantial path dependency, the number of (Muslim) migrants has actually gone down, and the LPF, though triggering party system change, has been a massive electoral failure. All these factors may have limited the effect of party system change on the politicization of migration and integration. We use political claims analysis of about 1800 newspaper articles between 1995 and 2009 to measure politicization.

Joost Berkhout, Laura Sudulich, Wouter van der Brug, University of Amsterdam

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Introduction

Political opportunity structures, most notably the electoral system and the party system, are considered key determinants for explaining inter-country-differences in the emergence of new movements, political issues and parties (Kitchelt, 1986; Kriesi, 2004). Their persistence over time, such as through the ‘freezing’ of political alignments of voters and conflict-dimensions between parties, also belongs to the perennials of comparative political science (e.g. Mair, 1997; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). The study of political opportunity structures, however, suffers from a number of important drawbacks. Especially problems of conceptual stretching have been highlighted (e.g. Koopmans, 1999).

At least of equal importance, and more central in our argument, are problems in the design of the research. That is, in most comparative studies on the subject, the number of country-differences exceeds the number of countries studied. Even the narrowest definitions of political opportunity structures include a wide variety of system level factors such as the proportionality of the electoral system, the effective number of parties, the level of corporatism (or pluralism), the openness of the policy process, the dimensionality the party system, the level of federalism and so on. These are sometimes also further specified for the specific (policy) issue under study. Even with a relatively large number of countries that are relatively similar on other potentially explanatory factors such as those related to public opinion or the state of the economy, it is very difficult to isolate the effect of, for instance, the electoral system relative to the effect of the level of federalism. This problem can be partially addressed through the assessment of a single country over very long periods of time in which opportunity structures change. However, similar to the comparative design, when studying incremental changes spanning multiple decades, one is likely to find that multiple components of political opportunity structures change simultaneously, and sometimes together with other factors. It is consequently very difficult to relate any distinct change to a possible effect, such as most notably the emergence of a movement, party or issue.

In this paper, we partially address this problem by treating the 2002 party system change in the Netherlands as a case of change of political opportunities structures in the context of relative stability of alternative explanations. We assess the plausibility that these changes in the political opportunity structure lead to increases in the politicization of migration and integration. That is, in the time period 1995-2009 all major components of the Dutch political opportunity structure stayed relatively constant *except* the party system.

The Dutch case allows for a relatively precise examination of the relationship between opportunity structures and politicization for four reasons: (1) The abrupt and short-term nature of the 2002 party

system change, (2) the undisputed magnitude, which allows for a relatively clear 'before' and 'after' assessment, (3) the fact that The Netherlands is a most likely case in the potential effect of party system change on various aspects of politics and, (4) that politics on the issue of migration and integration are most likely to be affected by these party system changes. Let's spell these arguments out in some more detail.

First, the party system change has been non-incremental and has been labeled a typical 'punctuation' of a pre-existing systemic equilibrium (De Vries and van der Lubben, 200x; Koopmans, 2012; on terminology: Jones and Baumgartner, 2005). In other words, the elections, and the relatively brief preceding campaign, are the key, single moment of change with long periods of stability preceding and after the event. Earlier events such as 9-11 have only infrequently been cited as producing (additional) changes in the party system and later events reinforced on-going trends or were inconsequential in systemic terms (on 9-11: Fennema, 2012, 81-109; Berkhout, Sudulich van der Brug, 2011). Second, there is broad agreement among scholars and political observers that there has been a fundamental change in the Dutch party system. This is substantiated by the numbers; in 2002 the second highest proportion of voters in post-Second World War European history shifted their electoral alliance and an equally unprecedented 17 percent of the votes voted for the LPF, a party that did not have an electoral predecessor (Mair, 2008). This fundamentally altered the relationships between political parties. The nature and products of such a change is debated and seen in different ways, from a strengthening of the Left-Right dimension (Otjes, 2011), the emergence of a 'new' dimension (Kriesi and Frey, 200x) to the ideological adaptation of a pre-existing socio-cultural dimension (Pellikaan, De Lange and van der Meer, 2007). Third, in comparative terms, the Dutch party system is relatively sensitive to electoral shifts. That is, the electoral system does not have strong institutional constraints such as electoral thresholds, the parties are not strongly tied to their constituents through vertical linkages such as in the 'old pillars' and procedures of government coalition formation are relatively open through the absence of pre-electoral blocks (e.g. Mair, 2008, 251-252). Party system changes, such as through electoral shifts, are in the Netherlands more likely than in other countries to have consequences on on-going political and policy concerns and agendas. In a 'control group' of other European countries (without party system change) we should not observe the same patterns of politicization. Fourth, the 2002 Dutch party system change seems to depend on a single issue: migration and migrant integration. It should consequently mainly affect the politics on this issue. This has also been shown in previous studies. For instance, Otjes (2011) finds that on the basis of parliamentary motions, after 2002, migration and integration is the 'most prominent issue on the parliamentary agenda' and the issue shows largest increase 'in attention when comparing 1998-2002 to 2003-2006' (Otjes, 2011, 415). Roggeband and Vliegenthart (2007)

shows that, besides salience, also the framing of migration and integration changed substantially after 2002 (also see: Koopmans and Muis, 2009).

Please note that we are interested in the effect of party system change on politicization after 2002. There is, of course, politicization preceding the 2002 elections, most notably by Pim Fortuyn in the 2002 campaign, that is likely to have caused the system change. We will be very careful in the interpretation of the data for that time period because of the mutual relationship between party system change and the politicization of immigration.

In the following, we outline our assessment of the literature on our main dependent variable, politicization and on the main explanation under study, political opportunity structures. We also discuss alternative explanations. Then, we describe our data consisting of political claims analysis in Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Ireland, Spain, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands between 1995 and 2009. What follows is the core of our analysis which, as outlined earlier, focusses on the Netherlands. The paper ends with a conclusion in which we suggest some alternative explanations for the patterns found.

Conceptual framework

Politicization

Politics is about attention to certain issues and conflict about them. Comparative political scientist tend to focus on either salience or attention, or party political positions. First, agenda-setting studies in political science point to the relative attention, the *salience*, of issues in various arenas of politics (e.g. Jones and Baumgartner, 2005; Baumgartner et al, 2009; Downs, 1972; Cobb and Elder, 1972). In an overly simplified view of such agenda-setting approaches, issue attention travels from public opinion via the news media through party politics to the government and its policies. Such studies focus on the variation in government responsiveness to political issues. The rank-order of issues, the restricted nature of agendas and the (un)likely pathways of issue salience are in such approaches important parameters explaining country-differences in politicization. These agenda-setting explanations, however, still miss the magnitude and character of the conflict. For instance, if twenty percent of the Congressional hearings deal with 'public land' issues, does that make the issue of public land a politicized one?

Therefore, and second, especially scholars of political parties, and party competition more specifically, highlight the importance of *positional* competition and the extent to which political parties (and the electorate) have different, polarized positions on the issue (e.g. Downs, 1957; Carmines and Stimson, 1989; Hobolt and De Vries, 2011). Electoral competition is seen as a process

in which parties present different choices to the electorate in terms of different positions on issues and opposing ideological positions. When political actors have different positions they are in conflict – the issue is *polarized*.

So, politics should be understood as a combination of salience and polarization. This is our main dependent variable and should change with changes in the political opportunity structure. Such a combination of agenda-oriented and conflict-oriented approaches to conceptualize politicization is shown in the figure 1 below. The vertical dimension addresses the extent to which the issue receives more political attention than other issues (saliency). The horizontal dimension reflects the extent to which political actors have different positions on an issue (polarization).

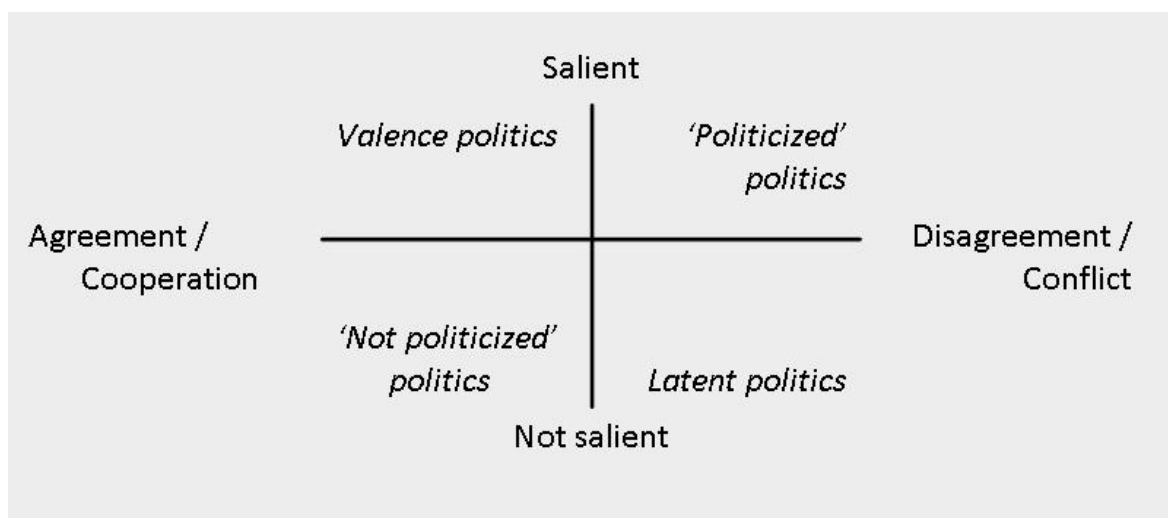


Figure 1: Typology of politics towards a topic

The variation on these two dimensions produces four ideal-typical states of politics on an issue. First, 'not politicized' politics refers to situations in which there might be a social problem, which might even be recognized as a problem, but which is not (yet) a political issue. Second, valence politics is about issues on which actors agree about the appropriate actions to take. Yet, the topic is considered by at least some political parties as the responsibility of the state. So, it is put on the agenda as a political issue. Stokes (1963, 373) was the first to coin the term 'valence issues', i.e., issues where different actors agree about the goals that had to be realized, but where parties disagree about the ways in which to realize these goals or the priority to give to the issue. Third, in situations labeled as latent politics, actors do not attend to an issue and have diverging positions on it. Certain institutional arrangements (coalition governments, high electoral thresholds) may encourage implicit agreements among actors to 'agree to disagree', but not to take further decisions on the issue. In that case, parties attempt to decrease the saliency of certain issues. Typical

examples of ‘latent politics’, are the ways in which Dutch parties dealt with the issues of abortion (Outshoorn, 1986) and euthanasia (Green-Pedersen, 2007). Four, under ‘politicized’ politics issues are contested and salient. For instance, this is the case for the political conflict around wearing (Islamic) headscarves in French schools in 2004. There was strong public and political disagreement on this salient issue. The political conflict on the issue was eventually contained by a law on banning headscarves. In practice, issues will often be very salient for a brief period of time. Once some kind of decision has been taken, the issue is often not high on the agenda any more, at least for a while until new changes are being proposed. So, in practice, issues will often move between being ‘latent’ and being ‘politicized’.

Explanations for politicization

Explanations for the politicization of an issue in general, and the migration and integration in particular may be organized by making two distinctions (similar organizations of the literature are used in studies explaining the emergence of radical right parties: Eatwell, 2003, Mudde, 2007). First, we may either perceive of politicization as a process that essentially originates within the political system, and in a top down fashion supplies politics to society or, starts bottom up with society ‘demanding’ politics on the part of politicians. We should, secondly, differentiate explanations that are based on the (micro- or meso-level) agency of actors, such as political leaders or social movement organizations, from those that emphasize structural conditions at the macro-level, such as political opportunity structures.

Table 1: Summary of explanations for politicization of issues

	Structure	Agency
Initially top down	Political Opportunity Structure	Policies implemented
Initially bottom up	Societal developments	Actions by specific groups

We discuss each of these and, first, focus on the plausibility of structural, top-down explanations.

Political opportunity structure

A succinct and ‘classic’ definition of political opportunity structure is provided by Tarrow (1994, 85): ‘consistent - but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure’. The type of activities that we are interested in are those related to the electoral process: so these are voting on the part of the electorate and providing electoral choice by means of party political organisation on the part of parties. The expectations for ‘success’ in these activities (i.e. choosing a party that represents your interests, or, from the party perspective, receiving as

much votes as possible), is largely determined by two components of the political opportunity structure: 1) formal political institutions and 2) the conflict dimensions within the party system (Kriesi et al, 1992; Kriesi 2004; Kitchelt, 1986).

First, the rules regarding formal political institutions largely determine which part of the political system is likely to be open or closed to certain issues. This approach builds on the earlier observation of Schattschneider (1957, 936) that “the function of institutions is to channelize conflict but they do not treat all forms of conflict equally, just as football rules discriminate between legitimate and illegitimate forms of violence”. This means that in some countries certain channels and their actors are more likely to be engaged in politicization than in other countries. For instance, the UK media system, with its strong tabloid press, seems more open to popular, anti-immigrant voices than the German media system that is more strongly affiliated with established party positions (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Akkerman, 2011). Another obvious example is the existence of electoral thresholds; in countries with high thresholds (Germany, United Kingdom) it is more difficult to politicize issues via the establishment of new political parties. Existing parties and other political channels, such as social movements, are thus more likely to be relatively common venues for politicization.

There has not been a substantial change in this component of the Dutch political opportunity structure over the time period studied. Formal political rules and the expectations on the part of citizens or political actors about how these rules operate thus cannot provide satisfactory explanations for any variation that we may observe in the politicisation of migration and integration.

Second, the on-going and previous political conflicts manifest themselves in the structure of party systems - producing conflict dimensions, such as left-right. These dimensions matter for the incorporation of new issues. In other words, parties would avoid addressing issues that could produce internal disagreement, or destabilise existing coalitions (Schattschneider, 1960; Green-Pedersen, 2007). Established parties usually do not want new conflict dimensions to become politicized, particularly when their own constituents are divided on these issues, or if these new conflicts redefine the balance of power in a way that is potentially unfavourable to them. The emergence of new political issues in the system (i.e. politicisation) depends partially on whether it can be incorporated in existing conflict dimensions or not.

As regards the plausibility of this explanation in the case under study, a minor, but potentially relevant change in party political opportunities, occurred towards the end of the nineties. At the local level so-called ‘Liveable’ parties gained electoral support, partially undermining the position of

established, mainstream parties. This is likely to have increased the expectations of success for such parties at the national level.

Furthermore, of greater importance for this paper is that the ‘grand’ purple coalition (in power between 1994 and 2002) required the party political depoliticisation of a broad range of issues, most notably migration and integration (van der Brug et al, 2009). In these years, governing parties, even the mainstream right-wing VVD, provided a relatively unfavourable channel for politicisation of migration and integration. This is in contrast to the post-2002 period, when right-wing parties initially formed a government coalition, and consequently the government-opposition dynamics changed in such a way that migration and integration issues to a large extent united the coalition vis-à-vis the opposition. This, and the right-wing competition on the mainstream right, also provided opportunities for politicisation within the mainstream right party (VVD).

Our main hypothesis is that due to the change in the party system in 2002, migration and integration in the Netherlands became more politicized, in that it received more political attention and actors took more strongly diverging positions.

Alternative explanations

What are other potential explanations and are they plausible, i.e. requiring control, for the case under study? We follow the types of explanations mentioned in table 1.

First, it seems plausible that any kind of issue will be more likely to become politicized when the issue has a strong impact on society as a whole and particularly on people’s ordinary lives. Examples are nuclear power plants in Japan after the disasters in 2011, unemployment in the 1930s, and issues related to financial austerity in Greece in 2012. As regards the migration and integration issue, such real world developments and attitudes towards them could include the numbers and nature of immigrants, the state of the economy and anti-immigrant attitudes.

We do not think structural societal developments are very plausible explanations for politicization in this case. Over the time period studied, the number of immigrants went down, and for groups that may be of particular concern, notably Moroccan and Turkish migrants, we observe an outgoing migration pattern in the early 2000s (Berkhout and Sudulich, 2011). The state of the economy, such as indicated by employment, GDP growth and consumer confidence, followed general European trends with growth towards the end of the internet bubble, a minor non-growth period around

2002-2004 and instability towards the end of our research time period in 2009.* There may be some form of ethnic competition that produces anti-immigration attitudes when the economy is doing badly. However, the economy was never in a serious recession and anti-immigrant attitudes remain relatively constant over the time period studied (Coenders et al, 2008: 276), making them also relatively implausible as mechanisms related to economic explanations and as cause in their own right. Though there may be other mechanisms that relate economic slowdowns to politicization, we do not think this, like the other societal developments, is a particularly plausible explanation in the Dutch case.

However, non-structural, relatively contingent events in society could potentially trigger the politicization of an issue. There has been relatively little previous theoretical work on this and in the empirical section we note how certain 'events' such as 9-11 or van Gogh could catalyze or trigger the effect of any of the causes discussed here.

Second, it may be that politicization takes place as a reaction to specific policies that are implemented, particularly if such policies are unpopular among specific groups. This is, in general terms, classically argued by Lowi (1972, 299, also: 1964, 1969) when he wrote that 'policies determine politics', and is later further specified by Wilson (1989). In various West European countries, policies have been implemented to regulate the entrance and settlement of groups of immigrants. Moreover, various policies have been proposed or implemented to help and/or oblige immigrants to integrate into the cultures of their new countries. Other policies intend to tackle social problems related to the presence of large immigrant groups.

In the Netherlands, this took the form of the Vreemdelingenwet in 2000 and several policy initiatives in the early 2000s (Butter, De Lange and Berkhout, 2011). We think it is implausible that these have produced political conflict and attention in itself. Political dissensus regarding the Vreemdelingenwet in 2000 has been contained within the policy community and parliamentary committees, and predated the actual implementation (e.g. De Lange, 2007). The 'Verdonk-policies' in the early 2000s are more likely to be a (largely symbolic) product of polarization rather than that it produced politicization.

Third, the strategic choices of political actors, how contextually constrained they may be, eventually matter for turning an issue into a politicized issue. For instance, political claims from immigrant organizations increase the visibility of immigrants in public life and may give rise to resentment

* The pattern of consumer confidence is typical in this regard (CBS: % of optimists minus pessimists): 1995: 4, 1996: 1, 1997: 15, 1998: 17, 1999: 14, 2000: 24, 2001: -1, 2002: -20, 2003: -35, 2004: -25, 2005: -22, 2006: -1, 2007: 8, 2008: -20, 2009: -22

among other groups, who might react by making opposite claims. Furthermore, politicians need to be 'on the right moment, on the right place'. Though this is very difficult to assess formally, we think it is a necessary condition for politicization. In our empirical discussion, specify the moments in which leading politicians such as radical right politician Pim Fortuyn or mainstream left Job Cohen were capable in (de)politicizing migration and integration or not.

Data and method

We use political claims analysis of newspaper articles to measure politicization of migration. The data have been gathered in the context of the 'Support and Opposition to Migration' (SOM) project (2009-2012, www.som-project.eu). The analysis of political claims focuses on public political behavior as observed in, and meticulously coded from news media.

In line with previous research, we define an instance of claim making as a unit of strategic action in the public sphere. It consists of the purposive and public articulation of political demands, calls to action, proposals, criticisms, or physical attacks, which, actually or potentially, affect the interests or integrity of the claimants and/or other collective actors (Koopmans and Statham, 1999). The core components of a claim are similar to what Lasswell (1948, 37) has defined as core components of political communication: 'who? says what? too whom? in which channel? with what effect?' It has been successfully used to measure Europeanisation (Koopmans and Statham, 2010), to examine the discursive context of migrant mobilization (Localmultidem and Eurislam projects) and to map citizenship typologies (Koopmans et al., 2005). It has never been specifically used to measure politicization along to conceptual lines outlined above (for a methodological assessment see: Helbling and Tresch, 2011). The method has been adapted to serve our research goal of measuring salience and polarization of migration and citizen integration.

First, political actors make an issue more salient by being publicly active on it. The salience of immigration relative to other political issues is indicated by a weighted (country/newspaper) measure of the number of claims per time-period. In addition salience may be weighted on the basis of addressees of the claim. At the time of writing this conference paper, we do not have sufficient data to weight the salience relative to other issues. In this paper we will present raw data on the number of claims per day, but when we develop this paper further, we will weight it relative to the number of claims on other issues. This approach is relatively similar to earlier research.

Second, the measurement of polarization is more complex. Political actors position themselves in various ways. That is, they polarize positions relative to each other (supporting / opposing each other), relative to the issue/substantive topic (e.g. pro- or anti- migration) and relative to existing

policies / status-quo. Larger differences between actors on each of these points imply higher levels of polarization. For now, we focus on the position relative to the migration issue measured on a 5-point scale.* We use the inverse of Van der Eijk's agreement score (a measure of agreement in ordered rating scales) and defined it in such a way that it ranges from 0 to 1 (van der Eijk, 2001). If all observations are in the same category of a rating scale, there would be perfect agreement and our measure of polarization would be 0. When half of the claims is in the 'strongly restrictive' category and the other half in the 'least restrictive' category, there is maximum disagreement. In that case, our measure of polarization would be 1. A uniform distribution over all five categories yields a polarization score of 0.5.

The research is narrowed down through the selection of newspapers, days and the definition of the migration issue. First, in each of the countries studied we selected two newspapers on the basis of the reputation of the newspaper on their positions on the migration issue. In the Netherlands we have selected De Telegraaf and De Volkskrant.† We selected both regular newspaper articles and editorials (opinion articles by the newspapers themselves) through browsing of 'physical' newspapers. Second, we selected only newspaper articles on a random sample of 700 days. Third, research assistants 'clipped' articles on migration and its social consequences. The study looks at claims about the issue of immigration and integration in a relative broad sense. We cover government activities relating to the entry and exit of people from the country, including the general policy direction, the institutional framework, issues of border controls, visa policies, and actions related to illegal entry. We also cover social, cultural and economic conflicts, as well as issues related to social cohesion if they involve migrants. In this context we cover government policies on targeted integration, language and citizenship programmes, and issues on how migration affects existing government programmes such as housing, education, or policing. As such, we also include coverage on the activities, problems, and social contributions of migrant communities.

For each article in this sample research assistants coded political claims on the basis of an elaborate codebook (Berkhout and Sudulich, 2011). Here, we use only a couple of aspects coded. These are briefly explained in the results section below.

* Actual wording of the 5-point scale: 'strongly restrictive to migrants / conservative / pro-national residents / mono-cultural', 'somewhat restrictive to migrants / conservative / pro-national residents / mono-cultural', 'neutral/ambivalent/technocratic/pragmatic', 'somewhat open to migrants / progressive / cosmopolitan / multi-cultural', 'strongly open to migrants / progressive / cosmopolitan / multi-cultural', 'unclassifiable', missing

† Papers selected in other countries: Austria: Der Standard and Neue Kronen Zeitung. Belgium(Wallonia): La Dernière Heure and Le Soir. Belgium (Flandres): De Standaard, Het Laatste Nieuws. Switzerland (German-speaking): Blick and Neue Zürcher Zeitung. Switzerland (French-speaking): Le Matin and Le Temps (March 1998 onwards), Tribune de Genève (1995 to March 1998). Spain: El País and La Vanguardia. Ireland: Irish Daily Star and The Irish Times. United Kingdom: The Daily Mail and The Guardian.

Results

We present descriptive figures over time of the salience and polarization of the issue of migration and integration in the Netherlands, carefully assessing the differences before and after 2002. We compare that to broader European-trends and assess whether it is likely that the change in the party system produced politicization or whether other factors account for that.

Figure 2 presents the political salience of the issue of migration and integration as measured by the number of claims made. The line represents moving averages based on 60 observations preceding any point in the graph. Considering the size of our sample this is around a year. So, the point at the start of the line represents the salience of the preceding year, 1995. Moving averages are particularly suitable for describing long-term trends.

The figure indicates two peaks and three lows in political attention. The peaks are around 2001 and 2004, the lows around 1997, 2000 and 2006. There is no clear trend upward or downward. When comparing before and after 2002, we find a sizable peak in attention around 2004 that easily outnumbers the much smaller attention peak around 1999.

Contrary to common understandings, the 2004 peak largely predates the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh on 2th of November 2004 that should have triggered political attention to Muslim extremism (Buruma, 2006). Political attention is also relatively low around the 'Hirsi Ali' government crisis in the summer of 2006.

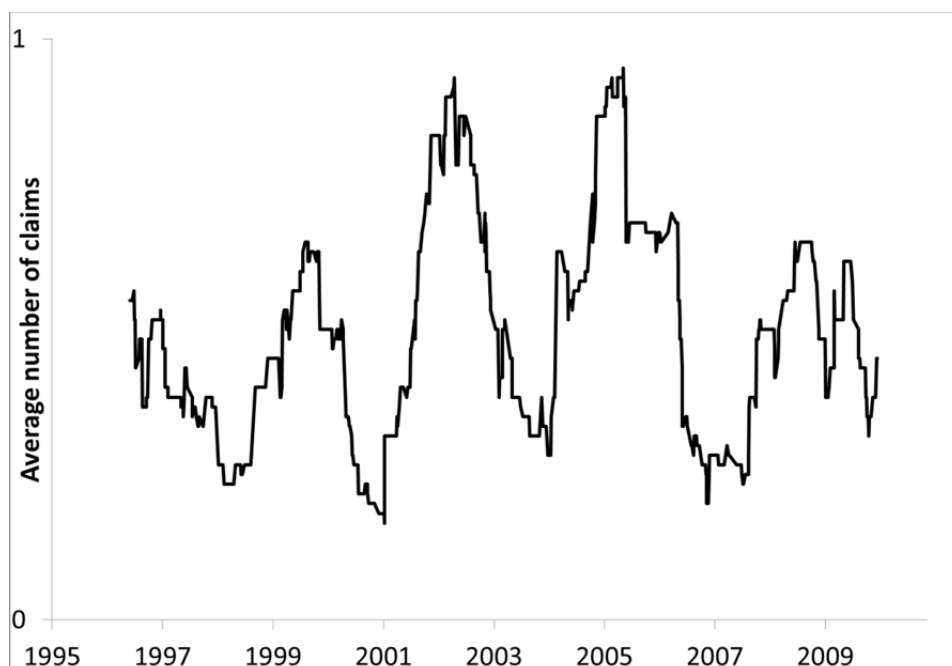


Figure 2: Salience of migration and integration in the Netherlands, 1995-2009, moving average of number of political claims per 60 sampled days.

Figure 3 presents the polarization on the issue of migration and integration in the Netherlands between 1995 and 2009. Remember that we use an adapted version of van der Eijk' agreement score where 1 indicates polarization and 0 agreement. The dashed line in the figure indicates the actual positions taken expressed as the proportion of claims taking 'somewhat' and 'very' restrictive positions.

The solid line in the figure shows that polarization remains relatively constant at around 0.3 over the time period. There are noticeable peaks of (still) modest (<0.5) polarization in 2002, 2006 and 2009. This is relatively low compared to other countries. For instance, in the United Kingdom polarization scores range between 0.42 and 0.82. It may be that this is a reflection of the consensus-oriented institutional rules in the Netherlands and the winner-takes-all arrangements in the United Kingdom. The dashed line in the figure shows a substantial increase in the proportion of relatively strict positions. Up to 2001 the proportion of strict positions was below twenty percent, between 2002 and 2006 in around thirty percent of the claims strict positions were expressed.

As regards the polarization scores, the 2002 peak is likely to be associated with the election campaign and the electoral victory of Pim Fortuyn. The presumed party system change that is central in this paper, is, as expected, accompanied by polarization of politics of migration and integration.

The 2006 peak in polarization confirms our expectation regarding the relatively favorable political opportunities that arose from the 2002 party system change. This requires us to look somewhat deeper into Dutch politics in 2006. Following irregularities regarding the citizenship status of VVD MP Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the VVD government minister Verdonk, responsible for citizenship issues, started a denaturalisation procedure (van Holsteyn, 2007, 1140). This produced conflict between government-coalition parties D66, VVD and CDA, and a subsequent fall of the government. The breakup highlighted the sensitive nature of the division between the anti-immigrant populist neo-nationalism of VVD minister Verdonk on the one hand, and the cosmopolitan, liberal, human rights position of junior government coalition party D'66 (supported by opposition parties such as Groenlinks) on the other hand. As mentioned earlier, this division had, after the 'LPF crisis' in 2002 / 2003 established itself as a relevant structuring force in Dutch party politics (e.g. Otjes, 2011, Aarts and Thomassen, 2008). The sizable increase in attention around 2006 is likely related to the favourable political opportunities for the politicisation of migration of integration that followed from the 2002 party system change. It seems that the expectations on the part of political actors, such as minister Verdonk, regarding 'success' of attending to the issue were larger than before 2002. This is further exemplified by the fact that in the 2006 elections after the 'Hirsi Ali' crisis, she received a larger number of individual votes than the VVD party leader Rutte, who was at that time considered

to represent the centrist-liberal wing of the party. Consequently, in an internal VVD election she unsuccessfully challenged his leadership of the party (with Rutte receiving 51 per cent of the members' votes) (van Holsteyn, 2007).



Figure 3: Polarization of migration and integration in the Netherlands, 1995-2009. Solid line: inverted and rescaled van der Eijk' agreement score. Dashed line: yearly proportion of claims taking moderate or very strict positions

As discussed above, politicized politics implies a combination of political attention to, and disagreement on, an issue. Figure 4 shows the average number of claims (salience) and polarization per year. It is thus a combination of the previous two figures also indicating the types of politics introduced in the conceptual section. In none of the years in our study, we find politicized politics on migration and integration, in terms of consistently high polarization and salience scores. That is, the 2004 peak in salience does not correspond with polarization, nor does the relatively high polarization scores in 2006 and 2009 have corresponding saliency scores. When polarization went up following the murder on van Gogh and the ‘Hirsi Ali’ crisis around 2006 political actors did not translate their disagreement into political attention to migration and integration issues. A situation we label latent politics. When political actors attended to the issue in 2001 and 2004, they were in relative agreement on the direction of policies, producing valence politics.

Though further studies are required, this suggests that situations of valence and latent politics are far more stable than we suggest in the conceptual section. Politicized politics, on the contrary, seems to be a fairly short-term phenomenon that easily averages out over yearly periods. Even in the very likely cases of the 2002 and 2006 elections, we do not observe longer term politicization.

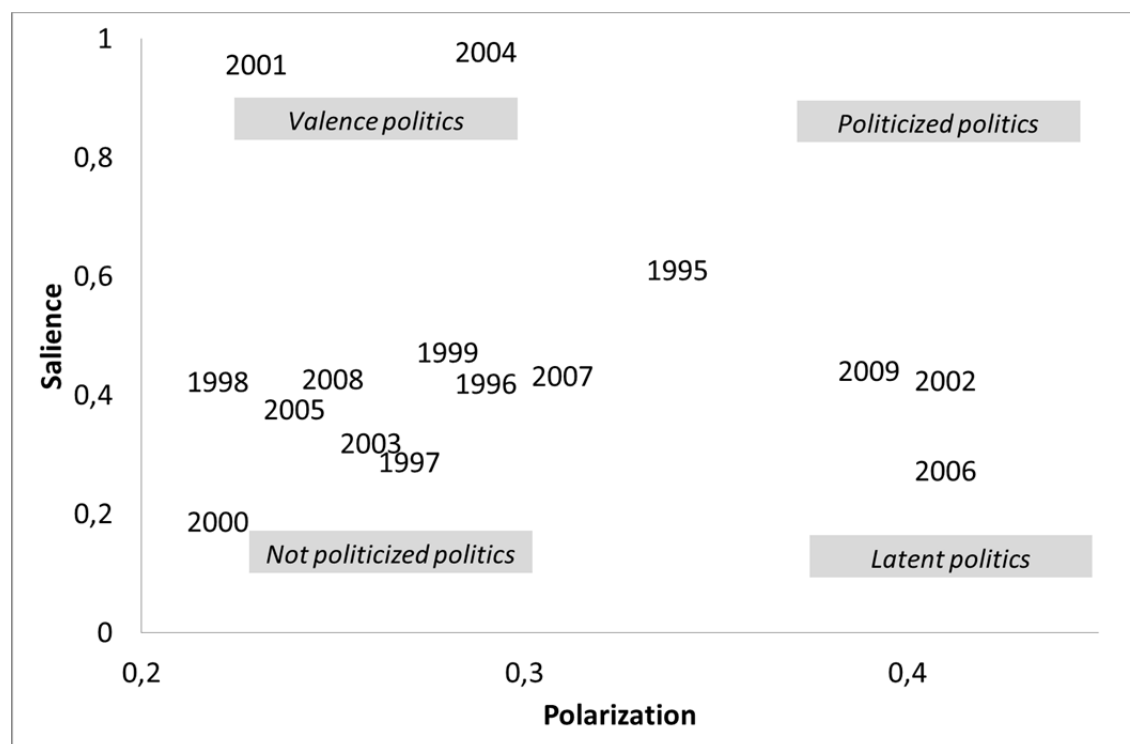


Figure 4: Scatter diagram of average number of claims (salience) and polarization score per year, the Netherlands, 1995-2009

Figure 5 shows the distribution of the types of actors that make claims on migration and integration in the Netherlands from 1995 to 2009. The types of actors involved indicate in which arena politicization occurs. Relatively large proportion of government actors compared to other actors indicates the extent to institutional constraints, usually associated with political opportunity structures, shapes the politics on the issue. 1998 and 2002 are notable in this regard. In the election year of 1998, government representatives made about half of the political claims on the topic. This is exceptionally large relative to other actors and the proportions in other years. The previous figures show exceptionally low salience and polarization for 1998. Government actors seem to be in control and not inclined to politicize the issue. This is in stark contrast to 2002. In that critical election year, government actors make exceptionally few claims relative to other actors or compared to other years. They seem out of political control and, considering low levels of institutional actors, politics may be relatively unconstrained by formal political structures. Such an absence of institutional constraints may be symptomatic for moments of systemic change.

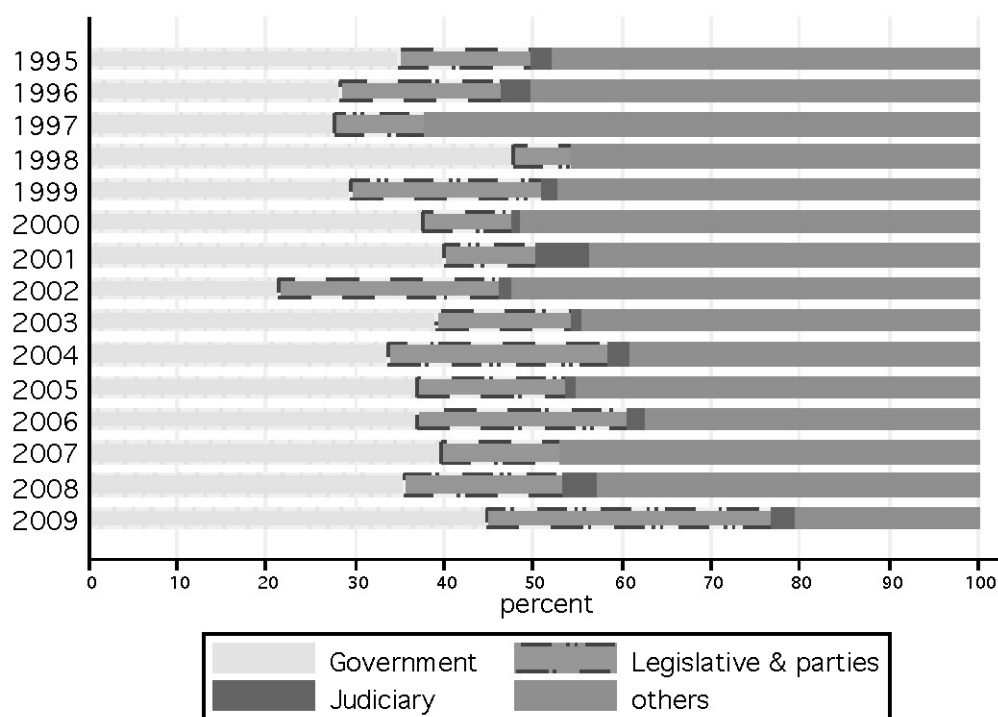


Figure 5: Distribution of actors making claims on migration and integration in the Netherlands by year, 1995-2009

Figure 6 shows the saliency of migration and integration in all West European countries included in the SOM project (except the Netherlands). The polynomial trendline mathematically allows for multiple peaks to fit the data but the data shows only a single peak between 2002 and 2004. Remember that we expected the Dutch political opportunity structure to provide relative favorable opportunities for attending to migration and integration, and that, due to the absence of such party system change, we should not observe such favorable circumstances in other countries. This figure does not support this expectation. In various West European countries we find a peak in attention to migration and integration. This is despite the fact that party systems in these countries do not more (or less) favorable opportunities compared to earlier or later time periods for such increase in attention. This suggests that an increase in political saliency in the Netherlands, which, as noted earlier, comes as 'valence politics' in 2004, must also be attributed to other, more widely European factors, than to changes in the Dutch party system.

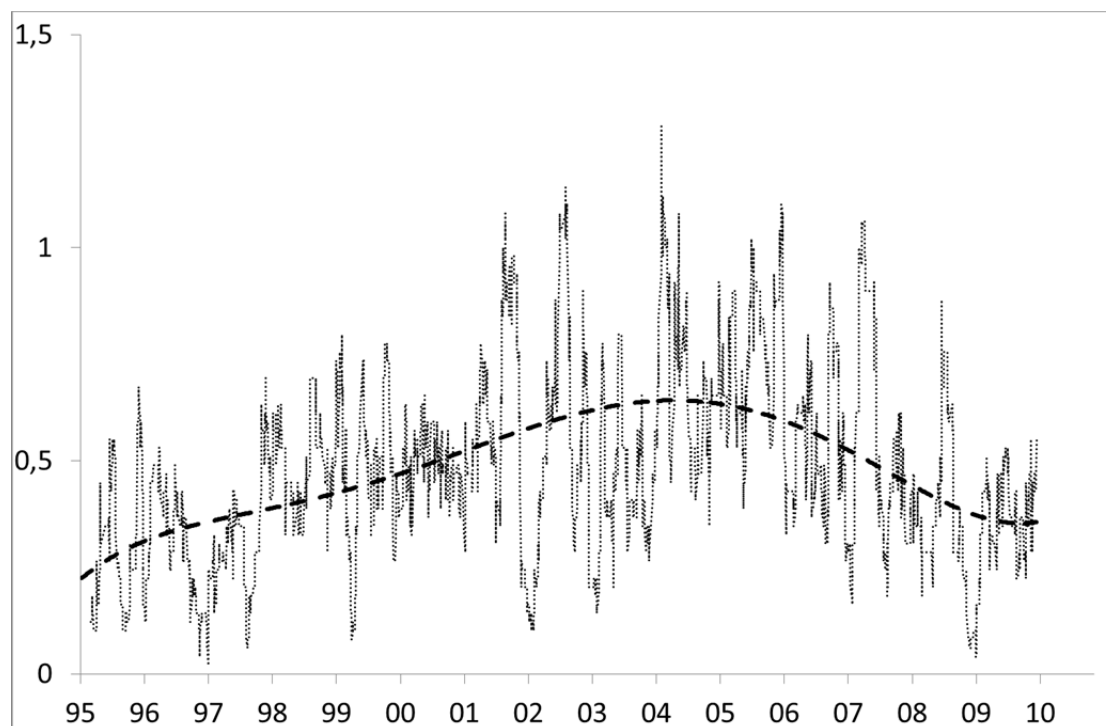


Figure 6: Saliency of migration and integration in all countries included in the SOM project excluding the Netherlands, 1995-2009, moving average of number of claims (dotted line), fifth order polynomial (broken line)

Concluding remarks

We started this paper with the observation that country comparative research design make it very difficult to precisely assess the effect of (variation in) distinct components of political opportunity structures on various aspects of politics, most notably (ease of) the politicization of relatively unpoliticized issues. We argued that the Dutch party system changed in 2002 and the changing politics on the issue of migration and integration between 1995 and 2009 provided a likely case for finding an effect of a change in political opportunity structures on politicization. A number of conclusions can be drawn.

First, in contrast to political observers and scholarly work on party positioning, we only find very modest variation in salience and polarization of migration and integration over the time period studied. Related to that, we do not find any relatively long time period in which migration and integration were strongly politicized. We do not think that this is a methodological issue. However, it seems to be more likely a conceptual problem. That is, and this would require further empirical assessment, issues are only high on the agenda for relatively short time periods. This has to do partially with the dynamics of the media, but also because politicians have to choose which battle they want to win. When disagreeing on a certain issue political actors cannot maintain costly longer term attention. They are consequently required to *either* reduce attention to the issue and 'agree to disagree' (producing latent politics), *or* tackle it through policies, which necessarily requires depolarization in the form of compromises with other actors (producing valence politics).

Second, despite the relatively minor variations in politicization, we could relate some moments of valence and latent politics to changes in the party system. This is especially the case with the 2006 election but also at other moments. In 2006, most notably, especially relatively right-wing parties could expect political success when mobilizing votes on the migration and integration issue. These expectations are clearly related to the previous success, and related party system dynamics, of the emergence of the LPF. However, this argument must be qualified. In most West European countries we find a peak in political attention around 2004-2006. The changes in the party system after 2002 in the Netherlands can certainly not be the only factor. Broader, across West European factors must be accounted for. There may be some sort of political learning effects of political actors in different countries, or, politics in different countries may react to similar events, such as the Danish Cartoon crisis in 2006, the bombings in London (2005) and Madrid (2004) or, earlier, in New York (2001).

Third, structural opportunities still need to be exploited by political actors and relatively contingent events also shape opportunities for politicization. We discussed several factors that potentially explain politicization. We found it relatively implausible that policies, migration numbers, the

changing state of the economy and anti-migration attitudes would explain changes in politicization. However, in our empirical assessment we related changes in attention and polarization to both structural factors (change in the party system), agency of political actors and more contingent events.

In future studies, we would like to extend this study in two directions. First, we aim to construct a somewhat more formal empirical assessment that includes a more precisely quantified measure of (various components of) political opportunity structures and incorporates all countries in our SOM project. Second, we will examine specific short term time periods in a more detailed manner. This should help assess the mechanism and effect of events on politicization. It should also clarify the nature of political conflict and shed light on our finding that, despite our strong expectations on the contrary, migration and integration was never (fully) politicized in any annual time period in the Netherlands between 1995 and 2009.

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