

Singapore Management University

## Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University

---

Research Collection School of Social Sciences

School of Social Sciences

---

1-2005

### A Subjective Approach to the Study of Oligopolistic Party Systems

Riccardo PELIZZO

Singapore Management University, riccardop@smu.edu.sg

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soass\\_research](https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soass_research)



Part of the [Political Economy Commons](#), and the [Political Science Commons](#)

---

#### Citation

PELIZZO, Riccardo, "A Subjective Approach to the Study of Oligopolistic Party Systems" (2005). *Research Collection School of Social Sciences*. Paper 75.

[https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soass\\_research/75](https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soass_research/75)

Available at: [https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soass\\_research/75](https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soass_research/75)

This Working Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Social Sciences at Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research Collection School of Social Sciences by an authorized administrator of Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University. For more information, please email [cherylids@smu.edu.sg](mailto:cherylids@smu.edu.sg).

# **A Subjective Approach to the Study of Oligopolistic Party Systems**

**Riccardo Pelizzo**

October 2005

Paper No. 11-2005

## A Subjective Approach to the Study of Oligopolistic Party Systems

### Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present a new theory of the cartel party. My argument is straightforward. Assuming that parties are the political analog of firms, that party systems are the political analog of markets, that the shares of the electorate are the political analog of the market shares that firms control, Western European party systems share with oligopolistic markets some structural features. Yet, to know whether Western European party systems resemble oligopolistic markets, we need to know whether Western European party systems are non-competitive political markets exactly in the same way in which oligopolistic markets are not competitive. That is we need to know whether changes in (political) supply are competitive adaptations to changes in demand or not. Hence, to focus on supply is not enough. We need to look at changes in supply relative to changes in demand. Moreover, since voters' perception of parties' political offer to the electorate does not simply reflect some objective conditions but is instead mediated by subjective factors (preferences, expectations, ideas, and so on...) I further suggest that the perception of the cartel may not be determined by parties' objectively oligopolistic practices, but it can simply be based on the *perception* of oligopolistic behavior, that is on the gap between the electorate's demands and the market's perceived supply.

The paper is divided into three parts. Part One discusses how my subjective approach can be used to assess whether Western European party systems resemble the functioning of oligopolistic markets. Building upon the existing cartel party literature, I argue that in order to describe Western European party systems as oligopolistic political markets, it is necessary

to show not only that there are some structural similarities between Western European party systems and oligopolistic markets, but also that the political offer of Western European party systems does not adjust to changes in demand in the same way in which changes in supply are not (competitive) adaptations to changes in demand in oligopolistic markets. In this part I also argue how my subjective approach can be used to assess whether political supply is adjusting to changes in political demands or not. Part Two presents some evidence consistent with the notion of oligopolistic political markets. The results of the survey data analyses presented in this part of the paper reveals that there is an increasing gap between the position of the electorate and that of the party system in each of the countries under study. Part Three discusses some of the possible implications of this research and suggests that the 1990s are the ‘age of the cartel party’.

### Part One: A Subjective Approach to the Study of Oligopolistic Political Markets

#### *Oligopoly and the Market*

When supply and price adjust to changes in demand, a market is defined as competitive. By contrast, non-competitive markets are those markets in which supply and price are not affected by changes in demand. When a non-competitive market is characterized by the presence of one seller and entry barriers, the non-competitive market is defined as monopoly<sup>1</sup>. On the contrary, a non-competitive market is defined as oligopoly when there is a limited number of firms operating in the market; when each of these firms controls a considerable

---

<sup>1</sup> According to Cozzi and Zamagni “there are many (...) factors that can explain the emergence and the consolidation of these (entry) barriers. One of these factors is the control of one or more of the raw materials that are needed to produce the good under consideration; another is the exclusive knowledge of a given productive technique; another one is the availability of patents concerning one product or new productive processes and so on”. See Terenzio Cozzi and Stefano Zamagni, *Economia politica*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1989, p. 377.

portion of the market, so that from 40 to 100 per cent of the market is controlled by 2 to 10 firms; and when none of these firms can ignore or act independently of what the other firms do<sup>2</sup>. Oligopolistic markets display two major peculiarities. The first is that the risks associated with the price fluctuations that can be observed in a competitive market are eliminated, because prices are fixed by the oligopolistic firms themselves either directly or through the manipulation of the quantities supplied. The second peculiarity of this oligopolistic market is that by eliminating the risks associated with competition, it promises and (is expected to protect) the survival of all of the oligopolistic firms themselves.

### *Oligopoly in the Political Market*

Do Western European party systems resemble these oligopolistic markets? In order to answer this question we need to assess whether Western European party systems actually display the same dynamics that we can observe in oligopolistic markets. And in order to do so, we need to assess whether they satisfy the three conditions mentioned above.

The first two conditions are easily met. As Blyth and Katz recently pointed out Western European party systems are characterized by a relatively small number of effective parties and that these relatively few parties control nearly the totality of the parliamentary seats<sup>3</sup>. But how do we know whether these relatively few parties distort competition? The cartel party literature has elaborated three different, but not mutually exclusive, answers.

---

<sup>2</sup> Cozzi and Zamagni, *op. cit.*, p. 90 and p. 377.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Blyth and Richard S. Katz, "From Catch-all-icism to Reformation: The Political Economy of the Cartel Party", European Consortium for Political Research Joint Sessions of Workshops, Grenoble, March 2001. A revised version of the article can be found in Mark Blyth, "The Political economy of Political Parties: Beyond the Catch-all-ic Church?", Paper Prepared for the 2002 Meeting of the Council of European Studies, Chicago, 14-17 March (2002).

### *The Systemic Approach*

For Katz and Mair, the distortion of competition is due to the fact that “party programmes become more similar, and (...) campaigns are in any case oriented more towards agreed goals rather than contentious means”<sup>4</sup>. The second answer, elaborated by Blyth and Katz, argues instead that parties distort competition by fixing the political analog of market quantities, that is by constraining the set of viable (mostly economic) policy options<sup>5</sup>. In both arguments, the cartelization of parties and party systems is associated with an observable phenomenon, that is the increasing similarity of parties’ programs and the narrowing of viable policies. Both arguments postulate the existence of a cartel of parties at the systemic level and they will be referred to as to ‘systemic’ conceptions of the cartel of parties. Instructive as they may be, both versions of the ‘systemic’ cartel party hypothesis are inherently unable to show whether the patterns of inter-party competition, or party systems, have come to resemble the functioning of oligopolistic markets<sup>6</sup>. By assuming that party programs and policies are the political analog of supply, changes in party programs or policies simply indicate that there has been a change in supply in the political market. But a change in supply is *per sé* insufficient to say that the competition in the political market is distorted. In order to show that the functioning of political market is distorted, it is necessary to show that the observed changes in supply are not adjustments to corresponding changes in demand. Hence, the ‘systemic’

---

<sup>4</sup> Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, “Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy. The Emergence of the Cartel Party”, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Blyth and Richard S. Katz, “From Catch-all-icism to Reformation: The Political Economy of the Cartel Party”, European Consortium for Political Research Joint Sessions of Workshops, Grenoble, March 2001.

<sup>6</sup> The idea that a party system results from the patterns of inter-party competition was developed by Giovanni Sartori, who argued that “Parties make for a “system”, then, only when they are parts (in the plural); and a party system is precisely the *system of interactions* resulting from inter-party competition. That is, the system in question bears on the relatedness of parties to each other, on how each party is a function (in the mathematical sense) of the other parties and reacts, competitively or otherwise, to the other parties”, see Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems. A Framework for Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 44.

conception of the cartel party hypothesis is unable to provide any conclusive evidence as to whether Western European party systems have cartelized or not.

In fact, one could very well argue against the ‘systemic’ conception of the cartel party hypothesis that changes in political supply are actually competitive adjustments to changes in political demand. Kitschelt, for example, argued that in the course of the past three decades voters’ political preferences and political distribution have changed<sup>7</sup>. Specifically, he argued that “the main axis of voter distribution (has shifted) from a simple alternative between socialist (left) and capitalist (right) politics to a more complex configuration opposing left-libertarian and right-authoritarian alternatives”<sup>8</sup>. According to Kitschelt this change in voters’ preferences and distribution (in the political space) reflected a change in political demands and parties’ (and governments’) were forced to change their political supply to adapt to the electoral market’s new demands. If this were the case, then there would not be any distortion of political competition and, hence, no similarity with oligopolistic practices. As will become clear later on in the paper, I do not share this view and I will explain under why it is legitimate to say that Western European party systems resemble the functioning of oligopolistic markets. This said, I do agree with Kitschelt on the importance of investigating changes in supply relative to changes in demand.

---

<sup>7</sup> Herbert Kitschelt, *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 30-31.

<sup>8</sup> Herbert Kitschelt, *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

### *The systemic-subjective approach*

Having recognized the limits of the ‘systemic’ approach to the study of the cartel, Kitschelt advanced what could be considered a “systemic-subjective” conception of the cartel<sup>9</sup>. This conception of the cartel differs from the previous in one major respect. The existence of the cartel is subjective and not objective. The cartel exists in voters’ perceptions but not necessarily in the real world. According to Kitschelt this perception is generated by the fact that when Social Democratic and Moderately Conservative parties, in their attempt to maximize their electoral returns, converge toward the median voter position, their political offers become increasingly distant from what these polarized voters demand of the political system. Hence, the political offers of the system parties become increasingly unable to satisfy their demands.

By bringing subjectivity back in, Kitschelt made an important contribution to further our understanding of whether, why and to what extent party politics may resemble the functioning of oligopolistic markets. However, his approach is not entirely satisfactory. Kitschelt is right in suggesting that the nature of the cartel is subjective, that is the cartel exists in the perception of the voters. Yet, his argument becomes less convincing when he argues that the perception of the cartel is generated by some clearly identifiable systemic factors, such as the system parties’ centripetal convergence.

Kitschelt’s systemic-subjective approach is in fact vitiated by some major problems. To say that the cartellization has an objective nature and that the object is parties’ centripetal convergence amounts to assuming that party systems are or can be represented in a uni-dimensional space, that parties’ positions can be located on this dimension (and, hence, can be



measured) and that voters are able to assess parties' objective changes of position on this dimension. Unfortunately, none of these assumptions is particularly sound. It is, in fact, not at all clear whether party systems are actually uni-dimensional or can be represented in a uni-dimensional space nor is it clear how parties can objectively be located in such a uni-dimensional space. And if it is not possible to measure parties' positions objectively, then it is not possible objectively to measure their centripetal convergence.

Political scientists have developed several methods to estimate parties' positions. Parties' positions have been estimated on the basis of a priori judgements, mass surveys, expert surveys, elite studies and party manifestoes<sup>10</sup>. Four of these five solutions provide at best a subjective assessment of parties' positions. By contrast, the left-right scores estimated by applying the Laver/Budge methodology to the party manifesto data do provide an objective assessment of parties' positions. Unfortunately these estimates do not provide reliable evidence as to where parties are located and, thus, cannot be used to assess whether parties have converged centripetally or not<sup>11</sup>. In sum, in spite of all the attention that the problem has received, measuring parties' objective location in the uni-dimensional space represents a problem for which the scholarly literature has been unable to find an adequate solution. It is, therefore, dubious that the voters have been more successful than party politics experts in assessing parties' objective positions and their changes. This problem has an obvious implication. If there is no objective measure of parties' centripetal convergence, then it is not

---

<sup>9</sup> Herbert Kitschelt, *The Radical Right in Western Europe*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1995, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion see Peter Mair, "Searching for the positions of political actors: a review of approaches and a critical evaluation of expert surveys", in Michael Laver (ed.), *Estimating the Policy Position of Political Actors*, London, Routledge, 2001, pp. 10-30.

<sup>11</sup> Riccardo Pelizzo, "Party Positions or Party Direction? An Analysis of Party Manifesto Data", *West European Politics*, vol. 26, n. 2, April 2003, pp. 67-89.

possible to claim that voters' (subjective) perception of the cartel reflects parties' (objective) convergence toward the center—because this centripetal converge cannot be measured 'objectively'.

Even more problematic is the claim that voters' perception of parties' cartellization is directly generated by objective or systemic factors. This claim is problematic because it assumes that the role that the human mind plays in the cognitive process is a passive one. The human mind, according to this view, simply records changes occurring around the subject. Yet, this assumption is at odds with some of the most reliable findings in the study of perception, namely that the human mind plays a considerably active role in the cognitive process and that the perception of the surrounding world is always mediated by, broadly speaking, subjective factors.

Perception is not simply the work of senses but it always involves a mental decision. In fact, by establishing what is relevant and what is not, the mind instructs our senses about what to see<sup>12</sup>. According to Gregory "perception involves going beyond the immediately given evidence of the senses: this evidence is assessed on many grounds and generally we make the best bet, and we see things more or less correctly. But the senses do not give us a picture of the world directly; rather they provide evidence for the checking of hypotheses

---

<sup>12</sup> This is true not only in the case of human beings but also in the case of animals. Popper's example in this case is quite telling: "The frog is programmed for the highly specialized task of catching moving flies. The frog's eye does not even signal to its brain a fly within reach if it does not move...in general, an animal will perceive what is relevant according to its problem situation; and its problem situation, in turn, will depend not only on its external situation, but upon its inner state: its programme, as given by its genetic constitution, and its many sub-programmes – its preferences and choices", Karl R. Popper in Karl R. Popper and John C. Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain*, New York, Springer International, 1977, p. 92.

about what lies before us...we may say that the perception of an object *is* an hypothesis suggested and tested by the sensory data...perceiving and thinking are not independent”<sup>13</sup>.

In our daily life, we are generally unaware of the fact that the mind affects our perception by formulating hypotheses “about what lies before us”. The role of the mind is quite clearly illustrated by the following examples. Sometimes, when we sit in the train, we look out of the window at the other trains in the station. We check our watch and we realize that it is time to go. We look again outside the window and we see that the train next to ours is moving. Yet, after some time we realize that we experienced an illusory movement. The other train did not move, our train did. Why did we experience such an illusion? Because “whenever there is movement the brain has to decide what is moving and what is stationary” and in our case the brain, incorrectly, hypothesized that our position was stationary and the other train was moving<sup>14</sup>.

In other words, our perception, our vision reflects not only the external, objective situation but also the observer’s inner state, our preferences and choices<sup>15</sup>. In fact, “the seeing of objects involves many sources of information beyond those meeting the eye when we look at one object. It generally involves knowledge of the object derived from previous experience, and this experience is not limited to vision but may include the other senses; touch, taste, smell, hearing and perhaps also temperature or pain. Objects are far more than patterns of stimulation: objects have pasts and futures; when we know its past or can guess its future, an

---

<sup>13</sup> The quote is taken Richard L. Gregory, *Eye and Brain. The Psychology of seeing*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1978 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), pp. 13-14. This quote, as some of the following quotes from Gregory, uses the word ‘brain’ where Popper would use the word mind. On the relationship between mind and brain, and on the different ways in which this relationship has been theorized, see Karl R. Popper and John C. Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain*, op. cit., pp. 3-99.

<sup>14</sup> Gregory, *Eye and Brain*, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>15</sup> This point was more fully articulated by Popper and Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain*, op. cit., p. 92.

object transcends experience and becomes an embodiment of knowledge and expectation”<sup>16</sup>. Previous knowledge, ideas, expectations are what we can generally refer to as ‘subjective factors’.

### *The Subjective Approach*

If psychologists and neuroscientists are right in claiming that perceptions are mediated by subjective factors and if we perceive politics in the same way in which we perceive any other phenomenon, then even our perception of politics and political phenomena is mediated by our subjectivity. This means that voters’ perception of the cartel does not reflect *sic et simpliciter*, some objective conditions such as parties’ centripetal convergence, but it reflects instead the way in which voters perceive parties’ movements in the political space.

This is why, and in contrast to the systemic-subjective approach, I suggest that what we need in order to understand whether and to what extent voters may perceive that a party system functions like an oligopolistic market, is what I refer to as the ‘subjective approach’.

My approach is ‘subjective’ because I argue that a party system is perceived to operate like an oligopolistic market (subjective) when the electorate perceives a gap between its demands and the party system’s perceived supply (subjective). The perception of this gap, in turn, may be due to the fact that the electorate’s demands have changed while political offer is perceived to have remained fixed. It may be due to the fact that demands have undergone dramatic changes while political offer is perceived to have changed little or, at least, not enough to satisfy the new demands. It may be due to the fact that the political offer has changed while demands have not. Or it may be due to the fact that demands and party

---

<sup>16</sup> Gregory, *Eye and Brain*, op. cit., p.10.

system's perceived offer have both changed but have changed in ways that make the gap between them seem wider. The adoption of my 'subjective' approach is crucial in this regard. By adopting the 'subjective' approach I am not only able to recognize the subjective nature of the gap between political demands and supply, but I am also able to investigate whether and to what extent the perception of the cartel is related to one of the above mentioned scenarios.

My 'subjective' approach resembles Kitschelt's approach in that we both argue that the cartel of parties (or cartel party system) exists only in voters' (subjective) mind. Yet, the 'subjective' approach differs from the 'systemic-subjective' approach in two ways. First of all, in contrast to the 'systemic-subjective' approach, I argue that the perception of oligopolistic behavior of parties (and party systems) does not have to reflect parties' objectively oligopolistic practices, but simply reflects the perception that the political offer of Western European party systems is increasingly inadequate to satisfy the electorate's political demands. In other words, the perception of a cartel of parties reflects the gap between the electorate's demands and what the electorate perceives to be the party system's supply.

Second, for Kitschelt, the perception of the cartelization is circumscribed to the voters located at the extremes of the political spectrum as I recalled above. The subjective approach allows one to explain why the perception of the cartellization may be found among voters other than those the voters located at the extremes of the political spectrum as well as why the perception of cartellization may be associated with the transformations other than centripetal converge of the system parties or with the party system's depolarization<sup>17</sup>.

---

<sup>17</sup> The overall polarization of a party system is measured as the ideological distance between the left-most party and the right-most party in a given party system. Ideological distance is defined as "the overall spread of the ideological spectrum of any given polity". See Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems. A Framework for Analysis*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 126.

In fact, the ‘subjective’ approach suggests that the electorate is not concerned about the political offer of any individual party, but is concerned instead with what I call the direction of competition. That is how well the electorate’s demands are satisfied by party system’s political offer.

## Part Two: Some Evidence

### *The Cartel as the Absence of Differences*

Voters might perceive a cartel when the positions and proposals of the relevant parties are so similar that the voter is unable to see real alternatives in the political market. The perception of a cartel is quite pervasive among Western European voters. More than 23 per cent of the British voters surveyed by the British Election Study in 1997 did not detect any difference between the Labour and the Conservative party, almost 42 per cent of the German voters surveyed by the German Election Study in 1998 did not think that parties’ differences were sufficiently marked to give voters a clear alternative, and more than 54 per cent of the French voters surveyed in 1997 declared that the proposals of the Left and those of the UDF-RPR coalition seemed neither completely nor somewhat different<sup>18</sup>. Data are presented in Table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

Even more interestingly, voters are increasingly unable to see differences between parties. As shown by the data reported in Table 2.1, the percentage of British voters who do not see any difference between the Labour and the Conservative party increased from 6.3 per cent in 1983

---

<sup>18</sup> British voters were asked the following question “now considering everything the Conservative and Labour parties stand for, would you say that (there is great difference, some difference, not much difference); French voters were asked instead the following question: “do the proposals of the Left and the RPR-UDF majority seem (very different, somewhat different, not particularly different, not at all different); finally German voters were asked “do you agree with the following statement: parties differ so much (in their objectives) from each other, that the citizen has a clear choice).

to 23.4 per cent in 1997. Although the French and the German data do not allow me to construct similar time series, it is possible to bypass this problem by using differences between age groups as a surrogate for the time series<sup>19</sup>. Table 2.2 shows the percentage of each of three age groups reporting not seeing differences between parties<sup>20</sup>. Both the French and the German data show that there is a negative correlation between age and the percentage of voters who not seeing differences between parties. In sum, a large, and growing, percentage of Western European voters report that they see little difference between the various parties. These findings are of great importance for the purposes of the present work as they provide evidence consistent with the non-competitiveness of the Western European political markets and with the subjective version of the cartel hypothesis.

[Table 2 about here]

Why do parties seem so similar? There are three possible answers to this question depending on the approach that one adopts. For the ‘systemic’ approach, parties seem similar because they are similar and they are increasingly similar because of increasing objective similarities. For the ‘systemic-subjective’ parties seem similar because they are perceived as such and this perceived similarity reflects objective changes, such as the centripetal convergence. The third answer is that parties seem similar because the position of parties and the whole party system are perceived to have changed relative to the position of the electorate.

---

<sup>19</sup> This solution is obviously far from being a perfect one. As Ingrid van Biezen sharply suggested to me, differences between age groups might be a product of socialization or political learning.

<sup>20</sup> Respondents were divided into three age groups: voters reporting to be under 30 years of age were assigned to the “young” category, voters reporting to be over 61 years of age were assigned to the category “old”, while all the voters in the 31-60 age groups were assigned to the category “middle age”.

### *Differences, Space, Distances*

The spatial representation of political differences provides an almost hegemonic analytical framework to both understand and explain party politics. Why is the spatial representation so important in the study of party politics? Because knowing where a party stands means knowing what it stands for and whether that is (morally) good or bad<sup>21</sup>. Therefore, knowing a party's location on the left-right space provides not only cognitive guidance, but it also provides electoral guidance<sup>22</sup>. Voters placed left-to-center are more likely to vote for parties that are perceived to be located left-to-center than right-wing voters and, conversely self-reported right-wingers are more likely to vote for right-wing parties than self-reported left-wing voters. In a similar vein Huber and Inglehart underlined that “the language of ‘left’ and ‘right’ captures a variety of salient issues that help citizens and elites alike make sense of the political landscape”. Meanwhile Dalton suggested that the spatial location is a sort of super issue, a synthetic indication of all that a voter or a party located in a certain place stands for<sup>23</sup>. In addition to these cognitive virtues, the spatial representation of politics has an additional advantage which is that it is highly comparable across countries because the terms “left” and “right” are empty signifiers, and they do not reflect (and obviously are not attached to) a specific essence<sup>24</sup>.

---

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of this point, see Norberto Bobbio, *Destra e Sinistra. Ragioni e significati di una distinzione politica*, Roma, Donzelli, 1994.

<sup>22</sup> For a different opinion, see Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems. A Framework for Analysis*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 335.

<sup>23</sup> For an assessment of the importance of the spatial metaphor, see also John Huber and Ronald Inglehart, “Expert Interpretations of Party Space and Party Locations in 42 Societies”, *Party Politics*, vol. 1, n. 1, 1995, pp. 111-; see also Russell J. Dalton, *Citizens Politics. Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Western Democracies*, Chatham, Chatham House Publishers, 1996.

<sup>24</sup> The idea that the terms “left” and “right” are empty signifiers, that they are labels that can be “easily “loaded” and “reloaded”- for they lack any semantic substratum” was advanced by Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, op. cit., pp. 334-336. For a more recent criticism of an essentialist definition of the terms “left” and “right”, see Marco Tarchi, “Destra e sinistra: due essenze introvabili”, in *Democrazia e Diritto*, XXXIV, 1, 1994, pp. 381-396. The fact that ‘left’ and ‘right’ are empty signifiers does not contradict the fact that the spatial



[Table 3 about here]

If the percentage of voters who place themselves on the Left-Right continuum is, as Sani and Sartori suggested a proof of the intelligibility of the spatial representation of the political competition, then a majority of West European voters do understand the terms “Left” and “Right”<sup>25</sup>. The data presented in Table 3 show that from two thirds, as in the Italian case, to four fifths, as in the Dutch and British cases, are able to place themselves on the Left-Right scale and, according to Sani and Sartori, understand the meaning of this spatial representation.

#### *Are Voters' Positions Fixed over Time?*

The data discussed so far suggest that voters place themselves on the Left-Right scale and that they actually understand the meaning of doing so, we can push our analysis a little bit further and ask whether voters' distribution along the left-right continuum is stable over time or not and, if not, how did it change.

Before addressing these questions, let me briefly explain how I will measure voters' positions on the left-right scale, whether their positions are fixed over time or whether they change. Both Eurobarometer surveys as well as German and Dutch elections surveys asked respondents to place themselves along the left-right scale. The left-right scale adopted by both the Eurobarometer and the Dutch Election surveys is a ten-point scale, where value 1 means 'left' and value '10' means 'right'. The German election studies adopted instead an eleven-

---

location is a sort of super-issue. The 'left' and 'right' terms are empty signifiers diachronically and cross-country, while the spatial location is a super-issue synchronically. That is terms 'left' and 'right' are *per sé* unable to tell us what they stand for *sub specie aeternitatis*, but they provide an indication of what a party stands for in a certain country at a certain time.

<sup>25</sup> Giacomo Sani and Giovanni Sartori, “Frammentazione, Polarizzazione e Cleavages: Democrazie Facili e Difficili”, *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, vol. VIII, n. 3, Dicembre 1978, pp. 339-361. A revised version of this paper can be found in Giovanni Sartori, *Teoria dei Partiti e Caso Italiano*, Milano, SugarCo, 1982, pp. 253-290. An English version of this paper, see Giacomo Sani and Giovanni Sartori, “Polarisation, Fragmentation and Competition in Western Democracies” in Hans Daalder and Peter Mair (eds.), *Western European Party Systems*, London, SAGE, 1983, pp. 307-340.

point scale, so that while 'left' is still associated with the value 1 in the scale, the term 'right' is now associated with value 11. On the basis of voters' self-placement on the scale, I compute the mean or the average voter position, which I adopt as the indicator of where the electorate is located and shifts from that initial value provides evidence as to whether and to what extent the voters' position changes over time. Specifically, an increase in the value of the average voter's position means that electorate is reportedly moving right-ward, while a decline in the value of the average voter's position denotes that the electorate is shifting left-ward.

With regard to the first question, the data show that voters' self-reported distribution on the Left-Right continuum has changed from the early 1970s to the year 2000 in each of the West European countries under study. By analyzing the data provided by the Eurobarometer surveys from 1973 to year 2000, three patterns can be observed. In France and in the Netherlands, after an initial shift to the right, the position of the average voter has moved left-ward in the period under study. In Germany and in the United Kingdom, the position of the average voter has moved left-ward as an almost linear function of time. In Italy, the position of the average voter has followed a steady right-ward trend. These transformations present a second element of interest. The Italian electorate, that was more left-ward oriented than the French, the German, the Dutch and British electorate in the early 1970s, is now the most right-ward oriented. The data are presented in Table 4.

[Table 4 about here]

If instead of using the data provided by the Eurobarometer surveys, I use the German Election Survey data and the Dutch Election Survey data, I reach the same conclusion, that is

that the electorate, in this case of these two countries only, reports to have shifted to left. The data are presented in Table 5.

[Table 5 about here]

*Are Parties' Positions Fixed over Time?*

As was previously noted more than 23 % of British voters, more than 42% of the German voters and more than 54% of the French voters say that parties are not different. Does this mean that the distance between all the parties in a given party system has vanished? Does this mean that the distance between the relevant parties has vanished? Or does it mean something else? In order to answer these questions I will analyze two sets of survey data. One set of data is represented by the Post-European Election survey conducted in 1989 and in 1994 which provides data with regard to voters' placement of French, German, Italian, Dutch and British parties. In addition to these data, I will also employ the data made available by the German election surveys conducted between 1976 and 1998 and the Dutch election surveys conducted from 1981 to 1997. These data allow me to construct time series and to see whether and to what extent voters' perception of parties positions has changed over time and, more importantly, to assess whether these changes in party location have followed any particular pattern.

The Eurobarometer surveys on the one hand and the German and the Dutch election surveys on the other hand asked respondents to locate parties on the left-right scales. The scales are the same as the ones employed for voters' left-right self-placement. On the basis of respondents' answers, I compute each party system party's position. This position is calculated by estimating the mean location for each party on the basis of all voters' answers. As in the case of voters' self-placement, the smaller the mean score that a party receives, the

more left the party is perceived to be. The greater the mean score, the more right-wing the party is perceived to be. Those parties that obtain the smallest and highest score are the parties that are perceived to represent the party system poles. By subtracting the score of the left-most party from that of the right-most party, I compute the polarization of the whole party system. In the same way, it is possible to calculate the polarization of the relevant parties, that is parties whose existence affects the dynamics of inter-party competition and government formation.

In addition to testing whether the ideological polarization of the whole party system and the distance between relevant parties have changed over time, I also test whether the Social-Democratic and Moderately Conservative parties have moved centripetally as Kitschelt suggested or not. Finally I test whether the average party's position has changed and if so how. The average party's position is very important because it indicates where the center of the party system is perceived to be so that changes in the average party's position indicate whether and how the ideological connotation of the whole party system changes over time. Changes in the position of the average party provide information as to the changes in the direction of competition.

Let me address the first question, that is whether the distance between all the party system parties has vanished. The answer is negative. Voters do locate different parties on different points on the left-right continuum. Moreover, if the distance between the parties located at the extreme poles of the party system is, as Sartori suggested, a proper indicator of polarization, then the Eurobarometer data display two different patterns. In the United Kingdom and in Germany, polarization of the whole party system has declined, while it has increased in France, Italy and in the Netherlands. The national election surveys present a

slightly different picture. In fact, the German Survey Election data indicate that the overall polarization of the German party system has increased from the mid-seventies onward, while the Dutch Election Surveys indicate that the Dutch party system has depolarized in the 1981-1998 period.

The fact that parties are still seen as different, which is why they are located on different points of the scale, is not consistent with the criticism of parties' increasing similarity. Moreover, the fact that in three of the five countries under study (according to the Eurobarometer) the differences between all parties are perceived to actually have increased is also inconsistent with the claim that parties are too similar. Looking at these findings in the light of voters' perception of parties' excessive similarity creates an interesting paradox. How do we explain that parties which are perceived as different are criticized for not being different even when their differences have increased? This dilemma seems to have two plausible solutions. The first is that when voters complain about parties' lack of differences they do not refer to all parties but they refer only to the relevant parties, that is to parties that because of coalitional or blackmail potential can affect both the nature of electoral competition and that of government policies. This solution of the dilemma is also consistent with the questions asked in the British and French national election studies. But there is also an alternative, which is that when voters denounce parties' excessive similarity, they do not refer to changes in the distance between parties but they refer instead to the direction of competition. I will return to this point later on. The data concerning the ideological polarization of Western European party systems are presented in Table 6.

[Table 6 about here]

The first solution of the above mentioned dilemma is clear. Voters criticize parties' excessive similarity because relevant parties, but not necessarily all the party system parties, have become increasingly similar. This would also explain why, in spite of the perception of an increasing distance between the parties located at the extremes, parties are perceived as too similar. In short, when voters criticize "parties" they do not refer to "anti-party-system parties". Moreover, if what voters observe is that the relevant parties are perceived to be increasingly similar, since relevant parties are generally the Social-Democratic and Moderately Conservative parties that alternate in government, then I would be able to support Kitschelt's claim that the distance between Social-Democratic and Moderately Conservative parties has vanished because they both converged centripetally.

Before I can assess whether this is indeed the case, several other questions need to be addressed. In fact, to know whether the distance between Social-Democratic and Moderately Conservative parties has vanished or not, we need to know whether Social-Democratic and Moderately Conservative parties have ever been perceived as different or not. Have they ever been perceived as distant on the left-right scale? Did the distance between the Social Democratic and the Moderately Conservative parties decline as Kitschelt suggested? If inter-party distance indicates that parties are different, then the Eurbarometer data show that Social-Democratic parties and Moderately Conservative parties are (perceived as) different. Moreover, the Eurobarometer data also show that the ideological distance between Social-Democratic parties and Moderately Conservative parties has declined in Germany, in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom, while it has increased in France and in Italy<sup>26</sup>.

---

<sup>26</sup> Only in 3 out of the 5 countries under study, the distance between social-democratic parties and moderately conservative parties has declined, that is in Germany, in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom. Only in the British and in the Dutch case, ideological distance has declined because of a simultaneous centripetal conversion

These findings reproduce the same dilemma we encountered with regard to the differences between all the party system parties, that there are differences and that these differences are sometimes perceived to have increased, and yet that voters perceive that there are no differences between coalitionable parties. Why? Because voters seem to be more concerned with the direction of competition, with whether the ideological make-up of the party system as a whole is shifting left-ward or right-ward than with the location of a single party, or with the distance between two relevant parties. The data are presented in Table 7.

[Table 7 about here]

Let me turn to whether the direction of competition has changed. What has generally been missed by those scholars who analyze party competition is that regardless of whether the distance between Social-Democratic and Moderately Conservative parties has declined or not, Social-Democratic parties have moved to the right almost everywhere. With only the exception of the French Socialist Party, the German, Italian, Dutch and British Social-Democratic parties moved toward the center or rightward. The result of this centripetal or rather right-ward shift of the Social Democratic parties, combined with the fact that the Moderately Conservative parties have either remained in their previous position (as in the case of the German CDU) or have moved further right (as in the Italian case with the emergence Forza Italia which is perceived as a more right-wing oriented party than the DC

---

of both social-democratic and moderately conservative parties. In contrast to this pattern, in Germany the position of the CDU has remained fairly stable relative to the position of the average voter while the distance between the position of the SPD and that of the median voter has declined. This suggests that only two out of the five cases corroborate Kitschelt's argument that the cartelization is due to the centripetal convergence of SD and MC. Furthermore, one should note that while there is some evidence in favor of Kitschelt's systemic-subjective cartel party hypothesis, there is almost no evidence for his explanation of the new extreme right parties. Kitschelt argues that the NRR are a response or rather a reaction against the centripetal convergence of SD and MC which makes the party system under-representative. On the basis of Kitschelt's theory and of the data just analyzed, one should expect a relatively strong new radical right in Germany, the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom, and,

was), is that there has been a clear right-ward shift of each of the party systems under study. The important point to be made here is that voters may perceive a right-ward shift of a party or a party system even if there has not been one<sup>27</sup>.

The perception of the party systems' right-ward shift is what is supported both by the Eurobarometer and, when they were available, by the national election study data. The analysis of the Eurobarometer data shows that voters perceive the average party's position has shifted to the right in France, in Germany, in Italy, in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom. All of these party systems are perceived to have noticeably moved right-ward in a five year time-span. The Eurobarometer data are presented in Table 8.

[Table 8 about here]

The Dutch and the German national survey data allow one to construct time series and to check whether the trends observed with the Eurobarometer data denote a long-term right-ward shift of the West European party system or only a temporary aberration. The Dutch data, which cover the 1981-1998 period, show a clear, though not perfectly linear, right-ward shift of the Dutch party system. Only in 1989 was the average party's position to the left of the value registered in 1981, while in all of the other cases the average party's position has been to the right of the 1981 value. In any case, the situation depicted by the Dutch election survey data is consistent with the picture revealed by the Eurobarometer data, that is that the Dutch party system moved right-ward from the late 1980s onward. Similarly, the picture depicted by the German election survey data shows that after a period of left-ward movement from the

---

conversely a relatively weak extreme right in France and in Italy. Electoral returns in each of these countries have provided very large evidence of the contrary.

<sup>27</sup> In other words, the right-ward shift of a party system may only exist in voters' subjective perception and, henceforth, entirely subjective.



mid-1970s to the early 1980s, the German party system shifted right-ward as suggested by the Eurobarometer data. The Dutch and the German data are presented in Table 9.

[Table 9 about here]

### *The Growing Gap Between Parties and Voters*

The analysis of the voters' self-placement on the left-right scale showed a increasing left-ward shift of the West European electorate, with the only exception represented by the Italian voters who reported increasingly high levels of right-wingism. At the same time, the analysis of parties' placement on the left-right scale showed that voters perceive an increasing right-ward shift of Western European party systems. By combining the two sets of data, I come to three different findings. First of all, I find that the gap between average voter's position and the perceived position of the party system's center has increased almost everywhere, with the exception of the United Kingdom where the distance between the average voter's position and the perceived center of the party system has declined in absolute terms from -.34 to +.09. Second, I find that regardless of whether the perceived distance between parties and voters has increased or not in absolute terms, in each of the countries under study party systems are perceived to have shifted right-ward. In 1989, the Dutch, the German and the Italian average party's position were perceived to be located on the right of the average voter's position, while both the French and the British average party position were perceived to be located on the left of the average voter's position. By 1994, the average party's position was perceived to be on the right side of the average voter's position in each of the countries under study. In other words, the perception of parties' tremendous right-ward movement is responsible, in the voters' eyes, for the greater distance between positions and preferences of the electorate and those of the parties. This is my third finding. Data are reported in Table 10.

[Table 10 about here]

The Dutch and the German election surveys provide additional evidence with regard to the fact that voters perceive that there is an increasing gap between the position of the electorate and the position of the party system. Moreover, if, and to the extent that, a position on the left-right spectrum is indicative of a policy preference, as was previously remarked, then there seems to be an increasing gap between the policy demands of the electorate on the one hand and the policy supply of the party system on the other hand. The data reported in Table 11 suggest in fact that the gap between the center of the party system and the position of the average voter has increased.

[Table 11 about here]

### Part Three: Conclusions and Reflections

The major findings presented in this paper are clear. The analysis of the survey data provides evidence consistent with my subjective cartel party hypothesis. Western European voters perceive that parties have become very similar, and that voters' political demands are left unsatisfied. As I have argued in the course of the paper, the perception of the parties' similarity is justified and/or motivated by the perception of a party system change. However, and in contrast to Kitschelt, I have shown that this change is not the centripetal converge of the Social-Democratic and Moderately Conservative parties, but it is instead the right-ward shift of the whole party system. To repeat my point, voters perceive that the gap between the electorate, its position and its policy preferences on the one hand and the party system, its position and its policy proposals on the other hand has widened.

In this paper I have also provided some evidence as to why there is a widening gap between the position of the party system and the position of the electorate. Specifically, I have

shown that the gap between the average voter position and the party systems' center is widening because of the simultaneous left-ward shift of the electorate and right-ward movement of the party systems. Party systems' right-ward shift was generated by the fact that Social-Democratic parties moved right-ward and the repositioning was not always counter-balanced by an equal left-ward shift of the Moderately Conservative Parties. This provides additional evidence as to why I suggested that it is not entirely appropriate to argue that the perception of the cartel is generated by the centripetal convergence Social-Democratic and Moderately Conservative parties. In Germany the distance between the position of the average voter and the position of respectively CDU, the CSU and of the CDU/CSU has remained roughly the same. By contrast, the distance between the position of the average voter and that of the SPD has diminished by from 2.54 to 1.15. In the Netherlands, both the PvdA and the CDA converged toward the average voter position but the PvdA converged toward the average voter more markedly than the CDA. In fact the distance between the position of the average voter and that of the PvdA has declined by 1.75 from 2.86 in 1981 to just 1.11 in 1998, while the distance between the position of the average voter and that of the CDA diminished by only 1.01 from 1.88 to .087. Data are presented in Table 12.

[Table 12 about here]

The second implication concerns the temporal localization of party cartelization. On the basis of their systemic approach both Katz and Mair and Blyth and Katz argued that parties' cartelization started in the 1970s, with the crisis of the catch-all party model of party organization. Specifically, this is when state contributions became parties' major source of financial resources and when parties abandoned the distributive policies that were characteristic of the catch-all party period. Both studies suggest that parties have further

cartelized in the following decades. In his criticism of Katz and Mair's version of the cartel party hypothesis, Kitschelt argued that there is little evidence in favor of the systemic theory of the cartel, and that the evidence that he finds suggests that while there might have been a systemic cartel or cartelizing tendencies in the 1970s, the cartel and/or the cartelizing tendencies were no longer there in the 1980s and in 1990s. This is the state of the debate if we assume that the systemic approach provides the only analytical framework for the cartel party hypothesis. Yet, as was previously argued, this is not the case.

In fact, on the basis of his systemic-subjective approach, Kitschelt admits that the lack of systemic evidence for the cartel, "does not imply, however, that voters have become more satisfied with the achievements of political parties as their representatives in the contemporary democratic order"<sup>28</sup>. Now, if parties are perceived as under-representative, if under-representation means that voters perceive that their political demands are not satisfied by parties' political offer, that is if political offer varies independently of changes in demand in a market controlled by a relatively small number of actors, and, finally, if this is an indication of cartelization, then all that Kitschelt is saying is that voters might perceive that there is a cartel of parties even when parties are actually trying to be or to become more representative. Kitschelt's point is very similar to the one I made before. For the voters, the 1990s are the age of the cartel party.

Table 1. Percentage of voters who see no difference between parties.

Country	Year	Percentage of voters seeing no Difference between parties
France	1997	54.1
United Kingdom	1997	23.4
Germany	1998	41.6

Source: British data are taken from British Election Survey 1997, German data are taken from Deutsche Nationale Wahlstudien 1998, French data are Taken from ICPSR 3138.

Table 2.1 Trends in the percentage of voters who do not see any difference between parties. United Kingdom, 1983-1997.

Country	Year	Percentage of voters seeing no Difference between parties
United Kingdom	1983	6.3
	1987	4.6
	1992	13.2
	1997	23.4

Source: 1983, 1987, 1992 and 1997 British Election Survey.

Table 2.2 Percentage of voters who do not see any difference between parties by age groups. France and Germany.

	France			Germany		
	%	of	N	%	of	N
Young	56.1		716	46.1		648
Middle Age	54.8		1460	42.3		1689
Old	50.7		759	36.3		818

Source: French data are taken from ICPSR 3138, German data are taken from Deutsche Nationale Wahlstudien 1998.

Table 3. Percentage of Voters who locate themselves on the Left-Right Continuum.

Year	France	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	United Kingdom
1973	78.3	92.9	82.7	92.6	82.3
2000	75.3	74.7	66.3	84.2	83.5
% change	-3.0	-18.2	-16.4	-8.4	+1.2

Source: ICPSR 7330 and ICPSR 3064.

<sup>28</sup>Herbert Kitschelt, "Citizens, politicians, and party cartelization: Political representation and the state failure in post industrial democracies", *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 37, 2000, p. 175.

Table 4. Changes in the position of the average voter from 1973-2000 in selected countries.

Year	France	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	UK
1973	5.05	5.63	4.68	5.80	5.37
1976	4.98	5.90	4.62	5.96	6.12
1977	4.87	6.02	4.24	5.72	5.85
1978	4.67	5.93	4.32	5.37	5.62
1979	4.71	5.85	4.32	5.54	5.75
1980	5.00	5.67	4.74	4.94	5.73
1981	4.79	5.91	4.50	6.02	5.59
1982	5.04	5.50	4.63	5.48	5.84
1983	5.10	5.60	4.65	5.18	5.64
1984	4.99	5.25	4.58	5.39	5.67
1985	5.40	5.50	4.65	5.24	5.92
1986	5.18	5.52	4.70	5.34	5.60
1987	5.00	5.32	4.66	5.38	5.80
1988	4.89	5.59	4.80	5.32	5.77
1989	5.10	5.34	4.49	5.25	5.75
1990	4.94	5.50	4.65	5.28	5.42
1991	4.81	5.60	4.80	5.39	5.56
1992	4.96	5.43	4.66	5.38	5.46
1993	4.91	5.56	4.75	5.34	5.35
1994	5.00	5.16	4.69	5.32	5.37
1995	4.94	5.35	5.02	5.14	5.21
1996	4.71	5.02	5.03	4.92	5.07
1997	4.80	5.15	5.45	5.14	5.21
1998	4.75	5.12	5.20	4.99	5.21
1999	4.67	4.93	5.27	5.14	5.12
2000	4.82	5.18	5.37	5.25	5.20

Source: Data are taken from the following surveys: ICPSR 7330, ICPSR 7511, ICPSR 7612, ICPSR 7728, ICPSR 7728, ICPSR 7957, ICPSR 9022, ICPSR 9057, ICPSR 8234, ICPSR 8364, ICPSR 8513, ICPSR 8680, ICPSR 9082, ICPSR 9321, ICPSR 9360, ICPSR 9576, ICPSR 9771, ICPSR 6044, ICPSR 6045, ICPSR 6195, ICPSR 3014, ICPSR 661, ICPSR 2443, ICPSR 2088, ICPSR 2831, ICPSR 2864, ICPSR 3064.

Table 5. National Survey Data: the changing position of the German and Dutch average voters.

Year	German median	Year	Dutch median
	Voter's position		Voter's position
1976	6.29	1981	5.75
1980	6.31	1982	5.60
1983	6.19	1986	5.51
1987	6.24	1989	5.42
1990	6.08	1994	5.41

1998	5.25	1998	5.36
------	------	------	------

Source: 1976, 1980, 1983, 1987, 1990 and 1998 Deutsche Nationale Wahlstudien; the Dutch data for the 1981, 1982, 1986, 1989, 1994 and 1998 elections were taken respectively from the following ICPSR surveys 7912, 8121, 8876, 9950, 6740 and 2836.

Table 6a. Changes in Polarization, 1989-1994.

Country	Polarization in 1989	Polarization in 1994	Change
France	7.32	7.42	+1.10
Germany	5.90	5.53	-.37
Italy	6.60	6.93	+.33
The Netherlands	5.20	5.67	+.47
United Kingdom	4.93	3.91	-1.02

Source: The 1989 data are taken from the ICPSR 9360, 1994 data were taken from ICPSR 3014.

Table 6b. Ideological Polarization in Germany and the Netherlands. Time Series.

Year	Polarization of the German Party System	Year	Polarization of the Dutch Party System
1976	5.00	1981	6.39
1980	4.51	1982	6.64
1983	5.43	1986	6.28
1987	6.15	1989	5.82
1990	6.45	1994	5.49
1998	6.98	1998	5.45

Table 7. Changes in the Distance between Social Democratic and Moderately Conservative Parties, 1989-1994.

Country	Distance in 1989	Distance in 1994	Change
France	4.43	4.83	+.40
Germany	3.28	2.83	-.45
Italy	4.46	5.09	+.63
The Netherlands	3.44	3.29	-.15
United Kingdom	4.93	3.91	-1.02

Source: The 1989 data are taken from ICPSR 9360, the 1994 data were taken from ICPSR 3014.

Table 8. Changes in the Position of the Party System's Center, 1989-1994.

Country	Position in 1989	Position in 1994	Change
France	4.91	5.27	+.36
Germany	5.65	5.98	+.33
Italy	4.87	5.13	+.26
The Netherlands	5.64	6.04	+.40
United Kingdom	5.41	5.46	+.05

Source: The 1989 data are taken from ICPSR 9360, the 1994 data were taken from ICPSR 3014.

Table 9. Location of the Party System's Center in Germany (1976-1998) and the Netherlands (1981-1998).

<b>Germany</b>		<b>The Netherlands</b>	
Year	Position of the Average Party Position	Year	Position of the Average Party Position
1976	6.69	1981	5.13
1980	6.27	1982	5.81
1983	6.45	1986	5.56
1987	6.26	1989	5.04
1990	6.74	1994	6.18
1998	6.63	1998	5.84

Source: Source: 1976, 1980, 1983, 1987, 1990 and 1998 Deutsche Nationale Wahlstudien; the Dutch data for the 1981, 1982, 1986, 1989, 1994 and 1998 elections were taken respectively from the following ICPSR surveys 7912, 8121, 8876, 9950, 6740 and 2836.

Table 10. Changes in the Distance between the Position of the Average Voter and the Position of the Average Party, 1989-1994.

Country	Distance in 1989	Distance in 1994
France	-.19	+.27
Germany	+.31	+.82
Italy	+.38	+.44
The Netherlands	+.40	+.72
United Kingdom	-.34	+.09

Source: The 1989 data are taken from ICPSR 9360, the 1994 data were taken from ICPSR 3014.

Table 11. Changes in the Distance between the Position of the Average voter and the Location of the Party System's Center in Germany (1976-1998) and the Netherlands (1981-1998).

<b>Germany</b>		<b>The Netherlands</b>	
Year	Distance	Year	Distance
1976	+.40	1981	-.62
1980	-.04	1982	+.21
1983	+.26	1986	+.05
1987	+.02	1989	-.38
1990	+.66	1994	+.77
1998	+1.38	1998	+.48

Source: 1976, 1980, 1983, 1987, 1990 and 1998 Deutsche Nationale Wahlstudien; the Dutch data for the 1981, 1982, 1986, 1989, 1994 And 1998 elections were taken respectively from the following ICPSR surveys 7912, 8121, 8876, 9950, 6740 and 2836.



Table 12. Perceived Centripetal Convergence of Social-Democratic and Moderately Conservative Parties.

a) The Netherlands

Year	Pvda	Average voter	Cda	Distance between Pvda and Average voter	Distance between CDA and Average voter
1981	2.89	5.75	7.63	2.86	1.88
1982	2.98	5.60	7.57	2.62	1.97
1986	2.66	5.51	7.61	2.85	2.10
1989	3.10	5.42	7.02	2.32	1.60
1994	3.72	5.41	6.45	1.69	1.04
1998	4.25	5.36	6.23	1.11	.87

b) Germany

Year	SPD	Average voter	CDU	CSU	CDU/CSU	Distance between the SPD and Average voter	Distance between CDU and Average voter	Distance between CSU and Average voter	Distance between CDU/CSU and Average voter
1976	3.75	6.29	8.35	9.15	8.75	2.54	2.06	2.86	2.46
1980	4.31	6.31	8.22	9.01	8.62	2.00	1.91	2.70	2.31
1983	4.21	6.19	8.46	9.17	8.82	1.98	2.27	2.98	2.63
1987	3.98	6.24	8.43	9.13	8.78	2.26	2.19	2.89	2.54
1990	4.14	6.08	8.12	8.88	8.50	1.94	2.04	2.80	2.42
1998	4.10	5.25	7.32	8.16	7.74	1.15	2.07	2.91	2.49

Source: Source: Source: 1976, 1980, 1983, 1987, 1990 and 1998 Deutsche Nationale Wahlstudien; the Dutch data for the 1981, 1982, 1986, 1989, 1994 And 1998 elections were taken respectively from the following ICPSR surveys 7912, 8121, 8876, 9950, 6740 and 2836.