

The European Mainstream and the Populist Radical Right

EUROPA REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES



Edited by
Pontus Odmalm
and Eve Hepburn

Populist politics isn't the sole preserve of the radical right parties. Conventional politicians have been getting in on the act for years. This fascinating book shows how and why – and reminds us that the comforting distinction between 'niche' and 'mainstream' is far more blurred than many of us assume.

Tim Bale, *Professor of Politics, Queen Mary University of London*

This book skilfully unravels the strategic interactions between mainstream and populist radical right parties. Through a series of comparative and case studies, it demonstrates that mainstream parties across Europe have greatly varied in their responses to multiculturalism, thereby facilitating or blocking the growth of the populist radical right. Thus, the book dispels the opposing myths of contagion from the right on immigration and integration issues, on the one hand, and the existence of a multicultural consensus, on the other.

Sarah de Lange, *Professor of Political Science, University of Amsterdam*

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The European Mainstream and the Populist Radical Right

Are populist radical right (PRR) parties the only alternatives for voters seeking restrictive and assimilationist outcomes? Or is a mainstream choice available? Popular opinion and social media commentaries often criticise mainstream parties for facing in the same liberal and multicultural direction. The literature on parties and elections equally suggests a convergence of policy positions and the disappearance of any significant differences between parties. This edited volume is an attempt to challenge such perceptions and conclusions. By systematically coding manifestos for 17 mainstream and six PRR parties in Western Europe, the book explores positional differences between mainstream and niche contenders over three key elections between 2002 and 2015. The findings indicate more choice than initially expected, but these restrictive and assimilationist options are usually in close proximity to each other and typically less intense than those of the PRR. This can help to explain the continuous growth of the PRR despite the presence of a mainstream alternative. Yet party system dynamics also matter. Contributing authors thus investigate a number of arguments in the precarious relationship between mainstream parties, the electorate and the PRR.

Pontus Odmalm is Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Edinburgh. Particular research interests include party politics of migration (broadly understood), party competition and the changing nature of political conflict in comparative perspective. He has published a number of articles and books on these topics. His more recent book, *The Party Politics of the EU and Immigration*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2014.

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The European Mainstream and the Populist Radical Right

Edited by Pontus Odman and Eve Hepburn

The European Mainstream and the Populist Radical Right

**Edited by
Pontus Odmalm and Eve Hepburn**

First published 2017
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-1-85743-831-4 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-31519-975-7 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Taylor & Francis Books

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Acknowledgements

This book would not have been completed without the fantastic work of our research assistants – Claudine Dalinghaus, Eirik Magnus Fuglestad, Heid Jerstad, Iris Marchand, Alexandra Remond, Cristina Sandu and Giorgos Zoukas – who spent the summer of 2015 collecting and translating manifestos for us. We are very grateful for the comments offered by the anonymous reviewer on our book proposal. S/he made several constructive points, which were subsequently incorporated in the final draft. We would also like to thank participants on the ‘Party Politics in Comparative Perspective’ panel at the 23rd International Conference of Europeanists (Resilient Europe?), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 14–16 April 2016, for their insightful comments and suggestions regarding our initial findings. And, finally, a big thank you to Cathy Hartley at Routledge for her encouragement and support throughout the writing process.

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Edinburgh, October 2016

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Abbreviations

CHES	Chapel Hill Expert Survey
CMP	Comparative Manifesto Project
EC	European Community
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
FIS	Finnish Immigration Service
L/M	liberal/multicultural
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MP	Member of Parliament
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRR	Populist radical right
R/A	restrictive/assimilationist
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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1 Mainstream parties, the populist radical right, and the (alleged) lack of a restrictive and assimilationist alternative

Pontus Odmalm and Eve Hepburn

Introduction

The populist radical right (hereafter PRR) is now a semi-permanent presence in several West European parliaments (Mudde, 2013, 2010; Rydgren, 2008). The parties belonging to this ‘new’ family have a multitude of origins but also share some important characteristics (Zaslove, 2009; Kitschelt, 2007; Minkenberg, 2000). Some started out as anti-authority and anti-red tape parties (Taggart, 1995) only to adopt increasingly authoritarian and conservative positions in recent years (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005; Kitschelt and McGann, 1995). Nationalism, welfare state chauvinism, and promises of a draconian approach to the immigration ‘issue’ have thus moved up on the parties’ electoral agendas. Yet elsewhere immigration and integration have constituted prolonged features of their election campaigns and party identities (De Lange and Art, 2011; Karamanidou, 2014; Goodliffe, 2012). As Table 1.1 shows, the PRR has been a feature of European parliaments since the mid-1950s. Austria and Norway are distinct outliers in this respect, there having been such a significant presence for more than forty years, whereas in Sweden, PRR-type parties have been largely absent, notably at the national level. One can also observe a clustering of cases. On the one hand, the PRR increased – and largely consolidated – its share of the vote in several countries. On the other hand, it has also experienced several electoral ‘dips’, particularly in Italy, the Netherlands and Norway.

The PRR has thus moved away from the niche position and entered the political mainstream, not least if ‘mainstream’ is measured by electoral support and seats in parliament rather than by ideological orientation, issues raised or solutions proposed. The literature points to a combination of supply-and-demand factors which has facilitated this transition while also contributing to the state of flux (Mair, 1989) many West European party systems are said be in. Mudde (2004) stresses the role of the PRR as demagogues and opportunists, which very much taps into prevailing dissonances between elite ‘aims’ and electoral ‘wants’. This gap, whether perceived or real, as well as voters’ increased dissatisfaction with the way in which their country is run, highlight the ‘populist’ aspect of these parties, and how the only ‘common sense’ option lies with the PRR contender (Zaslove, 2004).

Table 1.1 Results for the PRR, 1956–2015 (%); elections at the national/federal/presidential level

	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	E12	E13	E14	E15	E16	E17
Austria (1956–2013)	7	8	7	5	6	6	6	5	10	17	23	22	27	10	11	18	21
Freedom Party of Austria																	
Belgium (1981–2014)				1	1	2	7	8	10	12	12	8	10	12	12	8	4
Flemish Interest																	
Belgium (2003–14)														3	19	17	20
New Flemish Alliance																	
Britain (2005–15)															2	3	13
United Kingdom Independence Party																	
Denmark (1998–2015)												7	12	13	14	12	21
Danish People's Party																	
Finland (1999–2015)													1	2	4	19	18
Finns Party																	
France (1988–2012)														14	15	17	18
National Front																	
Italy (1992–2013)											9	8	10	4	4	8	4
Lega Nord																	
Greece (1996–2012)														0.1	0.3	7	7
Golden Dawn																	
The Netherlands (2006–12)															6	16	10
Party for Freedom																	
Norway (1973–2013)																	
Progress Party																	
Switzerland (1971–2011)																	
Swiss People's Party																	
Sweden (1988–2014)																	
Sweden Democrats																	
									0	0.1	0.3	0.4	1	3	6	13	

Note: E = election.

Yet Betz (1993, see also Evans, 2005) suggests that the PRR's success also connects to a 'politics of resentment', which has become increasingly consolidated across Europe. Mainstream parties, the argument runs, have effectively lost touch with 'the man on the street' and they have not responded sufficiently – or even quickly enough – to the concerns expressed by a 'forgotten working class' (see further Grabow and Hartleb, 2014; Oesch, 2008). The PRR's 'radical' tag, and its tendency to offer solutions traditionally associated with parties to the mainstream right, further highlight the metamorphosis that these parties have gone through. Several authors note that growing – and increasingly diversified – levels of migration have contributed to the (re)emergence of chauvinist sentiments regarding legitimate access to the welfare state, to the national labour market, and to the benefits associated with being a citizen (see e.g. Mudde, 2007; Minkenberg, 2000). Yet a key feature of contemporary PRR parties is that they often portray themselves as the only viable choice for those voters wishing for a significant reduction in numbers or even a complete halt to the arrival of certain migrant categories (see e.g. Akkermans, 2015; Helbling, 2014; Zúquete, 2008). Furthermore, they profile themselves as the sole actor to emphasise assimilation and reject (most) multicultural policies (Koopmans and Muis, 2009; Zaslove, 2008). Elsewhere, van der Brug *et al.*, (2005) suggest that such socio-structural and protest vote explanations to have limited explanatory power as their findings highlight prevailing opportunity structures to be better predictors for the success of PRR-type parties.

Yet the above explanations also downplay the role that mainstream parties play in this process, and, in particular, whether the lack of a restrictive and assimilationist (hereafter R/A) alternative can satisfactorily account for the PRR's upward trajectory in recent years. Although some studies find that mainstream parties are less polarised than they perhaps used to be (see e.g. Bucken-Knapp *et al.*, 2014; Super, 2014; Widfeldt, 2014; Schmidtke, 2014), this directional consensus is also under increased pressure from the PRR and a more volatile electorate. As such, mainstream parties are subjected to various prompts to accommodate the niche position and the restrictive views of the electorate (Art, 2011, Givens, 2005, Ignazi, 1996). Such pressures point to the fact that conventional narratives may no longer be entirely accurate and they therefore might warrant a more detailed investigation (see further Lahav and Guiraudon, 2006; Perlmutter, 1996).

This edited volume thus empirically addresses the significance of mainstream party positioning in affecting the success of the PRR. More specifically, it seeks to challenge those conclusions which suggest that the PRR option is, in fact, the only alternative for voters whose preferences fall in the reductionist and/or assimilationist spheres. The book utilises, but also expands upon, Meguid's (2005) framework for depicting mainstream party responses to niche challengers (see also Bale *et al.*, 2010). Meguid argued that one of three strategies can be used to counter the electoral success of the PRR, namely accommodative, dismissive, or adversarial approaches.

We have applied these approaches in order to further probe relationships between mainstream and PRR parties. But we have also moved beyond Meguid's influential framework. We not only consider how the mainstream responds to PRR-type challengers but also how they respond to each other. That is, we wish to discover degrees of mainstream convergence compared to those stances taken up by the PRR. And how might this consensus – or dissensus – either advance or impede the PRR's electoral success? We believe that Meguid may have been too deterministic regarding the potential responses that mainstream parties can make. We have therefore made a two-fold exploration. The first addresses the way in which mainstream parties have negotiated the strategic choices made available to them in the face of an increasingly successful – and anti-immigration – challenger. We then investigate the broader party system dynamics. It could well be that parts of the mainstream take up certain positions in response to their 'normal' competitors rather than them being instinctive reactions to the electoral threat posed by the PRR (Green-Pedersen and Odmalm, 2008). This more comprehensive focus allows us to challenge traditional explanations in the field, namely that ideological – rather than positional – convergence is key for explaining the PRR's success (see e.g. Arzheimer and Carter, 2006).

Given that our aim is to assess the degree of choice offered by the parties, a key source of data is their respective manifestos. Basing the analysis on what is largely a blueprint for parties' campaign priorities has enabled us to identify the differences in intended outcomes that these actors had in mind. The book then considers whether any changes in support for the PRR are also reflected in the positions that mainstream parties adopted from one election to the next. As such, our intention is to map cases where the PRR has been particularly successful, and then to track any positional changes that the political mainstream has effected over time. These stances have been systemically coded in order to initially establish the aggregate stances parties hold. They are then broken down to identify positional differences among three key sources of newcomers – namely labour migrants, asylum seekers, and family reunification migrants – as well as among parties' preferred mode of integration (multicultural or assimilationist). This subsequently allows us to assess how much (or how little) choice was offered to the electorate.

Based on the above literature, then, we initially made three predictions. First, in those cases where support for the PRR has increased or consolidated over time, the data should reveal a congregation of liberal/multicultural positions (hereafter L/M). In other words, mainstream parties are assumed to have taken up 'adversarial' positions in response to the niche contender's success. Conversely, when there are signs of declining support, a second expectation is that mainstream parties have changed positions in the R/A direction in order to remedy this electoral 'theft' (Van Spanje, 2010; Adams and Somer-Topcu, 2009; Budge, 1994). Such an outcome would thus constitute an 'accommodative' strategy according to Meguid's framework. A third scenario is that the mainstream has not addressed the immigration issue

at all, which consequently would be a ‘dismissive’ strategy. However, given the extent of public concern about immigration and integration ‘failures’, we assumed this to be an unlikely response. But should the data not support these premises (that is, adversarial, accommodative, or dismissive strategies) then the results needed further probing. We therefore asked contributing authors to pay special attention to whether any positional congruence – or divergence – can on their own provide enough evidence to explain variations in the PRR’s electoral fortunes (see further van der Brug *et al.*, 2005; Arzheimer and Carter, 2006; Kitschelt and McGann, 1995).

Whether a choice matters or not has troubled political scientists for quite some time now. And this has become particularly relevant to address if party competition has moved into the realms of valence contestation (see e.g. Odmalm and Bale, 2015, Clark, 2009; Green, 2007; Bale, 2006; Stokes, 1963). But if so, then it arguably suggests how merely offering a choice might not always be enough. Competing parties might also need to convince voters that their ‘choice’ is better than that offered by their opponent/s, and equally they may need to evidence some form of track record of handling the issue/s at stake. The political mainstream could also suffer from a lack of trust regarding the way in which they managed the migratory flows and/or dealt with issues relating to socio-economic and cultural integration.

However, additional variables are likely to be at play. One relates to the degree of ‘agenda friction’ that exists between parties and the electorate (Schattschneider, 1960, see also Hobolt *et al.*, 2008; Jones and Baumgartner, 2005). That is, mainstream priorities may not necessarily correspond to voters’ concerns, which the PRR contender, conversely, is quicker to calibrate and home in on (see e.g. Heinisch, 2010; Lahav and Guiraudon, 2006; Minkenberg, 2001). It could thus be more important that questions relating to immigration actually dominated on parties’ agendas rather than whether they offered an R/A choice (or not). Another aspect concerns the contagion effect (Norris, 2005) that the PRR is said to have. But as immigration and integration have developed into increasingly securitised – and increasingly murky – issues, mainstream parties may hesitate to deviate too far away from their long-standing positions, fearing a further haemorrhaging of votes and a further destabilisation of the party system. A third possibility posits that mainstream parties may also be hesitant to act as ‘issue entrepreneurs’ and who would stress issues previously suffering less prominence or salience (De Vries and Hobolt, 2012).

While our primary objective is to establish the degree – and type – of choice offered and then to assess whether the PRR option is, in fact, the only alternative, it is reasonable to assume that the above considerations and party strategies are also present. The contributors to this volume have therefore been given a degree of flexibility in order to capture some of the more contextual factors that may also help us to explain the outcomes established in Table 1.1. This leads us to three hypotheses which the book seeks to address:

H1: There are no differences between mainstream parties regarding their positions on immigration and integration.

H2: In the event that no mainstream party offers a more R/A position then the chances of success for the PRR increases.

H3: The PRR's success is due to strategic miscalculations made by the political mainstream (i.e. inability to claim issue ownership; degree of agenda friction present; fear of contagion from the right; and/or slow to act as issue entrepreneurs).

Case selection rationale and time frame covered

Table 1.1 also shows that support for the PRR has increased over time and on average PRR parties have received around 10 per cent of the vote since the mid-1950s. Since we aim to study relationships between mainstream parties, the PRR, and the degree of choice present, the universe in which our analysis takes place includes cases where the anti-immigration agenda has become the PRR's most obvious selling point. Although a large portion of existing research suggests that this party family would probably not exist had immigration not been an issue, it also points to an element of intra-family variation. The PRR classification typically ranges from parties with market-libertarian origins to those with a neo-Nazi past (see e.g. Afonso, 2013; Rydgren and Ruth, 2013; Betz and Johnson, 2004; Mudde, 1999). Yet elsewhere party profiles include value-conservatism; regional nationalism/separatism and, increasingly, Euroscepticism as well (see e.g. Kuisma, 2013; Hübinette and Lundström, 2011; Arter, 2010; Skenderovic, 2007). This spread has consequently given rise to some definitional problems in the field (see e.g. Mudde, 1996; Taggart, 1995; Fennema, 1997) and to some case selection 'headaches' since most European party systems currently include actors with some form of reactionary and/or ethno-nationalist agenda. A pattern can nevertheless be observed. The further north – and the further west – one looks, the more important the threat of the foreign 'other' becomes. While PRR parties in Hungary (Jobbik), Spain (España 2000) and Slovakia (SNS), for example, share nationalist and chauvinist sentiments similar to those of their sister parties in Scandinavia, the Benelux countries and France, they usually focus more on the clandestine aspects of immigration. They also tend to place greater emphasis on the threat of disunity stemming from their national minorities than do those in the latter cluster of countries.

There is also the question of maintaining an analytical distinction between 'mainstream' and 'PRR' in order to assess whether a mainstream option has indeed been present. Our definition takes its cue from Ackland and Gibson and establishes a mainstream party to be one that is likely to be a 'dominant force in the formation of government or act as a formal, or supporting, partner in this process' (2013: 235). Such a definition would, however, exclude several of the cases listed in Table 1.2, namely Austria (Fallend, 2004),

Belgium (Deschouwer and Reuchamps, 2013); Denmark (Hansen and Tue Pedersen, 2008), Finland (Raunio, 2015), Italy (Masseti, 2014), the Netherlands (van Kessel, 2011), Norway (Haugsgjerd Allern and Karlsen, 2014), and Switzerland (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005). All of these countries have witnessed the PRR's involvement, either formally or informally, in the formation of government, which thus leaves France, the United Kingdom and Sweden as the last cases standing. We therefore added the following qualifiers to our initial definition. The mainstream party in question should not be classified as radical/extremist/far left/far right elsewhere in the literature (see e.g. Camia and Caramani, 2012, March and Rommerskirchen, 2015; Mudde, 2007). We also consider that a party's mainstream status depends on ideological affiliations with accepted 'Euro-party' families. In particular, we include the following in our definition: members of the European People's Party (representing Christian democratic and conservative-type parties), the Party of European Socialists (representing social democratic-type parties), and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (representing social liberal-type parties), which, taken together, are often seen as the 'pillars' of mainstream ideological thought. The first two families have also been particularly challenged by the electoral success of the PRR, whereas the third constitutes an additional 'check' in respect to H1.

Using ideological criteria to determine whether or not a party is mainstream has allowed us to include Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands as well. But these countries also offer interesting contrasts to our original case selection. The two former countries provide indicative examples of the increasingly blurred edges between 'mainstream' and 'PRR'. The Dansk Folkeparti (DF – Danish People's Party) and Perussuomalaiset (the Finns Party, or PS) should, for example, be placed very much at the heart of the Danish centre-right and the Finnish centre-left families given their recent electoral successes (Rydgren, 2005; Raunio, 2015). The Netherlands is, conversely, an ideal case study due to the large number of PRR parties that have come to challenge the Dutch party system (van Kessel, 2011). The time frame we cover (i.e. the three most recent elections) is partly dependent on practical issues of obtaining the relevant data but also on how many PRR parties witnessed significant shifts in popularity over the past ten to fifteen years. They have largely ceased to be a mere irritant and now constitute a serious threat to the political mainstream. And not just to the centre-right but to the centre-left as well. Moreover, during this period we can see the PRR transforming into a party with an established presence in the national-level parliaments (Mudde, 2013).

Methodology

As we seek to establish whether the mainstream parties offered voters a choice between different societal outcomes, their respective manifestos served as the starting point for this analysis. Invoking party manifestos has a number of

Table 1.2 Case parties and percentage of votes (2002–15)

<i>Country and electoral time frame</i>	<i>Party name or acronym</i>	<i>E1</i>	<i>E2</i>	<i>E3</i>	<i>Party family</i>
United Kingdom, 2005–15					
Conservatives	Conservatives	32	36	37	European People's Party
Labour	Labour	35	29	31	Party of European Socialists
Liberal Democrats	Liberal Democrats	22	23	8	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party
United Kingdom Independence Party	UKIP	2	3	13	PRR
Denmark, 2007–15					
Venstre	Venstre	26	27	20	European People's Party
Socialdemokraterne	Socialdemokraterne	26	25	26	Party of European Socialists
Socialistisk Folkeparti	SF	13	9	4	Party of European Socialists
Dansk Folkeparti	DF	14	12	21	PRR
Finland, 2007–15					
Kansallinen Kokoomus	Kok	22	20	18	European People's Party
Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue	SDP	21	19	17	Party of European Socialists
Suomen Keskusta	Kesk	23	16	21	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party
Perussuomalaiset	Finns Party, or PS	4	19	18	PRR
France, 2002–12					
Parti Socialiste	PS	16	26	29	Party of European Socialists
Union pour un Mouvement Populaire	UMP	33	40	27	European People's Party
Front National	FN	17	10	18	PRR
The Netherlands, 2006–12					
Partij van de Arbeid	PvdA	21	20	25	Party of European Socialists
Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	VVD	15	21	27	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party
Christen-Democratisch Appèl	CDA	27	14	9	European People's Party
Partij voor de Vrijheid	PVV	6	16	10	PRR

<i>Country and electoral time frame</i>	<i>Party name or acronym</i>	<i>E1</i>	<i>E2</i>	<i>E3</i>	<i>Party family</i>
Sweden, 2006–14					
Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti	SAP	35	31	31	Party of European Socialists
Moderata Samlingspartiet	M	26	30	23	European People's Party
Folkpartiet Liberalerna	FP	8	7	5	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party
Sverigedemokraterna	SD	3	6	13	PRR

Note: E = election.

analytical advantages but is also an approach that increasingly has come to divide the political science community. On the one hand, the mere fact that all parties publish some form of electoral platform, which highlights what they want to achieve, how they intend to reach these goals, and why any changes need to be made to the status quo, has made it much easier for cross-national comparisons to be made (Klingemann, 1987). Furthermore, Walgrave and Nuytemanns (2009) point out how manifestos provide a summary of the main priorities that parties will pursue when in government, in a coalition, or when voted into parliament. As such, they provide us with an understanding of the motivating factors behind reform; of issue priorities, and of parties' preferred solution to the identified 'problem'. Others highlight limitations with the use of such data. It is not obvious, perhaps, that manifestos accurately reflect positions as the direction parties face in (see e.g. Pelizzo, 2003). By the same token, Green and Hobolt suggest that manifestos are 'designed to give a *broad* overview of a party's policy platforms' (2008: 466, emphasis added). They may therefore provide a too brief account of the relevant variables to be analytically useful. These objections highlight another problematic when trying to quantify quasi-sentences into units which make investigative sense, as exemplified by the ongoing 'fight' between the two main datasets – the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP), and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) (Budge *et al.*, 2001; Hooghe *et al.*, 2010). The CMP adopts a salience approach and tracks the amount of coverage, 'positive' and 'negative', which is then subtracted from one another to provide a numerical spread from -100 (left) to +100 (right). As such, it is almost inevitable that parties' placements are pushed towards the centrist position. It has been argued that this 'mathematically constrained' approach (Benoit and Laver, 2007: 103) is the main drawback of the CMP since it does not accurately reflect differences, or nuances, between parties. The CHES data, on the other hand, adopt an 'all things considered' approach, asking experts in the field to classify parties on a multiplicity of conflict dimensions. These classifications are based on several sources and manifestos are but one of these. Participating experts include 'speeches ... roll call votes; and information reported in newspapers, television and the Internet' as well (Hooghe *et al.*, 2010: 692) when they make their assessments. This, of course, points to another limitation when using party manifestos as the basis for scholarly research. Parties may well signal certain positions via their manifestos but then deviate from them, and sometimes radically so, once they take up office and/or seats in parliament. However, as we want to establish the degree of choice that parties offer, their respective manifestos have served as useful (and parsimonious) sources for making this assessment. Prior to this, however, we had to construct a measurement tool that would allow us to capture these positions and the level of conflict present.

Pellikaan *et al.* (2003) have proposed a tripartite scoring system which converts the manifesto quasi-sentences into comparable numerical units. Furthermore, this tool focuses on what parties want to achieve rather than on how

much space they devote to particular issue/s. De Lange (2007) later suggested a coding matrix, which centres on statements favouring a particular outcome versus those that favour a different one. More specifically, she references parties' attitudes towards extent of state involvement in the economy. Any statements which 'predominantly indicate that a party [is] in favour of state intervention' (ibid.: 420) receives a score of -1. On the other hand, if they suggest that the party is largely in favour of greater market influence, then a score of +1 is given. And if statements are either unclear or ambiguous, a score of 0 is allocated. In relation to the immigration issue, and bearing in mind the aim of this book, a similar approach was adopted (as exemplified by the extracts from the British and Swedish party manifestos – see below). For the categories of 'labour migration', 'asylum seekers', and 'family reunification', the respective scores are based on statements suggesting a more liberal approach -1 versus those that propose a more restrictive one +1¹:

At a time when we have over 600,000 vacancies in the UK job market, skilled migrants are contributing 10–15 per cent of our economy's overall growth. Our philosophy is simple: if you are ready to work hard and there is work for you to do, then you are welcome here. We need skilled workers. So we will establish a points system for those seeking to migrate here. More skills mean more points and more chance of being allowed to come here. (Labour migration, -1)

(Labour, 2005)

Setting an annual limit on the number of non-EU economic migrants admitted into the UK to live and work; limiting access only to those who will bring the most value to the British economy; and applying transitional controls as a matter of course in the future for all new EU Member States'. (Labour migration, +1)

(Conservatives, 2010)

Swedish salaries and conditions shall apply to everyone working in Sweden. (Labour migration, 0)

(Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti
(SAP – Social Democrats, 2014)

Equally, a multicultural approach to integration has received a score of -1 whereas an assimilationist stance scored +1. And again, if statements were unclear or ambiguous, then a score of 0 was awarded:

Getting employed should happen quickly, we want to strengthen the provision of Swedish as a second language. A personalised establishment contract should be available and it will clearly set up the rights and duties

of refugees. Intolerance and prejudice should be fought, all forms of discrimination are unacceptable. (Integration: more multicultural, -1)
(SAP, 2006)

In addition, we will promote integration into British society, as we believe that everyone coming to this country must be ready to embrace our core values and become a part of their local community. So there will be an English language test for anyone coming here to get married. (Integration: more assimilationist, +1)

(Conservatives, 2010)

To defeat the threats of Islamist terrorism, we must also engage with the personal, cultural and wider factors that turn young people to extremism. The Prevent programme was set up under the last Labour Government to stop young people becoming radicalised. But this Government has cut the funding and narrowed its focus. Much of the work to engage Muslim communities has been lost ... We will overhaul the programme to involve communities in countering extremist propaganda, stopping young people being groomed, and also building resilient institutions for social integration. We applaud those faith communities who have pioneered an inter-faith dialogue for the common good ... Everyone who works with the public in our public services must be able to speak English.' (Integration, 0)

(Labour, 2015)

Approaching the data in this way allowed us to bypass some of the methodological constraints identified elsewhere (see e.g. Dinas and Gemenis, 2010; Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006), while also letting our analysis 'travel' between cases without getting trapped in context. But as with any hand-coded analysis we also had to ensure coding consistency and minimise any subconscious bias during this process (Patton, 2002). We therefore carried out a series of inter-reliability checks to maximise the validity of the scores allocated to each statement. First, our research assistants translated and classified the relevant quasi-sentences into the appropriate categories. Next, the editors made an initial assessment (e.g. 'stricter family reunification policies for those foreigners that are difficult to integrate' (family reunification, +1) (Venstre, Danmarks Liberale Parti – Liberals, 2015), and, finally, the contributing authors were asked to assess their respective cases. Figure 1.1 and Table 1.3 show the results of these calculations. The former illustrates aggregate positions – per party and per election – whereas the latter breaks these positions down according to the four subcategories outlined above.²

Discussion of findings

The manifesto analysis highlights the fact that there are indeed differences among the mainstream parties and among the positions they adopt (H1). Across E1 to E3, we found eleven instances (61 per cent) where party systems included at least one mainstream alternative with an aggregate position pointing in the R/A direction.

In one-half of our cases (Denmark, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom), the R/A choice was present during all three elections. The French mainstream is (moderately) L/M during E1 but then becomes increasingly polarised as the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP – Union for a Popular Movement) makes a clear shift in the opposite direction. The Finnish and Swedish cases, on the other hand, clearly support the ‘lack of choice’ thesis since none of the mainstream parties offer an aggregate R/A option during either election studied. When positions were disaggregated, then the following patterns can be observed. Across E1 to E3, we found a total of 47 instances (23 per cent) when the mainstream communicated R/A stances. Of these 47 instances, parties were more likely to adopt such a position on ‘family reunification’ (31 per cent) than on ‘asylum’ or ‘labour migration’ (17 per cent each). An ‘assimilationist’ stance was, conversely, evident 35 per cent of the time. Contrasting these figures with the frequency of L/M and unclear/ambiguous positions, we get the following results. The identified L/M positions (55; 27 per cent) are slightly higher than the R/A ones, but their internal ranking differ (‘labour migration’ (34 per cent); ‘asylum’ (29 per cent); ‘family reunification’ (2 per cent); and ‘multiculturalism’ (35 per cent). However, it is the number of unclear/ambiguous statements that stand out. For this category, we found 102 such accounts (50 per cent), which are ranked as follows: ‘family reunification’ (35 per cent); ‘asylum’ (25 per cent); ‘labour migration’ (24 per cent); and ‘integration’ (16 per cent). These results can be interpreted thus. On the one hand, the tied position shared by ‘assimilationist’ versus ‘multicultural’ approaches could signal clear alternatives to the electorate. Yet on the other hand, a potentially toxic combination of L/M and unclear/ambiguous positions on ‘labour migration’ and ‘asylum’, coupled with R/A and unclear/ambiguous positions on ‘family reunification’ are likely to be confusing and, possibly, contradictory to voters.

However, looking at Figure 1.1 again, a polarisation of the party systems can also be observed. Although mainstream parties offer R/A alternatives in a majority of our cases, and during most of the elections we studied, their positions are typically in close proximity to each other, or they have tended to fluctuate between elections. The PRR contender, on the other hand, is not only the more intense option (Rabinowitz and MacDonald, 1989) but also constitutes the most consistent alternative. This is clearly the case in Britain where UKIP is placed at the more extreme end of our four-point scale during all three elections. And we found equally intense positions in Denmark and Finland. Although the distance between the DF and Venstre amounts to one

Table 1.3 Breakdown of positions on the immigration issue (2002–15)

	E1			E2			E3					
	Labour	Asylum	Family	Integration	Labour	Asylum	Family	Integration	Labour	Asylum	Family	Integration
	Conservatives	-1	1	0	0	1	-1	0	1	1	0	1
Labour	-1	1	1	1	1	-1	0	1	1	-1	0	0
Liberal Democrats	-1	-1	0	1	1	-1	0	1	-1	0	0	-1
UKIP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Venstre	-1	0	1	1	-1	1	1	1	-1	1	1	0
Socialdemokraterne	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	-1	0	1	0	1
SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	-1	-1	0	0
DF	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Kok	0	0	0	-1	-1	0	0	0	-1	0	0	0
SDP	-1	0	0	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kesk	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	-1	0	0	0	0
Finns Party	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
PS	0	0	0	-1	0	-1	-1	-1	0	0	0	-1
UMP	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1
FN	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
PvdA	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	-1	1	-1	1	0
VVD	-1	0	1	-1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
CDA	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	-1	1	-1
PVV	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1
SAP	0	-1	0	-1	-1	0	0	-1	0	-1	0	-1
M	0	-1	0	0	-1	-1	1	-1	-1	-1	0	-1
FP	0	-1	0	-1	-1	-1	0	-1	-1	-1	0	-1
SD	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Note: E = election.

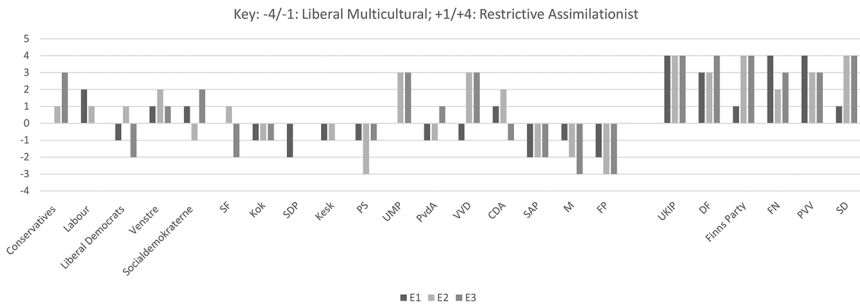


Figure 1.1 Aggregate manifesto positions on the immigration issue (2002–15)
Key -4/-1: L/M; +1/+4: R/A

Table 1.4 Was an aggregate R/A choice offered by one or more mainstream parties? (2002–15)

	<i>E1</i>	<i>E2</i>	<i>E3</i>
Britain	Yes	Yes	Yes
Denmark	Yes	Yes	Yes
Finland	No	No	No
France	No	Yes	Yes
The Netherlands	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sweden	No	No	No

Table 1.5 Subcategories of the immigration issue when an R/A choice was offered by one or more mainstream parties (2002–15)

	<i>E1</i>	<i>E2</i>	<i>E3</i>
Britain	Asylum/Family/ Integration	Labour/Integration	Labour/Family/ Integration
Denmark	Family/Integration	Asylum/Family/ Integration	Asylum/Family/ Integration
Finland	None	None	None
France	None	Labour	Labour/Family/ Integration
The Netherlands	Family/Integration	Asylum/Family/ Integration	All
Sweden	None	Family	None

spatial unit in E2, it is at least two during E1 and E3. By the same token, PS makes a clear turn towards the R/A direction following E1, thus increasing the distance to its mainstream competitors. By comparison, France and the Netherlands are the odd cases out. In the former, the UMP makes a drastic shift (Odmalm and Super, 2014) following E1. But in E2, the party communicates a position that is in fact more R/A than that of the Front National (FN – National Front). In the Netherlands, the distance between the L/M parties – the Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA – Labour Party) and the Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD – People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy) – and the R/A party – the Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV – Party for Freedom) – is at its greatest during E1. And even though Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA – Christian Democratic Appeal) and the PVV share the R/A sphere in this election, the distance between ‘mainstream’ and ‘PRR’ still amounts to three spatial units. In E2, however, the VVD and the CDA move significantly closer to the PVV’s position, whereas in E3, the CDA makes a significant shift away from its mainstream – and PRR – competitors. The PvdA remains in the L/M sphere during E1 and E2 only to then gravitate towards an R/A position in E3. And scores for those parties that are placed exclusively in the L/M sphere are equally close. In Finland and Sweden, the mainstream choice on offer is confined to *degrees* of L/M positioning rather than constituting a clear break from this consensus. The findings raise the possibility that it may not be enough merely to offer different alternatives. The options put forward by the political mainstream also need to be sufficiently clear and distinct from one another to make sense to the electorate.

We also assumed that there was a link between the absence of an R/A choice and the PRR increasing its share of the vote. This hypothesis has only been fully confirmed in the Finnish and Swedish cases (H2). The sustained lack of a mainstream alternative appears to have played in favour of both PS and the Sverigedemokraterna (SD – Sweden Democrats). In both cases, their support increases dramatically – from 4 per cent (E1) to 18 per cent (E3) in Finland (albeit with a minor decrease in E3), and from 3 per cent (E1) to 13 per cent (E3) in Sweden. And even when an R/A option is present, it has not necessarily affected the PRR’s electoral fortunes. In Britain, where this choice is present during all three elections, support for UKIP has consistently gone up from one election to the next. The results for Denmark, France and the Netherlands are mixed and our findings suggest no obvious pattern. All three party systems feature R/A alternatives, yet support for the DF, the FN and the PVV fluctuates between each election. While this variation is not always dramatic (e.g. the 2 per cent decrease for the DF between E1 and E2) its subsequent growth is more astonishing and the DF almost doubles in size between E2 and E3 (from 12 per cent to 21 per cent). On the other hand, the FN’s and the PVV’s upward trajectories makes a clear dip between E1 and E2, and between E2 and E3 respectively..

Table 1.6 Changes to the PRR's share of the vote (2002–15)

	<i>E1</i>	<i>E2</i>	<i>E3</i>
Britain	Up	Up	Up
Denmark	Up	Down	Up
Finland	Up	Up	Down
France	Up	Down	Up
The Netherlands	Up	Up	Down
Sweden	Up	Up	Up

With regard to H3, our case countries returned some interesting findings. The British party system shows convergence as well as divergence of mainstream positions. Yet this process also appears random and somewhat inconsistent. And any differences among the mainstream have often been so slight that they amounted to ‘little more than a cigarette paper between [them]’ (Partos, Chapter 2 in this volume). Partos also finds that these differences remain largely concealed within their respective manifestos, thus escaping detection by an electorate eager to establish variations between the parties. The PRR contender, conversely, is not only clearer but also more decisive in the R/A alternative it offers. Yet the British mainstream also appears to suffer from inertia and is typically slow to respond to voters’ increasingly restrictive mood swings. But even when parties react, particularly Labour and the Conservatives, it has often been accompanied by ‘slogans and gimmick-y schemes, rather than [by any attempt] to resolve the serious issues that immigration may have exacerbated’ (ibid.). This means that the British mainstream has often struggled to come up with consistent – and convincing – narratives which differ substantially from those of the niche challenger. And this struggle is not just limited to the general elections, but was also painfully evident during the British campaign to leave the European Union (EU) (known as Brexit).

With reference to the Danish case, Christansen (Chapter 3 in this volume) highlights particular ‘institutional arrangements’ that affected those inter-party negotiations taking place before and after an election. Danish governments usually comprise minority coalitions, and often have to rely on other parties for support as well as pre-arranged deals to ensure that key legislation is passed. These arrangements not only make the party system more volatile but also provide support parties with significant opportunities to influence policy direction on ‘their’ issues. In order to avoid a political stalemate, Danish governments have often been willing to grant concessions on issues prioritised by their support partner/s, even if these concessions sometimes go against what the government actually wants. These features help us to understand the occasionally strained relationships between the various mainstream parties, on the one hand, and between the political mainstream and the PRR on the other. Although the manifesto analysis shows how a restrictive choice was

offered during all three elections (2007–15), Christansen argues that this outcome was the price governing coalitions were willing to pay in order to get their budget proposals, in particular, accepted. Arguably, this suggests that the restrictive turns witnessed in the Danish case cannot solely be explained with reference to any contagion effect the PRR has had on mainstream parties. Of equal importance, Christansen concludes, is the way in which the mainstream competes and co-operates, especially in a party system characterised by unstable minority governments and constantly shifting allegiances.

Together with neighbouring Sweden, Finland constitutes an outlier in this study. In both cases we see mainstream parties that consistently try to resist moving towards the niche position. Yet Finland is not only a deviant case, it also displays further peculiarities. One of these relates to the mainstream parties themselves. Although all are placed in the L/M sphere, especially in 2007, Kuisma and Nygård (Chapter 4 in this volume) identify how the Finnish mainstream virtually let go of the immigration issue in subsequent elections. Whereas their Swedish counterparts continuously stressed their commitment to an L/M policy agenda, the Finnish mainstream has been remarkably silent on the issue. Instead, their priorities shifted towards areas in need of reform and restructuring following the financial crisis. Yet this inadvertently dismissive strategy effectively provided PS with free range to capitalise on growing anti-immigration sentiments among the electorate. A second feature concerns intra-party dynamics. Kuisma and Nygård argue that PS, and particularly its leader, embarked on an accommodative strategy towards opposition within the party. The outcome was that the (more) anti-immigration wing eventually became sidelined, which, in turn, provided PS with much needed credentials of being a serious and trustworthy alternative. Or as the authors (*ibid.*) conclude '[t]he "party within a party" strategy thus served to radicalise PS but without jeopardising the party's attempts to institutionalise itself'. The party has therefore been able to move into the political mainstream and profile itself as a coalition partner others could work with.

French elections, as Carvalho (Chapter 5 in this volume) notes, have been characterised by some sections of the mainstream, especially the UMP, attempting to co-opt the niche position, whereas those stances adopted by PS have become more adversarial over time. The result of these developments is an increasingly polarised mainstream. These changes are then said to explain electoral outcomes for the latter party, especially the 'disappointing' election of 2007. Yet in 2012 the FN managed to make a remarkable comeback. This feat, Carvalho argues, was due to the FN dropping any 'obvious references to national identity from 2007 onwards and expanded its conception of nationhood', while continuing to hold long-standing anti-immigration positions and being pro-assimilation. This transformation, arguably an attempt to extend the FN's electoral appeal to the mainstream, points to an inter-dependent relationship between the French mainstream and the PRR. The former not only adjusted its strategies, but the latter has also adapted its own in relation to its

mainstream competitors. This was particularly the case when the FN switched rhetoric from *préférence nationale* to a more traditional – possibly more French – discourse emphasising assimilation. Agenda-friction and relative degrees of issue-ownership appear to have played a role in French elections, yet Carvalho also finds that ‘holding office might be an obstacle rather than constituting an opportunity’. In other words, if parties stick to some form of path-dependent strategies and aim to replicate previously successful tactics, this may not necessarily yield the desired outcome. The incumbent not only needs to display competence but rivals also need to be perceived as being less competent. This is a gamble that does not always pay off.

Van Klingeren *et al.* (Chapter 6 in this volume) find that the Dutch mainstream parties have gradually shifted their positions in the R/A direction. Their key finding, that ‘the PRR has played an important role in politicizing immigration and in transforming the way in which immigration has been addressed’, suggests that mainstream parties have largely come to be at the mercy of the PVV. And this partly explains why there has been such a high degree of accommodation in Dutch politics, especially during the last three elections. Although some mainstream parties sharpened their stances on particular sub-categories of the immigration issue, arguably as a strategic move to win back certain segments of the electorate, their R/A positions are still far behind those communicated by the PVV. Although questions concerning immigration and integration have steadily become more important, the mainstream’s restrictive turn does not appear to have affected the outflow of voters to the PRR. Instead, there seems to be an endless cycle of mainstream parties playing catch-up with the PRR, with little or no electoral benefit. In the future, it could therefore be difficult to claim a mainstream status should any positional differences with the PVV be minimal. Or, as the authors suggest, it makes more sense to view the PVV as ‘a more radical version of a mainstream party’. Yet these inter-party dynamics are not the only factors at play. Van Klingeren *et al.* also highlight the remarkably open – and two-dimensional – nature of the Dutch party system when explaining this puzzle. Regarding the former, the threshold for parliamentary representation is so low that it could well be described as non-existent. And in terms of the latter, it suggests that party competition has gradually become more volatile and counter-intuitive. It follows that there are numerous coalition scenarios which might enable parties to actually govern. Furthermore, such coalitions have not necessarily been set up so as to keep the niche contender out.

Finally, in Sweden, the mainstream has converged in the L/M sphere. Similarly to Finland, this has allowed the PRR contender to exploit parts of the electorate seeking an R/A alternative. However, this conclusion is not as straightforward as it initially appears. Swedish voters have been remarkably static in their left-right placements, while the demand for PRR-type parties has remained equally high for the better part of the last 25 years. Yet this demand has not always translated into an electoral breakthrough, since the PRR party in question also needs to have ‘the message, the leadership, and

the organisation to get those potential votes' (Widfeldt, Chapter 7 in this volume). These factors, Widfeldt contends, are key for explaining the remarkable upward trajectory experienced by the SD in recent elections. These traits appear more important than the absence of a mainstream alternative; varying levels of issue ownership, or degrees of agenda friction. However, Widfeldt also finds evidence for how the Swedish mainstream is currently trying to demonstrate its competence, especially in the aftermath of the asylum crisis which hit the country particularly hard during the autumn of 2015.

Conclusion

The overall message emerging from this study points to two interesting conclusions. First, the 'lack of choice' thesis, which is currently a staple narrative across Western Europe, appears exaggerated. This is especially the case should one's analytical focus shift from country-level specifics to comparisons over time and space. A key finding is that mainstream parties have, indeed, offered the electorate a choice on the immigration issue. In other words, most of the main players in contemporary European politics (i.e. conservative and social democratic-type parties) suggested varying degrees of R/A outcomes when they competed for votes. That said, the R/A position is still less likely to be on the agenda than the L/M stance. Yet parties' aggregate stances are often difficult to distinguish from one another and they also tend to be moderately R/A. In the 'real world', then, voters could still perceive positional differences to be minimal at best, and non-existent at worst. But we also identified some positional variation when the immigration issue was broken down further. The political mainstream is more likely to signal a restrictive stance on 'family reunification' than on 'asylum' and 'labour migration'. And the number of times preferences are expressed for assimilationist-type policies is not insignificant but neither is it particularly frequent. This outcome helps us to understand why H2 has only been partially supported. We initially expected voters to gravitate towards the PRR contender should the party system lack an R/A mainstream alternative. Conversely, if an R/A option was offered – or if the political mainstream subsequently adjusted their positions in that direction – then we expected such a stance also to have an effect on the votes cast for the PRR. Yet the evidence does not suggest an obvious link between a restrictive and assimilationist mainstream and the niche contender then performing relatively worse. A plausible explanation for this result is that it might not be enough solely to propose R/A-type policies. Mainstream parties might also need to outdo the PRR in this respect. As such, it suggests that the intensity of positions could be as important as the direction taken by these positions. Or as Rabinowitz and Macdonald highlight, '[b]y taking clear, strong stands, candidates can make an issue central to judgments about themselves' (1989: 98). However, this strategy is likely to be a losing gamble as it also relies on parties being willing (and able) to go down that route. The

British and Dutch cases, for example, hint at such developments being underway. But should mainstream parties sharpen their stances, it could then spark a further sharpening of that of the PRR. Furthermore, the emphasis placed on reducing family reunification could also go against the preferences of parts of the (restrictive) electorate. They may, conversely, be keener to reduce numbers from other categories instead, namely asylum and/or labour migration (particularly of the unskilled variety). This outcome would therefore suggest a degree of mismatch between the wishes of the elite and those of the electorate.

Second, the continuous success of the PRR is not simply a function of whether mainstream parties offer an R/A choice or not. When we cross-checked the presence of an R/A mainstream with the PRR's election results, no immediate pattern stood out. In the British, Danish and Dutch cases, such an alternative was present during all three elections but it did not appear to have had any obvious impact. Instead, it is likely to have legitimatised the niche position, as the steady growth of UKIP would suggest. In Denmark, France and the Netherlands, on the other hand, the pattern is random. The presence of such a choice is of course important when trying to explain relationships between mainstream and PRR parties. But so are the broader competition dynamics of the party system. Mainstream parties typically have to appeal to voters on a whole range of issues. They also need to maintain the voters' trust and ensure effective policy implementation in different ways – and under very different circumstances – compared to what is expected of the PRR. However, for many of the contributors to this volume, the role played by institutions in this relationship has been a unifying theme. Mainstream parties are largely constrained by the rules (formal as well as informal) that govern their respective polities, as well as by the path-dependent outcomes that these institutional arrangements give rise to. Where parts of the mainstream have been hesitant to deviate too far away from well-established coalitions and strategies, many PRR contenders, conversely, appear less constrained and thus more capable of exercising higher degrees of agency. This institutional detachment has therefore allowed them to swiftly adjust tactics and messages in relation to a rapidly changing environment.

Yet despite this common theme, context (still) matters. As some of our authors discuss, there are indeed case-specific reasons that can further help us to disentangle those counter-intuitive findings stemming from H1 and H2. In the British case, for example, Partos references lack of direction to characterise most of the political mainstream, which has then come to pave the way for UKIP. Widfeldt, on the other hand, highlights the SD's ability to learn from the mistakes made by previous PRR parties. Professionalising the party machine and then repackaging the anti-immigration message have thus been (very) important changes in recent years. But it is in the Finnish party politics of migration that one finds characteristics that are not obviously present elsewhere. Kuisma and Nygård's key finding – the 'party within a party' strategy – may well constitute a prototype case-study in the future. That is,

the mainstreaming process of PS is not necessarily the result of the political mainstream having either adopted or legitimised the niche position. Rather, it is the outcome of PS having severed its ties with the more radical wing of the party. However, the Sweden Democrats is likely to be a potential comparator since the party broke away from its youth section in 2015 citing ideological incompatibilities. Yet it may be too early to decide whether this was a calculated strategy or whether it is part of a more general European trend.

Notes

- 1 This scoring system may appear counterintuitive but was chosen to be consistent with De Lange's operationalisation of citizenship/ethnocultural relations ('support for an inclusive and universalistic society (-1)/support for an exclusive and particularistic society (+1)' (2007: 420).
- 2 Please note that words or phrases referred to in chapters 2–7 stem from this coding unless indicated otherwise.

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Mainstream parties, the populist radical right, and the (alleged) lack of a restrictive and assimilationist alternative

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