Umbrellas and rainbows – the early development of party systems in new European democracies

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Abstract

How do party systems develop in the first few elections? Studies on the size of party systems have often kept out recently democratising countries, being exceptional cases without much regularity, instead they speak about party systems in stable democracies.

My interest is to know how they develop before. There are two opposing views about this issue: The *shakedown* view expects that after initial disorder in the party system (hyper-fractionalisation) the number of parties declines gradually before reaching common levels. The *party dispersion* view suggests that after an initial two-bloc competition the number of parties increases.

Empirical studies of the phenomenon have been rare and came to the rather surprising conclusion that the size of a party system is rather stable after authoritarianism is stable (Reich 2004).

For the study of the post-communist transition in Central and Eastern Europe (20 countries), I combine the different approaches, and show that for the very early development, the party dispersion hypotheses is relevant, whereas during the later consolidation of the party system, the shakedown effect works.
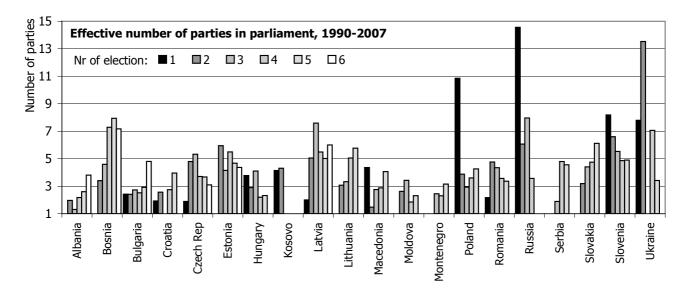
Introduction[1]

Electoral politics, party systems, and institutions in young post-communist democracies have often been described as fluent, volatile, and unstable. Comparative political research on the party systems in Central and Eastern Europe can only seldom account for the differences and the deviations from common expectations about party development, lacked for a long time about a sufficient number of cases to make systematic analysis. Will more recent elections bring about a "normalisation" of the party systems? By 2007, most of the countries experienced a series of four or five competitive elections. This gives new perspectives for comparative research.
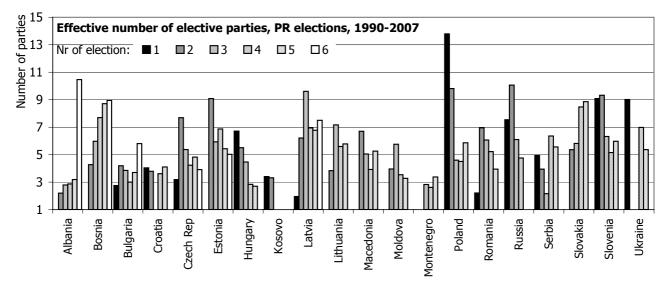
The picture that appears if looking at the development of the number of parties in Central and Eastern Europe looks fuzzy (figures 1-3): In single elections in the 1990s, some party systems (Poland, Russia, Ukraine) counted up to a dozen effective parties in parliament. In recent years, some cases, such as Hungary or Moldova, show a development towards a well-structured two-party system, whereas in many other democracies, the party system is still heavily fractionalised, often with 5 up to 8 effective parties in parliament (elections to the first chamber of the national parliament, cf. figure 1).
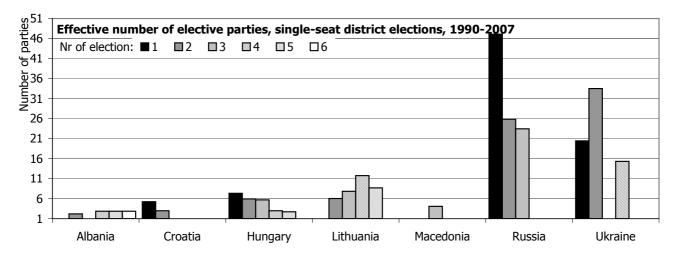
Two aspects are commonly considered when one attempts to explain the number of parties: the electoral systems (Duverger 1951; Taagepera 2007) the number of socio-economic/cultural divides within a society (Lijphart 1999;

Taagepera/Grofman 1981). For the countries under study, these explanatory approaches hardly work (cf. Golder 2002; Moraski/Loewenberg 1999; Birch 2003; Moser 1999).

Figures 1-3: Party fractionalisation in elections in Central and Eastern Europe: The figures show time series for the effective number of parties in parliament (figure 1), and according the vote shares in proportional elections (figure 2) and in the single-seat districts, in countries where such an electoral system (or a mixed system) was applied (figure 3). (Not all data available.)

Apart from the cross-country differences in the graphs presented (which are part of my broader PhD project), the peculiar focus of this paper lies on the differences in time. In many countries, the size of the party system underwent major changes from election to election. The most striking difference that is visible from the graphs occurs often from the first to the second elections.

Certainly, first competitive elections[2] after communist rule were often particular with regards to the electoral system in use. Often, single-seat district systems (inherited from the communist period) were used, either out of tradition, or because the communist parties or successor parties hoped to get better results under this kind of electoral system, and only in view of the second contest, proportional or mixed electoral systems (where one part of the parliament is elected by PR, the other in single-seat districts) were adopted (Dawisha/Deets 2006). One such case was Latvia, where the outcome in terms of the number of parties, as mapped in figure 1, followed very precisely the expectations that are usually related to different types of electoral systems: Two-party competition in single-seat district systems, and fractionalised party systems – here with 5 up to 7 effective parties – under proportional representation (PR). A very similar pattern can be observed in many other cases that did not change the electoral system (or, if they did, not in a way that is might explain such a development): The Czech Republic, Romania, or Serbia[3] are just a few examples. To make the story more complicated, some countries (Poland, Slovenia, Hungary) pull out of this common pattern and provide large multiparty systems already in the first competitive elections.

Apparently, we need to go beyond the explanations of different electoral systems and of the socio-economic structure of a country to explain the development of party systems. In this paper, I shall analyse the empirical puzzle as seen for Central and Eastern Europe employing two schools that make diametrically opposed expectations about the party system development in the early stage of democracies. Scholars of *political transitions* often speak of a party dispersion effect, a continuous increase of the number of parties from election to election until the party system gets its full size (Reich 2004; Howard/Roessler 2006). Models that explain the size of party systems through *electoral systems* let us expect rather the contrary: in the first elections, many parties try their luck, but later, they get more rational, draw on earlier experiences (Dawisha/Deets 2006), what leads to a continuous reduction of the number of parties (Taagepera/Shugart 1989; Cox 1997; Benoit 2001; Reed 2001).

Most of the studies on party formation in countries in transition focus on the type of the actors in transition, the degree of liberalisation that they aim at, and their political stands (Bermeo 1987; Przeworski 1991). Only a few quantitative empirical studies looked at the temporal development of the number of parties in Central and Eastern Europe. Simon (1997: 363) highlighted the impor-

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[2] If I speak about competitive elections, I address elections where democratic change is possible: For this aim, all or almost all the seats in parliament need to be subject to multiparty elections.
[3] If we should count the 2000 elections as the starting point – earlier elections are still missing in my database.

tance of the timing of the first elections for the development of party system fractionalisation, arguing that if elections are held "too late", when the civil forces already pluralized, their character is different.[4] Reich (2004), who studied the development of the number of parties in third wave democracies (countries that got democratised in the latest quarter of the 20th century), came to the conclusion that the number of parties is rather stable, and sometimes just slightly increasing after a democratisation. Olson (1998: 463) pointed – quite to the contrary – on the drastic increase of the number of parties between the first and the second election and came further, in difference to Reich, to the conclusion that the number of parties started to decline since the 1991-93 period. Dawisha and Deets (2006: 713-714) sustain a similar shakedown effect when looking at the effective number of elective parties, although voters and parties learn to act strategically only after the second elections. However both Olson and Dawisha/Deets make their observations without testing them with probabilistic methods or controlling statistically for changes in the electoral systems, what – particularly due to the not so rare changes of electoral systems after the first elections (Dawisha/Deets 2006: 702, 714) – might be desirable.

This paper shall compare the creation of party systems across 20 young democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, and investigate the expected patterns of development, based on a multivariate analysis that takes into account further relevant variables that might otherwise distort the picture (electoral rules, party nationalisation, ethnic fractionalisation, and mode of transition). Instead of employing a monotonic development, as we might expect based on the party dispersion or the shakedown hypotheses, I distinguish two phases of party development: Between the first and the second election, we experience an explosion of the number of parties, which is mostly due to the special character of the first elections with a still prevailing conflict line of the "old regime" forces versus "reformers" (Bielasiack 1997: 33). After a huge number of parties appeared in the second elections, we might expect the shakedown effect, due to the learning and adaptation process of parties and voters to the electoral rules. My study tests these hypotheses, including all the Central and Eastern European post-communist countries, including the Balkan states and European post-Soviet republics (Russia, the Baltic States, Moldova, Ukraine). Belarus is excluded, as a lack of democratisation.

The paper is structured as follows: In a first part, I speak about the different theoretical expectations about the development of party system fractionalisation in young democracies, and about previous studies of this topic. Thereafter, I propose my own model, and I test it with empirical data from Central and Eastern European democracies, before concluding.

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[4] Simon (1997: 363) states a second aspect, the case when civil society pluralized too late, and "consequently, the political force originating in the former socialist state will remain strong for a long time; it will be able to hold its position even after elections and either the democratization process of state institutions will be protracted or will stop". However, many cases that occurred according this path might not be included in my study, because in the case that the authoritarian party stays in power, there might be no transition to democracy, and the study covers the development of party systems in young democracies.

The development of party systems in the view of previous research

Studies on young party systems have looked at aspects such as the party institutionalisation (Mainwaring 1998), the decrease of volatility and stabilisation (Tavits 2005) or the electoral systems impact on party system (Birch 2003; Moser 1999). The research interest of this paper is to highlight a very basic question: how does party competition look like in first competitive elections, and how does it develop over time. Whereas there a broad number of studies investigate party system fractionalisation in consolidated democracies,[5] only rare studies have looked at the development of party systems in their very early stage using this variable.

Broad comparative studies have left out young democracies, because the party system needs first to be consolidated (Taagepera/Shugart 1989), or because the results simply do not correspond with common expectations made for more established party systems (Golder 2002).

Shakedown hypothesis

The logic on which the electoral system school is based might lead us to the expectation of a decreasing number of parties. This relies on what Duverger (1951) called the "psychological effect" of electoral systems: There are many political entrepreneurs and groups that would like to be represented in parliament with their own parties. However, voters want to have an effect of their vote, and this is why they try to vote for candidates or parties that have chances to achieve power, what means that they need to win seats in parliament. Similarly, it makes little sense for politicians to run on a party ticket that is due to fail, because it does not get enough votes. Accordingly, unsuccessful parties which failed to get elected to parliament or which are expected to fail, are abandoned by voters, donors and politicians, what leads to a balance where only successful parties (able to convert their votes into parliamentary seats) are getting elected. However, before such a balance of parties and electoral system is established, it requires what on the level of individual behaviour we would call a *learning process* of voters, party supporters and of the political personal – or phrased on the system level, an *adaptation process* of the party system to the institutional rules.

Such a party system adaptation relies on the experience of political actors: In order to act strategically, they need knowledge about the functioning of the electoral rules and well-founded expectations about the outcome in terms of vote distributions. Without such experience, many political entrepreneurs will try their luck, and voters will not know who of them has real chances to get elected. If there is no pre-existing party system and there are no experiences about the force of political parties, entry is easy, as much as exit is (Rose/Munro 2003: 72). So that the number of parties will be very high, but many parties will disappear quickly, because they do not get represented in parliament. In line with the large number of parties, we expect a large amount of

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[5] Cf. Amorim Neto/Cox 1997; Ordeshook/Shvetsova 1994; Norris 1997; Lijphart 1994; Taagepera 2007.

wasted votes, cast for parties that do not enter the parliament (cf. Bielasiak 2005). Reed (1988: 317) described this as "a situation of high entropy [which] contains the potential for many kinds of change", Ágh (1998: 208) as a "hundred-party system". The electoral (non-)success – caused by the electoral system that lets only the larger among the hundreds of parties to win seats – produces the learning effect among voters and the political personal, and most of the political mini-enterprises vanish, because they have no basis to survive (Duch/Palmer 2002). Every election works thus as a "filter" (Ágh 1998: 208). Due to the electoral filter and the learning process, the number of parties declines (O'Donnell/Schmitter 1986: 58; Dawisha/Deets 2006), until the party system reaches the size where it is in balance (Taagepera/Shugart 1989: 147; Cox 1997). In the shakedown period after the first democratic elections, party systems get more and more concentrated on few main, stable competitors (Reich 2004: 236ff.; Tavits 2005).

> "One of the key challenges in the overall quality of democracy in post-communist states is the consolidation of the party system. This consolidation occurs over time as an emerging process whereby the demand for parties and their supply by political forces reaches equilibrium (Cox 1997). Initially when elections are opened to contestation by opposition forces, both the demand and supply of parties is typically high as previously suppressed groups enter the democratic contest. As successive elections occur, a learning process occurs wherein the constraints on winning office become clear to both parties and voters and market-clearing expectations lead to a restriction of both demand and supply. This reduction in the number of parties will be a function of both the particular electoral rules in the country and the shape of the electorate in defining their desires for representation." (Benoit 2001: 2)

The shakedown hypothesis is shown by triangles in figure 4 below. In a long-term perspective, the number of parties adapts to the electoral system constraints and some parties might stabilise around social divisions in the society. Depending on the type of the electoral system and the number of social cleavages, the resulting number might differ from country to country. This is symbolised by two different hypothetical lines how the party system might develop.

Being more precise, we would need to distinguish three different aspects of the shakedown effect: the field of the competing or vote-winning parties, the field of the seat-winning parties, and the wasted votes. The core of the shakedown hypothesis captures the competing or vote-winning parties. An exaggerated supply of parties is present on the electoral market (number of competing parties), and voters do not have enough experience with the electoral system and no precise expectations about the outcome, in order to make a strategic vote in favour only of parties that can win seats. The vote is not adjusted to the electoral system, so that many votes are spent for non-successful parties (wasted votes), what leads to a discrepancy between the number of seat-

winning parties and the number of vote-winning parties, more in the beginning of the shakedown period than later.[6]

Party dispersion hypothesis

Literature that looks at political transitions suggests a process of *party dispersion* (Reich 2004; Przeworski 1991: 66-67). The logic of party dispersion relies on what Przeworski calls a dilemma of democratising forces in authoritarian regimes:

> "[…] to bring about democracy, anti-authoritarian forces must unite against authoritarianism, but to be victorious under democracy, they must compete with each other. Hence, the struggle for democracy always takes place on two fronts: against the authoritarian regime for democracy, and against one's allies for the best place under democracy. Thus, even if they sometimes coincide temporally, it is useful to focus separately on the two different aspects of democratisation: extrication from the authoritarian regime and the constitution of a new democratic one."
> (Przeworski 1991: 67)

During the initial transition moment, democratic reformers need to unify their forces in order to achieve a liberalisation of the regime (Howard/Roessler 2006). With ongoing democratic consolidation, provided that the thread from the old regime has disappeared, the need of a unity of the reformers vanishes. This allows the democratic forces to offer different political choices to the electors, thus the bloc of reformers can split off, so that a democratic multiparty system is created. Translated into a directional hypothesis, we would speak of an increase of the number of parties (Reich 2004: 237-238). This goes on so long until the level of party fragmentation corresponds to the political cleavages within the society (bold line in figure 4).
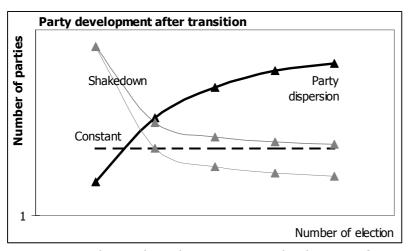

Figure 4: Hypotheses about the party system development after transition to democracy.

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[6] This discrepancy might even be more important in the case when legal thresholds are applied, because they create large amounts of wasted votes if the votes are not strategically enough distributed. If legal thresholds are applied it might happen that with an increase of the vote fractionalisation, the number of parties that cross the threshold (and thus the number of seat-winning parties) decreases. This can be summarised as follows:

	electoral systems with no threshold	with threshold
number of seat-winning parties	low shakedown effect	different effects, no clear trend
number of vote-winning parties	clear shakedown effect	clear shakedown effect

Why does Reich's case selection lead to a stable development in time

The party dispersion and the shakedown hypotheses were seldom tested in a quantitative way in a broad empirical comparison. Reich (2004) compares 23 periods of post-WWII democratisation in 22 countries; covering three or four elections for each of the cases included, six of the countries studied are post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia), and further Western European and Latin American transition countries. The study came to varying conclusions for different groups of countries. For most of the cases, the study found that the founding elections are setting the line for the long-term development of the party system, and there is neither an up nor a down in the number of parties afterwards (cf. figure 4 above, dotted line) – despite some volatility between the parties. In some cases, particularly the post-communist ones, the author (ibd.: 247) finds support for the party dispersion hypothesis. Due to the economic crisis "both the democratic opposition and parties supportive of the old regime splintered". The shakedown hypothesis however is mainly negated (ibd.: 248). To some extent, Reich's results might be influenced by his case selection. Two aspects merit our attention. First, he excludes cases where major reforms of the electoral system occurred. Second, the study considers only elections where "(1) the ruling government acknowledged the right of political parties to form independently of the state, and (2) the resulting election was not affected by government intimidation or sanctions placed on a significant segment of public opinion" (ibd.: 248). These criteria reflect a dilemma that needs to be resolved in empirical studies of transition elections: We might want to exclude cases with unstable external variables, in order to eliminate possible exogenous factors of change (such as the electoral system). The exclusion of not entirely free elections avoids relying on flawed data, which are partly the result of electoral fraud or other kinds of manipulations and not of the voters will. These methodological decisions might however lead to a bias in the case selection. Countries with transitions by pact might result to be over-represented. There, as in the case of Hungary, the institutional order and particularly the electoral system was agreed on before the first elections were hold among the main actors, so that these countries subsequently did not involve in major changes. In countries, however, where the first competiitve elections succeed already during the initial transition, often the first electoral system is inherited from the authoritarian period, and only when democratic forces come to power or exert pressure, the electoral system will be changed later on (cf. Dawisha/Deets 2006). Since revolutionary elections tend to be followed by electoral system changes, they are dis-selected by Reich's criteria. Moreover, the selection criteria often lead to the exclusion of the first competitive elections, because too often there are question marks about the fairness of very first elections: semi-democratic, manipulated elections can be a means of authoritarian regimes to allow a certain liberalisation, however trying to keep the power. Still, they can be the beginning of a period of democratisation. Studies that cover only fully free elections risk to capture a development during

party system consolidation, and to omit the development of party systems at the very beginning of the democratisation process. Further, Reich calculated and compared averages of country groups to make his conclusions about the shape of a development. Averaging groups of cases in order to investigate time effects seems to be a liable strategy if we are not interested in every single case, but in the aggregate, when hypotheses of a monotonic development (directional hypotheses) should be investigated, or if we expect that every case that is aggregated in a group shows synchronically the same development. If these conditions do not apply, calculating the average might produce misleading results. More precisely, processes that are contrary from case to case or non-monotonic developments that occur in different phases[7] might be cancelled out through the averaging, so that the result looks like a constant development.

A two-phase model of party development

My expectation of post-transitional party development differs from the work presented by earlier authors. Previous studies have relied on a monotonic move, either speaking about an increasing or a decreasing number of parties in post-authoritarian elections. I integrate previous diverging models into one, distinguishing two periods of party system development. The idea is built on the dilemma that has been described by Przeworski (1991: 67; cf. above): the pro-democracy movement needs to unify to bring about democracy, but it needs to compete divided in order to offer pluralistic, democratic choice. Initial elections in Central and Eastern Europe had an important function to decide upon the direction in which the countries should go: Legitimise the previously ruling, sometimes reformed, communist parties with a democratic mandate, or switch to the opposition, the democratic reformers. In the countries where the post-communist regime changed by rupture, the first competitive elections were making an initial decision about political change, about a re-establishment of the (slightly reformed) old regime or a far-going liberalisation of the state and of the economy. It has been shown that in electoral authoritarianism, only a unified democratic opposition to the autocratic forces can bring about liberalisation (Howard/Roessler 2006). After the old regime party loses its office, an important initial step of the transformation is completed, the power changes in competitive elections. Under these circumstances, the parameters of the initial dilemma change. Before the electoral turnover, the most crucial point on the political agenda was 'change' – and this was the main common denominator of all the reform forces. After the initial elections, in many cases the goal of a change of the government has been achieved, so that the need of unification is reduced, and instead the need for a pluralistic choice gets even more salient. The initial regime conflict is replaced by other political conflicts, so that the need for party pluralism gets larger than the reasons that hold the reformers together. We might thus expect the unified democratic reformers to fall apart. In consequence, the pattern of first

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[7] In some countries by the second or third elections, the process of party system transition might be more advanced than in others.

competitive elections might change in subsequent elections, and the plurality of parties might be much larger in the second compared to the first elections.

On the other hand, we need to look closer at the *shakedown effect* and its premises. The starting point of the shakedown effect was a pattern of hyper-fractionalisation, where hundreds of political entrepreneurs try to enter the political market. This conflicts with the image of the need for opposition unity in the first elections. Instead, the dilemma of the initial elections suggests that the hyper-fractionalisation happens in a later instance, when the real pluralistic competition starts to play. Not all of the parties that try their luck when democratic plurality is established can be elected, so that we would have a shakedown effect to follow.

Figure 5: Models of party development after transition; models discussed in previous research (left – identical with figure 4) and my two-phase model (right graph).

From umbrellas to rainbows – early party development in Central and Eastern Europe

Having discussed different models about early party system formation, I shall look at the empirical reality in the first competitive elections in the countries under study. Throughout Central and Eastern Europe, the embryonic party system was characterised by a duality between the old regime party versus "umbrella movements", uniting political groups, actors and citizens with the common goal of bringing about democracy. Often, these movements were extremely heterogeneous, containing all the colours of the political rainbow, from monarchists, conservatives, and liberals up to ecologic movements. Table 1 gives an overview over the movements, parties, and organisations that had the character of common opposition organisations in the early stages of the state transition in Central and Eastern Europe, and shows the number of parties in the first competitive elections.

Country	Umbrella organisation: Name and remarks	First elections: year and number of parties
Albania	**Democratic Party.** The party was during the initial years of the post-authoritarian transition rather an umbrella organisation of many individual, heterogeneous actors than a political party with a common program (Biberaj 1998: 277; Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe 1991).	1991 $N_{2S} = 1.8$
Bosnia and Herzegovina	**-** There was no unified umbrella organisation in the first democratic elections in 1990. However, the nationalist parties that were opposed to the old regime collaborated in the first elections.	-
Bulgaria	**Union of Democratic Forces.** Umbrella coalition of 17 opposition parties and interest groups. (Ashley 1990; NRI/NDI 1990)	1990: $N_{2S} = 2.4$ / $N_{2V} = 2.7$
Croatia	**Croat Democratic Union, HDŽ.** The HDŽ is not only the anti-communist, but as well the Croat nationalist party. In countries seeking for independence , the old-regime – reformer-cleavage might overlap with the nationalist cleavage.	1990: $N_{2S} = 1.9$ / $N_{2V} = 3.7$
Czechoslovakia	**Czech Republic: Civic Forum (Občanské forum, OF)** **Slovakia: Public against violence (VPN)** Soon after the first elections in June 1990, the Czech and Slovak party systems split off (Elster/Offe/Preuss 1998: 137; Klima 1998)	1990: $N_{2S} = 2.1$ / $N_{2V} = 3.1$
Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania	First elections Elections in the Baltic States were held still during the Soviet rule. The affiliation of candidates is not transparent from the electoral results. However, in every of the Baltic States there was a strong cleavage between separatist forces standing for an end of Soviet rule, opposed to the Soviet communist party. There were some separatist communists that won seats in every of the three states. **Estonia: Eestimaa Rahvarinne (Popular Front)** **Latvia: Latvian People's Front (Latvijas tautas fronte, LTF).** **Lithuania: Sajudis.** (Taagepera 1990; Krupavicius 1998).	Estonia: 1990 Latvia: 1990 Lithuania: 1990 Party affiliation of candidates unclear. They did not have any or sometimes a multiple party affiliation. However, the systems were all aligned in two blocs. (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe 1990).
Hungary	Opposition roundtable (EKA), but the opposition parties compete separately in the elections.	1990: $N_{2S} = 3.8$ / $N_{2V} = 6.7$ (PR-tier)
Kosovo	No umbrella movement – the political situation in the first Kosovo elections in 2001 deviates from our model.	2001: $N_{2S} = 4.1$ / $N_{2V} = 3.4$
Macedonia	No umbrella of reform forces. The ethnic Macedonian part of the party system was split between the Social Democrats (communist successor party), the nationalist VMRO, the smaller Liberal Party, and some smaller parties, and further a party of the ethnic Albanians.	1990: $N_{2S} = 4.4$ / $N_{2V} = 4.6$
Moldova	**Nationalist popular front.** (Slider 1990: 297)	1990. Party affiliation of candidates unclear.
Montenegro	Due to the character of the political transition process and the long-lasting state building process, it appears unclear which elections should be defined as founding. In the first partly competitive elections held in 1990, the Communist Party got an overwhelming share of votes and seats.	
Poland	**Solidarność.** By the first competitive elections in 1991, the movement was dissolved. (Olson 1993)	1991: $N_{2S} = 10.8$ / $N_{2V} = 13.8$
Romania	**National Salvation Front (Frontul Salvarii Nationale, FSN).** The Romanian version of a popular front promoted a	1990: $N_{2S} = 2.2$ / $N_{2V} = 2.2$

	new way of authoritarianism and national unity ideology instead of pluralism (Csergo 2002).[a]	
Russia	**Democratic Russia.** (Slider 1990: 297)	Party affiliation of candidates unclear.
Serbia	**Serbian Democratic opposition (Demokratska opozicija Srbije DOS).** The umbrella pattern occurs long after the initial elections. For a first time after 1990, all democratic opposition party unify in the 2000 election in a short-living umbrella alliance. The alliance falls apart soon after (Goati 2004).	2000: N_{2S} = 1.9 / N_{2V} = 2.2
Slovenia	The democratic opposition parties were united in a umbrella organisation (DEMOS, Democratic Opposition of Slovenia) in 1990, but competed separately in the elections.	1990: N_{2S} = 8.2 / N_{2V} = 9.1
Ukraine	**Democratic bloc.** Unites Rukh nationalists, Helsinki Union, environmentalist groups, strike committees (Slider 1990: 297).	1990. Party affiliation of candidates unclear.

Table 1: Umbrella organisations in Central and Eastern Europe – an overview.
N_{2S} = Effective number of parliamentary parties, according their seats won in parliament. N_{2V} = Effective number of elective parties, according their vote shares in parliamentary elections (Laakso/Taagepera 1979).
[a] The 1990 elections are described rather as semi-democratic than fully democratic.

The list contains democratic umbrella movements or popular fronts in most of the countries across Central and Eastern Europe. There are, however, a few exceptions: Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Macedonia, and to some extent Czechoslovakia. In all these countries, the number of parties in the first competitive elections is clearly larger than 2, and reform parties compete separately. In Czechoslovakia, there were two separate umbrella coalitions for the Czech and the Slovak part of the country.

Some might take the frequent use of single-seat district electoral systems in the first democratic elections, particularly in the post-Soviet cases, as an explanation of the two-bloc competition. Often, elections in single-seat districts favour the emergence of two-party systems. However, the use of single-seat districts is not clearly related to the shape of the party system, there are many cases of PR systems too under which a two-bloc competition with a united reform bloc resulted (table 2).

	Electoral system	
	Single-seat districts	PR, mixed system, single transferable vote
Umbrella coalition of reformers	Albania; Croatia; Latvia; Lithuania; Moldova; Russia; Ukraine.	Bulgaria; Czechoslovakia; Estonia; Romania; Serbia (2000)
Fractionalised party landscape	Macedonia	Hungary; Poland; Slovenia

Table 2: Electoral system in the first competitive election and umbrella coalitions.

In Russia, Ukraine, and Moldova, the abolition of the Communist Party monopoly came too late, just before the first competitive elections, in order to allow the formation of political parties. In all

three cases however, oppositional reformers united under a common label and held their own electoral campaigns (Slider 1990: 297).

A deviant case that is hardly to classify is Romania. The country is described to have lacked dissidents during the communist period, and instead of a reform movement, a nationalist-autocratic front controlled by members of the old regime took the power after the change in 1989/90. The only aspect which Romania shares with the umbrella movement is the unification of the political landscape under one organisation; but the National Salvation Front is today not understood any more as a reform movement (Csergo 2002).

Special attention needs to be spent to the treatment of cases that emanate from the two disintegrating countries, the case of former Yugoslavia and of the Soviet Union. This double character of the transition – democratisation of the regime and changing of the borders – accorded the conflict structure in these cases a peculiar character. As summarised in table 3, a two-dimensional setting of conflict lines emanates. One possible conflict divides the independence movement from the defenders of the old state borders; the other conflict divides communists from democratic reformers. The double conflict logic implies four possible positions for political parties. This logic would be misleading, since both dimensions are strongly correlated. In fact, we find only two or three fields to be covered by major parties. The democratic reformers usually cover two dimensions, independence and liberal reforms. Both are aspects that are opposed to the old system, and help to mobilise both groups of potential supporters – or of opponents of the old regime. We expect however the local communist parties to be more loyal to the central state than the democratic reform opposition, since they are related to the old, centralised regime. Depending on the strength of the pro-independence movement among the population, the local communist parties might sometimes however support kinds of enhanced autonomy or even moves towards independence, because any other position would be too unpopular in the population.

Regime reform cleavage *Nationalist/separatist cleavage*	Communists / communist successors	Democratic reformers
Unity of the previous state	Communist parties	-
Independence movement	Separatist communists	Popular front movements

Table 3: Regime cleavage and nationalist/separatist cleavage overlapping.

In the new separatist Republics of the Soviet Union, the three Baltic States, Ukraine, and Moldova, first competitive elections took place in 1990, still as part of the Soviet Union. The united popular fronts – supporting the independence of the Republics – were opposed to the communist party.

In the Republics of former Yugoslavia, the things are slightly different. Particularly Croatia and Slovenia experienced a liberalisation and an embryonic development of political organisations in the 1970s and 1980s. First democratic elections were held in 1990 in all the Republics. A pattern of a duality of communist successors and pro-independence reformers can be best seen in Croatia,

where the HDZ party was the main opponent of the communist regime and the main advocate of Croatian independency. The picture looks different in other countries of former Yugoslavia, where the party system was organised on an ethnic basis, where the reforms to democracy occurred later (Serbia got its umbrella movement in 2000). In the case of Slovenia, in 1989, after a period of liberalisation of the political life, a whole set of new parties could be formed. The opposition parties gathered in the opposition movement DEMOS (Demokratična Opozicija Slovenije / Democratic Opposition of Slovenia), an alliance of six parties (Bugajski 2002: 637-640). By the 1990 elections, the Communist party had transformed into a Social Democratic party, stood for democratic reforms, and was drastically weakened. Indeed, in the Slovenian case there was an agreement of communists and democratic reformers in the 1980s already on a comprehensive liberalisation and on independence claims.

The Slovenian case is similar to Poland and Hungary, both countries that experienced a transition by pact. First competitive elections in *Poland* were held in 1991, whereas partly free elections were held in 1989. Then, the upper house (Senate) was elected in real multiparty elections, whereas only 35% of the seats in the lower house (Sejm) were elected in elections under restrictions on candidates, and the rest of the members of parliament were appointed in elections without choice (Olson 1993). The reform umbrella movement (Solidarność) won a landslide victory of votes in these pre-transition elections, and most of the freely elected seats, but this could impossibly result in a majority of seats in parliament, so that the communist party still could control the institutions. Nevertheless, the governing power was shared in the period after 1989 (Grzybowski/Mikuli 2004), and democratic reformers and communists agreed on the lines of a new democratic system. By the time of the first fully competitive elections in 1991, Solidarność had split up and new parties were founded. The first competitive elections in *Hungary* have been preceded by a transition that was dealt at a roundtable of the old regime and the democratic opposition in June-September 1989, after a period of liberalisation in the 1980s, where a number of parties started to be formed out. For the roundtable talks, all the relevant opposition parties coordinated in an umbrella organisation, the EKA ("Opposition Roundtable"), and negotiated as a united actor. By the first competitive elections that were held in 1990, former communists and the democratic opposition had agreed on a new institutional order; the transition of the state was mainly a result of the 1989 negotiations, and thereafter, the democratic parties went their independent way. The communist party broke with Marxism-Leninism, and was transformed into the Hungarian Socialist Party (Tóka 2004; Elster et al. 1998: 266-267).

In all three cases of Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia, and different to the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the first fully competitive elections were held after a period of liberalisation and after a transition by pact that was agreed by the communists and the democratic reformers. This different pattern of transition almost perfectly correlates with the different character of the

competition in the first elections. We know that the nature of the transition might have an important impact on the first elections after transition (Bermeo 1987: 213).

What the cases of transition in Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia have in common is that the first competitive elections are held after both communists and the new democratic opposition agreed on liberalising reforms. And, thanks to a previous opening of the political space, new political forces did have the opportunity to form. After all the political players had agreed on democratic reforms, it needs not to astonish that the *old regime versus reformer* conflict got less salient, what helped to brake the unity of the reform parties and to incite them to compete separately.

It might further be argued that this type of transition gave new democratic organisations more time to build up structures and that the creation of a plurality of reform parties was possible due to the previous liberalisation, whereas in other cases of transition, the *ruptura cases*, as discussed, the opposition needs to be built up in a very short time between the opening and the first competitive elections, and umbrella movements are the easiest way to organise an opposition movement.[8]

The further development of party system fractionalisation in Central and Eastern Europe

My model suggested that after the first democratic elections, the umbrella movements split up in subsequent elections, leading to high fractionalisation of the seats in parliament and even more of the votes. Afterwards, the number of parties decreases again. The number of parties is measured with the effective number of parties (Laakso/Taagepera 1979), an index that can be calculated both on the basis of the vote distribution on parties (number of elective parties) and on the seat distribution (number of parliamentary parties).

In figure 6 (next page), the development of the number of parties is mapped for all the Central and Eastern European democracies under study. As a lack of precise electoral data, the first elections in post-Soviet republics are missing. A graphical analysis shows that in many cases, the number of parties increases between the first and the second elections (or, in the cases where we lack precise data for the first elections, it is clearly above 2 in the second elections). Some expected and a few unexpected exceptions apply.[9]

Further, the figure maps the development after the second election. In 11 cases, such a shakedown effect is clearly visible (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Macedonia [for the number of elective parties], Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Ukraine), and with a lag by one election as well in the case of Latvia. Such a bivariate analysis of the development however is too limited, due to the fact that external factors might affect the outcome.

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[8] Many thanks to Gábor Tóka for this point.
[9] Exceptions are the cases where first elections were held after initial transition (Hungary, Poland, Slovenia), and further – different from expectations – in Bulgaria and Croatia only one of both measures (elective parties and parliamentary parties) is increasing. In Albania and Moldova, the exact number of parties for the first election is missing, however knowing that it is not very different from 2, we can see that there is no clear increase of parties before the second elections.
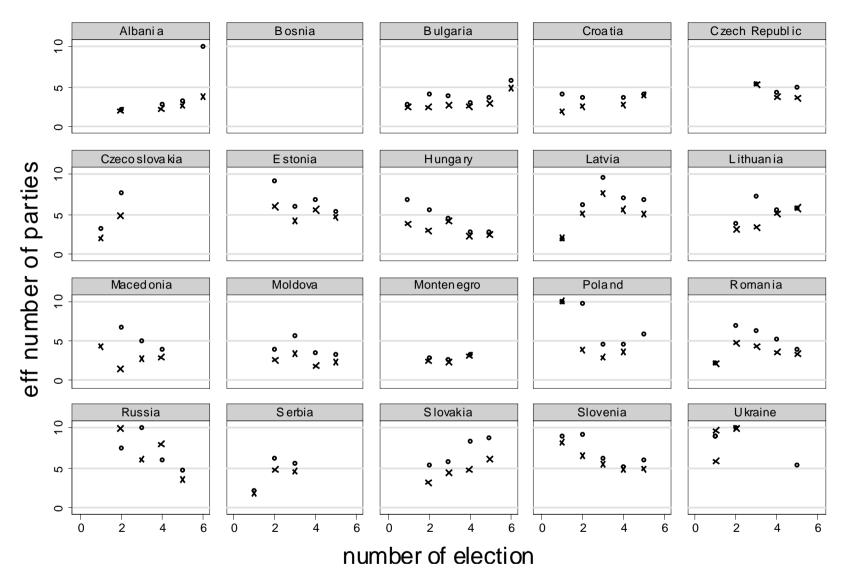
Figure 6: Development of the number of parties in 18 young democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. (Bosnia, Kosovo missing)
X – Effective number of parliamentary parties (seat distribution); **O** – Effective number of elective parties (vote distribution).
Numbers of parties of 10 or above are shown as 10 parties. Sources: Author's database.

Testing the effects in a multivariate model

This is why it makes sense to test the development with a more comprehensive model. I integrate further variables such as the electoral system, the ethnic structure of the countries under study, and the level of nationalisation of the party system. Empirical tests are based on my own database on elections in Central and Eastern European democracies in the period 1990-2007, including the electoral results on the national and on the sub-national level (such as by electoral district, by municipality, or by polling station).[10]

The model is part of the broader thesis project this paper is nested in. My model explains the variance of the effective number of elective (of vote-winning parties (logged), and of the effective number of parliamentary (seat-winning) parties. Interaction terms with up to three multiplied variables are introduces in order to control for the interaction effects between several electoral system variables, party nationalisation, and the time variable. Due to this, the OLS regression reaches a high level of complexity. A technical explanation of the formula tested and the outcome of the OLS regression are shown in Appendix 1. Here, I report the results regarding our variable of interest, the development over time. The results rely on 78 elections for which all necessary data is available.

Figure 7: Development of the number of parties in elections in Central and Eastern Europe, results of the OLS regression (cf. appendix).
A number of variables have been set at constant: electoral system with 10 districts, each with 10 seats, no national legal threshold, level of party nationalisation 0.8, effective number of ethnic groups 1.3.

My estimation highlights the shakedown effect, after a series of further variables is held constant (figure 7). The results of the OLS estimation confirm widely the hypotheses. Over time, the effective number of *vote-winning* parties clearly, and significantly, decreases. A shakedown effect can be observed as well at the development of the effective number of *seat-winning* parties, although as expected it is less strong and below the level of significance, and not visible at all for electoral systems with a legal threshold. As argued above, it is likely that after a certain experience with the new democratic institutions, and after gaining an image of the vote distribution among

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[10] An in-depth description of the database is part of the PhD project in work.

the parties and the chances to get elected, political entrepreneurs and voters will behave more strategically, so that less votes will be wasted on non-successful parties. First of all, the votes get concentrated on the larger parties (decrease of the number of vote-winning parties). If the expectation that this over time might lead to a reduction of the number of seat-winning parties is true, can, however, not be answered with my dataset and the test applied.

The case of Bulgaria helps to illustrate the not always synchronic development of the number of vote-winning and seat-winning parties: In 1990, Bulgaria was very close to a two-bloc competition, polarised mainly between the Socialist Party and the umbrella reform coalition UDF (Union of Democratic Forces), and some minor parties (farmer party BANU and Turkish minority party DPS). This is reflected by the rather low number of parties in the PR part of the elections (N_{2S} = 2.6 / N_{2V} = 2.7). The UDF coalition did however not survive the 1990 elections. One year later, when the next elections were held, parts of the coalition had already split off, and new small parties were appearing on the electoral market, reflected by an increase of the number of vote-winning parties (N_{2V} = 4.2), but many of the parties failed. This created a very large amount of wasted votes (about 25%), and only three parties, the Socialists, UDF, and DPS made it to parliament, whereas the BANU along with all new competitors did not cross the 4% threshold, so that the number of seat-winning parties even decreased (N_{2S} = 2.4). In following elections, the number of vote-winning parties decreased – according the development that is suggested by the shakedown hypotheses –, so that there were less parties failing to get represented in parliament, and the discrepancy between the number of vote-winning and seat-winning parties widely vanished.

Further, the OLS regression established a clear difference between the first elections (excl. Poland, Hungary, Slovenia) and subsequent elections: In the first elections, in difference to later contests, the electoral system in use does not have any impact on the number of parties. The number of parties is lower than later. Due to the small number of countries where the full set of variables is available for the first competitive elections, the estimations are not very precise, although the differences compared to later contests are significant.

Conclusion

First competitive elections in transition countries are often treated as special cases or outliers. This is one of the reasons why we have fairly little systematic knowledge on the development and creation of party systems in the early stages of democracy, and path-dependency arguments dominate the discussion. Different schools that addressed the problem in a comparative perspective expected either an increase or a decrease of the number of parties in the first series of post-authoritarian elections, but broad comparative empirical studies have remained rare. Reich (2004) came to the conclusion that there is no clear increase or decrease of the number of parties over the first couple of elections after democratisation.

My attempt was to test different hypotheses in order to explain the development of party competitions in an early stage of democratic transition and consolidation in Central and Eastern European countries. The results of this investigation can explain the development of the number of parties in post-communist Europe very well: We see that in the first competitive elections, reform parties usually align in umbrella or popular front coalitions. First competitive elections fall usually in the period of a predominating initial transition conflict: reforms and liberalisation versus conservation of the old regime. This dominant conflict overshadows other political questions and makes the democratic reform spectrum align in electoral coalitions, which unify parties of all political tendencies. Once they won the elections, there is no need any more for such alliances, instead the political divisions between different colours of reformers get more immanent and the alliance splits up. A slightly different picture can be observed for countries where the transition is secured by a pact (Poland, Hungary) or where – similar to a pact – an agreement of post-communists and democratic opposition on far-going liberalisation exists (Slovenia). In this group of cases, the need for an alliance of the reform forces is less immanent, and the political differences among the reformers get more salient, so that in none of these cases, the democratic reformers compete jointly in the first competitive elections.

In subsequent elections, umbrella coalitions split up, resulting in a high fractionalisation of the vote, and, due to lacking experience with the new democratic institutions and a lack of predictability of the electoral outcome, many votes are accorded to parties that fail to win any seats in parliament, so that many votes are wasted. This is the basis for a period of *strategic learning*, where the number of parties competing in elections gets reduced. As suggested by Olson (1998) on the basis of only few elections in a small sample of countries, newer and much broader empirical evidence confirms the expectation that after the second elections the number of vote-winning parties in Central and Eastern European democracies decreases.

The study of early development of party systems adds value in several aspects to existing knowledge about electoral systems, social cleavages and the size of party systems. On the one hand, we can consider that it extends our knowledge in the time dimension, adding young democracies to the more consolidated ones. On the other hand, elections are particularly important in young democracies, since they are shaping the political system, the actor's configuration and the possible further development of these. In this sense, knowledge about party competition and party system size in these early years of democratisation is a particularly valuable asset. Further research might extend the model to a more general universe of cases, looking particularly at the conditions that differ between post-communist and other transitions.

Appendix 1

Quantitative model to explain the effective number of parties

The purpose of this appendix is to specify the multivariate model to explain the effective number of parties N_2, and to show the results of the regression tests. The tested model is part of my thesis model and explained there in detail. It can only be the goal of these pages to give a short view on the formulas applied, without going into detail and explain the exact reasoning behind the model and the way how it is tested. The model applied is an amendment of the Taagepera (2007) model to predict the effective number of parties, which considers, in line with Sartori (1986), that different levels of party nationalisation might lead to different outcomes under the same electoral systems.

I measure party system nationalisation n with a variable that is larger than 0 (extremely low party nationalisation of the party system) and 1 (perfect territorial homogeneity or maximal party nationalisation); further I integrate the average constituency size m, the overall number of electoral districts d, and national legal thresholds t applied in the electoral systems (in countries that apply such, they vary between 2.5% and 6%).

$$N_2 \approx \{min \ [m^{k1} * d^{(1-n)k2}] \ ; \ (1/t\text{-}1)^{k1}\} * \varepsilon$$

Or, if the logarithm is taken:

$$log(N_2) \approx \ min \ [k_1 * log(m) + k_2 * (1\text{-}n) * log \ (d) \ ; \ k_1 * log(1/t\text{-}1)] + \varepsilon$$

k_1 and k_2 are two parameters that are expected to be between 0 and 1 that characterise the intensity of party competition.

In the regression estimation, the national legal threshold is operationalised as a dummy variable ~t, coded 1 in all the cases where a threshold is applied, and 0 otherwise. For methodological reasons (interactive terms), such an operationalisation avoids an overly complex model, and since most of the thresholds applied are in the small range of 4% to 6%, this seems justifiable.

I adjust the described model, taking account of the time dimension in the party development, as focused on in this paper:

- First, I take into account that the first elections (if not preceded by a transition by pact and a process of party system formation) are expected to lead to a reduced pattern of a two-bloc competition, except for organised ethnic minority interests. I control for the peculiar character of the first elections with a dummy variable ΔT, coded 1 for second and later elections and for all elections in countries with a transition by pact or a previous formation of the party system (Poland, Hungary, Slovenia). It is supposed that the variables *log(m)* and *log(1/t-1)* are only relevant in these cases, whereas the district size and electoral

thresholds are not relevant for the size of the party systems in the first elections. In consequence, my dummy variable is put in interaction with the district size and the threshold variable.

- Second, I take into account that the number of parties is expected to flourish in the second elections, followed by a *shakedown process* which is most intensive in a first time, and a later stabilisation. This idea is best captured if we count the ordinal number of each election in the series, and invert this number, so that each election in a series, starting from the second election, gets the value ½, $\frac{1}{3}$, ¼, $\frac{1}{5}$, etc. (from this, a shape results as it is shown in the right graph of figure 2), noted as T.[11]

- Third, I control if ethnic heterogeneity e (measured through the effective number of ethnic groups in a country, calculated with the inverted Herfindahl-Hirschmann index) increases the number of parties.

From this, the following testing model result:

$$N_2 \approx \{min~[m^{k1} * m^{k1*\Delta T} * d^{(1-n)k2}]; [(1/t\text{-}1)^{k1}*(1/t\text{-}1)^{k1*\Delta T}]\} * e * T * \varepsilon$$

Or, if the logarithm is taken:

$$log(N_2) \approx \{min~[k_1 * log(m) + k_1 * \Delta T * log(m) + k_2 * (1\text{-}n) * log~(d)~;$$
$$k_1 * log(1/t\text{-}1) + k_1 * \Delta T * log(1/t\text{-}1)]\}$$
$$+ e + T + \varepsilon$$

The model is tested on my database which covers 78 electoral contests in Central and Eastern European democracies in the period 1990-2007. I estimated with an OLS regression both the number of parties in parliament (specifications 1 and 2) and the number of elective parties (specification 3 and 4), both operationalised with the effective number of parties (Laakso/Taagepera 1979). Despite very high multicollinearity due to the included triple interaction terms, the model shows significant results and confirms to a large part my expectations (table A1). Generally, the models shows that in electoral systems with increasing district size (m), the number of elective and of elected parties increases, with a parameter $k_1 \approx$ 0.2-0.3, a value that is not very distant from theoretical predictions by Taagepera (2007).

The first elections are different in character, as seen in specification 1 and 3: We see that in the first elections, the size of the electoral districts *m* does not affect the number of parties – neither of the vote-winning nor of the seat-winning parties. No matter which electoral system is in use,

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[11] It remains subject to discussion in which form the variable should be included into the model. I decide for the multiplicative term, instead of an exponential form, because otherwise a problem might occur for the treating countries with single-seat districts. An inclusion of T as an exponential would mean that outcomes of elections with single-seat districts (*m=1*) do not vary by time, since m^T does not vary if *m=1*. This reflects the logic regarding the number of parties elected at the level of a single district which is constant at 1. However, if we consider that there is always some inter-district heterogeneity (imperfect party nationalisation), we find that high entropy (large values of T) contributes to a higher number of vote-winning and of seat-winning parties. This can only be reflected if T is included in a non-exponential form.

the outcome is similar. This can be see due to the fact that the variable $log(m)$ is not significant in neither of the models, whereas the term $\Delta T * log(m)$ is positive. Thus, the district size matters only from the 2nd election on. (The term $\sim t * log(m)$ is dropped due to a lack of sufficient cases of first elections in combination with a national legal threshold; this makes the variable perfectly collinear to the interaction variable $\sim t * \Delta T * log(m)$).

In later elections, the number of parties is determined by the electoral system and by party nationalisation. This conclusion can be drawn due to the fact that the electoral system variables m and $\sim t$ work in interaction with the time dummy variable ΔT that identifies the second and later elections. If elections happen under electoral systems without national legal threshold, the degree of party nationalisation matters (variables n * log(d) and log(d)), whereas in cases with a national legal threshold, party nationalisation is no longer important (variables $\sim t * log(d)$ and $\sim t * n * log(d)$).

After controlling for all these impacts, we can check if the expected shakedown effect occurs. Looking at the number of vote-winning parties, we can indeed observe a significant drop after the second elections. Due to exorbitant multicollinearity in my model, I drop the variable $log(m)$ from the model. It has been shown that it is not relevant in the first election, and only has an impact from the second election on, where the impact of district size m is measured through the interaction term $\Delta T * log(m)$. I have expected that for both the number of vote-winning and of seat-winning parties, a shakedown effect would be visible, but for the number vote-winning it should be stronger. The model confirms these expectations; the effect is larger and significant for number of vote-winning parties, and lower, due to high multi-collinearity below a level of statistical significance, for the number of seat-winning parties. If a few larger parties win many votes, and besides there are many very small parties (this is discussed as a party system with low balance in the literature, cf. Taagepera 2005), then it is possible that the number of vote-winning parties will be high, but only the largest parties get elected, so that the number of seat-winning parties is low. Such a phenomenon seems to be even more the case for electoral systems with national legal thresholds (negative coefficient for $\sim t * T$), what points on the more constraining character of such thresholds compared to small electoral districts in elections with a high fractionalisation of the votes, however the difference is not significant.[12]

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[12] If the vote fractionalisation is high, the effective threshold (cf. Lijphart 1994) given through the district size might decrease, whereas the national legal threshold is always fix.

Regression model explained variable:	(1) effective number of *elected* parties (log)			(2) effective number of *elected* parties (log)			(3) effective number of *elective* parties (log)			(4) effective number of *elective* parties (log)		
	B	S.E.	VIF	B	S.E.	VIF	B	S.E.	VIF	B	S.E.	VIF
α *(constant)*	.73	.93		.74	.41		1.44	.75		.51	.39	
ΔT	.49	.59	3.03	.49	.54	2.67	.30	.28	3.03	.86	.50	2.67
~t	.62	.76	62.22	.61	.51	41.71	.24	.76	62.22	.13*	.51	41.71
log(m)	.00	.17	49.26				-.22	.13	49.26			
*~t * log(m)*	variable dropped						variable dropped					
*ΔT * log(m)*	.22*	.11	29.16	.22*	.10	23.55	.27**	.06	29.16	.19*	.09	23.55
*~t *ΔT * log(m)*	-.29	.18	74.47	-.29*	.11	48.95	-.12	.17	74.47	-.27*	.11	48.95
log(d)	.52**	.17	42.17	.52**	.10	18.75	.46**	.14	42.17	.59**	.07	18.75
*~t * log(d)*	-.31	.80	438.45	-.31	.78	423.03	-.31	.81	438.45	-.49	.76	423.03
*n * log(d)*	-.75**	.11	11.78	-.75**	.11	11.62	-.67**	.08	11.78	-.66**	.09	11.62
*~t *n * log(d)*	.50	.90	383.13	.50	.89	382.50	.51	.90	383.13	.56	.87	382.50
T	.19	.36	2.89	.19	.32	2.73	.81**	.28	2.89	.68*	.26	2.73
*~t*T*	-.28	.66	5.44	-.29	.60	5.28	-.21	.34	5.44	-.07	.33	5.28
log(e)	-.47*	.23	1.64	-.47*	.23	1.52	.45	.25	1.64	-.35	.24	1.52
N	79			79			78			78		
R^2	.623			.623			.714			.702		
mean VIF			91.97			87.48			91.97			87.48

Table A1: OLS Regression models for the effective number of parties (logarithm); robust standard errors.
**significant at $p < 0.01$; *significant at $p < 0.05$.

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