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Politics as Unusual: The Pirate Party and New Politics in OECD Countries

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Abstract:

Standard bearer left and right parties, the customary powers for over a century, are under siege from new political movements that range from green and animal rights parties to a resurgent radical right. One piece of this new politics movement is a party that began in Sweden. Focusing on intellectual property rights and technology, specifically the internet, the Pirate Party of Sweden achieved representation in the European Parliament in June of 2009. This success has lead to the emergence of other Pirate Parties across Europe and even Canada. This paper seeks to answer what domestic factors would result in individuals forming and voting for Pirate Parties, a small piece of this new politics movement. Analysis is done using logistic regressions of variables corresponding to four schools of thought. After the data is analyzed, the evidence points to the Pirate Party being the result of electoral structural (the effective number of parties) and the culmination of values change in the 34 OECD countries.

Now and then we had a hope that if we lived and were good, God would permit us to be pirates.

Mark Twain, from Life on the Mississippi
I. Introduction: Puzzling Politics

There are tremors in the electoral systems of many modern democracies. Outside of Europe, the most recent midterm elections in the United States saw the emergence of the fiscally minded Tea Party carve itself out of the Republican Party, creating a new movement for conservatives to consider in Washington (Barstow 2010). In Japan, the Liberal Democratic Party, virtually unopposed since 1955, lost power in 2009 (bbc.co.uk 2009). These electoral tremors are deep seeded and are apparent across the globe.

Europe is also currently in the midst of the largest electoral shakeup seen in decades. In Sweden for example, the Social Democrats had been in government for 65 of the last 78 years. They had never lost two consecutive elections until the election in September 2010, which featured the Moderate Party and Swedish Democrats of the far right making substantial gains (European Elections Database 2011). The British general election in 2010 saw a hung parliament for the first time since the 1974 elections and ultimately ended with the Liberal Democrats joining forces with the Conservatives. And there were echoes of fascism in Austria as two far right parties, the Freedom Party and the Alliance for the Future, shared 30% of the 2008 national vote. Several other European countries have seen similar developments on the far right of the political spectrum in recent years. (Briggs 2009; MacShane 2010).

This rise of radical right parties, and their Gemeinschaft focus, places the electoral foundation of European societies in a precarious position, especially considering the bitter divides amongst the traditional left and right (MacShane 2010). Radical right parties, however, are battling for votes in an environment in which Green Parties, and even an animal rights party in the Netherlands, have become electorally viable. These two completely opposite ideologies are now competing against the main standard-bearer left and right parties in an electoral donnybrook.

Research Question and Practical Importance

Oddly enough a party has emerged that is part of this electoral shakeup, but not tied to radical right, or green movement, in any manner. Beginning in Sweden, a country known for its unique seafaring roots, it is a political movement known as the Pirate Party. The Pirate Party of Sweden calls for reexaminations of intellectual property laws, stressing the importance the internet has in modern society. Since its inception in 2006, the Pirate Party movement has spread across Europe and even to Canada, becoming a registered political party in 16 countries. Five others are currently in the process of gaining membership for formal registration. Perhaps not surprisingly, these parties are being formed in advanced industrial nations and as a result this study will focus on the 34 OECD countries. This conflagration of citizens adopting Pirate Parties, a limited political ideology by itself, brings up the
fundamental question of this paper: what conditions are present in an OECD country that would allow for a Pirate Party to form and receive votes?

The Pirate Party represents the clash of new politics and unstable electorates versus the decades old concept of “frozen parties.” The “frozen parties” thesis states that the traditional left and right blocks of parties in a country have been set before those respective parties even existed. Essentially, a political party is based on stable and hierarchical cleavages in a given country (Lipset, Rokkan 1967: 1, 6). Typically these “frozen” cleavages have been defined as regionally centered, ideologically centered, but mostly economically along owner/worker and agriculture/industry lines (Lipset, Rokkan 1967: 14). Each individual state’s particular situation at the time of its (typically 19th century) industrial revolution within has typically been the departure point for parties to begin “freezing” along these lines. Long before the extension of the franchise these cleavages were the source of conflict in a country. With the industrial revolution and the blossoming of a working class, such parties began to establish firm control of the political system.

The last forty years have seen the discussion switch from “parties are rising” and “parties are falling,” it is clear that small movements, such as the Pirates, can steal the spotlight for a moment because of their distance from the traditional cleavages. The Green Parties have seen success over the last few decades because of their commitment to a specific policy that doesn’t fluctuate quite as much as the mainstream parties, who are committed to following public opinion (Burchell 2002: 78). Likewise, radical right parties succeed because of their inciting rhetoric, appealing to an often ethnically centered view of the “good old days.” Small and niche parties are not required to settle the debate between pragmatists and ideologues and being radical on policies is often an advantageous electoral strategy (Adams et al 2006: 526). For those voters who have particularized issues they care about, these parties represent an alternative. Their competitive nature in national elections against the traditional 19th century based parties demonstrates that these frozen parties are melting.

The implications this has for politics today is the fact that there is a sizeable difference in the society that produced the 19th century “frozen” political parties and modern politics. Certainly, modern working classes no longer have the worry of 18 hour work days but instead can enjoy health care, an expansive education system and a general social safety net. The vast welfare state in Sweden and elsewhere that helps to protect citizens from birth forward, leads to the freeing of time and focus of the general citizen. One can more easily focus on concerns that are not directly related to security or survival. The political parties of an industrializing nation do not fit neatly in 21st century politics. Considering this, the Pirate Party represents a niche movement in such a state.
The Pirate Party represents a chance to examine a small political movement (the “other” column on a ballot) within the context of a changing electoral landscape. In more theoretical terms, the Pirate Party is a case study for the most fundamental and sacred parts of a democracy: political organization and voting. More than complex social welfare apparatuses or a national transit law, political organization and voting remain the core elements of democracies. What makes someone willingly support or vote for one party over another? This question is particularly poignant when the choices are beyond a “left” or “right” party. Flippancy is not entirely out of the question, as Mickey Mouse gets plenty of votes around Election Day, but organizing and voting for the Pirates is distinct from voting for the standard-bearer parties in Western Europe. Additionally, it is clear that the Pirates represent a piece of a changing electorate. A change that is tied into a rejection of the principles of traditional parties, rooted in the 19th century. Noting that, I will argue in this paper that there is a good reason to believe the Pirate movement is related to the changing values of European society.

Going forward, this paper will seek to answer a question related to organization and voting in democracies: what conditions are present in an OECD country that would allow for a Pirate Party to form and/or receive votes?

**Paper Outline**

This paper will first take an in depth look at the relatively recent history of the Pirate Party movement. Subsequent sections are focused on four main schools of thought pertaining to the above research question of the prerequisite conditions allowing for Pirate Party formation. Following that, assembled data from the 34 OECD countries will be examined, and potential explanations will conclude the paper.

**II. A Very Pirate History: Hoist the Anchor...**

On January 1, 2006, Pirates invaded Swedish politics. While leaving their cutlasses at home, these information age pirates have found new high seas to patrol: the internet. In terms of their policies, the Pirates of Sweden avowed to look at three primary issues: reforming copyright law, abolishing patents, and respecting privacy. With regards to other issues, they claimed: “In order to agree that motion, we take no position on other policy issues not related to the principles we have declared” (piratpartei.se). But on the topics they are advocates for, their language is clear: “The monopoly for the copyright holder to exploit an aesthetic work commercially should be limited to five years after publication. Today’s copyright terms are simply absurd...No film studio or record company bases its investment decisions on the off-chance that the product would be of interest to anyone a hundred years in the future” (piratpartei.se).
After the Pirate Party website was launched in January of 2006, the website had over three million hits after its first two days (piratepartei.se/historia 2009). The required 2,000 signatures for official party status were doubled within 48 hours (piratepartei.se/historia 2009). This flurry of activity resonated with the Swedish media and the international press and both picked up on the story within hours (Dagens Industri 2006).

What sustained the Pirate Party in Sweden over the next three years were three widely discussed internet and technology related news stories. The first was general dissatisfaction with Sweden’s controversial FRA law which permits government surveillance of email, international phone calls and internet traffic (O’Connell 2008). The second contentious story was controversy surrounding the IPRED law, based on a similar legal measure found at the EU level, which permits copyright holder access to ISP subscriber information (Palm 2009). Finally, the trial against the Swedish bit torrent website the Pirate Bay (which allows access to software, audio and video files for free) led to an explosion of interest after the guilty verdict was brought against the four main founders of the site with each required to pay a portion of a $3.5 million dollar settlement and a year in prison (Pfanner 2009).

The view of the Pirate Party within Sweden by its citizens and voters seems to be split. When asked why he voted for the Pirate Party in the European Parliament elections, a music festival attendee responded: “Civil rights...Everyone has the right to privacy, whether it’s SMS or a phone call” (Prodger 2009). At the same time his friend sitting next to him quickly responded that, “I just care about the file sharing,” adding, “Sharing is caring” (Prodger 2009). Others are still convinced that the party lacks depth as one festival patron responded, “They do not have any opinion in some very important questions” (Prodger 2009). Even amongst the young, the party remains as unique and divisive. The Pirates discuss issues that speak directly to the 21st century younger voters who have grown up alongside the technology, a unique distinction amongst most political parties.

History: Effects

The same day as the Pirate Bay verdict over 9,000 new members joined the Pirate Party. And by the end of 2009, the Party had over 50,000 members making it the third largest party in Sweden in terms of membership (piratpartei.se). This allowed them to achieve seven percent of the national vote in the 2009 European Parliament elections and gain one (soon to be two) seats in the supranational assembly. And in September of 2010, the Party registered a slightly higher vote total than in 2006 but failed to enter parliament with only 0.65% of the national vote (Swedish Electoral Commission).

And while that membership has since eroded, due to a rule in Sweden requiring yearly membership renewal for political parties, the impact of the Pirate Party has been felt in other areas as
well. Shortly after the Pirate Party emerged the Moderate Party, Left Party and Green Party in Sweden switched their stance on intellectual property and file sharing to a more pro-user standpoint (Kundinoff 2006).

Perhaps the most important effect of the Pirate Party’s success is the spread of the ideology across the globe. Outside of Sweden, the Pirate Party has expanded quickly. Many of the 15 officially registered Pirate Parties (not including Sweden) were founded either directly after the emergence of the Swedish Pirate Party in January of 2006 and after its later success in the European Parliament elections between the fourth and seventh of June in 2009. Below is a chart listing the countries and the founding dates of their respective Pirate Parties. These are all included in this paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Founding Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1-Jan-06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>21-Jun-06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>31-Jun-06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>10-Sep-06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>12-Sep-06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>6-Dec-06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>24-May-08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>12-Jun-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>17-Jun-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>28-Jun-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>12-Jul-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>30-Jul-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>28-Sep-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>4-Oct-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>10-Mar-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>1-Jan-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The trend in the developments across Europe and Canada seemed to suggest that the Pirate Party movement’s early success was driven in large part by the accomplishments (perceived or otherwise) of the original party in Sweden. The quick development, along with the connecting thread of being an internet and technology based political movement, created an environment of cooperation. On April 18, 2010, representatives of 44 nations, with 22 Pirate Parties in total, gathered in Brussels to found the Pirate Parties International (presseurop 2010: see Appendix for PPI members). The impressive part of the movement is that all of the Pirate Parties are united around the three main issues the Swedish party originally espoused. And while their success has been mostly low level outside of the European Parliament victories in Sweden, these Pirates nonetheless represent something new entirely: an international movement begun in cyberspace, about cyberspace.
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The PPI is taxed with acting in the best interest of all its members and increasing awareness of the Pirate Party as a movement and to strengthen its bonds internally and externally (Pirate Party International Statute 2010: 2). The rapidity with which this movement grew and centralized with a founding charter that is more serious than the Party’s moniker leads to one to believe is quite remarkable. And while in total the electoral gains of the separate Pirate Parties have been modest outside of Sweden (local level victories in Switzerland, Germany and the Czech Republic) many will be up for election for the first time this year (such as Finland) with this international community of support.

It is worth examining a few specific cases of the Pirate Parties recent activities in different countries. Briefly, I will delve into three Pirate Parties: Canada, the Czech Republic and Germany.

In Canada, the first country with a Pirate Party outside of Europe, Jeff Coleman a 3D Print Designer ran in the November 2010 federal by election in Winnipeg North (globalwinnipeg 2010). In an interview Jeff was quick to point out the importance of a Pirate Party in Canada: “The specifics of legislation about copyrights and patents and digital media are extremely complicated for the average person. And, in fact, that’s part of the problem. We keep making laws more complicated to regular people” (Globe and Mail 2010). That election ended with Jeff and the Pirates receiving a very modest 94 votes or 0.6% of the 7,303 vote total (electionscanada 2011). A tepid response to be sure, but having a party founded the previous year, and only gaining official status a few months earlier in April 2010, it is still a noteworthy debut for a movement previously only seen participating in European elections. Since then the Canadian Pirate Party has been involved in staging demonstrations in favor of Wikileaks, the “watchdog” website founded by Australian Julian Assange to release secretive and classified information, most recently at the University of Calgary (Constantin 2011).

In the national elections in May of 2010 the Pirate Party of the Czech Republic received over 42,000 votes (European Election Database 2010). Since then, they have also taken an interest in the WikiLeaks saga. The Party launched its very own “Pirate Leaks” in December of 2010 (Willoughby 2010). With the focus on just the Czech government, the Party hopes to replicate the same “watchdog” purpose as the worldwide WikiLeaks. This response is interesting due to how the party co-opted a news story for its political ends. A noteworthy news story is often picked up and applied by a political party. In this case, it is a commitment to ideals (a free and open internet and society) closely related to the Pirate’s original tenets.

In Germany, the Pirate Party has had arguably its best success outside of Sweden. In September of 2009 the Pirates received 2.0% of the national vote (by party list tabulation) (European Elections Database 2010). The German Pirates have also won a few seats in local governments in Hamburg and
Offenbach (PPI 2011). But beyond modest successes in localities, the German Pirates have staged a number of protests as well. One such instance involved a January 2010 protest against airport security scanners that featured Pirate Party members walking through airports in Berlin, Frankfurt and Düsseldorf in their underwear with signs saying, “No need to scan us—we’re already naked” (The Local 2010). Another major protest that the Pirate Party of Germany had its hands in was the formation of “flash mobs” at Angela Merkel’s campaign rallies in 2009 (Hoff 2009). These crowds had formed over the internet, with a large contingent of Pirate members that mockingly called out “Yeah!” after Merkel finished a line from her stump speech. These incidents are the response of the Pirate affiliated German youth to boring and predictable mainstream campaigns. All told, the Pirates of Germany look as if they could be the next country to have a major Pirate breakthrough.

**III. Four Schools of Thought: Literature Review**

With the question of “what conditions are present in an OECD country that would allow for a Pirate Party to form and receive votes?” this paper will use four different strategies in examining why Pirate Parties exist in some nations and not others. The theories included are rational interest, the institutional electoral framework, protest movements, and values formulation. Each will give a different insight into the possible factors that would drive the formation of a Pirate Party.

**Rational Interest Model**

A rational interest model would answer the research question of “what factors contribute to the existence of Pirate Parties in OECD countries” due to its approach of recent experiences shaping behaviors. Rational interest attempts to solve the issues present in a “political culture” model, the natural opposing ideology that contains a highly subjective view of behavior (Whitefield Evans 1999: 130). Political culture puts significant emphasis on normative orientations, or experiences one has from childhood. The familial and social institutions are an important portion of political culture as well, essentially creating a large group of long standing ideas transmitted primarily in the concerned individual’s formative years (Whitefield Evans 1999: 130). In all, political culture sags under the weight of inclusion with too many causal factors.

Rational interest or rational choice, conversely, is more focused on recent developments and influences that are said to shape a person’s political thought. An individual’s personality, coupled with the political and social realities of the recent past, influence their choices for the future (Whitefield Evans 1999: 131). This model argues that individuals construct and reconstruct their own personal behavior and political responses based on the above influences, plus the availability of information, resources and resource constraints.
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Differing from a “political culture” model, the rational choice model puts significantly less stock in cultural entrenchment (Whitefield Evans 1999: 131). National myths and symbols provide a basic context, but contemporary situations influence a person more than an overarching historical narrative does.

For example, a recent economic depression coupled with political and social strife has immediate consequences for a farmer in Nation X. This person is likely to have different concerns than someone in Nation Y who is an entrepreneur experiencing rapid business success. While their respective nation’s histories and cultures may shape them as a whole, the rational interest model dictates that they will be more concerned with immediate issues and future prospects than the past or a national saga (Whitefield Evans 1999: 133). Put another way, a rational actor seeks their “ends,” whether in business or voting behavior, by using strategies that would require the least input of scarce resources (Downs 1957: 4).

For the Pirate Party this would mean there are two potential “ends” with regards to those involved with the movement. The first would be political power. They want seats in national parliaments to achieve their three main policies. The second would be a simple wish to be able to download the latest music, movies and software for free. An explanation rooted more in materialistic self interest, a desire to expand their media libraries greatly for a small investment of time and memory storage. In either case, a rational interest model would state that these individuals organizing and voting for Pirate Parties believe in the policies. And since the party is relatively new, as is the internet, the rational interest model would say that internet culture is a new social experience that people have rallied around, resulting in its formation and successes.

Criticisms of the Rational Interest Argument

While arguing that “political culture” is muted when it comes to individual decision making, the rational interest viewpoint’s simplicity is appealing. However, rational choice does remain connected to, and even somewhat dependent on, the environment in which it was created. For example, someone voting in Chile is going to have a series of structural factors to consider before they cast their vote that may differ vastly from someone in Great Britain. A society recently free of dictatorship might have a different outlook when it comes to protest than an established liberal democracy. In all, rational interest seeks a universality of human decision making. This may make it appear as if it is outside the so called “political culture” because it seeks to avoid “multiplication of unnecessary causal factors” (Whitefield, Evans 1999: 133). And as a model, it should seek to become simplified in order to predict anything. Still,
rational interest cannot hope to escape the ecosystem in which it originated in each country entirely and this must be noted when applying it analytically.

**Structure**

A structural hypothesis argues that the electoral systems of some countries allow for small parties to manifest themselves in government. In this case, proportional representational systems allow for smaller parties to have a voice in government. This hypothesis would answer my question rather simply because the nature of the electoral system gave these parties an opportunity to succeed. The main aspect of the structural hypothesis is Duverger’s Law.

Some classification of the pieces that comprise the structure hypothesis is needed. The first is the difference between majoritarian and proportional representation. While this is a gross simplification, as both contain subcategories, it remains an important difference. The main distinction is how votes are converted into seats. In the simplest of terms, single member districts will create a two party system as potential third party candidates are siphoned off by the top two parties (Duverger 1963: 204). Conversely, proportional representation will create a number of parties beyond SMD’s dualism because of the increased opportunities for seats (Duverger 1963: 245).

Combined with the type of electoral system is district magnitude. Often used as a measure of an electoral district’s “weight,” district magnitude is higher the more seats there are in a given district (Lijphart 1994: 10). For example, the Netherlands has a DM of 150 because the entire country is one district, resulting in high proportionality between the vote and the legislature. District magnitude is one of the main differences among PR systems.

By extending Duverger’s law there are a few ancillary components of electoral systems worth examining. One such component is the effective number of parties by vote and seat in the national legislature. Essentially, effective number of parties calculates the fragmentation of the legislature. The higher the effective number of parties, the more fragmented the legislature is. It is an extension of Duverger due to the fact that countries with higher district magnitudes are likely to have a higher effective number of parties. If the country uses single member districts, the easiest way to also have a slightly higher effective number of parties is to have a substantial amount of districts. (Gallagher Mitchell 2005: 614).

**Criticisms of the Structural Argument**

There are certain detractors who have maintained that this kind of thinking denotes “institutional determinism” where the final outcome is determined by the electoral system alone (Baldini Pappalardo, 2009: 99). The counterarguments are valid and deserve discussion. For one, social
cleavages before the advent of the electoral system impacted the creation of that system. True, interaction of society with the electoral system does produce a clearer picture of why certain parties are elected; it is only because of that combination that such a relationship exists. The data created merely by the examination of an electoral structure would result in an incomplete picture. When it comes to district magnitude or effective number of parties, a basic statistical overview is insufficient. Each country has a unique party system that developed historically and cannot be examined in full by statistics alone. The question remains with a structural argument: why the Pirate Party and not others?

Protest

Alexis de Tocqueville described protest, and the violence of the French revolution, as aspirations growing faster than objective conditions (Dalton 2006: 69). But perhaps a more apt view on the subject is that of British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan who offered the observation that people protest because they've never had it so good (Taggart 1996: 21). In short, a protest hypothesis would answer the research questions in a very direct manner: Controversial issues that attract a contingent of protestors and/or perceived governmental shortcomings could lead to citizens taking action in the form of protest.

The major elements of the protest hypothesis includes the idea that protestors are policy oriented, individualistic (especially with a distrust for centralized leadership), and focused on issue voting (Carter 2005, Taggart 1996: 29, 179). Whether from the left or right, protest also usually takes place within “ideological blocs” rather than wide swings to the opposite side of the political spectrum (Carter 2005: 115). The obvious example is the far right growing out the mainstream right wing parties. One does not see typically see liberal voters jump across the political spectrum to protest in favor of the often racial charged dogma of the far right.

Furthermore, it is often the well educated, younger, left leaning individuals seen as participating in protest politics at a higher rate (Taggart 1996: 155). So while older voters participate at higher levels, anti-establishment acts are seen as the realm of the young. With fewer people voting (and protesting) at the younger levels, it is the individuals well read on a particular topic that often lead new protest movements (McVeigh, Smith 1999: 694).

A protest hypothesis also includes the idea that new social movements come out of a “crisis of modernity” (Edelman 2001: 298). This crisis is a switch in protest from the traditional industrial age protest of labor versus capital towards a more decentralized variety. New social positions have created a complicated picture of protest that means each individual has more than one identity and will seek to espouse their multiple viewpoints. There is a “social democratic consensus” that has pushed many
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advanced industrial nations into new realms of debate (Edelman 2001: 291). The individuals protesting in these movements, similar as to mentioned above, are “enlightened elites” that, combined with new communication technologies such as the internet, are able to organize their new social movements cheaply, reliably, and efficiently (Fisher et al 2005: 104).

The Pirate Party movement may represent the emergence of a new kind of protest via an internet culture. Being tied to internet usage this movement and its growth signifies how it contains many of the above elements denoting protest politics: individualistic, policy oriented relatively new topics, tied to the youth, connected, and organized.

Criticisms of the Protest Argument

A protest vote hypothesis is both complex and incredibly simple. The broad categories of individualism, distrust of centralization, policy oriented, centered on the youth, and idea of “crisis of modernity” play into a protest hypothesis. However, the hypothesis itself feels incomplete. There are hidden variables behind the façade of a label of protest that are mentioned only in passing. For example, if a young person today is protesting a topic of their interest, they could not have simply decided to just protest against for no real reason. It had to have been learned from somewhere, then cultivated and grown within a permissive culture. This is especially true when one considers the aspect of post labor protesting. This is directly tied into the final hypothesis to be discussed: values. With the concepts of “social democratic consensus” and “enlightened elites” used to describe societies that no longer concern themselves with the basic requirements of food and personal security means that Pirate Party formation cannot simply be protest alone. Protest, in the form of new social movements, seems to be tied directly into the values of the society in question.

Values

A values hypothesis is centered on the concept that over the past few decades Western European countries have experienced a shift from concerns over material well being to wanting to improve the quality of life (Inglehart 1977: 3). This hypothesis would answer the research question saying that the rise of Pirate Parties is the culmination of decades of change in Western Europe. The OECD countries have developed differently in the last 40 years than others and as a result, the values systems present in each country facilitated these parties forming. The Pirates could not have existed 40 or 60 years ago because the values in Sweden, not to mention the technologies and material environment connected to such values, have changed. This “Culture Shift” is slow. It will not manifest itself from year to year, but decade to decade.
The values argument is based in an understanding in human needs and the idea of scarcity. The most basic of these needs are the obvious items such as food, water, clothing and shelter. Beyond that, less tangible things are required such as community and feeling of safety (Inglehart 1977:23). This is often found in a family setting. Beyond these most basic of human needs, the desires for things such as friendship and self esteem are needs that require satisfaction. At this point, however, with the basic securities and needs provided for, humans are allowed the opportunity to follow intellectual pursuits. In short: free time.

Coupled with the idea of scarcity comes the concept of socialization. When it comes to politics, groups of people who experience their “times” will have different perceptions about how politics and the government should be run. For example, a society that experiences a crippling depression will vote and support a style of government that focuses on material concerns such as food prices. To take this example further, let’s say that generation’s children and grandchildren grow up in a period of material well being. These children and grandchildren will begin to favor things such as individual improvement over economic concerns, as those are no longer a daily worry (Inglehart: 1977: 23).

This linkage between scarcity and socialization is the crux of the materialist/post materialist or values hypothesis. Post materialists will seek to improve themselves and their communities, main example being intellectual-aesthetic needs because their material concerns (often defined as physical and food security) are met (Inglehart 1977: 363).

These new environments created the opportunity for the Pirates to emerge, as they could not have existed even 20 years ago. For the Pirates of Sweden it is obvious enough as the internet was used primarily in the defense industry (in the form of ARPANET among others) and not a truly a tool for the general public until the late 1990s. Further, the advances made in internet technologies since the early part of the decade are quite astounding. Many proponents of value change say that it is a glacial slow process sometimes, but that hypothesis was formed before one could talk to a friend in Beijing from London instantly. The Pirate movement itself is the meeting of a new internet generation meeting the traditional value changes. The impact of technology on modern young people is staggering and the politics associated with the granting of this great tool have yet to be explored in depth.

**Criticisms of the Values Argument**

This argument has faced opposition primarily from those advocating that values are connected simply to economic well being (Lipset 1981: 31). This change in politics, in “economic” values eyes, does not cure all ails as individuals will still feel relatively deprived (Lipset 1981: 444).
While many democracies also boast advanced economies the economical based values argument leaves an important aspect out: post industrial societies’ penchant for personalization of politics (Inglehart 1977: 253). What values offers is an incredibly slow changing model that takes several election cycles to manifest. A large part of this is education. Young voters, with higher relative education than previous generations, are exposed to a realm of ideas larger than that of their parents, and subsequently pass on such views to the next generation.

A stronger counter to the contention that values are purely based in economics is an economic principle itself: the law of diminishing returns. Eventually, a country in a post industrial state cannot maintain the levels of GDP growth yearly it saw in the transformation from agrarian to industrial (Inglehart 1990: 431). Short term economic fluctuations cannot account for the change European societies have seen in the years following the Second World War. Indeed, some have even been willing to show that countries with strong communal values and ties actually run more successful governments (Putnam 1993: 178). It remains a complicated relationship whereby history interacts with the current layout of the political environment. Sufficed to say, the changing values of the preceding decades have left an indelible impact on current generations of voters.

IV. Hypothesis

From these four schools of thought, rational choice, structure, protest, and values, one is presented with a dizzying array of potential academic options for explaining the appearance of Pirate Parties in OECD countries. Rational choice appears to have an answer through the concept that individuals want to either see their political choices in action, or simply want to download media from the internet and found a party that shares this materialistic concept. However, rational choice is too isolated in time to give a clear answer. Structure seems logical, as Duverger’s Law shows the distinction in electoral systems makes the difference whether parties are represented or not. Nonetheless, it cannot explain why Pirate Parties have formed and not others. A protest argument could be made, simply based on the news footage of Pirates in various countries, but there are factors behind protest that make it possible. As a result, one is left with values as the only possible hypothesis. It is encompassing enough to be show that at present, Europe has, and is, going through a slow values change that has made it possible for such a party to emerge. The interplay of a stable economy, progressive social beliefs, and the impact of technology and the internet created a values system that facilitated the Pirate Party’s rise and expansion across Europe and to Canada.

I believe I will find that values change, the result of decades of social change, is the reason why the Pirate Party was elected to the European Parliament.
V. Data

The four hypotheses being tested (rational interest, institutional, protest, and values) require a number of variables to determine the cause of Pirate Parties appearing since the first in Sweden in 2006. The countries selected as cases include the 34 OECD countries for their relative uniformity politically and economically. This may result in smaller ranges when it comes to the data selected but those differences may explain the appearance of registered Pirate Parties in one country over another.

With regards to calculating the likely probability of a Pirate Party forming, logistical regressions will be used to calculate the effects of specific variables from each hypothesis on the existence of a Pirate Party. The dependent variable, “Pirate Party” is coded to either 0 (no party) and 1 (Pirate Party exists).

The following variables will be used:

For rational interest, internet users per 100 (out of the total population) will be used due to its suggestion that a larger internet community within a specific country would directly relate towards the emergence of Pirate Parties. The measure has been used in communications studies, particularly in Eszter Hargittai’s study on explaining internet differences in OECD countries (1999).

The institutional hypothesis will include the following variables: whether or not a nation has proportional representation in its electoral system and the effective number of parties (calculated by a formula created by Michael Gallagher of Trinity College in Dublin) as it will show whether or not the electoral system in question allows for a variety of parties to be represented in the national legislature. Both have been used extensively in Political Science particularly in Michael Gallagher and Paul Mitchell’s book *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (2005).

Protest will include the World Values Survey question asking about the “Confidence” in the national parliament. For the purposes of this paper, a “lack of confidence” will be used, comprised of the “little to none” or “none at all” categories to achieve a view of general dissatisfaction that might lead to the growth of new or small parties. The World Values Survey confidence index has been used repeatedly in a number of studies including Kenneth Newton’s “Trust, Social Capital, Civil Society and Democracy” (2001). Additionally, the turnout percentage of the last major national legislative election in each country will be used. Lower turnouts could possibly lead to smaller, bizarre, parties because of the lack of interest in the mainstream left/right parties that often dominate.

Finally, the values variable is made up of the four item post materialist index created by Inglehart which has been used repeatedly since the 1970s primarily in *Silent Revolution* and *Culture Shift* (1977, 1990). Countries that have higher post materialist scores will obviously put more importance in
“expanding political rights” and “free speech” over the safety and security items in Inglehart’s index. This obviously makes these countries more likely to have political parties with concerns that are more eclectic.

VI. Results

In this results section, I will first describe the findings associated with a bivariate model for each variable of interest. These results are presented in Table 2. I will then present the results of models that include a set of predictors to see how these various theories stack up against each other when put to statistical test. These more substantial models are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Rational Interest

There appears to be some degree of significance when it comes to the existence of a Pirate Party compared to internet users per 100. However because this variable fails to reach significance at the conventional standard of 95% confidence, this suggests that there are other factors at work. One would have supposed on face value that high internet usage relates directly into Pirate Party formation, but it appears as if there is only a partial relationship.

Institutional

When the existence of a Pirate Party is run against the electoral system indicator of proportional representation, the probability of a relationship is high, but not terribly significant. This seems to suggest that electoral system alone, (broadly defined) does not dictate the existence of Pirate Parties. While closely tied to proportional representation, effective number of parties by seat is similarly close in terms of a highly probable relationship but not significant by itself.

Protest

Lack of confidence in the national parliament clearly does not result in the emergence of registered Pirate Parties as bivariate logistic regressions between the two results in extremely low probability. Turnout also shows a weak relationship, with a considerably lower probability than lack of confidence. Clearly, the two variables chosen for protest do not show a significant relationship when it comes to protest voting. We thus see no evidence that existence of Pirate Parties rests singly on a protest movement that arises when satisfaction with the government is low.

Values

Of all the variables tested in a preliminary round of analysis, the one with by far the most significance is the post materialism index. It is the only one that has statistical significance within the standard 95% confidence interval. And the effect, as outlined by the theoretical discussion above, is positive. The emergence of Pirate Parties must be tied to societies in which the need for basic
necessities and securities has been achieved and the focus politically shifts towards newer concerns. The results here are detailing that, in the case of the Pirate Party, a focus on these new concerns creates an environment in which Pirate Parties can form.

**Controls**

Gross Domestic Product per capita will serve as a nice control for a final regression as it tiers the OECD countries by income and asks whether or not wealth determines the existence of irregular parties like the Pirate Party. By itself, however, it is not quite significant. It remains noteworthy and will be examined in a final regression.
TABLE 2
Logistical Regressions for the existence of a Pirate Party: Bivariate Analysis

| Variable                          | Coefficient | Standard Err. | P>| z | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-----|
| Internet Users                    | 0.0475402   | [0.0245644]   | 0.053|
| Per 100                           |             |               |     |
| Proportional Representation       | -1.290984   | [0.9238014]   | 0.162|
| Effective Number of Parties (Vote)| 0.4711808   | [0.2743648]   | 0.086|
| "Lack" of Confidence (WVS)        | -1.37696    | [2.302591]    | 0.55 |
| Turnout: Last Legislative Election| 0.7739148   | [2.961316]    | 0.794|
| Post Materialist Total (WVS)      | 18.87586    | [7.934152]    | 0.017|
| Gross Domestic Product Per Capita (USD) (Control) | 0.0000664 | 0.000382 | 0.082 |

Number of Observations: Internet: 34, PR: 34, Effective Number of Parties: 33
Lack of Confidence: 34, Turnout: 32, PM: 33
TABLE 3
Logistical Regressions for the existence of a Pirate Party : Final Test

| Variable                           | Coefficient | Standard Err. | P>| z | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-----|
| Internet Users Per 100            | 0.0736585   | .0474463      | 0.121|
| Proportional Representation       | 0.4580378   | 1.395185      | 0.743|
| "Lack" of Confidence (WVS)        | 0.3917661   | 3.543809      | 0.912|
| Turnout: Last Legislative Election| -5.89808    | 5.917558      | 0.319|
| Post Materialist Total (WVS)      | 33.23771    | 16.75542      | 0.047|
| Gross Domestic Product Per Capita (USD) (Control) | -0.0001348 | .0000925 | 0.145|

Number of Observations: 30
### TABLE 4
Logistical Regressions for the existence of a Pirate Party: Final Test With No PR Variable

| Variable                                             | Coefficient    | Standard Err. | P>| z | |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|-----|
| Internet Users Per 100                               | 0.0238572      | [0.486536]    | 0.624 |
| "Lack" of Confidence (WVS)                           | -1.728002      | [4.213913]    | 0.682 |
| Turnout: Last Legislative Election                    | -14.33939      | [8.67898]     | 0.098 |
| Effective Number Of Parties (Seat)                   | 1.315462       | [.6677819]    | 0.049 |
| Post Materialist Total (WVS)                          | 41.5646        | [19.42711]    | 0.032 |
| Gross Domestic Product Per Capita (USD) (Control)    | -0.0000977     | [.0000856]    | 0.254 |

Number of Observations: 30
Final Test and Conclusions

By combining all the above variables, there can be a test to see if the above bivariate logistic regressions hold. By combining a host of variables into a single model, we create competition among explanations and test them statistically. The difference between the two models is the degree of nuance gained by using effective number of parties over proportional representation. As the structure hypothesis stated, PR would result in more parties emerging. However, there is a difference between a coded 0 and 1 variable and how fractured the electorate is. As such, Table 4 provides this nuance.

After examining the results, two conclusions emerge. First, post materialism remains extremely significant, especially under the controlling nature of GDP per capita and other influences. The second, effective number of parties becomes relevant and significant when run together with the other variables. And although turnout approaches significance, at a much higher probability than in the bivariate analysis, it remains too low to account for Pirate Parties forming.

The data seems to suggest that the existence of Pirate Parties in OECD countries is due to values and it is also partially an institutional story. Countries that have high post materialist scores, and have a high number of parties receiving seats in national elections could possibly lead to the formation of Pirate Parties. With regards to the effective number of parties, it is an interesting story as it shows that proportional representation alone cannot account for the formation of this small party in the countries examined. However, it is important to remember that despite the significance of effect number of parties, it alone cannot explain Pirate Parties. More apt would be to say that a post materialistic values system, coupled with a fractured electorate, gives way for Pirate Parties to form.

Case Studies on the Data

As the data suggests, there appears to be a high correlation between the existence of Pirate Parties and post materialism, with effective number of parties as an ancillary component. It is worthwhile to examine two case studies in this regard. They are both cases that exemplify my data at opposite ends of the spectrum. One has high post materialist scores and an elevated effective number of parties with a Pirate Party. The second has both low post materialist scores and effective number of parties and no Pirates. After an examination of the dataset, there are a few potential candidates on both sides. Perhaps the most illustrative examples, however, are Austria and Hungary with the former representing the more ideal and the latter the counterpoint.

Austria

Compared to some of its Germanic Pirate relatives, the Austrian Pirate Party has remained relatively quiet. The election that they most recently contested was the March 2010 elections in the city
of Bregenz, running four candidates and obtaining 1.62% of the vote (austriantimes.at 2010). The party updates its website frequently, often coinciding with major events in the realm of the internet. Recently, the news has been focused on Wikileaks, but there have been other issues covered such as the “internet kill switch” and a controversial data retention program (heiseonline 2011, Libbenga 2011). The Austria Pirates protested fiercely against this data retention program, which allows for two years of traffic and location information, shutting down the Vienna Ringstrasse for about an hour in 2007 (Libbenga 2011).

More importantly for the purposes of this paper, the Austrian case typifies the change seen towards post materialist society in recent decades in terms of both effective number of parties and, obviously, survey responses favoring post materialism.

The electoral system story has to begin after the conclusion of the Second World War. With Austria reuniting and acquiring independence in 1955, a system of proportional representation has been used to elect members to the National Council. Today, there are nine multi member constituencies, represented by seven to 36 individuals, with a four percent national threshold (ipu.org 2010). Interestingly, what followed, despite the PR system present after the conclusion of the war, was 30 years of two party rule in which the Social Democrats and Austrian People’s Party routinely shared around 90% of the national vote (Luther 1999: p.126). However since the 1980s, the legislature has become increasingly fragmented. Instead of a 2.09 effective number of parties by seat in 1945, today has doubled to 4.27 (Gallagher 2010). This opening is the very structural story detailed above in the theoretical sections and supported in the data. Larger electoral openings do translate into Pirate Parties forming.

The reasons for these “electoral openings,” though, are the result of larger changes within Austria during this period. Understandably, as detailed by the security aspect of post materialism, Austrians would seek some measure of stability when initially voting after the destruction two major modern wars wrought. By the time a generation of individuals raised in peace and in the midst of the economic miracle, or Wirtschaftwunder, had grown up, Austria was a very different place. A changed occupational structure, growth in cities, education and social mobility had led to an Austria looking at different priorities in politics (Luther 1999: p. 130). One could even argue this began in 1983 with the emergence of the Green Party in the National Council. In short, in a few brief decades we have seen an Austria change from its conservative post World War II roots into the advanced and technologically savvy country of today. This situation typifies the main points proposed by the literature on the subject of post materialism: take care of basic security and have a generation come of age in that time and the focus in politics will shift. When coded statistically for the emergence of Pirate parties, this supposition
holds up. Austria is one of the countries that remains a potent example because its post materialist scores (29.6%) are the highest of the countries included in this paper. Coupled with a relatively high number of political parties, it is little wonder why some Austrians have gone pirate.

**Hungary**

One of the countries within the study without a Pirate Party, Hungary is the other end of the spectrum. At present, it is a country of extremely low post materialist survey scores and very low effective number of parties. Both will be examined to explain why Hungary lacks the environment for a Pirate party to form at present.

Hungary’s electoral structure is a mixed system. There are 176 single member constituencies, 20 territorial multimember constituencies (electing 146 Deputies) with the final number of Deputies chosen from national lists (ipu.org 2010). The single member constituencies have voters cast two votes, one for individual candidates and a second for a party list. There are a number of percentage stipulations that complicate the system to a certain extent, the requirement that at least 25% of a constituency votes or that election has to be run again is one, but the case of Hungary can best be described as a mixed system. This creates salient district magnitude differences between Austria and Hungary that Duverger would note. As Hungary has recently only had democratic elections since 1990, there is a small sample to work with. Despite this, the effective number of parties over time are interesting to note. There has been a marketed decline in effective number of parties by vote, while by seat consistently remain around 2.00 or slightly higher (Gallagher 2010).

In terms of post materialism, Hungary is the counterpoint a country such as Austria. Living through 50 years of Soviet caretaking, Hungary did not experience the *Wirtschaftswunder* of many western European countries following the conclusion to the Second World War. Indeed, Hungary even lacked adequate sanitary facilities for 40% of the population in 1984 (Sillince 1990: p. 19). With economic equality, and even basic sanitation lacking for a large majority of the population up until the fall of the iron curtain in the early 1990s, Hungary’s citizens did not have their basic requirement of safety taken care of. With economic and social developments (namely the lack of an open political system for half a century) in recent years this trend may slowly reverse. One could argue that the Hungary is a generation or two behind countries such as Austria. While Austria and other post materialist nations have had peace, political and economic development in the last half century, former Soviet countries lived under oppressive political systems and inefficient economies. Austrians, for example, had two or three generations to settle after the tribulations of two wars. For Hungarians, the war’s consequences are just finally being overcome. Regardless, the Pirates have yet to manifest
themselves in Hungarian politics because of the low legislative fragmentation and low post materialism scores. This remains an interesting split between both sides of the Iron Curtain in the present day.

**VII. Discussion and Conclusions**

When it comes to the Pirate Party formation, the picture is not complete. However, one can say that it is probably the combination of electoral institutions and value change, not simply values alone as my hypothesis stated.

And while there is a high relationship between effective number of parties and values systems, it is foolhardy to conclude that the statistics presented herein are sufficient explanation to sum up 34 countries and their respective electoral and social systems and histories. With the time and resources available to me, I examined only a small portion of what made the Pirate Party successful. Looking ahead, I would suggest an in depth local level analysis with the different counties of Sweden on both the Pirate Party and 21st Century political issues. This would allow a more complete picture on what is categorically a grassroots movement of the youth.

For now, the Pirate Party represents a new party in the growing fissure of European politics. With the Greens and radical right, perhaps even the satirical “Best Party” of Iceland, the frozen party oligarchy of the 19th century faces new challengers in the electorate. Will this melting trend of “frozen parties” continue, or is the pattern simply cyclical? The story presented in this paper was an examination on what factors allow for a small political movement to appear across the globe. If nothing else, the Pirates are one of the first serious iterations of a political movement arising out of the incredibly dynamic system that is the internet and a reminder of the importance the electoral and social environment can play in creating political movements.

With a number of Pirate Parties also facing their first elections this year, it will be interesting to watch and see if the Pirate movement can continue, as that is the real question going forward: will the success and development of this international party movement continue? Or are they a “flash party” that is now on the wane? One quick glance through the bibliography of this paper shows the important part the internet played in its assembly, which is fitting. A quick glance around any classroom in on any college campus will show the impact technology has had just in academia. The applications in business and finance and up to even diplomacy are being affected and changed in a fundamental way by the internet. A trend that is likely to continue unabated.

How far we have come in information and communication technologies in two decades is staggering even to those who have grown up alongside it. The Pirate Party may have been early in dealing with the nature of this new technology, in addition to the concept of ownership in a truly global
marketplace, but these issues will not fade. You can’t stop the signal. Data can be saved, copied, and uploaded, whether it is the latest Hollywood blockbuster or a series of government files. All of us, politicians included, will have to decide what to do with these tools as we advance in this 21st century.
Appendix

Data used for regressions was compiled from a variety of resources. The source of each variable for the different schools of thought follows.

**School/Variable**

**Rational Interest**

**Internet Users Per 100**: World Bank Indicators; Internet Users Per 100. Data is from 2008.

**Structure**

**PR**: Coded 0 or 1 after examining each electoral structure on IPU Parline Database looking for general PR indicators.

**Effective Number of Parties (Vote)**: Calculated by using Michael Gallagher’s Excel Spreadsheet and election data used from Adam Carr’s Election Archive and the European Election Database.

**Protest**

**“Lack” of Confidence**: Added the “Not Very Much” and “None at all” categories of WVS survey question dealing with confidence in public institutions. The specific question wording and options are listed below. Survey data was from the 1999/2000 and 2005 studies, based on country availability.

**Turnout**: Used Adam Carr’s Election Archive and European Election Database.

**Values**

**PM Index**: Previously calculated figure used in WVS online analysis. Original question used to determine four item index is below. Survey data was from the 1999/2000 and 2005 studies, based on country availability.

**Control**

**GDP Per Capita**: Used CIA World Factbook’s individual country economic data. Data for all countries were 2010 estimates.
World Values Survey Questions

Confidence: Parliament

“V140.- I am going to name a number of organisations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all? Parliament”

Possible Answers:

- 1 A great deal
- 2 Quite a lot
- 3 Not very much
- 4 None at all
- -1 Don’t know
- -2 No answer
- -3 Not applicable
- -4 Not asked in survey
- -5 Missing; Unknown

Post Material Component Question (The four Item Index is calculated by how respondents rank answers in the following question):

“V71.- If you had to choose, which one of the things on this card would you say is most important? And which would be the next most important?”

- 1 Maintaining order in the nation
- 2 Give people more say
- 3 Fighting rising prices
- 4 Protecting freedom of speech
- -1 Don’t know
- -2 No answer
- -3 Not applicable
- -4 Not asked in survey
- -5 Missing; Unknown

The even numbered responses are associated with the “Post-Materialists,” and the odd are with “Materialists.”
Appendix, Continued

Finally, I have included the members of the OECD for reference as well as the current members of the Pirate Party International.

Appendix Table 1: Members of the OECD

| Australia | Finland | Italy | Poland |
| Austria   | France  | Japan | Portugal |
| Belgium   | Germany | S. Korea | Slovakia |
| Canada    | Greece  | Luxembourg | Slovenia |
| Chile     | Hungary | Mexico | Spain |
| Czech Republic | Iceland | Netherlands | Sweden |
| Denmark   | Ireland | New Zealand | Switzerland |
| Estonia   | Israel  | Norway | Turkey |
|           |         |       | United Kingdom |
|           |         |       | United States |

Appendix Table 2:

Current Members of the PPI

| Australia | Italy |
| Austria   | Kazakhstan |
| Belgium   | Luxembourg |
| Brazil    | Netherlands |
| Bulgaria  | Portugal |
| Czech Republic | Romania |
| Denmark   | Russia |
| Finland   | Serbia |
| France    | Spain |
| Germany   | Switzerland |
| Ireland   | United Kingdom |

As a final note, all Swedish websites consulted were translated using Google Translate. As it is not a perfect translation, efforts were made to ensure the exact meaning was established.
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<www.nsd.uib.no/european_election_database/>. Note: Used for Election Results.


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