

POSITION, SALIENCE, AND OWNERSHIP THEORY AND THE PIRATES: THE RISE  
AND FALL OF AN ATYPICAL PARTY

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## ABSTRACT

CLAIRE GREENSTEIN: Position, Saliency, and Ownership Theory and The Pirates: The Rise and Fall of an Atypical Party  
(Under the direction of Milada Vachudova)

Even if niche parties are not in government, they still affect politics, making it important to understand what causes niche parties to succeed or fail. Bonnie Meguid (2007) created Position, Saliency, and Ownership theory (PSO) to argue that the fate of Western European niche parties depends mainly on the strategic combinations that mainstream parties employ against niche parties. In this thesis, I test Meguid's theory on the Swedish and German Pirate Parties. I find that the Swedish Pirates largely conform to PSO theory, but I argue that the German Pirates' fortunes are better explained by the party's organization. This thesis makes two main contributions: it tests Meguid's theory on two parties whose fortunes could not have informed the theory, and it adds to the literature that looks to party organization to explain party trajectories by introducing the idea that some parties contain within themselves the seeds of their own destruction.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDU: Christian Democratic Union

CSU: Christian Social Union

FDP: Free Democratic Party

FRA: Försvarets Radio Anstalt, or Defense Force Radio Center

IPRED: Intellectual Property Rights Enforcement Directive

SPD: Social Democratic Party

## INTRODUCTION

Niche parties, parties that campaign mainly on new and crosscutting issues and avoid traditional political themes, are constantly changing the political landscape of Western Europe. Even when niche parties do not win seats in governments, they can still affect politics, as mainstream parties often decide to address new issues in response to niche parties' campaigns. This has had the effect of introducing new dimensions to mainstream political life; environmentalism and immigration became important issues in many European nations thanks to niche party efforts. Since niche parties can have such an impact on politics, it is important to understand what factors cause niche parties to succeed and fail. Most literature accounts for niche parties' rise and fall by turning to institutional and sociological variables for explanations, but these factors are oftentimes too static to account for a party's rise and fall, which is a dynamic process. For this reason, Bonnie Meguid's theory of niche party success and failure is both a much-needed and innovative approach to explaining why niche parties' support varies over time and, consequently, why some niche parties succeed and others fail.

Meguid (2007) theorizes that, at least in Western Europe, a niche party's trajectory is determined by the tactics that mainstream parties employ in reaction to niche parties. Meguid labels her approach Position, Salience, and Ownership (PSO) theory, and calls it a variation on the spatial theory of party competition. Essentially, Meguid's argument is that mainstream parties employ dismissive, accommodative, or adversarial strategies against niche parties, and a niche party's fate depends mainly on these strategic combinations. She uses quantitative methods

to demonstrate that these strategies affect niche party trajectories, and then presents three case studies to support her thesis.

Recently, however, an atypical niche party has emerged in Western Europe: the Pirate Party (PP). Founded in Sweden in 2006, the Pirates have spread across the world, campaigning on issues of Internet freedom, governmental transparency, and participatory democracy. The fact that the Pirates have introduced a new political issue, the Internet, does not make them a unique niche party. However, their organizational structure, commitment to transparency, and focus on participatory democracy is unique. The Pirates' commitment to transparency and participation is evident in the importance of the party base's opinions, the way elected Pirates act while in office, and the leadership's public statements. For example, internal party decisions are made using Liquid Feedback, an online platform where Pirates can propose, debate, and vote on all Party decisions. This responsiveness to the party base is also evident in the way elected Pirates act; Pirates in state Parliaments let their constituents vote online on governmental proposals, and party discipline is not as important to the Pirates as it is to mainstream parties. Similarly, Pirate Party leaders have avowed that they are merely mouthpieces for the party base and have no legitimacy for independent action on the party's behalf. In fact, recent attempts made by German Pirate Party leaders to steer the party cohesively have angered the party's base. Clearly, the Pirates' unorthodox structure and principles set the party apart from traditional parties, both niche and mainstream.

I argue that these unique characteristics make it impossible for Position, Saliency, and Ownership theory to fully explain the Pirates' trajectory. In this article, I test Meguid's theory on the Swedish Pirate Party, or Piratpartiet, and the German Pirate Party, or Piratenpartei. I find that Position, Saliency, and Ownership theory largely holds in the case of the Swedish Pirates. The



Piratpartiet's electoral results declined when mainstream parties all employed accommodative strategies against the Pirate Party, as Position, Salience, and Ownership theory predicts, although the effectiveness of these strategies and the Pirates' electoral success was heavily influenced by current events, which Position, Salience, and Ownership theory does not explicitly address. However, Position, Salience, and Ownership theory does not explain what happened to the German Pirate Party. Consequently, I suggest that when theorizing about the trajectory of certain niche parties, it is important to consider their internal characteristics, particularly their values and organizational structure. Party organization is mentioned occasionally in the literature as a contributing factor in parties' trajectories, but the evidence presented in this thesis indicates that the impact of party organization needs to be taken more seriously, particularly in the case of niche parties, as do the practical implications of a party's professed values. The determining factor in the Piratenpartei's trajectory is the party's own internal makeup; namely, its commitment to individuality, transparency, and participation. These values made the Pirates internally disorganized and gave them a propensity to air party infighting publicly, which alienated voters and kept the Pirates from functioning effectively. Analyzing a niche party's internal characteristics, particularly its level of organization, will improve future analyses of niche parties, especially when these niche parties are committed to increasing governmental transparency and citizen participation or turn to the Internet to help them organize, attract members and voters, and engage in politics.

Ultimately, my thesis contributes to the existing literature in two ways. First, this thesis is an outside test of Meguid's theory of niche party success/failure. This test provides an interesting hurdle for Meguid's theory, because although the Pirates fit her definition of a niche party and are located within her theory's geographical constraints, the Pirates formed after Meguid

designed her theory. Thus, this thesis tests this theory on two parties whose fortunes could not have informed the theory, thereby providing a strong test for the generalizability and veracity of Position, Saliency, and Ownership theory. Next, I show that while Meguid's theory does travel to a certain extent, it is also important to consider the impact of party organization when seeking to explain or predict political parties' success and failure. Therefore, I contribute to the literature that looks to party organization to explain party trajectories by introducing the idea that some parties contain within themselves the seeds of their own destruction. Party organization is briefly mentioned in the literature on the success and failure of various political parties, yet this thesis shows that party organization should be considered more thoroughly when analyzing the fortunes of niche parties. Particularly in the age of the Internet, where party disorganization can be more easily observed and have a more immediate impact on parties' fates, the idea that certain parties are the architects of their own demise is an idea worth considering.

This thesis proceeds in four stages: I start off by introducing the Pirates, their history, their issues, and their voters. Second, I discuss Meguid's theory in greater detail. Third, I test Meguid's theory on the Swedish and German Pirates. Fourth, I assess the factors behind these parties' trajectories and discuss the implications of my findings. I aim to demonstrate that the mainstream parties created strategies aimed at the Pirates, show how these strategies influenced the Pirates' electoral support, and establish to what extent the Pirates controlled their fate.

## **THE PIRATES: WHO ARE THEY, WHAT DO THEY WANT?**

In this section, I provide information on the history of the Pirate movement, its goals, and the characteristics of Pirate Party voters. The Pirate Party was founded in Sweden on January 1, 2006, by Rickard Falkvinge, a Swedish entrepreneur and Information Technology professional. Falkvinge established the party in response to the Swedish government's moves to strengthen

copyright law and the European Parliament (EP)'s resolution to begin saving telecommunications data that would allow governments to identify and prosecute Internet users who violated copyright law (Bartels 2013, 18-19). Falkvinge's decision to call the party the Pirate Party was a nod to using the word "pirate" as a negative term for people who illegally download and distribute copyrighted content on the Internet. This tongue-in-cheek party moniker also hints at two of the Pirate Party's goals: establishing an unrestricted Internet and abolishing many existing copyright and patent regulations. While most Swedes use the Internet,<sup>1</sup> the issue of internet freedom resonated most with younger Swedes, 41% of whom (ages 16-24) reported engaging in peer-to-peer file sharing (P2P) in 2007 (Statistics Sweden 2007, 193).<sup>2</sup> Additionally, it was a group of young Swedes that founded The Pirate Bay (TPB), a website that facilitates P2P. Swedes make good use of The Pirate Bay; when The Pirate Bay's servers went down in mid-2006, internet traffic in Sweden decreased by 20% (Schmitt and Stöcker 2006). Clearly, the Pirates had a large potential constituency in Sweden.

While the Pirates ended up winning a paltry 0.63% of the votes in the 2006 Swedish Parliamentary elections, far below the 4% necessary to win a seat, their message was seen as electorally relevant enough to be picked up, at least in part, by several mainstream Swedish parties (Bartels 2013, 21). Additionally, the Pirate movement traveled to Germany, where the German Piratenpartei was founded in Berlin on September 10, 2006. Since then, the Pirates have spread across the world. Pirates have won city council seats in multiple countries, mayoral positions in Switzerland and Iceland, state parliamentary seats in Germany, a senate seat in the

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<sup>1</sup> In 2006, 84% of Swedes ages 16-74 said they had used the Internet in the first quarter of the year (Statistics Sweden 2007). In 2011, nearly 90% of Swedes reported using the Internet at least once a week (Statistics Sweden 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Over 800,000 Swedes in older age groups said they had engaged in P2P (Statistics Sweden 2007, 193).

Czech Republic, and seats in the European Parliament. While most of the Piratpartiet's offshoots are in Europe, there are registered Pirate Parties in countries as diverse as Israel, Tunisia, and Uruguay. However, the German and Swedish Pirates are the most electorally successful branches to date.

While the Swedish Pirate Party focused primarily on issues of copyright law, the German Pirate Party has expanded to become a party that stands for internet freedom, civil liberties, reduced government intervention in citizens' lives, expanding democratic participation, and more governmental transparency (Bartels 2013, 25-6). Bartels cites this as an important reason for why the German Pirates experienced more lasting success than the Swedish Pirates (2013, 27-8).

While the Pirates captured the attention of only a few Germans in 2006, membership skyrocketed in 2009—the Pirates began the year with 870 members and ended the year with over 11,000 (Statista 2012).<sup>3</sup> This sudden upsurge of the Pirate Party in Germany surprised many Germans. Before 2009, the few people who were aware that Germany's Pirate Party even existed mainly viewed the party as a joke, not a viable party (Trentmann 2009).

However, the German Pirates benefited from three specific events in 2009: a law proposed by CDU politician Ursula von der Leyen that would ban German internet users from accessing child pornography, the European Parliament elections, and SPD parliamentarian Jörg Tauss' transferring his party membership to the Pirates (Bartels 2013, 28; Niedermayer 2013a, 35, 37). The furor over van der Leyen's proposed ban on child pornography websites gave the Pirates' profile an initial boost. Internet-savvy citizens saw this ban as the beginning of a slide

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<sup>3</sup> The German Pirate Party has nearly 34,000 members as of March 2013 (Statista 2013).

towards abolishing internet freedom<sup>4</sup>—what would prevent the government from banning other, non-pornographic, sites in the future? The Pirates were the only party that voters knew would be wholeheartedly against internet censorship. Additionally, the Internet ban caused Jörg Tauss to switch from the SPD to the Pirate Party in protest of the SPD's support for van der Leyen's proposal (Niedermayer 2013a, 37).<sup>5</sup> This garnered more media attention for the Pirates and gave them the allegiance of an experienced, visible politician.

The European Parliament elections were also important, because the Piratpartiet garnered 7.1% of the Swedish vote, enabling the Pirates to take two of Sweden's 18 seats in the EP. This gave the Pirates electoral credibility and caused many Germans to reconsider their assessment of the Pirates as a frivolous, unelectable party (Bartels 2013, 28). Importantly, these elections happened mere months before the 2009 German Bundestag elections, which meant that the image of the Pirates as an electable force was still in voters' minds in September.

While the Bundestag election results revealed that the Pirates had failed to reach the 5% threshold necessary for inclusion in parliament, by garnering 2% of the vote they had leapfrogged more established niche parties to become Germany's seventh most popular party (and the party with the most voter support of those that failed to meet the 5% threshold). After the Bundestag elections, the Pirates competed in multiple state elections, where they won between 1.6% and 2.1% of the votes (Niedermayer 2013a, 34). In September 2011, the German Pirates experienced their first breakthrough: they stunned political analysts by winning 8.9% of

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<sup>4</sup> An additional criticism of van der Leyen's proposal was that it would not stop child pornography, because there are ways to access blocked websites, and most child pornography in Germany is not hosted on websites. The law's opponents, including the Pirates, advocated erasing the websites instead of blocking them. (Greif and Pößneck 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Tauss' sudden allegiance was a mixed blessing for the Pirates; although Tauss was still a member of Parliament and his support drew attention, he was under investigation for possessing child pornography (Niedermayer 2013a, 37).

the vote in Berlin's Abgeordnetenhaus election, which gave them 15 of the 141 seats in Berlin's state parliament. This marked the start of a wave of success for the Pirates, whose popularity and membership grew throughout most of 2012. The Pirates went on to win seats in subsequent 2012 Landtag elections: 4 seats in Saarland, 6 seats in Schleswig-Holstein, and 20 seats in North Rhine-Westphalia. This wave of popularity was reflected in nationwide opinion polls, as well; in April 2012, national support for the Pirates had risen to 12%, and 30% of Germans said they could picture themselves voting for the Pirates in the future (Axel Springer AG 2012).

Nevertheless, the question remains as to why voters were enamored with the Pirates. Ulf Bjereld of Gothenburg University identified internet freedom as part of "a new cleavage in Swedish politics, about civil liberties.... The traditional parties have... underestimated the political potential in these issues" ("Swedish Pirates" 2009). Carsten Schymik agreed, saying that internet issues are indeed politically salient in Sweden (Waleczek 2009). The Pirates' supporters are often young, disinterested voters, unemployed, and less educated<sup>6</sup> (Oscarsson and Persson 2009). Swedish males are more likely to vote for the Party than females, and Pirates say they are attracted to the Pirate Party partly because they are against government internet censorship, which they believe threatens citizens' rights ("Swedish Pirates" 2009).

While the German Pirates' voter profile is similar to that of the Swedish Pirates (young, male, and internet-savvy, but, unlike Swedish supporters, well-educated), Bartels writes that voters' concern about the Internet does not have as much explanatory power for the Pirates' success in Germany as in Sweden (Axel Springer AG 2012; Bartels 2013, 17; Niedermayer 2013b, 70; Piratenwiki 2012). The most common explanation for the Piratenpartei's success is

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<sup>6</sup> Oscarsson and Persson write that the Pirates' supporters might tend to have less education than the typical Swedish voter because so many of the voters are young and therefore have not yet completed their education (Oscarsson and Persson 2009, 243).

that the Pirates attract protest votes. Approximately 81% of Germans believe the Pirates succeeded because they are distinct from other parties (Axel Springer AG 2012). German polling agencies have attempted to assess this view's validity. After analyzing the results of a poll conducted by Infratest dimap, researchers ascribed 42% of the Pirates' support to protest voters (Schönenborn 2012). In contrast, researchers designated only 14% of the Pirates' support as coming from voters who selected the Pirates based on "concrete programmatic or content-based issues" (Schönenborn 2012).<sup>7</sup> Other results from this poll are similar. When Pirate Party members were asked whether they supported the Pirates out of conviction or out of disappointment with other parties, 72% of respondents said they supported the Pirates out of disappointment, compared to only 22% who cited conviction.<sup>8</sup>

Niedermayer cautions that protest votes do not mean that voters are acting irrationally or that dissatisfaction with politics is a bad reason to vote for a party (2013b, 72). He argues that "protest voting and issue-based voting should not be seen as mutually exclusive motives," and that voters may support the Pirates because of the party's commitment to "transparency and participation" (2013b, 72). A poll of Piratenpartei members lends support to this argument; while 82% of Pirate Party members polled in 2011 said they joined the Pirates in part because they were unhappy with existing parties, 58.4% said they joined partly because they support

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<sup>7</sup> Another 23% were placed in the category of those who vote for the Pirates because they want to bring "fresh wind into politics" (Schönenborn 2012). This category cannot be merged with the previous two, as the desire for new ideas could be interpreted either as a protest against existing ideas or approval of the Pirates' ideas.

<sup>8</sup> These results cannot be explained away by arguing that perhaps few Germans vote due to satisfaction with their chosen political parties—when members of the CDU/CSU, the SPD, Die Linke (the Left), and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Alliance 90/The Greens) were asked whether they voted for their respective parties because of conviction or disappointment, at least 56% of these parties' respondents said they supported their parties out of conviction, compared to, at most, 42% of respondents who supported a party due to disappointment (Infratest dimap 2012).

enhancing transparency, and a further 76.7% cited “defense and strengthening of citizens’ rights” as a reason for their allegiance to the Pirates (Neumann 2011, 101). Additionally, Debus and Faas demonstrate that the desire for more direct, representative democracy led to higher positive feelings about the Pirate Party than did dissatisfaction with democracy or interest in the politics of internet usage<sup>9</sup> (2013, 207-8). Thus, while the term “protest” helps explain the Piratenpartei’s popularity, this does not mean that Pirate voters are disregarding political issues.

Just like the Swedish Pirates before them, though, the Piratenpartei’s popularity has plummeted. In April 2013, German polling agencies reported that just 2-3% of Germans would vote for the Pirates if the Bundestag elections were to happen next Sunday, down from highs of 11-13% in April 2012 (Zicht and Cantow 2013a, Zicht and Cantow 2013b, Zicht and Cantow 2013c). Position, Saliency, and Ownership theory offers one explanation for why both the Swedish and German Pirates experienced initial electoral success and then declined dramatically mere months later, while much of the other literature on niche parties’ trajectories looks to institutional, sociological, or organizational factors for explanations, which Meguid discounts.

### **THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF POSITION, SALIENCY, AND OWNERSHIP THEORY**

In this section, I outline Meguid’s Position, Saliency, and Ownership theory and its connection to the party competition literature, present the mainstream party strategies she identifies, and discuss her definition of niche parties. Additionally, I offer a brief summary of the literature that looks to organizational factors to explain niche parties’ trajectories, because the fate of the Piratenpartei is better explained through the lens of organizational theories.

Meguid’s Position, Saliency, and Ownership theory is an amended version of the spatial theory of party competition. According to spatial theory, parties compete with each other by

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<sup>9</sup> This variable was found to have no effect on voters’ opinions of the Pirates (Debus and Faas 2013, 207).



changing their positions on certain issues, which can be conceptualized as moving up and down on an issue dimension or moving within a set issue space (Budge and Farlie 1978; Downs 1957). By converging or diverging on policies, political parties hope to attract new voters and depress their competitors' vote shares. Meguid says that this model does not apply well to mainstream/niche party interaction, because niche parties do not operate on established issue dimensions. This forces mainstream parties to expand their strategic repertoire beyond convergence and divergence and focus on attempting to control the salience of the niche party's core issue and/or coopt the niche party's ownership of this issue. This alteration of spatial theory also means that parties can compete with parties that are not ideologically proximal, meaning that niche parties can face competition from parties at any position on the political spectrum. (2007, 22)

Meguid writes that, assuming that parties are operating in a system where they compete on issues, voter support depends on three factors: the party must have a salient issue, its position on this issue must be appealing, and the party must be seen to have ownership of its stance on this issue (2007, 14). In the case of single-issue niche parties, fulfilling all of these factors is crucial, because the party has no other issue dimensions on which to compete (2007, 14). Thus, mainstream parties' strategies towards niche parties focus on weakening the niche party's hold on one of these factors (2007, 27-8).

Meguid discusses possible strategies in detail. The first strategy mainstream parties can employ is an accommodative strategy, which coincides with Downs' idea of policy convergence. In this situation, parties adopt the niche party's stance on a particular issue, at least to some degree, in an attempt to siphon off voters who might otherwise vote for the niche party (2007, 24). Mainstream parties can also employ an adversarial strategy, which is when they decide to

diverge from the niche party's stance on an issue (2007, 24). This pushes voters towards the niche party (2007, 24). These strategies are based on the perception that voters pick parties based on how close the party's position on an issue is to their own opinions and that parties position themselves accordingly.

However, as Budge and Farlie (1983) explain, the salience of an issue is also important. Voters may be positionally similar to a party on an issue, but this does not affect a voter's behavior if the voter does not view the issue as important (Meguid 2007, 25). Thus, mainstream parties can engage in strategies that downplay or accentuate the salience of a niche party's issue. Meguid writes that ignoring a new issue can help reduce the issue's salience, and she calls this a "dismissive strategy," whereas adopting a position on an issue heightens the salience (2007, 28). Parties that select a stance close to that of the niche party are employing an accommodative strategy and hoping to weaken niche party support by coopting the niche party's ownership of the issue (Meguid 2007, 28). Conversely, mainstream parties can select an adversarial strategy, in which they come out against the niche party's stance on an issue and thereby raise the issue's prominence. (Meguid 2007, 28) If the niche party's position is an attractive one, an adversarial strategy boosts the niche party's vote share (Meguid 2007, 29).

Finally, mainstream parties can also try to take over the ownership of a niche party's issue. Issue ownership is important, because when more than one party holds the same position on an issue, voters cannot use party positioning to decide which party to support. Instead, voters look to see which party "owns," or has the most credibility, on an issue, and they cast their votes for that party (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Trilling 1976). An adversarial strategy cements the niche party's ownership of an issue, an accommodative strategy allows the

mainstream party to steal the issue from the niche party, and a dismissive strategy has no effect on issue ownership (Meguid 2007, 30).

Meguid also mentions organizational and institutional strategies available to mainstream parties. Organizational strategies can involve mainstream parties' weakening the niche party by stealing away niche party elites or by creating an electoral agreement or coalition with the niche party (2007, 30). Alternatively, mainstream parties can strengthen the niche party by prohibiting electoral or coalition agreements with the niche party and by attempting to demonize the niche party (Meguid 2007, 31). Because we do not see institutional strategies in the case of the Pirates, I do not mention them here.

All of these strategies come with caveats, as Meguid says: first, mainstream parties are hemmed in by their own actions and positions on issues. They suffer more electorally when they adopt an ideal anti-niche party strategy that conflicts with their identity than when they adopt a suboptimal strategy that lets them remain consistent on policies (2007, 25-6). Second, parties have a limited amount of time during which they can credibly steal ownership of an issue. Once a niche party has competed in a national election in a unitary state or a subnational election in a federal state, Meguid says that mainstream parties must turn to organizational and institutional strategies. (2007, 37)

When selecting a strategy, Meguid says that mainstream parties will assess the threat the niche party poses to the mainstream party, which is measured by "the ratio of [the mainstream party's] vote losses to the niche party relative to its mainstream party opponent's vote losses" (2007, 92). Parties also assess their internal cohesiveness, reputation, the current electoral situation, and other parties' actions before selecting a strategy. Importantly, these strategies are not affected just by situational and institutional constraints; they also interact with each other to

produce different outcomes for the niche party. When mainstream parties employ dismissive strategies, support for the niche party should decrease (Meguid 2005, 350). Additionally, niche party support should decrease when at least one mainstream party employs an accommodative strategy while another employs a dismissive strategy, when all mainstream parties employ accommodative strategies, when all mainstream parties employ adversarial strategies, and when one party employs an accommodative strategy and another adopts an adversarial strategy, provided the accommodative strategy is dominant (Meguid 2005, 350). In contrast, niche party support is predicted to increase when at least one mainstream party employs an adversarial strategy while another employs a dismissive strategy and when at least one party adopts an adversarial strategy and another party adopts an accommodative strategy, provided the adversarial strategy is dominant (Meguid 2005, 350). Additional information on Meguid's predictions and detailed hypotheses is available in her 2005 article and her 2007 book (Meguid 2005, 350; Meguid 2007, 108).

Since Meguid's theory revolves around niche parties, it is important to establish what she means by this term.<sup>10</sup> Meguid's definition of niche parties has three components. Firstly, niche parties eschew the traditional class cleavage, so instead of campaigning on the standard economic dimension, they focus their campaigns on issues that are new to the political arena. Secondly, niche parties' core issues are crosscutting, which lets niche parties draw voters from both sides of the left-right partisan divide. Finally, niche parties do not take stances on a wide range of policies, leaving them with a platform that addresses a very specific set of issues or

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<sup>10</sup> The literature contains alternative definitions of niche parties. Adams et al. (2006) offer a less rigorous definition. Wagner (2012) offers another that, while an improvement on Meguid's definition, is not necessary to include in this thesis, because since I am testing Meguid's theory it makes sense to use her definition, and because the Pirates qualify as a niche party in both Meguid's and Wagner's definitions.

issue. Meguid argues that these characteristics make niche parties fundamentally different from mainstream parties and other parties that are new to the political arena. By this definition, Green parties, radical right parties, and ethnoterritorial parties are all niche parties. (2007, 3-4)

Although Meguid's focus on parties' strategic actions is relatively novel, it is not unprecedented. She writes that while "consideration of the strategic behavior of parties is relatively rare in studies of new party success," Bale 2003, Carter 2005, Givens 2005, Harmel and Svasand 1997, Hug 2001, Kitschelt 1994, and Rohrschneider 1993 have all looked at the effects of party strategy on party success (2007, 14). Mudde (2011) can be added to that list, as well. However, Meguid's analysis is noteworthy due to its statistical and descriptive rigor and expansive theory. In addition to Position, Salience, and Ownership theory, the literature provides three other explanations for niche party success and failure: institutional variables, sociological variables, and organizational variables. Meguid argues that institutional and sociological variables cannot account for the electoral successes and failures of niche parties as well as mainstream parties' strategies can. She offers quantitative and qualitative support for this assertion, showing that these largely static factors have little purchase on explaining a dynamic process. I concur with Meguid's argument for why institutional and sociological theories do not explain niche party success and failure; consequently, I do not include those theories here. Having examined the institutional, sociological, and internal party explanations, Meguid concludes that the strategies that mainstream parties employ towards niche parties are the most important determinants of niche parties' fortunes.

While institutional and sociological theories are too static to explain a party's dynamic trajectory, some of the literature on organization helps inform my theory about the fate of niche parties. Meguid does not identify the internal characteristics of niche parties as being a decisive

factor when it comes to niche parties' success or failure, because she says these internal characteristics are not independent variables, but rather are influenced by mainstream parties' actions towards niche parties (2007, 14). Nevertheless, there is support in the literature for using parties' internal characteristics, such as party leadership and organization, to help account for party success and failure. De Witte (1998) and Husbands (1998) put forward arguments prioritizing the explanatory power of party organization when it comes to explaining the success of radical right parties, and this viewpoint finds empirical support in Lubbers et al. (2002). Carter puts forth a similar argument in her 2005 book on extreme right parties in Western Europe, where she finds that extreme right parties are more successful when they have strong leadership and are well organized (97). Petithomme (2008) identifies party organization as an important factor in explaining various Green parties' electoral successes and failures, as well, and Kitschelt (1995) cites organization as important to party success more broadly. While these previous studies dealt with Western Europe, Tavits (2012) says organization is key to party success in postcommunist countries, too. Therefore, it seems that party organization helps explain party success and failure, and I argue that it is crucial to understanding the Piratenpartei's trajectory.

### **TESTING MEGUID'S POSITION, SALIENCE, AND OWNERSHIP THEORY**

Having explained the nuts and bolts of Meguid's theory, I now proceed to test it. I test Position, Salience, and Ownership theory on the Swedish Pirates first, and I follow that with an analysis of the German Pirates. In the case of the Swedish Pirates, we see Meguid's theory in action—non-threatened parties pursue policies of accommodation and dismissal, and electorally threatened parties stick to accommodation even when the current salience of an issue is low, so as to maintain credibility. However, in the case of the German Pirates, the Pirate Party's own disunity is the main cause of its decline. Ultimately, I argue that Meguid's theory is much better

at explaining what happened to the Swedish Pirates than to the German Pirates, and that the Piratenpartei's internal characteristics explain its trajectory better than Meguid's Position, Salience, and Ownership theory does. While it is impossible to read every statement every mainstream party official made about the Pirates or to know what strategies party officials were selecting behind closed doors, I have endeavored to interpret events and present an accurate picture of the Pirates' rise and fall.

### **THE SWEDISH PIRATES: ACCOMMODATED AND DISMISSED**

I start by testing Meguid's theory on the case of the Swedish Pirates. I will trace the Pirates and the mainstream parties' strategic responses starting at the Pirates' inception and ending with their fall from popularity. In the case of the Piratpartiet, Position, Salience, and Ownership theory would predict that the Pirates should have enjoyed initial success, due to mainstream parties' lack of ownership of the internet issue and inability to credibly employ accommodative strategies. This is indeed what happened. Then, I find that as current events shifted attention away from internet issues, the mainstream parties were able to effectively employ accommodative strategies, even though Position, Salience, and Ownership theory predicts that accommodative strategies should not have worked well after the mainstream parties' actions undercut their credibility on the Pirates' issues. However, the lack of attention to internet issues let mainstream parties combine accommodative strategies with dismissive strategies, and, as Position, Salience, and Ownership theory predicts, this combination lowered support for the Pirates. Table 2 contains a summary of these results.

Rickard Falkvinge founded the Pirate Party a mere nine months before the 2006 Swedish Parliamentary elections were due to take place. The Pirates posed no electoral threat at this point, so, as Position, Salience, and Ownership theory predicts, the mainstream parties ignored the

Pirates. However, the party began acquiring attention and relevancy on May 31, when there was a raid on The Pirate Bay. Swedish police confiscated The Pirate Bay's servers, temporarily shut down the website, took three of The Pirate Bay's administrators into custody, and eventually charged them and one other person with copyright infringement. Suddenly, the issues of file sharing, internet freedom, and internet privacy, which had not been championed by mainstream parties, were thrust into the spotlight, and Pirate Party membership skyrocketed (Piratpartiet). The furor continued to grow due to allegations that the raid might have been illegally instigated at the request of Swedish politicians, and that the Swedish politicians were acting under pressure from the United States. While Swedish politicians denied these claims, the public was furious. File sharing, which had lacked the political salience necessary to attract mainstream parties' attention, was now a hot political topic relevant to many Swedes—a Sifo poll conducted in 2006 revealed that 48% of respondents supported legalizing free downloads of copyrighted music and movies, and in December the Swedish Statistics Bureau revealed that 20% of Swedes engaged in file sharing activities (Jannerling 2006; Larsson 2006).

The Pirates were perfectly positioned to attract votes on this issue, leaving the mainstream parties scrambling to figure out how to prevent electoral losses. Position, Salience, and Ownership theory predicts that mainstream parties will decide which strategies to employ against a niche party based on the relative electoral threat posed by the niche party, but given the newness of the Pirate Party, mainstream parties could not know which parties were most threatened by the Pirates. Thus, mainstream parties could not play off each other and respond to one party's accommodative strategy with an adversarial strategy of their own so as to increase the Pirates' legitimacy and thereby force a rival party to lose more votes. The alternative option would be a dismissive strategy, but, given the potential salience of this issue, mainstream parties



did not feel that they could employ dismissive strategies—the Internet was in the public consciousness as a political issue, and trying to downplay it entirely would cause voters to lose faith in the mainstream parties’ abilities to address voters’ concerns about file sharing, privacy, and internet freedom. Following Meguid’s logic, employing entirely dismissive strategies would hand the Pirates full ownership of internet issues and reduce the likelihood that the mainstream parties would be able to credibly employ accommodative tactics and coopt the Pirates’ ownership of internet topics in the future (2007, 37). According to Position, Salience, and Ownership theory, this left the mainstream parties with one uniformly optimal option: accommodation.

This is exactly the strategy that mainstream parties pursued. There is ample evidence of this; after the raid on The Pirate Bay, members of mainstream parties did not wait long to express concern about the privacy implications of laws they had previously supported. The Left Party and Moderate Parties said they wanted to either change or abolish the reigning anti-file sharing law they had rejected changing the year before; perhaps not coincidentally, young members of the Liberal, Left, and Moderate parties expressed more support for illegal file sharing than young members of other parties (Eriksson 2006; “Sweden Could” 2006). On June 7, Fredrik Reinfeldt, the Prime Minister and leader of the Moderate Party, said, “We cannot chase an entire generation of young people” (Eriksson 2006). The Green Party also modified its views on copyright law so as to bring them closer to those of the Pirates (Bartels 2013, 21). While Thomas Bodström, the justice minister and a member of the Social Democrats, had been a leading proponent of legislation that made it illegal to download copyrighted material, and although he said he still supported the existing law, he, too, expressed willingness to hear “new suggestions” on the issue (Ekman 2006; “Sweden Could” 2006). Swedish information-technology historian Lars

Ilshammar assessed the situation this way: “We’re talking about as many as one million potential voters that the political parties now have discovered. Suddenly they feel the need to treat them with some care” (Ekman 2006). The mainstream parties moderated their views on illegal file sharing and copyright law, hoping to seem more appealing to potential Pirate Party voters. These actions show that the mainstream parties were employing accommodative strategies, which is what Position, Saliency, and Ownership theory predicts the mainstream parties should have done in this situation.

These accommodative strategies had their desired effect: the Pirates ended up with a mere 0.63% of the vote in the national elections, far less than what was needed to enter the Swedish Parliament. While the Pirates were pleased with their result, given that they had had very little time to organize and campaign, Bartels writes that mainstream parties’ accommodative strategies took “decisive electoral wind out of the sails” of the Pirates (2013, 21). The Pirates’ unremarkable results align with Meguid’s theory. However, it is plausible to argue that the Pirates’ results could be due to the fact that the Pirate Party had existed for only nine months at the time of the elections and was competing on an issue without universal appeal. Nevertheless, this alternative explanation weakens over time, as the Pirates’ fate in subsequent elections reveals more support for Meguid’s theory.

With the Pirates seemingly lacking saliency in Swedish politics, most Swedish political parties felt free to pursue copyright and monitoring laws that were contrary to the stances they professed in 2006. 2007 was an uneventful year in for the Pirates, but in 2008, the mainstream parties moved forward with their plans to create a law that would require Internet Service Providers to give courts data on internet users suspected of engaging in illegal file sharing (“Lagen om” 2008). Although the law did not pass that year, Justice Minister Beatrice Ask and

Culture Minister Lena Adelsohn Liljeroth, members of the Moderate Party, came out in support of the law, saying it was important to protect the rights of copyright owners (Lindberg and Reh binder 2010; “Sweden Plans” 2008).

Also, in June 2008, the Swedish Parliament passed the FRA (Försvarets Radio Anstalt, or Defense Force Radio Center) law, a package of “wiretapping laws giving intelligence authorities wide latitude to intercept cross-border e-mails and phone calls on grounds of national security” (Chu 2009). This sparked popular criticism, particularly from Swedish youth—even the youth wings of parties that supported the bill were critical of FRA (Khan 2008; “Swedes Outraged” 2008). The Social Democrats, the Left Party and the Green Party were openly critical of the law, but the governing parties—the Moderate Party, the Liberal People’s Party, the Christian Democrats, and the Center Party—all voted for the law, and were openly identifiable as parties in support of what was seen as an invasive legislative package (Hernadi, Nilsson, and Bynert 2008; Landes 2008). The Pirate Party seized this opportunity to scold the mainstream parties and parade its Internet credentials (Olsson 2008a). Many mainstream politicians seemed overwhelmed by the popular backlash; in a September poll, some Conservative Parliament members indicated that they wished to revisit the bill, partly because “you can not ‘ignore the Swedish people’” (Olsson 2008a).

Still, the damage was done—by pursuing tougher anti-piracy laws and passing FRA, most Swedish political parties spent 2007-2008 undermining their own credibility on internet and privacy issues. The only sizable parties not tainted by supporting these laws were the Green Party and the Left Party. Meguid would predict that the events of 2007-2008 should prevent the mainstream parties, with the exception of the Greens and the Left, from being able to draw votes away from the Pirates through accommodative tactics. Consequently, Position, Salience, and

Ownership theory says that in order for the mainstream parties to be able to keep the Pirates from being electorally successful, the governing mainstream parties and the Social Democrats should employ dismissive tactics, while the Greens and the Left should adopt accommodative strategies and seek to challenge the Pirates for ownership of internet issues. In reality, the governing mainstream parties and the Social Democrats did not pursue dismissal, the optimal strategy. All mainstream parties attempted to accommodate the Pirates in 2009, with ineffective results. This miscalculation on the part of the governing parties and the Social Democrats is crucial in explaining why the Pirates did so well in the 2009 EP elections.

In 2009, exogenous events generated massive interest in the Pirates and their issues. This did not bode well for the mainstream parties, most of whom had squandered their opportunity to coopt the Pirates. The first gift for the Pirates was the FRA law, which had generated significant controversy in 2008. FRA's implementation in January 2009 brought citizens' attention back to the issue and reminded them of the frustration they felt when the law was initially passed.

The second notable event occurred in February, when the Swedish Parliament approved the implementation of IPRED (Intellectual Property Rights Enforcement Directive), a European intellectual property rights law (Thoren 2009). IPRED "allows copyright owners to go to court to get information from ISPs about suspected file sharers" (Olsson 2009c). This law was also controversial; in March 2009, nearly 80% of male Swedes ages 15-29 said they were opposed to IPRED, as did a majority of Swedish men ages 30-49 (Olsson 2009b). However, the government passed the bill in February, identifying the Moderates, the Liberals, the Christian Democrats, and the Centre Party as IPRED supporters (Olsson 2009a). The Left Party and the Green Party viewed IPRED as threatening to Swedes' privacy, while the Social Democrats supported IPRED's principles but believed the law needed modifications (Olsson 2009a). The Pirates

framed IPRED as an invasion of privacy and said the Swedish government was moving towards a Big Brother state (Olsson 2009d).

The final windfall for the Pirates was the culmination of the Pirate Bay trial, which ended on April 17. The district court in Stockholm convicted the defendants of assisting in copyright infringement, and it sentenced them to pay approximately \$3.5 million in damages and serve one year in prison (Olsson 2010a). This angered many Swedes, and 6,000 people joined the Pirates overnight (Olsson 2010a). Pirate Party membership continued to skyrocket—by the day of the European Parliament elections, the Pirate Party had 48,880 members, up nearly 40,000 since the start of the year (Pirateweb 2013). Mainstream parties reacted to this membership spike by attempting to accommodate the Pirates' main issue: internet freedom (Sullivan 2009). However, Anders Rydell noted that the Pirates had “moved the main focus from file sharing to personal integrity on the Internet. That meant they could successfully attract people concerned that we are headed towards a Big Brother society,” and, of course, the mainstream parties lacked the credibility they needed to wrest ownership of internet issues away from the Pirates (Sullivan 2009).

As Position, Salience, and Ownership theory predicts, the mainstream parties' accommodative tactics failed, and the Pirates ended up with 7.1% of the vote in the EP elections. The Pirates drew most of these votes away from left-wing parties (Bjereld and Oscarsson 2009). The Centre Party, the Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats, the Left Party, and Junilisten all suffered losses, while the Greens' and the Pirates' results improved dramatically (Valmyndigheten 2011). These results are important even though this election was an EP election; Meguid writes that “even if the results of an EP election are not expected to be replicated in the votes for national parliamentary candidates, they do capture the issue interests

of the voters” (2008, 123). Fittingly, a 2010 study by Erlingsson and Persson shows that the Pirates were attracting ideological votes, not protest votes (138). According to Erlingsson and Persson, voters selected the Pirate Party because they had strong opinions about internet privacy and believed that the Pirates were strongest party on issues dealing with internet privacy and freedom (148, 2010). A voter survey confirms this—online privacy/file sharing came in second as voters’ top concern in the EP elections (Statistics Sweden 2010, 196). Thus, the Pirates’ successful EP elections show that the Pirates’ issues resonated with Swedes, meaning that the Pirates and their issues merited the mainstream parties’ consideration.

The Swedish Greens never stopped taking the Pirates seriously. They had already matched their copyright policies to the Pirates’ policies, and they continued accommodating after the elections, employing organizational accommodation when they welcomed the Pirates to the European Parliament and invited them to join the European Parliament’s Green Party Bloc (Phillips 2009; Wester 2011a; Wester 2011b). They also continued to emphasize that the Greens were ideologically close to the Pirates (Ferm 2009). The Greens knew that the Pirates were their main competition for the youth vote, and since youths are more likely to care about issues related to the internet and file sharing, the Greens are acting as Meguid predicts: employing an accommodative strategy to establish credibility on the niche party’s issue and coopt votes. Having the Pirates join the Greens in the European Parliament was a coup for the Greens, as it legitimized the Green Party’s stances on internet issues in the eyes of Pirate Party voters. This should help attract Pirate voters in future elections.

The Pirates had high hopes for the 2010 Swedish Parliamentary elections. Unfortunately for the Pirates, the mainstream parties mainly employed dismissive tactics, which Position, Salience, and Ownership theory would predict to be the optimal strategy for every party aside

from the Greens. These dismissive tactics, accompanied by a lack of externally stimulated interest, combined to consign the Pirates to just 0.65% of the vote. In 2010, issues that had garnered attention for the Pirates in 2009—file sharing, IPRED, and FRA—had faded from view, as members of the Center Party and the Social Democrats admitted (Olsson 2010b; Olsson 2010c). By delaying the implementation of a controversial data retention bill passed in the EU Parliament earlier that year, the conservative government stymied the Pirates’ best shot at riding public outcry into the Swedish Parliament (Olsson 2009d). According to Marie Demker, the ruling parties were aware that they would not benefit from publicizing issues of copyright, internet freedom, privacy, and piracy (Olson 2010a). Mikael Sundström agreed that the mainstream parties were acting in their own interests by ignoring internet issues, because “none of the parties have something to gain from the issue, but they can only lose votes to either the Pirate or possibly the Green Party” (Olsson 2010b).

Sundström’s comments point to the fact that, aside from the Greens, the mainstream parties had all acted in ways that prevented them from being able to credibly coopt the Pirates. Highlighting an issue they could not hope to coopt would be self-defeating. Similarly, the fact that the Greens continued to publicize their stance on internet issues is as expected, given that their voter profile is similar to the Pirates’ and pursuing an accommodative strategy was the Greens’ best shot at coopting Pirate voters. However, the fact that the other mainstream parties ignored the issues central to the Pirates’ platform enabled these parties to suppress the Pirates. Thus, the mainstream party actions central to Position, Salience, and Ownership theory, coupled with a lack of timely events highlighting internet issues, account for the Pirates’ disappointing electoral results.

In summary, Position, Salience, and Ownership theory fares well when tested on the Piratpartiet. This case study has shown how mainstream parties that were not electorally threatened by the Pirates pursued accommodative and dismissive strategies, as appropriate, which weakened the Pirates' support. Additionally, potentially electorally threatened parties remained accommodative so as to maintain their credibility and forestall electoral losses to the Pirates, thereby weakening the Pirate Party. Mainstream parties' strategies cannot fully explain the Pirates' results, however; current events also played a role, as they sometimes helped and sometimes harmed the mainstream parties and the Pirates. When events that increased the visibility of internet issues occurred close to elections, the Pirates achieved better results than when internet issues were not well-publicized.

There are certainly alternative explanations for the Pirates' rise and fall. It is possible to argue that they may have disappeared due to their inability to remain visible to voters, that the issues on which their party was based were too weak to be the foundation for a party, or that they ran their course and would have disappeared anyway. I argue that the Swedish Pirates were less incompetent than merely unfortunate; the German case offers a much better example of collapse due to internal factors than the Swedish Pirates do. In terms of the Internet and privacy issues being a poor foundation for a political party, Swedish academics have indicated that the privacy issue the Pirates addressed would last in the political arena, whether or not the Pirates remained (Olsson 2008b; Tallberg 2009). Additionally, these issues affect the lives of millions of Swedes, so the potential for political success is there; whether a party manages to harness this potential and is permitted to sustain that momentum is another matter. The last alternative argument, that the Pirates' decline was inevitable, is impossible to discredit, although the information in the



case study indicates that mainstream party strategies and current events affected the timing of the Pirates' decline, if not its eventuality.

Nevertheless, the data presented in this thesis cannot fully refute these arguments. Ideally, I would make my argument with more individual level data on voters' decisions and individual voter volatility, as well as internal party documents about mainstream parties' strategy sessions on how to respond to the Pirates. Such documents might paint a different picture than the one I have presented. However, having analyzed the available information, I have done my best to demonstrate that the mainstream parties designed specific strategies to respond to the Pirates, that these parties' strategies and decisions on internet laws directly affected the Pirates' electoral support, and that the Pirates were not entirely masters of their own fate. Next, I analyze the trajectory of the German Pirate Party, which I argue cannot be explained by any of the existing theories, but which can be understood in light of the Party's unique values and organizational structure.

### **THE PIRATENPARTEI: VICTIM OF ITS OWN FAILURE**

In the case of the Piratenpartei, Position, Salience, and Ownership theory does not account as well for the party's decline. German mainstream parties' initial strategic combination should have reduced the Pirates' support, but it did not. Then, when the Pirates did decline, the events surrounding the Pirates' fall in popularity provide a much more immediate, direct link to this rapid decrease in support. Thus, I argue that the Piratenpartei's fall is due to internal factors, not mainstream party strategies, and I show how the Pirates' disorganization and self-destructive tendencies explain the party's decline. For a summary of party strategies employed in Germany, see Table 3.

Inspired by the Swedish Piratenpartiet, 53 Berliners founded the German Pirate Party in 2006, but the party received next to no attention, either from the media or mainstream German parties, until 2009 (Niedermayer 2013, 33-4). The Pirates broke into public consciousness due to an internet censorship law proposed by Ursula von der Leyen, a member of the CDU and of Merkel's cabinet. The ruling coalition, the SPD and the CDU, supported the law, while the opposition parties (the FDP, die Linke, and the Greens) initially did "nothing and then emitted little more than a soft whimper" (Niedermayer 2013, Stöcker 2009). While dismissing the Pirates and their issues was logical at the time, since the Pirates did not seem to pose an electoral threat to any of the mainstream parties, this dismissal had consequences. Due to the mainstream parties' dismissive tactics, the Pirates were the only party able to harness public outrage against the law, allowing them to cement their ownership of internet and privacy issues. Thus, the mainstream parties missed their best chance to credibly coopt the Pirates' themes of internet freedom, privacy, and transparency.

Although internet and privacy issues were not Germans' central concerns in the 2009 European Parliament elections, they made enough of a splash for the Pirates to get 0.9% of the votes, which was more than the Pirate Party had received in any previous state election (Niedermayer 2013, 36). Also, the Swedish Pirates' European Parliament election success, coupled with prominent SPD member Jörg Tauss' resignation from the SPD and entrance into the Pirate Party out of protest against the internet censorship law, helped keep the Pirates in the media spotlight during the run-up to the 2009 Bundestag elections (Niedermayer 2013, 38). The increases in media attention and party membership did not automatically translate into electoral success, however, partly because the Pirates lacked the financial resources necessary to launch a large campaign for the Bundestag (Niedermayer 2013, 40). Still, the Pirates managed to win 2%

of the votes in the Bundestag elections, enough to gain the attention of Chancellor Angela Merkel, who remarked, “we must take up the dialogue with the Pirate Party’s voters” (Niedermayer 2013, 42).

The Pirates had grabbed the SPD’s attention, as well. In a speech at the November 2009 SPD Federal Party Convention, Franz Müntefering, then the chairman of the SPD, said of the Pirates’ electoral results, “We will have to attend to this more intensively” (9). At the same conference, Thomas Schuler, a delegate from Saxony, cautioned that if the SPD did not begin taking the Pirates seriously, it might repeat the mistake it had made with the Greens, “which cost [it] young voters for a long time and left room for the development of a new party” (“Protokoll” 2009, 145). What Schuler is alluding to here is also something Meguid points out—accommodative strategies, when mainstream parties can successfully coopt a niche party’s issue, are most effective for a limited time period, and Position, Salience, and Ownership theory predicts that failure to employ timely accommodative strategies helps niche parties succeed. Clearly, members of the SPD realized that swift cooptative action against the Pirates was the best strategy.

Nevertheless, this concern about the Pirates did not translate into prompt strategic action on the part of the mainstream parties. This is likely due to the fact that the Pirates posed no immediate electoral threat, plagued as they were with an initial loss of media attention, mounting money troubles, party infighting, and negative press brought by prominent member Tausch’s conviction on charges of possessing child pornography (Niedermayer 2013, 42-3). In the only state election of 2010, that of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), the Pirates failed to meet their goal of winning 2% of the votes, and the media began disregarding the Pirates (Niedermayer 2013, 43). The Pirates began 2011 in a similarly mediocre manner, although they hoped that a

broader policy platform, written in November 2010, would bolster their political credentials and attract voters (Niedermayer 2013, 43-4). Nevertheless, the Pirates failed to get more than 2.1% of the votes in the 2011 elections in Hamburg, Saxony-Anhalt, Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland Palatinate, Bremen, and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

However, the Pirates' fortunes improved dramatically in September 2011, when they won 8.9% of the votes in the Berlin Landtag elections. Oscar Niedermayer writes that mainstream parties' inaction was crucial to the Pirates' success; "established parties underestimated the Pirates for too long, and when a possible success for the party began to loom, the top candidates of the other parties—Klaus Wowereit (SPD), Frank Henkel (CDU) and Renate Künast (Greens)" responded incorrectly (2013, 46). Commentator Markus Hesselmann agreed, saying, "the CDU, the Greens, and the SPD blew even more wind into the Pirates' sails" (2011). These results align with Position, Salience, and Ownership theory's predictions.

Polling agency Infratest dimap's post-election analysis revealed that the Pirate Party drew most of its support from former non-voters, but it also drew significant numbers of voters away from other parties ("Wahl zum Berliner" 2011). The Pirates pulled 23,000 voters from former non-voters, 17,000 from the Greens, 14,000 from the SPD, 13,000 from Die Linke, 6,000 from the FDP, 4,000 from the CDU, and 22,000 from other sources ("Wahl zum Berliner" 2011). Meguid says that what matters most is relative electoral threat, not the basic fact that one party loses votes to another. Thus, although the CDU did lose votes to the Pirates, its main rival, the SPD, lost more. Therefore, the CDU's best strategic option would be adversarial, so as to promote the Pirates' endurance and keep pressure on the SPD. In contrast, the SPD, Greens, and Die Linke would be best served by accommodative strategies, which could help coopt Pirate voters. The FDP's optimal strategy is less clear-cut. It lost fewer voters to the Pirates than some

other parties, and thus should seem ideally placed to pursue an adversarial strategy, but because the FDP was hemorrhaging voters, it might wish to pursue an accommodative strategy to try to draw voters away from a new, disorganized party. Regardless of the strategies the mainstream parties chose after Berlin, this election signaled that the Pirates could no longer be dismissed. Because the Pirate Party posed an electoral threat to all other parties, albeit in varying degrees, Position, Salience, and Ownership theory states that the parties should abandon dismissive strategies in favor of accommodative or adversarial strategies.

After Berlin, the SPD recognized that its largely dismissive strategy towards the Pirates was a failure. In 2011, the district of Hessen-Süd lamented the SPD's failure to address the problems of internet censorship and freedom, writing that while many members of the SPD are against blocking internet sites, "unfortunately we were unable to establish this view in the national party. This gap offered the Pirate Party the chance for a remarkable start in the Bundestag election" ("Jahrbuch" 2011). Also in 2011, the district of Weser-Ems wrote that when it came to internet politics and understanding how important these issues are to young voters, "the SPD has committed considerable errors," and that "the issue of internet politics was not taken seriously enough," which helped the Pirates electorally ("Anträge" 2011, 430). The SPD acknowledged that the Pirates had also been strengthened by mainstream parties' failure to respond to voters' desire for transparency and participation in politics, and resolved to reignite an initiative for more direct democracy that was formulated with the Greens in 2002 ("Ordentlicher" 2011, 5).

The minutes of the 2011 Convention reveal more information about the SPD's proposed tactics for dealing with the Pirates; Ralf Stegner, member of the party's Executive Committee, said that "we do not need Pirates in Parliaments. We, too, can take care of such issues [of

participation and social networks], and we must do that so that young people do not run away from us” (“Protokoll” 2011, 130). Party member Björn Böhning echoed this sentiment, saying, “we want to be the strongest internet party in Germany” (Bücker 2011). Thus, it seems the SPD was belatedly embarking on an accommodative strategy. The delay between the Pirates’ creation and the SPD’s concerted response posed problems for the SPD’s credibility on issues dealing with the Internet, participation, and transparency, however. By linking its future efforts to a 2002 initiative, the SPD was trying to show that its positions on transparency and direct democracy were credible and cohesive with the Party’s identity, not a disparate policy crafted to fight the Pirates. However, while its new strategy was largely accommodative, it did not completely legitimate the Pirates, so as to establish the SPD as the best choice for internet-savvy voters. For example, while Sigmar Gabriel, the head of the SPD, admitted that established parties should learn from the Pirates, he also said that the Pirates were incapable of governing, devised simplistic solutions, and viewed the world as black and white (Vogt 2011).

The 2011 Berlin election prompted the Greens to take the Pirate Party seriously, as well. The Greens had had chances to take ownership of the internet issue, but because they had deprioritized it, by 2011 the media and the public looked to the Pirates first when it came to the internet, which cost the Greens voters (Ludwig 2011). Jürgen Trittin, head of the Green Party, said after the Berlin election that the Pirates’ success “is structurally the most difficult problem that accrued for us out of this electoral result” (Bergt and Schulte 2011). In Berlin, 17,000 former Green voters switched to the Pirates, and the Pirates continued to attract people from groups that the Greens counted on for support (Bergt and Schulte 2011). One Green politician commented that the Pirates “are flesh of our flesh” (Bergt and Schulte 2011). Thus, Position, Salience, and Ownership theory predicts that this electoral threat should cause the Greens to adopt an

accommodative strategy. The Greens were accommodative to a certain extent, saying they were “passionately involved with internet politics” (Ludwig 2011). The Greens were also the first mainstream party to write a comprehensive document on their internet policies, which they did in 2011, and Renate Künast repeatedly emphasized that “whoever wants more transparency and internet freedom must vote for the Greens” (Gathmann 2011; Gaugele and Malzahn 2012).

However, the Greens also attacked the Pirates, saying that the Pirates’ policy of allowing former right-wing extremists into the Pirate Party was “naïve,” and criticizing their lack of a quota for women in positions of power in the party (“Grüne kritisieren” 2011; “Sind die Piraten” 2012). In the 2012 run-up to state elections in Schleswig-Holstein and NRW, Green politicians accused the Pirates of being ruled by “wishful thinking,” attacked their education policy as “false,” and said it was “intolerable” that the Pirates had not prevented right extremists or former right extremists from joining the Pirate Party (“Grüne: Bei Piraten” 2012). The Greens also emphasized that they were diametrically opposed to the Pirates when it came to supporting the rights of creative individuals, saying that the Pirates mistakenly believed “stolen copies are a human right” (Medick and Meiritz 2012). By opposing the Pirates on one of the Pirates’ key issues –free and legal internet downloads— the Greens muddled their accommodative strategy, and, as Meguid shows in her case study on France’s National Front, a muddled accommodative strategy is not as effective as a fully accommodative one (2007, 178).

Immediately after the Berlin elections, the FDP, too, seemed to be moving towards an accommodative strategy. Development Minister Dirk Niebel said the FDP should look to the Pirates and learn from them by doing a better job of emphasizing the importance of individual freedom and by emulating the Pirates’ spontaneity (“Niebel empfiehlt” 2011). Christian Lindner, then the General Secretary of the FDP, added that the FDP shared the Pirates’ desire to improve

internet freedom and protect people's privacy ("Liberale" 2011). However, before the Saarland elections, the FDP became slightly more adversarial, when Justice Minister Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger accused the Pirates of stealing the FDP's positions and said that the FDP was the party responsible for blocking controversial laws that would restrict internet freedom, not the Pirates ("FDP wirft" 2012).

Die Linke could not credibly coopt the Pirates by saying it had any prior interest in the internet, but it too, opted for an accommodative strategy, albeit an organizational one (Schulze 2011). Die Linke recognized that the Pirates were an electoral challenge, and so they decided to join with the Pirates in certain areas ("Bartsch" 2011; "Piraten und Linke" 2011). They discussed addressing internet issues, as well, but they preferred to combine their social views with the Pirates' internet expertise instead of establishing their own positions on internet topics ("Piraten entern" 2011; "Piraten und Linke" 2011).

The CDU lost comparatively few voters to the Pirates, which meant that they were not constrained by any Position, Salience, and Ownership theory recommendation about which strategy to employ against the Pirates. Ultimately, the CDU ended up with an indecisive strategy after Berlin. Günter Krings, the acting chairman of the CDU/CSU group in the German Parliament, said that the fact that the Pirates had not taken many votes away from the CDU was evidence that the CDU and CSU were currently on the right course in terms of internet issues and strongly criticized the Pirates (Beckedahl 2011). However, Peter Altmaier, the Parliamentary Party Secretary of the CDU/CSU Party Group, was less antagonistic, saying that that the CDU needed to begin addressing internet issues now that the Pirates had raised the salience of the issue (Altmaier 2011). Because the CDU did not face as much of an electoral threat from the Pirates as the other mainstream parties did, it could choose an adversarial strategy so as to boost



the Pirates' profile and depress the electoral results of rival mainstream parties. However, the CDU could also accommodate the Pirates, which would be reasonable if it felt that internet issues warranted the time, money, and effort necessary to formulate and follow through on internet policies. At this point, the CDU seemed ambivalent about the Pirates, and while it did not concertedly condemn the Pirates, neither did it suddenly implement new internet policies or become more transparent and participatory. Thus, the CDU remained dismissive of the Pirates.

So, the combination of mainstream party strategies was accommodative-dismissive (ACDI), which, according to Position, Salience, and Ownership theory, should be expected to eventually reduce support for the Pirates. However, these strategies were likely implemented too close to the next state election to affect the Pirate Party, which won 7.4% of the votes in the March 2012 Saarland elections. After this result, the other mainstream parties persisted in their previously chosen strategies, while the FDP switched to an adversarial strategy. They did this despite the fact that they would have been best served by continuing to accommodate the Pirates, given the fact that in Saarland the Pirates had taken more votes from the FDP than from any party except for Die Linke ("Landtagswahl Saarland" 2012). Nevertheless, the newly elected General Secretary of the FDP, Patrick Döring, initiated the adversarial strategy by saying that the Pirates' visions of society, politics, and people were often permeated with "the tyranny of the masses" ("FDP General" 2012). This phrase was widely publicized, and it resulted in significant backlash against the FDP, which was seen as aloof and out of touch with voters. Döring and other prominent FDP members continued to attack the Pirates, however. The FDP's top candidate in the North Rhine-Westphalia elections, Christian Lindner, said just prior to the North Rhine-Westphalia elections that "I do not take the Pirates as a group very seriously;" Döring accused the Pirates of being inconsistent on issues of transparency; and Philipp Rösler, head of

the FDP, compared the Pirate Party to the Somali Pirates and, after saying Die Linke was “an enemy of freedom,” said the Pirates were merely Die Linke “with an Internet-connection” (“Döring attackiert” 2012; “Lindner will” 2012; “Rösler: Piraten” 2012).

Thanks to the FDP, the combination of party strategies was now mostly accommodative-adversarial (ACAD) instead of ACDI, but because more parties were acting in an accommodative than adversarial manner, Position, Salience, and Ownership theory still predicts a decrease in support the niche party. While this strategy switch might have happened too close to the next set of state elections to be a decisive factor in the Pirates’ success, the Pirates did well in May in Schleswig-Holstein and North Rhine-Westphalia, winning 8.2% of the votes in Schleswig-Holstein and 7.8% of the votes in North Rhine-Westphalia. As in Berlin, the Pirates drew many of their votes from former nonvoters, and overall the Greens, Die Linke, and the SPD tended to lose more votes to the Pirates than the CDU and the FDP did (“Landtagswahl Nordrhein-Westfalen” 2012; “Landtagswahl Saarland” 2012; “Wählerwanderung” 2012; “Zitterwahl” 2013). Despite the predictions of Position, Salience, and Ownership theory, the Pirates’ membership continued to grow; in May 2012, around 30,000 Germans were Pirate Party members (“Datei” 2013). These middle months of 2012 saw the Pirates at the height of their popularity—between April and August, German polling agencies reported that if the Bundestag elections were held that coming Sunday, between 13% and 7% of voters would vote for the Pirates (Becker et al. 2012; “Sonntagsfrage Bundestagswahl” 2013).

## **THE FALL OF THE GERMAN PIRATES AND THE REASON FOR THEIR DECLINE**

At least as early as March 2012, despite the Pirates’ popularity, journalists were already concerned that the Pirate Party might be a short-lived party due to its own internal characteristics. *Der Spiegel* commented that “dishing out criticism, attacking and mocking their

adversaries—the approach that the Pirates use so effectively in dealing with the established parties has also been directed at some of their own people for a long time.... The tendency toward self-destruction... could still turn into a bigger problem within the party” (Spiegel Staff 2012). This “tendency toward self-destruction” was facilitated by the Pirates’ commitment to transparency and direct democracy. All issues are supposed to be debated on the Pirates’ Liquid Feedback platform, where party members can submit, discuss, and vote on various political proposals in online forums, and major party decisions must be discussed and voted on by all members present at the National Party Conferences. In April 2012, Michele Marsching, head of the North Rhine-Westphalia Pirates, said this type of direct democracy “does not work anymore. We have to say goodbye to [it]” (Becker et al. 2012). She is not alone in this sentiment, but expressing such views leads to backlash, as party leaders quickly discovered. Even though the majority of Pirate Party members do not participate, those who do often do so aggressively, particularly online, where they are protected by anonymous usernames (Becker et al. 2012). As of April 2012, this combative online forum had frightened many leading Pirates away from giving interviews, because no one wanted to be attacked by their own party and risk unelectability (Becker et al. 2012). Elected Pirate officials began suggesting that perhaps some political decisions should be made behind closed doors (Becker et al. 2012). The fissures in the Pirate Party were beginning to show.

By August 2012, the Pirates’ standing in opinion polls had sunk to its lowest level since March, and it continued to sink even lower (“Sonntagsfrage Bundestagswahl” 2013). Annett Meiritz wrote that this was happening even though “the political Zeitgeist is favorable for the Pirate Party” (2012). Meiritz put the Pirates’ decline down to five reasons: the Pirates’ constant internal bickering, which, due to the Pirates’ commitment to transparency, was observable by

voters and journalists; the lack of a unified strategy; internal missteps, including an inability to make members pay dues and the controversy over Johannes Ponader's position as political director of the Pirates;<sup>11</sup> the Pirates' troubles with living up to their promises; and the fact that the Pirates were losing their 'new party' allure (2012). Additionally, the head of the Pirate Party, Bernd Schlömer, failed to recognize the danger, saying, "we do not have a problem" (Meiritz 2012).

Oskar Niedermayer, of the Free University of Berlin, raised additional concerns about the potentially negative impact of the Pirates' internal structure and practices. In an article published in 2013, Niedermayer listed nine difficulties he foresaw for the Pirates. First, Niedermayer noted that running a political party staffed mostly by volunteers would prove difficult to maintain as the party grew. Secondly, the Pirates' aversion to hierarchy is incompatible with the practical needs of a political party. Thirdly, the Pirates' volunteer leaders are under pressure from a vocal and fractious base, which has led to instability. Fourthly, elected Pirates are supposed to serve as representatives of the party base, but the Pirates also assert that their representatives are allowed to vote based on their conscience. This discrepancy could cause voter dissatisfaction. Next, Niedermayer says there is no way to tell whether Liquid Feedback participants, whose views help determine Pirate policy, represent the wider party or not. Also, the Pirates' inability to clarify their positions on issues, which is due in part to the fact that the Pirates make party-wide decisions in a direct democratic method, limits their programmatic offerings and their ability to campaign effectively. Next, the Pirates cannot remain a political outsider party forever, so disillusionment will inevitably cost the Pirate Party votes. Finally, the Pirates' dedication to

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<sup>11</sup> Many Pirates and Pirate Party voters were unhappy that Ponader had an important leadership position in the party because he was living partially off of unemployment benefits and had been the beneficiary of a donation drive to raise money for his living expenses (Meiritz 2012).

making decisions after much discussion with the party base may preclude them from being viable coalition members, thereby preventing them from gaining much political power.

(Niedermayer 2013, 59-60).

Niedermayer's concerns are apt—slightly before the January 2013 Lower Saxony elections, the Pirates' membership began to decline (“Datei” 2013). The Pirates were hovering at around 3% in opinion polls, but they remained confident that they would win the necessary 5% of votes to win seats in the state Parliament (Reinbold 2013a). This optimism was misplaced, however, as the Pirates ended up with just 2.1% of the votes. Yet again, the Pirates had tripped themselves up. Not only were their campaign methods largely ineffective, but the national party also initiated a self-critical, heated debate about the direction of the Pirate Party merely a week before the elections (Reinbold 2013b). The Pirates' leader in Lower Saxony, Andreas Neugebauer, recognized the damage this uproar could do, lamenting, “at the moment we are hurt by everything that distracts from our substantive work and makes us seem like a chaotic heap” (Reinbold 2013a). Regardless of mainstream party strategies, the Pirates were too disorganized to be attractive to any but the most dedicated Pirate Party voters. Schlömer acknowledged this after the election, saying, “we've got to stop being preoccupied with ourselves. We very clearly haven't done enough to show what the Pirates stand for and why there won't be any change in politics without the Pirates” (Reinbold 2013b).

Despite's Schlömer's call for change, the Pirates continued being self-obsessed. In early February, Schlömer and Party Director Johannes Ponader disagreed publicly over the direction of the Pirates. While Schlömer and most other leading Pirates wanted to focus on the Bundestag elections and begin professionalizing the Pirates to make them more electable, Ponader countered that the Pirates should not abandon their direct democratic approach, said that a top-

down Pirate Party would not work, and, in direct contravention of Schlömer's wishes, insisted that the Pirates elect a new leadership board at the National Party Conference in May (Reinbold 2013c). Then, after Schlömer and Ponader openly insulted each other, Schlömer and Pirate executive member Klaus Peukert helped create an email survey for Pirate Party members to vote on whether or not a leadership election should take place in May and to rate the performance of individual Pirate Party leaders (Meiritz and Reinbold 2013; Reinbold 2013c). Leaders could then decide whether or not to make their ratings public. This move was calculated to show Ponader that he did not have Pirate Party members' support and should acquiesce to Schlömer (Meiritz and Reinbold 2013). Ponader responded to this survey by accusing the Pirates' Executive Committee of engaging in "pure populist action" (Reinbold 2013d). He then decided not to make his survey results public, which incensed many Pirate Party members, who complained that he was going against the Party's commitment to transparency and that he was ruining the Pirates' image (Meiritz 2013a).

Several more crises followed on this debacle. First, there came news that Christopher Lauer, the Party Group Head in Berlin and one of the few Pirates viewed as competent by those outside the Pirate Party, might have threatened Ponader (Meiritz 2013b). Next, reports revealed that only a third of Pirate Party members were paying their yearly dues of 48 Euros ("Fehlende" 2013). Then, the head of the Pirates in Baden-Württemberg left his post and the party, saying he was tired of the Pirate Party's uncivil discourse and concerned about physical threats that party members had made against him and his family ("Partei in der Krise" 2013). The next day, the head of the Brandenburg Pirates resigned, saying he was not enjoying his position anymore ("Partei in der Krise" 2013). Then, on March 6, Ponader resigned (Hawley 2013). Due to the Pirates' commitment to discussion and transparency, all of these dust-ups occurred publicly.

Meiritz comments that “no party celebrates its self-disassembly as openly and publicly, as aggressively, as tragically as this one” (Meiritz 2013b).

While Meguid argues that niche parties’ actions are not independent of mainstream parties’ actions, and that therefore it is inaccurate to assume that niche parties fall apart independently, this argument does not hold in the case of the Pirates (2007, 14). The mainstream parties’ tactics did not force the Pirates’ leadership to turn on itself, recruit members unwilling to pay dues necessary to sustain the party, or create a party culture permeated by anonymous fighting and endless debate. The Pirates self-destructed. While it is true that the mainstream party tactic combination of ACAD (with AC outweighing AD) should have undermined the Pirates’ popularity, a closer look at the events surrounding the Pirates’ decline reveals that instead of the mainstream parties doing the undermining, the Pirates themselves handled this job, assisted by their disorganization and their commitment to the ideals of transparency, participation, and individuality. Thus, Position, Saliency, and Ownership theory cannot account for the rise and fall of the Piratenpartei. Instead, the Piratenpartei’s values and internal organization offer the best explanation for why Pirate Party grew and shrank as it did.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this thesis contributes two main insights to the literature. First, testing Position, Saliency, and Ownership theory on two parties that did not inform the theory’s creation or development in any way reveals that although this theory cannot perfectly explain party success and failure, it remains a useful way to analyze niche parties’ trajectories. Nevertheless, while Position, Saliency, and Ownership theory can help explain the trajectories of certain niche parties, including the Piratenpartiet, whose rise and fall is best explained by Meguid’s Position, Saliency, and Ownership theory combined with current events, there are other niche parties

whose fortunes cannot be fully explained by this theory or by a decline in media attention and current events. The German Pirate Party is one such party; it existed in an environment with largely favorable mainstream party strategies, and yet it still declined abruptly, thanks to its disorganization and commitment to transparency, individuality, and participation. Thus, the Piratenpartei contained within itself the seeds of its own demise, and future analyses of niche party success and failure should consider the fact that other parties may be similarly destined to fail because of internal factors. This phenomenon is likely to be particularly important for newer niche parties due to the increasing influence of the Internet, which had an indelible influence on the Pirate Party.

While the Piratenpartei does not represent every niche party, the insights of this analysis are applicable even beyond the Pirate Party offshoots sprouting up around the world. Firstly, this thesis indicates that future analyses of niche parties should consider internal party organization, because while external factors are important, the Piratenpartei demonstrates that they cannot always offer a full explanation of a niche party's trajectory. As this thesis showed, the German Pirates' own missteps were crucial in causing it to lose support and votes across Germany. Thus, while niche parties are certainly influenced by the actions of mainstream parties, niche parties do possess some control over their fates. Additionally, niche parties' influence on their own trajectories may well expand in the future, as more political parties incorporate the internet into their political repertoire in hopes of connecting with voters, providing an inside look at the political process, and increasing participation. As more niche parties use the internet as a springboard into politics, the lesson of the Pirates will become increasingly relevant. While the Internet offers increased opportunities for political transparency and participation, which can appeal to voters, the Piratenpartei shows that a party too committed to these values quickly



becomes unappealingly chaotic. In order to succeed, political parties must be adequately responsive to demands for transparency and democracy without descending into unrestrained infighting. Not every political party is built in a way that dooms it to failure, but analyses that discount this possibility and overlook party organization are incomplete.

## **APPENDIX**

When coding party strategies as accommodative or dismissive, I looked mainly at statements by national party leaders or information included in Party Yearbooks. When leaders of the same party made divergent statements, I coded the strategy after the party leader's statements, and noted that this discrepancy in opinions should have the effect of weakening whatever strategy the majority of the party was trying to pursue and making it less effective.

**Table 1**  
Mainstream Party Strategies and their Effects in Sweden

| <b>Mainstream Party</b> | <b>Optimal Strategy under Position, Salience, and Ownership theory for 2006, 2009, 2010 elections</b> | <b>Behavior in Relation to Pirates (bolded text indicates a party's departure from the theory's recommendations)</b> | <b>Predicted Effect of Combined Strategy on Pirates' Electoral Results</b> |
|-------------------------|---|--|--|
| Social Democrats        | Accommodative (AC), DI, dismissive (DI)   | AC, <b>AC</b> , DI   |  |
| Moderate Party          | AC, DI, DI  | AC, <b>AC</b> , DI   |  |
| Green Party             | AC, AC, AC  | AC, <b>AC</b> , AC   |  |
| Liberal People's Party  | AC, DI, DI  | AC, <b>AC</b> , DI   |  |
| Centre Party            | AC, DI, DI  | AC, <b>AC</b> , DI   |  |
| Christian Democrats     | AC, DI, DI  | AC, <b>AC</b> , DI   |  |
| Left Party              | AC, AC, AC  | AC, <b>AC</b> , AC   |  |
|                         |   |  | Decrease, Increase, Decrease   |

The Pirates' electoral results were less than expected in 2006, increased dramatically in 2009, and were less than expected in 2010.

Own coding using Meguid's Position, Salience, and Ownership Theory.

**Table 2**

Mainstream Party Strategies and their Effects in Germany

| <b>Mainstream Party</b> | <b>Optimal Strategy under Position, Saliency, and Ownership theory for 2009 Elections and Then After the 2011 Berlin Elections</b> | <b>Behavior in Relation to Pirates</b> | <b>Predicted Effect of Combined Strategy on Pirates' Electoral Results</b> |
|-------------------------|--|--|--|
| SPD                     | DI, AC   | DI, AC                                 |  |
| CDU                     | DI, AD   | DI, DI/AC                              |  |
| FDP                     | DI, AC/AD  | DI, AC through March 2012 and then AD  |  |
| Greens                  | DI, AC   | DI, AC                                 |  |
| Die Linke               | DI, AC   | DI, AC                                 |  |
|                         |  |  | Decrease (or stasis),<br>Decrease  |

Own coding using Meguid's Position, Saliency, and Ownership Theory.

**Table 3**

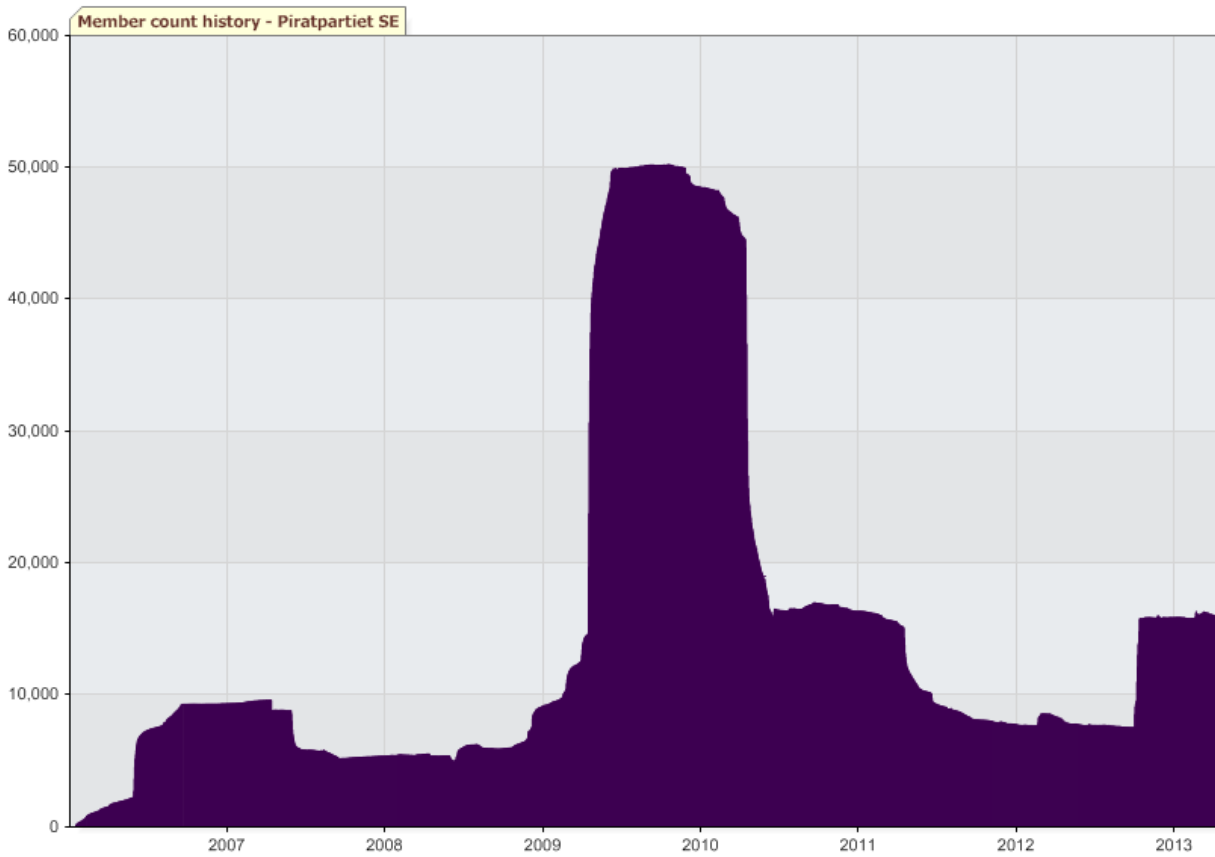
Public Support for the Piratenpartei

| Date    | Support |
|---------|---------|
| 9/1/11  | 2%      |
| 10/6/11 | 8%      |
| 11/3/11 | 7%      |
| 12/1/11 | 6%      |
| 1/5/12  | 6%      |
| 2/2/12  | 6%      |
| 3/1/12  | 7%      |
| 4/4/12  | 10%     |
| 3/5/12  | 11%     |
| 6/6/12  | 9%      |
| 7/5/12  | 7%      |
| 8/1/12  | 8%      |
| 9/6/12  | 6%      |
| 10/4/12 | 4%      |
| 11/8/12 | 4%      |
| 12/6/12 | 3%      |
| 1/4/13  | 4%      |
| 2/7/13  | 3%      |
| 3/7/13  | 2%      |
| 4/4/13  | 3%      |

Data from the Infratest dimap poll where respondents are asked “if the Bundestag elections were to take place next Sunday, which party would you vote for,” accessible at:

<http://www.wahlrecht.de/umfragen/dimap.htm>

**Figure 1:** Piratpartiet Membership: January 1, 2006—April 6, 2013



Information available at: <https://pirateweb.net/Pages/Public/Data/MemberCountHistory.aspx>

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