

Europe, transnational mobilisations, civil society

2025-26

Valentin Behr

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Introduction

Valentin Behr, CNRS research fellow.

Research topics/interests:

- Sociology of intellectuals; history of political ideas (intellectual history): conservatism, illiberalism.
- Sociology of (political) elites: trajectories of former APAs at the EP (revolving doors, public/private circulations, lobbying, ...).
- Focus on right-wing movements (conservative mobilisations) and CEE (Poland).

⇒ Introduce yourselves.

About this course: a course in English, not an English course.

Introduction

Europe, Transnational mobilisations, Civil society...

???



Europe?

of Europe



Transnational mobilisations?

Conventional vs non-conventional Political Action

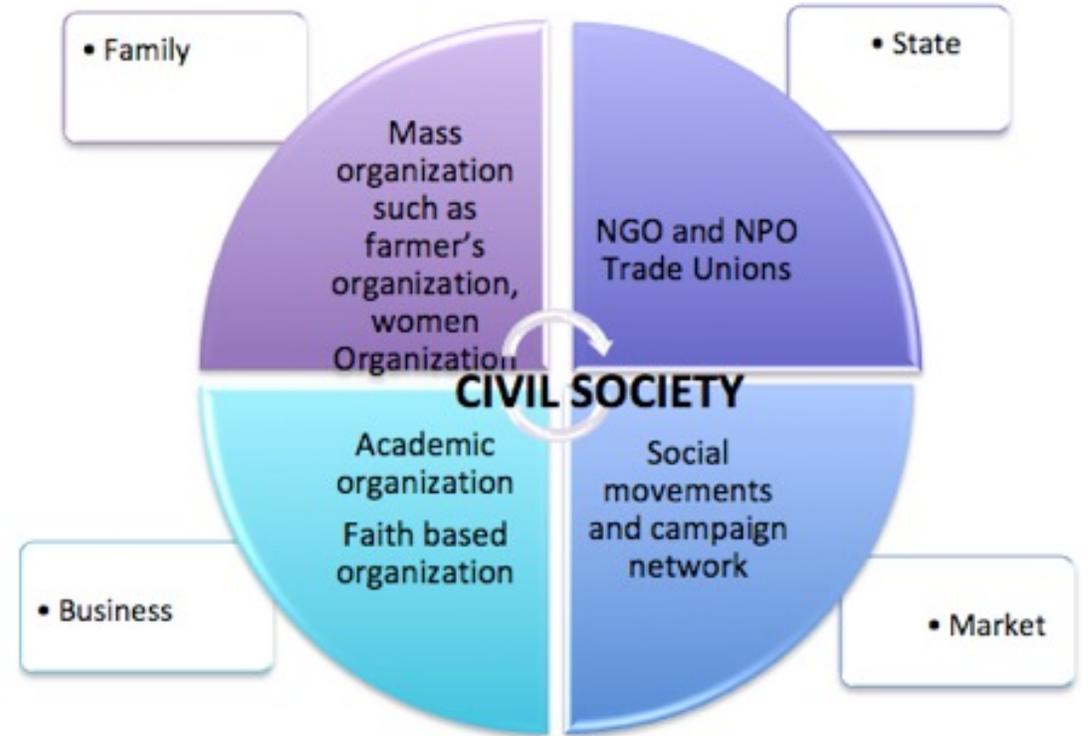
- Conventional pol. action = elections, pol. parties, pol. debates, pol. participation.
- Non-conventional pol. action = protest (contention) cf. petitioning, demonstrations, occupations, blocking, ... but also influence (lobbying, advocacy).





Civil society?

Civil society?



General outline

Lecture 1/ 27 January 2026 – Introduction – historical perspective

Lecture 2/ 3 February 2026 – Chapter 1 – Transnational society, transnational politics

Lecture 3/ 10 February 2026 – Chapter 1 – Transnational society, transnational politics

Lecture 4/ 17 February 2026 – Chapter 2 – Lobbying the EU

Lecture 5/ 10 March 2026 – Chapter 2 – Lobbying the EU

Lecture 6/ 17 March 2026 – Chapter 3 – The Global Right

Lecture 7/ 31 March 2026 – Chapter 3 – The Global Right

Lecture 8/ 7 April 2026 – Chapter 4 – Transnational activism

Lectures and reading list

Date	Reading
27 January 2026	
3 February 2026	Charles Tilly & Sidney Tarrow, <i>Contentious Politics</i> , OUP, 2015 (introduction).
10 February 2026	Abram De Swaan: “ The European void. The democratic deficit as a cultural deficiency ”, in <i>The European Union and the Public Sphere</i> , 2007.
17 February 2026	Michael Saward, “ The Representative Claim ”, <i>Contemporary Political Theory</i> , 2006.
10 March 2026	TBA
17 March 2026	Michael Bernhard, “ Modes of Civil Society and Right Mobilisation ”, <i>Politika</i> , 2025.
31 March 2026	David Paternotte & Roman Kuhar, “ Disentangling and Locating the ‘Global Right’: Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe ”, <i>Politics and Governance</i> , 2018.
7 April 2026	TBA

Student assessment

IN-CLASS READING

Some time will be devoted to reading and discussing a short text for each lecture.

The class will be divided into groups. **Students are required to read the text individually in class.** Then, **each group will prepare notes** to contribute to the **collective discussion.**

Each group will be responsible for:

- **Summarising one part of the text**, focusing on the main points, arguments and takeaways. This part is less about providing a linear summary of the text and more about synthesis: choose the elements you want to focus on and select examples.
- **Proposing points of discussion**, nuances and counter-examples.

Another group will be responsible for **conducting specific searches on the context** of the text: What kind of publication is this? Who are the authors? What sources or research do they draw on? This group will also be responsible for providing additional information on elements of the text that require explanation, such as figures, organisations and historical references.

Timeframe: 45 minutes (max.) to read the text and prepare notes, and 45 minutes (max.) for in-class discussion.

Student assessment

Be specific and relevant. Use this course (and others) to inform the discussion. Don't hesitate to ask questions if you find anything unclear after reading the text.

Reflect on your own learning: How do you conduct a quick internet search? Which sources do you choose and why? According to which criteria? Do you use AI? For what purpose? How do you verify your findings?

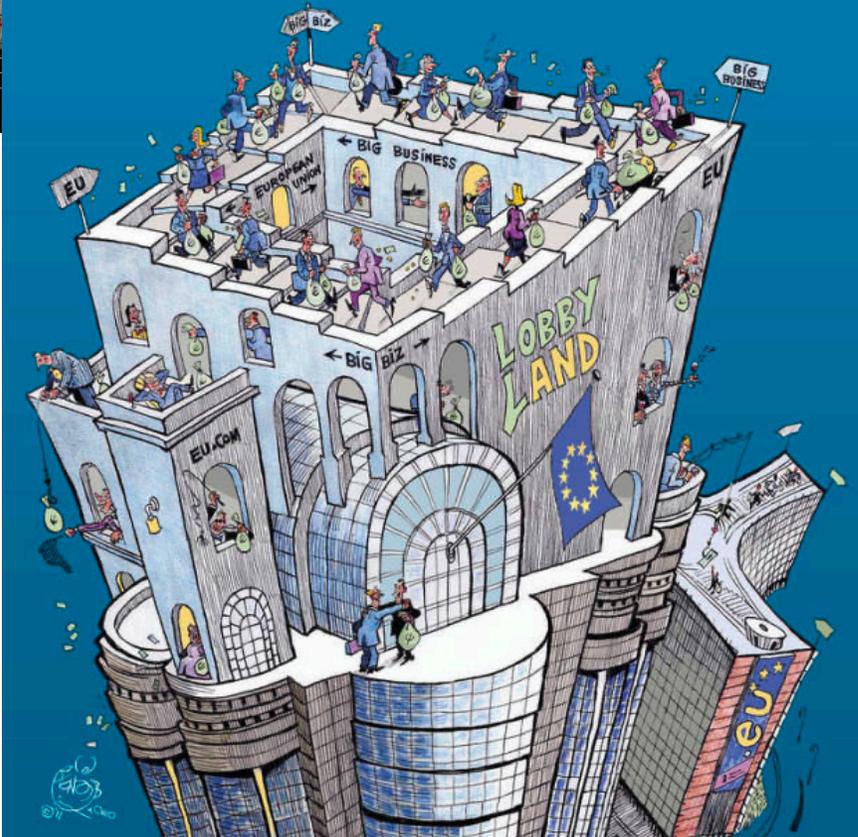
This work will contribute towards **your grade for the semester:**

- One mark will be awarded for **in-class participation**. Each student is expected to play an active role in the collective discussion, for example by acting as their group's spokesperson.
- The other mark is for a **written summary** of the text and in-class discussion. This should be written collectively by groups of three to four students. **This summary is due the following week.**

Warning 1: Students are also required to read the text proposed for each lecture (see the reading list).

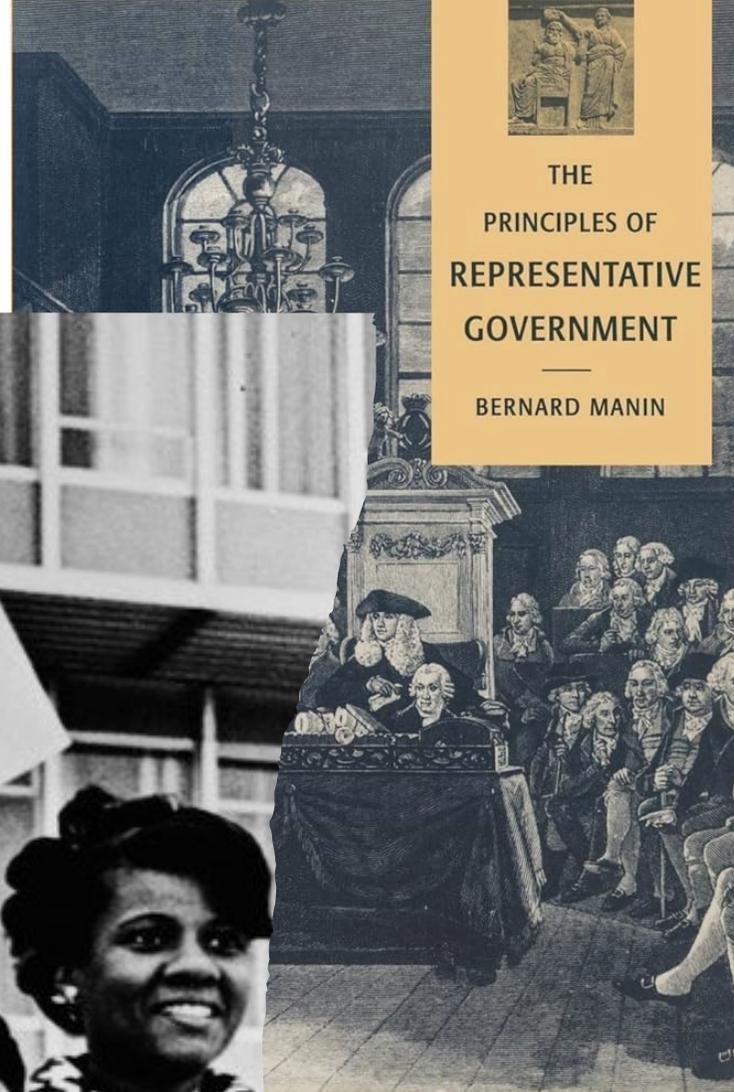
Warning 2: Attendance is also part of the assessment.

General introduction: a historical perspective



- **Conventional pol. action** = elections, pol. parties, pol. debates, pol. participation.
- **Non-conventional pol. action** = protest (contention) cf. petitioning, demonstrations, occupations, blocking, ... but also influence (lobbying, advocacy).

I: From one revolution to another (1789-1848)



Deconstruct myths about our democracies.

The link between voting (representation) and democracy is a construction; it was not given or natural.

Representative democracy has been constructed through a **process of division of labour**: between professionals in politics (the representatives) and the citizens (the voters).

Today, democracy and universal suffrage seem to be connected.

Nonetheless, this has not always been the case.

Insights from Jacques Rancière:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84760JnuNII>

Other principles of legitimation have existed long before the election or universal suffrage:

- Lottery (Athens).
- Divine right: French Absolutism, monarchies, “Ancien-Régime”.
- Acclamation (acclaim, applause).

In France, the principle of universal suffrage is proclaimed in 1848, half a century after the Revolution.

At that time, it is a male suffrage, but also almost exclusively a “white” suffrage.

One could even argue that the vote is still not “universal”: conditions of age, citizenship, ...

Classes laborieuses et Classes dangereuses

photo-PassLivres

On a toujours remarqué l'importance du crime dans la littérature du XIX^e siècle mais on a trop tendance à y voir une mode littéraire coupée des réalités. En fait, ces récits sortis de l'imagination de Balzac, Hugo ou Eugène Sue, peuvent et doivent être mis en relation avec la société parisienne de l'époque. Née de l'inadaptation de la ville « de pierre », aux besoins d'une population qui s'accroît formidablement en 1830 et 1848, la criminalité imprime sa marque tragique à la ville. Elle façonne le Paris de la monarchie de juillet, un Paris pathologique, qui souffre du déséquilibre des sexes, qui pullule d'enfants trouvés et de naissances illégitimes, un Paris qui ressent jusque sur son visage même la trace des maladies vénériennes ou que terrorise seulement la peur de ces maladies. Le crime y pousse en terrain privilégié comme la fleur empoisonnée d'une civilisation.

Dépot légal - Impr. 4705-6 Edit. 9222 4 trimestre 1978
Pierre Faucheux / Dedalus / Documents R. Viollet

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Louis Chevalier
Classes laborieuses et Classes dangereuses

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Political discourse from 1789 to the end of the 19th century, and laws framing universal suffrage: **anxiety of the elite vis à vis the people.**

Fear of the masses, perceived as angry, irrational and dangerous.

Cf. the phrase “les classes dangereuses”.

Social Darwinism.

Citizenship / development of democracy.

18th century: American and French revolutions.

Thomas Humphrey Marshall (*Citizenship and Social Class*, 1950) distinguishes three main steps in the establishment of modern citizenship:

- The affirmation of **civil rights** in the 18th century: democratic revolution (Declaration of Independence in the US in 1776; Declaration of Human and Civic Rights in France in 1789): freedom of speech, of religion, property rights, equality of citizens in rights.
- **Political rights** in the 19th century: development of representative democracy, right to vote and to be elected.
- **Social rights** in the 20th century: development of the Welfare State: right to education, healthcare, work, housing.

This three-steps model fits well to the US and British cases, but less to Germany (where social rights were adopted prior to political rights, cf. Bismarck) and to France (where civil and political rights appear jointly, even if political rights become effective only after 1848).



On which criteria should citizenship be based?

French Revolution: dominant conception of the people as uneducated, untalented with Reason.

Women and colonized people are even not considered.

Constituent Assembly, 1791: distinction between **“active” citizens** and **“passive” citizens**.

- Passive citizens = members of the nation, enjoy civil rights (Declaration of Human and Civil Rights).
- Active citizens enjoy the right to vote.

This distinction derives from the idea of **Reason**: only individuals who have their self-will, who are considered as autonomous, are supposed to be able to have their own opinions, and so have the right to vote.

Three different criteria are used to define self-will and the autonomy of judgement:

- Intellectual independence: a voter should be a grown man gifted with Reason. Childs are considered to be under the influence of their parents. Women are considered as being dependent from their husband's or father's will.
- Sociological independence: a voter should be an autonomous individual and no the member of an order.

Cf. **Loi Le Chapelier** (1791): ban on religious congregations and trade unions (until 1884).

- Economic independence: a voter should earn his living by exercising an independent profession. Exclusion of servants.

⇒ **Census suffrage.**

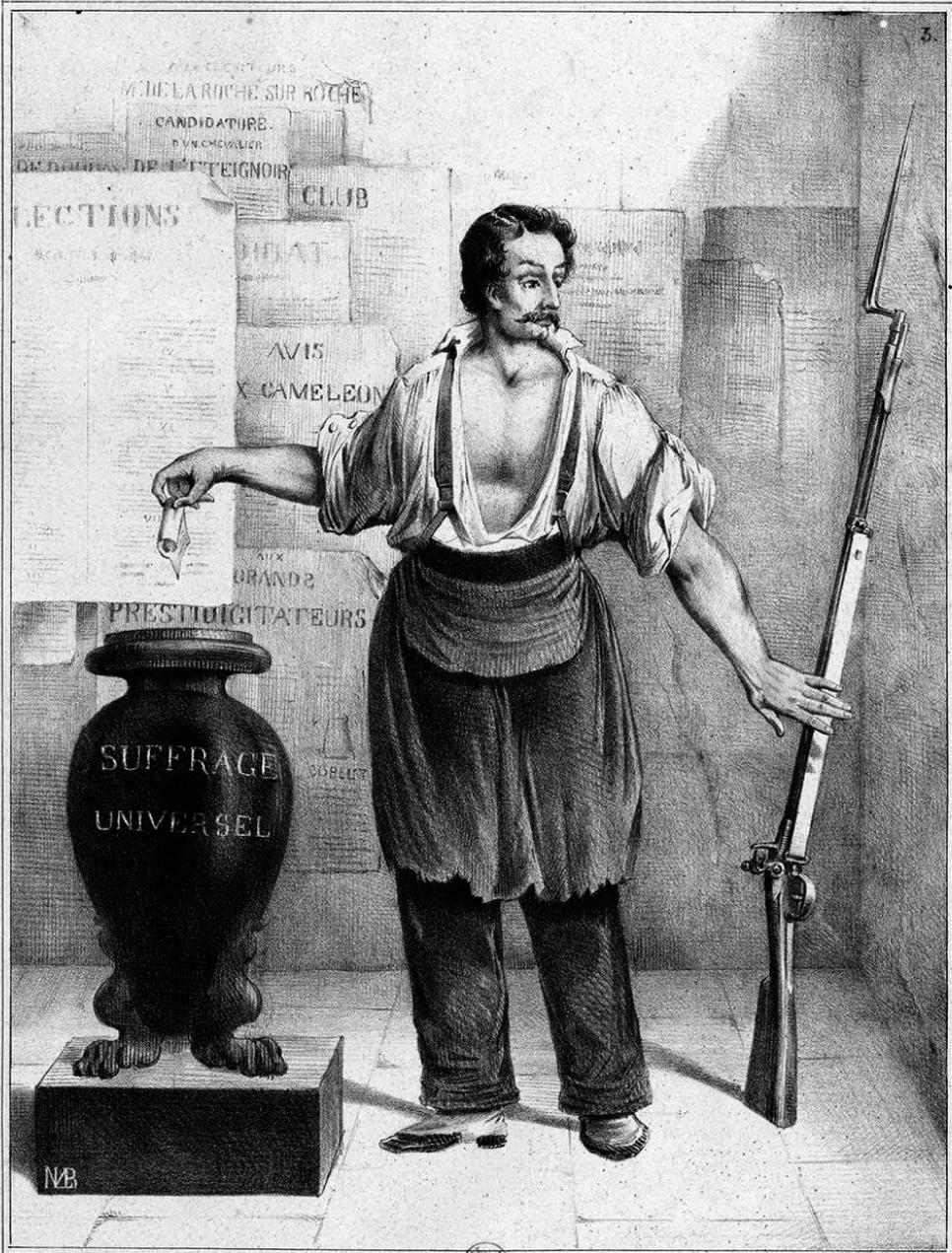
The concrete exercise of political power is reserved to the dominant parts of society, but on a basis of principals that have been completely redefined in line with the Revolution.

The new political regime and principles established after 1789, even though they rest on social grounds which are far larger than those of the Ancien-Régime, are still based on the **political exclusion** of major parts of the whole population.

1848, universal suffrage: what consequences?

II: Universal suffrage as domestication of citizens

“L’urne et le fusil”,
Marie Louis Bosredon, 1848



Cher. Lottmann. r. St-Jacques 59.

N° 57

Ça, c'est pour l'ennemi du dehors ; pour le dedans, voici comme l'on combat loyalement les adversaires. . . .

Universal suffrage = new mode of regulation of the political competition.

Implies the banishment of other means/modes such as violence.

Tocqueville: the universal suffrage opposes “the idea of law to that of violence”.

Universal suffrage = to pacify the competition between different political camps.

However, ... contestation of results, pressures, frauds and cheats, but also violence and barricades, not to mention coups, were pretty common means to be used in the political competition throughout the 19th century.



L'acte de vote

Yves Déloye
Olivier Ihl

The 1848 ballot was far from being calm and peaceful.

Far from being a means to pacify the political competition, the universal suffrage did not encourage the search for compromise.

At that time the results of a ballot are not easily accepted by the losers; and sometimes the winners consider it gives them the right to humiliate the losers. Hence, **the ballot is just one step in a broader political struggle**, a struggle that can sometimes use violent means.

Invites to consider the **necessary conditions for democratic competition**: rule of law, freedom of speech, free media, intermediary organisations (political parties, civil society org^o), etc.

REFERENCES

ALAIN GARRIGOU

Histoire sociale
du suffrage universel
en France

1848-2000



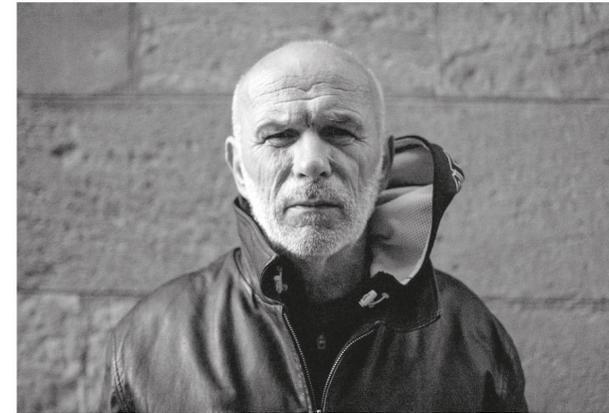
There is no linear history of democratization, however.

Cf. “cycles of contention” (Tilly and Tarrow), like in the 1960s/1970s.



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► VENDREDI 28 FÉV. / 19 H 30 • JEAN-MARC ROUILLAN



Apéro-discussion avec Jean-Marc Rouillan, auteur de *Dix ans d'Action directe* (Agone) à propos des livres de sa vie (romans, témoignages, essais, manifestes...) et de ses propres livres, quelque vingt ans après la première publication de *Je hais les matins*. On parlera de Malraux, Kerouac, Sabaté, Hemingway, Flaubert, Travençolo, Gorter, Jules Bonnot, Aragon...



III: The professionalization of politics

Invention of the universal suffrage also means **new ways of doing politics**.

- ⇒ Professionalization of politics throughout the 19th century.
- ⇒ Invention of modern politics.

Pattern: representative democracy => professionalization of politics in each parliamentary democracy in Europe.

End of Notables = amateurs in politics.

Cf. **Max Weber**: those who, thanks to their economic situation, can do politics as a hobby, without any salary.

Next to the notables, the 19th century sees the emergence of **new political entrepreneurs**.

Cf. republican bourgeois elite (lawyers, doctors, teachers).
+ Workers' movements (socialists).

See Heinrich Best & Maurizio Cotta (eds), *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe 1848-2000. Legislative Recruitment, and Careers in Eleven European Countries*, Oxford University Press, 2000.



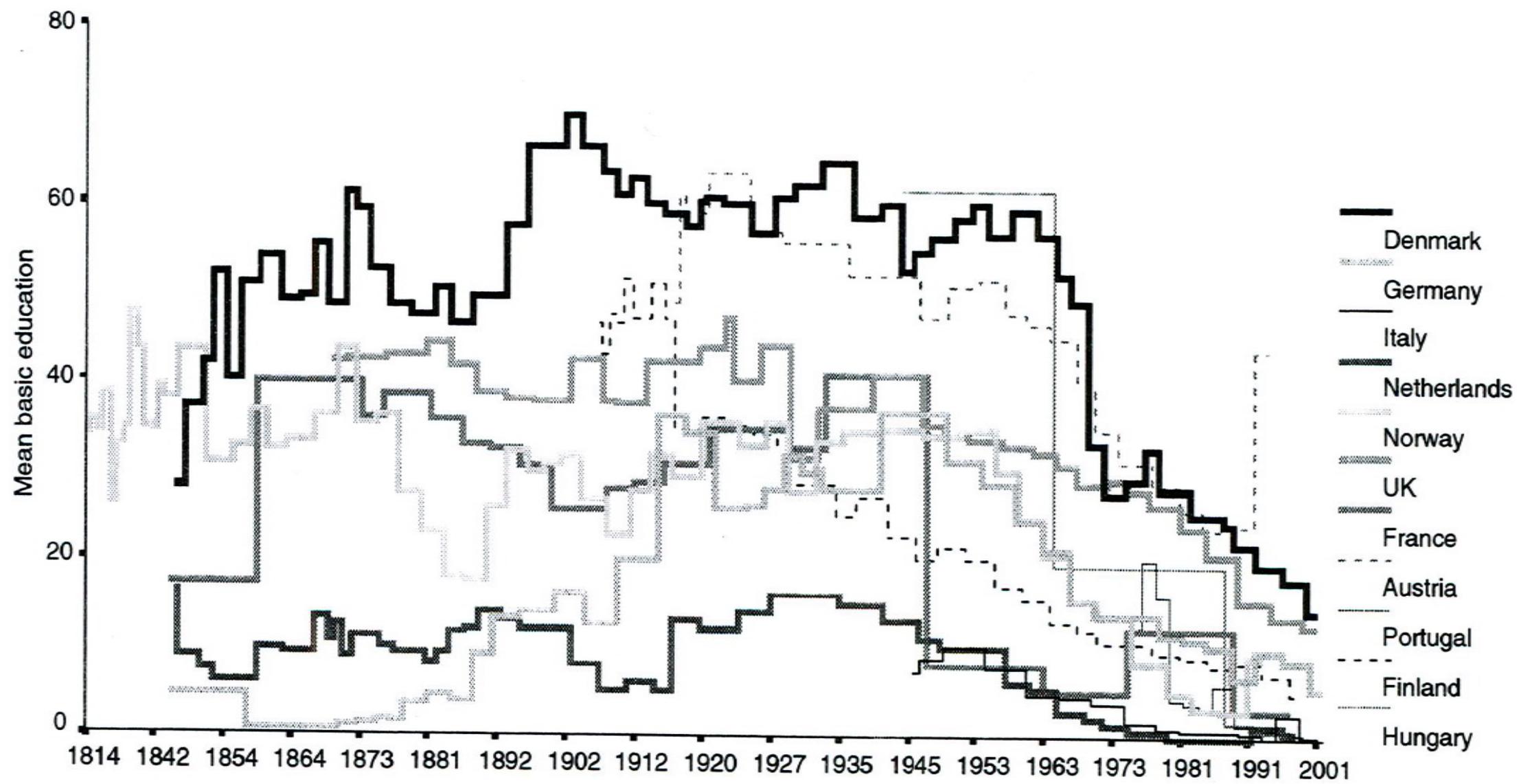


FIGURE 5.1. Basic education (Var04), all countries (%)

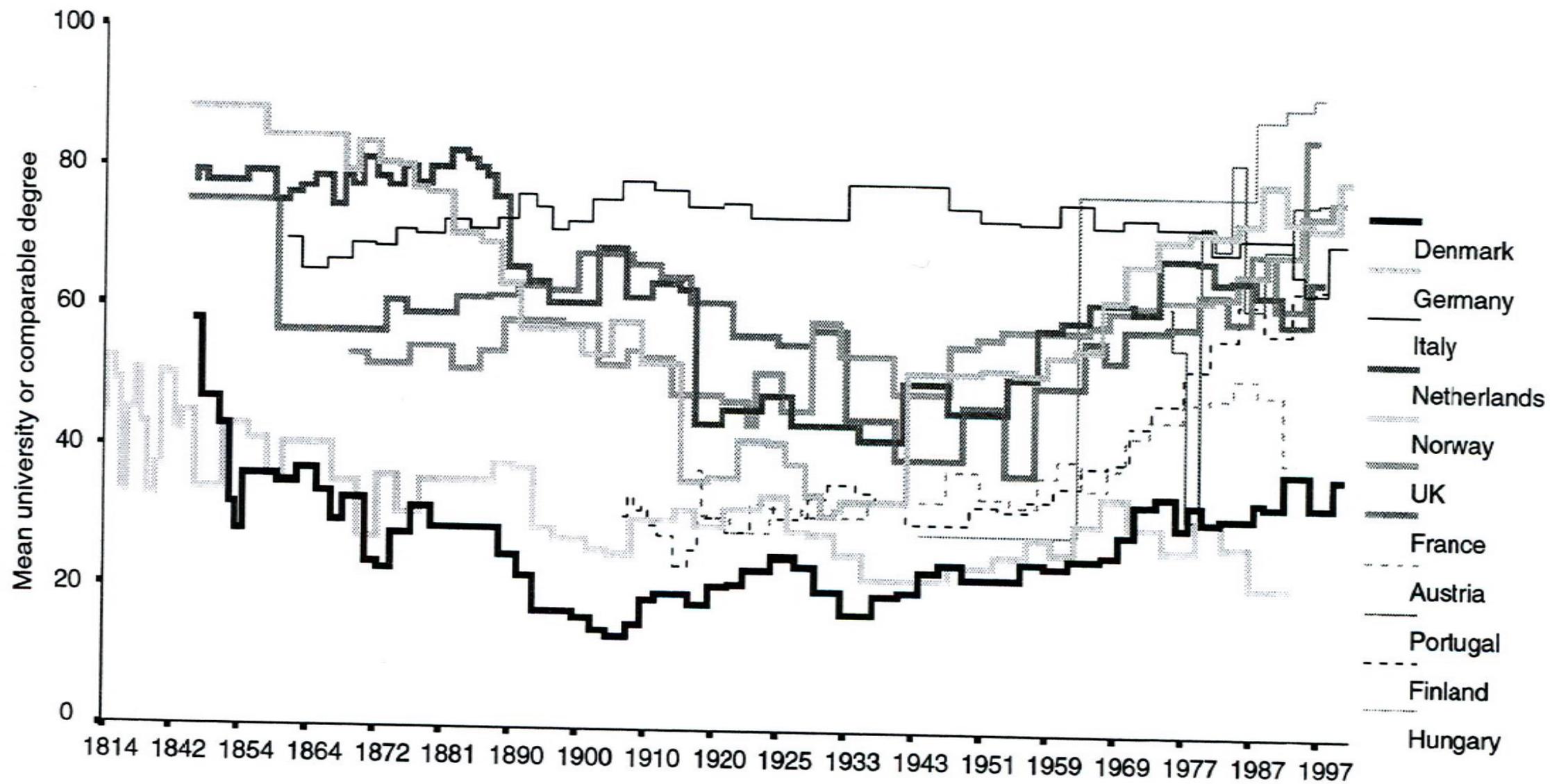


FIGURE 5.2. Higher education (Var06), all countries (%)

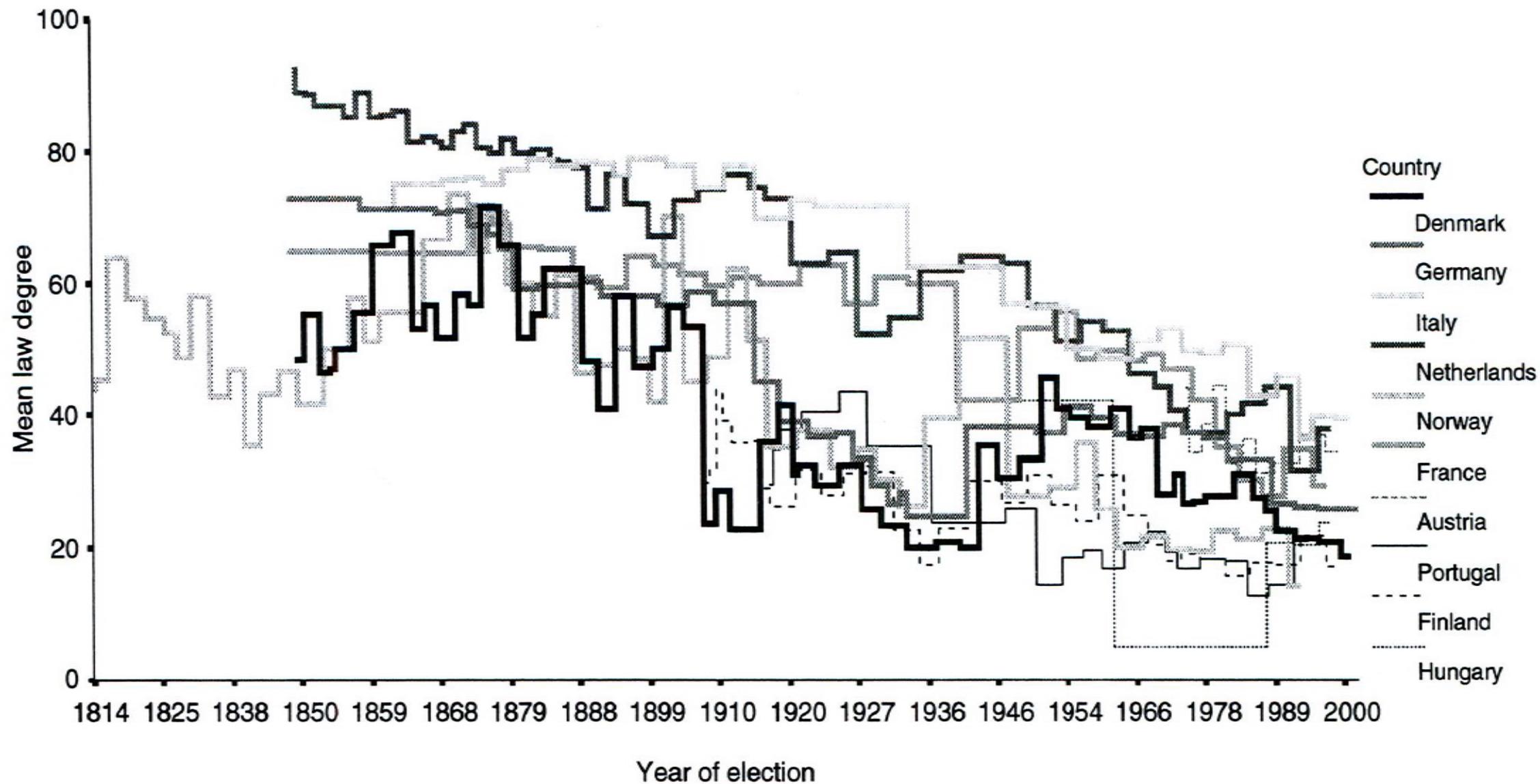


FIGURE 5.6. Legislators with a law degree (Var07), all countries (%)

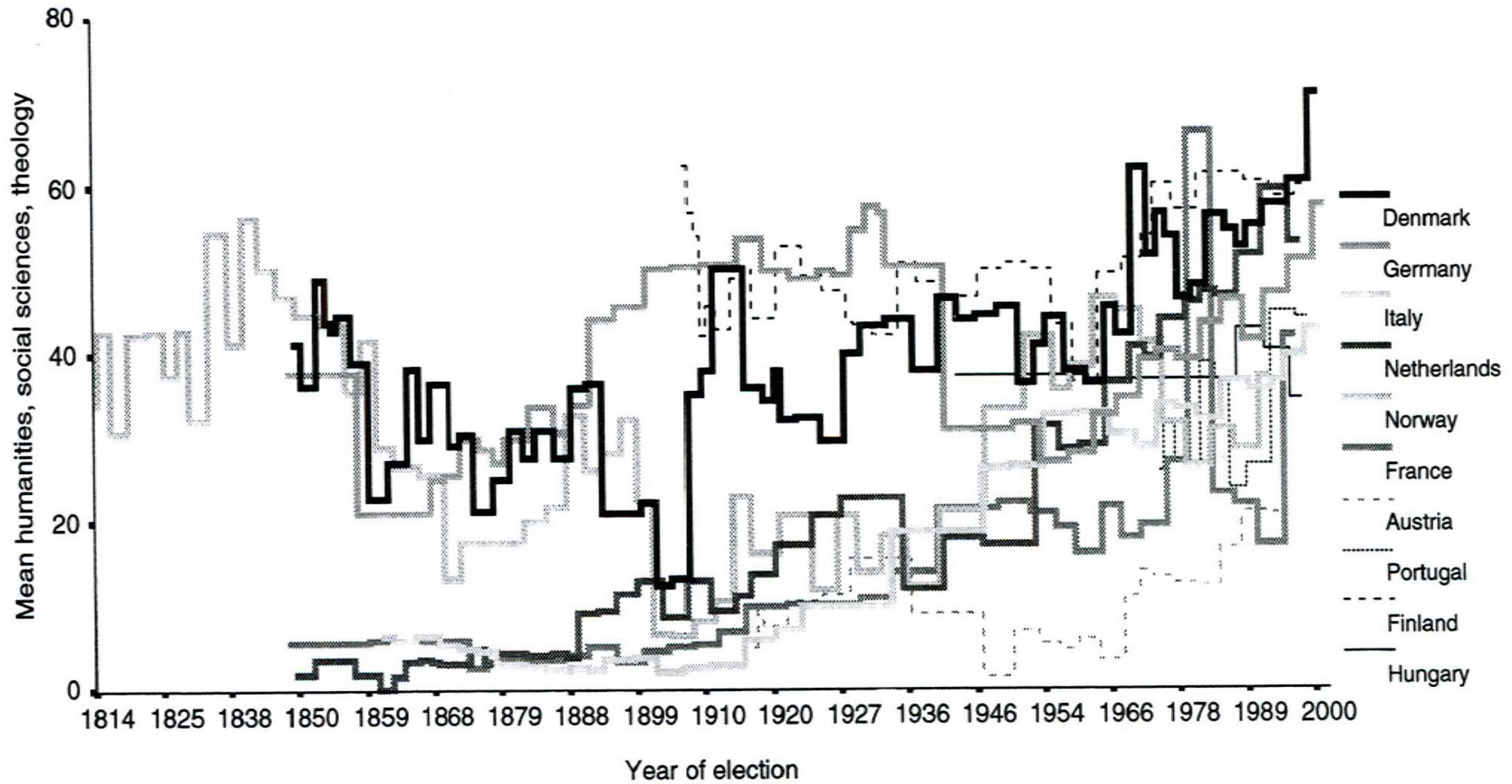


FIGURE 5.7. Legislators with a public administration, economics, humanities, or social sciences degree (Var08), all countries (%)

Emergence of **political parties: political programs.**

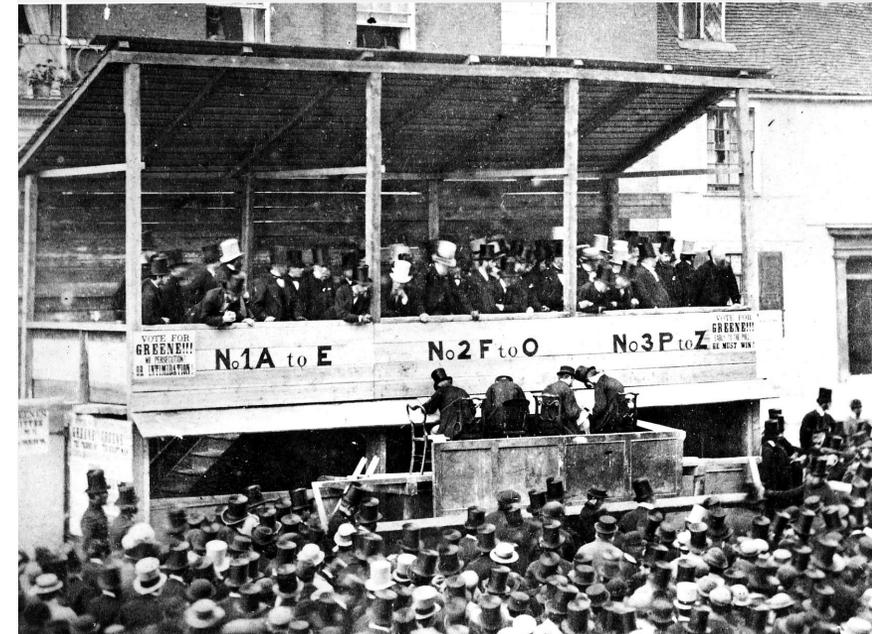
Development of electoral campaigns, techniques of mobilization: public meetings, political propaganda.

Be able to speak in public => favors the bourgeois elite and partly explains why the political recruitment is so socially selective.

⇒ Emergence of a new social figure, the professional politician, according to Weber's definition: **to live off politics and for politics.**

- They live **off** politics because they earn their living off politics, this is their principal professional activity.
- They live **for** politics because it is their vocation.

“Iron law of oligarchy” (Robert Michels, 1911, *Political Parties*): rule by an elite is inevitable within any democratic organization as of the “tactical and technical necessities” of the organization.



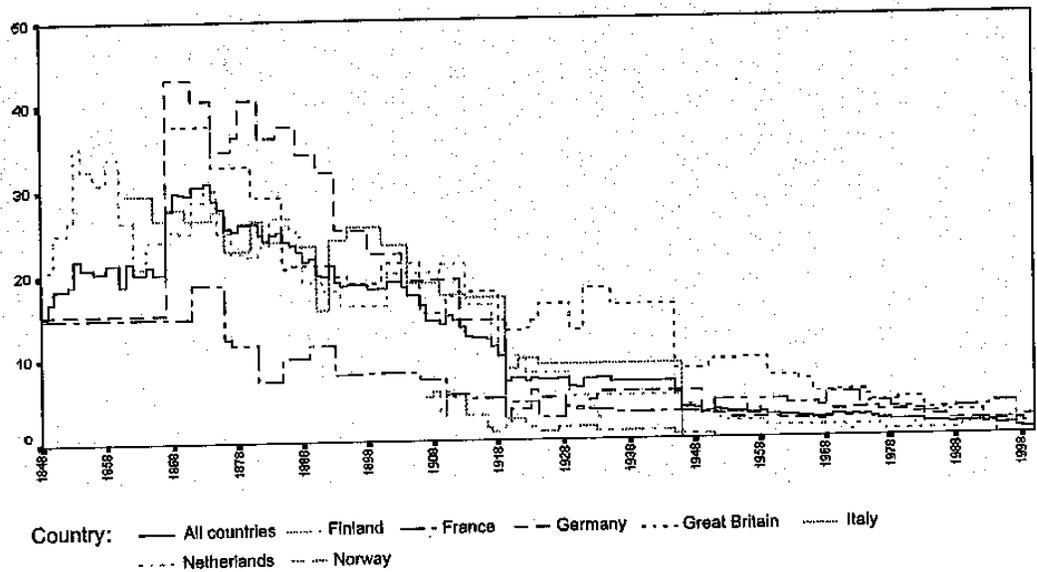


Fig. 13.5. European Parliaments 1848–1999: nobility

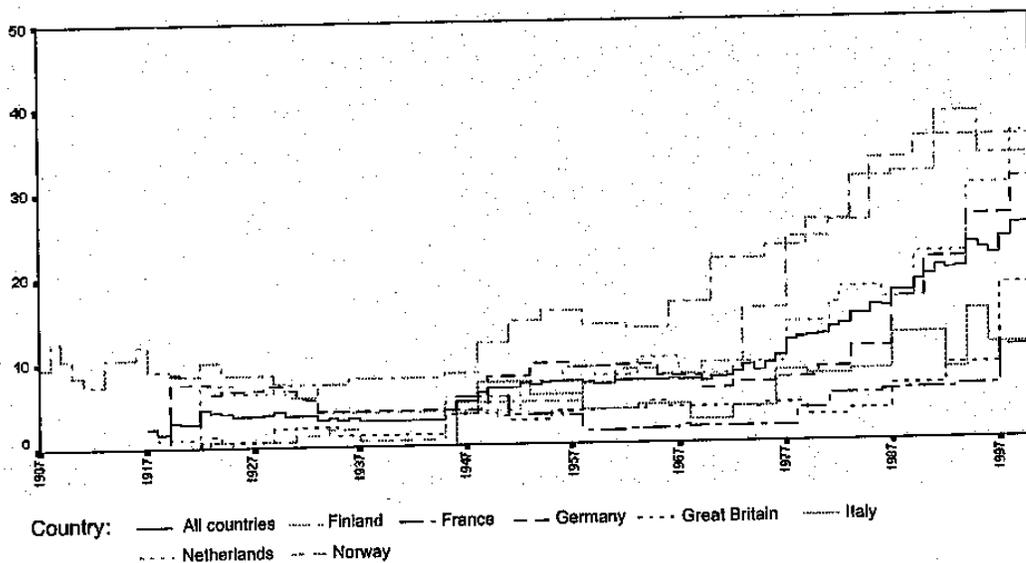


Fig. 13.6. European Parliaments 1907–1999: female legislators

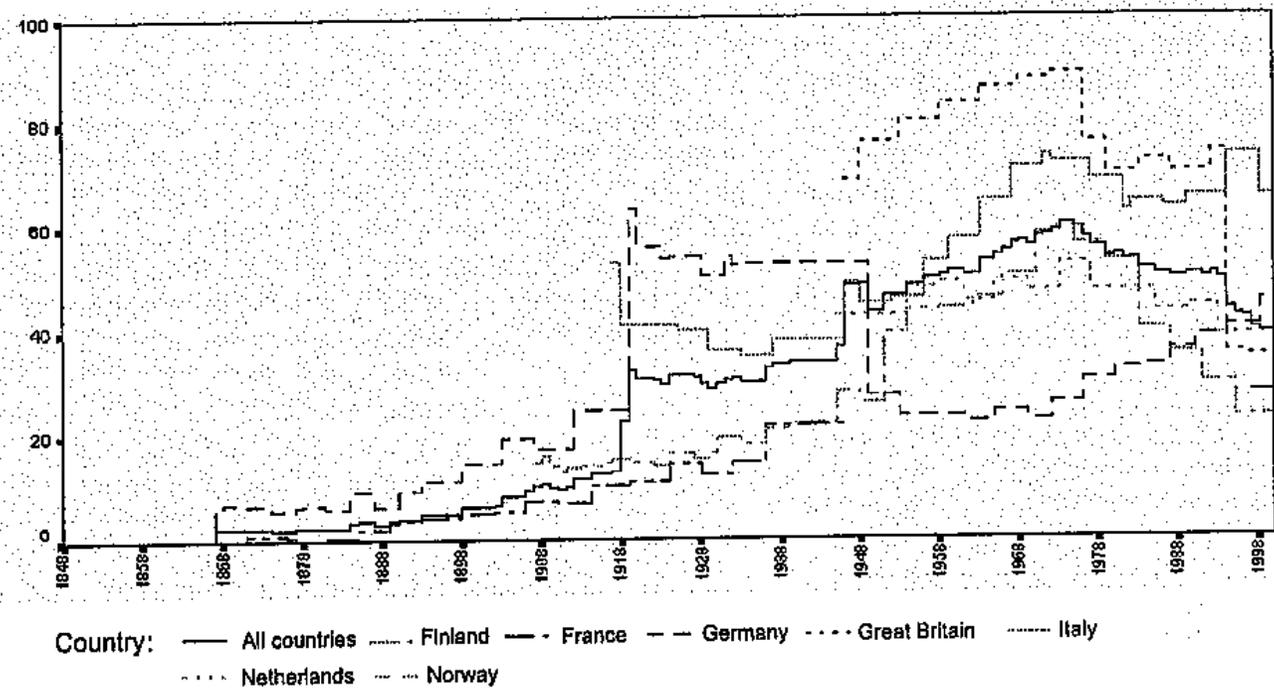
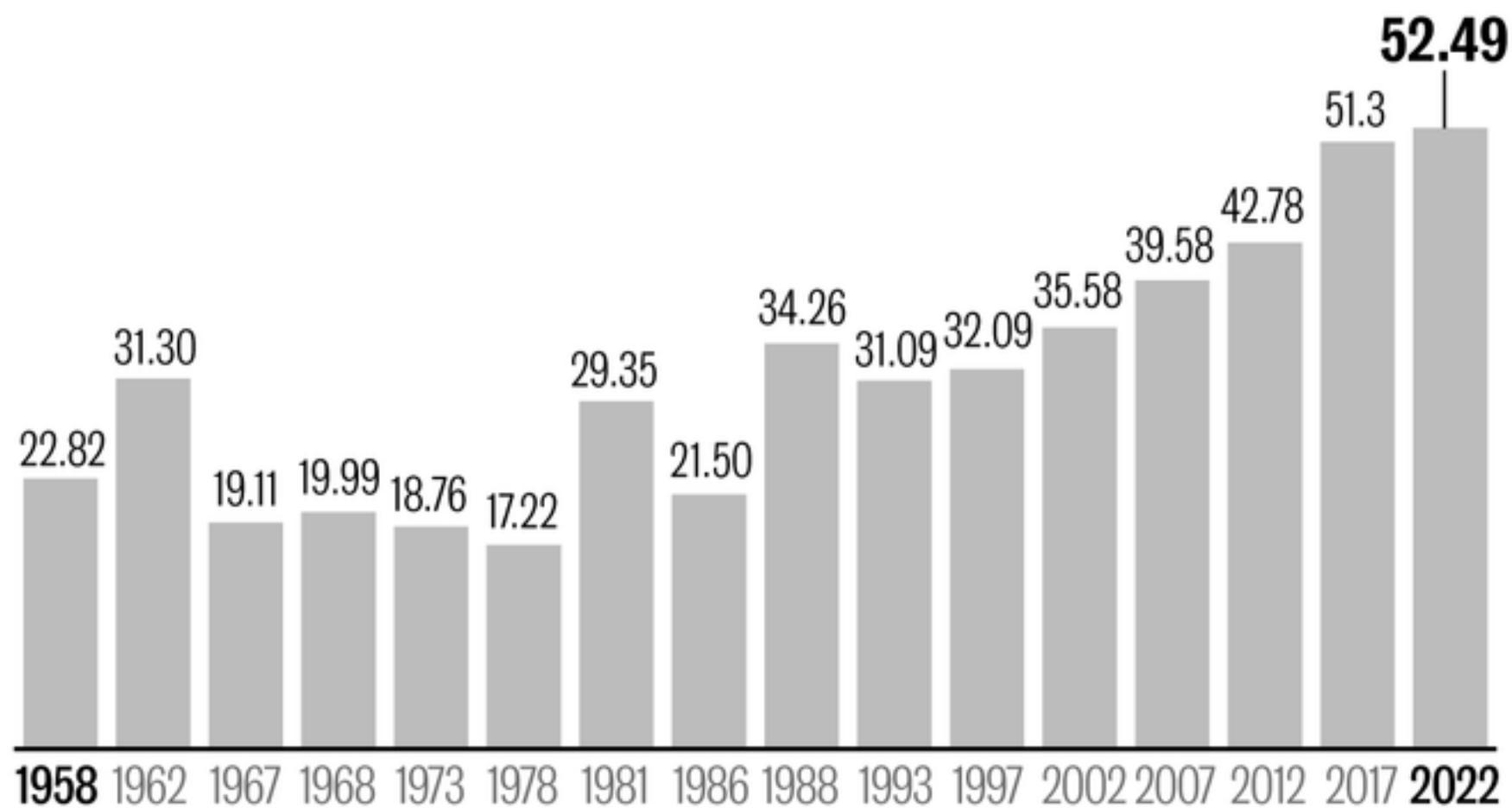


Fig. 13.4. European Parliaments 1848–1999: leading party position

IV: A “crisis” of democracy?

The issue of disintermediation

Abstention rates in legislative election first rounds under the Fifth Republic



Source : ministère de l'intérieur

Table 1. National levels of party membership

Country	Year	Total party membership	Total party membership as percentage of electorate (M/E)
Austria	2008	1,054,600	17.27
Cyprus (Greek)	2009	81,433	16.25
Finland	2006	347,000	8.08
Greece	2008	560,000	6.59
Slovenia	2008	108,001	6.28
Bulgaria	2008	399,121	5.60
Italy	2007	2,622,044	5.57
Belgium	2008	426,053	5.52
Norway	2008	172,359	5.04
Estonia	2008	43,732	4.87
Switzerland	2008	233,800	4.76
Spain	2008	1,530,803	4.36
Denmark	2008	166,300	4.13
Sweden	2008	266,991	3.87
Portugal	2008	341,721	3.82
Romania	2007	675,474	3.66
Lithuania	2008	73,133	2.71
Netherlands	2009	304,469	2.48
Germany	2007	1,423,284	2.30
Ireland	2008	63,000	2.03
Slovakia	2007	86,296	2.02
Czech Republic	2008	165,425	1.99
France	2009	813,559	1.85
Hungary	2008	123,932	1.54
United Kingdom	2008	534,664	1.21
Poland	2009	304,465	0.99
Latvia	2004	10,985	0.74
<i>Mean (N = 27)</i>			4.65

Going, going, . . . gone? The decline of party membership in contemporary Europe

INGRID VAN BIEZEN,¹ PETER MAIR² & THOMAS POGUNTKE³

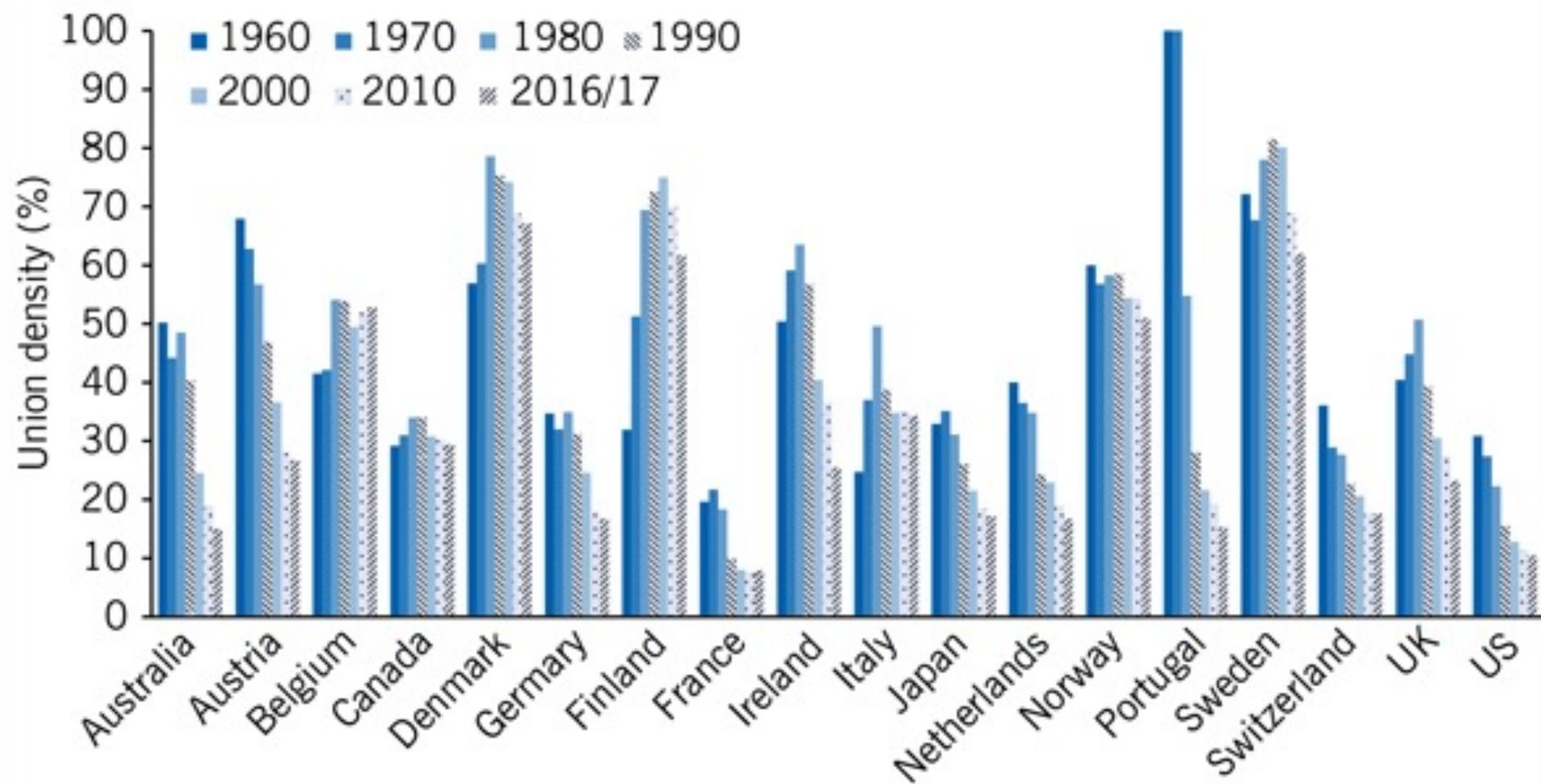
¹*Leiden University, The Netherlands;* ²*European University Institute, Florence, Italy;*

³*Heinrich Heine University, Düsseldorf, Germany*

Table 4. Party membership change, 1980–2009

Country	Period	Change in M/E ratio	Change in number of members	% change in number of members
Czech Republic	1993–2008	–5.05	–379,575	–69.65
United Kingdom	1980–2008	–2.91	–1,158,492	–68.42
Norway	1980–2008	–10.31	–288,554	–62.60
France	1978–2009	–3.20	–923,788	–53.17
Sweden	1980–2008	–4.54	–241,130	–47.46
Ireland	1980–2008	–2.97	–50,856	–44.67
Switzerland	1977–2007	–5.90	–178,000	–43.22
Finland	1980–2006	–7.66	–260,261	–42.86
Denmark	1980–2008	–3.17	–109,467	–39.70
Italy	1980–2007	–4.09	–1,450,623	–35.61
Slovakia	1994–2007	–1.27	–41,204	–32.32
Belgium	1980–2008	–3.45	–191,133	–30.97
Netherlands	1980–2009	–1.81	–126,459	–29.35
Austria	1980–2008	–11.21	–422,661	–28.61
Germany	1980–2007	–2.22	–531,856	–27.20
Hungary	1990–2008	–0.57	–41,368	–25.03
Portugal	1980–2008	–1.05	+4,306	+1.28
Greece	1980–2008	+3.40	+335,000	+148.89
Spain	1980–2008	+3.16	+1,208,258	+374.60

Figure 1. Union density, 1960–2016/17



Source: Visser, J. ICTWSS Database. Version 6.0. Amsterdam: Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labor Studies (AIAS), University of Amsterdam, June 2019.

Peter Mair, *Ruling the void. The Hollowing of Western Democracy* (2013).

“The age of party democracy has passed.”

“Although the parties themselves remain, they have become so disconnected from the wider society, and pursue a form of competition that is so lacking in meaning, that they no longer seem capable of sustaining democracy in its present form.”

“What we now see emerging is a notion of democracy that is being steadily stripped of its popular component — easing away from the demos.”

“In the political discourse of the twenty-first century we can see clear and quite consistent evidence of popular indifference to conventional politics, and we can also see clear evidence of an unwillingness to take part in the sort of conventional politics that is usually seen as necessary to sustain democracy.” (Mair)

Génération désenchantée? Jeunes et démocratie (eds. Laurent Lardeux & Vincent Tiberj, INJEP).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LooHQd_m6KE

Indifference to conventional politics does not mean indifference to politics *tout court*, cf. opinions regarding “cultural matters” (womens’ rights, LGBTIQ rights, support to refugees, cosmopolitanism, ...) and climate issues; involvement in social movements and/or NGOs active on those topics.

More “direct” action, echoing disintermediation and the loss of influence of political parties.

CONCLUSION

- Democratization as a long process, not univocal: anti-democratic and anti-liberal elements throughout its history: cf. slavery, social Darwinism, etc.
- Not a linear process (authoritarian restorations, Paris Commune), and not taken for granted (Vichy).
- **Democracy is not only formal:** beyond elections and majority will, there is an array of institutional arrangements (Rule of Law, checks and balances, ...) + complementary channels of participation and representation of citizens (unions, pol. parties, civil society org^o, protests, petitioning, deliberation, ...).
- **Disintermediation** + search for **alternative ways of doing politics** (single-issue politics, “participatory turn”) as the main characteristic of contemporary democracies?

DOMENICO LOSURDO

LIBERALISM

A COUNTER-HISTORY

