

Dutch subnational elections: How to explain the rise of radical right parties and their connection with independent local parties

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Abstract: Whereas radical right parties are on the rise on a subnational level in several European countries, in the Netherlands an exceptional situation can be observed with four radical right parties represented in local councils. The number of municipalities with such councillors increased from 8% in 2018 to 22% in 2022, although their size is still relatively small. When understanding the increasing share of radical right councillors by Tobit estimations, the number of inhabitants, regional diversity, the number of people with social assistance and fragmentation are important explanations. In addition, if a radical right was already represented in the previous council this is an important explanation for the next election. Moreover, the relative size of Dutch independent local parties holding seats in the council rose from 25% in 1998 to 42% in 2022 and we study the relation between these two trends. Following a difference-to-difference method for local elections in 2018 and 2022, the impact of radical right on contesting independent local parties was analysed and this influence turned out to be related to BVNL and to lesser extent for FvD.

Keywords: subnational elections; radical-right parties, independent local parties; political fragmentation; Tobit estimation; difference-to-difference method.

1 Introduction

In the Netherlands, radical right-wing parties have made significant progress in representation in local and regional councils. In March 2019, the radical right-wing party *Forum voor*

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Democratie (FvD) became the largest party in provincial elections (Otjes, 2021). Since the last election in March 2022, radical-right parties are represented in 22% of Dutch municipalities, which is almost three times more than in 2018 (8%). Although their share of seats is still low with 1.3% in 2022, their representation is increasing over time. Some months after the national election in 2021, there are four parties (PVV, FvD, BVNL and JA21) with radical right roots in the Dutch parliament. All four parties have representatives in several Dutch municipalities, although JA21 is only represented in the city of Amsterdam. As fragmentation of the council increased as well, the number of parties forming the board of aldermen -the governing body of a municipality- also has risen (Gradus et al., 2021). The average number of parties with aldermen increased from 2.8 in 1998 to 3.5 in 2022. However, radical right parties have no aldermen yet. In some other countries the appearance of radical right parties on a local level did already take place since the beginning of this century. As Loxbo (2010) shows, in Sweden the radical right party Sweden Democrats gained representation in 10% of municipalities in 2002 and was successful in some municipalities in challenging mainstream parties. In Belgium, since 2000 Vlaams Blok (renamed Vlaams Belang) was rather successful in local elections with a peak in 2004 of 30% of the votes in the province of Antwerp (Delwit, 2019). For Germany, Jankowski et al. (2022) found that in 2016 the radical right-wing party AfD competed in 88 of 398 municipalities in the region of Lower Saxony. That article focusses on the effects of the participation of AfD on the success of independent local lists, which received an average vote share of 13.1% in the election of 2011 and 15.6% in the election of 2016.

In the literature, a debate about how to define radical right parties is going on. According to Mudde (2007), the key elements of radical right-wing ideology are nativism, ethnocentrism, authoritarianism and Euroscepticism. De Lange (2007) argues that radical-right parties do not have a robust view on economic issues. Therefore, these parties have

considerable flexibility: even when a neo-liberal economic agenda was “employed successfully, as it was by the French Front National in the mid-1980s, it was a tactical tool to be abandoned as soon as the political wind changed, and protectionism and welfare chauvinism seemed more promising” (Otjes , 2021, p. 131). In the Netherlands four radical right (RR) parties are yet active on national, provincial and local level: PVV, FvD, BVNL and JA21. Some like Otjes (2021) argue that FvD attracts more economically libertarian voters and PVV voters are more concerned about redistribution. Based on enquiry, Otjes (2019) also shows that the economic agenda of the PVV (i.e. the RR party with the longest history) has changed from libertarian towards deserving a left-wing agenda. As BVNL and JA21 are split off from the FvD, their economic agenda has some common grounds. As the situation in the Netherlands with four radical right parties in the Netherlands (PVV, FvD, BVNL and JA21) in last local election is exceptional, in this paper we try to explain the council’s seat share of radical right by the number of inhabitants, regional diversity, population density and fragmentation. Similar to Coffé at al. (2007) we use Tobit estimation to explain the RR’s seat share per municipality. Loxbo (2010) show for Sweden Democrats that they are large in deprived areas and if the majority of the mainstream parties in the previous election was just above 50%.

Interestingly, the recent history of the increasing representation of radical right parties in Dutch local councils is intertwined with increasing seat share for independent local parties (Otjes, 2018, 2020). The relative size of Dutch local parties holding seats in the council rose from 25% in 1998 to 42% in 2022 and the relative share of their aldermen from 21% in 1998 to 40% in 2022. Focusing on the Netherlands, Boogers and Voerman (2010) used three categories to make a distinction between independent local parties (ILPs). Besides localist parties, which focus on the quality of the local administration in the municipality, there are interest parties that aim to represent a certain group of inhabitants. There are indications that

some ILP operate as protest parties to express dissatisfaction with the local administration (Boogers and Voerman, 2010). Particularly radical right parties have become best known for their strong anti-establishment attitudes due to their electoral success and strong critique of the political elite (Mudde, 2007). Interestingly, Jankowski et al. (2022) show that in the election of 2016 in which the German anti-establishment party AfD contested local election in many municipalities in the State of Lower Saxony (LS), the vote share of ILP decreased by more than three percentage points. Their findings demonstrate that the increase in the success of ILP was halted in municipalities in which the AfD competed, while it continued to increase in regions where the AfD was absent. For the Netherlands, Gradus et al. (2021) did a similar analysis. In 2018 it was the first time that the PVV is contested in a substantial number of Dutch municipalities (30). However, they observe a non-significant treatment effect of PVV. According to Gradus et al. (2021), one reason for this could be that the Dutch ILPs are already more established than German ILPs in LS. As more radical right parties are contested in Dutch local municipalities, we contribute to the literature on the relation between RR and ILP and show that there for some RR parties (i.e. BVNL and to a lesser extent FvD) it is larger than for PVV.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 describes provincial elections between 2011 and 2019 as this was the first time that radical right was represented. Section 3 presents the data for municipal elections between 1998 and 2022. In section 3.1 we describe the (relative) number of seats of different political parties in local councils. We pay special attention to radical right parties. In section 3.2 we give the (relative) number of aldermen and their political affiliation. As Dutch councils have become more fragmented in recent decades, we present two fragmentation indexes in section 3.3. In section 4 we present different models for the share of radical right seats in municipal councils and their estimation. Some concluding remarks and topics for future research are offered in section 5.

2. Dutch provincial Elections 2011-2019

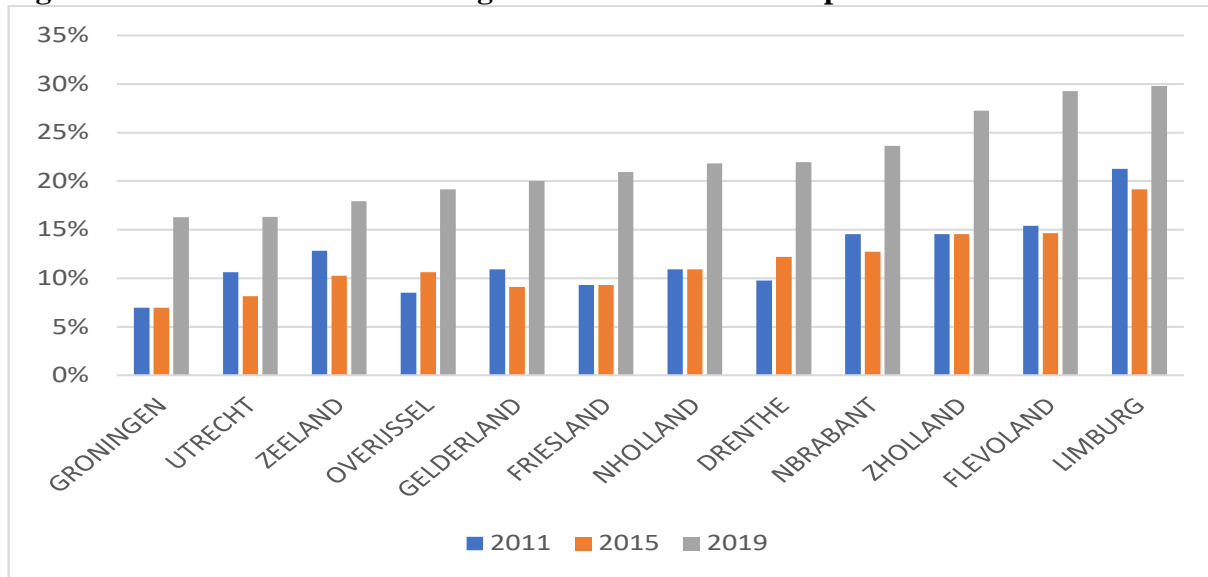
In the Netherlands there are three layers of government (central, provincial, and local).

Subnational governments consist of 12 provinces and (in 2022) 345 municipalities. Provincial councils are elected every 4 years. In 2004, Geert Wilders left the parliamentary group of VVD and started a new party, PVV or Freedom Party. The most important points for Wilders to leave VVD was a fewer liberal agenda on Islam and no negotiations with Turkey on EU-membership. Since 2006, the PVV has a representation in the House of Representatives of the Dutch parliament. Since 2011, it has also a representation in twelve provincial councils. In 2017, another radical right party FvD won two seats in the House of Representatives.

Interestingly, in March 2019 FvD became the largest party in provincial seats with more seats (86) than right-wing liberals VVD (80). In 2020, after several controversial statements made by FvD's party leader Baudet, many provincial councillors left FvD and another radical right-wing party JA21 was founded. In the national elections in March 2021, three radical right parties were elected in the House of Representatives: PVV (17), FvD (8) and JA21 (3). Soon after this election three parliamentarians of FvD have left as well and formed BVNL. So, there are now four radical right parties in the Dutch House of Representative.

In all 12 provinces, the size of RR-parties is increasing. In Figure 1 their size (in % of seats) is given in 2011, 2015 and 2019.

Figure 1. Relative size of radical right in number of seats of provinces



Source: Wikipedia

In 2019, in Groningen and Utrecht RR has 16% of the seats and in Limburg this is 30%.

Importantly, the senate is indirectly elected by provincial councils. In the Senate election in May 2019, the right-wing liberal VVD and FvD both won twelve seats (out of 75). In 2020 after several controversial statements of Baudet, several senators left FvD and most went to JA21 (or group Nanninga).

3. Dutch Municipal Elections 1998-2022

Local governments are seen as the most visible level of government, and they have considerable autonomy regarding public service provision (Gradus and Budding, 2020). Due to mergers, the number of municipalities has decreased from 548 in 1998 to 345 in 2022. In recent decades, various public responsibilities such as home care for the elderly and disabled have been transferred from central to local government. At present, the importance of local social services has increased significantly. Currently, municipalities have a budget of about 7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and 20 percent of government spending. With over 40,000 inhabitants on average, Dutch municipalities are relatively large compared with most other European countries (Bel et al., 2010).

3.1 *The municipal councils*

Municipal councils are elected every four years. In principle, elections in all municipalities are held on the same day in March (with exceptions for municipalities that have recently been merged or are expected to be merged soon). The Dutch electoral system is based on party-list proportional representation with no threshold other than the natural threshold due to council size. For new political parties it is easy to participate in an election as they only must be a foundation and a small deposit should be secured. The minimum number of votes necessary for the first seat is equal to the total number of votes divided by the number of seats. The number of seats varies between 9 (for municipalities with less than 3,001 inhabitants) and 45 (for municipalities with more than 200,001 inhabitants). Therefore, the threshold due to council size ranges from 2% for large cities with 45 seats and 8.25% for small municipalities with nine seats.⁴ Due to mergers, the number of municipalities has decreased from 548 in 1998 to 345 in 2022 and the total number of seats on local councils has decreased from 10,129 in 1998 to 8,531 in 2022.

National parties are defined as parties that are represented in the House of Representatives in the National Parliament, local parties are not (Gradus et al., 2021). After the 2021 National Election, there are 17 parties elected: Social Democrats (PvdA), Conservative Liberals (VVD), Christian Democrats (CDA), Progressive Liberals (D66), Green Left (GL), Socialist Party (SP), Christian Union (CU), Reformed Political Party (SGP), Freedom Party (PVV), Party for Animals (PvdD)², Party for Elderly (50+)⁵, Party for minority rights (DENK)²,

⁴ For small municipalities with less than 19 seats, the threshold can be smaller as also parties with more than 75% of the vote share can win a residual seat.

⁵ As these parties are running only in the municipal election from 2018, we did not take them into account in Table 2. It should be noted that their size is relatively small. In 2018, their number of councillors were 35 (PvdD), 36 (50+), and 22 (DENK). In 2022, the number of councillors were 63 (PvdD), 24 (50+), 25 (DENK) and 20 (Volt), and 8 (BIJ1). BBB has no representation in a local council.

Forum for Democracy (FvD), a pan-European liberal party (Volt)², a new radical-right (JA21), a party for farmers and citizens (BBB)² and a party for radical equality (BIJ1)².

Data about these political characteristics (seats and aldermen) in the election years 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2018 were collected from the *Gids Gemeentebesturen* (Guide to Municipal Boards).⁶ Data for the results of the 2022 municipal council election were gathered by using the election results published on the website of NOS Nieuws, i.e. the news website of the Dutch public broadcasting organization⁷, and those for the aldermen were made available by VNG upon our request just after the last coalition was installed in September.

PVV participated in local elections since 2010. In the 2010 and 2014 election, the PVV only had seats in the cities of The Hague and Almere, but on a national level the PVV got 15.4% of the votes in the 2010 elections and 10.1% in the 2012 elections. In 2018, the PVV had a list in 30 municipalities and 75 seats in municipal councils. FvD is also active since 2018 on a local level. In March 2018, it got three seats in the municipal council of Amsterdam. In December 2020, two of three councillors have left this party to establish a new radical-right party JA21. In 2022 local elections, in 74 municipalities there are radical right councillors.

In 2018, it was the first time that the PVV is elected in a substantial number of Dutch municipalities (29). In 2022, the PVV had representation in a similar size of municipalities (32), but other radical right-wing parties as FvD and BVNL gained representation in respectively 49 and 14 municipalities (Table 1). In 2022, only in Amsterdam another radical right-wing party JA21 won two council seats. In Table 1 and others RR is the sum of these four radical-right parties.

⁶ Due to availability issues, we used the guides who were published in the years 2002 (showing the political composition as of September 2001) for election 1998, 2004 (id., October 2003) for election 2002, 2009 (id., October 2008) for election 2006, 2012 (id., September 2011) for election 2010, 2016 (id., January 2016) for election 2014 and 2018 (id., July 2018) as well as 2020 (id., February 2020) for election 2018.

⁷ For municipalities merged in 2020 and 2021 elections have taken place in November before the year of merger and the data on seats were available on www.kiesraad.nl.

Table 1. Number of municipalities with radical right parties

<i>Elections</i>	RR	PVV	FvD	BVNL	JA21
<i>2022</i>	74	32	48	14	1
<i>2018</i>	30	29	1	0	0
<i>2014</i>	2	2	0	0	0
<i>2010</i>	2	2	0	0	0

Since 2022, in 21 municipalities there are two radical-right parties with seats in the council. In 16 municipalities, there is a combination of PVV with FvD, in three of FvD with BVNL and one of PVV with BVNL. Only, in Amsterdam there are seats for both JA21 and FvD. It should be noted that PVV, FvD and BVNL contested in respectively 32, 54 and 20 municipalities, so for FvD and BVNL there are six municipalities where the threshold is not surpassed.

In Table 2, the size of different parties as a percentage of their seats in total number of seats in every election year is given, calculated as the mean value of all municipalities. Sometimes, a combination of political parties ran together in the election. In such a case the number of seats is divided equally between these parties.⁸

⁸ For example, in a lot of municipalities there is a combination between both CU and SGP (in 2022 34). In 2022, the number of a combination between PvdA and GL is larger than in earlier years with 41).

Table 2. Relative size of different parties in number of seats

	Local	PvdA	VVD	CDA	D66	GL	SP	CU	SGP	RR
1998	24.6%	17.8%	17.7%	24.3%	4.1%	3.7%	1.2%	2.9%	2.6%	-
2002	29.9%	15.0%	15.9%	24.3%	2.7%	4.2%	1.2%	3.9%	2.8%	-
2006	27.3%	21.6%	14.1%	21.0%	1.6%	4.4%	2.6%	4.5%	2.8%	-
2010	30.3%	14.1%	16.6%	18.8%	5.6%	4.5%	2.2%	4.3%	3.1%	0.1%
2014	34.8%	9.4%	12.5%	18.5%	8.3%	3.9%	4.2%	4.8%	3.3%	0.1%
2018	36.7%	7.3%	13.8%	17.3%	6.9%	6.1%	3.1%	4.6%	3.0%	0.6%
2022	41.6%	7.1%	12.2%	14.3%	7.0%	6.2%	1.8%	4.1%	3.4%	1.3%

Table 3. Political parties represented in municipal council

Parties	1998	2002	2006	2010	2014	2018	2022
PvdA	90.4%	88.6%	91.2%	90.7%	86.5%	82.9%	78.6%
VVD	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.5%	93.5%	94.4%	93.5%
CDA	98.8%	98.7%	98.6%	99.3%	98.7%	99.2%	97.7%
D66	55.7%	40.7%	27.2%	58.5%	67.8%	75.8%	74.8%
GL	38.9%	45.9%	48.5%	50.6%	50.1%	61.8%	64.2%
SP	12.0%	12.5%	21.1%	26.3%	31.7%	32.9%	27.0%
CU	27.5%	40.5%	45.6%	44.9%	47.8%	49.7%	48.4%
SGP	24.8%	24.1%	24.5%	23.4%	24.9%	27.0%	27.3%
RR	-	-	-	0.5%	0.5%	8.4%	21.7%

The main established parties in the Netherlands are the Christian Democrats (CDA), Conservative Liberals (VVD) and Social Democrats (PvdA), although the total size of these parties has dropped dramatically from 60% in 1998 to 34% in 2022. On the contrary, the size of local parties has increased substantially from 25% in 1998 to 42% in 2022 (see also Gradus et al., 2022). The SGP and CU⁹ are (traditional) Protestant parties and their size increased slightly between 1998 and 2022 (with a small drop for CU in 2022). The Progressive Liberals (D66) and Green Left (GL) also increased their size. The number of seats for the Socialistic Party (SP) increased to a peak of 4.2% in 2014, although this is less than in the national elections. In the 2017 election the SP got 9.3% of the seats in the National Parliament. The main reason is that the SP only ran with a list in a limited number of municipalities. As Table 3 shows, the SP is now present in somewhat more than twenty five percent of Dutch

⁹ In 1998, the CU consisted of two parties RPF and GPV. In 2000, these parties merged into CU.

municipalities. This differs from the CDA and VVD as they were elected in almost all municipalities. For PvdA, there is a slight decrease in recent years. For other parties, it is varying between 75% (D66) and 27% (SGP). In 2022, radical right is present in two percent of Dutch municipalities, although in seats their size with 1.3% is relatively small although increasing over time.

3.2 Board of Aldermen

After every local election, the members of the council negotiate the number of aldermen and their political affiliation. The board of mayor and aldermen is responsible for preparation and execution of policies. The mayor is appointed by Central Government and his/her executive power is limited and therefore we only discuss the board of aldermen.¹⁰ In principle, aldermen are appointed for a period that lasts until new municipal elections, although in a limited number of municipalities aldermen and their affiliations change during the four years. So, on principle, they are appointed for four years. However, no information on earlier step down is available in the data we have. A municipality has ample power to increase the number of aldermen. For example, the largest city Amsterdam has had six to nine aldermen in 1998-2022.¹¹ Since the last election in 2022, due to increasing fragmentation the current number is nine.

Table 4. Relative number of aldermen

	Local	PvdA	VVD	CDA	D66	GL	SP	CU	SGP	RR
1998	20.6%	21.7%	19.8%	29.7%	1.8%	1.7%	0.1%	2.5%	2.0%	-
2002	24.7%	18.0%	16.1%	29.6%	2.1%	2.7%	0.6%	3.4%	2.4%	-
2006	17.9%	27.8%	14.7%	25.2%	1.4%	4.3%	1.4%	4.8%	2.5%	-
2010	25.6%	15.0%	19.8%	21.8%	5.6%	3.9%	1.0%	4.3%	3.1%	0.0%
2014	29.0%	9.2%	13.2%	23.3%	9.1%	3.9%	2.8%	5.5%	3.8%	0.0%
2018	31.5%	7.5%	15.7%	21.5%	6.5%	5.9%	1.8%	5.4%	3.5%	0.0%
2022	40.1%	8.2%	14.6%	15.9%	7.3%	5.3%	0.8%	3.9%	3.3%	0.0%

¹⁰ Currently, the mayor is still appointed by the King as part of the Dutch constitution. However, in due course this will be done by the Central Government as to emphasize the independence of this figure.

¹¹ Currently, PvdA, D66 and GL have a coalition and three aldermen each, so nine in total.

In Table 4 the relative number of aldermen per political party is shown. Some developments are comparable with those in Table 2. The relative number of aldermen in the main established parties dropped substantially and the number of aldermen for local parties has increased substantially between 1998 and 2022. It is well-known from the literature on political issues that there can be a distinction between general political preferences as expressed by the voters (represented by the share of seats of each political party on the municipal council) and those of the ruling parties (shown in our analysis by the aldermen) (Saarimaa and Tukiainen, 2016). A method of analysing this is divide the relative number of seats in the municipal council (see Table 2) through the relative number of aldermen (see Table 4). This can be interpreted as the relative number of aldermen per seat (see Table 5).

Table 5. Relative number of aldermen per seat

	Local	PvdA	VVD	CDA	D66	GL	SP	CU	SGP	RR
1998	0.84	1.22	1.12	1.22	0.44	0.46	0.07	0.86	0.77	-
2002	0.83	1.20	1.01	1.22	0.80	0.63	0.51	0.89	0.86	-
2006	0.66	1.29	1.04	1.20	0.87	0.97	0.53	1.07	0.88	-
2010	0.84	1.07	1.19	1.16	0.99	0.86	0.46	1.02	0.97	0.00
2014	0.83	0.98	1.05	1.26	1.10	1.00	0.67	1.14	1.14	0.00
2018	0.86	1.03	1.14	1.24	0.95	0.98	0.60	1.19	1.15	0.00
2022	0.96	1.15	1.97	1.11	1.04	0.86	0.44	0.95	0.98	0.00

In 2022, the relative number of aldermen for local parties is almost one and is larger than in other periods. Therefore, this is an indication that the non-conformist's position of these local parties has decreased (Gradus et al., 2021). Another indication for the decrease of this non-conformist's position is that the share of municipalities with at least one alderman from local parties is rising from 46% in 1998 to 86% in 2022. For the main established parties VVD, PvdA and CDA, there are consistently over time more aldermen than seats (except 2014 for PvdA). The contrary is true for the SP, which has an anti-establishment orientation. For GL it is less than one, although it is substantially larger than for SP and for other parties is around one. It

should be noted that for RR there are no aldermen, their difference is increasing over time. Similar as in Flanders, the main democratic parties seem to apply a principle known to them as the cordon sanitaire (Coffé et al., 2007).¹²

2.3 *Fragmentation of the council and board and power*

We have calculated two fragmentation indexes. Firstly, we measured fragmentation by the (absolute) number of political parties in the board. Secondly, we included the relative size of parties. In allowing for differences in the relative size of parties, the effective number of political parties can be calculated (see Mueller, 2003). As a formula:

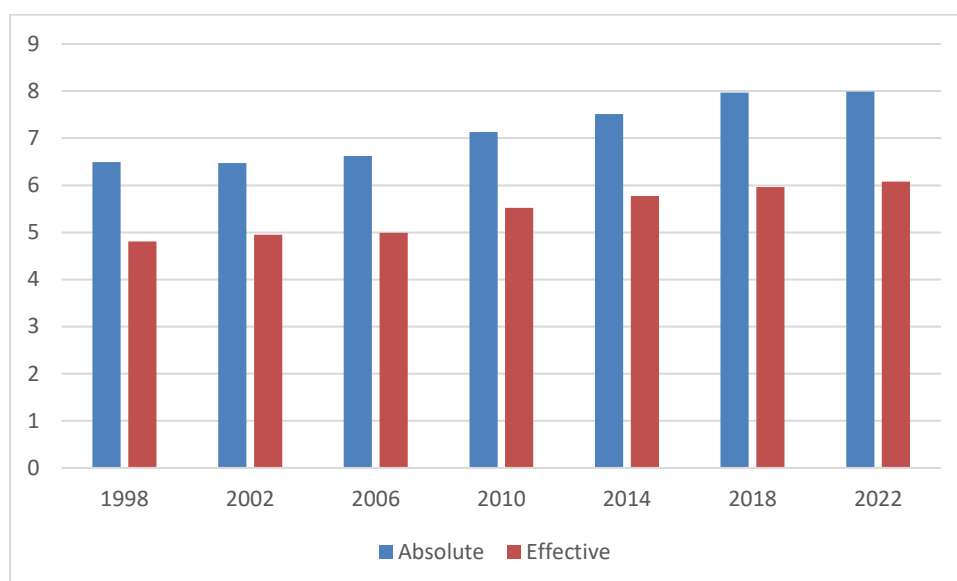
$$C = 1 / \sum_{i=1}^n x_i^2, \quad (1)$$

where x_i is the share of the seats (or board members) of i -th party (listed normally ordered in size) in a municipality. In political science this is often called the Laakso-Taagepera index.

In Figure 2, for every election in our dataset the absolute and the effective number of political parties in the council in the years of elections is presented.

¹² There are two exceptions of this cordon sanitaire. After 2019 provincial election, FvD became the largest party with 15 of seats and RR on a provincial level got between 16% in Utrecht and 30% in Limburg. In Noord-Brabant, there was a coalition with FvD between May 15, 2020, and May 20, 2021 and in Limburg there was until July 2021 a coalition with support of FvD.

Figure 2. Absolute and effective number of political parties in council



The effective number of political parties steadily increased from 4.8 in 1998 to just above 6 in 2022. In addition, the absolute number of political parties increased from 6.5 in 1998 to 8.0 in 2022. Moreover, Gradus and Dijkgraaf (2019) found for the Netherlands evidence that political fragmentation of the council decreases the ability to introduce unit-based waste pricing. As waste pricing is political disputable and has some adverse effects as illegal dumping and administrative costs less fragmented municipalities are more eager to introduce it. Studying Dutch waste collection, Gradus and Budding (2020) found some indications that privatization is more difficult under highly fragmented local councils. In addition, we also calculate the power of the government, measured as its share of seats in the council. After the election aldermen are chosen and they should get at least 50% of the council seats. Moreover, a powerful majority is also more capable of confronting the challenges presented by different interest groups (Vanneste and Goeminne, 2020). On average, the power of Dutch municipalities decreased from 63% in 1998 to 60% in 2022.¹³

¹³ In some municipalities the power is less than a half. This will be the case if an aldermen seat is vacant, or a governing party does have a seat in the local government.

In the next paragraph we explain first the relative number of seats for RR. Second, it will be tested whether the rise of radical-right parties in some municipalities potentially harms the electoral success of ILP. Table 6 contains the descriptive statistics for these estimations.

Table 6 Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Std. Dev.	Observations
RR (% *100)	0.95	21.05	0	2.72	686
Inhabitants (/1000)	49.60	873.34	0.93	73.57	686
Population density (/1000)	0.84	6.64	0.004	1.00	686
Number of parties (t-1)	5.93	13.09	2.30	1.69	686
DPower(t-1)	0.14	1	0	0.35	686
DNoord-Holland	0.13	1	0	0.33	686
DZuid-Holland	0.14	1	0	0.36	686
DUtrecht	0.07	1	0	0.26	686
DNoord-Brabant	0.17	1	0	0.38	686
DLimburg	0.09	1	0	0.29	686
DZeeland	0.04	1	0	0.19	686
DGelderland	0.14	1	0	0.35	686
DOverijssel	0.08	1	0	0.27	686
DFlevoland	0.02	1	0	0.13	686
DDrenthe	0.03	1	0	0.18	686
DFriesland	0.05	1	0	0.22	686
DGroningen	0.03	1	0	0.17	686
D2022	0.49	1	0	0.50	686
Local (%)	0.33	1	0	0.19	2372
RR (dummy)	0.04	1	0	0.21	2372
CDA (%)	0.19	0.74	0	0.10	2372
PvdA (%)	0.13	0.53	0	0.09	2372
VVD (%)	0.14	0.53	0	0.07	2372
D66 (%)	0.05	0.31	0	0.06	2372
GL (%)	0.05	0.32	0	0.06	2372
SP (%)	0.02	0.43	0	0.05	2372
CU (%)	0.04	0.42	0	0.07	2372
SGP (%)	0.03	0.42	0	0.07	2372
Inhabitants (/1000)	41.33	873.34	0.93	65.11	2372
Population density (/1000)	0.74	6.64	0.004	0.91	2372
Number of parties (t-1)	6.98	16	2	2.31	2372
Effective number of parties (t-1)	5.36	11.31	1.69	1.45	2372

The number of observations where all variables are available is 2,372. These observations are result of (t-1) estimation, we use in fact a total of 2,884 observations. RR were represented in

Dutch councils from 2010. As we have only two municipalities with PVV in 2010-2014, we only estimate the seat share for RR for 2018-0222 with 686 observations.

4. How to explain the increasing share of radical right parties and interaction with ILP?

4.1 How to explain the share of radical right parties?

Loxbo (2010) demonstrates that the share of immigrants has a positive, strong statistically significant effect on the share of seats for Sweden Democrats in 2006. As we do not have data for immigrants, we use as proxy the number of inhabitants. In the Netherlands. We expect a positive sign for it. Similar to Coffé et al. (2007), we control for the anonymity and alienation, and include population density, expressed as the number of inhabitants per m². We expect a positive sign for it. Moreover, Coffé et al. (2007) suggests that people divorced from community and association are first and foremost among the supporters of extremism. Their measure of social capital is the per capita number of local branches of socio-cultural associations within the municipality. However, we do not have data on it. Nevertheless, there are some indications that socio-cultural associations are historically stronger in Limburg and Noord-Brabant (Vermeij and Schyns, 2019). Therefore, we include a province dummy. In addition, in some provinces as Noord-Holland and Flevoland large cities have more immigrants. Finally, we also investigate the relation between RR and political fragmentation of the council. As shown in paragraph 2.3, Dutch councils become more fragmented. Loxbo (2010) argues that it becomes harder to get a majority radical right parties gain form it and therefore we include a fragmentation index. We measure fragmentation by the number of parties in the council. However, an increase in the share of radical right parties does mechanically increase the extent of fragmentation, so we include fragmentation of the council

of the previous election. We could expect a positive sign if the fragmentation increases. We also test three alternative models. In the first one we test what the consequences are if a radical right party was already represented in the previous election. In the second alternative model we test if there is an effect of a power between 50% and 55% for the previous coalitions. For Sweden, Loxbo (2010) shows that in such a situation radical right can gain. In the third estimations we test the influence of social assistance. Guriev and Papaioannou (2022) show that the populists' vote share for deprived regions with high unemployment is high. We therefore expect that if the number of social assistances is high the vote share for radical right is high. To sum up, the following models will be estimated¹⁴:

$$RR_{it} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \log INH_{it} + \alpha_2 \log INH^2_{it} + \alpha_3 \log POPD_{it} + \sum_{j=1}^{11} \alpha_{4j} DP_j + \alpha_5 FI_{it-1} + EY_i + \varepsilon_{it}, \quad (2a)$$

$$RR_{it} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \log INH_{it} + \alpha_2 \log INH^2_{it} + \alpha_3 \log POPD_{it} + \sum_{j=1}^{11} \alpha_{4j} DP_j + \alpha_5 FI_{it-1} + \alpha_6 DRR_{it-1} + EY_i + \varepsilon_{it}, \quad (2b)$$

$$RR_{it} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \log INH_{it} + \alpha_2 \log INH^2_{it} + \alpha_3 \log POPD_{it} + \sum_{j=1}^{11} \alpha_{4j} DP_j + \alpha_5 FI_{it-1} + DPOWER_{it-1} + EY_i + \varepsilon_{it}, \quad (2c)$$

$$RR_{it} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \log INH_{it} + \alpha_2 \log INH^2_{it} + \alpha_3 \log POPD_{it} + \sum_{j=1}^{11} \alpha_{4j} DP_j + \alpha_5 NP_{it-1} + ASSIST_i + EY_i + \varepsilon_{it}, \quad (2d)$$

¹⁴ We also checked for multicollinearity of equation (2a) and (3). As the correlation coefficients of all variables are less than 0.65 and 95% is less than 0.4 no predictors indicate the presence of multicollinearity. The correlations can be obtained upon request.

where INH is the number of inhabitants, DP is a dummy for different Dutch provinces, ASSIST is the number of social assistance per municipality, POPD is the population density, EY is a set of dummies for the election years, FI is the number of effective parties for the council in election-year t-1, DRR is a dummy with one if a radical right party was represented in previous election and DPOWER is a dummy with one if the government share in the council in election-year t-1 is between fifty and fifty five.

The estimation method should account for the bounded nature of our dependent variable (the RR's seat share). As actual seat shares range from 0% to 21%, especially the lower bound deserves special attention. Indeed, RR did not participate in the elections in 585 of the 686 municipalities (i.e., 85%). Therefore, following Coffé et al. (2007) facing similar issues for Vlaams Blok/Belang in Flanders, we will proceed by estimating a Tobit regression (Tobin, 1958). Table 7 contains for four models the results. Equation (2a) is called the base model, (2b) the RR (-1) model, (2c) DPOWER (-1) model and (2d) ASSIST model.

Table 7. Estimates RR (*100)

Variable	Base	RR(-1)	DPOWER(-1)	ASSIST
Log (INH)	5.13***	4.127**	5.22***	3.93***
Log (POPD)	0.27	-0.17	0.08	-0.64
FI (t-1)	1.46***	1.16***	1.47***	1.26***
RR (t-1)	-	8.20***	-	-
DPOWER (t-1)	-	-	-1.42	-
ASSIST	-	-	-	153.12**
P_NH	7.17**	7.03**	7.07**	6.20**
P_ZH	1.85	2.48	1.89	1.04
P_NB	4.98	5.23*	4.70	3.87
P_LI	10.04***	9.16***	9.71***	7.53**
P_ZE	12.56***	11.09***	12.01***	9.75**
P_GE	2.40	3.12	2.14	0.73
P_OV	7.77**	6.37*	7.30***	5.42
P_FL	14.49****	10.95***	13.79***	12.48***
P_DR	7.40*	6.42	6.93*	4.37
P_FR	10.16***	9.95***	10.25***	6.50*
P_GR	11.18***	11.79***	11.65***	6.981*
D2022	5.02***	2.75**	4.60***	4.38***
C	-47.12***	-39.93***	-46.69***	-43.80***
Observations	686	668	669	678

Tobit estimations with left censoring at zero. */**/** means significance at 90/95/99%,

The results in Table 7 are in accordance with our expectations. The variable inhabitants is significant and positive (at the 1% level) in all four models. The larger the municipality the larger the share of radical right parties. Also, for the regional hypothesis, there is evidence. For the provinces Flevoland, Zeeland, Noord-Holland and Limburg the estimation of the dummy (against the benchmark Utrecht¹⁵) is significant (at 1% level) in all four models. For Groningen and Friesland, it is significant (at least 5% level) in three model. For population density-hypothesis, there is no evidence. The dummy for the election year 2022 is strongly significant and positive. Finally, the fragmentation hypothesis is significant in all the four models.¹⁶

¹⁵ We selected this province as the benchmark as this province has the lowest share of RR (see Figure 1).

¹⁶ If we take the number of parties, the coefficient is significant in the base model and DPOWER-model

In RR(-1) model we got a positive and strong significant result for the seat share of radical right in the previous election. The interpretation is such that if a radical right was already represented in the previous election chances are high that it will be represented in the next election. However, in the DPOWER-model there is no significance for power (between 50% and 55%) in the previous period. This means that a tight majority for the coalition in the previous period does not imply an increase for RR in the next election. Also, in the ASSIST model we found strong results for social assistance. In line with Guriev and Papaioannou (2022) municipalities with higher unemployment have a higher share of RR.

4.2 Impact of radical right parties on the electoral success of ILP?

Drawing on a recent study of Jankowski et al. (2022), who focuses on the German federal state of Lower Saxony (LS), we elaborate in this section whether there is an impact of radical right on the electoral success of ILP. The five local elections in Lower Saxony allows for a robust analysis of how the entrance of the AfD to the German party system affects the electoral success of ILP. Specifically, this setting allows to employ a difference-in-differences research design and exploits that the AfD competed only in certain but not all municipalities in the local elections of 2016. Therefore, only some municipalities received the “treatment” of having the AfD competing for votes, while the AfD was absent from the election in all other municipalities. To be precise, the AfD competed in 88 of 398 municipalities in LS, which is 28.9% and there are data on several elections in 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016 as local elections take place in every five years in the German state of LS. For the Netherlands in 2018 it was the first time that the PVV contested in a substantial number of municipalities (30). Following Jankowski et al.’s approach, (2022), Gradus et al. (2021) observed as expected a negative treatment effect of PVV. However, this effect was not statistically significant and this is a different result than in Jankowski et al. (2022). In 2022, radical right parties are

represented in 22% of Dutch municipalities. Therefore, it is possible to repeat the approach of Gradus et al. (2021) now with also the data of 2022 election. In Gradus et al. (2021) also a non-linear effect for inhabitants is evaluated.

Therefore, the almost the same model as in Gradus et al. (2021) will be estimated:

$$ILP_{it} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \ln INH_{it} + \alpha_2 \ln INH_{it}^2 + \alpha_3 POPD_i + \alpha_4 NP_{it-1} + \alpha_5 DRR_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}, \quad (3)$$

where DRR (or DPVV etc.) is a dummy with one if a radical right party (or PVV etc.) competes in municipality i and NP is the number of parties in previous election. For other variables see equation (2). Jankowski et al. (2022) had to deal with missing values for ILP as many German municipalities have no local lists. In our case we have only 110 out of 2,372 observations where ILP are missing and as such we treat them as zero.¹⁷ As in Gradus et al. (2021) we include year and municipal fixed effects, and we estimate with OLS. Table 8 contains the difference-in-difference estimations for equation (3).

Table 8. Estimates effect of presence RR, PVV, FvD and BVNL on ILP (%)

Variable	Coeff	Prob.	Coeff	Prob.
DRR	-0.040	0.00	-	-
DPVV	-	-	-0.021	0.07
DFvD	-	-	-0.033	0.01
DBVNL	-	-	-0.054	0.04
Log (INH)	-0.002	0.03	-0.002	0.00
Log (INH)^2	0.001	0.39	0.000	0.30
Log (POPD)	-0.002	0.91	-0.001	0.91
NP (t-1)	0.006	0.00	0.006	0.00
C	0.379	0.00	0.380	0.00
Fixed effects municipalities	Yes		Yes	
Fixed effects years	Yes		Yes	
Observations	2372		2372	
R ²	0.84		0.84	

White cross-section standard errors and covariance (d.f. corrected)

¹⁷ If we leave these missing values out, we get similar results.

First, we observe a negative treatment effect of RR, and the sign is as expected negative. Contrary to Gradus et al. (2021), this effect is now statistically significant. The interpretation is that if a radical right party contested in a local election in 2018 or 2022, the seat share of ILP decreased by four percentage points. Second, for inhabitants and inhabitants square we do not find a significant effect anymore. However, if only inhabitants and no square is included, we still have a significant and negative effect. For number of parties the year dummies now have a significant effect.

We also test whether this effect is dependent on specific radical right party. Therefore, we include three dummies (DPVV, DFvD and DBVNL) and Table 8 contains the results. Interestingly, we observe different treatment effects of different radical right parties. The interpretation is now: if a radical right party PVV, FvD or BVNL contested in a local election, the seat share of ILP decreased by two percentage points, three percentage points and five percentage points, respectively. For PVV, Gradus et al. (2021) found similar results for the election in 2018 and it is only weak significant with 10%. For BVNL, the effect on local parties is the strongest, which gives some reasoning as this party runs their campaign jointly with other local parties.¹⁸ Moreover, Jankowski et al. (2022) argue that these effects could be observed for other parties as well. In Germany, particularly the conservative CDU witnessed a decrease in its electoral success by 2.5 percentage points, although this is still relatively small as the CDU received an average vote share of 40.7% in 2011 (Jankowski et al., 2022). Gradus et al. (2021) indicate that the presence of the PVV did affect the electoral success negatively of CDA and especially PvdA, but not of VVD. This effect is statistically significant and 1% for CDA and 3% for PvdA.

¹⁸ Therefore, in Beek, Bergen op Zoom and Nissewaard the name was slightly changed in BVB, BVB and BVN.

Therefore, we run the same analysis as in equation (3) with the main established parties such as CDA, VVD, and PvdA on the left-hand side. As there can be many missing observations for parties as GL, SP, CU and SGP we also run equation (3) only for the municipalities where these parties are represented. In the second column of Table 9 these estimates are given.

Table 9. Estimates presence RR and number of parties on electoral outcome other parties

Effect on	All observations		Only observations >0	
	DRR	Number of parties(t-1)	DRR	Number of parties(t-1)
CDA	-0.002	-0.005***	-0.002	-0.005***
VVD	-0.003	-0.002***	-0.007	-0.002***
D66	-0.009	0.001*	-0.001	0.000
PvdA	-0.015**	-0.002**	-0.018***	-0.001*
GL	0.005	0.000	-0.005	-0.002
SP	-0.008*	0.001	-0.005	-0.001
CU	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000
SGP	0.000	-0.000	-0.003	-0.001

Estimations with model as presented in Table 8.

*/**/*** means significance at 90/95/99%.

The results in Table 9 indicate that the presence of a radical right party did affect the electoral success negatively of SP and especially PvdA, but not of the other parties. This effect is now 2% for PvdA, somewhat lower than in Gradus et al. (2021). If we consider that SP has only presence in 30% of municipalities the significance of the presence effect of RR on SP disappears. In the second and last column we estimate the consequences on the electoral success of different parties if the number of parties increased in the last election. Interestingly, the effect on the three main established parties CDA, VVD and PvdA is significant, but for others not. Especially, CDA with a strong position in the past deteriorates due to fragmentation as their size decreases with five percentage points if there is a one party more in previous local council. The results are robust if only the observations larger than zero are included.

5. Conclusions and discussion

After 2022, there are four radical right parties (PVV, FvD, BVNL and JA21) represented in Dutch local councils. The number of municipalities with at least one RR-councillor increased from 8% in 2018 to 22% in 2022, although their size in seats with 1.3% in 2022 is still relatively small, but it is increasing. On provincial level their size is larger and in some provinces as Flevoland and Limburg in the last provincial election three out of ten seats are radical right. In 2018, the PVV was represented in 29 municipalities. In March 2018, FvD got only three seats in the municipal council of Amsterdam. In 2022, FvD entered the councils of 48 municipalities and the party lost two seats in the Amsterdam city council and has one left. For PVV, BVNL and JA21 this is respectively 32, 14 and 1. Radical right has no aldermen and like Belgium one can speak of a cordon sanitaire (Coffé et al., 2007).

We try to explain by a Tobit estimation the share of radical right parties based on several variables. First, the more inhabitants a municipality has, the higher the share of radical right parties. Second, regional diversity seems also an important explanation as we found evidence for more radical right parties in e.g., Limburg, Zeeland, Noord-Holland and Flevoland. Third, we found that if the fragmentation of the council is increasing, the share of RR is increasing in the next election. Fourth, in line with Guriev and Papaioannou (2022) we found evidence that more deprived municipalities measured by the number of social assistances have a large share of RR. Fifth, if a radical right was already represented in the previous council, chances are high that it will be represented in next election. Contrary to Loxbo (2010), a tight majority for the coalition in the previous period does not imply an increase for RR in the next election.

Interestingly, the recent history of the increasing representation for radical right parties in local councils is intertwined with increasing independent local parties (ILP). Comparing with Belgium, Germany, Austria and Denmark, this is a remarkably development with 42% of

the seats in 2022 for these parties (Gradus et al., 2022). In the literature, there are indications that some ILP operate as protest parties to express dissatisfaction with the local administration (Boogers and Voerman, 2010, Jankowski et al., 2022). As particularly radical right parties have become best known for their strong anti-establishment attitudes, Jankowski et al. (2022) show that if the German anti-establishment party AfD contested 2016-local election in municipalities in the State of Lower Saxony (LS), the vote share of ILP decreased by more than three percentage points. For the Netherlands, Gradus et al. (2021) did a similar analysis. In 2018, it was the first time that the PVV is contested in a substantial number of Dutch municipalities, and they observe a non-significant treatment effect of PVV. It seems that Dutch ILPs are already more established than German ILPs in LS. This is confirmed by the relative number of aldermen per seat, which increased to 0.96 in 2022 comparable with most other parties except SP and radical right.

Interestingly, we observe that if we add the municipalities in the election of 2022 in which a radical right party contested local election, the seat share of ILP decreased by four percentage points. However, we observe a different treatment effect of different radical right parties: if the radical right party PVV, FvD and BVNL contested local election, the seat share of ILP decreased by respectively two percentage points, three percentage points and five percentage points. For PVV, this is only weak significant and more in line with Gradus et al. (2021). For BVNL, the effect on local party is the strongest, which give some evidence that this party is closely related to independent local parties. Moreover, the effect on local parties is not very different from the PvdA. We also investigate the effect of fragmentation (measured by the number of parties) on ILP and see a positive and significant effect for ILP, and a negative effect for the main established parties CDA, VVD and PvdA.

There are many avenues to explore for future research. First, in some municipalities, members of FvD or PVV left these parties to establish their own party. Also on a provincial

level, there is splitting behaviour as since 2019 61 out of 86 FvD-representatives have defected. After several founding members split from the FvD, the party has been described as adopting more radical messages. It would be interesting to study this pattern in more detail. Second, the Dutch ILPs are a large and diverse group (Boogers and Voerman, 2010). It would be interesting to categorize them as well as and their relationship with radical right. Third, using data for radical right councillors for education, experience, age and gender different gap can be evaluated as there is some evidence for this in other countries (Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022).

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