

Chapter 1

Introduction

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Over recent decades, hundreds of new political parties took their places among the party systems of democracies worldwide. Some barely outlasted their introduction to the public before exiting the stage, leaving behind no performance worth recording. Others came on the scene with a dramatic first election success, which then would not be repeated, establishing the largely unenviable record of a ‘flash’ or ‘fly-by-night’ party. But some – a minority for sure, but a sizable number – behaved in ways and performed well and long enough to give the impression that they could be around for some time to come. Not permanent, perhaps, but justifying the designation of ‘institutions!’ This book is primarily about that status – ‘party institution’ – and the process by which parties may acquire it.¹

What takes a new party from infancy to institutionhood within its political system? Why do some reach that status, while so many fail, often well short of the prize? Those are the primary questions that have driven research reported in this volume.

While this book certainly does not stand alone in its efforts to address those questions, it has few peers in the range of cases that it covers in some detail. And while the contributions of previous individual efforts have been significant, their cumulative effect has been somewhat muted by ‘talking past one another’ with different definitions of key concepts. In acknowledgement of that fact, the many authors of this book reached agreement early on to adopt a single, multidimensional approach to the central concept of institutionalisation.

In this chapter, our purpose is to introduce the rest of the book. We begin by briefly summarising the common conceptual framework. We then turn to discussions of what is considered to be a key obstacle to institutionalisation of many parties (personalisation), what are the variant beginning and ending

points of the institutionalisation process (from what, to what) and some of the theoretical implications and findings that may be gleaned from the studies reported here.

Collectively, the authors of the rest of the chapters have taken responsibility for placing their works within the relevant extant literatures. For that reason, and to avoid excessive redundancy, we will here avoid voluminous citations to external literature. Instead, our literature review is limited almost exclusively to the works that reside within this book.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In chapter 2, we present the multidimensional approach to conceptualising institutionalisation which has been adopted for this book and all of its chapters. Based on the three dominant and distinguishable uses to which the concept has been put in the extant literature, this conceptual framework involves three distinct dimensions: internal institutionalisation, external institutionalisation and objective durability. Taken together, we define institutionalisation as ‘the process of acquiring the properties of a durable organisation which is valued in its own right and gaining the perceptions of others that it is such’ (Harmel et al. 2018: 6).

Internal institutionalisation refers to a party being valued in its own right apart from its momentary leaders and their initial goals (value infusion) and behaving according to regularised procedures rather than the whims of a leader (routinisation). External institutionalisation is found in the perceptions of external actors – such as the electorate or leaders of other parties – that the party of focus is considered an established party with lasting power. And objective durability covers persistence and a record of ability to survive through shocks (survivability).

While this framework is applied throughout the book, individual authors have been creative in developing empirical indicators appropriate to the variety of party types and contexts, as referenced in chapter 2.²

A KEY OBSTACLE TO INSTITUTIONALISATION: *PERSONALISATION*

Among the obstacles to party institutionalisation that have been identified in the extant literature, pre-eminent among them is ‘personalisation’ of decision making. A stumbling block for party institutionalisation generally, personalisation is the tendency to put tremendous decision-making authority in the hands of a single, largely unrestrained party leader. While personalisation can

be an obstacle to routinising decision making in other parties as well, depersonalisation is a major challenge of institutionalisation for any ‘charismatic party’, which by definition is a creation and a creature of its leader (who may or not be personally charismatic in the classical sense) (see Harmel et al. 2018: 77–78; Panebianco 1988: 145–147). At the other extreme, movement-based parties are virtually immune from deep personalisation, given their preference for ‘flat’ organisation with bottom-up decision making.

The party that began its life personalised and then successfully depersonalises can reap significant rewards potentially encompassing all three dimensions of institutionalisation. Internally, depersonalisation involves routinisation of decision making apart from the original, dominant force. But it also means much-enhanced potential for infusing value for the party itself, aside from its original leadership and original leader-centric purpose. Externally, as argued and shown in Anghel’s study of coalition behaviour in Romania (chapter 11), personalisation can stand in the way of other parties’ perceptions of a party as an organisational partner rather than just a personal vehicle for the leader. In that vein, depersonalisation can effectively reshape the party’s external image into something less ‘personal’ and potentially more lasting.

INSTITUTIONALISATION FROM WHAT?

On the road to institutionalisation, not all new parties start at the same place. Some may well have a head start over others, depending on their type of organisation, their ideological/issue profile and the nature of their ‘roots’. All of these points are illustrated in this book, given the range of cases covered in its various chapters.

Organisationally, Argentina’s PRO (Altavilla, chapter 5), the Czech Republic’s VV and ANO (Hloušek and Kopeček, chapter 4; Stauber, chapter 12), Greece’s To Potami (Lefkofridi and Weissenbach, chapter 2) and Romania’s PUNR and PUR (Anghel) are examples that began as ‘charismatic parties’.³ Such parties are alleged to be particularly difficult to institutionalise, given their traits of dominant leadership and personalised decision making (Panebianco 1988; Harmel et al. 2018). Serbia’s SPS (Vuković and Milačić, chapter 6) and Romania’s PSD, PDL, and UNPR (Anghel) also began as highly personalised parties, with similar obstacles. But on the other end of the continuum, Poland’s Green Party (Kwiatkowska, chapter 8), Greece’s ANEL (Lefkofridi and Weissenbach), and Sweden’s Pirate Party (Svåsand, chapter 9) began life as ‘movement’ parties, clearly lacking in strong, charismatic leadership. Though such parties would not face the special challenges posed by extreme personalisation, and particularly would tend to begin with an abundance of value infusion, they could face their own brand of serious

challenges affecting external institutionalisation. Still others – including the likes of Greece’s SYRIZA (Lefkofridi and Weissenbach) and the four ‘more institutionalised’ parties identified in Romania by Anghel – began with more traditional party organisation.⁴

New parties also vary as to their original ideological/issue profile, as demonstrated across the cases covered here. Some began as ideological parties of either the left or right, such as Greece’s SYRIZA and Norway’s Progress Party (Harmel et al. 2018), respectively. Others began as single-issue or narrow-issue parties, including Sweden’s Pirate Party and Poland’s Greens. Still others could best be described as centrist, non-ideological, and/or ‘pragmatic’ in orientation (e.g. VV and ANO in the Czech Republic); such parties may succeed in building short-term electoral success but may have more difficulty than ideological or issue-centric parties in infusing value.

As to their roots, some new parties – including Serbia’s SPS and Romania’s PSD and PDL – are not really all that new, instead serving as ‘successors’ to parties that have been rendered inoperable and in some cases even illegal, often as a consequence of regime change. Even among parties that are more truly ‘new’, there are still some whose roots were planted earlier, as in the cases of parties formed from mergers (e.g. Greece’s SYRIZA) or splits (e.g. Greece’s ANEL) of existing parties. All such parties may begin with organisational and/or human resources, which need to be built ‘from scratch’ for parties without prior roots of any kind. Parties with organisational roots in a social movement (e.g. Sweden’s Pirate Party) or collection of movements (e.g., Poland’s Greens) also begin with ‘a history’, but routinisation of movement character may prove more hindrance than help.⁵

The parties covered in this book also display variant roots vis-à-vis governmental status. While some began with a neutral stance towards government and a relatively respectful stance towards the parties in government, others began as oppositional parties from the start, effecting a clear anti-establishment orientation (e.g. both VV and ANO in the Czech Republic and To Potami in Greece). But a few of the new parties actually began their lives as dominant parties; such was the case for HDZ in Croatia and LDP in Japan. Dominance need not necessarily mean a clear and quick path to institutionalisation, though, as clearly demonstrated in the latter case. The LDP did not institutionalise as a party, *per se*, until its dominance was seriously challenged (see Uekami and Tsutsumi, chapter 7).

INSTITUTIONALISATION TO WHAT?

While some students of institutionalisation have incorporated ‘democratic procedures’ into their treatment of the concept, the reality is that not all

institutionalised parties have routinised the same types of decision-making processes or power distributions. Even among parties which have arguably ‘institutionalised’, there is still considerable variety in *what* has been institutionalised. Parties may institutionalise practices of decision making where all important decisions ‘bubble up’ from participation of members or supporters, but others may institutionalise centralised decision making in the hands of one or a few leaders. The determining factor is not the number involved in making decisions, but whether the decisions are made according to rules/procedures that have been routinised.

A few of the cases covered here – Poland’s Greens and Sweden’s Pirate Party – began with what might be considered ‘extremely democratic’ decision-making procedures and have struggled to routinise effective internal behaviour. Several of our cases have institutionalised strong central leadership, with considerable decision-making authority passed on from one leader to another. In those beginning as charismatic parties, such as Tuđman’s HDZ in Croatia and Babiš’s ANO in the Czech Republic,⁶ this has often involved what is labelled the ‘routinisation of charisma’. In the case of the HDZ, even the ‘informality’ associated with charismatic decision making has been routinised in what is now a depersonalised institution. Japan’s LDP has also institutionalised strong central leadership, but in this case, after a long period of faction-level dominance.

THEORY AND FINDINGS

In adopting the three-dimensional framework for institutionalisation, we left open the empirical question of inter-dimensional co-relationship and the theoretical question of inter-dimensional dependency. Does a high (or low) level of institutionalisation in one of its forms also imply a high (or low) level on all three dimensions? Is a high level on one required in order to accomplish a high level on one or both of the other dimensions? In another place (Harmel et al. 2018: 44–45), we speculated on such questions:

While the three dimensions or ‘types’ of institutionalisation are conceptually and theoretically distinct, they are nonetheless conceptually *related* – through their obvious association with the more general concept of ‘institutionalisation’ – and they are highly likely to be theoretically related as well. And yet those anticipated theoretical relationships are not so robust as to suggest that the conceptual distinctions are unnecessary. An objective record of durability is likely to contribute to the perception that a party is an ‘institution’ to be reckoned with, for instance, though some parties are able to reach external institutionalisation even before establishing a record of objective durability. Routinisation and value infusion may be necessary for some parties to be seen by others as predictable

and trustworthy, though some highly routinised and value-infused parties may still find it very difficult to achieve external institutionalisation. Internal institutionalisation – especially for parties that were formerly personalistic vehicles – may be necessary for persisting and surviving to a record of objective durability, though party reification by itself may not be sufficient to assure reaching that status. And so on!

Some of this book's chapters have addressed these and similar matters and provide relevant evidence as to the merits of such arguments. First, are the three dimensions of institutionalisation – including especially the internal and external varieties – indeed distinguishable empirically? The evidence from chapters of this book suggests that the answer is a definite 'yes'. Stauber's comparative analysis of Czech parties and Svåsand's and Kwiatkowska's case studies all conclude that it is indeed possible to accomplish one of internal or external institutionalisation without achieving the other. And Kwiatkowska even finds evidence of separation between routinisation and value infusion, both of which are aspects of internal institutionalisation. If nothing else, this evidence would seem to suggest that within institutionalisation as a *process*, it is apparent that one component may indeed lag behind others.

Are the dimensions causally related such that one or more is/are dependent on the rest? Again, evidence exists within these pages to support an answer in the affirmative, at least as regards the dependency of objective durability on the others. Stauber's, Anghel's, and Čular and Nikić Čakar's (chapter 10) analyses collectively lead to the conclusion that the combination of internal and external institutionalisation maximises the ability to persist. On the other hand, Kwiatkowska's study of Poland's Greens leads her to conclude that an extremely high level of internal value infusion may actually *impede* institutionalisation on other dimensions, while compensating for them nonetheless.

Beyond the relationships among the three dimensions, the analyses presented in this book speak collectively to other theoretical issues as well. For instance, among the plausible explanations for varying degrees of institutionalisation are other distinguishing characteristics of the parties themselves. As hinted earlier in the '*from what*' section, these include their original organisational type, ideological/issue profile and the nature of their 'roots'. Though the project was not designed to systematically address all of the relevant hypotheses, there is ample evidence throughout the book to at least glean preliminary judgements on some of them.

One other 'internal' factor in institutionalisation, especially for parties that were highly personalised in their early years, is whether the dominant leader purposefully impedes internal institutionalisation – which might be seen as 'normal' for such a party – or, alternatively, actually encourages it. Elsewhere (Harmel et al. 2018), we noted that the original leaders of

Denmark's and Norway's Progress Parties saw no virtue in institutionalisation, but timely replacements (one for reason of death and the other by prison sentence) brought second-generation leaders who actively pursued routinisation. In this book, Hloušek and Kopeček present the case of Andrej Babiš, the first-generation leader of Czech Republic's ANO, who himself oversaw the routinisation of charisma into an organisation modelled after a business firm. (Only the fact that, as of this writing, the party has not yet had a replacement of its effective leader keeps it from being considered fully institutionalised.)

Some of the chapters speak directly to the possible impacts of certain 'environmental factors' upon institutionalisation or some of its aspects and are at least suggestive of hypotheses that can and should be tested more broadly and systematically elsewhere. For instance, three of the chapters highlight the party system as a source of explanation. With special attention to internal institutionalisation, Uekami and Tsutsumi conclude that increasing inter-party competition brought both decline in the importance of factions and increased focus on the party per se. In his study of Argentina's PRO, Altavilla argues that stability of the party *system* is a factor in the institutionalisation of its individual parties. And Svåsand suggests that de-alignment of the Swedish party system may have helped the Pirate Party to survive, in spite of almost no evidence of institutionalisation on the external dimension.

Flipping the causal arrow, a couple of our chapters directly address possible *consequences* of party institutionalisation. Lefkofridi and Weissenbach suggest how different dimensions of institutionalisation might affect a party's success in gaining parliamentary representation. And Anghel argues that internal institutionalisation affects the ultimate success or failure of coalition agreements.⁷

CONCLUSION

Chapters 3 through 12 clearly demonstrate the applicability of the conceptual framework of chapter 2 to a range of party and system types. Though originally developed for analysing entrepreneurial parties (Harmel et al. 2018), the three-dimensional framework now has proven utility for comparing across virtually all types of political parties. And in chapter 13, Heylen applies the same framework to other types of intermediary organisations as well as parties.

One of the lessons of this collective project is that while not all new political parties start at the same place on the path to institutionalisation, and while each party type presents its own challenges, it is possible for parties of any type to ultimately reach a high degree of institutionalisation on at least some of its dimensions. Another lesson is that the process is hardly ever easy, and

the formula for successful institutionalisation normally includes not only the right combination of internal characteristics and contextual factors, but also the desire to do so in the first place.

NOTES

1. Another option, of course, is for a party to institutionalise and then go through a process of de-institutionalisation. Though our main focus in this book is on institutionalisation, a few of the cases discussed here have experienced de-institutionalisation on at least some components, as noted where appropriate. The Socialist Party of Serbia may be considered a special case of de-institutionalisation, since what was further personalised and hence de-institutionalised from the very start of the ‘new’ successor party replaced the institutionalised, but already strongly personalised, character that it inherited from its predecessor party (see Vuković and Milačić, chapter 6). And in Harmel et al. (2018), we fully explore the concept of de-institutionalisation and detail the process of de-institutionalisation in Denmark’s Progress Party.

2. And in chapter 13, Heylen demonstrates that the framework can be fruitfully applied not only to political parties, but also to other types of political organisations.

3. In fact, since the original leaders of these parties did not have any experience in governmental offices, these parties qualify also as ‘entrepreneurial’ parties (Harmel et al. 2018: 5).

4. In chapter 10, Čular and Nikić Čakar consider the case of Croatia’s HDZ, which actually combines characteristics of both charismatic and movement parties.

5. In chapter 13, Heylen discusses some conditions under which social movements or other types of political organisations could transform into institutionalised parties.

6. Though Hloušek and Kopeček (chapter 4) report evidence of routinisation of Babiš’s charisma, the fact that – as of this writing – Babiš remains leader of the party means that the crucial test for internal institutionalisation is yet to happen in this case.

7. In chapter 13, Heylen highlights some of the possible consequences of institutionalisation discussed in the sub-disciplines studying other types of intermediary organisations. In general, these consequences are perceived as potentially more severe as compared to the institutionalisation of parties.