

## *Chapter 1*

# Introduction

Literally hundreds of new parties have been added to the party systems of well-established democracies since the 1960s. Most of those were a ‘flash in the pan’, so to speak, and died quickly, with little fanfare and little impact. But a smaller number survived, some of which gained what we call in these pages ‘full institutionhood’, not just enduring for a significant period of time, but also developing routinized procedures for carrying on party business and becoming ‘forces to be reckoned with’ (or at least acknowledged) by other parties in their systems. Among those, it has become almost a truism that most would be found on the left or in the centre of their countries’ political spectrums, with ‘right-wing protest parties’ finding it particularly difficult, if not impossible, to institutionalise. And yet there have been *some*, and among those have been the Progress Party of Denmark and the Progress Party of Norway. Both were born in the early 1970s as additions to well-established party systems (and hence why we still call them ‘new’ parties), and both had fully institutionalised – by standards we develop in chapter 3 of this book – by the early 1990s.

While this book documents important facts about the development and experiences of those two parties, its primary purpose is to develop and demonstrate the utility of conceptual frameworks and theoretical approaches for the study of institutionalisation (and de-institutionalisation) of right-wing protest parties more generally, though much of what we do and find here has implications for the study of party institutionalisation (and de-institutionalisation) writ large. In the study of political parties, after all, as in any scientific endeavour, the main benefit from the study of ‘deviant cases’ is not the fun to be found in observing the deviates (though that can be fun), but instead the new theoretical insights which are required for understanding those cases and which have payoffs for explaining and predicting other cases as well.

For reasons we detail in chapter 5, the new right-wing protest parties of Denmark and Norway were not expected – by casual political observers but also serious party scholars in the political science community – to be more than a flash in the pan, and yet they defied the supposed odds against them and institutionalised within three decades of their births. How could that have happened? Were there particular circumstances or features of these parties and/or their environments which made it possible? If so, are those circumstances or features unique to these parties and their systems, or are they generalizable elsewhere? These are the questions which drive our inquiry in the first five chapters of this book.

In chapter 8, we turn our attention to the topic of organisational ‘decay’, or as we call it in these pages, ‘de-institutionalisation’. Though both Progress parties were fully institutionalised by the early 1990s, only one of them survives today. Indeed, during the period from the mid-1990s through 2001, the Danish party went from institutionhood to demise. Since this happened for just one of the two parties and not both, we are presented with another puzzle: what factor(s) might help explain the de-institutionalisation of one institutionalised party while another avoids or effectively endures through episodes of decay, when the two parties share so much in common? Such is the ‘stuff’ of chapter 8.

Along the way, we have often found it useful to bridge existing literatures and theories as a means of spawning new insights and hypotheses. Partially as a result of this bridge-building, we have identified what we think are key factors in the stories of the Progress parties, which also help explain the special difficulties in the institutionalisation of parties like them and to explain the different trajectories of our two parties since achieving institutionhood.

At times, our attempts to learn from extant literature, and especially to cumulate from different literatures, were thwarted by conceptual fuzziness: the same term being used to mean different things, different terms being used to cover the same meaning, multidimensional concepts being treated as unidimensional, etc. And hence, we have tried in these pages to contribute to greater conceptual clarity regarding such terms as ‘institutionalisation’ and ‘impact’, not to mention ‘right-wing protest party’. We turn now to a brief introduction to a few of the most important terms and concepts used throughout the book.

## INTRODUCTION TO TERMS AND CONCEPTS

The term ‘right-wing’ party can be and has been applied to a wide variety of parties. In this book, we consider the Progress parties to be *right-wing protest parties of entrepreneurial origins*, and furthermore, though they

were technically ‘new’ only in their earliest years, we and others still tend to refer to them as *new parties*. First, the Progress parties were from the outset *right-wing* in that they sought reduction in governmental intervention in the economy. For us, that condition is both necessary and sufficient to be classified as right-wing. Though others may associate, and indeed have done so, such stances as conservatism, authoritarianism, nationalism, and traditionalism with ‘right-wing’, we prefer to treat such additional traits as extra baggage which may accompany ‘right-wingism’, but which do not necessarily do so (as made clear in chapter 5). While their early stances on economic issues clearly placed both parties in the category of ‘classically right-wing parties’, it was substantially later (i.e. in the mid-1980s) that they added ‘anti-immigration’ to their issue profiles. For that reason, some consider the Progress parties to have become ‘new-right’ parties as well.<sup>1</sup>

Second, the Progress parties are *protest* parties, at least in origin, because the parties were chiefly identified with, and purposely emphasised, what they were *against* (i.e. taxes in particular), while leaving what they might be *for* as more of a mystery.<sup>2</sup> In overtly opposing establishment parties, some features of the establishment political process, and long-established policies associated with the political establishment, these two parties clearly qualified as *anti-establishment* parties as well.

Third, as parties of *entrepreneurial* origin the Progress parties are distinguished from parties that grew out of fully organised mass movements, but also from parties of parliamentary origin. Other ‘personal’ parties<sup>3</sup> have been formed by public office holders, but as entrepreneurial parties, each Progress party was the creation of one person who neither held an elected public office nor led a popular movement. Parties of entrepreneurial origin have most or all of the characteristics usually associated with ‘charismatic’ parties (e.g. see Panebianco 1988).<sup>4</sup>

Finally, we often in these pages refer to the Progress parties as ‘new parties’. Though they were *literally* new at the time of their origins in the early 1970s, our meaning has more to do with their being additions to well-established party systems. In that sense, their ‘newness’ extends beyond what could technically be considered the period of their organisational youth. This is a point that plays heavily in our analysis in chapter 5.

Because *institutionalisation* is the central concept of this book, we should also make clear how we will use this term (in anticipation of a more detailed treatment in chapter 3). ‘Institutionalisation’ has been used in the political science literature – and even in just the literature on political parties – to mean several different things. While some (e.g. Rose and Mackie 1988) have equated a party being institutionalised with being recognised as an institution by outsiders, others (e.g. Panebianco 1988) have emphasised certain organisational attributes to the exclusion of external perceptions. Our own

approach merges elements of each, while at the same time maintaining a distinction between institutionalisation and other related concepts such as organisational autonomy, organisational complexity, and centralisation of power. We define institutionalisation as 'the process of acquiring the properties of a durable organization which is valued in its own right and gaining the perceptions of others that it is such'. For us, then, institutionalisation is a multidimensional concept, encompassing: (1) 'internal' routinisation and value infusion, (2) 'external' perception of the party as having the ability to last, and (3) 'objective' durability. It is possible to be 'high' on one of these dimensions while 'low' on one or both of the others.

Relatedly, for us the term '*de-institutionalisation*' resembles Huntington's concept of institutional 'decay'. As such, de-institutionalisation refers either to discrete instances or to whole processes of reversal from indicators of institutionalisation: as when a party abandons routinized procedures, resumes features of 'charismatic' parties, or behaves in ways which cause other political actors to doubt its leaders' ability to endure or to deliver on promises.

## ORGANISATION OF THE BOOK

This book is divided into four main parts. Part I, Introduction, consists of this chapter and the next. In chapter 2, we will introduce both the cases and their national contexts. Though the Progress parties are similar in many regards, they also differ in important respects, such as the timing of their electoral successes and failures and of their first, very important leadership changes. Similarly, the Danish and Norwegian political and party systems have much in common (enough so, in fact, that this study can appropriately be thought of as following the 'most similar systems' approach), such as comprehensive welfare state arrangements, cultural homogeneity, proportional representation, and, until 1973, stable multi-party systems. But they also vary in ways that will prove important for analyses in later parts of the book, such as facing different kinds of political problems and the timing of critical changes of personnel. Specific contextual factors will also come into play later in the book; for example, differences in the two countries' provision of public subsidies for parties.

Part II, Institutionalisation, consists of five chapters. In chapter 3, the concept of institutionalisation is developed in detail, and each of its three component dimensions is matched with appropriate indicators. Then in chapter 4 the conceptual framework is applied to the two Progress parties so as to determine the extent to which, and the ways in which, each of the parties was institutionalised as of the early 1990s, an important benchmark in our analyses. Though both parties are found to have been highly, if not completely, institutionalised

by that time, interesting differences are found in the trajectories that the parties followed from their inception to institutionalisation.

Having established that both parties had in fact institutionalised, we devote chapters 5 through 7 to analysis of that accomplishment in the context of many predictions that they would die young and unfulfilled, in hopes of answering the question: ‘what went wrong in the prognostications?’ In chapter 5, special treatment is given to features which, according to extant theory on right-wing protest parties, should have rendered the Progress parties all but impossible to institutionalise. We also identify what we see as some very important offsetting factors, with special emphasis (in chapters 6 [theory] and chapter 7 [application]) on the need for particular leadership skills during different phases of the institutionalisation process, and the importance of timely leadership changes in making the new skills available within both Progress parties. Having established in chapter 4 that these parties had indeed institutionalised by the early 1990s, it is our objective in chapters 5 through 7 to contribute to explaining *how* such parties could institutionalise.

According to the broader extant literature on the concept of institutionalisation, completion of that process need not necessarily imply organisational permanence. To the contrary, fully institutionalised systems can fall into decay, increasingly show signs of de-institutionalisation, and even collapse entirely. Part III consists of chapter 8, which focuses on the topic of *de*-institutionalisation as applied to the Progress parties, or more precisely, the de-institutionalisation of Denmark’s Progress Party during the last half of the 1990s. Because the Norwegian party did not suffer the same fate, we look for explanation in the different circumstances of the institutionalisation process in both parties (including *what* was institutionalised), as well as in differences in their immediate post-institutionalisation experiences.

Finally, in the concluding part (chapter 9), we recount the major findings of the previous chapters in an effort to identify factors from the stories of these two parties which should be considered in further refinements of theory on institutionalisation and de-institutionalisation of right-wing protest parties. In the process, we also provide some comparative context, drawing upon experiences of similar parties in other countries. The individual stories of several of those parties are told, in brief, in the appendix to the book.

## TIME PERIODS FOR ANALYSES

The presentations in this book cover three time periods which roughly correspond in both countries to pre-Progress (pre-1973), the institutionalisation years (1973–1993/94), and post-institutionalisation (1993/94 and later).

Chapter 2 introduces not only the Progress parties, but also the contexts within which they developed, obviously including the pre-Progress years.

Throughout the empirical chapters of Part II (Institutionalisation), our analyses focus upon the period from the birth of the Progress parties in the early 1970s through the early 1990s. By the end of that time period, both parties had existed for approximately two decades and had, in various ways, become routinized and integrated within their respective party systems, and thus institutionalised. In 1994/95, both parties suffered serious splits. For the Norwegian party, this proved to be an important test of survivability, which the party passed, and indeed that party continues to this day. For the Danish party, though, the split proved to be a major component of the process of decay, significantly contributing to de-institutionalisation and eventually to the demise of the party. As will be detailed in chapter 8, that de-institutionalisation process covered the period from the mid-1990s through 2001, after which the party was never able again to garner sufficient support for recertification.

Thus, while material in the book spans the post-World War II era through recent years, the greatest concentration will be on developments from the early 1970s through early 2000s.

## RESEARCH DESIGN(S)

In different places and for different purposes, we employ variants of both similar systems and different systems designs in this book. Because both of the Progress parties had completely institutionalised by the early 1990s, while others of the ‘right-wing protest’ and ‘charismatic’ parties have generally found it difficult to do so, we look especially for plausible explanation from features which our two Scandinavian parties (and/or their environments) have in common but which separate them from those other parties (and/or their environments).<sup>5</sup> But when seeking reasonable explanation for why the two parties institutionalised differently (i.e. why they institutionalised different patterns of behaviour) and why one eventually de-institutionalised while the other has not, we of course turn to other aspects on which the two parties (and/or their environments) also differ.<sup>6</sup>

## NOTES

1. Others that are normally included in the category of new-right parties are, for instance, the Vlaams Belang in Belgium, the True Finns in Finland, the Sweden Democrats in Sweden, and the Republikaner in Germany.

2. The terms ‘anti-establishment’ or ‘protest’ party locate new parties in opposition to the existing policy areas dominating the political discourse. Such parties include the Centre Democrats in the Netherlands, the Front National in France, and the Lega Nord in Italy. For research on such parties, see the special issue of the *European Journal of Political Research* on ‘The Politics of Anti-Party Sentiment’, edited by Poguntke and Scarrow (1986). See also Ivarsflaten and Gudbrandsen 2013.

3. See Verseci 2015; Levitt and Kostadinova 2014.

4. However, not all entrepreneurial parties are charismatic in the same way. Though all are creations and creatures of their leaders (who may or may not have personal charisma), and hence all are charismatic parties (according to Panebianco’s definition; see pp. 145–147), some emphasize ‘issues’ in the message the leader creates, while for others the leader (that is, the leader’s supposed ability to do great things) *is* the party’s message. The Progress parties and most other European entrepreneurial parties are of the former variety. Entrepreneurial ‘person’ parties are often found in developing democracies, where such parties are often developed to support the candidacy of just a single presidential candidate. Such parties are more likely to be associated with the notion of ‘personal charisma’ than is the case for entrepreneurial ‘issue’ parties such as the Progress parties. Unless otherwise noted, the arguments of this book are not intended to be generalized to entrepreneurial ‘person’ parties.

5. We should be clear that in this book our comparison of the two Progress parties to one another is explicit and systematic, while comparison to other cases is largely implicit and when made explicit, is generally less systematic and more illustrative and suggestive.

6. Or to state it differently – and in a way more valid to the underlying logic of the design – we do *not* seek explanation for similarities from the many things on which the cases differ, nor do we seek explanation for differences from the many things on which they are alike.