

## **Institutionalisation of Political Parties: Comparative Cases**

Robert Harmel & Lars G. Svåsand (eds), *Institutionalisation of Political Parties: Comparative Cases*, London: Rowman & Littlefield/ECPR Press, 2019; xx + 318 pp.: ISBN 978-1785523021, £58.50 (hbk)

Party scholars and practitioners alike intuit that party institutionalisation matters. However, despite the relevance – to which I return at the end of this review – the concept has remained elusive in existing scholarship. This captivating volume, edited and written by established experts on the field, formulates an enhanced framework for the study of party institutionalisation. In the introductory chapters, the editors and Hilmar Mjelde suggest three dimensions of institutionalisation, inspired by classic works by Panebianco, Janda, Huntington, Rose & Mackie. The three dimensions – internal institutionalisation, external institutionalisation and objective durability – are all distinct but connected. Internal institutionalisation refers to the infusion of values within the party and routinisation of behaviours. External institutionalisation to institutionalisation in the eyes of the electorate and leaders of other parties. Finally, objective durability refers to party survival over time. These are all familiar themes from party institutionalisation literature but discussed and elaborated with some eloquence and parsimony here. A recurring theme in the volume is the relationship between party institutionalisation and personalisation that is often seen as its greatest enemy. However, the authors here go beyond this trivial notion and discuss ways in which highly personalised parties take steps towards institutionalisation. Some of the chapters even discuss how institutionalisation can happen through the routinisation of charisma – most prominently the chapter by Goran Čular and Dario Nikić Čakar on the Croatian HDZ.

The case studies adopt the framework from the introductory chapters but also add innovative operationalisations and offer fascinating slants on the topic. The range of case studies is inspired for at least three reasons. Firstly, the cases are drawn from three continents, from democracies of different age and size, and at different levels of consolidation. Secondly, the chapters discuss a wide gamut of parties – from the dominant (Croatian HDZ, Japanese LDP) to the feeble (e.g. the Polish Greens, Swedish Pirates); from the established (LDP in Japan, Serbian Socialist Party) to the new (e.g. the Argentinian PRO, the Czech ANO, the Greek SYRIZA, ANEL and To Potami), to the new but already deceased (the Czech VV). The fascinating chapter on Romania by Veronica Anghel adds to electoral coalitions the mix. Thirdly, the case studies adopt various analytical approaches, ranging from cases studies rich in detail to Jakub Stauber's systematic quantitative analysis of the dimensions of institutionalisation among Czech political parties. In the illuminating final chapter, Frederik Heylen makes a convincing case for extending the ideas on institutionalisation developed for political parties to other political organizations (social movements and NGOs). The comparison to institutionalisation studies in other fields demonstrates the generalisability of the ideas but by cross-pollination also suggests future avenues for the study of party institutionalisation.

There is a lot more to like in this volume. The framework on party institutionalisation is clearer and more tangible than existing attempts in literature. The highly intriguing case studies explore the correlations between the dimensions of institutionalisation in different parties. These often challenge traditional preconceptions of institutionalisation. For example, Agnieszka Kwiatkowska masterfully dissects the Polish Greens, showing that different dimensions can compensate for others or can even hinder institutionalisation on other dimensions.

There is always a limit to the number of questions any book can tackle and how fully it can satisfy a critical reviewer. However, this reader was left peckish for further discussion on the relationship between *party* institutionalisation and *party system* institutionalisation – questions that remain

criminally separated in contemporary scholarship. Also, to return to the beginning of the review, how much does party institutionalisation really matter in contemporary democracies? There are examples of parties – some discussed in the volume – that persist and even shape their countries despite low levels of institutionalisation, at least in some of the three dimensions. Some governments, especially outside of Western Europe, are fairly successfully led by parties with low levels of institutionalisation. Is institutionalisation, then, beneficial and desirable at all? The volume hints that it may be unwelcome to the beneficiaries of personalisation. But is institutionalisation desirable – always or under certain conditions – for lower ranking party elites, their members and voters? How and to what extent is it necessary for boosting the quality of democracy or governance? Individual chapters occasionally raise the possibility of de-institutionalisation that, as the party presidentialisation literature suggests, is on the rise of many West European countries. The volume could have discussed that issue a bit more explicitly and systematically. A concluding chapter could have elaborated the editors' views on all of these matters. However, it is perfectly legitimate (perhaps even intentional) to let the readers – and those inspired by this volume to study party institutionalisation – to find their own answers to these fundamental questions that the volume has masterfully raised. By treading previously uncharted waters of party institutionalisation, unafraid of some treacherous yet informative cases, the authors have managed at once to highlight the complexity and add clarity to the concept of party institutionalisation.

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