

Explaining Party Emergence in Swedish Local Politics 1973–2002

PhD Gissur Ó. Erlingsson
Växjö University and The Ratio Institute

Contact information

E-mail: Gissur.erlingsson@ratio.se

Abstract

Since individuals demanding formations of new parties face a collective action problem, I inquire why people form new parties, and why this political strategy became increasingly popular between 1973 and 2002 in Swedish municipalities. Case-studies indicate that ‘strong emotions’ – i.e. anger, frustration and indignation – mobilize rational actors to start up new parties. However, ‘strong emotions’ only explain why individuals form parties *in the first place*, not why party formation has become *a popular strategy*. Hence, I hypothesize that entrepreneurs forming parties at t inspire potential entrepreneurs in neighbouring municipalities at $t + 1$. Since previous attempts to explain the increasing number of new parties in Sweden have failed, I maintain that the support the hypothesis gains adds important knowledge to this field.

Key Words:

Party entrepreneurs, new parties, emotional arousal, rational imitation, local politics, Sweden

JEL-codes:

D01, D71, D72, H41

1. Introduction¹

As Olson (1971: 15) points out, the provision of public goods is the function of organizations generally. Since political parties are organizations, this implies that when political parties are formed, everyone can benefit from the new party's efforts without contributing to its formation or even voting for it in public elections. Through their participation in councils, parties influence the production of a range of public goods. Once a political party is on its feet and working, the efforts of the parties' activists automatically become available for everyone else, since all policies political parties can force through, influence or veto, affect society as a whole.²

That political parties supply public goods has important, yet often overlooked, implications (e.g. Frohlich and Oppenheimer 1970: 105). Because individuals who form political parties (in essence *party entrepreneurs*) solve a collective action problem, not every potential political organization materializes. As Olson (1971: 2) puts it:

Unless the number of individuals is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interest.

In the case of party formation, this is an accurate description since individuals who wish to see a new political party formed face an N-person prisoners' dilemma (e.g. Nownes and Neeley 1996):

Table 1. The Paradox of Participation.

		Other dissatisfied citizens	
		Form a new party	Refrain from forming a new party
The individual dissatisfied citizen	Engages in the party formation project	<i>Prefers second most</i> (2)	<i>Prefers the least</i> (4)
	Refrains from the party formation project	<i>Prefers the most</i> (1)	<i>Prefers the second least</i> (3)

Table 1 shows the conflict between individual and collective rationality and explains why not every potential political organization materializes, even though there might be widespread public dissatisfaction with existing political parties or a general will amongst large segments of citizens in a society that a new political party is needed. Individuals

¹ This paper has benefited from comments of Jerker Moodysson, Jan Teorell and Liam Weeks.

² This way of conceiving political parties also mirrors Lavers (1997: 71) term political services: 'The notion of political services includes the direct provision of public goods but in addition encompasses the provision of more general political regimes that facilitate the production of public as well as other goods and services that might otherwise be available only suboptimally [...] The outcome is the resolution of collective action problems as a result of the provision of what I am referring to here as 'political services'. This line of argument is implicit in Tullock's (1971: 917) reasoning (i.e. 'When [the voter] casts his vote in the public market, he is producing a public good'), and can also be found in the works of Downs (1957: 137), Olson (1971: 15), McCulloch (1990: 499) and Whiteley *et al* (1994: 80).

wishing to see a new party formed are expected to reason like this: 'Whether or not I engage in forming a new political party, one of two things will happen. Either enough other discontented people will form a new party, or not enough will. If the first thing happens, I will be able to reap the fruits from the efforts of the party entrepreneur, without having to invest (and risk) my money, time, energy, and social status. If the second thing happens, my investments in the project would have been wasted.' Ergo, it is better for the whole group that wishes for a new party to be formed if some individuals organize it, but best for each to refrain from this strategy (cf. Elster 1989: 126).

Therefore scholars committed to rational choice make the following prediction: No matter what other citizens do, it is in the individual citizen's self-interest to refrain from the strategy of party formation. A reasonable expectation is that individuals prefer investing their time, money, energy, and social status in other projects than a relatively *high cost* and *high risk* activity such as party formation.³ And as if this initial collective action problem is not enough, groups that somehow overcome free-rider problems face additional hardships. Firstly, voters often find it hard to coordinate on new political alternatives, hence new parties have difficulties attracting enough votes to gain representation in councils (Golder 2003). Secondly, the market for votes is already occupied by well organized, resourceful and politically experienced actors. Since the market for votes is a zero-sum game established parties are not expected to treat newcomers on the scene kindly (Lipset and Rokkan 1967: 30, 61; see also Detterbeck 2005; Katz and Mair 1995).⁴ For a number of reasons then, party emergence appears to be puzzling events in need of explanation.

State of purpose

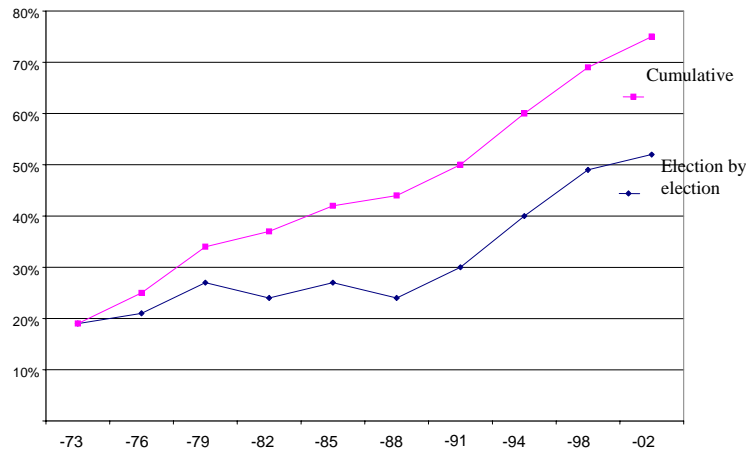
Between 1973 and 2002 the number of new, non national parties⁵ elected to Swedish local councils (*kommunfullmäktige*) increased dramatically. Only about one fifth of the councils had a new party represented after the 1973 election. After 2002, new parties were represented in over half of the councils (see figure 1).

³ When forming a new party, you have to invest much time in the project. In most cases you will have to risk your private financial resources. In addition, you face a close scrutiny of your private life when the party is launched. Furthermore, most party entrepreneurs experience harsh words, and even outright harassment, from representatives from the established parties. As if this is not enough, you certainly cannot count on getting enough electoral support to gain representation to the council you run for, once investments have been made and the party has been formed. It therefore seems fair to file party formation under 'high cost and high risk projects'.

⁴ In Erlingsson (2007) there is a detailed discussion on the difficulties party entrepreneurs face.

⁵ By 'new political parties', I refer to parties that never had representation in the national parliament.

Figure 1. Non national parties in local councils 1973 – 2002.



The cumulative line shows that 75 percent of the municipal councils have had – at one time or another – a non national party represented. In fact, approximately 370 new party organizations have been around throughout the whole period (see the appendix in Erlingsson 2005).⁶ Since individual party formations are puzzling, this development is remarkable. Despite predictions, not only does the occasional new party emerge – in Swedish local politics, party formation has also become an increasingly common strategy. The purpose of this paper is therefore to answer two questions:

- Why do individuals form new political parties in the first place?
- Why did party formation become an increasingly popular strategy in Swedish municipalities?

Notes on methodology and outline

A combination of methods is employed. To answer the first question, the general story behind individual cases of party formation is described. Three in depth case studies, chosen according to a ‘most different’-strategy, are conducted. By mode of ‘process tracing’, the purpose is to examine if there is something universal to the party formation narratives, i.e. if some general mechanism explains the decisions of party entrepreneurs. To answer the second question, I use quantitative techniques to examine if ‘imitation’-mechanisms explain why this strategy has become more common.

The paper proceeds as follows. In part two, a brief review of the dominating theoretical approaches is made, and I argue that they are unsatisfactory points of departures for my purposes. In part three, I search for mechanisms responsible for the individual entrepreneur’s decision to form a party. In part four, I proceed by searching for explanations for party formation becoming an increasingly popular strategy 1973–2002. Finally, in part five, main conclusions are summed up.

⁶ Several scholars have examined if municipalities where new parties have gained representation have something in common. The results are depressing: No structural variable increases the probability for emergence of new parties (e.g. Wörlund 1999; Lodenius 1999: 166; Petersson *et al* 1997: 71; Johansson and Schmidt 1983).

2. Dominating Approaches

To justify why the methods and theories employed here are preferred, a brief survey of the dominating perspectives on party emergence is made. Although theory development has been scant, a fair amount of studies have tried to explain the number of political parties in party systems and/or party emergence. I argue that the *dominating* and *most popular* theoretical approaches are roughly divided in three main categories:

- *Institutional explanations*: formal rules, such as electoral systems, shape incentives for potential party-entrepreneurs, and hence explain party formation.
- *Demand oriented explanations*: new parties are expected to evolve in response to value change among citizens.
- *'Existing supply' explanations*: failures in established parties explain party formation.

I will briefly review the general logic behind these approaches and argue why they are limited and incomplete – therefore unsatisfactory or inadequate – for answering the present questions.

Institutional explanations

Institutional theories generally rely on Duverger's (1954) law: due to coordination problems in strategic voting, electoral systems applying plurality rule in single member districts will tend towards having two large parties. On the other hand, the more proportional (PR) the electoral systems are, the larger the numbers of political parties are expected to be found. These predictions find evidence (e.g. Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Lijphart 1994; Farrell 1997). Willey (1998) uses this argument to explain party emergence, and finds that new parties are more prone to emerge in PR-systems with large district magnitude, while PR-systems with small districts tend to have stable party systems.

This is all fine. However, for the purposes at hand, these results are not useful. Institutional hypotheses are primarily capable of explaining *spatial variation at one point in time*. The purpose of this paper, however, demands a theory capable of handling *changes over time*, within the one and same political system. For the institutional perspective to be able to explain why party formation became a popular strategy 1973–2002, one would have to show that relevant institutions at the local level have undergone changes between 1973 and 2002 so party formation has become (a) less costly, (b) easier and/or (c) more lucrative. As it turns out, this is not the case (Erlingsson 2005: ch. 4).

Demand-oriented explanations

If institutional theories are not particularly suited to explain changes over time within the one and same political system, 'the demand-oriented perspective' is practically tailor-made for this task. Many scholars relate to Inglehart's (1990) studies on post-material values to explain why new parties emerge.⁷ The mechanism works something like this: citizens' values underwent major transformations throughout the post-war period. There was a shift from materialist values (desire for physical and economic security) to post-materialist values (desire for freedom, self-expression and quality of life) There is ample evidence showing that such a transformation really has taken place. However, it is the next step in the argument –

⁷ Inglehart has, to my knowledge, never explicitly analyzed party emergence, although a hypothesis along this line of this reasoning is suggested in Inglehart and Flanagan (1987: 1300f).

that value change automatically generates parties based on post-materialist values (i.e. neoliberal, environmentalist or feminist parties) – that is troublesome.

There are at least three reasons why this perspective is unattractive for the tasks at hand. Firstly, empirical research has refuted its viability. Harmel and Robertson (1985: 516) not only showed that it is ill suited to explain the emergence of new parties in general (for example, it has a hard time explaining the emergence of right-wing, anti-system or populist parties) – but it also does not even make the emergence of so called post materialist parties comprehensible. Similar discouraging results are found elsewhere (e.g. Budge *et al* 1987: 391f; Laver and Hunt 1992: 55; Ware 1996: 20, 48). Furthermore, Fridolfsson and Gidlund (2002) reached the conclusion that the post-materialist hypothesis has little or no relevance in explaining party emergence in Swedish municipalities. Secondly, the perspective has theoretical problems: it does not take into account that established political parties are able to *control* the political agenda and *adapt* to changing preferences in the electorate (e.g. Mair 1983). This counteracts the predictions made by the demand oriented perspective. Thirdly, it does not take into account that, since political parties are producers of collective goods, groups demanding political parties face a collective action problem. The lack of micro-foundations, which could help make the decisions of individual party entrepreneurs intelligible, makes the supply-oriented perspective unattractive for the purposes at hand.

‘Existing supply’ explanations

It is hard to disregard this perspective’s premise because it is so intuitive – the premise of course being: ‘new parties emerge when established alternatives fail’ (e.g. Hauss and Rayside 1978; Lawson and Merkl 1988). This is also a recurring theme in the new-institutionalist literature where, for example, Ahrne and Papakostas (2001) claim that the inertia of old forms of organizations is the precondition for the emergence of new ones. The failure (or unwillingness) of old organizations to change and adapt to new demands opens up spaces between all existing, established organizations, and these spaces – in turn – may become sites for new organizations.⁸

However, at least two important objections to this perspective can be raised. Firstly, since its premise is so intuitive, it also borders on being tautological. Logically, if the organizations already occupying the market for political parties are (a) perfectly adaptive to changes in voter preferences, do (b) fully canalize the demands of the electorate to public decisions and (c) do handle public resources optimally, there would be no reasons for individuals to form new parties. Secondly, micro foundations are absent, and the perspective is therefore silent about the motives of the party entrepreneur. Even if established parties fail (*do not* adapt to changing preferences, *do not* canalize demands to public decisions, and *do not* handle public resources optimally), with the consequence that a demand for a new political party arises, there is still no real good reason for individuals to invest their money, time, energy and social status in the high cost project of forming a new political party. The free-rider problem appears again. Therefore, we need a theory that *highlights the role of individuals* and tries to make *the motivation of party-entrepreneurs* intelligible. The ‘existing supply’-perspective does not provide this.⁹

⁸ One can argue that too much adaptation has similar effects. If parties quickly abandon long established standpoints on policy issues and challenge the party’s core values, it can contribute to a loss of votes in the party’s core constituency.

⁹ One of the few scholars who takes micro foundations seriously, and truly remedies the neglects in the ‘existing supply’-perspective, is Hug’s (2001) game theoretical approach to party emergence.

Summary

The main mechanisms explaining party emergence, examples of research employing each perspective, and the limits and inadequacies of these alternatives, are summarized in table 2.

Table 2. Snapshot-view of the literature on party emergence.

	Explanation	Relevant studies	Limitations
<i>The institutional perspective</i>	'Rules of the game', i.e. electoral systems, determine the number of parties in a given party system.	Lijphart (1994), Farrell (1997), Willey (1998). Evidence: in cross-national comparisons, this mechanism explains the number of parties in given systems.	Does not handle processes (developments over time) or the fact that new parties emerge in systems that do not change their 'rules of the game'.
<i>The demand-oriented perspective</i>	Citizens are increasingly adopting 'post-material values', hence, new parties emerge in response to new demands made on the political system.	Relates to Inglehart (1977). Evidence: tests of this hypothesis do not find convincing empirical support (see Harmel and Robertsson 1985; Fridolfsson and Gidlund 2002).	Poor empirical support, does not handle the fact that established parties adapt to new circumstances, cannot solve problems posed by literature on collective action.
<i>'Existing supply'-perspective</i>	New parties emerge when the old, established ones fail to channel demands and opinions and/or fail to manage collective resources in a satisfying way.	Dates at least back to Hauss and Rayside (1978), but is systematically developed in Lawson and Merkl (1988). Evidence: Often cited commonsensical explanation in public debate; often referred to in case-study research.	Is silent about the micro-level, i.e. the party-entrepreneur; gives no good understanding as to why someone would step forward to solve collective action problems.

Although some of these arguments *are* relevant, their shortcomings do not qualify them as theoretical points of departure for the empirical investigations. This said I now turn to my own way of approaching the two research questions: Why do individuals choose to form new parties in the first place? Why did party formation become an increasingly popular strategy between 1973 and 2002?

3. Why Do Individuals Form Parties?

Looking back at the 'paradox of party emergence' in the introduction, what motivates an individual to step forward and form a new party? The costs are known beforehand, and they are certain. Compared to other forms of political participation these are *high*. The rewards, on the other hand, are not clear and are *uncertain* – the entrepreneur does not know if his new party will gain enough votes to reach representation in council. *Ex ante*, party formations are puzzling circumstances in need of explanation.

The ‘analytical narrative’

To answer questions about the motivations of individual entrepreneurs, case studies are employed. Attention is turned to three cases and I describe the processes which preceded the individual entrepreneur’s decisions to form the party. By comparing the respective entrepreneur’s paths to the decision, I strive to illuminate general mechanisms that enhance our understanding as to why individuals choose to form new political parties. This mode of procedure is inspired by a fairly recent debate within sociology and political science among scholars that have attempted to bridge the gap between inductive and deductive research strategies. Abbott (1992), Griffin (1993), Abell (1993) and Kiser (1996) have all argued that scholars conducting case studies without ambitions to generalize are mistaken and need to pay more attention to theory. Even single case studies must have guidelines for how the cases should be analyzed, or else we run the risk of delivering custom-made *ad hoc* explanations.

To avoid these pitfalls, a framework inspired by the concept ‘analytical narratives’ (Bates *et al* 1998) is developed and applied to the cases. Creating an ‘analytical narrative’ entails combining theoretical assumptions with a close-up contextualization of the analysis. As Kiser (1996) argues, it is reasonable to use rational choice as general theoretical point of departure for narrative analysis, since it provides a ‘deep structure’ to the narratives, hence facilitating explicit discussion of individual motives for action. Also, rational choice is apposite for narrative analysis since it facilitates the incorporation of features stressed by scholars in the narrative genre: micro level action, events, temporality, and path dependence.

When constructing the universal analytical narrative, expectations about the sequences that precede party formations *in general*, need to be formed. Hug (2001: 36) describes such general sequences that seem to be common to all party formations, and his descriptions work as good starting points for the model that will guide my analysis of the cases: At the outset, someone is unhappy about some political issue(s). This person somehow attempts to voice his/her demands in one way or another. When these demands face rejection by the establishment, a potential for party formation exists. This simple universal model for party formations resembles Hirschman’s (1970) frameworks which discusses the strategies of *exit*, *voice* and *loyalty*: processes of potential party formation start out with some individual (whether he is a member of an established party or not) who is unhappy with the status quo. But what can (s)he do about it? (S)he can choose to:

- A. Be silent and loyal** to the established order. *The story ends right here.*
- B. Exit and resign** from all attempts to bring about change. *The story ends right here.*
- C. Protest/voice and make demands** to change the established order. *The story continues.*

If the individual chooses action (A) or (B), the representatives of the established party do not have to react. However, if the individual voices, protests and makes demands on the established order, the representatives from the relevant concerned established parties need to choose either of these actions:

- 1. Accept the protest** and satisfy the demands. *The story ends right here.*

2. Ignore the protest and continue business as usual. *The story continues.*

If the party accepts the protest and satisfies the individual's demands, the story ends right there. The party adapts to the internal pressures for change, the protesting individual is socialized and life goes on. However, if the party ignores the protest, it forces the individual to act once again. And again, (s)he has three options:

A1. Accept the failure and be loyal to the established order and act if nothing has happened.

A2. Make a 'silent' exit, i.e. leave all attempts to change the established order behind.

A3. A combination of 'exit' and 'protest'/'voice', i.e. form a brand new political party that represents the new demands.

Three cases of party formation are analyzed with this model (i.e. the 'analytical narrative' or 'the universal story of party formation').¹⁰ The presentation of the three cases is structured around three crucial moments on the entrepreneur's path to the party formation decision:

- *The diverging demand*
- *The clash with the established party system*
- *The decision to form the new parties*

The diverging demand

John Görnebrand was an active member of the Centre party throughout the 1960s. Görnebrand had always been a fierce critic of the Swedish universal welfare state, and made no secret of this contempt in public (e.g. Görnebrand 1970a and 1970b). Görnebrand worked intensively to put his views on the public agenda, and he proposed very neo-liberal, market-oriented solutions to these problems (which in the early 1970s had very few adherents in Sweden). His demands actually diverged from all established parties in Sweden at that time. The ideas that stood out most from the mainstream were demands to liberalize the alcohol policy, to drastically change the social policy and to get rid of the VAT on food.

In the early 1980s, Agne Andersson and Kurt Andersson were members of the Moderate party in the municipality of Båstad. After attempts to present some new ideas to the party's local leadership, Andersson and Andersson, became more and more disappointed at – what they thought – the group of 'conservative colonels, mayors and lawyers' (Arnhult 2004) that had controlled the party locally since the mid 1970s. There was personal antagonism between Andersson and Andersson and this older conservative group, and the local leadership was not willing to grant Andersson and Andersson eligibility to important positions in the Moderate party's council list before 1988's election. Aside from mere personal collisions, there were also ideological discrepancies. Andersson and Andersson wanted, for example, to make investments in tourism and the local trade and industry; and

¹⁰ The cases have been chosen according to a 'most different strategy' considering two variables: *when* the party was formed, and *what kind of politics* they represent. The parties are: *Kommunens väl* (neoliberal party formed 1973; splinter from the Centre party); *Bjärepårtiet* (liberal party formed 1988; splinter from the Moderates) and *Törnman's Kirunapårtiet* (a leftist party with a Social Democratic agenda formed 1994; splinter from the Social Democrats).

move in more liberal policy directions. These suggestions were not liked by the local, more conservative, Moderate leadership.

Lars Törnman used to be a renowned union leader – nationwide in Sweden in general, but particularly locally in Kiruna – in the late 1980s. He had always been a supporter of the Social Democrats, and in the 1980s even very active with some public functions in Kiruna municipality. Also, he was a particularly popular figure among his fellow miners. Actually, Törnman did not really have a political agenda that diverged from the Social Democrats (indeed, he always said he was a ‘true’ Social Democrat [*Arbetaren* 1995 nr 11]). However, his views challenged the interests of the local Social Democratic leadership. Törnman was angered over how the local Social Democratic leaders handled their mandate. Among other things, they had been involved in a couple of high-profile corruption scandals. So what Törnman demanded was renewal and restructuring inside the local Social Democracy. Specifically, he wanted a better functioning internal democracy, and practically, this should be done by substituting some of the older corrupted individuals with fresh, young faces on the ballot list before the 1994 election.

The clash with the established party system

How did these individuals – Görnebrand, Andersson and Andersson, and Törnman – try to gain sympathy for their demands? Görnebrand used at least three different strategies. First, he wrote polemical articles in the daily press. Second, he published the book *Socialbyråkratin* [*The Social Bureaucracy*] (Görnebrand 1973) where he dismissed almost all elements of the Swedish welfare states. Third, he tried to find support for his neo-liberal agenda within his own Centre party by (a) writing a letter to Thorbjörn Fälldin (national leader of the Centre party) presenting his suggestions (Görnebrand 1972b) and (b) trying to create a network of neo-liberals within the Centre party¹¹ (Görnebrand 1972c; 1972d). However, the party leader (Fälldin 1972) dismissed Görnebrand’s suggestions completely, and rejected his ways of perceiving the problems with the welfare state. Also, on the face of it, his strategy to build a network of neo-liberal individuals within the Centre party seems to have failed (Görnebrand 2004).

What happened to Andersson’s and Andersson’s demands within Båstad’s local Moderate branch? When they realized they were not up for any meaningful positions before the 1988 election, they decided to create a splinter list consisting of themselves and eight other oppositional, i.e. liberal, Moderates (*Nordvästra Skånes Tidningar* 14.01.1989). However, this alternative splinter list was never approved by the Moderate party centrally. Ergo, the Moderate leadership – locally, regionally and nationally – viewed it as illegitimate. In spite of this, the splinter list gained enough votes for Andersson and Andersson – and four others on the list – to receive seats in council. And in council, the representatives of the splinter list decided to neglect the agreements the ‘proper’ local Moderates had made with the People’s party and the Centrum Democrats in Båstad. Andersson and Andersson decided to circumvent all of the local Moderates’ internal procedures and negotiate with the Centre Party and the Social Democrats. This ‘coup’ provoked not only an outcry from the ‘proper’ leadership of the local Moderates (*Nordvästra Skånes Tidningar* 17.12.1988a; *Nordvästra Skånes Tidningar* 17.12.1988b) – but also triggered many acts of harassment against Andersson and Andersson in their private homes. But this did not stop Andersson and Andersson from continuing to make settlements with the Centre Party and the Social Democrats on a more liberal policy concerning trade and industry, and local tourism policy. This made the rift

¹¹ In these letters, Görnebrand actually went as far as to write that he desired to create ‘a party within the party’.

between Andersson's and Andersson's splinter list on the one hand, and the representatives of the 'proper' Moderate party on the other, complete.

Törnman says that his only wish was to renew the Social Democrats by asking them to give new, younger people the chance to have influence on the party's local policy agenda: 'I just wanted to see new faces in Kiruna's Social Democracy' (Törnman 2003). In other interviews he has stated that: 'the present municipal board needs to go away, they have worn out their public confidence' (*Dagens Nyheter* 03.03.1994) and 'the town hall needs to be tidied up and democracy has to be introduced' (*Norrbottnens-Kuriren* 01.03.1994). So what did he do to make the Social Democrats listen to his demands about renewal? His plan was simple enough. He knew that he personally had huge popular support among the public in general and the miners in Kiruna in particular. Therefore, he never actually planned to form a new party. Instead, he was convinced that just his *threat* to form a new party would make the leading Social Democrats cave in to his demands (*Expressen* 19.09.1994; *Göteborgs-Posten* 26.09.1994). So, to threaten to form a party if they did not appease his demands is what he did.

The decision to form the new party

Before the 1973 election, Görnebrand had tried to put his definitions of the problems of the Swedish welfare state on the agenda by writing polemical articles and publish a book on the topic. He had also tried to make way for his views within the Centre Party. All of these strategies failed. When he later explained why he formed his party *Kommunens Väl* (which later changed their name to Centrum Democrats with national ambitions) approaching the 1973 election, he complained about the Swedish consensus tradition and the Centre Party's decision to participate in the huge fiscal reform in 1970. 'Such settlements', Görnebrand wrote 'do not belong in open democratic and parliamentary systems' (Görnebrand 1976). It is obvious that his failure to gain an ear for his demands provoked deep discontent within him. In one polemic article before the 1973 election he wrote:

Our established parties – which have jointly created a puffed-up, bureaucratic and overprotective society – cannot be trusted. They are impregnated with a mentality that declares adults incapable of managing their own affairs. A new, young party needs to be created to radically clean up the weeds that suffocate new thoughts.

After several attempts to manage his way through the Centre Party, he seems to have made this decision for at least three reasons: he (i) was disappointed, bitter and angry after the bad treatment he felt he got from the leader of the Centre Party and disillusioned after his failed attempt to create a 'party within the party'; (ii) saw a market for new parties when polls showed that over 25 percent of the voters had not decided which party they should vote for (quotes in Görnebrand 1972a); and (iii) felt that party formation could be a viable strategy, since Glistrup had had success with this strategy in the neighbouring country Denmark, ergo, he seems to have been inspired by earlier pioneers in the party formation business (cf. quotes from Görnebrand in *Blekinge Läns Tidning* 27.04.1974; *Ystads Allehanda* 10.05.1975).

What about Andersson and Andersson in Båstad? After 1988's election, the Moderate party found themselves in a peculiar situation: Together with the People's party and the Centrum Democrats, the party gained council majority and had an agreement that involved building a coalition and rule together. However, six of the Moderate members of council were elected via a splinter list. These six – with Andersson and Andersson at front – decided to negotiate with the Social Democrats and the Centre Party instead, in order to be able to carry out their liberal agenda. Hence, the 'proper' representatives of the Moderate party were overrun and

denied power to control the council. Of course, the Moderate party regionally and centrally could not accept this situation. So six months after the election in 1988 – and after attempts to reconcile the fractions within Båstad locally – the Moderate party decided to move for an exclusion of Andersson and Andersson (*Nordvästra Skånes tidningar* 14.03.1989), and on 5 June 1989 this decision was executed (*Nordvästra Skånes Tidningar* 06.06.1989). However, the following day Andersson and Andersson declared that they did not intend to leave their seats to any ‘proper’ Moderate representative, and Agne said: ‘If we aren’t allowed to work within the party, I guess we’ll just have to work outside it then’ (*Nordvästra Skånes Tidningar* 07.06.1989). *Bjärepårtiet* was officially formed on 5 July. His explanation for the decision is simple: ‘If you can’t get support for your ideas within the group of people you identify yourself with, well, then you have to do something about it. In Sweden you always have the right to form a new party’ (Arnhult 2004). When asked about *why* he managed to continue with his political activism, despite fierce criticism from Moderate party officials and anonymous harassment in his private life, he said he got a kick from the harassment, and that a *lust for revenge* and to *prove his antagonists wrong* drove him to the decision to form a new party.

When Törnman (*Arbetaren* 1995 no 11) explains his decision to form *Kirunapartiet* approaching the 1994 election, he says:

I took for granted that they [the leading Social Democrats in Kiruna] were fully aware of my public popularity, that my threat to form a new party would scare them so that they would bring at least three or four new faces on the list... but hell no! They just further cemented the party organization. And then, there was not much else for me to do. I just had to form the new party.

Obviously, he felt obliged to form the new party after he had threatened to do it and when the Social Democrats did not appease his demands, there was not much choice other than to actually create it (Törnman 2003). In interviews directly after his decision he said that his only purpose with the formation of *Kirunapartiet* was to reform the corrupted local Social Democratic party in Kiruna and for a transitional period act as a ‘deputy’ *real* Social Democratic party in the local politics of Kiruna. He actually said: ‘We are a Social Democratic alternative and our ballot list should be seen as a pure splinter-list’ (*Norrbottens-Kuriren* 15.04.1994). How should his decision be interpreted? Well, what drove him seems to have been (i) frustration over the fact that the local Social Democrats actually did not pursue a Social Democratic policy; (ii) anger over the fact that these Social Democrats refused to listen to the demands he put on them, and (iii) fear of losing social status if he did not form a new party when the Social Democrats would not appease his demands. Here, one could also add a fourth reason: in interviews Törnman has said that his decision to threat the leading Social Democrats with the prospect of him forming a new party was inspired by feminist Maria-Pia Boethius’ threat to form a feminist party in the early 1990s, if established parties would not put female candidates higher up on their ballot lists (demands that actually were carried through, hence Boethius never had to realize her threat).

What triggers individuals’ decision to form new parties?

Can Görnebrand’s, Andersson’s & Andersson’s and Törman’s paths to the decision to form a new party tell us anything *general* about mechanisms that make party formation more intelligible? It is beyond doubt that all of them had policy goals they wanted to achieve. Görnebrand had his neo-liberal agenda, Andersson and Andersson wanted to give the local Moderates a more liberal profile and Törnman wanted to reform the local Social Democrats

by introducing new people on to the ballot list. On the other hand, all of them knew that they risked their social status (all bear witness to harassment, loss of friends, and bad-mouthing from individuals within established parties). In addition, there really seem not to be any monetary incentives to speak of. So, simple cost-benefit calculations do not really make their decisions intelligible. Hence, we're still stuck with the initial 'paradox of party emergence'.

'But' - maybe the inquisitive asks - 'can't policy goals explain the decisions to form parties'? I maintain this is neither a sufficient nor satisfactory explanation. It actually, once again, brings the problem of free-riding to the fore. One needs to know *why* they just don't wait until someone else launches the neo-liberal party, the more liberal Moderate party or the reformed Social Democratic party, so that they *themselves* won't have to invest (and risk!) the time, money, energy and status. In other words, one needs to know 'what's in it for them', for the individual party entrepreneurs to engage in this high cost/high risk venture.

But before the 'what's in it for them'-question is answered, the premise that party formation is a high cost/high risk activity must be discussed. True enough: to start up a new party takes time, costs money, risks your social status and will not with any certainty lead to council representation. However, if we look back at the cases, all party entrepreneurs have previously been engaged inside an established party. Ergo, they already come from a situation where they've invested a lot of time in political activity. So the step for them to form a political party, although big, is not *as* big as it would be for a person that had no previous political engagement. This of course helps to explain why the vast majority of party entrepreneurs have a past in some of the established political parties (see Eriksson 1999).

That said, we are still stuck with the question about the party entrepreneur's driving forces. The case studies indicate that something sets off, directs and accelerates the decision to form a new party. This something very well might be 'strong emotions'. The entrepreneurs studied have all felt wronged; they have experienced disappointment, anger, frustration and indignation after their encounters with representatives from the established parties. I maintain that this is actually more significant than one might think at first glance; because the role emotions play in the decision-making process - especially when it comes to relatively high-cost decisions surrounded by uncertainty - have been documented in modern research on political participation. But in no means should 'strong emotions' be interpreted as opposite to rational behavior: As Damasio (1994) argues, emotions should be interpreted as prerequisites for rational behavior, in particular to mobilize energy to take action. Ergo, several scholars have started to merge thoughts about the role of emotions for political action into their theories on rational behavior (e.g. Hanoch 2002; Lawler and Thye 1999).

With this theoretical framework in mind, how can the entrepreneur's decision be interpreted? It could be argued that the established parties' unwillingness to channel and adjust to internal criticism serves to heighten the opposition individuals' anxiety, and in line with Marcus *et al's* (2001: 11) reasoning, this leads them to search for alternative strategies to reach their policy goals. Bad treatment and infected encounters with established parties seem to provoke a will to obtain redress, which in turn becomes a *psychological selective incentive* that make entrepreneurs disregard simple cost-benefit calculations, hence overcome barriers for action and choose the high cost strategy of party formation (see also Gamson 1995: 90; Elster 1989: 64).

Similar conclusions are found elsewhere in research on political participation. For example, Collins (1990: 43) writes: 'the core of anger is the mobilization of energy to overcome an

obstacle'. When Hercus (1999: 34) analyses feminist collective action, she writes: 'The analysis confirms the central importance of anger in collective action'. And when Reed (2004: 656) studies high risk collective action in revolutionary Nicaragua, the conclusion is: '[emotions] function as motors [...] of revolutionary movement'.¹² The results presented here are compatible with these findings in the relatively new literature on political action: 'strong emotions' – such as feelings of being wronged, disappointment, anger and indignation – seem to have mobilized Görnebrand, Andersson & Andersson and Törnman to overcome obstacles to choose the high cost strategy of party formation. Here, it is important to note that the 'strong emotions' in no way make their decisions irrational. Rather, I think, the emotions should be interpreted as accelerators which channel the entrepreneurs' energy towards *action* instead of quiet resignation or defection from politics all together. Viewed this way, emotions should be understood as prerequisites for rational action.¹³

4. Why Did Party Formation Become an Increasingly Popular Strategy?

In the previous section I proposed an answer to why some people, i.e. 'the party entrepreneurs', step forward and – against theoretical predictions – form a new party. The mechanism identified – the accelerating force of 'strong emotions' – seems to make the individual party entrepreneur's decision more intelligible. However, this answer only helps us understand the micro-question (why *individuals* form new parties) and is not too helpful when an answer to the macro-question has to be presented, i.e. why party formation became an increasingly popular strategy in Swedish local politics 1973–2002.

How should one go about explaining the increasing number of new parties in Swedish municipalities? In section 2 above, I argued that existing popular approaches are inadequate to answer this question. We also know that previous attempts to explain this specific development – mainly tests of different structural variables – have failed (see footnote 4 above). Furthermore, we know that the parties that have been formed vary much in character (they are everything from single-issue, to environmentally friendly, anti-immigrant, purely genuinely local and 'sub local' parties). Therefore, it is motivated to focus on *the strategy* to form a party rather than anything else, and hence I choose to pursue a very particular line of inquiry which hasn't been previously tested in this particular context. Remember that two of the entrepreneurs above, mentioned that they in one way or another were 'inspired' by party formations at earlier points in time. Against this background I think it is worthwhile to examine if 'rational imitation' can help us understand why party formation became so popular.

Two assumptions are central to the hypotheses I formulate. Firstly, the actors are rational, but are incompletely informed about the consequences of their actions (i.e. their decisions are made under degrees of uncertainty). Secondly, there is actor-heterogeneity in the population of potential party entrepreneurs: some need little information before taking action to form a

¹² Although Renwick-Monroe (1996: xi) does not make a theoretical point of it, her study on why Germans – risking their lives and without rewards – helped Jews to hide and/or escape from the Nazis, is interesting in connection with this discussion on emotions and political action. When describing the actions of one of her interviewees – 'Otto' – she writes: 'Why did he risk his life for others? "One thing is important", Otto told me, "I had no choice. I never made a moral decision to rescue Jews. *I just got mad. I felt I had to do it*" (my italics).

¹³ I believe that my interpretations of what's going on can be merged with Schumpeters (1961) thoughts on the entrepreneurs' role in economic life. Schumpeter maintained that monetary incentives were *not* the entrepreneurs' main motivator. He believed that the joy of creating and the dream of building up a personal kingdom were the entrepreneurs' selective psychological incentives.

new party (these can be thought of as 'risk-seeking entrepreneurs'), while others need to be quite sure that their decision to form a party actually leads to the desired consequences, and hence need much more information before taking action (these can be thought of as 'risk-averse entrepreneurs').

These assumptions suggest that an individual's propensity to form a new party is a function of two things (cf. Hedström 1994: 1161f): it is partly dependent on characteristics unique to each individual (how much information he or she needs before taking action or how risk-seeking or risk-averse he or she is), and is partly influenced by the actions of other actors in the relevant social system (i.e. how many others that have successfully applied the relevant strategy).

To say that individuals' actions are interdependent is, of course, commonsensical. Game-theorists have always assumed that decision-makers try to form expectations about what other actors will do before deciding on a specific course of action. The argument put forward here, however, differs slightly from this standard way of reasoning. It is not *just* the game-theorists credo (that decisions are affected by expectations about future action of others) that is repeated. What is added is that actors' decisions are heavily influenced by the experiences *other* actors have had in their social system at *previous points in time*. The concept 'diffusion-processes' captures this phenomenon which Strang (1991: 235) describes as 'any process where prior adoption of a trait or practice [or strategy] in a population alters the probability of adoption for remaining non-adopters.' If one actor was successful using a particular strategy at an earlier point in time, this increases the probability that other actors adopt the same strategy later on.

Diffusion-processes are made more intelligible when an individual level mechanism called 'rational imitation' is introduced (Hedström 1998). Presumably, most individuals are driven by it, more or less consciously, in their everyday lives. The risks our friends, colleagues or complete strangers take – and the consequences they face from taking these actions – provide signals about which strategies are effective or ineffective, appropriate or inappropriate, successful or unsuccessful (e.g. Granovetter 1978; Schelling 1973). The core of the rational imitation mechanism is that other individuals' experiences pass on useful *information* about the value of different strategies to us.

Friedman and Hechter (1988: 215) make a case for this 'rational imitation'-mechanism when they ponder on the relationship between the information available to actors and the strategies individuals actually choose. They ask us to consider a situation in which two individuals that are subjected to exactly identical structural constraints behave very differently. The authors then stress the importance of *information* in explaining outcomes:

We can account for this by saying either that they have different preferences, or that they have different information about the consequences of their action. To claim that behaviour is explicable by reference to different preferences is tautological, and undermines the standard methodology of rational choice. The second explanation is more satisfying: the amount of information that agents have can affect behaviour *independently* of constraints or preferences. It may well be that information is the crucial intervening variable in all rational choice explanations.

The conclusion, which is important for the purposes at hand, is that the *supply of available information* affects whether actors pursue a high-cost political strategy or abstain from it. The

information actors have about the costs and benefits associated with a particular course of action determines if certain strategies become common or remain being exceptions.

To put this more simply, in everyday life people say they were 'inspired by' and 'influenced by' others, or that they have 'learned lessons' from someone or something. Whatever we choose to call it, similar mechanisms are at work. The experiences other people have provide us with important *information* on the value of choosing a particular course of action (Hedström 1994: 1163). This information increases our certainty about the relationship between actions and their consequences: it tells us whether or not particular strategies lead to desired outcomes, if they do not, or if they have some unforeseen, negative side-effects.

As Hedström *et al* (2000: 151, 168) make a case for, the imitation-mechanism is expected to be most prevalent concerning strategies that are characterized by high costs and uncertainty, when decision-makers have to make large investments but are unsure that their action will lead to the desired effect. Given this, it is reasonable to assume that the imitation-mechanism has good potential to explain why individuals choose the kind of 'high cost/high uncertainty'-decision I focus on here, i.e. the decision to form a new party. But whatever the decision is, the underlying logic remains similar: The experiences other people make at earlier points in time reduce the uncertainty associated with the specific strategies involved. So, the information we get from people who successfully adopted a certain strategy, lowers our threshold for taking this course of action.

This takes us back to the distinction made earlier, between 'risk-taking entrepreneurs' and 'risk-averse entrepreneurs'. It seems reasonable to assume that different individuals have different thresholds for when they think they have enough information to choose a certain course of action. For example, a person who starts up a new company in a completely unexplored market takes larger risks compared to the person who is the third or fourth to launch a company in this same market. The successful first entrepreneur provides information to other potential entrepreneurs that possibilities in this market indeed exist – and so others follow.

Granovetter (1978) argues similarly. Some individuals are prepared to take high risks, are ready to make big investments and decisions without much information. These individuals can be thought of as *genuine entrepreneurs* (or *pioneers*) and they are *risk-seeking*. Others need to be quite sure that their investments in particular strategies will lead to the desired ends, and therefore take action only after they have gathered a relatively large amount of information. In relation to *genuine entrepreneurs/pioneers*, these individuals are *imitating entrepreneurs* (or *followers*) who are relatively risk-averse. The point of this distinction is that different individuals have different thresholds as to how much information they need, and how much uncertainty they are willing to accept, before embarking on a high cost political strategy such as forming new political parties.

The conceptual toolbox has been introduced, and now a preliminary hypothesis can be formulated: party formation has become increasingly popular because *imitating entrepreneurs* are inspired by *genuine entrepreneurs*, and hence party formation at t increases the probability for party formation at $t + 1$ (e.g. Myers 1997: 96). How can this seemingly simple hypothesis be converted into empirical research?

The spatial dimension of rational imitation

Hägerstrand (1953) is a fine guide to make this hypothesis researchable. During field studies, Hägerstrand found that people who adopted some technological innovation tended to have neighbours that were already using the same innovation. He generalized these results, and concluded that diffusion of innovation could be explained by communication processes (cf. Rogers and Shoemaker 1971: 178), the point being that what our neighbours do provides information about which strategies are successful and which ones are not (cf. Hedström 1994). Several empirical studies have confirmed Hägerstrand's expectations (e.g. Walker 1969; Brown & Cox 1971; Collier and Messick 1975). Hedström (1994: 1159) puts himself in this tradition when he stresses the importance of *information* for explaining why people join social movements:

[T]he social networks in which actors are embedded are likely to be of considerable explanatory importance [...] because information about the movement, its costs and benefits, are spread through interpersonal contacts.

Access to relevant information is a key variable in the construction of an empirically testable hypothesis that tests the explanatory power of imitation-mechanisms. One core premise is that information is diffused in social networks, and that the political strategies people in our network choose inspire us to take political action (or refrain from it).

As Myers (1997: 7) points out, it is reasonable to assume that social networks are geographically concentrated. This assumption gains support by recent research in economic geography, which – despite all the technological advancements in communications and transportations – finds that face-to-face contacts, personal experiences, social proximity and interpersonal trust are still key factors in explaining the formation of cluster (e.g. Storper and Venables 2004; Bathelt *et al* 2004). These assumptions point in a particular direction, namely that the decision to choose the strategy of party formation is expected to be 'contagious' over short geographical distances.

The first testable hypothesis can now be formulated. Municipalities that have new political parties represented in their councils are predicted to have neighbours that already have new political parties in their councils. Therefore a spatial diffusion of party-emergence in Swedish municipalities is expected:

A. The spatial proximity hypothesis. A geographic concentration of municipalities that have new political parties represented in councils is to be expected. When a municipality gets a new party, this municipality will have at least one neighbour that already has such a new party in its council.

To further strengthen the suspicion that rational imitation is the actual causal mechanism, I also perform a tougher test for spatial *and* temporal proximity. Here it is important to find out *when* the neighbouring municipality was 'infected' by a new party to be more confident that imitation-mechanisms are actually at work (cf. Myers 1997: 97). This hypothesis demands that neighbours were 'infected' by a new party in the election *directly* preceding the one a municipally got a new party in council:

B. The spatial *and* temporal proximity hypothesis. Individuals are expected to form new parties at time $t + 1$ in municipalities where a new party already gained representation in a neighbouring municipality in the directly preceding election at t .

Both hypotheses share the assumption that the probability of a new party being formed in a given municipality increases if a neighbouring municipality already previously had a new party in the local council. The latter hypothesis, however, is a bit tougher because it demands that a neighbour got it in the election that directly preceded the one under examination.

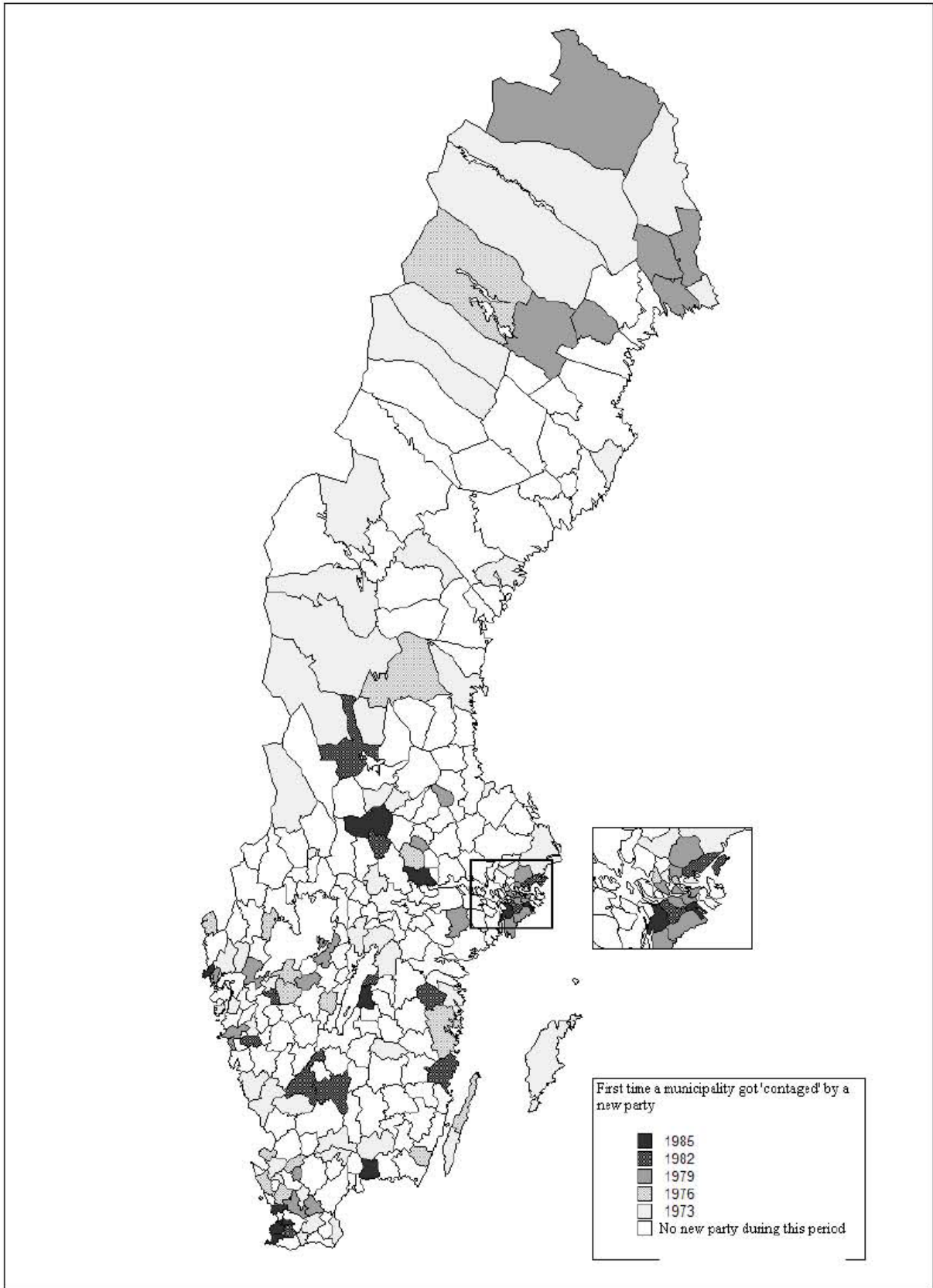
The units of analysis are Swedish municipalities. 'Spatial proximity' means that municipalities sharing a physical border are 'neighbours'. 'Temporal proximity' means that when a party gains council representation in local council, this will affect the probability of party formation in a neighbouring municipality in the election that directly follows.¹⁴

The spatial diffusion of party formation

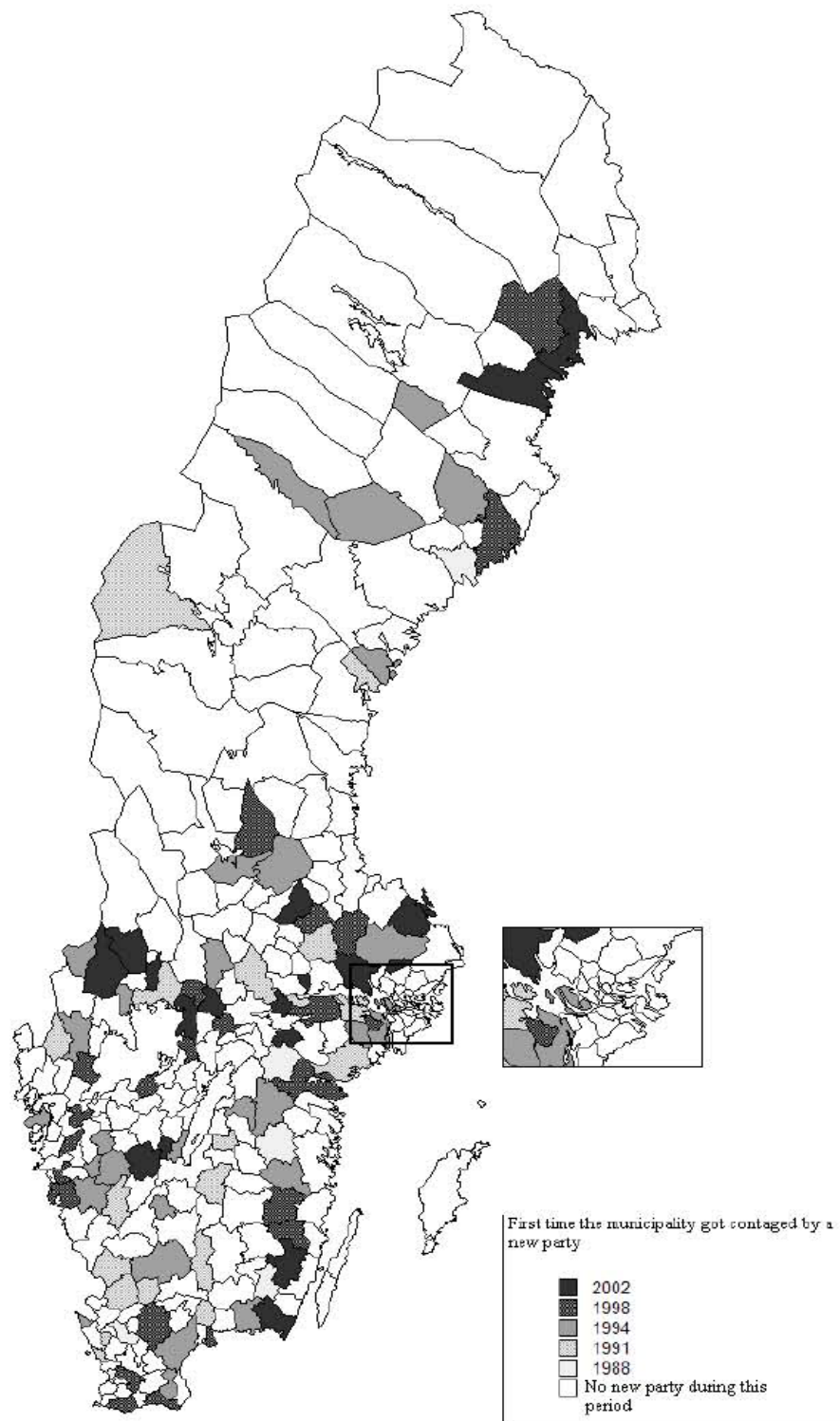
Before testing the two hypotheses, previous attempts to explain party-emergence in this specific empirical context need to be mentioned. A fair amount of research has been devoted to this question. Most of it has leaned towards various types of structural explanations. Interestingly, all have failed to find something that unites municipalities where new parties have entered local councils and good theoretically motivated correlations have been found (cf. Johansson and Schmidt 1983; Petersson *et al* 1997; Wörlund 1999). Therefore, it is motivated to uniquely focus on the explanatory power of the 'rational imitation' hypothesis.

A fairly easy way to check if there is something to the hypothesis is to look at maps of Swedish municipalities for the 10 elections held 1973–2002. On each map I have indicated which municipalities got new party-representation in the current election, and also which municipalities had new parties since before. This way of proceeding will visualize any potential clusters and tell us if there is any potential in the imitation-hypothesis.

¹⁴ Note that the number of municipalities have varied between 277 and 290 (there have been secessions during the period researched). All in all, 10 elections are analyzed (this gives a sum of 1911 observations).



Map 1. Shows when municipalities got a new party in the local parliament for the first time – for elections held in 1973, 1976, 1979, 1982 and 1985.



Map 2. Shows when municipalities got a new party in the local parliament for the first time – for elections held in 1988, 1991, 1994, 1998 and 2002.

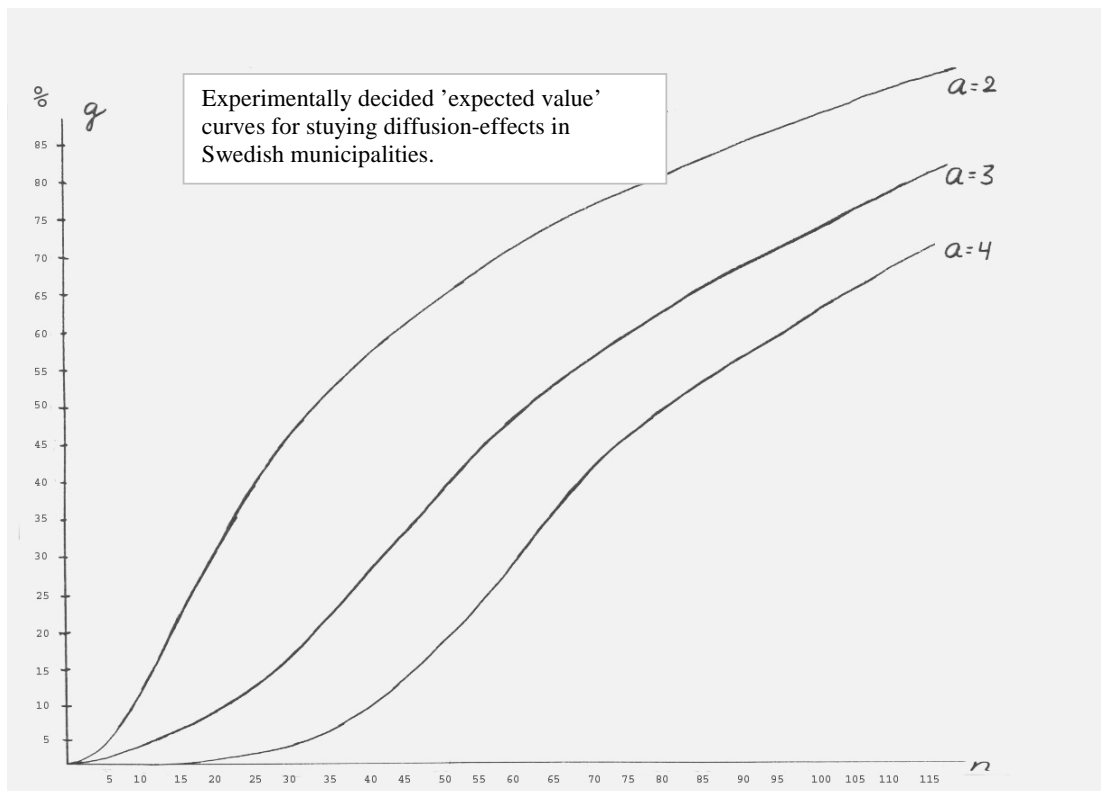
The maps give an impression that some imitation might be going on. Put slightly differently, the maps give us no reason to reject the hypotheses. But does this visual impression, seen from a birds-eye view, hold for rigorous testing? A first, simple way to examine this is to examine whether the *actual* pattern of party-establishment is more clustered than a *random* pattern would predict. To compare *actual* patterns with *random* patterns more data are needed. These are distilled from a close analysis of the maps over party entry throughout all ten elections. These data are found in table 3.

Table 3. Data to analyze spatial-proximity/clustering.

	1973	1976	1979	1982	1985	1988	1991	1994	1998	2002
Total number of municipalities 'infected' by new parties at present election	52	57	76	69	74	67	86	115	143	151
Number of municipalities that are 'infected' by new parties in the present election.	(52)	17	27	10	17	10	28	41	38	33
<i>Percentage of 'infected' municipalities who have neighbours that have...</i>										
a) in any earlier election got a new party represented or has a neighbour that got a new party in the present election	[---]	65%	89%	80%	82%	80%	82%	90%	92%	97%
b) in the previous election got a new party represented or has a neighbour that got a new party in the present election.	[---]	[---]	70%	40%	59%	60%	36%	71%	79%	70%
Total number of municipalities that <i>sometime</i> has had a new party represented (the numbers above represent the cumulative count, the numbers below represent the number of new 'infections' in the present election.	(52)	69 +17	95 +26	105 +10	119 +13	125 +6	143 +18	173 +30	199 +26	218 +19
<i>Percentage of these 'infected' municipalities that...</i>										
a) have at least one neighbour that is 'infected' with new parties.	63%	71%	89%	80%	82%	80%	82%	90%	92%	97%
b) are parts of clusters containing <i>at least</i> three geographically clustered municipalities.										
c) are parts of clusters containing at least four geographically clustered municipalities.	27%	42%	67%	76%	70%	79%	82%	85%	91%	93%
	10%	22%	59%	72%	58%	66%	75%	85%	91%	89%

In the early 1980s, Johansson (1982: 79ff) developed a tailor-made model to analyze imitation effects in Swedish municipalities. Through experiments, Johansson reconstructed describing how much clustering random processes would explain. Johansson 'expected-value model' answers the question: 'if we randomly mark 50 Swedish municipalities on a map, how many of these do we expect to form clusters of at least two, at least three or at least four municipalities?' By repeating his experiments, Johansson came up with the model in figure 2:

Figure 2. Expected value curves.



Let's apply Johansson's tools to the data displayed in table 3. The results shown in table 4 are produced when comparing Johansson's expected-value curves with actual results regarding whether or not municipalities have had new parties in their councils:

Table 4. Difference between real and expected 'neighbour-values'.¹⁵

Difference in percentage points between actual
and expected neighbour-values

Year	Number of 'infected' municipalities	a = 2	A = 3	a = 4
1973	52	+ 2	- 13	- 10
1976	59	+ 1	- 4	- 4
1979	76	+ 11	+ 7	+ 12
1982	69	+ 4	+ 21	+ 30
1985	77	+ 5	+ 11	+ 13
1988	67	+ 5	+ 25	+ 27
1991	87	0	+ 17	+ 21
1994	115	- 5	+ 4	+ 15
1998	143	[---]	[---]	[---]
2002	151	[---]	[---]	[---]

Table 4 shows that *hypothesis A* gains initial support. If we look at the most allowing test ($a = 2$, clusters of at least two municipalities), the actual pattern is generally higher than we

¹⁵ Elections 1998 and 2002 cannot be analyzed with Johansson's 'expected value model'. When we pass 115 'infected' municipalities, it becomes meaningless to analyze differences between actual and expected values, since the latter, as we can see from figure 5, are already so high.

would expect randomness to produce. If we look at the tougher tests ($a = 3$ and $a = 4$, clusters of at least three or four ‘infected’ municipalities), the actual patterns perform worse than the experimentally expected pattern in 1973 and 1976 elections. Here, ‘infected’ municipalities are not so well clustered. However, from 1979 onwards, the cluster pattern kicks in. Subsequent elections support the suspicion that rational imitation-mechanisms might help us understand this phenomenon: the harder demands we place on clusters (i.e. high a -values = larger clusters), the more the actual pattern diverges from the expected ones. Overall, *hypothesis A* performs better than a pure random process.

The test of *hypothesis A* suggests that it’s worthwhile to perform a tougher test and examine if rational imitation is responsible for the party formation strategy’s growing popularity. *Hypothesis A* gives us no reason to brush this suspicions aside; but it is not a satisfying test of the rational imitation mechanism. A better test to say something about causality is to test *hypothesis B*: individuals are expected to form new parties at time $t + 1$ in municipalities where a new party already gained representation in the directly preceding election at t .

What is now studied is how the ‘the first entry of a new party in council’ affects party entry in neighbouring municipalities. Such analysis demands instruments capable of handling dichotomies: either a municipality is ‘infected’ by a new party, or it is not. Since the dependent variable is dichotomous, the assumption of ‘normal’ regression analysis is a poor appreciation of the real relation between the independent and dependent variable. Hence, I apply a logistic regression model. The analysis is conducted on the same material as the in the previous section (i.e. elections in 277–290 municipalities throughout 10 elections). How well does *hypothesis B* perform? To get an overview of what the final logistic model can explain, three models are presented in table 5:

Table 5. Logistic regression: test of spatial *and* temporal proximity.

New party represented? (Yes/no)	Model 1. (Without diffusion)	Model 2. (With diffusion added)	Model 3. (With added diffusion and control for repeated events)
Election 1979	.416 (.324)	.394 (.325)	.403 (.326)
Election 1982	-.464 (.395)	-.560 (.397)	.537 (-.397)
Election 1985	-.0146 (.352)	-.1052 (.354)	-.0687 (.355)
Election 1988	-.578 (.406)	-.693* (.408)	-.640 (.409)
Election 1991	.534* (.318)	.442 (.320)	.503 (.322)
Election 1994	.904** (.308)	.732** (.312)	.798** (.315)
Election 1998	1.165*** (.304)	.877** (.314)	.956*** (.317)
Election 2002	1.023*** (.314)	.682 (.326)	.779** (.333)
Diffusion	_____	1.246*** (.297)	1.344*** (.303)
Elections since the latest	_____	_____	.006

new party entered			(.059)
Number of earlier new party entries in the municipality	_____	_____	-.272 (.196)
Constant	-2.485*** (.245)	-2.699*** (.252)	-2.706*** (.253)
Pseudo R2	0.045	0.057	0.059

* Statistical significance: 0.1.

** Statistical significance: 0.05.

*** Statistical significance: 0.01.

Explanation: Number of observations: 1911. The dependent variable is: existence of a new party (coded as 1) and non-existence of new party (coded as 0). Figures without parenthesis: Beta-coefficients; within parentheses, standard errors.

Not that I only test the diffusion effect. Hence, in technical terms, this is a rather simple analysis. It does not control for other variables (cf. that ‘unemployment’, ‘political majority’, ‘the state of the local economy’ etc. affects the probability of party emergence). There is an empirical reason that I opted for this: Since previous research has found no correlation between other variables and the existence of new parties, I find it worthwhile to examine what the rational imitation-hypothesis can come up with.

In practice, model 1 just describes what we’ve already seen in figure 1; the coefficients for elections 1979–2002. Model 2 includes the diffusion-variable. The final model should be evaluated against this one. Here, we can see that diffusion has a significant effect. In model 3, however, I have made it a bit more difficult for the temporal proximity hypothesis by controlling for so called ‘repeated events’ (Allison 1982: 51ff), which entails controlling for if municipalities have an inherent propensity to ‘breed’ new parties, independent of what is going on in neighbouring municipalities. In the final model we actually see that diffusion is significant, and stronger, than in model 2. In the final model we also get the p-value 0.16. This measures what Long (1997: 75f) calls the ‘discrete change’, i.e. the *expected change in probability for a new party entry in a municipality that previously had none*, when the number of new parties in any neighbouring municipality increased from 0 to 1.

Does this result add something new to our knowledge? Well, we *do* know that the result is significantly different from 0. But without previous research to compare with, there really is not much more that can be said. However, since support was found for *hypothesis A* using simpler measures, and since *hypothesis B* lends some, albeit weak, support, I think we cannot disregard the basic idea that imitation-mechanisms actually may be at work. If one thinks that my theoretical arguments are sound, and accepts that the support the basic hypothesis gains, I maintain that ‘rational imitation’ contributes to make the second research question intelligible. I think the key word is ‘support’ rather than ‘weak’ since previous research has not found any correlations that can be made intelligible by theory or intuition. Taking into account changes in infrastructure, media landscape, and information technology, one would expect that the proximity I here measure (i.e. sharing a border) would make less difference than it empirically does. This fact makes the results even more contra-intuitive, hence also surprising.

5. Conclusions: Emotional Arousal and Rational Imitation Matter

I started out by arguing that individual cases of party formation are puzzling, but despite theoretical predictions, party formation has actually become an increasingly common

strategy at the Swedish local level. The purpose was therefore to enhance our understanding when it comes to these phenomena by answering two questions: Why do individuals choose to form new parties in the first place? Why did party formation become an increasingly popular strategy between 1973 and 2002 in Swedish municipalities?

The answer to the first question – indicated by three case studies – is that ‘strong emotions’ (i.e. feelings of being wronged, disappointment, anger, frustration and/or indignation) seem to trigger party entrepreneurs to overcome obstacles and form a new party. However, emotions alone cannot explain why party formation became an increasingly popular strategy between 1973 and 2002. When it comes to answering this second question, I showed that previous research has had a hard time explaining this development. Interestingly, two of the case studies indicated that party entrepreneurs might be inspired by party formations at earlier points in time.

For this reason, I turned my attention to the argument presented in Hedström *et al* (2000: 151, 168), i.e. that imitation mechanisms ought to be useful in explaining political participation characterized by high costs and uncertainty. Empirically, this was tested on an extensive data set (i.e. 277–290 municipalities in the ten elections held 1973–2002). As it turns out, there seems to be some support for the suspicion that the strategy of forming new parties is contagious. The fact that an entrepreneur forms a political party at an earlier point in time appears to inspire potential entrepreneurs in neighbouring municipalities to form new parties at a later point in time. Ergo, the contribution of this paper has been to highlight (a) the importance of ‘strong emotions’ in explaining high cost political participation that is surrounded by much uncertainty, and (b) the role ‘rational imitation’ or ‘learning mechanisms’ have, when it comes to explain why a certain kind of high cost strategy (i.e. party formation) becomes popular within a society. I by no means claim that these are the ‘ultimate’ explanations, but rather, that they are good candidates when it comes to making the two puzzling phenomena under scrutiny here more comprehensible.¹⁶

¹⁶ Note that the explanations I have presented here are compatible with a ‘push’/‘pull’-model (see Erlingsson 2005: chapter 7). ‘*The push factor*’ is related to the ‘existing supply perspective’ described in section two. Because of deteriorating internal democracy in established parties in Sweden (e.g. Gilljam and Möller 1996: 154f), members in these parties have found it increasingly difficult to voice demands and make political carriers within existing parties. People either quit their political activity all together (in fact, 300 000 – half of the total of about 600 000 established party members quit their activity 1991–2005 [Pettersson 2005]), or their activity finds new ways (for example, through party creation). ‘*The pull factor*’ is related to the ‘demand oriented perspective’ described in section two: Because citizens have become increasingly discontented with the performance of established parties and the politicians representing them (e.g. Holmberg and Oscarsson 2004: 249f; Möller 2000: 56), a market appears to have evolved throughout the past three decades for party entrepreneurs that wish to launch new parties, i.e. the party entrepreneur can put in his/her decision equation that there actually might be large segments of voters that potentially are open to vote for new party alternatives. However, I sincerely believe that the ‘push’/‘pull’-model is ‘only’ a necessary, albeit certainly not a sufficient condition for answering the research question posed in this paper. For a full understanding, the role emotions play and the rational imitation-mechanism, need to be incorporated.

References

Books and articles

- Abbott, Andrew (1992). 'From Causes to Events: Notes on Narrative Positivism', *Sociological Methods and Research* 20(4), 428–455.
- Abell, Peter (1993). 'Some Aspects of Narrative Method', *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 18(2–3), 153–166.
- Allison, Paul D. (1982). 'Discrete-Time Methods for the Analysis of Event Histories', *Sociological Methodology* 13, 61–98.
- Ahrne, Göran and Apostolis Papakostas (2001). 'Inertia and innovation.' SCORE Working Paper no 5, Stockholm: Score, University of Stockholm.
- Bates, Robert H., Avner Greif, Margaret Levi, J. L. Rosenthal and Barry Weingast (1998). *Analytic Narratives*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bathelt, Harald, Anders Malmberg and Peter Maskell (2004). 'Clusters and Knowledge. Local Buzz, Global Pipelines and the Process of Knowledge Creation', *Progress in Human Geography* 28 (1), 31–56.
- Brown, Lawrence and Kevin Cox (1971). 'Empirical Regularities in the Diffusion of Innovations', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 61 (3), 551–559.
- Budge, Ian, David Robertson and Derek Hearl (1987). *Ideology, Strategy and Party Change. Spatial Analyses of Post-War Election Programmes in 19 Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Collier, David and Richard Messick (1975). 'Prerequisites versus Diffusion. Testing Alternative Explanations of Social Security Adaptation', *American Political Science Review* 69 (4), 1299–1315.
- Collins, Randall. (1990). 'Stratification, Emotional Energy, and the Transient Emotions' in Theodore D. Kemper (ed) *Research Agendas in the Sociology of Emotions*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Damasio, Antonio R. (1994). *Descartes' Error*. New York: Quill, Harper Collins Publishers.
- Detterbeck, Klaus (2005). 'Cartel Parties in Western Europe?', *Party Politics* 11(2), 173–191.
- Downs, Anthony (1957). 'An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy', *The Journal of Political Economy* 65(2), 135–150.
- Duverger, Maurice (1954). *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*. London: Methuen.
- Elster, Jon (1989). *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eriksson, Cecilia (1999). *Lokalt engagemang med platsideologisk bas – exemplet lokala partier*. Novemus: Örebro universitet.
- Erlingsson, Gissur Ó. (2007). 'Notes on the "Freezing Hypothesis"', Ratio Working Paper no 113. Stockholm: The Ratio Institute.
- Erlingsson, Gissur Ó. (2005). *Varför bildas nya partier*. Lund: Department of Political Science, Lund University.

- Farrell, David M. (1997). *Comparing Electoral Systems*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Friedman, Debra and Michael Hechter (1988). 'The Contribution of Rational Choice Theory to Macrosociological Research', *Sociological theory* 6(2), 201–218.
- Fridolfsson, Charlotte and Gullan Gidlund (2002). *De lokala partierna och den nya politiska kartan*. Örebro: Novemus, Örebro Universitet.
- Frohlich, Norman and Joe A. Oppenheimer (1970). 'I Get by with a Little Help from my Friends', *World Politics* 23(1), 104–120.
- Gamson, William A. (1995). 'Constructing Social Protest' in Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans (eds.) *Social Movements and Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gilljam, Mikael and Tommy Möller (1996). 'Från medlemspartier till väljarpartier' in *På medborgarnas villkor. En demokratisk infrastruktur*. SOU 1996:162. Stockholm: Fakta Info Direkt.
- Golder, Matt (2003). 'An Evolutionary Approach to Party System Stability', unpublished manuscript. <http://homepages.nyu.edu/~mrg217/evolutionary.pdf>.
- Granovetter, Mark (1978). 'Threshold Models of Collective Behavior', *American Journal of Sociology* 83 (6), 1420–1443.
- Griffin, Larry J. (1993). 'Narrative, Event-Structure, and Causal Interpretation in Historical Sociology', *American Journal of Sociology* 98(5), 1095–1133.
- Görnebrand, John (1973). *Socialbyråkratin*. Malmö: Corona.
- Hanoch, Yaniv. (2002). 'Neither an Angel Nor an Ant': Emotion as an Aid to Bounded Rationality', *Journal of Economic* 23(1): 1–25
- Harmel, Robert and John D. Robertson (1985). 'Formation and Success of New Parties', *International Political Science Review* 6(4), 501–523.
- Hauss, Charles and David Rayside (1978). 'The Development of New Parties in Western Democracies Since 1945' in Louis Maisel and Joseph Cooper (eds.) *Political Parties: Development and Decay*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Hedström, Peter (1994). 'Contagious Collectivities. On the Spatial Diffusion of Swedish Trade Unions, 1890–1940', *The American Journal of Sociology* 99 (5), 1157–1179.
- Hedström, Peter (1998). 'Rational Imitation', in Peter Hedström and Richard Swedberg (eds.). *Social Mechanisms. An Analytical Approach to Social Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hedström, Peter, Rickard Sandell and Charlotta Stern (2000). 'Mesolevel Networks and the Diffusion of Social Movements. The Case of the Swedish Social Democratic Party', *The American Journal of Sociology* 106 (1), 145–172.
- Hercus, Cheryl (1999). 'Identity, Emotion, and Feminist Collective Action', *Gender and Society* 13(1): 34–55.
- Hirschman, Albert O. (1970). *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty. Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- Hopkin, Jonathan (2005). 'Predatory Rule in Advanced Industrial Society? Political Entrepreneurship, Self Dealing and the Case of Forza Italia', paper presented at ECPR general conference in Budapes 7-9 september 2005.
- Hug, Simon (2001). *Altering Party Systems. Strategic Behavior and the Emergence of New Political Parties in Western Democracies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Hägerstrand, Torsten (1953). *Innovationsförloppet ur kronologisk synpunkt*. Lund: Messages from the Department of Social and Economic Geography.
- Inglehart, Ronald (1990). *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Inglehart, Ronald and Scott C. Flanagan (1987). 'Value Change in Industrial Societies', *The American Political Science Review* 81(4), 1289-1319.
- Johansson, Leif (1982). *Kommunal servicevariation*. Ds Kn 1982:2. Stockholm: Kommundepartementet.
- Johansson, Leif and Stephan Schmidt (1983). *Stabilitet, variation och förnyelse*. Lund: Meddelanden från Statsvetenskapliga institutionen, Lunds universitet.
- Katz, Richard S. and Peter Mair (1995). 'Changing Model of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party', *Party Politics* 1(1), 5-28.
- Kiser, Edgar (1996). 'The Revival of Narrative in Historical Sociology: What Rational Choice Can Contribute', *Politics & Society* 24(3), 249-271.
- Laver, Michael (1997). *Private Desires, Political Action: An Invitation to the Politics of Rational Choice*. London: Sage Publications.
- Laver, Michael and Ben Hunt (1992). *Policy and Party Competition*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Lawler, Edward J. and Shane R Thye (1999). 'Bringing Emotions into Social Exchange Theory', *Annual Review of Sociology* 25, 217-244.
- Lawson, Kay and Peter Merkl (eds.) (1988). *When Parties Fail. Emerging Alternative Organizations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Lijphart, Arend (1994). *Electoral Systems and Party Systems*. Oxford: Oxford university press.
- Lipset, Seymour. M. and Stein Rokkan (1967). 'Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction' in Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan (eds.) *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross National Perspectives*. London & New York: The Free Press.
- Lodén, Anna-Lena (1999). 'Bemötande av främlingsfientliga och populistiska partier i kommuner och landsting' in SOU 1999:10 *Demokratins förgörare*. Stockholm: Fritzes.
- Mair, Peter (1983). 'Adaptation and Control: Towards an Understanding of Party and Party System Change' in Hans Daalder and Peter Mair (eds.) *Western European Party Systems. Continuity and Change*. London: Sage Publications.
- Marcus, George., W. Russell Neuman and Michael MacCuen (2000). *Affective Intelligence and Political Judgement*. Chicago: University Press of Chicago.
- McCulloch, Alistair (1990). 'Joining a Political Party: A Reassessment of the Economic Approach to Membership', *The British Journal of Sociology* 41(4), 497-516.

- Myers, Daniel (1997). 'Racial Rioting in the 1960s. An Event History Analysis of Local Conditions', *American Sociological Review* 62 (1), 94–112.
- Nownes, Anthony J. and Grant Neeley (1996). 'Public Interest Group Entrepreneurship and Theories of Group Mobilization', *Political Research Quarterly* 49(1), 119–146.
- Olson, Mancur (1971). *The Logic of Collective Action. Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Petersson, Olof (2005). *De politiska partiernas medlemsutveckling*. Stockholm: SNS.
- Petersson, Olof, Jörgen Hermansson, Michele Micheletti and Anders Westholm. (1997). *Demokrati över gränser*. Stockholm: SNS Förlag.
- Reed, Jean-Pierre. (2004). 'Emotions in Context: Revolutionary Accelerators, Hope, Moral Outrage, and Other Emotions in the Making of Nicaragua's Revolution', *Theory & Society* 33(6), 653–703.
- Renvick-Monroe, Kristen (1996). *The Heart of Altruism. Perception of a Common Humanity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Rogers, Everett and Shoemaker, Floyd R. (1971). *Communication of Innovation. A Cross-cultural Approach*. New York: The Free Press.
- Schelling, Thomas (1973). 'Hockey Helmets, Concealed Weapons, and Daylight Saving. A Study of Binary Choices with Externalities', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 17 (3), 381–428.
- Schumpeter, Joseph (1961). *A Theory of Economic Development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Storper, Michael and Anthony Venables (2004). 'Buzz. Face-to-face Contacts and the Urban Economy', *Journal of Economic Geography* 4(4), 351–370.
- Strang, David (1991). 'Adding Social Structure to Diffusion Models. An Event History Framework', *Sociological Methods and Research* 19(3), 324–353.
- Taagepera, Rein and Mathew Shugart (1989). *Seats and Votes*. New Haven: Yale university press.
- Tullock, Gordon (1971). 'Public Decisions as Public Goods', *The Journal of Political Economy* 79(4), 913–918.
- Walker, Jack (1969). 'The Diffusion of Innovation in American States', *American Political Science Review* 63 (3), 880–889.
- Ware, Alan (1996). *Political Parties and Party Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Whiteley, Paul F., Patrich Seyd, Jeremy Richardson and Paul Bissell (1994). 'Explaining Party Activism: The Case of the British Conservative Party', *British Journal of Political Science* 24(1), 79–94.
- Willey, Joseph (1998). 'Institutional Arrangements and the Success of New Parties in Old Democracies', *Political Studies* 46(3), 651–668.
- Wörlund, Ingemar (1999). 'Lokala partier i Sverige', *Kommunal ekonomi och politik*. 3(3), 51–64.

Polemical- and news articles mail correspondence etc.

Arbetaren (1995). 'Vi är de riktiga socialdemokraterna.', in no 11, 11-12.

Blekinge Läns Tidning 27.04.1974. 'Vår argaste socialchef: Nu ska han bilda ett eget parti.'

Dagens Nyheter 03.03.1994. 'Lars Törnman registrerar parti.'

Expressen 19.09.1994. 'Kirunapartiet blev störst i kommunen.'

Fälldin, Thorbjörn (1972). Letter from Fälldin addressed to John Görnebrand (dated 28.06.1972).

Görnebrand, John (year unknown). 'Nytt parti mot förmyndarpolitiken.' Polemical article in *Lomma-Tidningen*.

Görnebrand, John (1970a). 'Ungdomens opinionsbildning.' Polemical article in *Skånska Dagbladet* (28.02.1970).

Görnebrand, John (1970b). 'Intet nytt under solen.' Polemical article in *Skånska Dagbladet* (17.03.1970).

Görnebrand, John (1972a). A polemical article that got rejected by *Sydsvenskan* (reject letter is dated 22.04.1972).

Görnebrand, John (1972b). Letter from Görnebrand addressed to Thorbjörn Fälldin (the letter is dated 09.03.1972).

Görnebrand, John (1972c). Letter from Görnebrand addressed to Åke Lindsö (the letter is dated 01.08.1972).

Görnebrand, John (1972d). Letter from Görnebrand addressed to Åke Lindsö. (Brevet daterat 29.08.1972).

Görnebrand, John (1976). 'Alla dessa missnöjespartier', polemical article in *Vår Framtid* no 1.

Göteborgs-Posten 26.09.1994. 'Törnman törs gå sin egen väg.'

Nordvästra Skånes Tidningar 17.12.1988a. ' -De bör lämna sina uppdrag!'

Nordvästra Skånes Tidningar 17.12.1988b. 'Ett hån mot oss moderater i Båstad' (letter to the editor, Ingalill Munther).

Nordvästra Skånes Tidningar 14.01.1989. 'Moderat spränglista och turistchef kom och gick.'

Nordvästra Skånes Tidningar 14.03.1989. 'Moderater uteslöts.'

Nordvästra Skånes Tidningar 06.06.1989. 'Båstadmoderater utesluts.'

Nordvästra Skånes Tidningar 07.06.1989. 'Kan falangerna enas?'

Norrbottnens-Kuriren 01.03.1994. 'Nytt parti i Kiruna.'

Norrbottnens-Kuriren 15.04.1994. 'Valupptakt för nya Kirunapartiet.'

Ystads Allehanda 10.05.1975.

Interviews

Arnhult, Agne (2004). The party entrepreneur who formed Bjärepartiet in the municipality of Båstad (1988). His name back in the 1980s was Agne Andersson, but has since changed his last name.

Görnebrand, John (2004). The party entrepreneur who formed Kommunens väl in the municipality of Simrishamn (1973) and the Centrum Democrats (1976).

Törnman, Lars (2003). The party entrepreneur who formed Kirunapartiet in the municipality of Kiruna (1994).