The lives of the party: contemporary approaches to the study of intraparty politics in Europe.

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Abstract
Intraparty politics is a precursor to political parties' policy proposals, manifestos, selected leaders and candidates that often involves many actors and is regularly accompanied by tensions. This essay introduces the contents of a special issue devoted to the internal dynamics of political parties in Europe. We connect each contribution of the issue to three key aspects of intraparty research: 1) sources of information on internal party politics and methods of analysis; 2) how contemporary parties reconcile or otherwise address disagreements within the party; 3) the electoral and other ramifications of internal party tensions or divisions. Overall, the comparative case studies and cross-national comparisons across Western and Eastern Europe included in this issue show that considerations of intraparty dynamics advance scholarly research on alliances and coalitions, party organizations, and party competition.

Keywords: intraparty democracy, party factions, party leadership

This special issue is about the causes and consequences of internal party tensions, and the various sources of information available for scholars to investigate intraparty politics.[1] Parties may be collective entities but internal factions, groups and divisions structure those entities (Katz and Mair 1993; Bäck 2008; Giannetti and Benoit 2009). Several potential sources of intraparty conflict can be easily identified: for example, across most European democracies, party membership has declined (van Biezen et al. 2012). Yet, under certain conditions, rank-and-file members continue to set the ideological limits of a party's programmatic flexibility (Scarrow 2015). Additionally, policy positions on

contentious issues – such as various aspects of the welfare state, immigration, and European integration – often generate factional strife that pit durable and diverse interests within a party against one another (e.g. Odmalm 2011; Hinnfors et al. 2012; Tzelgov 2014). As much as parties try to conceal these conflicts and to keep them within the party, often they have substantive ramifications. Recent examples from the leadership selection processes of the British Labour Party (Garland 2016) or the Swedish Christian Democrats (Bjereld et al. 2016) demonstrate the effect that intraparty disagreements can have on party strategy and hence the entire party system. Together, the contributions of this special issue focus on three key aspects of intraparty research: 1) sources of information on internal party politics and methods of analysis; 2) how contemporary parties reconcile or otherwise address disagreements within the party; 3) the electoral and other ramifications of internal party tensions or divisions.

Within party politics scholarship, there is broad interest in internal party dynamics (see, e.g., Cross and Katz 2013) but high quality information on the internal processes of these organizations is harder to acquire than aggregate information such as cabinet allocations or vote and seat share (see Ceron 2015; Heidar 2006). The articles of this special issue reflect a combination of established and new data collection tools and analytical strategies that the field of intraparty politics offers: Ceron (2016) examines social media as a source of information on internal party dynamics; Greene and Haber (2016) focus on the speeches made by party leaders at party congresses; and Aylott and Bolin (2016) draw on in-depth interviews with party politicians of various ranks. Although surveys of party members in European democracies have a long tradition (e.g. Seyd and Whiteley 1992; Whiteley et al. 1994), the article by Kölln and Polk (2016) presents the first

membership survey conducted in Sweden, which is also part of recent developments to generate comparative surveys of contemporary political party members (Van Haute and Gauja 2015). Each article in this issue discusses and critically reflects on the important question of available information sources and the different approaches to their scholarly analysis.

The contributions also address how contemporary parties resolve, respond or avoid disagreements within the party (Aylott and Bolin 2016; Greene and Haber 2016). In practice, leadership and the rank-and-file are often composed of distinct factions, and these competing groups often create ongoing tensions (May 1973; Blondel 1978; Norris 1995). Political parties are divided horizontally and vertically, meaning that various branches within the party have an impact on party position taking and policy, as well as on what individuals populate the leadership of the party (Allern and Saglie 2012; Aylott and Bolin 2016).

Finally, this collection of articles studies the electoral and coalitional ramifications of internal tensions for parties throughout Europe. Ibsenskas and Sikk (2016) explain temporary party strategy change, such as entry to and exit from electoral coalitions and changes in electoral labels, and permanent change, such as splits and mergers, through intraparty tensions across eleven Central and East European countries. Aylott and Bolin (2016) provide a framework for understanding the understudied process of party leadership selection and autonomy, while Somer-Topcu (2016) examines the effect of party leadership changes and finds that they reduce voter disagreement about party positions in seven European countries. Greene and Haber (2016) explore the dynamics of

collaborations between partner parties in Western Europe – e.g. the German Christian Democratic Union and the Christian Socialist Union – and the dramatic effects these can have on parties' internal politics. Finally, Kölln and Polk (2016) show that members' ideological disagreement can even lead to considerations of long-term support of another party.

The individual contributions extend research on internal party politics via single country comparative case studies as well as cross-national comparisons involving Western and Eastern Europe. They show that intraparty politics is relevant for scholarly research on alliances and coalitions, party organizations, and party competition.

In the first contribution, **Andrea Ceron** asks to what extent social media statements made by political actors can be used to extract information on the heterogeneity of preferences and factions within political parties. He argues that the social media messages of politicians are a valuable resource for understanding internal party dynamics, and reports that they help explain Italian politicians' decisions to endorse candidates for leadership positions, switch parliamentary groups, and understand the chances of particular politicians being chosen for ministerial positions.

Ann-Kristin Kölln and **Jonathan Polk** investigate the prevalence of ideological disagreement between party members and party leadership via a recently conducted survey of party members in Sweden, the first of its kind. Party members with higher levels of political interest and a stronger sense of independence are associated with more party-member incongruence, and incongruence is, in turn, connected to less favorable evaluations of the party leader, voting for a different party, and considering joining a

different party altogether. The article highlights that ideological disagreement within parties is not unusual and has important consequences for a party's electoral fortunes and party competition.

Zachary Green and **Matthias Haber** examine the effects of inter-party cooperation, in the form of pre-electoral coalitions, on intraparty politics. Building on their comparative analysis of such coalitions across 20 countries in the latter half of the 20th century, these authors argue that parties shift their preferences closer to partners when the pre-electoral coalition increases electoral support and distance themselves from one another when the coalition does not increase vote share. Greene and Haber move on to analyze a particularly extreme case of pre-electoral coalition in the "sister parties" of the German CDU and CSU. Quantitative analyses of speeches from the party national congresses of these parties are consistent with the authors' central argument.

Raimondas Ibsenskas and **Allan Sikk** provide a new approach to study party change in Central and Eastern Europe, based on a new and unique dataset covering party changes in 11 countries in the first 25 years after their democratic transitions. They make a compelling case for conceptualizing party change as multi-dimensional by differentiating between label changes, splits, mergers, and electoral alliances. Their findings contribute to a growing literature on Central and Eastern Europe that highlights the structuring role of political parties in these countries and the capacity for representation and accountability in the midst of substantial party change.

Nicholas Aylott and **Niklas Bolin** present a new framework for understanding the selection of party leaders, which emphasizes principal-agent delegation. In particular,

they depict a two-step process of leadership selection where a managerial agent exerts substantial leverage on the outcome before the wider party selectorate is involved in the decision-making. Detailed analysis of interviews and written documents on the Swedish Social Democrat and Green parties illustrate the applicability of the framework. The article highlights that seeming democratic leadership selections are more complex and may even be quite undemocratic.

Zeynep Somer-Topcu directly addresses the consequences of internal party politics by asking if party leadership change affects voter perceptions of that party. Time-series cross-sectional analyses in seven Western European democracies support her central argument that leadership change exposes voters to more information about a political party's policy stances and thus reduces citizen disagreement about these positions. This effect is strengthened when the leadership change is accompanied by a change in the policy position of the party. The results mean that leadership change can avoid or reduce voter disappointment and it can help parties live up to the normative standards of the Responsible Party Model.

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