Understanding Populist Party Organisation

The Radical Right in Western Europe

Edited by
Reinhard Heinisch and
Oscar Mazzoleni
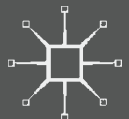
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The Radical Right in Western Europe

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Preface

This book was a result of an academic collaboration between authors from different European countries assembled in a research group examining populist party organization and representation. The researchers organized workshops first at the University of Lausanne in September 2012, at the University of Amsterdam in June 2013, and again at the University of Salzburg in September 2014. The original idea behind the project was to look at populist parties as 'normal' parties in the sense that they do not require special theories or a unique conceptual framework for their analysis. The notion of normal parties not only related to the fact that over the span of 20 years such parties had become more common across Europe, thus acquiring an air of 'normalcy' by their sheer number but also implied that conventional theoretical tools from the literature on parties would help us understand their endurance and success. The research group's discussions were also guided by increasing evidence that the focus on structural and demand-side explanations of why populist parties are successful or unsuccessful may make us miss important clues as to their true strengths and advantages in a competitive political environment.

The longevity of older right-wing populist parties and the successful emergence of new ones was thus an important point for consideration. Another question had to do with the role of charismatic leadership, the phenomenon often considered to be at the heart of explaining the success of populist parties. In the context of the Austrian Freedom Party

Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ), for example, the media rarely tired in attributing its successes to the 'Haider phenomenon'. And if it was not the leaders' almost magical political skills and personal magnetism that accounted for the surge of populist parties then it was said to be the winning formula the leaders applied in pursuing a relentless vote-maximizing strategy. The image of an almost deinstitutionalized and amorphous formation, more movement-like than real party, also crept into the scholarly discourse and fostered an image of such parties as outsiders and 'not normal' by the standards of conventional European parties. However, by the time the research group met, several parties had undergone leadership changes. Moreover, all right-wing populist parties under consideration had faced important internal and external challenges to which they had to also react organizationally. In fact, all the parties, including the ones created more recently by a small band of activists or single founder, had become in one form or another institutionalized, with complex organizational features, and appeared organizationally rather conventional and thus 'normal'. As a result, it made no sense to ignore these facts when trying to understand a party's endurance.

In the eyes of the researchers assembled in this group, scholarship had neglected the question of how individual populist parties are organized territorially and how representation within these parties functions at all levels. Thus, the members of the research group favoured treating populist formations rather as long-standing Western European parties with complex multilevel organizations and an extensive representative presence in elected institutions. This led to the idea to apply a standardized theoretical framework and guiding questionnaire to allow for genuine comparisons across country cases. Yet, the researchers have remained open to the possibility that populist parties are indeed similar to one another but different from mainstream parties in their own countries and as such unconventional in their respective national contexts. Thus, any meaningful analysis would have to examine populist party organization in the national context. It was important to understand the political 'ecosystem' in which these parties operate and how they respond to it organizationally. Finally, there emerged the question of whether a typology of 'right-' and 'left'-wing populist forms of organization and representation can be constructed.

Whereas the concept of the 'normal' party was an important heuristic device to help guide the framing and conceptualization of this volume, the term does not appear as an operational category because it proved difficult to define without ambiguity—'normal' as 'typical' in national organizational terms or 'normal' as in approximating the mass-party legacy (e.g. Duverger 1963) or 'normal' in being analyzable based on the typical organizational party literature. Moreover, also normal parties fail in handling leadership transitions. Therefore, 'normal' would also have to be defined in terms of party families or party models (i.e. mass/cartel parties), all of which have different 'normals'. As a result we did not want to employ a potentially controversial concept that would distract from the findings presented in this book. However, the term does capture the idea that populist parties are an ordinary phenomenon. They are neither fleeting nor episodic but have indeed organizational depth that is central to their existence.

As with all such books, logistical and conceptual constraints required that a selection of cases had to be made. For reasons of engaging in meaningful comparisons, it was clear that at least for the purposes of this book the focus needed to be on a single region, Western Europe, and on one part of the political spectrum, the far right. With respect to the actual party cases, one can of course always argue in favor of this party versus that party. We wanted to have parties with a proven track record in terms of significant electoral success and repeated presence in the national legislature. We also aimed for a mix of longer established and relatively more recent parties. While trying to have variability in terms of national settings and foundational characteristics, we purposefully excluded parties that were politically or functionally very different from the rest of the sample. The German *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), for example, is too recent a party to be included whereas Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* (FI) was too much like a business-firm party rather than a right-wing populist one. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) has been seen (also by itself) as nationalist and rather different from the populists on the far right and has rejected offers of collaboration with the latter. Its success also came rather recently compared to that of the other parties examined. Geert Wilders' Dutch Freedom Party Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV) would clearly qualify as right-wing populist, yet its organizational

structure, given that Wilders is the party's sole member, makes it so unique that meaningful comparisons in this context would be difficult. Hence, we settled on the Austrian Freedom Party Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ), the Belgian Flemish Interest *Vlaams Belang* (VB), the Swiss People's Party Schweizerische Volskpartei (SVP), the Italian Northern League *Lega Nord* (LN), The French National Front *Front National* (FN), the Norwegian Progress Party Fremskrittspartiet (FrP), and the Sweden Democrats Sverigedemokraterna (SD). All contributing authors in this volume are recognized specialists on their respective parties and thus represent expertise that is second to none.

Using both English and native language names to refer to the parties in this book may appear an impermissible inconsistency. However, a rigid insistence on uniformity would have required writing about the *Freiheitliche Partei* (Freedom Party) if we consistently use the national-language expression whereas translations into English would have meant using 'Flemish Interest', the 'Northern League', and the 'National Front' with all associations that such terms employ. In these cases, the party names have arguably become political 'brand labels' that carry certain connotations that the technical English translation will never have. Thus, we wanted to let authors decide which form they preferred and national language names were invariably used where this is also common in the scholarly literature. Consequently, at the beginning, we provide for all parties their native language names, and at the same time, an English translation and common acronym (see the list of abbreviations below).

Finally, one of the principal objectives of the group was to develop standardized tools and concepts for investigating organizational development and effectiveness in populist parties. The findings presented in this volume represent only a part of the materials gathered and conclusions reached by the researchers in this collaboration.

Acknowledgements

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Duncan McDonnell is Senior Lecturer in the School of Government and International Relations at Griffith University in Brisbane. From 2011 to 2014, he was a Jean Monnet Fellow and then a Marie Curie Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence. He has co-authored *Populists in Power* (2015) with Daniele Albertazzi and co-edited *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack*

Religion (2016) with Nadia Marzouki and Olivier Roy. He is currently working with Annika Werner on a book about the European-level alliances formed by radical right populist parties.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	National Party Name	English Party Name
BGB	Gewerbe- und Bürgerpartei	Party of Farmers, Traders and Independents (Switzerland)
C	Centerpartiet	Center Party (Sweden)
CD&V	Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams	Christian Democratic and Flemish (Belgium)
CVP	Christlichdemokratische Volkspartei der Schweiz	Christian Democratic People's Party of Switzerland
DC	Democrazia Cristiana	Christian Democracy (Italy)
DP	Demokratische Partei	Democratic Party (Switzerland)
FDP	Freisinnig-Demokratische Partei/Die Liberalen	Free Democratic Party/The Liberals (Switzerland)
FI	Forza Italia	Forza Italia Political Movement (Italy)
FN	Front National	National Front (France)
FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreich	Austrian Freedom Party
FrP	Fremskrittspartiet	Progress Party (Norway)
KD	Kristdemokraterna	Christian Democrats (Sweden)
L	Liberalerna	The Liberals (Sweden)
LDD	Libertair, Direkt, Democratisch	Libertarian, Direct, Democratic (Belgium)
LN	Lega Nord	Northern League (Italy)

Abbreviation	National Party Name	English Party Name
LPF	List Pim Fortuyn	Lijst Pim Fortuyn (the Netherlands)
LR	Les Républicains	The Republicans (France)
M	Moderata Samlingspartiet	Moderate Party (Sweden)
M5S	Movimento Cinque Stelle	Five Star Movement (Italy)
MP	Miljöpartiet de gröna	Green Party (Sweden)
N-VA	Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie	New-Flemish Alliance (Belgium)
ND	Nationaldemokraterna	National Democrats (Sweden)
ÖVP	Österreichische Volkspartei	Austrian People's Party
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano	Italian Communist Party
PD	Partito Democratico	Democratic Party (Italy)
PdL	Il Popolo della Libertà	The People of Freedom (Italy)
PS	Parti Socialiste	Socialist Party (France)
RP	Reformpartiet	The Reform Party (Norway)
SAP	Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti	Swedish Social Democratic Party
SD	Sverigedemokraterna	Sweden Democrats
SP	Sozialdemokratische Partei der Schweiz	Social Democratic Party of Switzerland
SPÖ	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs	Social Democratic Party of Austria
SVP	Schweizerische Volkspartei	Swiss People's Party
UdC	Unione di Centro	Union of the Centre(Italy)
UDI	Union des démocrates et indépendants	Union of Democrats and Independents (France)
UMP	Union pour un Mouvement Populaire	Union for a Popular Rally (France)
V	Vänsterpartiet	Left Party (Sweden)
VB	Vlaams Belang	Flemish Interest (Belgium)
VdU	Verband der Unabhängigen	Federation of Independents (Austria)
VNP	Vlaams-Nationale Partji	Flemish National Party (Belgium)
VU	Volksunie	People's Union (Belgium)
VVP	Vlaamse Volkspartij	Flemish People's Party (Belgium)

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Introduction

Reinhard Heinisch and Oscar Mazzoleni

Right-wing populist parties are thriving throughout Europe. With few exceptions, political systems have seen such parties make significant electoral gains and shape the national political discourse across the continent. Whereas, populism, a belief system expressing various types of anti-elite claims, appeared at one point to be limited to certain countries with particular sociocultural cleavages or excessive forms of *partitocrazia*, this phenomenon has since manifested itself even in countries long regarded model democracies. In Finland, the True Finns won almost 20 per cent of the vote in the national elections in 2011 whereas their counterpart in Sweden, the Sweden Democrats, managed to enter the national parliament in 2010. In 2014 they more than doubled their support, receiving 12.9 per cent of the votes and becoming the third largest party. In other

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countries with a longer right-wing populist presence, such as in Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, and Switzerland, these parties have successfully adapted to new political circumstances and undergone changes that do not appear to have weakened them. In Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, and Switzerland populist parties even became part of the national government, while in other instances they preferred to exercise influence from behind by supporting conservative parties to stay in office, such as the Freedom Party in the Netherlands and the Danish People's Party. Inevitably, the study of party-based populism has migrated from the margins of the scholarship on political parties toward its centre because the growing success of such parties forces us to re-examine our understanding of populism and of how populist party organizations operate.

Researchers to date have largely focused on structural and demand-side theories explaining why populist parties emerge and are successful or unsuccessful (Mudde 2007; Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008, among others). To the extent that supply-side explanations have been considered, the role of ideology, leadership, and party strategies took centre stage (e.g. Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Norris 2005). At the same time, Western European populist parties have been more or less implicitly framed as 'charismatic parties' with centralized leadership, a strong loyalty to the leader to ensure party cohesion, feeble organization, and a tiny bureaucratic apparatus (Meny and Surel 2002; Müller- Rommel 1998: 194; Taggart 2002: 67; Widfeldt 2000: 488; Zaslove 2008: 324 à). Rarely has sufficient attention been paid to the question of organization (but see Bolleyer 2013), in particular to how such formations survive without their leaders. Therefore, our research question is the following: *Which organizational features beyond the leader make up a populist party?* Our emphasis on organization is thus guided by Cas Mudde's specific appeal to scholars to put populist parties 'at the center of research on the phenomenon' and his critique of the 'lack of original research' as this has resulted in a field 'full of received wisdom' (Mudde 2007: 295; Goodwin 2006). In order to develop a thorough empirical and comparative perspective, we argue that such an analysis has a strong heuristic benefit if one considers populist formations as 'normal' parties so as to place them within the conventional literature on party organization.

Why Study Populist Party Organization?

Among scholars of political science, European right-wing populist parties are often considered fundamentally "episodic" or "flash" parties and essentially dependent on their "charismatic" leader (e.g. Müller-Rommel 1998; Woods 2014: 10). Time and again, scholarship has drawn on the concept of authoritarian *Führerprinzip* and emphasized populism's exclusive orientation toward a supremely dominant figure at the helm who controls every aspect of the party (Taggart 2000: 100ff.) claiming it as a 'personalistic' party (see Schedler 1996: 101).

However, the necessity to go beyond a leader-centred focus has acquired even greater urgency because in recent years many populist parties have undergone changes in leadership and/or had to cope with new circumstances in their respective political environments. In France, Marine Le Pen, has taken the mantle of leadership from her father, the founder of the National Front. In Italy, the long-term leader of the Northern League, Umberto Bossi, was forced to resign and was replaced by a 'triumvirate' consisting of Roberto Maroni, Roberto Calderoli, and Manuela Dal Lago before the new leader, Matteo Salvini, was installed. Meanwhile in Austria, Jörg Haider not only left the populist party he dominated for decades but founded a rival formation challenging the Freedom Party. The latter is now led by Heinz-Christian Strache whose hold on the party and its various constituent groups appears strong but yet different from that of Haider. Other charismatic leadership figures from well-known European populist parties such Frans 'Filip' Dewinter of the Belgian party Flemish Interest or Christoph Blocher of the Swiss People's Party have never fitted the conventional model of the authoritarian *Führer* because they were either not the party leader or the party was organizationally more loosely structured.

As several such parties have had to contend with new political rivals and/or moved to support conservative mainstream parties in public office, either by joining coalitions or backing minority governments, party organizations have been exposed to internal and external pressures to which they have had to react and adapt, often, as these examples make clear, without the guiding hands of their founding leaders. Moreover, the continued

success of these older populist parties challenges the assumption that if populists enter public office or collaborate with mainstream parties, they would either atrophy or become ordinary parties of the right. In reality, however, the effects of these developments have been much more varied (cf. Albertazzi and McDonnell 2015). Whereas, for example, the fate of the Dutch party Lijst Pim Fortuyn, which imploded after the assassination of its leader and a brief period in a coalition government (see Van Holsteyn 2003), seemed to confirm the assumption that populist parties without their leaders are doomed (Pennings and Keman 2003), the experiences of others such as that of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) tell a very different story (Heinisch 2013). In the latter case, the right-wing populist FPÖ reversed its fortunes and successfully adapted to leadership change and new circumstances. Similarly, the Norwegian Progress Party and the Danish People's Party, which supported conservative parties in public office—in one case through coalescing, in the other by providing legislative support—continue to do well despite the departure or weakening of their founding leaders. According to Mudde and Kaltwasser, 'an elective affinity between populism and strong leader seems to exist. However, the former can exist without the latter' (2014: 382).

Therefore, the question that arises is what happens when a leader can no longer continue in office or loses his/her strength (Bolleyer 2013; McDonnell 2016). How does a party whose electoral growth had been built around its strong leader endure? One way to approach this question is to follow recent scholarship suggesting that populist party endurance is correlated with strong and complex organization (De Lange and Art 2011; Art 2011). This would require identifying the organizational patterns of contemporary populist parties and examine the role organization plays in party development and adaptation.

This book suggests that leadership change offers an opportunity to uncover important aspects of the organization of successful populist parties. Understanding the role of party organization in the context of leadership change can offer insight into how political formations endure in a dynamic political environment. This is because the transfer of leadership can be successful only in the sense of lasting acceptance if the new leader acquires legitimacy that can be bestowed from a representative party body whose decision is seen as authoritative by the party members.

For parties to cope with the loss of a (founding) leader or to deal with a severe political setback, organizational cohesion and unity are important. By comparison, where such an organizational dimension is missing as was the case in the *List Pim Fortuyn*, a power vacuum and infighting between rival personalities is likely to ensue (see Van Holsteyn 2003).

Proceeding from the idea that organization matters in those populist parties that have endured and successfully negotiated political change, this book has the three following principal objectives. First, this book seeks to move the discussion to supply-side factors that centre on party organization by systematically and comparatively analyzing the overall organizational design of right-wing populist parties in Western Europe. Second, the analysis here will seek to integrate the study of populist parties with the conventional literature on party organization. In doing so, we hope to address a gap in the literature because the populist party's internal dynamics have remained rather neglected, even in the mainstream literature (Katz 2002: 88). Third, this project also examines the question of whether it is possible to discern or construct a general 'populist' party typology of organization.

Research Questions and Theoretical Approach

In this study, we want to determine if, and to what extent, right-wing populist parties in Western European countries share among themselves certain organizational features. Following Duverger's (1963: xv) idea of 'anatomy', or rather morphology, we conceive of parties as organizations in which the constituent parts interact in specific ways (Katz and Mair 1993). Paraphrasing a classical statement by Robert Michels (1915: 21–22), we also argue that organization is a necessity for an effective and durable populist party. As it is our intention to shift the focus more strongly to organization, and the complex interrelationship between leadership and the party apparatus, we pose our two-part research question as follows: *Which features beyond the (former) leader make up populist party organization How do such parties organize over time and in their context?* Drawing on the conventional literature on party organization, we want to understand how such parties react to leadership changes,

deal with internal splits, and manage to adapt to new political circumstances. In short, understanding party organization sheds light on how populist parties operate when leadership is compromised or restrained.

Following Bolleyer (2013: 52ff., 208), we hypothesize that for a populist party to endure, the founder/party leader would need to be 'actively engaged in the creation of a membership organization' and, more generally, in an extra-parliamentary organization. In short, organizational complexity and institutionalization are required. However, these aspects have to be investigated more deeply in connection with other crucial factors. In our comparative approach, we are guided by concepts and indicators developed by Kenneth Janda and his colleagues in their systematic, comprehensive, and empirically-based study of the organization of 150 parties in 50 countries in the late 1960s (e.g. Janda 1970, 1980).[1] Specifically, we focus here on the following interrelated components: institutionalization, complexity, centralization, and coherence. As we assume that the configuration of these aspects is time-dependent, it is crucial to consider organizational change (such as one caused by a split) and the consequences of inter-party competition.

Although we recognize institutionalization as a complex and controversial concept in political sociology and political science (e.g. Ruzza 1997; Randall and Svåsand 2002), we adopt here a broad definition of a party as existing as a social organization beyond a 'momentary leader' (Janda 1970: 88). This implies that an organizational logic aimed at maintaining and preserving the party as a whole is more likely to prevail where otherwise personal ambition and divided personal loyalties lead to further conflict. Strong institutionalization matters, especially during a leadership vacuum, for it allows subordinate units to function to some extent autonomously and in a purposeful manner, even when there is no direction coming from the top, thus enabling a party to bridge such a hiatus. This is important because by facilitating adjustment strategies and leadership renewal, organization provides an explanation for a populist party's adaptive capacity (Burgess and Levitsky 2003; Levitsky 2003).

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[1] The project 'Political Party Data Base Working Group' that was recently launched shows the current importance of this scientific legacy. See http://www.politicalpartydb.org. For a short presentation see Scarrow and Webb 2013.

This implies a dialectic between flexibility and rigidity allowing for viscosity and resilience (Sartori 1976: 244). Especially important indicators of party institutionalization are organizational longevity (including breakdown and split), competition, and change in leadership, as well as electoral stability/instability.

In focusing on organizational complexity (or degree of organization), we first investigate the organizational structuration. Here, we draw on Janda (1970: 87–80) and examine formal statutes but also informal behaviour (Appleton 1994). However weak or malleable, the organization of a successful populist party still has had to perform certain crucial functions in order for the party to endure. This is important because by facilitating adjustment strategies and leadership renewal, it provides an explanation for a party's adaptive capacity which implies an interplay between flexibility and rigidity, allowing a 'strong' and resilient organization Levitsky 2001: 28. Secondly, we explore the extensiveness and intensiveness of the organization, that is the degree of concentration or dispersion over the territory and the importance of the party's small(est) units (Janda 1970). In addition, we consider the vertical integration between central and peripheral units of the party by examining interdependencies as well as cooperative and resource linkages (Thorlakson 2009a, b). In doing so, we avoid methodological approaches which view populist parties as niche, transient, and 'abnormal' and instead conceive of such formations as complex multilevel organizations with an extensive representative presence in elected institutions (Deschouwer 2006; Detterbeck 2012). Better organized parties can also channel grassroots sentiments more effectively whenever the leadership is compromised, thereby reducing intra-party tensions. Moreover, a party with a national organizational scope can campaign in many locales simultaneously and effectively, for even the most charismatic leader cannot be in all places. Organizational reach across regions and society is also likely to yield to a greater diversity of skill and talent, thereby enhancing a party's capacity to adapt politically when needed.

By examining centralization, we follow Duverger's definition (also supported by Janda 1970) as 'the way in which power is distributed amongst different levels of leadership' (1963: 52). As such, we tend to conceive of the populist party leader as being able to act highly autonomously when

managing factionalism and representing populist claims. As Hans-Georg Betz (1998: 9) pointed out, 'most [such] parties display a highly centralized organizational structure, with decisions being made at the top by a *relatively circumscribed circle* of party activists and transmitted to the bottom' [our emphasis]. We assume therefore that leadership a) defines the one member of a group who is legitimized to forbid certain types of behaviour to all other members (Janda 1970), and b) involves varying degrees of concentration in the form of a group of people representing the party's top echelons and key decision-makers (Harmel 1989: 168). In addition, we aim to capture party centralization by measuring the dominance of national party organs over the regional/local organs and also by analyzing the mechanism by which the principal leadership is selected. Identifying the locus of rule-making and policy formulation as well as the level where decisions are made about membership, sanctions, and the allocation of funds allows us to answer questions about the relative effect of centralization when dealing with leadership changes and the need for political adaptation.

Lastly, we explore party coherence and internal cohesion which represent key characteristics of enduring populist organizations (Janda 1970: 110–111). We agree with Laclau (2005) when we argue that populist parties develop a schematic and divisive discourse on society and politics, aiming for a clear symbolic border between 'us' and 'others', 'people' and 'power'. In order to do so in a sustained manner, we suggest that party-based populism requires both an organizational configuration and leadership, serving as the principal messenger and visible attention getter. In this sense, party endurance implies maintaining leadership, as a matter of necessity, in a more or less concentrated form. In short, leadership strength and the organization's adaptive capacity necessitate one another to maintain party coherence. We assume them to be key factors in explaining how well populist parties negotiate evolutionary thresholds such as leadership changes, political adaptation, the formation of political alliances, and the management of intra-party rifts. The creation of such an effective—and enduring— organizational configuration in which leader(s) can perform such a role is a matter of some difficulty and should not be taken for granted, especially because increasing institutionalization and complexity of the organization tend to favour less coherence. The dimension of organizational coherence is captured by analyzing the

degree of ideological, political, and legislative factionalism along with leadership factionalism, leadership change, and reaction to change.

Furthermore, the internal organizational configuration is constantly in interaction with the partisan and institutional environment. Thus, we suspect that enduring populist party organizations are not the same across Europe in terms of institutionalization, complexity, centralization, and coherence. Such diversity also reflects contextual competitive patterns which may play as opportunities or constraints. In other terms, political parties are isomorphic organizations, since they are structured according to the contextual conditions in which they act (Harmel and Janda 1982). However, right-wing populist parties tend to radicalize their core base while antagonizing other parties. Formal or informal alliances represent rather unusual moves for radical right-wing populists, given that such action typically runs counter to their established internal and external image. Therefore, alliances may pose a problem for such parties because they are seen as 'selling out' or compromising on key radical positions. A party that is organizationally capable of supporting such changes is at a clear advantage over those where such developments widen a potential rift between the leaders and the rank-and-file members. Moreover, taking our cues from literature on party models (e.g. Krouwel 2006), we argue that organizational traits are always a practical response by specific parties to competitive challenges. Therefore, we wonder to what extent populist organizations conform to, or differ from, the typical patterns and legacies of party organization within their (national) context. Therefore, comparisons with respect to the following characteristics are especially relevant for understanding populist party organization: length of leadership, membership evolution, membership role (openness, rights, duties), role of leadership, centralization, and coherence.

Case Selection and Comparisons among Parties

In order to provide a systematic in-depth analysis, we opted for a two-level complementary approach: we selected a number of relevant parties that can be analyzed as case studies but may also be compared with each

directly along a standardized set of criteria. Therefore, the book offers a series of chapters each of which is devoted to a particular right-wing populist party but at the same time each chapter permits us to draw parallels to the other cases and thus helps us identify similarities and differences across the spectrum.

The cases examined were drawn from a group of parties the literature has identified as a) successful right-wing populist, b) operating in West European democracies, and c) having enduring presence in the 1990s and/or 2000s. Included in our comparative study are the Austrian Freedom Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*), the Belgian Flemish Interest (*Vlaams Belang*), the Swiss People's Party (*Schweizerische Volkspartei*), the Italian Northern League (*Lega Nord*), the French National Front (*Front National*), the Norwegian Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*), and the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*). In making our selection, we sought, on one hand, to maximize the variance in terms of the national setting (federal or more unitary systems), party origin, foundational characteristics (some parties are insider-turned-populist parties, others began as business-firm parties), and leadership characteristics (divided or unified leadership) so as to trace the organizational evolution in response to particular junctures and challenges. On the other hand, we tried to minimize the variance in terms of the party family so as to eliminate other aspects that also might affect organizational development. Thus, our focus excluded flash-parties, cases considered episodic, or parties avoiding formal structuration, such as in the Freedom Party in the Netherlands and the League of Ticino in Switzerland (Mazzoleni and Voerman 2015). Also parties whose successes were very recent (like *Alternative für Deutschland*/AfD) or more short-lived (Bündnis Zukunft Österreich/BZÖ) or that are generally not considered true members of this 'party family' United Kingdom Independence Party and Forza Italia (UKIP) were not selected.

Our sample of seven parties nonetheless incorporates considerable variation including formations in which the (founding) leader or leaders has or have disappeared or weakened (either in his or her inside or outside role). The parties selected also differ with respect to electoral success and institutional commitment—in some cases they are present only in parliament, in others also in government. Moreover, all cases are well-known in the European context, beyond the circle of specialized scholarship on populism.

If we describe our sample then the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) is the oldest formation dating back to the mid-1950s whereas the Belgian Vlaams Belang (VB) founded in 2004 appears to be the youngest but it is all but in name the continuation of the Vlaams Blok (founded in 1979). Three parties, the French Front National (FN), the Swiss People's Party (SVP), and the Norwegian Progress Party (FrP), were all founded in the 1970s. The latter two along with the FPÖ began as rather different parties and became established before undergoing their transition to right-wing populism. The Sweden Democrats are the youngest formation founded in 1988. Three parties, the French Front National, the Swiss People's Party (SVP), and the Norwegian Progress Party (FrP), were all founded in the 1970s. The latter two, along with the FPÖ, began as rather different parties and became established before undergoing their transition to right-wing populism.

The parties in the sample vary also in terms of their success: The SVP was electorally the most successful achieving nearly 30 per cent in 2015, followed by the FPÖ with 26.9 per cent in 1999, and the FrP with 22.9 per cent in 2009. The Belgian and Swedish parties were the relatively least successful with around 12 per cent, if we qualify the Italian Lega Nord (LN) (10.2 per cent) as having a regional agenda and thus less of a truly national following. Yet, the SD can still be seen as ascending rapidly in the polls and its best results are recent, whereas the VB has been on a decline resulting in vigorous internal debates about changes in direction. Nonetheless, party strength must be assessed in relation to the political competitors at the national level. Importantly, all parties had at one point or another gained 10 per cent or more of the national vote in parliamentary elections. After their breakthrough election they generally re-entered their respective national legislatures while performing equally well if not even better in the elections to the European Parliament.[2] Among the parties with the longest representation in a national legislature we find the Freedom Party (since 1956), the SVP (since 1971), the Norwegian FrP (since 1973), and the Vlaams Blok/Belang (since 1978) whereas the Sweden Democrats' debut in the legislature was much more recent (2010).

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[2] This does naturally not pertain to the SVP.

In terms of voter support in absolute numbers, no party comes close to the French Front National, which was backed by about 6.8 million voters in the 2015 regional elections. The Lega Nord, which was supported by some 3.7 million in the 1996 general elections, is a distant second. The FPÖ is the party with the most voters (1.2 Million in 1999) in parliamentary elections among the smaller countries and thus slightly ahead of Vlaams Belang with some 930,000 in 2004. Moreover, of the seven parties in the sample, four—the FPÖ, SVP, FrP, LN— have been formally members of governments. Two parties—Lega Nord and Progress Party— have supported minority governments.

In the following section, we will introduce the individual chapters and briefly describe the parties analyzed.

The first chapter, by Reinhard Heinisch, is devoted to the Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs/ FPÖ), founded in the mid-1950s and transformed into a right-wing populist party under Jörg Haider's leadership in the 1980s. The FPÖ differs from other parties in the analysis by having gone through its process of institutionalization and significant organizational development long before becoming a right-wing populist party. It had also twice been part of the national government and thus has had to respond to the challenges of an activist base and the pressures of public office. In the course of the FPÖ's history as a populist party, it has been forced to overcome several crises, one of which, in 2005, threatened the party's very existence. The chapter will show how organizational features help account for the persistence and success of the party all the way to the present leadership of Heinz-Christian Strache. He presides over a party that won over 20 per cent of the vote in the 2013 elections and has been at or near the top in national opinion surveys.

The second chapter, by Emilie van Haute and Teun Pauwels, is focused on the Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang/VB) and considers the evolution of the party since before its transition from the Vlaams Blok, a predecessor party founded in 1978. The Flemish Interest differs from most of the other cases presented here by having a dominant regional centre and a more diverse leadership structure. In its evolution, the VB also had to contend with competing goals such as the more narrow issue of Flemish nationalism and the broader agenda associated with right-wing populism. Its durable presence as an opposition party despite the '*cordon sanitaire*'

imposed by the mainstream parties, in combination with recent electoral setbacks in federal and European elections, provide contradictory evidence about this party's aptitude to respond effectively to political challenges.

The third chapter, by Oscar Mazzoleni and Carolina Rossini, discuss the Swiss People's Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei/SVP). A small and moderately conservative party founded in the 1970s, it was traditionally anchored in certain regions, but experienced significant radicalization under the leadership of Christoph Blocher in the 1990s. Structurally, the SVP is different from other cases, save the Vlaams Belang, by being dominated by a single regional branch. Although there are also other parties with regional strongholds in the analysis (the Freedom Party, the Northern League), the case of the Zurich branch of the SVP and its leader Blocher appears special. He faced the challenge of creating a more unified national organization from a regional base in the context of a relatively decentralized political system. Despite encountering several challenges, Blocher's party became one of the strongest radical right-wing populist parties in Western Europe and managed to expand its organization all across the country.

The fourth chapter, by Duncan McDonnell and Davide Vampa, features the Italian Northern League (Lega Nord/LN), analyzing its evolution since the 1980s and tracing its development under the charismatic leadership of Umberto Bossi and, most recently, under Matteo Salvini. The LN has played an important role as an Italian government party but at one point also advocated secession from Italy. For most of its history, it was dominated by its leader, Bossi, like few other parties. Yet, following financial improprieties on his part, the LN had to come to terms with the loss of its iconic figurehead. The Northern League exemplifies a party that seems to endure as one of the main parties in the Italian political system despite electoral failures and internal difficulties.

The fifth chapter, by Gilles Ivaldi and Maria Elisabetta Lanzone, analyzes the French National Front (Front National/FN), one of the oldest and internationally most influential right-wing populist parties. Its electoral consolidation since the 1980s has been accompanied by the successive creation of an effective nationwide organization and the development of the party's locally rooted power base. Like the LN, the Front National is traditionally identified with authoritarian leadership. With

electoral support of between 10 and 18 per cent across all national elections since 1984, the party has been able to transition from the old leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, to his daughter Marine, who attained 25 per cent of French votes in the European elections in 2014. Especially in recent times, the FN has been trying to acquire a different, more moderate image, thus becoming 'detoxified', so as to be more acceptable to mainstream voters. In this the FN represents an example of an 'old' right-wing populist party seeking to adapt itself to a changing political context.

The sixth case, by Anders Ravik Jupskås, is the Norway Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet/FrP) which is among the most successful and oldest right-wing populist parties in contemporary Europe. Founded in 1973 as an anti-tax party, it was headed for a long time after 1978 by its undisputed party leader Carl I. Hagen. Despite his retreat in 2006, the party has been able to persist in the electoral arena, achieving about 16.3 percent in the national elections in 2013. This chapter traces the evolution of the FrP toward mass party organization and examines the problems it encountered when turning into a more differentiated and regionally rooted formation. Like most of the other parties in the sample, the Norway Progress Party had to undergo leadership changes while coping with the challenges associated with electoral growth.

The seventh chapter, by Ann-Cathrine Jungar, is devoted to the Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna/SD). Founded in 1988, the party is not associated with charismatic leadership and leadership has in fact changed several times. Different from other cases in the sample is the SD's rather collective approach to leadership and its embrace of the conventional party legacy. Since 2006 the party has established itself in many electoral districts and entered the Swedish Parliament for the first time in 2010. In the parliamentary elections of 2014, the SD doubled its share of votes, becoming the third largest party of the country. Thus, the Sweden Democrats provide a contrast to the older right-wing populist parties in our sample and represent an important complement.

In order to analyze these cases, the contributing authors were asked to follow a comprehensive set of questions and guidelines directed at different organizational characteristics related to the discussion above. This comparative approach allows for a considerable degree of standardization and cross-country and cross-party comparison. Therefore, the eighth chapter is devoted to answering the question of whether it is possible to discern or

construct a general organizational typology of enduring populist parties in Western European democracies. Likewise, we wonder which features can be identified as representative of core characteristics of such parties. We also traced organizational development over time and do not consider these cases to be static entities but rather 'moving targets' of sorts. Moreover, the concluding chapter compares the cases with each other, also in relation to their respective national contexts. This is intended to show how parties are influenced by national conventions and practices and to what extent they are shaped by belonging to a certain party family. Thus, it is entirely possible that right-wing populist parties may differ from their mainstream competitors but are nonetheless more typical representatives of their national polities when viewed across the spectrum of European parties. By the same token, the evolution of right-wing populist parties may result in the development of distinct features regardless of the original situation and national constraints. Lastly, it is through looking beyond conceiving populist parties as personalistic formations that this volume hopes to make its contribution.

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The Austrian Freedom Party: Organizational Development and Leadership Change

Reinhard Heinisch

Introduction: the Main Traits

This chapter is devoted to the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) and its organizational dimension, which, as this analysis[1] will show, played an important role in sustaining the party during a period of fragmentation and significant external challenges. Although the FPÖ is still commonly associated with charismatic leaders such as Jörg Haider or, currently, Heinz-Christian Strache, one cannot ignore the fact that the Freedom Party boasts a large member base as well as a complex vertically integrated organization. The following chapter will first outline the origin, foundation, and early development of the Freedom Party. Subsequently, it will trace organizational change over time by focusing especially on the

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extent of organization, centralization, and cohesion. The final segment will compare the right-wing populist FPÖ to other Austrian parties to examine whether its organizational characteristics are unique or in fact similar to those of other parties. As throughout this book, the analysis will draw substantially on Kenneth Janda's conceptualizations and measures of party organization.

Origin and Early Development

As Janda (1980: 19) observes, 'a party's history may be clouded by splits, mergers, name changes, and related phenomena. Thus, there is often a problem in establishing party identity for the purpose of determining its origin.' The Austrian Freedom Party is a case in point: it was formally launched in 1956 and as such represented the successor to a short-lived political party dubbed Federation of Independents (Verband der Unabhängigen/VdU).[2] But it was also heir to a long and well-entrenched ideological current in Austrian history, called the Third Force or Third Camp, that dates back to the bourgeois-democratic and nationalist (anti-imperial and anti-Catholic) revolution of 1848 (cf. Luther 1997; Riedlsperger 1998; Höbelt 1999).

Politically, the new party was locked into an ideological corner. By representing far-right and German-nationalist interests including those of the so-called front-generation and ethnic Germans expelled from Eastern Europe, the FPÖ's agenda held little relevance for most Austrians with their more immediate priorities in the era of postwar reconstruction. Moreover, the two politically dominant parties, Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the Christian-democratic People's Party (ÖVP), formed successive coalition governments and jointly attracted support from over 90 per cent of the electorate. Using their hegemonic position in Austrian politics, the main parties were able to penetrate every aspect of state and society and built up a clientelistic following while cutting the FPÖ off from the channels of power. Because of the Freedom Party's political isolation from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, it resembled a 'ghetto party' (Luther 1997: 65).

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[2] The VdU was also known as WdU, Wahlpartei der Unabhängigen [Electoral Party of Independents].

The 1970s were a period of growing political acceptance when the Freedom Party was considered a potential partner for the main parties, culminating in an SPÖ-FPÖ coalition in 1983. Modernizing the party required a more consistent and intellectually sound programmatic basis. However, the FPÖ's change toward greater political liberalism pursued by the party leadership was met with considerable internal resistance. The FPÖ consisted of different factions corresponding loosely to the relatively independent provincial branches of the party and ranging from social liberal and market liberal to pan-German right-wing nationalist or Catholic conservative in orientation. To survive politically, party leaders were forced to make concessions to the internal opposition, find ways to manage party fragmentation,[3] and continue governing through alliances. By the 1980s, the party was evenly divided between liberals and right-wing nationalists so that the exponent of the liberal faction, Norbert Steger, was elected by only a slim, 55.3 per cent majority. When he embraced a coalition offer by the Social Democrats in 1983 in hopes of positioning his party more like an Austrian version of German Free Democrats (FDP), he did not anticipate that the FPÖ was about to move in the opposite direction.

The organizational looseness and lax party discipline translated into a public perception of discord and incompetence. The situation was aggravated by the inexperience of FPÖ in the public policy arena. This was when the young and charismatic head of the Freedom Party branch in the State of Carinthia, Jörg Haider, emerged as the unofficial leader against the liberal party elite. In 1986, Haider and his supporters marshalled a party convention in which they deposed the unpopular Steger and brought down the government.

Forced into opposition, Haider subsequently transformed the FPÖ from a libertarian-nationalist party into a right-wing populist party. From the start, the 'new' FPÖ became known for breaking new ground in campaigning and political communication. Haider was an effective debater on television, imported highly choreographed US-style public appearances, and introduced permanent campaigning in Austria. He was especially successful in appealing to segments of voters that had previously paid little attention to politics.

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[3] For example, a challenge from neo-Nazi extremists, who subsequently left the party and founded the rightwing extremist National Democratic Party (NDP) (Luther 1995: 438).

Electoral Stability and Instability

Polling between 5 and 6 per cent in elections before 1986, the Freedom Party had a small but stable electoral following. Thereafter, the FPÖ increased its electoral support to 9.7 per cent in 1986, 16.6 per cent in 1990, 22.5 per cent in 1994, and 26.9 per cent in 1999 (cf. Table 1.1). Only the elections in 1995 temporarily halted the FPÖ's advance. Nonetheless, from 1986 to 1999 the FPÖ's share of seats in parliament grew from 18 to 52 out of 183.

Table 1.1 Percentages of votes by Austrian parties in national elections

	Political Parties[a]						
Year of election[b]	Freedom Party (FPÖ)	Greens	Social Democrats (SPÖ)	People's Party (ÖVP)	Liberals	Alliance (BZÖ)	Team Stronach
1970	5.5		**48.4**	44.7			
1971	5.5		**50.0**	43.1			
1975	5.4		**50.4**	42.9			
1979	6.1		**51.0**	41.9			
1983	*5.0*		**47.6**	43.2			
1986	9.7	4.8	**43.1**	41.3			
1990	16.6	4.8	**42.8**	32.1			
1994	22.5	7.3	**34.9**	27.7	6.0		
1995	21.9	4.8	**38.1**	28.3	5.5		
1999	***26.9***	7.4	33.2	**26.9**			
2002	*10.0*[c]	9.5	36.5	**42.3**			
2006	11.0	11.1	**35.3**	34.3		4.1	
2008	17.5	10.4	**29.3**	26.0		10.7	
2013	20.5	12.4	**26.8**	24.0	5.0		5.7

[a]The parties are ordered along the left—right dimension, with the exception of the FPÖ (left column). Bold numbers (including bold-italic) indicate the parties forming the government following the respective elections. Bold-italic numbers highlight a government participation of the FPÖ.

[b]Legislative sessions and government periods do not always correspond exactly. General elections often take place at the end of the calendar year and new governments take office much later, often at the beginning of the following year (this was, e.g. the case in 1987, 1996, 2000, 2003, and 2007).

[c]The second ÖVP-FPÖ cabinet lasted only until April 2005, when the BZÖ formally replaced the FPÖ as the ÖVP's coalition partner, without new elections being called.

Source: Federal Ministry of the Interior

By the end of the 1990s, the Freedom Party had also greatly expanded its power at the regional and local level, becoming the second largest party in five of Austria's nine provinces (including the capital of Vienna) and the dominant party in Carinthia (cf. Dachs 2008: 97–99). As the Freedom Party gained strength at the regional level, it became part of various state governments—in the provinces of Carinthia, Vorarlberg, Styria, Upper Austria, Lower Austria, and Burgenland (cf. Table 1.2). The province of Carinthia especially became the political stronghold of the FPÖ where it replaced the SPÖ as the dominant party.

In terms of party programmes, Haider formally retained the relatively liberal party programme but in fact relied on short- to medium-term action programmes that all but abandoned any commitment to traditional programmatic fixtures. This implied a high degree of ideological flexibility and political opportunism in the pursuit of an uncompromising vote-seeking strategy. As such, the Freedom Party shifted from a pro-European to a sharply anti-European stance and, departing from the party's libertarian roots, began criticizing economic liberalization as social dumping. A staple among Freedom Party mobilization strategies have been the campaigns against foreigners and especially Islam. Besides immigration, cultural identity, hard Euroscepticism, and fighting political corruption,

Table 1.2 Legislative and electoral stability: FPÖ representation at the national and state level

	National Parliament lower house		National Parliament upper house	9 state legislatures combined	
	% votes	% seats	% seats	% votes	% seats
1983	5	6.6	0	7.3	6
1986	9.7	9.8	0	6.8	5.5
1990	16.6	18	7.9	12.6	12.5
1994	22.5	23	14.3	18.3	19.6
1995	21.9	21.9	18.8	18.5	19.8
1999	26.9	28.4	23.4	22.8	23.6
2002	10	9.8	18.8	21.2	21.8
2006	11	11.5	1.6	12.2	11.3
2008	17.5	18.6	1.6	13.4	12.7
2013	20.5	21.9	11.3	15.2	15.4

Sources: Online databases of Federal Ministry of the Interior; Austrian Parliament; State of Upper Austria

other major themes of FPÖ campaigns have included opposition to the neo-corporatist regulatory state, a tougher stance on law-and-order issues, and a push for governing by ballot initiative and plebiscite.[4] As the Freedom Party grew in strength, it emerged as the leading blue-collar party ahead of the Social Democrats and dominated the segment of young (especially male) voters (cf. Plasser and Ulram 2000: 225–241). Already, in 1994, as many as 38 per cent of male workers but only 21 per cent of female workers opted for the Freedom Party (Plasser et al. 2000: 83). In 1999 its share blue-collar vote (42 per cent) matched that of the Social Democrats (43 per cent) (Hofinger et al. 2000: 128).

Following the FPÖ's greatest electoral triumph in the 1999 national elections, in which it achieved nearly 27 per cent of votes, surpassing even the ÖVP, the Freedom Party was in a position to enter government as a coalition partner of the Christian-Democrats under Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel. Ostensibly to calm the international criticism about the inclusion of such a controversial party in public office, Haider stepped down in 2000, leaving his close confidante Susanne Riess-Passer in charge as a caretaker and hoping to run the party from behind.

After the FPÖ joined the coalition with the ÖVP in 2000, the pressure to transform a radical protest party into a government party caused enormous internal rifts and drove away many of its voters. Egged on by Haider, the grassroots rebelled against the leadership and government team, prompting the latter's resignation and new national elections in 2002 in which the FPÖ was decimated by losing more than half of its 1999 electorate (cf. Table 1.1). A much diminished Freedom Party continued the coalition with ÖVP but was even less able than before to shape government policy and appease the party grassroots activists. Sensing that the radicalization of the party base had gone beyond his control, Haider himself led a group of policy-seeking moderates out of the party on 4 April 2005, thus creating the most severe split in the FPÖ's history. Under a new political name, Alliance Future Austria (BZÖ),

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[4] In 1997 the so-called 'Contract with Austria' was formally adopted as the new programme. It no longer emphasized Austria's allegiance to the German nation and cultural sphere but rather endorsed an explicit '*Österreichpatriotismus*' [Austrian Patriotism] and devoted extensive consideration to Christianity and its defense. It also called for more influence for citizen juries and 'lay judges' to obtain stricter punishments, especially for 'sexual offenders and deviants' (Kotanko 1999).

Haider's group continued in government with the ÖVP. Now led by the charismatic, Vienna-based Heinz-Christian Strache, the rump FPÖ soon reverted to its radical populist roots. In time he managed to rebuild the party, resolve its financial problems after the split, and lead it back to electoral success so that the FPÖ emerged once again as a party of equal electoral strength to the Social Democrats and Christian-Democrats.

The Party Organization over Time

The Austrian Freedom Party has always been a membership party. Its 40,000 card-carrying and dues-paying members provide the FPÖ with significant resources and reach. New members enjoy full party privileges and can immediately run for office if nominated by the party. Although the size of membership did not grow proportionally to the Freedom Party's electorate after its populist turn, it nonetheless expanded by over a third after 1986, peaking in 2000 with approximately 50,000 members (cf. Table 1.3). Remarkably, the Freedom Party was able to increase its ranks while its mainstream competitors all lost members.

Table 1.3 The membership of FP by selected years

Year	FPÖ-members
1959	22,000
1970	26,000
1974	30,000
1979	34,000
1981	37,568
1986	*36,683*
1988	*37,958*
1990	*40,629*
1992	*41,260*
1994	*43,764*
1996	*44,541*
2000	***51,296***
2004	44,959
2008–today	ca. 40,000 (FPÖ claims 50,000)

Note: Italics (including bold-italics): years with Haider as party leader

Sources: Sickinger (2009: 145), Rösslhumer (1999: 34), author's own calculations, FPÖ

At one point, the rank and file of the pre-Haider FPÖ had consisted mainly of local dignitaries recruited from academic circles and professional groups. After 1986, the Freedom Party broadened its support base. The party's membership has sustained a complex and vertically integrated organizational structure whose origin dates back to the immediate postwar period. The heterogeneity of the party and the long-standing ideological divisions between its regional units gave rise to a federated structure that shifted significant reserve power to the regional party organs.

Degree of Organization

In terms of the nationalization of structure (cf. Janda 1980: 108–109), the FPÖ boasts highly differentiated national party organs, which are at least formally more powerful than the regional and local organizations but leave considerable autonomy and discretion (e.g. membership decisions, party finances, and candidate selections) to the regional party organs. Formally, the central decision-making authority in the party lays with the federal party congress. It elects the party leader by majority vote and its decision supersedes all others. However, the congress rarely meets—typically every two to three years—and is too unwieldy an instrument for quick decision-making. Since the party congress is broadly representative of the FPÖ's national party apparatus and all regional chapters, its decisions enjoy considerable legitimacy. Thus, party leaders cannot run the party in a manner contrary to the majority will in the congress. Although it is usually convened by the party leader, the party congress can also assemble following a petition drive by ordinary party members. Thus, sufficiently large renegade groups and well-organized grassroots activists within the party that can gather the signatures of more than half of party delegates to convene such a meeting (to be held within four weeks of presenting the signatures) and mount a 'coup' against the leadership. Such efforts have been successful and resulted in the installation of Jörg Haider as party chair in 1986 and the overthrow of Susanne Riess-Passer as party chair in 2002. It is also generally assumed that Haider's own decision to found the BZÖ in 2005 was prompted by the realization that he was unlikely to prevail with his agenda at an upcoming party congress

for which 380 of 751 delegates had petitioned. The second most senior party organ is the federal party leadership board *(Bundesparteileitung)*,[5] which acts as a regular stand-in for the party congress during the long periods between sessions and is typically convened by the federal party leader. However, it may also be called by one third of its members. The political weight of the party leadership board can either constrain the decision-making power of the party chair or amplify the leader's influence in all other party organs if he/she can count on a sufficiently loyal following. The party executive committee *(Bundesparteivorstand)*[6] handles all activities and tasks not assigned to any other party organ and which require input beyond the immediate leadership. It meets at least once a month and, most importantly, drafts the candidate slates for national and European elections and appoints trustees to the boards of state-owned enterprises. It should be noted that parliamentary candidates are selected jointly based on a defined formula by the national organization (for nationally nominated candidates on the national slate) and by the regions (for regionally nominated candidates on national slate). Delegates to the lower-level elected bodies are determined by the corresponding regional and local party organs in such a manner that the state party exercises final control. However, a party leader has both formal and informal ways of blocking undesirable candidates, either by invoking that the interest of the party is at stake or by threatening to withhold political support for the local unit. Whereas Haider had gone to great lengths when removing undesirable party officials and candidates even by dissolving or merging entire local units, Strache has on the whole been more cautious and dependent on the support of subordinate party organizations. In the cases when he has moved against party officials it has been formally, on the basis of the violation of party statutes and alleged harm to party interests.

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[5] It consists of the federal party executive committee along with the delegates from the state party chapters (one delegate per 1000 members, elected for 3 years) and all members holding executive government office (national, state, city, district) or serving as elected representatives in a legislative body (European Parliament, national parliament, and state legislatures).

[6] It consists of the federal party presidium, the caucus leaders from state and national legislative bodies, the representatives from recognized party-affiliated organizations, along with four members elected by the Party Congress.

Freedom Party, National Level 2014
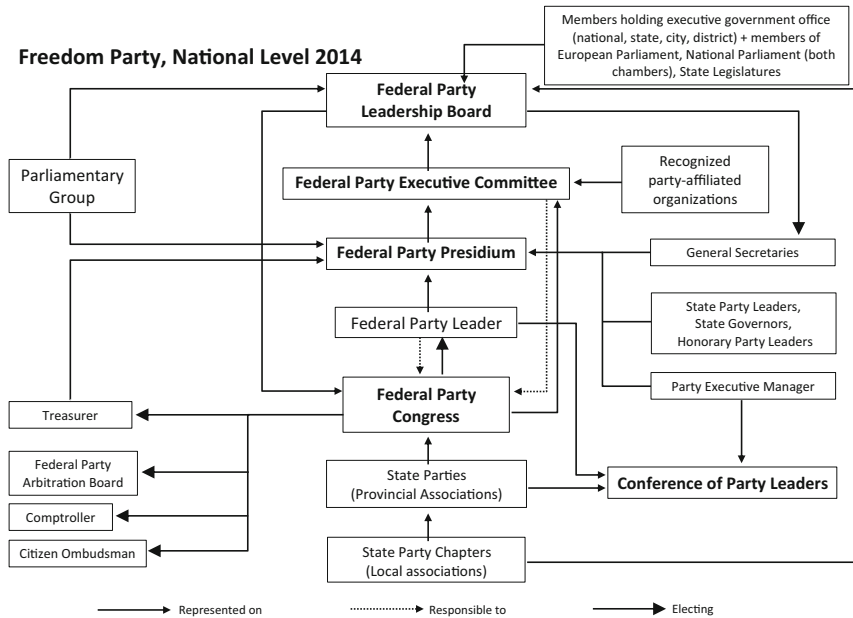
Fig. 1.1 Diagram of Freedom Party organization

Managing regular party business and handling day-to-day decision-making is left to the federal party presidium *(Bundesparteipräsidium)*.[7] It takes action whenever the executive committee cannot meet or in those cases when issues have been delegated by the executive committee. Successful FPÖ party chairs like Haider have ensured that this committee is composed of loyal confidants to maximize the leader's leverage in those party committees in which the presidium is represented collectively (Fig. 1.1).

In terms of organizational intensiveness, the FPÖ's smallest units follow what Janda (1980: 101) called a precinct-based model and are known as local groups *(Ortsgruppen)*. They consist of ten and more members,

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[7] It consists of the party leader himself, the deputy leader, the managing party leader, all leaders of the national and state party caucuses along with all the other most senior officials in the party and in elected office such as the (deputy) speaker(s) of the national parliament, the party treasurer, the party executive manager, the general secretaries, the state party leaders, FPÖ state governors, and all honorary party leaders.

elect their own leadership, and send delegates to the district organization (one delegate for every ten members)—groups smaller than this may form what the party calls base posts *(Stützpunkt)*, which have lesser statutory rights.

District organizations elect their own leadership and nominate delegates for the state party congress (one delegate for every 20 district members). Overall, there are some 200 base posts and about 1200 local groups (cf. Table 1.4) which make up nine provincial chapters. In terms of the extensiveness of organization (cf. Janda 1980: 102), we find that the FPÖ is evenly present throughout the country although the strength of these organizations may vary. All regional units meet regularly (at the local level at least once a year to select a leader) and make binding decisions (cf. Janda 1980: 98).

Centralization

Turning to the pattern of interaction between the relevant party organs and the role of the party leader within the organization, we find that the federal party chairman *(Bundesparteiobmann)* enjoys wide-ranging powers of issuing directives to all party members, supervising all party activities and initiatives, as well as convening and preparing all meetings of the FPÖ's various central party organs. Leadership contests in the FPÖ have followed what Janda (1980: 110) calls 'open and closed procedures' despite the requirement that leaders be chosen by a party convention. Typically, the struggles for leadership used to be open and fierce reflecting clashes between major party factions. As a result of the FPÖ's factionalism, previous party leaders like Friedrich Peter and Alexander Götz had to rely on intra-party bargaining and alliance building. This was also the case with Haider's immediate predecessor, Norbert Steger, whose principal support base was the Vienna branch of the party, which represented only about 5 per cent of FPÖ members. Being forced to seek alliances—particularly with the more powerful Upper Austrian chapter—to prevail in internal power struggles, Steger remained vulnerable to attempts by foes such as Haider, who aimed to undercut such alliances. Building alliances was also the model Jörg Haider initially followed. In his quest for

Table 1.4 Number of local Freedom Party units by type of organization, state, and year

	Burgenland		Carinthia		Upper Austria		Lower Austria		Salzburg		Styria		Tyrol		Vorarlberg		Vienna		Austria	
	BP	LG	BP	LG	BP	LG	BP	LG	BP	LG	BP	LG	BP	LG	BP	LG	BP	LG	BP	LG
1984	56	18	5	157	119	40	158	259	17	128	176	129	79	48	30	29	37	23	676	831
1992	0	23	5	171	264	145	98	328	15	105	130	171	45	70	19	48	0	23	456	1.084
1996	14	80	3	167	7	146	76	328	7	112	19	211	18	97	18	53	0	23	215	1.217
2002	53	97	15	157	13	189	80	339	9	110	8	218	15	107	0	52	0	23	237	1.248

Note: Italics: FPÖ under Haider's leadership
BP Base Post fewer than 10, *LG* Local Group has at least of 10 members
Source: Luther (2006: 375)

party domination, two phases can be distinguished. Initially, Haider still had to rely on intra-party alliances to consolidate his power. Later, when he had achieved more complete control over the party, he had the freedom to act without such collaborative arrangements.

Within this structure of vertical integration, the *Landespartei* [state party], that is the party chapter at the provincial level, is the organizational backbone of the FPÖ and provides it with remarkable organizational reach. Its bottom-up organization makes top-down decision-making generally difficult. This is because at every level lower ranking units send delegates to the next higher level and thus enjoy representation all the way up to the federal party congress. The nine state parties possess the organizational wherewithal to function, if necessary, as autonomous and cohesive units. This is because they mirror the national party's organizational structure, may elect their own leaders and representatives, and are the principal sources of party revenue.[8] The regional party organizations are also the general gateway to FPÖ membership because new recruits typically affiliate with the FPÖ by joining up at a local chapter. Thus, within the bounds of the federal party statute, the state party can on its own regulate the terms of membership, set a membership fee, and has wide-ranging discretion in selecting local and regional candidate slates.

Another important aspect of party centralization is the control over party finances. It is noteworthy that between 63 per cent (1990–1999) and 50 per cent (2000–2007) of party revenue were derived through the state party organizations (Sickinger 2009: 145). This provides regional party organs with significant leverage not only vis-à-vis the centre but also each other.

The state party organizations are also instrumental in securing much of the public financing by virtue of the level of representation in regional governing bodies. Moreover, the party collects a so-called 'party tax', typically a percentage of the take-home pay from legislators or members of the executive, which is a common form of party financing in Austria. Parties such as the FPÖ, large enough to form their own caucus in the

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[8] This is because the lion's share of public funding is disbursed through the state governments to the state party organizations based on the latter's electoral representation.

national legislature and state parliaments, receive additional funding to support their legislative activities. 'Party academies', essentially party think-tanks, are also entitled to significant support from public coffers. Membership dues and individual small and large donations are additional revenue sources (cf. Sickinger 2009: 383). All in all, the 40,000 members of the FPÖ would be expected to pay approximately €22 a year each in party dues. Nonetheless, reports (Sickinger 2009: 146) indicate that the actual amount raised through membership fees is much lower and closer to €750,000. If we include donations and revenue generated by events, the total amount collected at the state level is about €1.5 million (Sickinger 2009: 146). Although Austria's main parties have substantially larger financial resources at their disposal, the FPÖ's growing electoral success under Haider resulted in increases in subsidies and reimbursements for campaigning at the federal- and state-level.

The formulation of party policy rests with the top leadership, typically consisting of the party chair and his/her close confidants. Formally, all policy goals are derived from the party programme which is subject to decision-making by the party congress. In reality, the importance of traditional party programmes significantly declined under Haider's leadership. He introduced his new programme the so-called 'Contract with Austria'[9] only in 1997. Instead, the party relied on short- to medium-term action programmes and election platforms. Often, it was Haider who announced new policies and new political directions via the media, expecting the party to follow. While Strache does not quite enjoy the same freedom of action and in spite of the FPÖ's launch of a new programme in 2011,[10] it is still the party leader who provides the policy direction within the established ideological boundaries. Although Strache is seen as the principal programmatic decision-maker there are those that in interviews point to the party General Secretary Herbert Kickl as the true

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[9] Not to be confused with an earlier action programme of the same name.
[10] A new programme was launched in 2011, which departed in several ways from that developed in the Haider era. The new text is shorter and still emphasizes an 'Austria First Agenda', but explicitly recognizes Austria as 'part of the German cultural nation' (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs 2011).

éminence grise who is either the important ideas-man or at least a very influential advisor to the party leader.[11]

Arguably the most important aspect of party centralization is the role of the leader in relation to the rest of the organization and his or her power to make and implement decisions. This is even more true in the case of the FPÖ given the party's traditionally fragmented nature and its history of plotting and moving against party leaders—Friedrich Peter, Alexander Götz, Norbert Steger, Susanne Riess-Passer are all examples of party leaders overthrown or pushed out. Thus, when Haider became party leader, factionalism declined, largely due to the rigorous enforcement of party discipline and the execution of selective purges. Although party members may appeal to party tribunals, and state party organizations resent meddling by the federal party, the power of sanction lies with the party leader. In Haider's case, he enforced his political line[12] by using statutory party tribunals, loyalty pledges, gag orders, and the power of sanction over all members. Frequent rotations of officials and periodic shake-ups of the composition of decision-making bodies added a dimension of 'permanent revolution' (Luther 1997: 290) to Haider's FPÖ. In order to prevail with his plans, Haider did not shy away from sweeping purges of regional organizations. Expulsions occurred at all levels, ranging from more or less voluntary departures after people had been humiliated and demoted, to outright expulsions following party disciplinary action (Zöchling 1999: 187).[13] When Haider appeared stymied in his efforts in 1998, he resorted to blackmail by threatening to leave the FPÖ and form his own party. After a damaging financial scandal in a regional party chapter, Haider demanded that all party officials sign a 'pledge of conduct and loyalty', disclose personal financial information, and renounce certain benefits if they held public office.[14] Another strategy to boost Haider's

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[11] This was included also in a pre-election televised debate when Chancellor Faymann accused Strache of merely repeating what 'Kickl had written down' without knowing what he was saying. See also Böhmer (2012).

[12] *Basta* 6 June 1991: 33.

[13] For details see Bailer-Galanda and Neugebauer (1997: 36–37) and Zöchling (1999: 187).

[14] Moreover, functionaries and officials 'agreed to donate any income earned for their services above the equivalent of €5500 per month to a local welfare organization and to surrender the right to any income from public money other than the salary for their office' (Riedlsperger 1998: 31).

control was the recruitment and promotion of 'yes men', commonly known as Haider's '*Buberlpartie*' or 'boy-gang' (Heinisch 2002: 97–103).[15] These were individuals who had had no previous specific connection to the party but were fiercely loyal to Haider personally and whose appointments to positions of authority displaced long-standing functionaries. Thereby, Haider undermined and disrupted established intra-party networks that could mount organized resistance to his plans. His extraordinary domination of the party was nonetheless formalized by granting the party leader full power (*Generalvollmacht*) over all regional FPÖ organizations (Zöchling 1999: 180). The FPÖ leader's zeal to root out factionalism and dissent was undoubtedly motivated by the party's history of quarrels over political direction, going back to its inception (Riedlsperger 1998; Höbelt 1999: 181–247). The resulting exodus of many liberals and the weakening of German nationalists not only eliminated rival centres of power but removed major sources of dissent, thus making the party more unified.

Despite the FPÖ's transformation into a populist party increasingly oriented towards an authoritarian leader ('*Führerprinzip*'), it nonetheless retained a structurally complex and differentiated organization. This means that Haider could not simply flaunt party rules at will. Instead, he saw to it that the organizational aspects were rearranged such that they worked in his favour. For example, Haider reduced the number of directly elected top party functionaries in the Presidium from eight to five, thus strengthening the position of the FPÖ leader and his confidantes (Riedlsperger 1998: 30).

Haider's other strategy to shore up centralization was to appeal directly to the party base and threaten, if necessary, a recalcitrant apparatus or obstinate groups of functionaries with a groundswell of opposition by the grassroots, which he could mobilize like no one else. While the FPÖ under Haider represents an extreme case of a leader's hold on his party and was thus an example of unprecedented centralization in Austrian party politics, the same cannot be said of the FPÖ under Strache, as is discussed below. Nonetheless, he too, is a beneficiary of Haider's relentless attempts to root out dissent and factionalism, which allowed Strache—especially after the exodus of the BZÖ—to take over a much more cohesive and internally unified party.

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[15] For details see Zöchling (1999: 183).

Between Change and Adaptation

The exodus of Haider and nearly the entire senior party leadership, including the sitting party leader Ursula Haubner (Haider's sister), along with numerous elected officials and the FPÖ's largest state organization, in 2005, robbed the party of its most experienced politicians and significant financial resources. It came not only as an enormous political shock but also as an emotional and psychological one because Haider had remained the single most important person in the party and a source of identity and integration. The exodus of Haider and many party officials not only represented a nearly irreplaceable loss but also created a new political rival who was intimately acquainted with all of the FPÖ's strategies, resources, and weaknesses. Given that much of the FPÖ's 'brand' image was closely associated with Haider, the 'maverick politician', it was unclear in 2005 whether this important political trademark would not follow Haider to the new party.

After the split, the Freedom Party was forced to endure a series of paralyzing legal proceedings to determine whether it or the BZÖ was entitled to access FPÖ bank accounts and party property. In addition, being shut out from government and significantly reduced in strength in the national parliament and state legislatures, meant a considerable loss in revenue, since party funding is allocated on the basis of electoral performance. At the same time, the FPÖ still carried an enormous debt burden because Haider had poured large sums into all-out campaigning in the late 1990s. As a result, when Strache became party leader one of his foremost tasks was to consolidate party finances.

The biggest political and organizational challenge for the Strache-FPÖ was to redevelop the relationship between the national party and the state parties. Because of the latter's influence over finances and membership, the role of the FPÖ's state party organizations was paramount for overall party cohesion. Immediately after the split many regional branches were sitting on the fence, waiting to see how the power struggle would play out. Importantly however, the state organizations could, in most cases, maintain their cohesion and keep their decision-making apparatus intact. To the extent that there were defections and separations, they were orchestrated by single individuals or small groups. However, once it became clear that the bulk of the party's base and most of its officials were going to

remain loyal to the FPÖ, the hesitant state parties began drawing closer to Strache[16], except in Carinthia where the majority of the state party went with their leader, Haider. Everywhere else, the state parties remained loyal to Strache but their cohesion and capacity allowed them to leverage their strength in the negotiations with the national party so as to increase their influence in the central party organs.

The organizational dimension of the FPÖ proved important in stabilizing the party. Besides the fact that the state party organizations remained intact functional units, the FPÖ's party congress was the crucial element in overcoming the crisis. It swiftly elected a new party leader who was able to make decisions in an otherwise fluid situation and could enter into talks with wayward regional chapters. Moreover, the party congress and new party leader were able to move new people into the various executive bodies of the party to replace those who had abandoned the FPÖ. Finally and probably most importantly, the party congress was the only political body able to bestow broad legitimacy on the new leadership team and their actions. This reduced the risk of further fragmentation and denied Haider the opportunity to claim that the BZÖ represented the true Freedom Party. The rather clear decision by the FPÖ base against Haider was important for constructing an image and brand identity of the party without their iconic former leader. What is more, the party was able to use this occasion to signal a clear break with the unpopular political course in government and, instead, return to an earlier self that had found so much favour with voters.

Unlike the BZÖ, which had a significant organizational apparatus available only in Carinthia, the Freedom Party could rely on functioning state organizations and thus a ground operation, which allowed the FPÖ to shift quickly into campaign mode. Its officials were well organized and

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[16] Following the separation by the Carinthian FPÖ, the Freedom Party of Vorarlberg (around party leader Egger) also severed its ties from the national party in 2005 and appeared initially lost to the FPÖ. However, in response, a parallel FPÖ chapter (around Klaus Bilgari) was founded, which sought (re)admission to the national party. Following legal disputes the two groups reunified and reintegrated into the national Freedom Party in 2006. Also the Upper Austrian FPÖ declared itself independent. After the resignation of the regional party leader Günter Steinkellner, the state party negotiated its readmission and rejoined in 2006. The Freedom Party in Tyrol faced the problem that its two members in the state government had switched to BZÖ, then formed a rival party called The Free Party of Tyrol but eventually withdrew their candidacy from state elections.

experienced at preparing for elections. They understood campaign logistics, had the local knowledge to mount a successful mobilization effort, and had a tried and tested protest party template to follow. It is thus no great surprise that the Freedom Party bested the BZÖ in terms of vote shares in all subsequent elections except in Carinthia where the organizational advantage lay with the latter. To neutralize any sway that Haider might still have had over the Freedom Party's rank-and-file, a very effective campaign against the 'old' Haider was launched, in which he was characterized as someone who had abandoned the ways of his 'younger self', betrayed his party, and acquired increasingly peculiar behaviour.

Under the new leader, Strache, the FPÖ recovered in the national elections of 2006, 2008, and 2013, winning 11.04 per cent (21 seats), 17.54 per cent (34 seats), and 20.51 per cent (40 seats), respectively (cf. Table 1.1). In doing so, the post-Haider Freedom Party took full advantage of having, in Strache, a youthful and telegenic leader who is a good campaigner and reminiscent of the younger Haider. Although Strache has clearly been the most successful FPÖ leader besides Haider, he long remained beholden to powerful groups within the party, whose support he required to maintain his position, including the backing of powerful German nationalist academic fraternities (Horaczek and Reiterer 2009: 86).[17]

Strache's inability to intervene decisively in three state party organizations (Lower Austria, Carinthia, and Salzburg) until 2015, following disappointing local election results, is an indication of the limits of his power. Moreover, unlike his predecessor, the current FPÖ leader cannot use the threat of resignation to blackmail the party to grant him special concessions. The Freedom Party has learned that its political fortune does not depend on a singular leadership figure but rather a political formula and specific political environment.

Nonetheless, the changes to the FPÖ since 1986 also mean that Strache has inherited a unified party that is well-positioned to compete effectively. Also the Strache-FPÖ has shown that, if necessary, it does not shy away from high-profile expulsions. In 2014 Strache forced Andreas

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[17] The Strache-FPÖ reinserted a clause into the FPÖ's programme explicitly claiming Austria to be part of the German cultural nation. By comparison, Haider referred to his party as an 'Austria–party' and saw to it that the far-right fraternities were gradually pushed out of leadership positions.

Mölzer, the party's only member of the European Parliament and a major figure in the FPÖ, to withdraw his candidacy for the European elections for making racist remarks about a leading Austrian soccer player. In 2015 Strache fired and expelled the party leadership of the state of Salzburg (thereby losing nearly all of the FPÖ's members in the local legislature) for having acted against the party's interests.[18] In the same year an FPÖ member of parliament was expelled for anti-Semitic comments on a social media site.

To the extent that there have been intra-party rifts in the post-Haider FPÖ, they existed between the centre and regional party organization, most overtly with the Carinthian, Lower Austrian, and Upper Austrian chapters. However, these incidents of incoherence as well as the recent expulsions were less about ideology or strategy and more about either the efforts of local party officials to retain a maximum of control over local decision-making or examples where individual actions threatened the image of the entire party. Strache's popularity with FPÖ voters and the membership base as well as the FPÖ's good standing in opinion polls, provide him with enough support to remain in the leadership position should the party unexpectedly suffer an electoral slump.

Similarities and Differences within the Party System

If we contrast the pattern of FPÖ's organization with that of Austria's major parties, SPÖ and ÖVP, there are important differences and parallels (see especially Müller 1994). Initially, the FPÖ and its predecessor, the VdU, were organizationally at a disadvantage vis-à-vis their three political competitors, ÖVP, SPÖ, and Communists. Because these parties were reestablished already in 1945, they could draw on organizational remnants and experienced personnel from prewar and pre-Fascist Austria, ensuring significant organizational continuity into the postwar era. By contrast, the German-nationalist camp lacked party-political continu-

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[18] The renegade group around former FPÖ state-party Chairman, Karl Schnell, created their own formation but were blocked by the courts from continuing under the name Freedom Party.

ity. Following the war, the VdU and later the FPÖ were still dominated by Nazi sympathizers, which locked the Freedom Party in to a political ghetto (cf. 'ghetto-party period' in Luther 1997: 138) and prevented the party from forming effective organizational linkages to mainstream institutions in Austria. Crucially, the FPÖ lacked links to Austria's powerful labour market institutions, which in turn formed the social partnership and were the key element in economic governance.

Generally, the law in Austria requires parties to have an organizational structure with differentiated organizational responsibilities and a modicum of internal democratic decision-making through representative bodies. Because the barriers of party formation are rather low, parties can be founded quite easily. Nonetheless, entering parliament is a daunting hurdle for new parties: they must either achieve 4 per cent of the vote nationally or a certain proportion of the vote in at least one electoral district (*Grundmandat*). Despite these challenges, the Freedom Party managed to garner enough votes to enter parliament consistently even before the party's explosive growth after 1986.

In terms of centralization and factionalism, the FPÖ falls somewhere between Christian Democrats and Social Democrats among the older parties. Traditionally, the ÖVP is the most heterogeneous Austrian party because its organization is based on both regional and functional representation. Besides its regional branches, the People's Party consists of formally autonomous entities called leagues, organized along distinct functional and societal interests (e.g. farmers, civil servants, employees, business people). This makes the party's centre notoriously weak and leadership competition is subject to heavy intra-party bargaining and closed contestation. The logic of intra-party dynamics was always to balance the power and influence between the most important party factions. By comparison, the Social Democrats have remained much more centralized despite also adopting a federated structure. They are well-known for their cohesion and thus for largely avoiding instances of public dissent within the party. They generally handle leadership transitions smoothly and effectively in that new party leaders are hand-picked by senior party officials and subsequently confirmed by disciplined party conventions. This high degree of unity generally provides the SPÖ with a strategic advantage when competing with the ÖVP.

By contrast, the FPÖ has pursued the model of open leadership contests and intra-party alliance-building between major state party chapters. This is because the Freedom Party lacked organized sub-units, aside from regional chapters, capable of making credible commitments as a precondition for bargaining. This is not to say that the FPÖ did not have other important affiliate organizations such as groups representing business, women, farmers, teachers, families, students, youths and seniors, among others. Yet, with some exceptions,[19] these never had the power comparable to the professional 'leagues' that made up the ÖVP. Instead, political differences within the FPÖ were subsumed under the existing regional cleavages so that certain regional chapters became associated with particular ideological and programmatic orientations.

Another important difference between the Freedom Party and their main rivals is the role of the party's base in relation to the leadership. Both the SPÖ and ÖVP have had much larger membership rosters, once numbering in the hundreds of thousands. As the Austrian mass parties developed into catch-all parties, the increasingly amorphous membership base meant that the party elites in ÖVP and SPÖ could generally ignore their rank-and-file members as long as the parties were seen as broadly representing the interests of core constituent groups. Forming clientelistic linkages has been an essential strategy for Austria's main parties and led to persistent criticism about partisan influence peddling. In fact, the major parties, SPÖ and ÖVP, closely match Katz and Mair's (1995) conceptualization of catch-all parties having turned into cartel parties. At this stage, both the rank-and-file membership and electoral support have declined in importance for the main parties because they draw a considerable portion of their political strength from the penetration of state institutions and from receiving state resources. By contrast, the rank-and-file members of the FPÖ have been far more motivated by party positioning and political direction and thus are important for the party. As a result, Freedom Party leaders are well-advised not to ignore them.

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[19] The Ring Freiheitlicher Studenten—a right-wing student organization—from where members of the party elite have traditionally been recruited.

When comparing the demographic composition of the FPÖ member-
ship and elected representatives to that of other parties, we notice that
the self-employed, business people, and civil servants dominate (cf. Jenny
et al. 2001: 60; Preisl-Westphal 2001: 411). In fact the combined share
of self-employed and business persons among the FPÖ MPs is 45 per
cent (cf. Table 1.5). Given that the FPÖ has also strong roots outside the
major cities, a significant share of FPÖ MPs (7.6 per cent) has rural or
small-town backgrounds. Despite opening the party to the urban blue-
collar electorate during Haider's leadership and despite some 38 per cent
of Freedom Party MPs identifying themselves as workers, in a survey
(Preisl-Westphal 2001: 411), a closer analysis of the biographies of
Freedom Party MPs of the same time period reveals that few of them
really had working-class roots (only 4 or 1.9 per cent overall—cf. Table
1.5). Some 23.5 per cent were white-collar workers, a further 17 per cent
civil servants (Table 1.5), most of whom served with the military, police,
or central administration (Jenny et al. 2001: 60). In short, a relatively
larger proportion of FPÖ MPs represented business and entrepreneurial
interests than is the case for Austrian main parties.

The FPÖ has had the distinct reputation of being male-dominated and
traditionally enjoyed an electoral advantage particularly among young
males. This is despite the fact that the Freedom Party has fielded women
as candidates for important political offices (twice for the Austrian fed-
eral presidency), had two women as party leaders (Susanne Riess-Passer
2000–2002 and Ursula Haubner 2004–2005), and a woman as a regional
party chair (Barbara Rosenkranz). Nonetheless, there were no women
Freedom Party members at all in parliament until 1983. Afterwards female
representation rose quickly during Haider's tenure when traditional party
recruitment mechanisms were not in effect.[20] After 1988 the percentage
of female Freedom Party MPs remained constant at around 20 per cent
and reached a peak in 2002 with some 26 per cent but substantially
declined thereafter.[21] Thus, the share of female representation in parlia-
ment remains smaller than in other Austrian parties (cf. Table 1.6).

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[20] Nonetheless, a clause in the party statute requiring that there had to be at least one female dele-
gate on the party executive committee was removed in 1992.

[21] Own calculations based on parliamentary records, see http://www.parlament.gv.at/WWER/

Table 1.5 Occupation of FPÖ members of parliament 1956–2014 (in absolute numbers)

Occupation of FPÖ MPs / Leg. period	Total (56–14)	VIII (56–59)	IX (59–62)	X (62–66)	XI (66–70)	XII (70–71)	XIII (71–75)	XIV (75–79)	XV (79–83)	XVI (83–86)	XVII (86–90)	XVIII (90–94)	XIX (94–96)	XX (96–99)	XXI (99–02)	XXII (02–06)	XXIII (06–08)	XXIV (08–13)	XXV (13–14)
Business owner	55		1	1	1	1	3	3	3	4	4	8	11	12	17	6	2	5	7
Self-employed	39	1	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	6	10	9	8	3	7	10	10
Farmer	16	1		1					1	1	3	4	4	4	3	1		1	1
Civil servants	36	2	1		1	1	2	2	3	3	4	8	9	6	8	3	5	7	6
White collar	49	2	3	3	1	1	1	1		1	2	6	8	9	15	3	5	8	12
Blue collar	4										1			1		1			
Students	4											1			1				2
Homemaker	3															1	1	2	2
Pensioner	2																1	1	
Total	208	6	8	8	6	6	10	10	11	12	18	33	42	41	52	18	21	34	40

Table 1.6 Share of women in Austrian parliament by FPÖ, 1956–present

Women (%)	FPÖ
1956–1986	0.97
1986–1999	20.02
1999–2005	23.25
2005–2014	18.56

Source: Author's own research/ parl. Biographies (Austrian Parliament)

Although the FPÖ trails other parties in female representation in both chambers of parliament, it has relatively broad occupational diversity and enjoys wide-ranging representation in legislative bodies at the regional and local level.

When assessing the degree of legislative cohesion during Haider's tenure as party leader, we would qualify it as very high. If we apply two well-established measures, the Rice-index and the Turner-index, (see Müller et al. 2001: 250–252) to this dimension, we find that in the 1990s Freedom Party MPs maintained a highly cohesive position. The only exception was that instances of so-called 'silent protest' through absences were somewhat higher for the FPÖ than for the other parties, at least for the legislative periods XIX (1994–1996) and XX (1996–1999) when Haider's power was at its apex.[22] The other opposition parties, the Greens and Liberals, showed comparatively less internal cohesion. However, one should note that Austrian parties have generally a high level of caucus discipline and while MPs are formally free to vote as they see fit, they also know that violations of party discipline would be career-terminating because they are unlikely to be re-nominated by a party to its next slate of parliamentary candidates. In the case of the Freedom Party there is the additional rule that the FPÖ's caucus statute ensures that caucus discipline is determined by an internal majority vote that is binding for all caucus members.

We may summarize this comparative analysis by observing that the FPÖ has been an outsider in Austrian politics from the start. Despite this, it adopted many of the general organizational characteristics of Austrian parties. As such, its pattern of organization, institutional differentiation,

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[22] For details on legislative cohesion see Müller et al. (2001: 250, 252).

and structure of representation broadly correspond to those of the FPÖ's political competitors. Nonetheless, more than in any other party, the leader is the embodiment of the party and thus the leader's actions and opinions matter enormously to the rank-and-file membership and must meet their approval.

Conclusion

The image of the FPÖ that emerges is one of a right-wing party that had struggled to find internal cohesion, which it achieved through a drawn-out process of fragmentation and centralization. After its foundation, the FPÖ built an organization that not only mirrored other traditional Austrian parties but that also enabled it to accommodate its internal heterogeneity. However, this left central party organs weak and state party organizations relatively strong and cohesive. In order to make the Freedom Party a more effective national force, Haider embarked upon a restructuring process that significantly reduced the FPÖ's internal divisions and rid the party of dissenting factions and rival centers. Yet, FPÖ party leaders had to heed the sentiments prevailing at the base. During the crisis in 2005 the FPÖ found itself leaderless and confronted with an existential challenge. In this situation, the Freedom Party acted rather like a 'normal' party by drawing on its organizational strength. It was quickly able to elect a new leader who enjoyed broad legitimacy and the authority to act. Had party institutions not functioned and provided for authoritative leadership, the FPÖ would have remained embroiled in the infighting between different groups and personalities and fragmented further.

In the moment of crisis, it was the FPÖ's organization that sustained the party. The cohesiveness of the FPÖ's state party organizations ensured that they remained fairly unified, allowing for a negotiated return to the national party. The FPÖ's extensive local organization also helped the party transition quickly into opposition mode and gear up for electoral campaigning.

The recovery of the Freedom Party is noteworthy also in light of several protest parties that have entered Austrian politics over the past decade but

have since disappeared or sharply declined. The relative success of the FPÖ stands also in marked contrast to the history of the BZÖ, which entered a severe decline following Haider's death in 2008. Its Carinthian party organization re-affiliated with the FPÖ and its national party failed to re-enter parliament in 2013. In the meanwhile, the FPÖ under Strache has taken the lead in national opinion polls and could very well end up ahead of all the other parties in the next elections. The experience of the FPÖ suggests that, on one hand, transformative political success may require a highly centralized form of leadership, but on the other its durability and resilience may depend on its organizational and institutional capacity. Overall, successful populist parties may have to balance these two conflicting necessities.

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2

The Vlaams Belang: Party Organization and Party Dynamics

Emilie Van Haute and Teun Pauwels

Introduction: The Main Traits

The Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest – VB) is often singled out from the rest of the Belgian parties. It is portrayed as a threat to democracy in the media, ostracized from the rest of the party system via a *cordon sanitaire*, and often studied as a unique or pathologically deviant case in the scientific literature (Mudde 2010). This separation of the VB from the rest of the political landscape rests often on an analysis of the ideological foundations of the party. However, not much has been written about the party's organization, especially in comparative terms. Therefore, this chapter aims to investigate how common or uncommon the VB's party organization is compared to the other parties in Belgium. This is to be accomplished by drawing on a framework of organizational features identified by Janda (1970) in his comparative analysis of party organizations.

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To accomplish our task, we have divided the chapter into three sections. The first one explores the main steps in the development of the party by adopting Janda's conceptual framework (1970), and looks especially at the evolution of the party's external relations over time. More specifically, we want to ascertain the way in which the VB has institutionalized, and to which extent. Thus, we analyze the party's relation to both power in general and the other parties in the system. This initial segment will also include an analysis of the party's issue orientations and main ideological traits (see also Janda 1980). The second section will explore the party's formal organization. Following Janda's conceptual framework (1970), we focus on three main aspects of the VB's internal structure: the degree of organization as well as the level of centralization of power and internal coherence. The third section will adopt a comparative perspective and seek to determine to what extent VB party organization comprises unique features.

Within the Political System: Permanent Opposition

The VB emerged in 1978 out of dissatisfaction with the Flemish nationalist Volksunie (VU). In the second half of the 1970s, part of the Flemish movement started criticizing the VU for adopting positions considered too moderate and left-leaning. This frustration peaked when the VU signed the so-called Egmont Pact, which envisioned a reform of the Belgian state, although it was seen as too favourable to the French-speaking population, especially in the peripheries around Brussels. One of the VU members, Lode Claes, decided to quit the party and establish the Vlaamse Vokspartij (VVP). At the same time, Karel Dillen founded the Vlaams-Nationale Partij (VNP). The two parties opted to participate in the federal elections of 1978 under the name Vlaams Blok (VB).[1] Against all expectations, Dillen, not Claes, was the one elected for national parliament. The latter decided to leave politics, allowing Dillen's formation to absorb the nationalist wing of the VVP. On 28 May 1979 the VNP was dissolved and the VB was officially established (De Witte and Scheepers 1997; Mudde 2000).

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[1] In this chapter, VB refers to Vlaams Blok until 2004 and to Vlaams Belang after 2004.

In its early years, the VB remained a small party dominated by Dillen. Its programmatic focus was directed almost entirely against the Egmont Pact, emphasizing the goal of Flemish independence. The party recruited particularly among Flemish nationalist movements such as Voorpost and Were Di. Despite the support from these auxiliary organizations, the VB did not grow in the electoral arena. In 1981, Dillen was re-elected as MP but the vote share of the party declined from 2.1 to 1.8 per cent (Delwit et al. 2011). In the second half of the 1980s, the VB started to broaden its ideology and evolved from an anti-Egmont party towards a modern populist radical-right party, expressing increasingly anti-immigrant rhetoric. Together with this ideological shift, the party started to change internally. With operation 'Rejuvenation', Dillen integrated various young VB members into the party council. The 29-year-old Gerolf Annemans replaced Karel Dillen in the Lower House in 1987. In the same year, a youth organization called Vlaams Blok Jongeren (VBJ) was established by, among others, Filip Dewinter and Frank Vanhecke. These internal changes provoked some tensions when a faction of committed VB members accused the VBJ group of sidelining the Flemish cause in favour of the anti-immigrant issue in 1988. Dillen supported the VBJ, which, in turn, led to the exodus of the dissatisfied VB members and strengthened Dewinter's position (Mudde 2000).

The ideological and organizational changes started to pay off electorally by the end of the 1980s. In the federal elections of 1987, the VB obtained 3 per cent of the votes with its slogan 'Own people first!'. The local elections one year later showed the party's potential when the VB secured 17.7 per cent of the votes in the city of Antwerp. In the 1989 European elections, the VB doubled its 1987 result, obtaining 241,117 votes. The real breakthrough came when the VB polled 10.3 per cent in the 1991 national elections (see Fig. 2.1) (Delwit et al. 2011). This 'Black Sunday' alarmed all other Belgian parties, which decided on imposing a *cordon sanitaire,* agreeing not to cooperate with the VB under any circumstances and at any political level. There were even some social movements that sprang up to protest against what many considered a 'revival of fascism' (Pauwels 2011).

However, as the VB was able to rely on a well-developed organization, it did not suffer from the ostracism in the electoral arena but was, on the
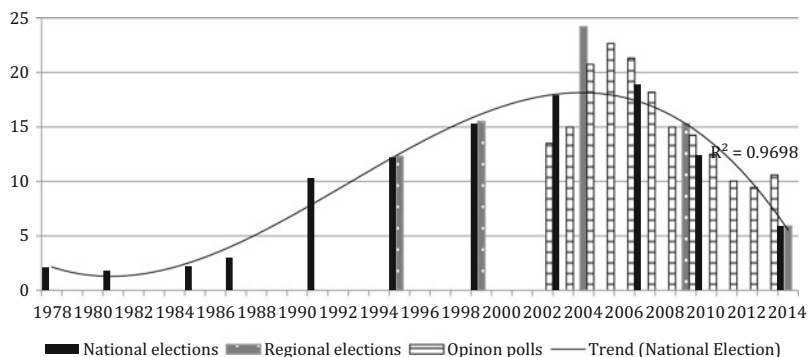
Fig. 2.1 Polling results and vote share of the VB in Flanders, over time (%). *Note*: Opinion poll results are average scores of the polls held in a specific year. *Source*: Various polls from TNS Dimarso, computed by Teun Pauwels

contrary, very successful. In 1996 the leadership switched from Dillen to Vanhecke, who was considered a consensus figure between the Flemish nationalist faction (symbolized by Annemans) and the anti-immigrant wing (symbolized by Dewinter). Under the leadership of Vanhecke, the VB obtained one electoral victory after the other and was particularly successful in Antwerp and other urban areas. In the national elections of 2003, the party obtained 18 per cent of the votes. One year later the Court of Appeal of Ghent condemned several VB organizations for violating the anti-racism law (the first instance in April was confirmed following an appeal in November). The conviction by the court gave the party high visibility in the media and enabled the VB to claim the role of a victim in the hands of the established parties. Subsequently, the party achieved its best result ever at the 2004 regional and European elections in June with 24.2 per cent of the votes (Flanders), becoming the second largest party of Flanders (technically the first because Christian Democratic and Flemish (CD&V) and New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) came first but formed an electoral cartel of two distinct parties. After the appeal failed and the verdict was confirmed in November 2004, the name Vlaams Blok was changed to Vlaams Belang. The party also moderated its external discourse to some extent, as evidenced by Dewinter's

admission that his 70-points plan (which envisioned the forced repatriation of immigrants) was no longer realistic given the changed context. At the same time, Vanhecke conveyed a different discourse, as he confirmed at the party conference in November 2004, stating that the VB changed its name but not its identity (Coffé 2005a). In terms of organization and ideology the Vlaams Belang was largely a continuation of the Vlaams Blok, and the party documents still focused predominantly on Flemish nationalism, immigration, populism, crime, and law and order. Yet a more cautious communication strategy was adopted to avoid further judicial problems.

Despite the party's electoral performances and parliamentary representation (Table 2.1), it could not become part of the government because of the *cordon sanitaire*. In an attempt to further broaden the party's appeal, several young members such as Marie-Rose Morel (a former Miss Flanders) and Jurgen Verstrepen (a former radio and TV presenter) were recruited and elected to key representative mandates in the party (respectively, regional MP and local representative in Antwerp). In 2008 Bruno Valkeniers replaced Frank Vanhecke as party leader. Nevertheless, the growth of the VB seemed to have come to an end. In the 2006 local elections, the party faced its first symbolic defeats. In Antwerp, the VB appeared to have reached a ceiling and arrived only second behind the Socialists (Delwit 2012). In Ghent, the party lost two seats and in the national elections in 2007 it faced competition from the neo-liberal

Table 2.1 VB representatives at the various institutional levels, 1999–present

Europe	House of representatives	Region (Flanders)	Region (Brussels)
2 (1999–2004)	15 (1999–2003)	20 (1999–2004)	4 (1999–2004)
3 (2004–2009)	18 (2003–2007)	29 (2004–2009)	6 (2004–2009)
2 (2009–2014)	17 (2007–2010)	21 (2009–2014)[b]	1 (2009–2014)
1 (2014–2019)	12 (2010–2014)[a]	6 (2014–ongoing)	1 (2014–ongoing)
	3 (2014–ongoing)		

[a]Reduced to 11 after Jurgen Ceder left the party and decided to sit as an independent MP.
[b]Reduced to 18 after Karim Van Overmeire, Erik Arckens, and Gerda Van Steenberge left the party.
Source: Emilie van Haute's own data

populist List Dedecker (LDD). For the first time since the early 1990s, its results were disappointing (Pilet and Van Haute 2008). It gained 19 per cent, which represented a loss of 6 percentage points and one seat. The first major electoral defeat came in 2009 when the party lost one third of its votes compared to 2004 (a loss of 8.9 percentage points and 11 seats). A post-electoral survey showed that 15 per cent of the previous VB voters had switched to the Flemish nationalist N-VA (the successor of the VU) while 8 per cent defected to the LDD. Interestingly, a considerable number of switchers referred to the *cordon sanitaire* as having motivated their shift to another party (Pauwels 2011). While the effectiveness of the *cordon sanitaire* has often been questioned, it seems that a consistent strategy of containment, combined with democratic alternatives might have a negative impact on populist radical right parties in the long run (Rummens and Abts 2010). The electoral decline continued at the national elections in 2010 when the party obtained only 12.6 per cent of the votes in Flanders. After another disappointing result at the local elections of 2012, Valkeniers decided to step down as the head of the VB and Annemans was elected as the new party president. Yet, he was not able to reverse the negative trend and the party faced another, even more severe electoral defeat in 2014. It achieved only 5.9 per cent of the votes in Flanders, barely clearing the electoral threshold. Nearly half of the VB voters from 2010 opted for N-VA in 2014 (Deschouwer et al. 2014). Subsequently, the 28-year-old and relatively unknown Tom Van Grieken succeeded Annemans to become the youngest party president ever in Belgium.

After years of continuous growth, the VB suddenly had to deal with severe electoral and financial losses, which led to internal tensions. The conflict was centred in particular on the question of whether a strategy of moderation or radicalization would be most effective when dealing with the electoral decline. The party has been tempted to revert back to its previous formulas for success. For example, in May 2014, Dewinter launched a video game called *Less-Less-Less* in which players could swat 'Muslim terrorists' and the then Prime Minister, Di Rupo (a French-speaking Socialist), all represented as flies in the cartoon. After citizens petitioned that such acts be prosecuted under the law, the video game was deemed racist in February 2015 and had to be removed from

the website.[2] Yet, no further legal action against Dewinter was taken. Subsequently, in January 2015, Dewinter blamed the Quran for being 'the reason [for] a lot of mischief, the source of all evil [and] a license to kill' while holding up a copy during a parliamentary session. The radical approach of Dewinter and the growth of the more moderate alternative N-VA have prompted important VB representatives such as Verstrepen, Vanhecke, and Van Overmeire, to leave the party.

The Party Organization over Time: Developing a Well-Oiled Multilevel Party Structure

In this section we explore how the VB has developed in terms of organization and examine, based on the party statutes, how the party is structured at different institutional levels today. We also analyze the level of centralization of power in the party and its internal coherence.

Degree of Organization

In terms of organizational development two phases can be identified, of which the latter is still ongoing. The first phase lasted from the party's inception in 1978 until the early 1990s and saw the VB grow as an organization by moving through two major stages: its foundation (starting up the party) and finding its direction (the necessity of adopting a clear focus). This development was facilitated by the fact that the party was established from the remnants of the VU. The founders of the VB had a model of reference on which they could build the new party structures. Therefore, the party adopted clear and well-established structures from the start, including a research centre (1983) and a youth organization (1987). The way the party functions informally has evolved and professionalized over time but the formal structures themselves have not changed much. During the foundational phase, the new party

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[2] See Otte (2014). http://www.flanderstoday.eu/politics/dewinter-questioned-about-alleged-racist-internet-game. Accessed 16 October 2015.

also benefitted from the fact that, as mentioned earlier, it was embedded in Flemish nationalist organizations such as Were Di and Voorpost. This brought important advantages to the party in terms of personnel, finances, and roots at the local level. Art (2008: 430) claims that the motivated members of Flemish nationalist organizations were the political soldiers who 'did "the dirty work" of campaigning, stuffing tens of thousands of mailboxes with campaign material and postering the city of Antwerp'.

Although the structures were in place, the party was still very small and heavily dominated by its leader Karel Dillen, who imposed his views and direction onto the party and placed a clear focus on the Egmont Pact and Flemish independence. The party displayed only a marginal electoral appeal (see Fig. 2.1), and stagnated in terms of membership recruitment (around 5,000 members throughout the period—see Fig. 2.2). During these years, the VB was still an organization of volunteers and amateurs, which is evidenced by the fact that the party president, Karel Dillen, worked for a taxi company while serving in parliament (Coffé 2005c). Organizationally, the party was still very weak at the local level, presenting lists under its name in only 24 municipalities at the 1982 local elections (7.8 per cent), in 50 municipalities in 1988 (16.2 per cent), and
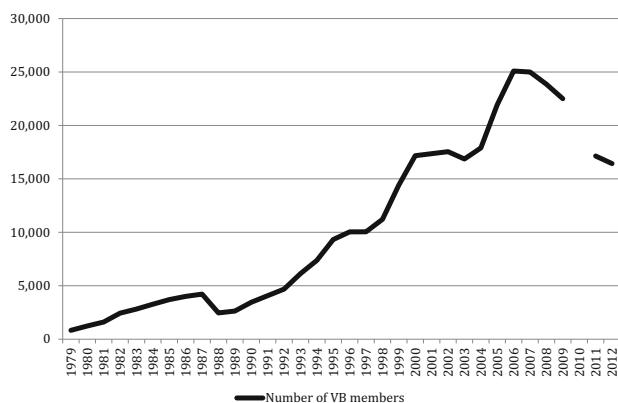
Fig. 2.2   Number of VB members, 1979–2012. *Source*: van Haute et al. (2012); www.projectmapp.eu. Accessed 2 October 2015

in 131 municipalities in 1994 (42.5 per cent)(see Wille and Deschouwer 2007; Wille 2011; Deschouwer et al. 2013a).

This foundational phase and search for direction ended in a conflict over leadership and a dispute over autonomy because there was significant opposition to the party leader and his push for renewing the party. However, members of the new generation, such as Dewinter, prevailed, which resulted in a shift in focus towards the issue of immigration and triggered an exodus of the dissatisfied VB supporters (see Fig. 2.2, 1987–1988). This, in turn, ended up resolving the party's internal tensions.

The resolution of the crisis led to a second phase from the mid-1990s until the end of the 2000s and beyond, representing the VB's organizational maturity and professionalization. During these years, the party grew both electorally and organizationally while boosting its membership. In the three years from 1992 to 1995 the VB doubled its membership (4682 to 9322 registered members). Party membership peaked in 2006 with 25,090 members. In terms of its demographic profile, the VB reported a ratio of 73.2 per cent men compared to 26.8 per cent women in 2006 (77.4 per cent/22.6 per cent for 2011). The age distribution in 2006 shows that the party also managed to attract young people, as 13.0 per cent of its members were under 30 whereas 20.6 per cent were above 65 (Noppe 2007). The VB also expanded at the local level, presenting lists under its name in 181 municipalities (58.8 per cent) at the 2000 local elections, and in 224 municipalities (72.73 per cent)in 2006 (see Wille and Deschouwer 2007; Wille 2011; Deschouwer et al. 2013a).

With such rapid growth, the VB had to adapt and professionalize its organization which was facilitated by the electoral breakthrough of 1991, after which the VB started to receive considerable funding. This is because Belgian parties rely for the major part of their finances on state funding based on their vote share. In terms of propaganda, the VB is the Flemish party that spends more than any other on leaflets, posters, and the like (Buelens and Deschouwer 2003: 21). The VB also saw its staff increase significantly during that period. In 1995–1996, it counted 12 parliamentary assistants and 75 employees in the party's central office. This number grew to 29.5 full time equivalent parliamentary assistants and 91 staff members in 1999–2000, 32 assistants

and 127 staff members in 2003–2004, peaking at 36 and 129 respectively in 2005–2006 (Biondi 1997; Noppe 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007). Moreover, the party started providing a range of different services to its office holders and members, such as judicial support, media training, support for designing campaign material, and political summer academies. It has also launched its own monthly publication entitled *Vlaams Belang Magazine*.

By the end of the 2000s, however, this second phase ended with a crisis triggered by the first electoral defeats. Since 2009, the party has not only been losing members (Fig. 2.2), but its membership has also been aging compared to 2006. In 2011 only 8.0 per cent of the members were under 30 whereas 32.5 per cent were over 65.[3] Moreover, the VB could not maintain its extensive presence in the local elections compared with 2006. In 2012 it was only able to present lists under its name in 175 municipalities (56.8 per cent). The party consequently lost public funding and had to reduce its staff (23.5 parliamentary assistants and 31 employees in 2011–2012). The electoral setbacks led to a conflict between the leadership and the lower levels of the party organization. The latter and the grassroots accused the leadership of having lost touch with what was happening on the ground as a result of having too large and complex an organization. These phases of organizational development show that although the party grew and professionalized over the years, the basic party structures which were implemented at the start have remained rather similar.

Centralization

Centralization refers to the distribution of power between the different units within the party, and especially between the party in central office and the lower levels of the organizational structure (local branches and so on). We will first briefly present the organizational structure of the VB, and then analyze the distribution of power along four internal

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[3] Authors' data, as they appear in the political party database (Poguntke et al. 2015).
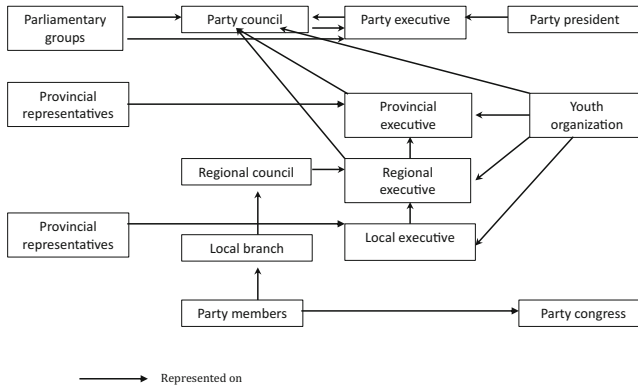
Fig. 2.3 Organogram of the VB. *Source*: *Party Statutes* (Poguntke et al. 2015), computed by Teun Pauwels

decision-making processes: leadership selection, candidate selection, policy formulation, and control over sanctions.

The party's vertical organization comprises four different levels (national, provincial,[4] *regio*, and local) with the most important ones being the local and national arenas. Each level is organized around a council and an executive body (Fig. 2.3).[5] This structure matches Belgium's multi-layered institutional design (Janda 1980; Thorlakson 2009a, b).

At the national level, there is the congress in which all members may participate'. The party council (*Partijraad* – approximately 110 members) consists among others of the members of the party executive, the party leader, the MPs from all parliamentary groups (European, federal, and regional), and representatives at the provincial level. Despite the fact that the statutes limit the number of members of the party executive (*Partijbestuur*) to a maximum of 15, it consisted of 24 members in 2013[6]: the party leader, the treasurer, one MEP, three senators, five MPs from

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[4] This organizational layer was added after the electoral reform of 2002, when it was decided that electoral districts would match the provinces (Delwit and Van Haute 2003). All Belgian parties have consequently adapted their organization to facilitate, among other things, the internal discussions around list formation.

[5] The examination of the party structures is based on the most recent version of the party statutes (version 2011/03/19).

[6] See *Vlaams Belang* (2013)

the House of Representatives, six MPs from the Flemish Parliament, one MP from the Brussels Parliament, and five extra members including three members of the executive board of the VBJ. The party executive meets on a weekly basis and brings together the leaders of the parliamentary groups (European, federal, and regional) and the president of the party council. The party passembles and leads the party executive, which nominates also the party's vice-president, national secretary, and treasurer.

At the level of provinces, there exists a provincial executive (*Provinciaal Bestuur*), composed of the top candidates of the party at the previous federal and regional elections, the presidents of the *regio* branches, and the leader of the provincial council fraction. The provincial executive is responsible for the information flow between national and lower levels. It also coordinates *regio* branches, supervises the work of the provincial party representatives, and deals with conflicts at the regional level. The president of the provincial executive is appointed by the party council, on the advice of the party executive.

At the regional level, there is a regional council (*Regio Raad*) composed of at least one delegate from each local branch as well as a regional executive (*Regio Bestuur*) appointed by the party executive (all indirectly and directly elected representatives and chairs of the party are eligible). It includes also a representative of the party's youth organization (*Vlaams Belang Jongeren*/VBJ). Both regional bodies provide information and coordination. At the local level there are 210 branches (for 308 municipalities in Flanders)[7] that are charged with running the party and collaborating with representatives at the local level. Together with the regional party organization they propose electoral lists for the local elections.

In its horizontal organization, the party has only one auxiliary affiliate, namely the aforementioned youth organization VBJ. It can send its president as well as one delegate for every 500 VBJ members to the party council and one delegate to the local, regional, and provincial executives respectively. Although the VBJ's tasks are described in the party statutes, they are rather typical of youth organizations, such as recruitment and socialization (Hooghe et al. 2004).

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[7] Figure is based on data provided by the VB at national level in June 2012.

The distribution of power between these bodies reflects the centralized character of the VB organization. Officially, the party congress and the party council are responsible for making the fundamental political and strategic decisions but in practice this has typically been in the hands of the party executive and the party leader. The party executive is responsible for the day-to-day management of the party (political and strategic positions) and reports to the party council. As head of the party executive, the president is also responsible for the day-to-day management of the party and functions as the main spokesperson of the party. Together, they initiate the leadership and candidate selection processes and are the driving force in the formulation of policy positions and party manifestos.

Formally, the party leader is appointed for four years in a two-step process underscoring the dominant role of the party executive. In a first step, the candidate is nominated by secret ballot in the party council. Each member of the party council is eligible as candidate for the party leadership. The candidate who wins a majority of the votes after the first round is proposed to the congress as leader elect. If no candidate reaches a majority, a run-off is organized between the top two candidates of the first round. In the second step, the candidate leader is presented to the party where all members with voting rights can vote.[8] If the candidate does not reach a majority, the party executive has to propose an alternative candidate following the exact same procedure. This procedure gives all the power to the party council while the vote of the congress can be regarded more as a plebiscite.

The candidate selection process varies depending on the level. For local elections, the local branches and executives are in charge of composing the lists of party candidates. The regional executive also proposes lists for provincial elections together with the provincial level. For the European, federal, and regional elections, the initiative lies in the hands of the party executive but the party council is in charge of final approval of the lists.

By comparison, the procedure for policy formulation is only very loosely described in the party statutes. These state that the executive proposes 'all political materials and decisions regarding the strategies of the party' (*Party Statutes, II.5.A.I*) whereas the council may 'discuss' the proposals

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[8] Members are granted the right to vote after one year of party affiliation.

and the congress can only approve the proposals. The latter is responsible for updating the manifestos by means of resolutions and, more generally, for 'deepening the nationalist ideas' of the party (*Party Statutes, II.3*).

Finally, the power of sanction lies in the hands of the party president, party executive, or the provincial executive. Members can appeal to the president of the party council against unfavourable disciplinary decisions. The party council remains the final place of appeal and will set up an advisory committee to confirm or void the initial sanction. As a result the party council is entrusted with overseeing all disciplinary procedures, and the application of all sanctions.

Coherence: Intra-party Dynamics and Tensions

As can be seen from the previous description of the VB's organization, the party appears tightly organized. While the formal structure resembles the one adopted by most Belgian parties, the distribution of power is truncated. Vertically, the party executive is one of the most important bodies of the VB and probably the entity where most of the power resides. Dewinter claimed in 1993 that the concentration of power in the party executive is partly related to the professionalization of the party but it could also be caused by the lack of input coming from the party council itself (Buelens and Deschouwer 2003). Another reason might be that all members of the party executive are also on the party council and can therefore control it. Given the composition of the party executive, most of the power resides in the hands of the party leader and the leaders of the parliamentary party groups.

Horizontally, the party is characterized by an unequal geographical distribution. From its origins, the VB has always been an 'Antwerp' phenomenon, both in terms of organization as well as in terms of electoral success. This can be explained to some extent by the fact that many former Flemish nationalists and collaborators sought the anonymity of Flanders' largest city after the Second World War. Furthermore, immigration, unemployment and a lack of urban renewal provided a breeding ground for the mobilization of VB voters in Antwerp. This is reflected in the composition of the party executive (38 per cent from Antwerp, see Table 2.2) and the party membership (25 per cent from Antwerp, see Table 2.3).

Table 2.2 Distribution of party executive members per province, in % (2013)

Province	Members of the party executive	Inhabitants	Difference
West Vlaanderen	8.3	15.8	−7.5
Oost Vlaanderen	12.5	19.5	−7.0
Antwerpen	37.5	23.8	+13.7
Limburg	8.4	11.4	−3.0
Vlaams Brabant	25.0	14.7	+10.3
Brussel	8.3	14.8	−6.5
Total	**100.0 (*N* = 24)**	**100.0**	

Source: *Vlaams Belang* (2013)

Between Change and Adaptation

As pointed out in the previous section, the organizational development of the party gave rise to internal tensions, which were more acute at the end of each phase of organizational development. At the end of the 1980s Karel Dillen was pushing the party in a direction ('rejuvenation', shift in core issues focus on immigration issue) that alienated segments of the party resulting in a large membership decline (41 per cent between 1987 and 1988, see Fig. 2.2). The electoral defeats at the end of the 2000s triggered a new crisis. Tensions emerged over the geographical dominance of Antwerp and the level of control enjoyed by the party executive over the rest of the organization.

Indeed, the number of Antwerp VB candidates inside key decision-making bodies of the party has remained disproportionate despite the relative decline in power of the provincial branch vis-à-vis the other provincial branches in terms of membership (Table 2.3). Between 1995 and 2006 the share of the Antwerp members relative to the total party membership declined from 31 per cent to 'only' a quarter. Yet, Antwerp still dominates the party executive, leading to tensions and resentment by other branches.

The level of control by the party executive over the rest of the organization has also generated tensions in the lower levels of the party organization, which accuse the leadership of having lost connection with what is happening on the ground. More specifically, the first electoral setbacks provoked much discussion about whether a strategy of radicalization or moderation would be needed for electoral growth. It also meant that fewer elected seats in the legislature have been available for distribution. Particularly, the dominant position of Filip Dewinter (although he has never been the

Table 2.3 Geographical distribution of party membership, 1995–2006

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2003	2004	2006	2006 (%)	1995 (%)	Diff. 2006–1995
Brugge	410	445	453	470	588	737	660	753	1024	4.1	4.4	−0.3
Oostende	390	371	364	394	459	534	554	632	1166	4.6	4.2	0.5
Kortrijk-Roeselare-Tielt	435	493	491	534	766	925	928	952	1435	5.7	4.7	1.1
Gent-Eeklo	631	749	761	785	1028	1208	1258	1291	1637	6.5	6.8	−0.2
Aalst-Oudenaarde	505	515	528	755	1182	1438	1396	1564	2057	8.2	5.4	2.8
Dendermonde-Sint-Niklaas	735	774	803	879	1161	1337	1400	1392	2060	8.2	7.9	0.3
Antwerpen	2882	3227	3217	3556	4150	4821	4479	4653	6357	25.3	30.9	−5.6
Mechelen	630	656	647	729	934	1135	1159	1208	1623	6.5	6.8	−0.3
Turnhout	414	466	460	468	587	768	689	713	1161	4.6	4.4	0.2
Limburg	784	803	813	918	1172	1432	1437	1541	2365	9.4	8.4	1.0
Leuven	359	391	400	419	536	669	685	714	1153	4.6	3.9	0.7
Halle-Vilvoorde[a]	–	–	795	873	1233	1432	1474	1553	2193	8.7	–	8.7
Brussel	1048	1041	208	309	457	539	605	750	662	2.6	11.2	−8.6
Andere	99	107	108	129	171	192	146	176	197	0.8	1.1	−0.3
Total	9322	10,038	10,048	11,218	14,424	17,167	16,870	17,892	25,090	100.0	100.0	

[a]1995–1996: Brussel and Halle-Vilvoorde branches united

Source: Emilie van Haute's own data

formal leader of the VB) has led to severe conflict. His radical strategy has remained unchanged despite electoral losses, which alienated parts of the VB membership and its principal leaders. Consequently, several top politicians, including Vanhecke, Verstrepen, Dillen, and Van Overmeiren left the VB. Vanhecke and Van Overmeiren have stated clearly that they could no longer identify with the radical strategy pursued by the head of the VB. Overall party membership also started to drop so that between 2007 and 2009, the VB lost 2,500 members (10 per cent). The hemorrhaging is assumed to have continued but the party has not disclosed more recent membership figures. However, one indicator points to further decline: in the official statements of party accounts to the House of Representatives, the VB reports €121,408 in membership fees in 2011, and only €20,583 for 2012 (Doc 53—2786/002), representing a loss of about €100,000 and suggesting a dramatic drop in membership numbers.

The party is also facing a crisis since the leadership does not want to lose control over the lower levels of the organization whereas the latter are pushing for more say in the decision-making process. A recent conflict, where the regional party executive of Ghent (the second largest Flemish city) opposed the national party executive, illustrates these tensions. In 2011, a regional executive was appointed with the support of the head of the party, but the local office holders disagreed and even established the dissident 'Belfort group'.[9] The leader of this group argued that not only was the appointment of the regional executive a problem but also that there was a deeper underlying reason for dissatisfaction:

> We are dissatisfied because the party leadership clings to its style and methods of 20 to 25 years ago. We think that the party's message should be translated into the 21st Century with less provocation. But the style of Filip Dewinter still dominates, you might say the style of the Antwerp municipal council. (VRT Producer 2011)

This example illustrates that two sources of dissatisfaction overlap. Another example of this can be found in a statement by Vanhecke, who

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[9] The group is named after the Belfry in Ghent, a medieval tower overlooking the old city centre. Its defensive function is here used as a symbol for the resistance of the group against the dominance of Antwerp over the party.

denounced on his internet blog the complete domination of the VB by the Antwerp section led by Dewinter. He stated that:

> [t]he fragile equilibrium that existed until mid-2009, with FDW [Filip Dewinter] playing an important and prominent role but at least taking the role of the party bureau … into account, has been systematically broken down by Bruno Valkeniers. On every crucial occasion, Valkeniers has taken the side of FDW … The VB has become the party of one man and this cannot possibly end well. (Vanhecke 2011)

Along with the extra-parliamentary organization, the party in public office is another arena where disagreements and disloyalty can manifest themselves. Although voting behaviour in parliament is to a large extent unified (Olson 2003; Willumsen 2010), looking at pre-floor attitudes (i.e. measuring attitudes irrespective of parliamentary voting) and sequencing may tell us more about what takes place before the votes are cast (van Vonno 2011). In that regard, the Partirep MP survey[10] offers important insights into the attitudes of VB's regional and national MPs, even if the response rate was relatively low for the party.[11]

In terms of policy positions, the VB MPs display significant cohesiveness. This is especially the case on the party's core issues such as Flemish independence, immigration, EU integration, and law and order. All MPs surveyed are fully in favour of transferring 'more powers to the regional level', and they all strongly agree that 'immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of our country' (100 per cent 'strongly agree'). They also all (strongly) agree that 'people who break the law should be given stiffer sentences' (100 per cent 'agree' or 'strongly agree'). Finally, they all support the idea that 'EU integration has gone too far'. However, the degree of cohesiveness is much lower on other issues, and especially on socioeconomic issues. When asked to position themselves on proposals such as 'larger income differences are needed as incentives for individual effort' or 'the government should play a smaller role in the management

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[10] The Partirep Comparative MP survey (Deschouwer et al. 2013b) surveyed national and regional legislators in 15 European democracies and in 60 parliaments between 2009 and 2011.

[11] The database includes 13 respondents from the VB (6 out of 21 from the Flemish regional parliament, and 7 out of 17 from the Belgian federal parliament).

of the economy', MPs tend to adopt different viewpoints so that the answers were spread between the options provided.

Overall, nine out of 13 respondents admitted to having found themselves with positions other than that of the party. If agreement plays a large role in party unity, the ability of the party to impose discipline and the MPs' loyalty are also crucial, especially in cases of discord. In that regard, MPs from the VB tend to dislike mavericks and favour party discipline. Nearly all of them indicated that it is wrong to say that 'members frequently take parliamentary initiatives without the parliamentary party's authorization' and that 'confidential party discussions usually find their way to the media'. They think that party discipline should remain as it is, and even argue that the party 'should be stricter on keeping internal party discussions confidential'. Overall, the VB can rely on very tight and unified parliamentary party groups that tend to agree on the party's core issues and values, and as such they accept and even demand stricter party discipline.

Since the role of the leader has always been emphasized in the literature on populism, we also investigated leadership change to see, particularly, whether or not this has led to internal divisions. In contrast to other populist parties, the VB is not a personal party. During its first years, it was dominated by its founder, Karel Dillen. Although his leadership was never in question and lasted for a very long time (17 years), he cannot be considered a charismatic leader. In addition, he also maintained a professional career outside politics by working, as already stated, simultaneously as an accountant in a taxi company.

With the emergence of the new generation—Annemans, Vanhecke, and Dewinter—in the end of the 1980s, a shift occurred. From then on, the party was no longer beholden to one political figure. Although Dillen remained the party leader until 1997, a division of roles occurred between these different strong personalities all of whom were members of the party executive. The party leader was primarily responsible for the party organization whereas other prominent personalities from the executive were more present in the media. A case in point is Dewinter who comes across as the VB's most visible and most popular personality, dominating opinion polls even until today. To explain this idiosyncratic form of leadership would go beyond the scope of this chapter. However, it needs to be stressed that the VB is a 'policy-oriented' rather than 'vote-seeking' or

'office-seeking' party (Strøm 1990). Given its role as a permanent opposition party, the position of the party president is less crucial than that in the governing parties because there are neither executive mandates to be allocated nor any decisions to be taken in terms of concrete governing policies. Rather, the VB tries to spread its ideology in the most extensive way possible by matching up key party officials with political issue areas: for example, Dewinter and Vandermeersch have been assigned to the issue of immigration, whereas Annemans is to deal with Flemish nationalism. In this manner, Dewinter does not necessarily need direction from the formal party leadership to push his ideas. Because of his considerable electoral appeal, he is given wide latitude and ample opportunity to make his case in the media. Being a member of the party executive, he is also impossible to ignore on important strategic decisions. Nonetheless, we may suspect that it is because of Dewinter's controversial nature that he has never been selected as the formal party leader.

Vanhecke's middle position put him in a perfect place to assume the role of party leader. He succeeded Dillen and led the party from 1996 to 2007. Valkeniers, who can be considered as leaning toward the Flemish nationalist side, succeeded him for five years until 2012. Since then, two more leaders have been at the helm of the party: Gerolf Annemans (for two years, until 2014), and Tom Van Grieken. The actual time periods party leaders served have thus been dramatically reduced since the Dillen era. Nevertheless, as described above, the formal procedure for leadership selection implies that the vote of the party congress can be regarded as an endorsement rather than a real competitive race. This is illustrated by the fact that Frank Vanhecke was re-elected as party leader in 2004 with 94.2 per cent while Tom Van Grieken was elected as the new leader in 2014 with 93 per cent of the votes.

Similarities and Differences within the Party System

The previous section provides a good overview of the development of the party organization and its current state. However, in order to understand more fully whether the VB has a 'normal' or unique party organization,

the aforementioned aspects have to be seen within a comparative perspective. This section compares the VB to the other Belgian parties using the same indicators of party organization: the intensiveness and extensiveness of the organization (membership figures and number of branches); the level of centralization (degree of openness of the organization and rights and obligations granted to the rank-and-file); and levels of legislative and leadership cohesion.

In terms of party membership, the VB differs from most other Belgian parties (not counting the Greens–Ecolo and Groen) in three important ways. First, the party attracts slightly more young members than other parties (Van Haute et al. 2012). Secondly, and more fundamentally, it represents a rare example of long-term membership growth, at least until the end of the 2000s. Thirdly, and despite rising membership, the party has largely failed to reach an overall ratio of members to voters similar to that of other Belgian parties, again with the exception of the Greens (Table 2.4).

In terms of extensiveness of the organization, the data from the Belgian survey of local party chairs (Deschouwer et al. 2013a) show that after the 1990s, the VB competes with the traditional party families (Christian Democrats, Liberals, and Socialists) in terms of coverage in the local elections and does better than the Greens (Table 2.5).

As regards the level of centralization, the VB has adopted a structure resembling that of other Belgian parties from the very beginning. However, this does not tell us much about the distribution of power within that structure. Therefore, from a comparative perspective, it is more interesting to look at the distribution of roles within the party structure.

The VB is clearly the party with the most open procedure for membership recruitment (Van Haute 2015). Party membership is regulated by uniform national rules laid down in the party statutes. The only requirement for membership, besides payment of a fee (€12.5 per year), is adhering to the party's principles. The party statutes make no mention of age restrictions, exclusivity of membership or probationary periods (Van Haute 2015). Once affiliated, members are granted a right of information (via the *VB Magazine*) and, for those aged 30 or less, the right of free affiliation with the party's auxiliary organization VBJ.

Table 2.4 Party membership (ratio members/voters) in a comparative perspective

	Groen	Ecolo	SP.a	PS	VU/NVA	CD&V	CDH	VLD	MR	Average all but VB	VB
1981	0.6	0.6	15.3	21.1	8.1	10.7	12.5	7.8	9.1	10.7	2.4
1985	0.4	0.6	12.3	16.9	10.6	9.0	8.6	11.3	11.4	10.1	4.3
1987	0.5	0.4	11.3	15.1	9.9	11.6	8.7	10.6	13.2	10.1	3.6
1991	0.7	0.4	13.3	15.5	10.0	12.7	6.6	9.0	6.7	9.3	1.0
1995	1.5	1.0	10.6	16.3	5.5	10.4	6.5	10.0	5.6	8.2	2.0
1999	1.0	0.6	12.1	16.4	4.5	12.3	7.0	8.6	6.0	8.5	2.4
2003	3.7	1.9	6.3	9.6	5.7	10.0	5.5	7.3	4.3	6.3	2.2
2007	1.7	1.4	7.9	10.8	0.8	6.4	7.0	8.5	3.8	5.8	3.1
2010	1.8	1.9	8.7	9.1	1.4	10.0	7.2	11.8	4.2	6.8	4.1

Source: van Haute (2014)

Table 2.5 Presence of national parties at the local elections in Flanders (in %)

	CD&V	CD&V-N-VA	VU-N-VA	Open VLD	SP.a	Groen	SP.a--Groen	VB
1976	86.0		50.6	47.7	82.8			
1982	89.9		52.6	58.4	85.7	19.8		7.8
1988	91.6		56.2	70.8	85.7	48.4		16.2
1994	78.9		24.3	69.5	72.7	50.6		42.5
2000	83.8		27.3	68.5	69.2	61.0		58.8
2006	45.8	41.9	11.4	72.4	55.8	35.7	14.0	72.7
2012	84.7	2.3	87.3	62.0	51.0	34.4	17.5	56.8

Source: Local chair survey (Deschouwer et al. 2013a)

Table 2.6 Rights and obligations of party members, Belgium 2012

Party	Participation to congress	Candidate selection	Party leader selection	Election manifesto	Participation in power
Ecolo	Yes	2	2	3	2
Groen	Yes	2	2	2	2
SP.a	No (delegates)	4	2	4	–
PS	No (delegates)	4	2	4	–
CDH	Yes	0	2	2	2
CD&V	Yes	2	2	2	2
MR	Yes	0	2	0	0
Open VLD	Yes	2	2	2	2
N-VA	Yes	0	2	3	2
VB	Yes	0	0	0	0

Note: *0* No formal (in)direct active role and no voting rights, *1* Formal active
 role, *2* Right to vote, *3* Both, *4* Influence through delegation or representation
Source: Party Statutes (Poguntke et al. 2015), computed by Emilie van Haute

Although formal affiliation with the VB is easy and less regulated than in other Belgian parties, members are granted fewer rights (Table 2.6). They can attend the party congress but are not granted any say in major decisions of the party (candidates and leadership selection, adoption of the party manifesto, and the decision for the party to enter government). This strongly differs from the practice of other Belgian parties where members are generally granted at least the right to formally approve the decisions on these matters.

These findings are, however, based on the VB party statutes, which are much shorter (12 pages) and thus less detailed than the average length of the statutes for the other Belgian parties (averaging 33.8 pages).

Nevertheless, it shows that, if the overall structure of the VB looks like that of other party organizations in Belgium, the formal distribution of roles as described in the party statutes is different and points towards a greater centralization of power.

With regard to legislative cohesion and loyalty, data from the Partirep MP survey show that parties from the radical right (including the VB) tend to display, on average, lower levels of disagreements among MPs as well as lower levels of non-loyal MPs (Close and Lopez 2013).

In terms of party leadership, the VB deviates from the rest of the Belgian parties on two levels: The first concerns the leadership selection method and the length of party leadership. When choosing a leader, the VB is the only party that does not grant its members the right to directly elect the party chair. All the other parties have, by now, transferred this right to their members (Cross and Pilet 2014). Regarding the average length of party leadership, the VB is at odds with the general trend in other Belgian parties: With a total of only five party chairs and an average term length of 11.7 years, the time in office for the VB leaders is much longer than it is for those of other parties (cf. Fig. 2.4). However, this has drastically changed since the start of the electoral decline: the party has known three leaders since 2007, compared to two leaders in the period 1979–2007.

As mentioned in the previous section, the VB leadership is quite unique compared to other populist parties in that the formal leader is not always the most dominant figure in the media. This is, however, not an exception in Belgium. There are other examples of party presidents
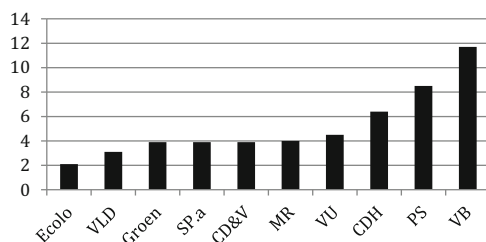
Fig. 2.4 Average length of party leadership (in years), 1979–2013. *Source*: Emilie van Haute's own data; Cross and Pilet (2014)

who are not the most prominent figures inside their party. This is usually the case when a party enters the government and the party leader then acts in tandem with another, often more media-oriented, figure. What is unusual in the case of the VB is that this type of party leadership (organization-oriented) happens despite the *cordon sanitaire* and the certainty that the party will not enter office.

Summing up, the party organization of the VB is similar, in terms of its structure, to the other parties in Belgium but differs in terms of its functioning. Despite the fact that it is rather open to new members, they have relatively few rights and the party is heavily dominated by a party executive that is regionally skewed toward Antwerp. Nonetheless, the parliamentary party is highly unified, tends to display high levels of internal agreement on policy positions, and displays considerable loyalty towards the party.

Conclusion

This chapter analyzed the VB's organization from a comparative perspective in an attempt to answer whether, in terms of its organization, the VB can be considered a 'normal' party. A first observation is that the structure and functioning of the organization has changed as the VB has evolved from an amateur to a professional party. Electoral growth went hand-in-hand with membership growth, increased local embeddedness and professionalization. However, since the first electoral defeats at the end of the 2000s, a reverse trend can be observed. Moreover, the VB did not always develop smoothly given that the party experienced two major organizational crises: a leadership and autonomy crisis at the end of the 1980s and a crisis over control that the party currently struggles to overcome. Despite these developments the formal structure and the dynamics of the organization have not changed much over time.

Comparatively speaking, we conclude that although the shell of the VB resembles that of other Belgian parties, its core is of a different nature. While the organizational structure reflects the multilevel institutional design typical of Belgian parties, the distribution of power within the party is truncated to the advantage of the party in central office.

The VB distinguishes itself from other parties by exercising tight control over internal procedures such as leadership, candidate selection and policy formulation. The party offers lower than usual barriers to affiliation but members have comparatively fewer rights. This corroborates the findings of Jagers (2002) who concluded that, in terms of organization, the VB is the internally least democratic of all Flemish parties.

In addition, the VB differed from most Belgian parties by its increasing membership until the 2000s as well as by attracting younger supporters. It successfully expanded its organization and local reach to match that of traditional parties. Furthermore, the internal dynamics are characterized by the party in central office dominating the party in a top-down manner. This is complemented, at the horizontal level, by the preponderance of the Antwerp party over the rest of the branches. Another distinctive feature of the VB is that the party in public office displays higher levels of agreement on policy positions than other parties do. Party loyalty and discipline are valued and accepted by the party representatives to a degree larger than in other parliamentary party groups. Finally, the VB stands out in Belgian politics due to its exceptionally long leadership terms and the closed procedures for leadership selection.

Nonetheless, several of these aspects have changed or at least have been called into question since the first electoral defeat at the end of the 2000s. The dominance of the party executive and the Antwerp branch has generated heavy criticism and caused significant tension. Moreover, the VB has started to resemble other parties and is now experiencing a similar membership decline as well as shorter office terms for its party leaders.

Overall, the case of the VB supports the idea that populist radical right parties can develop effective organizations that 'prove more resilient' (Norris 2005: 218), enabling them to endure victories and losses. In fact, the party's organizational strength has often been presented as an explanatory factor for its (persistent) success (Art 2008; Coffé 2005b). Currently, however, the question is whether the party organization is strong enough to survive the increasing gap between the party elite and grassroots or whether the dominance of the party executive and the 'Antwerp faction' will alienate the rank-and-file members even further. Many challenges lie ahead for the VB and it remains to be seen whether the party will be able to overcome its current problems in the long run.

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3

The Swiss People's Party: Converting and Enhancing Organization by a New Leadership

Oscar Mazzoleni and Carolina Rossini

Introduction: The Main Traits

This chapter is devoted to the Swiss People's Party[1] (SVP), which is electorally one of the strongest political parties included in the 'family' of European radical right-wing organizations. Originally a conservative agrarian party that was founded as a national organization in 1971, the SVP had already been represented in federal government for several decades. Being an example of what Mény and Surel (2000: 260) dubbed a 'converted' party, the SVP experienced a deep internal shift in the 1990s. Headed by the 'charismatic' billionaire Christoph Blocher and supported by his followers, the party moved toward a right-wing radicalization in combination with an anti-establishment stance. Moulded by a dominant vote-seeking strategy, the party has experienced enormous and durable organizational

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[1] German: Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP), French: Union Démocratique du Centre (UDC), Italian: Unione Democratica di Centro (UDC).

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growth that saw the creation of new sub-national branches all over the country. The party enjoyed uninterrupted electoral gains in the period from 1995 to 2007, in which its share of the national vote went from 15 per cent to 29 per cent. Since 2003 it has established itself as the main party in the national parliament (see Fig. 4.1). In that same year, the SVP won a second seat in the federal government and Blocher was elected as one of the seven-member executive. After some stagnation in 2011, the SVP won just under 30 per cent of the vote in parliamentary elections in 2015.

It is widely believed that the electoral achievements of the SVP have been due to increasing investment of human and financial resources in electoral mobilization and, above all, in ensuring the longevity of the party's 'charismatic' leader (Mazzoleni 2008: 135; Skenderovic 2009a; Art 2011: 171). However, an exclusively leader-centred approach appears insufficient to explain some important aspects associated with electoral success. For instance, although its principal leader experienced several political setbacks in 2007 and despite even undergoing a split in 2008 involving some of its cantonal branches, the national party organiza-tion continues to maintain a high capacity for mobilization. The 2011
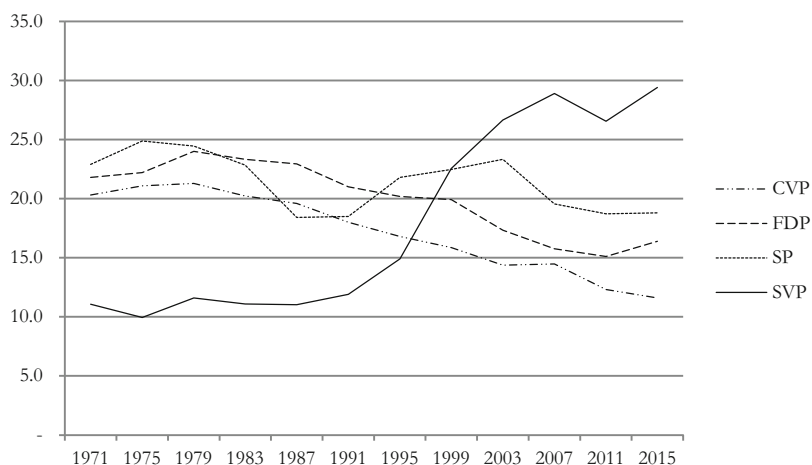
Fig. 3.1 Parties* represented in the National Council (% of popular vote)**, 1971–2015. * Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP); The Liberals (FDP); Social Democratic Party (SP); Swiss People's Party (SVP). ** The National Council is the lower house of the Federal Assembly of Switzerland. *Source*: Swiss Federal Statistical Office

and 2015 federal elections confirmed the SVP's position as the strongest national party in the Swiss Parliament. Consequently, the question arises as to the role of the party organization and the ways in which the relationship between the leadership and the organizational features have developed over time.

In order to answer these questions and go beyond the traditional notion of 'populist' parties as simply being 'charismatic', it is crucial to connect this analysis with certain classical approaches to party organization in contemporary democracies such as those of Duverger (1963), Janda (1970, 1980), Panebianco (1988), as well as Harmel et al. (1995). In this literature, the focus in placed especially on the complexity of the organization, the autonomy of sub-national branches, and the level of centralization achieved by the leadership, a topic often brought up in reference to populist parties. Examining these formations from an organizational perspective, we can take a broader view of leadership in the sense of one member of a group being legitimately authorized to prohibit certain types of behaviour to members. This includes also the possibility of personal and collective leadership as well as leadership with a varying degree of 'concentration'—that is a group of people representing the party's top hierarchy and key decision-makers (Harmel 1989: 168). It is also crucial to consider the origin and genesis of the party and, as far as the institutions are concerned, conceive of centralization as a composite phenomenon, which is to be explored in relation not only to factionalism, but also to the complexity of the organization. Centralization can represent the conditions enabling a new leadership to impose changes in the organization. Centralization also affects ideological transformation and at the same time lends permanence to the organization.

Although these dimensions are crucial, it is also important to consider the SVP in relation to the Swiss party system as a whole, where it occupies a unique position compared to that of other European rightwing anti-establishment parties in their respective political environments. Generally, these can be grouped into two categories (Dézé 2004). The first type is represented by the 'outsiders', who express themselves through a politically marginalized position within the government institutions. This includes small extremist groups, by definition anti-parliamentarian, as well as parties that limit themselves to parliamentary

opposition or are subjected to a '*cordon sanitaire*'. Political parties of the second type will instead accept government participation, often through an alliance with mainstream parties. When these anti-establishment parties enter a relatively large government coalition, they face three main choices in the form of adaptation, resistance, or a compromise strategy between the two. In the first case, the party adapts to the norms of political conduct by following formal and informal institutional rules. In the long term, this option reduces the impact of its anti-establishment posture considerably and, at least partially 'deracializes' its protest stance. In the second case, one notices a more or less fundamental resistance to such adaptation. This attitude may, in the long run, hinder a party's participation in the government as was the case with the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), which joined and then left the government coalition in between 2000 and 2005 (Heinisch 2003). The third way is rather rare: a 'populist' party participates in a government coalition, but adapts only partially to the common rules of the game as evidenced by the 'new' SVP.

Despite its radicalization, the 'new' SVP was not met with a '*cordon sanitaire*' and has until now remained part of the government coalition, adopting a position between resistance and adaptation. This development was made possible by several factors associated with the peculiarities of the party itself as well as with the Swiss political system. First, the SVP (like the Austrian FPÖ before Haider) is one of the few cases of an insider-radicalized party: It had been a part of centre right-wing government parties for decades. Secondly, it has also adopted pragmatic attitudes on several issues where it converges especially with centre right mainstream parties, especially those in government and parliamentary decision-making. Thirdly, in its radicalization, the SVP has been taking advantage of the specific institutional setting in Switzerland. On one hand, the party benefits from the principle that large coalitions became the general norm for the system of government in the early twentieth century and, on the other, the SVP is boosted by typical reciprocal autonomy between representatives of the government and their respective parties (Burgos et al. 2011). Under pressure from the 'new' SVP, a more competitive pattern has gradually taken hold in Swiss politics (Mazzoleni 2016). This development was brought about by noticeably higher levels

of volatility, a shifting setting in which electoral mobilization occurred, and an increasingly adversarial logic in parliamentary and referendum arenas.

This chapter therefore highlights the longer- and shorter-term factors that have influenced the SVP's organization and electoral success. In our attempt to tackle these issues, we will subsequently trace the party's evolution over time. Then, using a range of internal party sources, we will show how sub-national autonomy complements centralization as we examine the changes in the degree of organization and coherence that characterize this unique and successful party. We will conclude by exploring how party organization has coped with new circumstances and examine the ways in which the SVP's evolution has differed from that of the mainstream parties in Switzerland.

The Party Organization over Time

Although one might argue that a successful radical right populist party is characterized by a 'strong' leader and a 'strong' organization (e.g., Carter 2005), a more dynamic perspective calls for a deeper investigation. Thus, we will focus especially on party change and adaptation. The case of the SVP brings together two of the conditions for organizational discontinuity formulated by Harmel and Janda (1994), namely the arrival of a new party leadership and a clear transformation in the dominant coalition within the party, as can be seen in the unprecedented radicalization of the SVP and the shift in internal power. This development was brought about by an 'external shock' in the form of the arrival of new political opportunities on which the emerging leadership managed to capitalize and which it could exploit in order to take the helm.

At the head of the new leadership was Christoph Blocher for whom this achievement represented the apex of a political career that began in the 1970s. Elected to the local legislative assembly near the city of Zurich in 1974, to the parliament of the Canton of Zurich in 1975, and to the federal parliament in 1979, Blocher was then appointed president of the Canton of Zurich branch of the party in 1977, a position he held until 2003. He began operating on a different scale within his party during the

second half of the 1980s. At that time it was, above all, in the referendum campaign opposing Swiss participation in the European Economic Area, in 1992, that Blocher earned his reputation and prominence as a national leader. Following a series of key political appointments accompanied by a stellar career both in the Swiss army (as a colonel) and in the fields of industry and finance that made him a billionaire, Blocher created his own brand of Swiss right-wing politics. However, he was able to build a collective leadership, surrounding himself with other influential politicians from the Canton of Zurich, such as Ueli Maurer, Toni Bortoluzzi, Hans Fehr, Christoph Mörgeli, and Gregor A. Rutz, all of whom became members of the federal parliament in the 1990s and 2000s.

The 'new' entrepreneurial leadership adopted a three-fold party mobilization strategy. First, it developed professionalized and capital-intensive forms of campaigning (Skenderovic 2009a, b) in a way similar to the electoral-professional party pattern outlined by Panebianco (1988). Secondly, the new leadership strengthened the party's grassroots membership and simultaneously expanded its repertoire of action by drawing on its mass party legacy. These features are in fact not very different from those of a 'mass populist party' (Collier and Berins 1991: 788; Levitsky 2001). Thirdly, it increased the power of the head office formed around a strong national leadership, while leaving some autonomy to the subnational branches.

Considering the impact of this new strategy, we can distinguish two initial phases in the recent organizational history of the SVP. In the first one, we see a gradual break with the 'old' SVP and the emergence of the new national leadership (1991–1995). The second phase was dominated by the party's consolidation and unparalleled electoral success (1996–2007). In these two periods, the party's electoral fortunes clearly depended not only on structural articulation, but also on increasing the extensiveness and intensiveness of the organization (degree of organization) and the centralization of power at the national level. This occurred in an effort to impose strong party loyalty around the new leadership (internal coherence). We can therefore argue that the first phase was characterized by a 'strong' leader in combination with a relatively 'weak' organization, whereas the second phase was marked by a 'strong' leader along with the rise of a 'strong' organization (Carter 2005).

The Degree of Organization

The above-mentioned two initial phases influenced also the degree of organization, which can be understood as 'the complexity of regularized procedures for mobilizing and coordinating the efforts of party supporters in executing the party's strategy and tactics' (Janda 1970: 106–107; 1980: 98). Because of the powerful role of the leader (Mudde 2007), populist parties are said to provide a low degree of organization. However, since even the 'old' SVP was already characterized by fairly well-developed structural articulation, with a formal organogram and regular assemblies, the 'new' SVP has shown even greater complexity.

Initially, Blocher and his followers faced a party that had a weak national leadership and was strongly decentralized. Its organization was characterized by limited territorial extensiveness and low intensiveness. As a national organization, the SVP was created in 1971 by uniting different cantonal parties concentrated in the German cantons but also in Vaud, Fribourg (a bilingual canton), and Ticino. At the time there were nine cantonal branches of the Bauern-, Gewerbe- und Bürgerpartei [Farmers-, Trade-, and Bourgeois-Party] (BGB) and two cantonal branches of the Demokratische Partei [Democratic Party] (DP) all of which became part of the SVP. Between the 1970s and the 1980s, sub-national branches existed in only 15 cantons or semi-cantons out of the 26. In those years the SVP's electoral share at national level was between 10 and 12 per cent, making it the fourth largest Swiss party.

The SVP's electoral growth substantially increased its territorial extensiveness. As the party began to move towards a more radical ideology, cantonal branches of the SVP were set up in all the remaining cantons. Between 1988 and 2005, the number of municipal chapters grew from 643 to 726 (Ladner 2008: 60). Since 2001 the SVP has had a branch in every canton. Indeed, the SVP's electoral growth was therefore largely the result of extending its presence throughout the country during the 1990s (see Fig. 4.2). The increasing territorial extensiveness reflects the broader sociological range of electoral support, including currently not only farmers and small business owners but also urban working-class and middle-class supporters (Kitschelt and McGann 2005; Lutz 2008, 2012).
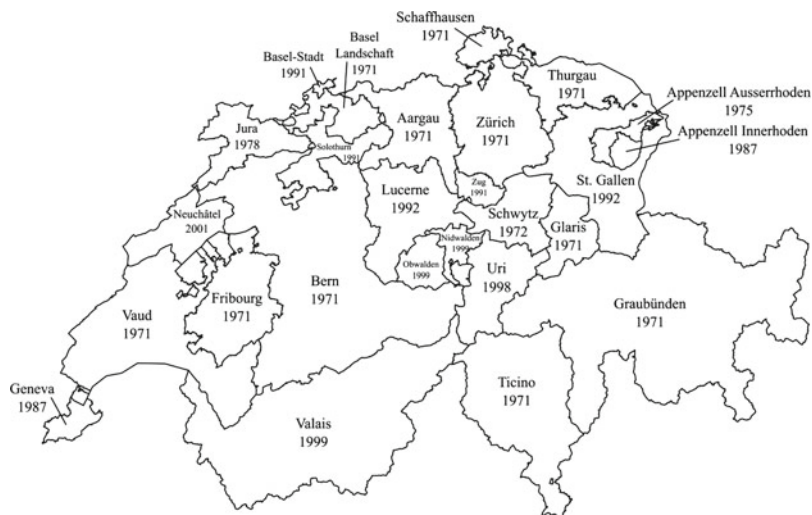
**Fig. 3.2**   Establishment of the Swiss People's Party by canton

Also the degree of organizational intensiveness has grown substantially. In Duverger's terms, the party becomes an 'instrument of agitation' (1963: 35) in relation to the growing linkage between party membership, discipline, and solidarity (Janda 1980: 101). While the official membership is said to have grown from 59,900 in 1996 to 90,000 in 2007, the SVP also developed a capacity—unique among Swiss parties—for succeeding in popular initiatives (which require the backing of at least 100,000 individuals for launching and the support from a majority of voters and cantons to be victorious)[2]. Accomplishing this feat necessitated not only capital-intensive campaigns but also activist-intensive mobilization on the ground. Thanks to a network of local branches and important financial resources, the party was also able to stage frequent meetings such as the well-known Albisgüetli Congress of the Zurich branch, which has brought together at least 1,500 activists and supporters from all parts of Switzerland every year (Skenderovic 2009b).

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[2] Of 37 federal popular initiatives voted on from 2009 to 2016, only six have been accepted. However, three of them were launched or directly supported by the SVP, including the initiatives against minarets (2009) and against mass immigration (2014).

Centralization

Under their new leadership, the SVP moved in part toward a stronger and centralized national organization. The subsequent phase was thus marked by a 'strong' leader and the rise of 'strong' organization. It formally began in 1996 when Ueli Maurer was elected as national party president. While Blocher became the undisputed leader at the national level by 2003, he never held the most important office in the national party in formal terms, namely that of national president, but continued to preside over the Canton of Zurich branch of the SVP. This entitled him to sit on the central committee of the national party and also the National Council, the Swiss federal parliament. As the former director of the farmers' association in the Canton of Zurich and a member of federal parliament, Maurer was at the helm until the beginning of 2008. These almost 12 years represented a period longer than that of any other served by a president of the national SVP before or since. Along with Blocher and Maurer, other influential politicians from the Canton of Zurich also played key roles in reorganizing the national party. The formal outcome of this reorganization is shown in the organogram depicted in Fig. 4.3. The cantonal branches, the youth organization and the parliamentary group are each formally represented in three of the four supreme decision-making organs (the steering committee, the central committee, and the assembly of delegates).

Although the new leadership did not alter the formal organogram, it did change the organs' composition and responsibilities. Indeed, by giving the cantonal sections a different role in the management of the national party, centralization was increased. This happened not by changing the competences of the assembly, but rather the allocation of the delegates by canton. Thus, with the statutory reform of 2000, each cantonal section was officially entitled to eight delegates. Every four years the steering committee is to grant representational rights to the cantonal branches and other organizations on the basis of the number of votes obtained in the elections for the National Council. In other words, the most important sections and those with the most voters—thus, those which had grown the most in the 1990s during the process of radicalization—became better represented within the party's ruling body.
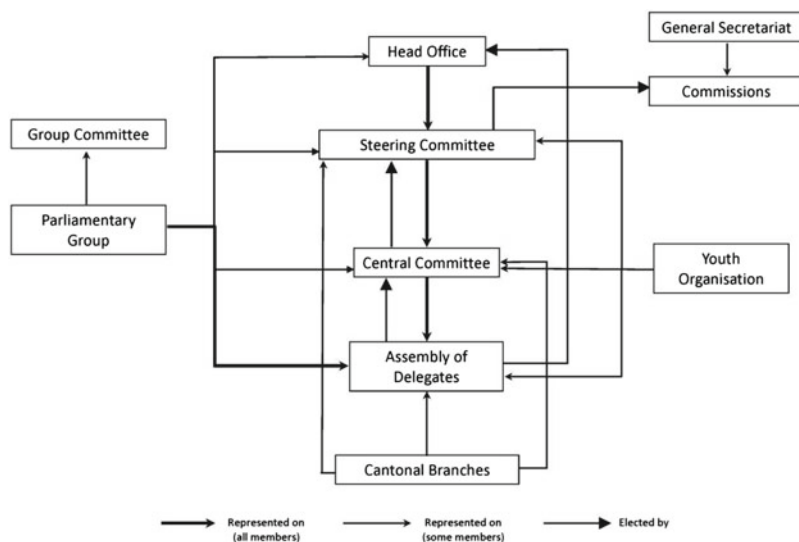
Fig. 3.3 Organizational structure of the Swiss People's Party

Secondly, the party's central office, or rather, the role of the central committee, where Blocher sat, expanded its power by acquiring important tasks such as (a) adopting key slogans for federal polls based on decisions taken by the assembly of delegates; (b) deciding on the launch of referendums; (c) examining and adopting policy documents; and (d) electing the members of the steering committee and general secretariat. An important role is also played by the steering committee, which is responsible for current affairs and has the task of electing the chairmen and members of the special commissions, and which is also responsible for federal elections and managing financial issues.[3] There was an increase above all in the power of the head office, which was known until 2008 as the 'Bureau of the Party', comprising the president of the party, the vice-presidents, the chairman of the parliamentary group and the secretary general. In 2004 the head office was given responsibility for 'planning and strategic orientation', and for representing the party in 'all political questions', rather than simply the 'current ordinary political questions'.

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[3] As of 2001, the Steering Committee 'also establishes the dues of the cantonal branches according to the principles adopted by the assembly of delegates' (Statutes of the SVP, 2016, sec. 19).

The party's central office is empowered to formulate the party's programme and election platform and decide on the messages for national election campaigns. Since 2001 one of the tasks of the assembly of delegates has been to adopt key planning documents, but these are discussed and approved by the central committee without involving the cantonal branches as had been the case until 2000. The manifesto commission nominated by the head office and elected by the steering committee, establishes the party's basic programme. The national party has also increased its power in the statutes by directing campaigns at a national level and producing campaign documents (electoral platform, programmes, etc.) for the cantonal branches. In the federal elections of 2011, the central committee, which is responsible for electing the chairman and members of the special commission as well as for running the federal elections, set up a central campaign commission, whose task is to formulate party strategy. The commission furnishes party posters and illustrations for use also by the cantonal branches.[4] The official aim was to support candidates in the election campaign and also ensure brand uniformity when communicating with voters.[5]

Thirdly, the growing centralization of the party has manifested itself also in financial respects because the national party became less dependent on contributions from the cantonal branches and party members in general. Following the statutory changes in 2001, the SVP is funded by annual contributions from the cantonal branches and organizations. The amount is determined by the central committee on the basis of quantifiable needs and the number of voters. The party is funded also by contributions from individual members and representatives of the government, the parliament, and the Supreme Court. Other sources are voluntary donations and contributions brought in through extraordinary fundraising (Sec. 31). However, despite the increase in the number of cantons—according to a study carried out on the occasion of the 2007 federal elections (Gunzinger 2008)—the total amount contributed by the cantonal branches between 1998 and 2006 has remained unchanged at around 14 per cent. Nonetheless, there has been a net increase in funds

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[4] Cf. *Schweizerische Volkspartei* Bern (2007).

[5] Cf. *Schweizerische Volkspartei* Vaud (2007).

following advertising campaigns and events organized by the national party (45 per cent). Furthermore, the financial resources available for campaigning have greatly increased owing to the growing support by wealthy supporters and members such as Blocher himself.

The growing power of the head office and, more generally, the increasing centralization of the party have had significant consequences for the party in public office. Most importantly, for Christoph Blocher to become a member of the national government in 2003 was a clear sign of the head office's influence in government policy. Here, it should be noted that the election to government of the national leader of a Swiss political party is a rare occurrence in Swiss politics. The electoral system and the collegial approach that characterize Swiss government formation tend to favour moderate figures that fit well into a coalition format in which there exist neither block resignations nor a prime minister. Nevertheless, despite the centralization and the attempt to give greater coherence to the party, the SVP is still characterized by areas of autonomy left to the regional and local levels.

Coherence

Kenneth Janda defined coherence as the 'degree of congruence in the attitudes and behavior of party members' (Janda 1980: 118). The aforementioned changes in the SVP organization have contributed to its internal coherence. In the first phase, the SVP witnessed an internal struggle between the old leadership and the new arrivals. The 'old' SVP was extremely decentralized and had a low level of professionalization. Blocher and his followers were aided in their ability to take over the party by having on their side large human and financial resources, an unprecedented level of professionalization, and a solid reputation as winners in the electoral and referendum arenas.

When the changes in the party's internal rules facilitated the consolidation of Blocher's leadership as a cohesive team, the more moderate wing of the party became de-facto side-lined and found itself less and less represented in the upper echelons of the organization. Unlike the case of the Austrian Freedom Party, where Haider as its new leader pushed through

reforms challenging the 'ordinary' workings of the party, thus giving rise to a process of de-institutionalization (Luther 2000, 2003), the new leadership of the SVP preserved, at least for a period of several years, some spaces of autonomy for the minority groups. Indeed, the selection of candidates for the cantonal and federal elections has, at least formally, still remained an exclusive prerogative of the cantonal branches. Within their areas, the cantonal branches continue to be responsible for promoting the principles of the SVP—representing the party's interests in public opinion and vis-à-vis the institutions—and for recruiting new members. The only responsibility formally left to the national SVP is to defend issues considered to be of 'national interest' (sec. 5). Although the definition of what counts as national interest has been determined by the national party, the cantonal branches are able to make decisions and adopt stances, for instance in the federal referendum arena, that differ from those of the national party.

Besides the integrative power of accommodative rules, an important factor in terms of cohesion is the SVP's traditional focus on certain core issues. This combines a restrictive view on immigration and European integration with a liberal pro-business agenda in economic matters. As such, the discourse and priorities of the 'new' SVP are strongly shaped by the defence of national integrity, especially the notion of Swiss exceptionalism (Mazzoleni 2013a). Although the 'core' ideology is handled flexibly, it reflects genuine continuity on the part of the SVP for over two decades. As is typical for mass party organizations, such flexibility assumes, on the one hand, the availability of important but autonomous financial and human resources, in particular, grassroots party activists and sub-national—cantonal and municipal—levels of party organization. On the other hand, it also requires a strategy aimed at internal 'coherence' (that is 'the degree of congruence in the attitudes and behavior of party members') shaped by the main leadership (Janda 1980: 118). When these two conditions become imbalanced or compromised, affected parties may encounter political problems. Thus, the split that occurred in the SVP in 2008 and the creation of a moderate breakaway party by some dissidents (the Conservative Democratic Party) can help explain the electoral setbacks that followed, especially in the 2011 federal elections. Nevertheless, the SVP managed to preserve its dominant

position in the federal parliament and has attained important advances in cantonal elections in recent years, such as in French-speaking cantons.

Between Change and Adaptation

The SVP developed a relatively concentrated national leadership with marked centralization while strengthening its internal ideological coherence. This trend also resulted in some unexpected consequences for the leadership itself. In fact, since 2007, a third phase in the SVP's evolution has emerged in which the leader 'has lost strength', especially outside the party, although the organization remains 'strong'. In December 2007, following a period of increasing polarization within the party system and despite the further electoral growth of the SVP, a parliamentary majority voted to expel Blocher from the federal government. Blocher's expulsion, based on his perceived inability to play by the rules of the consociational system, which is often viewed as a characteristic of Switzerland (e.g. Deschouwer 2001), represented a new political and organizational challenge for the SVP and its leader. His replacement by another member of his party led to the most serious internal crisis in the history of the SVP, a crisis that was largely unexpected by the party leadership. Indeed the expulsion of the leader was not just the result of inter-party competition but, curiously, also a direct consequence of an increase in internal factionalism triggered by the process of centralization. Some warning signs had already been in place. In the previous phase, in particular during the legislative periods of 1999–2003 and 2003–2007, the party's parliamentary cohesion weakened and there were frequent calls, also publically, from the head office and steering committee for there to be greater discipline among the various members of the parliamentary group who had dissented in a number of major decisions.[6]

Yet, what transpired next was a far worse blow to Blocher's leadership. In December 2007, a member of the SVP, Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, was elected to the Federal Assembly in Christoph Blocher's place.

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[6] There were many examples of public controversies around the discipline of SVP MPs. See, for instance, Münzel (2004), *Neue Züricher Zeitung* (2003, 2004).
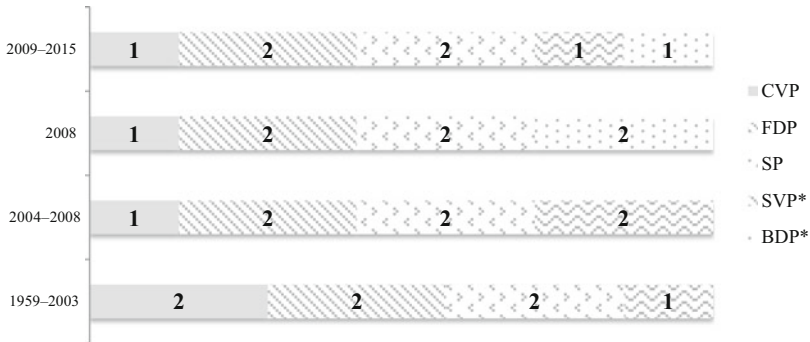
Fig. 3.4 Parties ** represented in the Federal Council 1959–2015. * The two elected in 2007 were members of SVP cantonal branches (Bern and Graubünden), but were not recognized by the parliamentary groups of the SVP. In June 2008, the two representatives affiliated with the Conservative Democratic Party of Switzerland (BDP). ** Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP); The Liberals (FDP); Social Democratic Party (SP); Swiss People's Party (SVP); Conservative Democratic Party (BDP). *Source*: Swiss Federal Statistical Office

After confirming her election to the Federal Council, Widmer-Schlumpf and Samuel Schmid, the other SVP member in the Federal Council, were expelled from the SVP parliamentary group in spring of 2008. At the same time other members of the SVP began to disapprove of Blocher's political leadership, in particular for failing to give due consideration to the consequences of his ouster from government. The Graubünden SVP backed its new federal councilor as a result of which the branch was subsequently expelled from the SVP. After this episode, the ousted Graubünden SVP and several members from other cantons joined forced to found the Conservative Democratic Party on 16 June 2008. For the first time since 1959, the Federal Council, that is the national government, changed in the composition of parties (see Fig. 4.4). Also in June 2008 representatives of the SVP in the Canton of Bern decided to break away and team up with the Conservative Democratic Party, after which also Samuel Schmid joined the new formation. Under these circumstances, the national SVP was kept away from governing, albeit temporarily.

According to de Lange and Art (2011: 1233), one of the conditions for the continued existence of a populist organization is, above all, the

leader's ability to play his or her role not only outside the organization, but also inside it by deploying *savoir-faire* and organizational skills. After being expelled from the federal government, Blocher had indeed lost his official position within the party. However, rather than giving up on his political agenda, he continued to play an important role within the party organization. The initial response was to further strengthen the central office and secure Blocher's return to the party leadership as vice-president. In the spring of 2008 Ueli Maurer, who had in the meantime begun to distance himself from Blocher, left the office and a new national president of the party, Toni Brunner, was elected. Considered a young disciple of Blocher's, he represented the hardliners in the federal parliament. Moreover, control over the party in public office was formally tightened with the introduction of new mechanisms for controlling internal discipline: The statutes were modified on 1 March and 4 October 2008 with the addition of a new clause to the effect that all those accepting an election to the Federal Council that had not been proposed by the SVP's parliamentary group in the federal chambers were not entitled to SVP membership. It was no accident that the SVP returned to government with the election of the former party president, Ueli Maurer, in December 2008.

The 'demarcation' strategy that had been imposed in terms of elections and referendums was also strengthened in the legislative sphere. In the 1999–2003 legislature, the SVP was already pursuing a more isolated roll-call voting strategy with respect to other groups, and in 2008 this tendency grew significantly.[7] As a result, the unity of the parliamentary group increased considerably. This was also due to the fact that the representatives of the moderate wing who had failed to toe the line of the parliamentary group in previous legislatures, ended up among the ranks of the breakaway Conservative Democratic Party.[8] At the same time, the party's head office strengthened its power and representation. On the one hand, it was gradually expanded, with the addition of new vice-presidents, who increased in number from three to five, elected by

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[7] Le Temps (2006), Linder and Schwarz (2005), Hermann (2011), see also Mazzoleni (2013b).
[8] *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (2008).

co-optation.[9] A second step occurred in May 2012 when their number rose to seven, officially making way for party representatives from French-speaking Switzerland and also for SVP women, who currently account for two out of the nine members. In 2013 the steering committee comprised nine members from cantons traditionally known for their more pragmatic approach[10] but 18 from newly created cantonal branches closer to the direction of the Zurich branch.[11] As late as 1994, six of the 20 members of the steering committee had been from the Canton of Bern. The expansion of the head office was also an opportunity to provide Blocher with a new role within a less concentrated but more structured and powerful group. It included what we may call 'his disciples' but also persons representing regional and gender diversity.

The head office found itself once more in a position of needing to avoid further internal tensions after suffering its first ever drop in popularity in the elections for the lower chamber of the national parliament in 2011. The party had also not succeeded in its attempt to strengthen its presence in the upper chamber but thus failed to win a second seat in the government. However, contrary to the expectations of many observers, the SVP experienced only a very slight decline of 2 per cent. It remained Switzerland's number one party with 26.6 per cent of votes in the lower chamber (based on a proportional system), and thus the most important group in the federal parliament. Moreover, while the period after 2011 did not lead to further rifts or expulsions, there has been no shortage of new electoral triumphs for the SVP, such as in the cantonal elections for Neuchâtel and Valais in the spring of 2013 as well as Geneva in October 2013. Most impressively, in the 2015 national elections the SVP won 11 additional seats in Switzerland's lower house of parliament. Contrary to observers claiming to have been spotting a trend toward decline,[12] the SVP has demonstrated a great capacity for further organizational

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[9] This change was approved by the assembly of delegates, which met in Frauenfeld in March 2008, and accepted the proposal of the head office (cf. Press Release 3 March 2008).

[10] 5 members come from Bern, 1 from Vaud, 2 from Schwyz, and 1 from Graubünden.

[11] 2 members come from St. Gallen, 4 from Zürich, 4 from Aargau, 1 from Lucerne, 1 from Nidwalden, 1 from Schaffhausen, 1 from Ticino, 1 from Thurgau, 1 from Valais, 1 from Fribourg, and 1 from Geneva.

[12] *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (2011, 2012).

development of the party[13] and superior mobilization in the referendum arena. This includes the successful popular initiative 'Against Mass Immigration', held in February 2014, which strongly challenged existing bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the EU. Undoubtedly, this result represents the party's central political success in the referendum arena of the last two decades.

Similarities and Differences within the Party System

The SVP's achievements are in part also the result of the weakness of their competitors. Founded and developed as a 'normal' party within the Swiss context, the organizational shift that occurred in the SVP in the 1990s and 2000s represents both an internal breakdown of, and a challenge to, the Swiss party legacy. While members of government are bound by collegiality to conform to the majority positions of the government, the parties—as 'extra-parliamentary' organizations—can legitimately organize referendums on laws proposed by the government, or launch popular initiatives on new issues. Nevertheless, by the 1980s, the federal referendum arena was largely dominated by left-wing and far-right parties. It was above all the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland (SP)—often being in the minority in government and parliament—that used direct democratic instruments in this way. This has legitimized the role of the SVP, which regularly launched challenges against the majority in government in the referendum arena.

Another factor is the SVP's resistance to play by the traditional rules of Swiss politics. This concerned in particular the traditionally low levels of competition in the electoral arena and the well-known emphasis on cooperation in the government arena (Mazzoleni 2017). Cooperative rules in Swiss politics experienced their apex and greatest relevance in the period between 1959 and 2003, when the national government saw the uninterrupted participation of all the main parties with an unvarying

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[13] The number of district and municipal sections continued to grow, and between 2007 and 2011 the party established 110 new branches, above all in French-speaking Switzerland (cf. Press release 14 July 2011).

distribution of seats (Burgos et al. 2011). Throughout the twentieth century the established rules of cooperation tended to maintain 'a strictly circumscribed competition' between Swiss parties (Kirchheimer 1966: 188). This, along with the mechanisms of direct democracy, helped lower the incentives for developing modern forms of political professionalization and capital-intensive campaigning (Ladner and Brändle 2001; Skenderovic 2009b). This also reduced the importance and salience of the national political and central party offices. Thus, historically, Swiss party organizations, especially centre right-wing parties, have been characterized by a weak and decentralized organization. Rooted in a multitude of cantonal structures and institutions, Switzerland's major parties were federated through light national organizations. Their origin, including that the 'old' SVP, dates back to the nineteenth century. All parties, except the SP, saw cantonal branches with either weak or no links at all between them when they began forming national confederations. This helped preserve considerable autonomy for the cantonal branches. Until the 1990s, the most centralized of all Swiss parties was undoubtedly the SP, which had been excluded from the federal government for decades. In the other main parties, including the SVP, it may be argued that 'each cantonal party has the tendency to consider itself the whole and not as a part of an ensemble' (Masnata 1963: 244; see also Gruner 1977). As federal elections were essentially conducted at the cantonal level, this provided also a favourable basis for the emergence of loose linkages between the party-as-organization and the party-in-public office, thereby enhancing the salience of the cooperative rules among representatives within government institutions.

Thus, 'new' SVP challenged not only the cooperative rules but also the organizational conditions of Swiss political parties. In contrast to the above-described territorial 'diffusion' of the party (Panebianco 1988: 50), the 're-founding' of the SVP resulted in territorial 'penetration'. This gave a crucial role to the head office and especially the national head of the party. It is thus easy to see the importance that the creation of new regional chapters played in the national strategy, especially under Maurer's presidency. Lacking a similar national leadership, no other Swiss party has, in recent decades, increased its territorial extensiveness, intensiveness, and centralization to a similar extent.

Moreover, the 'new' SVP both pushed grassroots mobilization and introduced 'Americanized' campaign methods that had been largely absent in Swiss politics. According to scholars' estimations, the SVP was the only one of the four main parties to have gained members between 1997 and 2007 (Gunzinger 2008: 89). The 'new' SVP emphasizes among other aspects a polemical style, negative campaigning, and larger investments in advertising and electoral personalization (Skenderovic 2009a, b). The SVP's campaign posters, present in every corner of the country during the campaign for the national elections of October 2007, all bearing a single slogan, 'Support Blocher! Vote SVP!' and flanked by a giant photo of the national party leader, constituted perhaps the apex of this new trend.

This level of 'nationalization' and personalization in electoral communications, which had been absent from the SVP and Swiss election campaigns in general, contributes to undermining the traditional rules and follows increasingly a media logic (Ladner 2005; Weinmann 2009). These transformations also partially involve the other government parties. Trying to adapt to the increasingly competitive trends, the FDP, the CVP, and the SP reinforced their central offices and have in some way tried to push toward greater coherence since the 2000s. However, neither the centre right-wing nor the social-democrats have significantly transformed their own party structure and generally failed to catch up with the SVP. This has, in part, been due to a lack of activists and financial resources along with persistently weak leadership. Moreover, the resistance against change is also a by-product of the cooperative political culture that claims to oppose the 'Americanization' of Swiss politics (Mazzoleni 2007; Pilotti et al. 2010).

Conclusion

We set out to explore how 'populist' parties with complex organizational structures and a relatively strong leadership manage to lay the foundations for a lasting presence in political systems, adapting their organization in response to internal and external challenges. To do this, we emphasized the need to bridge the gap between the study of 'populist' parties and the literature on party organizations. In our case study of the Swiss People's Party (SVP), we showed how this process of adaptation, which also includes forms of discontinuity, draws concretely on

several such elements beginning with the origin and genesis of the party. Prompted also by the SVP's position both within the party system and government, the party initiated specific forms of development of organizational complexity, centralization, and ideological coherence.

We have therefore shown how the new leadership has contributed to shaping not only the ideological stance of the party but also its organization features. We have also shown how these changes serve the aim of perpetuating leadership and organization. However, the SVP appears to be a long way from being a 'charismatic' party, and has rather a structured party organization. Coming from a weak, decentralized, but already rather complex organization, the 'new' SVP has been moulded into an organization combining activist-intensive and capital-intensive resources. Both have strengthened grassroots mobilization as well as mobilization from the national central office. Nonetheless, some autonomy has been left to the sub-national branches (like the selection of candidates for the federal elections). The recent history of the SVP shows how the increasing power of the central office over the public office can engender rifts and internal conflicts. Nonetheless, moving towards centralization has been necessary for the party to manage its increasing extensiveness and intensiveness. Centralization has meant strengthening the central office and its power in relation to the assembly of delegates, the cantonal branches, and the party representatives in both parliament and government.

As these features require a bargaining strategy to avoid factional tendencies, we have also shown how the continued presence of the SVP in the Swiss political system depends on its ability (or inability) to adapt the role of the leader and the organization in order to respond to the need for a clear ideological orientation. If the centralization of the organization is a key tool of the 'populist' leadership, what seems even more important is its ability to manage internal challenges created by external opportunities and constraints. Since the mid-1990s the new SVP's leadership has been able to manage change and adaptation to a considerable degree. In this context, we sought to demonstrate how the personal role of the leader is less crucial in terms of being a 'charismatic' individual, but rather in being the key person in a cohesive leadership team. There, the leader remains in the position of the power broker in a relatively non-concentrated leadership model (Janda 1970: 111). Following the phase of party concentration, which peaked in 2003 when the leader of the SVP was elected to

the federal government, the party went through a critical period. After Blocher's removal from government in 2007, internal tensions led to the expulsion and breakaway of an internal minority.

However, these developments did not herald a definitive decline for the former (74-year-old) leader. On the contrary, he held on to a leading role in the party, albeit in a less visible function. Above all, despite electoral stagnation in the federal elections of 2011, the SVP remained the strongest party in the federal parliament, showing a great capacity for political adaptation and change. This was confirmed by the SVP's impressive victory in the 2015 national elections in which it achieved its best results ever. Thus, the SVP exemplifies 'normal' party organization when we consider its high organizational complexity. Yet, by pursuing populist politics, the SVP also represents, to some extent, a peculiar party organization that combines features borrowed from the mass party with professional-electoral party patterns. Within the Swiss political landscape, no other party has increased its organizational intensiveness and centralization around a national leader like the 'new' SVP. Whereas, its predecessor had shared the principal political traits with the other main government parties, the 'new' party developed competitive features that provide it with crucial advantages in electoral and referendum arenas.

As with other 'populist' parties across Europe that have gained key institutional power in recent years, the example of SVP also shows that 'charisma-centred' interpretations of the role of the leader do not provide us with sufficient insight to explain the party's success. Instead we may conclude that it was the leader's role in institutional adaptation and organizational development that proved decisive.

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4

The Italian Lega Nord

Duncan McDonnell and Davide Vampa

Introduction: The Main Traits

The Lega Nord (LN) [Northern League] in 2015 is the oldest party group in the Italian Parliament. While this statistic reflects the highly turbulent nature of Italian politics over the past three decades, it also underlines the resilience of a party whose roots lie in a series of regionalist movements that emerged across northern Italy in the 1980s. These were later merged in 1991 into the LN under Umberto Bossi, who led the party until April 2012. Proving to be far from a short-lived protest movement as many had imagined, the Lega played a key role in the demise of the Italian 'First

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Republic' in the early 1990s before then becoming a member of the first government of the Second Republic in 1994. Although an ill-fated flirtation with secessionism and refusal to enter alliances later that decade saw the party's support levels plummet, the Lega went on to serve in right-wing coalition governments led by Silvio Berlusconi for eight of the ten years between 2001 and 2011.[1] In terms of electoral results and institutional roles occupied at both national and sub-national levels, the LN has thus been one of Europe's most successful regionalist and populist parties (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2010).

In the remainder of this first section, we provide an overview of the Lega Nord's history to date and show that—according to the criteria used by Kenneth Janda (1980)—it can now be considered 'institutionalized'. In the second section, we explore in depth the party's organization by following the same broad analytical headings as those used by the other contributors to this volume, namely 'degree of organization'; 'centralization'; and 'coherence'. We find that, despite the Lega's avowedly federalist nature, in reality its organization has for most of its existence been that of a centralized, hierarchical macro-regionalist party. In the third section, we look at how the party has responded to the most serious crisis in its history—Bossi's resignation in April 2012, following a corruption scandal. We note that, while the new leader Matteo Salvini has so far brought the Lega electoral success and good poll ratings, there is evidence that some elements of the party's organizational model are changing as part of a broader process of adaptation to new internal and external circumstances. In the fourth section, we look at the similarities and differences of the Lega's organizational model compared to other parties in Italy. As we demonstrate, this has elements in common with Berlusconi's parties, given the traditional dominance of the leader, but also with the new Movimento Cinque Stelle (M5S)[Five Star Movement] as regards the focus on the grassroots and the importance of activism. Finally, in the conclusions, we sum up the main points of the chapter

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[1] In the mid-1990s, the Lega shifted from advocating federalism to calling for independence for 'Padania', an invented nation covering most of Italy's northern regions. It abandoned this position in 2000 when it re-joined the Berlusconi-led centre-right coalition. See Albertazzi and McDonnell (2005: 995–996).

and briefly discuss the significance over time of its party organization for the Lega Nord.

Italy's Oldest Parliamentary Party

The LN largely fulfills Janda's criteria for assessing party institutionalization (Janda 1980: 19). It has been in existence under its current name since its foundation in 1991 and, although there were several high-profile expulsions and small breakaway factions in the 1990s, none of these proved to be significant (Janda 1980: 23–24). The LN has also displayed legislative stability given that it has maintained a constant presence in the Italian parliament, in the European Parliament, and in the regional assemblies of the North for over two decades (Janda 1980: 26). Despite its electoral performances having fluctuated over time as we can see from Table 4.1 below, they have never precluded the party from taking seats at national, European, and regional levels (see Table 4.2). Finally, as regards Janda's 'leadership competition' variable, while there was no such competition during the 20 years in which Bossi was Federal Secretary, the LN has changed since his resignation in 2012 and now follows 'an overt process' (Janda 1980: 24) for selecting its leader which involves a 'formal meeting of party members on the issue of leadership

Table 4.1 General election results of the main Italian centre-right parties, 1994–2013

	1994	1996	2001	2006	2008	2013
LN	8.4	10.1	3.9	4.6	8.3	4.1
FI/PDL	21.0	20.6	29.4	23.7	37.4	21.6
AN	13.5	15.7	12.0	12.3		
UDC	–	5.8	3.2	6.8	5.6	1.8

Note: FI stands for Forza Italia, AN for Alleanza Nazionale [National Alliance] and UDC for Unione di Centro [Union of the Centre]. In 1994, 1996 and 2001, the general election results cited are those from the proportional part of the elections for the Camera dei deputati (Chamber of Deputies). On three occasions since 1994, one of the parties listed did not run as part of the coalition: the LN in 1996 and the UDC in 2008 and 2013. FI and AN ran together as the PDL in 2008—hence the apparent sudden rise in the FI figure that year
Source: Electoral archive of the Italian Interior Ministry (2015)

Table 4.2 Lega Nord elected representatives at main institutional levels, 1994–2014

National	1994	1996	2001	2006	2008	2014
	177	86	47	36	85	34
European	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	
	6	4	4	9	5	
Regional	1995	2000	2005	2010	2014	
	57	42	40	81	54	

Note: Figures for 2014 are from June 2014. For national representatives, the reference years prior to 2014 are those in which elections were held. For the regional level, the reference years prior to 2014 are those in which most (but not all) of Italy's 20 regions held elections

Source: Electoral archive of the Italian Interior Ministry (2015)

change' (ibid.) and is fully in line with the rules laid down in the party statute[2] (Lega Nord 2012a).

The main purpose of this introductory section is to outline the history of the LN. Formally created in 1991 by the union of six regional 'leagues' that had emerged in the 1980s across the north of Italy (Biorcio 1997: 39–53), the LN was led from its inception by Umberto Bossi—founder of the most electorally successful of these leagues, the Lega Lombarda [Lombardy League]. In the ensuing years, the party rose rapidly, taking 8.7 per cent of the vote at the 1992 general election and then—following the collapse (or transformation) of most of the parties which had dominated the First Republic—entering government for the first time after the 1994 elections as part of the new centre-right coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi. While this cohabitation ended swiftly and acrimoniously in December of that year, the LN went on two years later to achieve just over 10 per cent when it ran alone at the 1996 general election (see Table 4.1). Due to its isolation from the two main centre-right and centre-left blocks, reflecting also the party's (unpopular) new secessionist stance, the ensuing years saw a series of poor performances in second-order elections,

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[2] This chapter was written before the June 2015 Lega Nord federal congress, which slightly changed the party statute. The Lega is now defined as a 'confederal' rather than 'federal' party. Additionally, the President of the party only plays a symbolic role. The new leader, Matteo Salvini, backed this measure in order to weaken the role of the former leader, Umberto Bossi (who remains president for life). Other formal changes are marginal and do not significantly deviate from what is written in this chapter.

prompting the Lega to abandon its call for an independent northern state and return to its alliance with Berlusconi in time for the 2001 general election. Although, as Table 4.1 shows, the party performed poorly on that occasion by achieving just 3.9 per cent of the vote, it was compensated by its entry into government and subsequent capacity to influence policy (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2005).[3]

The 2006 general election saw a small improvement in the LN vote—rising to 4.6 per cent and thus going against the received wisdom that populists in power will inevitably lose support (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2015). After two years in opposition, the party made a significant advance at the 2008 general election, almost doubling its share to 8.3 per cent and taking its place in a Berlusconi-led coalition government once again. The 2008 election proved to be just the first of a series of excellent results for the Lega. It received its highest ever share at national level, 10.2 per cent, in the 2009 European Parliament (EP) elections and then, in 2010, registered its most successful sub-national performance to date with LN candidates for regional presidencies securing victory in two key northern regions (Piedmont and Veneto). Although the Lega's support levels remained high in opinion polls throughout both its time in office until the government fell in November 2011 and the initial period back in opposition, its ratings rapidly declined following the news in April 2012 that Bossi and members of his family were under investigation for misappropriation of party funds (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2015: 94–95).

In the aftermath of this scandal, Bossi quickly resigned (though he was awarded the ceremonial role of 'Life President') and another leading figure in the party, Roberto Maroni, was elected as federal secretary at the LN congress in July 2012. The change in leadership, however, could not stem the party's slide in the polls and this was reflected at the February 2013 general election, when the LN received just 4.1 per cent (see Table 4.1). Maroni, in turn, decided later that year to step down as

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[3] As Albertazzi and McDonnell (2005: 959–960) show, the Lega in this period adopted an effective strategy of picking 'friends' and 'enemies' within the coalition. In brief, this amounted to the party often attacking its fellow junior coalition partners, the Alleanza Nazionale (AN – National Alliance) and the UDC (Unione di Centro (UDC – Union of the Centre), while generally avoiding conflict with Forza Italia and supporting Berlusconi on issues of particular interest to him (for example, justice).

leader after having been elected president of the Lombardy region, thus triggering primaries, held in December 2013, at which Bossi attempted a comeback. This ended in a heavy defeat for the party's founder as he took just 18 per cent of the vote, over 60 percentage points behind the much younger member of the European Parliament (MEP) from Lombardy, Matteo Salvini, who won easily with 82 per cent.

Finally, a word about the Lega's ideology. Under Bossi and Maroni, the party appealed to a homogeneous and distinct, virtuous northern 'people', conceived of as 'a single entity, ethnos and demos together, an idealized community' (Tarchi 2003: 151). Its main policy issues were federalism and immigration. Ideologically, the Lega was thus 'ethnoregionalist populist' (Spektorowski 2003). As such, the party was quite similar ideologically to those of the populist radical right and was also regularly classified in this manner, albeit with reservations by some of the scholars doing so (e.g. Mudde 2007; Norris 2005).[4] However, as we discuss in section 'Between Change and Adaptation', the party under Salvini has significantly toned down its 'northern regionalist' appeal but ramped up even further its anti-immigrant, authoritarian and Eurosceptic positions. In our view, it has thus become a fully-fledged populist radical right party akin to the French Front National (FN) [National Front], the Vlaams Belang (VB) [Flemish Interest] and the Austrian Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) [Austrian Freedom Party].

The Party Organization over Time: a Centralized Macro-regionalist Party

Degree of Organization

The party organization of the Lega Nord was established at the beginning of the 1990s, when six regional leagues and territorial movements from the north and centre-north of Italy decided to establish a formal alliance.

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[4] Cas Mudde (2007: 56) said that 'the LN might not (always) be a perfect example of the populist radical right, but it is too similar to be excluded from the party family' while Pippa Norris (2005: 65) observed that the party 'may not be strictly part of the radical right'.

These were largely unorganized at the time. As Damian Tambini (2001: 90) explains, even the most structured of the founding movements, the Lombard League, had 'only five permanent staff members as late as 1989, and offices in a four-room Milanese apartment'. It was, as he puts it, a 'do it yourself' organization (ibid.). This situation changed substantially as support for the movement—and its consequent access to public office and resources—rapidly grew in the ensuing years. Faced with the need to create a proper organizational structure, the LN opted for a model that was strongly hierarchical. Together with the dominant role of the founding leader, Umberto Bossi, this guaranteed cohesion for a party that in the first decade of its existence was on several occasions beset by personality clashes and demands for greater internal autonomy by regional factions (Tarchi 1998: 151).

The organization of the Lega Nord is based on a network of 'sezioni comunali' ['municipal branches'], the smallest organizational units of the party. According to the 2012 Party Statute, LN members voluntarily take part in local politics or in initiatives promoted by regional and national leaders (Lega Nord 2012a: Art. 33). The degree of involvement in party activities does not just depend on members' willingness to participate, but is also defined by their formal 'status', which depends on the duration and quality of their affiliation to the party. Janda (1980: 127–132) analyses the role of party members by referring to the 'involvement' dimension, which he explains as 'the intensity of psychological identification with the party' and 'the commitment to furthering its objectives by participating in party activities'. If we use some of his indicators, we can see that membership requirements in the Northern League have traditionally been quite high. Members have to pay a fee of at least 10 Euros and are formally divided into two categories: *soci sostenitori* ['supporter members'] and *soci ordinari militanti* ['activist members']. Supporter members cannot vote or stand for internal party positions and are not obliged to participate in the party activities (Lega Nord 2012b: Art. 2). A supporter member can formally become an activist member only if he or she has been a member of the party for at least 12 months and can demonstrate that he/she has been active in the movement (Lega Nord 2012a: Art. 32). A request for 'activist membership' needs to be approved by the provincial office of the party (Lega Nord 2012b: Art. 5). Activist members have

the right to vote in party assemblies and can run for internal party posi-
tions. They have the *duty* to participate in and support the activities of
the party (Lega Nord 2012b: Art. 3). A member can stand for municipal
party positions 180 days after becoming an activist member and has to
wait a year before being eligible to stand for provincial party positions,
three years for regional positions (called 'national positions' given that
the individual northern regions were originally considered 'nations' and
the term has remained in use) and five years for national positions (called
'federal positions'). Finally, a member can aspire to become Federal
Secretary after 10 years of being an Activist Member (Lega Nord 2012b:
Art. 7). Overall, therefore, members of the Lega Nord have to undergo a
very strict selection process and are subject to a series of time barriers if
they wish to pursue a career within the party.

As regards the territorial presence and extension of the party, Gianluca
Passarelli and Dario Tuorto (2012: 264) found that the Lega in 2011 had
a total of 1441 branches, of which 628 were in Lombardy, 367 in Veneto,
and 142 in Piedmont, with the remaining 304 divided between the other
regions of the North and Centre. As Fig. 4.1 below shows, these com-
prised over 170,000 members at the end of 2011. While the scandal that
hit the party in 2012 appears to have had a dramatic effect on the number
of members (see section 'Between Change and Adaptation'), it is worth
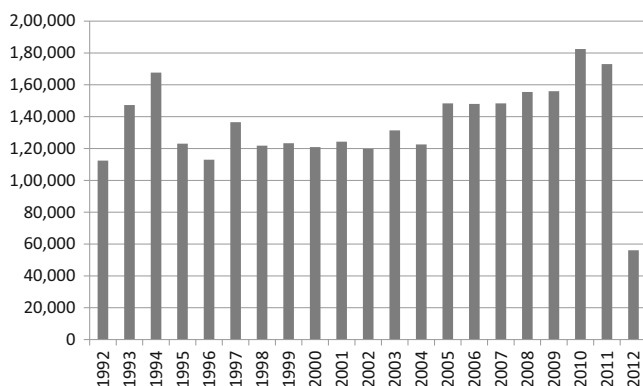
Figure 4.1   Lega Nord membership, 1992–2012. *Note*: The figures refer to
the number of members on 31 December of each year. *Source*: Data provided
by the Federal Organizational Secretariat of the Lega Nord

noting that the Lega until then had for many years bucked the Western European trend of party membership decline (van Biezen et al. 2012).

In the mid-1990s, the party also created a network of 'ancillary' organizations aimed at reaching out to different social and demographic categories. For instance, young members (aged under 30) were affiliated to the youth organization, Movimento Giovani Padani [Movement of Young Padanians], while women could participate in the organization Donne Padane [Padanian Women]. The list of ancillary organizations also included a number of professional categories (entrepreneurs, teachers, newsagents, etc.) and even a trade union. With the exception of the youth organization, these organizations largely failed to become influential. Finally, the party also tried to develop different forms of internal and external communication outlets, such as a daily paper *La Padania*, dozens of smaller publications, a radio channel, Radio Padania Libera, and even a television station, TelePadania.[5]

Centralization

The Lega Nord resulted from the merger of different regionalist movements and for this reason it adopted a federal organizational structure divided into 13 regional branches. As mentioned earlier, these were called 'national councils' in Lega parlance. The formal organizational structure of the party has remained substantially unchanged in the two decades since then. The leader is called the *segretario federale* (federal secretary) and acts as the head of the *segreteria federale* (federal secretariat), which is the executive office of the party (Lega Nord 2012a: Art. 8). The federal secretariat also includes the federal president, three deputy secretaries, the organization secretary, the presidents of the parliamentary groups (including the European Parliament) and any LN representatives who are presidents of regions (Lega Nord 2012a: Art. 17). In line with Italian territorial administrative divisions, the regional branches are in turn divided into provincial and municipal branches (Lega Nord 2012a: Art. 2). The main decision-making bodies of the party are the federal congress, which

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[5] Since Salvini took over, the daily paper and the television station have both closed as part of the cost-cutting organizational changes we discuss in the section 'Between Change and Adaptation'.
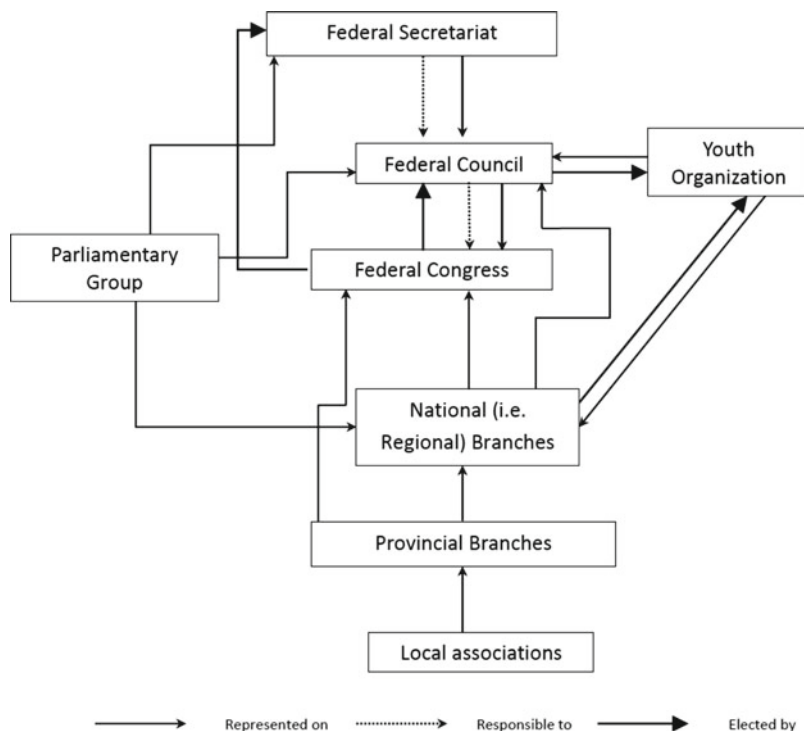
Figure 4.2   The state-wide organization of the Lega Nord. *Source*: Authors' elaboration from party statute

is supposed to take place every three years, and the federal council, which is comprised of the leaders and representatives of each 'confederated' national (i.e. regional) council (Lega Nord 2012a: Art. 8).

Figure 4.2 above summarizes the organization of the Lega Nord and underlines the fact that strong formal emphasis is placed on the representation of regional ('national') branches in federal decision-making bodies. The leaders of the parliamentary groups are also well represented at federal level. In addition, Lega Nord MPs are represented in their regional branches.

The democratic and federal set-up of the LN described in the party statute, however, has often been overridden by the informal use of central powers. In fact, what was indicative of the centralized and hierarchical character of the party for the first two decades of its existence was not so

much what was written in the statute, but the fact that the federal secretary (i.e. party leader) Bossi was able to entirely ignore it. To take one particularly illuminating example: article 10 of the 2002 party statute stated that the federal congress (which, according to article 9, had to be held every 3 years) should elect the federal secretary and that his/her mandate was set at 3 years (Lega Nord 2002: Art. 14). Nonetheless, despite these very clear rules, the party did not hold a single Federal congress (and therefore no leadership election) for 10 years from 2002 until July 2012, when Maroni was elected federal secretary after Bossi's resignation.

As regards candidate selection for elections, this is strictly hierarchical, since the federal council has to ratify any candidature proposed by the party's regional leaders for regional, national and European elections. This centralism is replicated in the relationship between regional and municipal sections of the party, since the former have to approve lists and alliances submitted by the latter. In addition, as we have seen, the rules clearly state when party members can stand for public office positions at different territorial levels (Table 4.3). At the same time, the party statute is quite vague about the role that members play in selecting election candidates. In this context, and in line with what we have said earlier, the federal leadership is free to decide the composition of Lega Nord candidate lists without consulting party activists. The federal leadership also plays a dominant role in drafting the party manifesto, not just for general elections and European Parliament ones, but also for those at subnational

Table 4.3 Rules for members wishing to stand for party and public offices (years of membership required are indicated in cells)

Territorial level	Party office	Public office
Municipal	180 days	1 year (2 years for municipalities with more than 15,000 inhabitants)
Provincial	1 year	2 years
Regional	3 years	5 years
Federal	5 years (10 years to become Federal Secretary)	5 years

Source: 'Regolamento della Lega Nord per l'Indipendenza della Padania' (2012 edition of the Lega Nord party organization rules)

Table 4.4 Weights of regions in the Lega Nord vote

	1992	1994	1996	2001	2006	2008	2013
Lombardy	42.09	45.2	43.31	51.51	46.0	43.9	53.32
Veneto	16.99	21.6	24.57	21.51	21.81	27.46	22.31
Lombardy+Veneto	*59.08*	*66.8*	*67.88*	*73.02*	*67.81*	*71.36*	*75.63*
Piedmont	15.38	14.98	14.31	11.62	11.33	11.35	8.8
Friuli VG	4.1	4.64	5.18	4.52	3.58	3.29	3.49
Liguria	5.5	4.32	3.16	2.96	2.49	2.26	1.57
Emilia Romagna	8.96	6.04	5.73	5.19	7.1	7.2	4.97
Trentino-AA	1.7	1.47	1.97	1.52	1.78	1.92	1.82
Tuscany	2.39	1.75	1.22	0.97	1.67	1.6	1.17
Other	2.89	0	0.55	0.2	4.24	1.02	2.55
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: The regional weights are calculated by dividing the Lega Nord general election votes in each region by the total Lega Nord general election votes in Italy and multiplying by 100. This gives us the percentage weight of each region as part of the Lega Nord vote.

Source: Electoral archive of the Italian Interior Ministry (2015)

level. Hence, when competing for public office, LN candidates have to refer to a 'standard' manifesto written by the federal council.[6]

If we look at the respective weights of the different regions forming the federal organization, we can see that the Lombardy branch has played a dominant role. In 2012, although the party was formally composed of 13 National (i.e. regional) Councils, 47 per cent of the members of the Federal Secretariat came from Lombardy. As Table 4.4 above shows, this centrality of Lombardy was broadly in line with the electoral weight of the region among the LN's overall vote in general elections. Nonetheless, it is still striking to consider that—as Table 4.5 below plain—the party's ministers in government to date have been overwhelmingly chosen from among Lombard members of the party. Indeed, it was not until the party returned to government in 2008 that it nominated its first Veneto minister, despite the weight of this region in the party's vote share. Admittedly, the situation was different as regards junior ministers, with the geographical distribution of these being more balanced. Generally, if we think in terms of the three dimensions of party organization described by Lori

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[6] See, for example, the 2013 local elections manifesto (Lega Nord 2013): http://www.leganord.org/index.php/component/phocadownload/category/7-comuni-al-voto%3Fdownload%3D789:programma-elezioni-amministrative-2013.

Table 4.5 Geographical origins of Lega Nord ministers in government cabinets (1994, 2001–2006, 2008–2011)

Region	Berlusconi I (1994)	Berlusconi II (2001–2005)	Berlusconi III (2005–2006)	Berlusconi IV (2008–2011)
Lombardy	3	3	3	3
Veneto	0	0	0	1

Source: Italian Senate (2015)

Thorlakson (2009), it seems evident that, despite its rhetorical support for federalism and decentralization, the LN has been a vertically integrated organization, in which regional branches have had little influence on key federal decision making processes and have enjoyed only limited autonomy as regards candidate selection and the drafting of party programmes (even for local and regional elections). In other words, rather than a 'horizontal' alliance of regionalist and territorial movements, the Lega has in reality been a macro-regionalist party, de facto dominated by its Lombard leadership (Massetti 2009: 205).

The dominance of a small set of Lombard elites also reflects the fact that during Bossi's time as leader from 1991 to 2012, there was no clear distinction between 'the party in public office' and 'the party in central office' (Katz and Mair 1994). The members of the federal secretariat were mostly MPs and members of government. Bossi himself became a minister in different Berlusconi governments, as did other high-profile Lombard members of the federal party elite like Roberto Maroni, Roberto Castelli, and Roberto Calderoli. However, it is worth nothing that the LN leadership is now mainly controlled by younger local or regional administrators, who have little experience of national public office. Most notably, Salvini (just 40 when he became leader) is a longstanding member of the European Parliament and a former city councillor in Milan. He has never been a member of the Italian parliament or national government.

Finally, notwithstanding the importance of members as voluntary workers for the Lega, we find that most of the party's income comes from public funding. Table 4.6 below provides information on the party's 2010 and 2011 budgets. It shows that membership fees accounted for less than 4 per cent of total party funding during these years, whereas public funding was by far the largest source of party financing, followed by private donations.

Table 4.6 Lega Nord finances, 2010 and 2011

	2010		2011	
	Euros (thousands)	%	Euros (thousands)	%
Public funding	22,506	61.7	17,613	59.5
Private donations	10,136	27.8	8,315	28.1
Membership fees	1,245	3.4	1,105	3.7
Other	2,582	7.8	2,552	8.7
Total	36,469	100	29,585	100

Source: See http://www.leganord.org/index.php/il-movimento/bilancio (accessed:
26 March 2014)

Coherence

Although Bossi dominated the Lega for the first two decades of its existence, this did not occur without internal divisions and struggles. In the previous section, we noted an imbalance in the 2001–2011 period between the Lombard and Venetian branches in terms of ministerial portfolio allocations. While this did not give rise to serious internal dissent, the same was not the case in the early 1990s when strong territorial divisions emerged. For instance, in 1994 and 1995 the party experienced a period of instability with many defections, particularly in Veneto (where the regional leader, Franco Rocchetta, left the party), Piedmont and Lombardy (Vernice 1995: 7). Ultimately, such events served to strengthen the leadership of Bossi, who replaced dissidents with loyal party members. Bossi thus exploited internal divisions to increase his own power. This culminated in the late 2000s with the creation of a so-called 'magic circle' composed of his relatives and friends (Brunazzo and Roux 2013). Generally, we can say that Bossi built the Lega Nord in a way that minimized factionalism at the leadership level. It was not possible to challenge his leadership in any kind of sustained manner since internal dissent was not tolerated and opponents were swiftly forced to leave the party or were expelled as 'traitors'. As Anna Cento Bull and Mark Gilbert (2001: 123) argue, Bossi attempted to make his position 'institutionally fireproof' in the sense that he could be deposed only if 'two thirds of the Federal Council invoked an extraordinary Federal Congress and presented a convincing alternative candidate and programme'.

Ideological struggles within the party became less relevant over time mainly because of the strengthening of Bossi's leadership discussed above.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that—among those who remained—many of the higher echelons of the party had very different political backgrounds (Tambini 2001: 87). This may have had some influence on their political discourse. For instance, marked differences can be noted in the communication style of the MEP Mario Borghezio, a former member of far right movements, and Roberto Maroni, a former left-wing activist. Such differences aside, since the LN's foundation, the main divisions within the leadership have emerged on the federalism-secession axis rather than the left-right one. Most notably, when Bossi decided to transform the Lega Nord in the mid 1990s into an openly secessionist movement calling for the full independence of Padania, some moderates within the party (including Irene Pivetti—former president of the Chamber of Deputies) voiced their doubts and were soon driven out of the movement. In fact, according to Ilvo Diamanti (1997: 76), an important aspect of the decision to promote the concept of 'Padania' as an independent political entity was Bossi's desire to 'unify and regain control of an organization and rank and file which had become overly heterogeneous and contradictory'.

After 2000, divisions over federalism and secession became less relevant, as Bossi abandoned the 'Padanian independence' stance and re-established an alliance with the centre-right led by Silvio Berlusconi. The internal cohesion of the party thus improved significantly in the 2000s.

Table 4.7 Parliamentary defections from the Lega Nord and other Italian parties, 2001–2013

	2001–2006	2006–2008	2008–2013
Lega Nord	*4 (13.3%)*	*1 (4.3%)*	*2 (3.3%)*
Forza Italia	11 (6.2%)	3 (2.2%)	–
Alleanza Nazionale	5 (5%)	4 (5.6%)	–
PDL	–	–	73 (26.5%)
DS	7 (5.1%)	–	–
Margherita	7 (8.8%)	–	–
PD/Ulivo	–	24 (11%)	14 (6.5%)
UDC	2 (5%)	3 (7.7%)	1 (2.9%)

Note: The data refers to defections in the lower house, the Chamber of Deputies. We cite the absolute number and then, in brackets, the percentage of the parliamentary group which this number represents
Source: Italian Chamber of Deputies (www.camera.it)

Table 4.7 below shows that the Lega Nord parliamentary group has also been quite cohesive since then. Particularly in the 2008–2013 period (despite this being characterized by high political instability), defections were less significant (3.3 per cent) than in other parliamentary groups such as the Popolo della Libertà (PDL) [People of Freedom] with 26.5 per cent and the Partito Democratico (PD) [Democratic Party] with 6.5 per cent.

Between Change and Adaptation

The Lega Nord has survived several major setbacks since its creation. First of all, its decision in 1994 to leave—and thus bring down—the Berlusconi-led government provoked a significant loss of MPs and internal party divisions. Second, its move to a secessionist stance and refusal of alliances in the late 1990s led to a heavy electoral decline and more internal divisions. Third, the serious illness of its leader, Bossi, in 2004 caused commentators to wonder about the party's ability to continue 'on its own'. However, in all three instances, the Lega was able to survive and go on to enjoy new electoral successes. This was, in our view, thanks both to the unique ideological offer of the party and its strong, well-rooted organization. Indeed, if we look again at Fig. 4.1, we can see that—despite the various crises listed above—the party membership never fell below 110,000 at any stage. For example, while its vote share halved between the 1996 and 2001 general elections, its membership remained relatively stable during that period. However, the party's most recent crisis—the 2012 scandal involving Bossi—has not been met with the same trend of membership stability. As Fig. 4.1 also shows, the Lega saw a huge fall in its membership from 173,044 at the end of 2011 to 56,074 at the end of 2012. In addition, and again according to official party figures, just over 17,000 members were entitled to vote in the December 2013 leadership election, confirming that this membership decline had continued apace. Thus, of all the crises to hit the party during its two decades in existence, this seems to have been the one with the most damaging organizational effects.

However, while the 2013 primary election underlined how far the membership numbers had dropped, it also represented a turning point for

the Lega ideologically and electorally. Under Salvini, the party has shifted from ethno-regionalist populism to a more marked anti-EU, radical right populist profile. Responding to broader social and political changes during the economic crisis, Salvini has been able to move the territorial focus of the party from the *sub-national* to the *supra-national* level. As a result, by 2015 the Lega had become less and less a 'macro-regionalist party' mobilised against the *national centre* and ever more a 'national-populist' party mobilised against an emerging *European centre* and its policies. This shift to the right and away from federalist issues, which were no longer crucial in the Italian political debate, produced their first positive effects at the 2014 European Parliament elections, when the Lega Nord recovered slightly from its 2013 general election result and gained 6.2 per cent of the national vote (although this was still 4 points down on its performance in the 2009 EP election).

Reversing the electoral decline of the Lega, which seemed inexorable during Maroni's brief time at the helm, strengthened the leadership of Salvini, who could then begin implementing painful organizational reforms. The labour-intensive structure on which the party used to rely has been partly dismantled. For instance, a drastic cut in the number of staff working full time for the Lega was accompanied by the closure of the party newspaper *La Padania*, after almost 17 years in existence. These cuts in large part reflect the straitened financial conditions in which the Lega now operates. Table 4.8 below is a continuation of Table 4.6 and shows the main sources of party finance during 2012–2013. The total income of the party dropped from around 36 million euros in 2010 to 14 million euros in 2013. In the same period, membership revenue almost halved from

Table 4.8 Lega Nord finances, 2012 and 2013

	2012		2013	
	Euros (thousands)	%	Euros (thousands)	%
Public Funding	8885	45.1	6535	46.6
Private Donations	7064	35.8	3923	28
Membership Fees	918	4.7	674	4.7
Other	2850	14.4	2902	20.7
Total	19,717	100	14,034	100

Source: See http://www.leganord.org/index.php/il-movimento/bilancio (accessed: 23 October 2015)
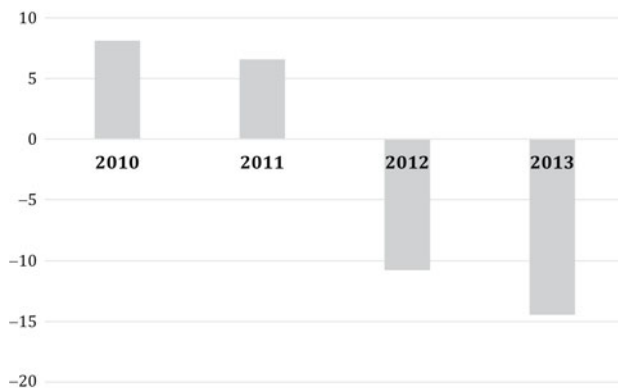
Figure 4.3   The budget of the Lega Nord: surplus/deficit (in millions of Euro), 2010–2013. *Source*: See http://www.leganord.org/index.php/il-movimento/bilancio

1.2 million euros to 674,000 euros. Preliminary figures for 2014 suggest that the contribution of membership to the financing of party activities has further declined to 650,000 euros. As Fig. 4.3 clearly highlights, the party's finances have thus nosedived in just four years. While in 2010 the Lega Nord had a budget surplus of more than 8 million euros, in 2013 it had a deficit of 15 million euros. Although the fall in membership contributions have affected this, the collapse in revenue can be mainly explained by the reduction in public financing, which had represented the most important source of income for the party.

Salvini has been able to adapt effectively to the changes imposed by the new political conditions, which have made heavy party structures and extensive organizations economically unsustainable for most Italian parties. Frequent participation in television debates and social media have become his main political weapons. Moreover, his strategy of expanding the political support for the party to the south of Italy has not resulted in the construction of new organizational structures but, rather, in the creation of a personal list called '*Noi con Salvini*' (literally meaning 'We with Salvini'). This is a network of electoral committees, directly linked to Salvini, which do not formally belong to the Lega Nord. More generally, the Lega under Salvini has been quite successful at the ballot box.

After its recovery at the 2014 European elections, the party obtained a striking success in the 2014 regional election in Emilia Romagna (19.4 per cent), becoming the largest party after the centre-left Partito Democratico (PD) [Democratic Party]. This upward trend was confirmed at the 2015 regional elections when the Lega replaced Berlusconi's party, Forza Italia (FI), as the main party on the right in all central-northern regions, including ones such as Umbria, Tuscany and the Marche where it had never been strong (Vampa 2015). Consistent with these results, opinion polls in mid-2015 suggest that the Lega Nord is the strongest party at national level on the right.[7]

Similarities and Differences within the Party System

In a context of constant transformation of the Italian party system, for over two decades the Lega Nord survived and remained relatively unchanged in terms of its organization (at least until 2013). The party was created at the beginning of the 1990s when Italian politics was still dominated by former mass parties like the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI – Italian Communist Party) and the Democrazia Cristiana (DC) [Christian Democracy] which were extensively organized (Mair and Van Biezen 2001). Although these parties were in decline and soon to disappear (or to be radically transformed) by the time the LN emerged, the Lega carried on some aspects of their organizational heritage 'such as an emphasis on "ideology" (first federalist then secessionist), the centrality of the 'believers' within the apparatus, and the strong vertical internal links' (Tarchi 1998: 151). Indeed, as Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (2015: 39) note, Lega Nord representatives in interviews for their study placed great emphasis on the LN organization being like those of the old mass parties and laid claim to being the only 'real' party left in Italy.

The LN of course was not the main political newcomer for long in early 1990s Italy. With the collapse of the First Republic in 1993-94,

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[7] Opinion polls and surveys can be found at: http://www.sondaggipoliticoelettorali.it/ListaSondaggi.aspx?st=SONDAGGI

new parties emerged and others were forced to undergo a radical process of transformation. Berlusconi's Forza Italia marked a real change in the format and organization of Italian political parties. Berlusconi fully controlled his party and its formal organizational rules provided almost no scope for internal discussion (and certainly not for dissent). The success of Berlusconi's party both reflected and promoted a general 'presidentialization' of Italian politics (Calise 2005) and encouraged the proliferation of new 'personal' parties on both the centre-right and centre-left. As McDonnell (2013: 222) has argued, personal parties are characterized by (a) strong doubts within the party regarding its continuity in the absence of the leader; (b) poorly developed organization at grassroots level; (c) extremely strong concentration of formal or informal power in the hands of the leader; (d) the party's image and campaign strategies being centred on the leader.

Contemporaneously with the creation of Forza Italia on the centre-right, the main party of the left, the post-communist Partito Democratico di Sinistra (PDS) [Democratic Party of the Left] underwent a difficult journey of 'de-ideologization' in the early 1990s, accompanied by the decentralization and 'de-structuring' of its predecessor's very centralized and hierarchical party organization. At the same time, it promoted a process of intra-party democratization that, in 2007, culminated in the creation of the PD, whose leadership is elected through open primary elections (Vampa 2009). This latter aspect makes the PD very different from Forza Italia, which clearly located all key powers in the hands of the leader (McDonnell 2013: 224–225). However, the effect of intra-party democratization on the PD has also been to fuel increasing personalization and presidentialization. This is due to the fact that, in order to be elected in open primary elections, the aspirant PD leader needs to establish a direct link with the voters without the mediation of the party apparatus, thus embracing a 'plebiscitary' conception of democracy (Floridia 2009). Nonetheless, it should be underlined that, despite the shift to a 'lighter' party model, the PD remains the Italian party with the most extensive organization and the largest membership.

The Lega Nord thus has commonalities and differences with the party models represented by both Forza Italia and the PD. Like Berlusconi, Umberto Bossi remained the unchallenged leader of his party for two

decades, even after suffering a stroke in 2004, which impaired his speech and mobility. However, unlike Forza Italia—whose grassroots level is almost entirely neglected outside election campaigns (McDonnell 2013: 228–230)—the Lega invested heavily in the construction of a strong and extensive territorial organization that is more similar to those of traditional centre-left parties. Indeed, as we have seen, the role of party members and activists was clearly recognized in the organization of the Lega which, unlike the PD, has not promoted open primaries that blur the distinction between party members, supporters and voters. Rather, in the LN, membership is something that is valued and full 'activist' status must be earned. Given that McDonnell (2016) found in interviews with LN members and representatives between 2009 and 2011 that—although Bossi's authority was unquestioningly accepted—there were no doubts expressed about the LN's ability to continue after him, it seems better to consider the LN as a party which was 'personalized' rather than 'personal' (like Forza Italia). In other words, Bossi may have dominated the Lega, but—at least in the eyes of party representatives and members—he did not 'own' it in the same way as Berlusconi clearly 'owned' his party (ibid.).

Lastly, it is worth noting that the (re-)organization of the Lega Nord in recent years may have been influenced by the emergence and electoral success of the Movimento Cinque Stelle (M5S) [Five Star Movement], which has promoted new forms of political participation and activism based on the web and new media communications (Bartlett et al. 2013). After becoming federal secretary, Maroni launched the *Lega Nord 2.0*, a web portal in which party members could actively participate in an 'intranet' system (Bianchi 2012). Within a matter of months, many of the party's representatives also began to use social media like Facebook and Twitter, with the new leader Salvini a particularly assiduous (and popular) user of both.[8] Of greater relevance to our purposes in this article is that the M5S—while denying it is even a party—has a conception of membership activism, and the personal commitment this involves, which seems quite similar to that of the Lega (Passarelli et al. 2013).

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[8] Data provided by Daniele Baroncelli (2015) show that in the first 5 months of 2014, the number of Salvini's Facebook followers rose from 60,000 to 155,000. This was the fifth largest increase among all Italian politicians (see http://www.baroncelli.eu/politici_italiani/?comp=2014-01-01).

Conclusion

As we have shown, the Lega Nord's party organization since 1991 contained a number of apparent contradictions. An avowedly federalist party which adopted an organizational structure supposedly based on the free alliance of regionalist movements from across the north of Italy, the LN in fact proved to be a highly centralized party dominated by elites from a single region, Lombardy, and in particular by its leader for two decades, Umberto Bossi. A populist party which mobilized against the former mass-turned-cartel parties of Italy's First Republic, the Lega not only recuperated many aspects of the mass party model, but also—just like those old cartel parties—used the resources of the state to fund itself (see Table 4.6). Indeed, the misappropriation of those resources would be what would finally bring about Bossi's downfall in 2012.

In this chapter, after demonstrating that the LN has largely fulfilled Janda's criteria for institutionalization, we examined in detail the organizational structure and workings of the party. As we showed, the LN has in fact been a vertically integrated organization (Thorlakson 2009: 161) in which the influence on key federal decision-making has not been equally distributed across regional organizations, and respect for formal rules by the leadership has often been lacking. Nonetheless, it has been a very successful party organization, surviving a series of real and potential crises. As we also noted, however, changes are afoot in the Lega Nord since Matteo Salvini became leader in December 2013. He has faced—and continues to face—many strategic and organizational challenges. Given the cuts to party funding in Italy, the future of the Lega Nord's organizational model, especially at local level, appears troubled. However, in the light of both the Lega's historical resilience and the electoral resurgence sparked by Salvini, the party seems likely to remain an important force within Italian politics for the foreseeable future.

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5

The French Front National: Organizational Change and Adaptation from Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen

Gilles Ivaldi and Maria Elisabetta Lanzone

Introduction

The French Front National (FN) constitutes one of the most successful populist radical right parties in Western Europe (Mudde 2007: 41). Since the mid-1980s, the FN has established itself as a significant force in French politics. According to the conventional literature on party institutionalization (Janda 1980; Harmel and Svasand 1993), the French FN can be considered institutionalized and showing both electoral stability as well as organizational continuity over time. Since Marine Le Pen's ascension to the party leadership in 2011, the FN has entered a new stage of its political development, which indicates adaptability and the ability to survive its founding leader.

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The main focus of this chapter is on the organization of the French FN. The first section provides a brief historical overview of the main traits of the FN as established political party and prototype of the pan-European populist radical right. In the second section, we look at the organizational features of the FN. Based on previous research by Ivaldi (1998), our analysis suggests that the FN conforms to the model of a 'charismatic' party, characterized by its centralization of power, authoritarian leadership, and lack of intra-party democracy. The third section moves on to asking to what extent Marine Le Pen's accession has altered the organization of the FN. We find that, despite a move towards the democratization of leader selection, the current FN retains most of the idiosyncratic features of a centralized hierarchical organization oriented towards strong authoritarian leadership. As explored in section four, these features continue to differentiate the FN from mainstream parties of the left and the right in France. Finally, the conclusion of this chapter discusses the significance of party organization for understanding the longevity of the FN in France.

An Established Populist Radical Right Party

The FN was born in 1972 from a small neo-fascist organization, Ordre Nouveau, as an electoral umbrella for nationalist groups to run in the 1973 legislative elections. Initial membership appeared very heterogeneous, bringing together various strands of the French extreme right under the leadership of Jean-Marie Le Pen. The FN remained electorally irrelevant during the first decade of its formative phase. It made its national breakthrough in the 1984 European elections where it received 11 per cent of the vote. Since the mid-1980s, the party has been polling an average of between 11 and 15 per cent of the vote in French legislative and presidential elections, respectively, which demonstrates electoral stability (see Tables 5.1 and 5.2).

Since its initial take off, the FN has also fielded candidates in all local and regional elections, winning representation in regional, departmental and municipal councils, as well as in the European Parliament since 1984. Nonetheless, the FN's presence in municipal and departmental councils

Table 5.1 Votes for the FN in presidential elections, 1974–2012

Year	% vote	
1974	0.7	Jean-Marie Le Pen
1981	–	No FN candidate
1988	14.4	Jean-Marie Le Pen
1995	15.0	Jean-Marie Le Pen
2002	16.9	Jean-Marie Le Pen, 1st round
2002	17.8	Jean-Marie Le Pen, 2nd round runoff
2007	10.4	Jean-Marie Le Pen
2012	17.9	Marine Le Pen

Source: Ministry of the Interior

Table 5.2 Votes and seats for the FN in legislative elections, 1973–2012

Year	% vote	Seats
1973	0.5	0
1978	0.8	0
1981	0.3	0
1986[a]	9.6	35
1988	9.7	1[b]
1993	12.4	0
1997	14.9	1[c]
2002	11.3	0
2007	4.3	0
2012	13.6	2[d]

[a]Proportional representation in 1986, majoritarian system otherwise

[b]Yann Piat from June to October 1988, Marie-France Stirbois from October 1989 to March 1993

[c]Jean-Marie Le Chevallier from June 1997 to February 1998

[d]Marion Maréchal-Le Pen and Gilbert Collard

Source: Ministry of the Interior and National Assembly

has been negligible, with very little impact on the political composition of local governments. In the regional arena, the FN has achieved coalition potential on two occasions in 1986 and 1998. The introduction in 2004 of a new first-past-the-post bonus seat allocation to the largest party resulted however in a sharp decline in FN seats and in its loss of coalition power (see Table 5.3). Because of the systematic bias in France's two-ballot majoritarian electoral system, which goes against minor parties, the

Table 5.3 Votes and seats for the FN in regional elections, 1986–2010

Year	% vote	Seats
1986	9.6	131
1992	13.7	241
1998	15.1	275
2004	14.7	156
2010	11.4	118
2015	22.7	358

Source: Ministry of the Interior

Table 5.4 Votes and seats for the FN in European elections, 1984–2014

Year	% vote	Seats
1984	11.0	10
1989	11.7	10
1994	10.5	11
1999	5.7	5
2004	9.8	7
2009	6.3	3
2014	24.9	24

Source: Ministry of the Interior

FN has only won a marginal number of seats in the National Assembly since the late 1980s. The exceptional use of proportional representation in the 1986 elections provided the FN with 35 deputies in the National Assembly, which were lost in 1988 after the new right-wing government returned to the majority system (see Table 5.2).

The change of the leader, which occurred in 2011, has not affected the party's electoral appeal: under Marine Le Pen, the FN has enlarged its base of support, reaching new heights in the 2012 presidential election with 17.9 per cent of the vote (see Table 5.1). The FN topped the 2014 French European election winning a quarter (25 per cent) of the vote and 24 seats (see Table 5.4). This allowed Marine Le Pen to establish leadership over the pan-European nationalist right. Success at the national level has been matched locally. In the 2014 municipal election, the FN won 11 city councils and 1544 councillors, besting its previous 1995 record. The regional elections of December 2015 showed another surge in FN support with 27.7 per cent of the vote and 358 regional councillors nationally.

The French FN epitomizes the mobilization strategy of the West European populist radical right, which combines ethno-nationalist xenophobia with anti-establishment populism (Rydgren 2005). Initial success

was achieved by politicizing immigration and law and order issues. During the 1990s, the party endorsed also Eurosceptic and anti-globalization positions (Zaslove 2008). The FN is considered to exemplify the 'niche' party with a strong focus on cultural issues of competition (Meguid 2008). Because of its extremist right background, the FN has been politically ostracized by the mainstream, playing mostly a nuisance role vis-à-vis other actors in the party system. Stemming from its inability to win seats in parliament, the FN has never achieved coalition potential in French politics. Despite growing electoral returns, it has been primarily characterized by its status as outsider and political pariah (Ivaldi 2016a).

FN electoral consolidation has been accompanied by the progressive building of an effective nationwide organization and by the development of the party's local base of power. The 1990s saw the reinforcement by the FN of its party apparatus, which served as an instrument for voter mobilization across all arenas of party competition, both local and national. For more than four decades, the FN has shown a great deal of organizational continuity despite party factionalism and a series of internal power conflicts. The most significant split occurred in 1999 when the FN delegate general, Bruno Mégret, left the party together with about half of its grassroots and cadres. The *mégrétiste* split of 1999 had a deleterious impact on the FN, substantially reducing its organizational and membership strengths, while resulting also in electoral competition between the FN and Mégret's newly formed Mouvement National Républicain (MNR). However, the MNR failed to achieve electoral relevance and remained a marginal force in French politics whilst the FN demonstrated political resilience.

Under Marine Le Pen's leadership, party change has been guided by the concept of 'de-demonization' (*dédiabolisation*). As Ivaldi (2016b) suggests, de-demonization is primarily characterized by the attempt to 'detoxify' the party's extremist reputation while simultaneously preserving its populist radical right potential for voter mobilization. The current FN seeks to improve its credibility as political agent through party modernization and professionalization. Whereas the 2011 leadership election represented a first notable step towards greater intra-party democracy, there is little evidence of a more substantial move towards party 'normalization', either ideologically or organizationally.

Instead, we find a process of 'Marinization' whereby Marine Le Pen has successfully replaced her father as charismatic leader, both inside and outside the party.

The Party Organization Over Time

This second section explores the organization of the FN from 1972 to 2011. During that period, the party organization of the FN has exhibited important features of the 'charismatic' populist party, including considerable centralization of power, personal charisma of its leader, top-down relations between the central party and its local branches, and lack of intra-party democracy (Ivaldi 1998). The FN has also shown a high level of internal factionalism and, reflecting on its status as political pariah, has had weak ties with the external society.

Centralization of Power

The FN has been a highly centralized party such that effective decision-making authority has been concentrated in the hands of the national leadership and its undisputed 'charismatic' leader. For nearly four decades, Jean-Marie Le Pen fulfilled the function of personifying the FN in the media and demonstrating an authoritarian form of political leadership, which helped to compensate for the organizational vacuum in his party. Le Pen's personality, communication skills and flamboyant style were seen as important factors in the electoral rise of the FN during the 1980s. Internally, Le Pen was also able to forge a strong affective bond with party members, leading in many cases to a cult of the leader (Ivaldi 1996). Beginning with the 1990 party congress in Nice, Le Pen received 'soviet-like' majorities in leadership elections where he ran as the only candidate. His unquestioned legitimacy also helped to maintain unity in a highly factionalized party (see below).

The leader was the real locus of power in the FN, which showed a high concentration of leadership, with Le Pen and a few members of the party's executive bodies exercising effective authority. During the 1980s,

authority was concentrated in the party chairman and the secretary general, Jean-Pierre Stirbois, who both decided party policy, communication, and strategy. In 1988 the national structure became more complex with the creation of the general delegation (*délégation générale*), whose task was to formulate policy and to organize the ideological training of party members and cadres. Conceived as a 'think-tank' within the FN, the delegation was headed by Mégret who was accountable only to Le Pen. Since the mid-1980s, major FN policy positions have been determined therefore by the party's national leadership, often with the help of small groups of experts, without the need for approval by party members. The national leadership has also maintained strict control of access to the mass media, with Le Pen acting as official party spokesman.

Le Pen played a critical role in both the mobility of cadres and their careers. The FN party chairman had control over personnel recruitment and dominated the selection of legislative candidates. Most FN leaders were also largely indebted to Le Pen for having provided them with top positions of power in the party's executive organs. The political bureau, which was the FN's central office, can properly be described as the personal machine of Le Pen. Recruitment was based on co-optation and had, in the end, to be agreed by him personally. The restructuration of the secretariat general, which occurred after the death of Stirbois in 1988, illustrates the prominent role played by Le Pen in the FN's model of elite recruitment. The new structure was staffed with veteran members of the FN, such as Jean-Pierre Schénardi, Jean-Pierre Reveau, Roger Holeindre, and Michel Collinot, together with younger members of the party elite who had pursued their whole political careers inside the party, such as Martial Bild, Yves Dupont, Franck Timmermans, Jean-François Touzé, and Jean-François Jalkh.

Le Pen administered major disciplinary actions: The expulsion of national leaders was often the consequence of personal disagreements and rifts with Le Pen himself. In the late 1980s, the FN expelled some of the more 'respectable' right-wing notables such as Yann Piat, Yvon Briant and François Bachelot, who had joined the party during the 1986 elections. In the 1990s, one major source of conflict was between Le Pen and some of the FN cadres who were gaining political momentum locally, such as Jean-Marie Le Chevallier in Toulon and Jacques Peyrat in Nice.

In 2005 another personal dispute with Le Pen led to the expulsion of Jacques Bompard.

In the early stage of FN development, Le Pen's personal financial contribution to the party certainly reinforced his position of power within the organization. Le Pen could avail himself of a considerable personal fortune, which he had inherited amidst public controversy from the Lambert family in the late 1970s. This gave him substantial financial and political leverage within the party. In 1988 Le Pen set up a small organization, COTELEC, to collect funds from party members, private donors, and banks to support the FN's electoral campaigns financially. Since new legislation on party finance in 1990, the FN has also received direct state subsidies, which have complemented the revenue generated by the membership fees, loans, and private donations (see Table 5.5 below). Funds have been collected and allocated primarily by the national organization. In this process, Le Pen has maintained a strong financial link with the FN and therefore control over the party through the continuing involvement of COTELEC in funding the political activities.[1] In December 2015 FN candidates received funds from COTELEC to cover their regional election campaigns, showing the persistence of Jean-Marie Le Pen's financial power within the party.

Nationalization of Party Structure

The FN national organization remained underdeveloped during the 1970s. In the 1980s, Jean-Pierre Stirbois played a prominent role in making the operation and organization of the FN more routine, and attempting to imitate the Communist model of party organization (Birenbaum 1992). The party was transformed into a permanent organization that could accommodate a larger membership and also increase the FN's presence in local elections. By the early 1990s, the FN had set up a more complex national organization, including executive and representative bodies, and local federations across all 96 metropolitan departments (see Figure 5.1). Nonetheless, the organizational structure of the FN reflected its highly

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[1] Le Lab Politique (2015).

Table 5.5 FN party finances, 1993–2013

Year	State subsidies[a]	Membership fees[b]	Other revenue[c]
1993	4.4		
1994	5.5		
1995	5.5		
1996	5.5		
1997	5.5		
1998	6.3		
1999	6.3		
2000	6.3		
2001	6.3		
2002	6.3		
2003	4.6		
2004	4.6		
2005	4.6		
2006	4.6		
2007	4.6		
2008	1.8	0.5	1.5
2009	1.8	0.4	1.9
2010	1.8	1.0	1.3
2011	1.8	1.4	8.6[d]
2012	1.7	1.6	2.9
2013	5.5	2.0	1.9

Source: CNCCFP (2015)

All figures are in million EURO; [a] based on the vote share in legislative elections and the number of MPs; [b] Figures not available prior to 2008; [c] including for instance financial contributions by MEPs, private donations, conferences and other financial products; [d] including the sale of the party's headquarters in Saint-Cloud

centralized system of power. Its party hierarchy was defined by the informal role of the executive bureau and vice-presidents at the top. Although not officially specified as such in the party statutes, the executive bureau was the top decision-making body, replacing the official decision-making body of the party, the political bureau, and exerting direct control over the local branches of the party. The executive bureau controlled all departmental branches which had no power in defining policy and party strategy. Federal and regional secretaries were nominated by the bureau and remained under its firm authority. Regional secretariats served as
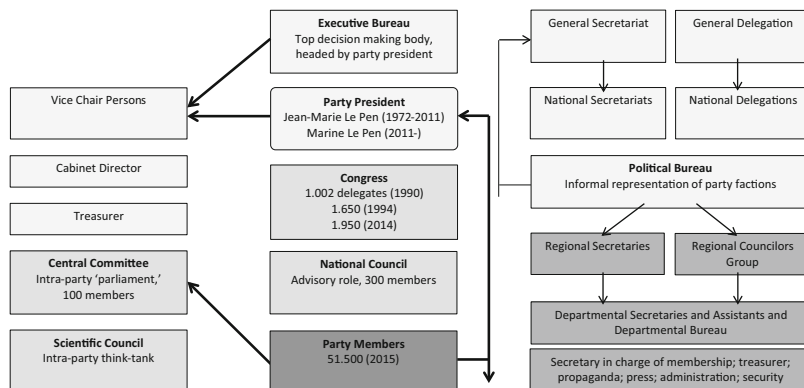
Fig. 5.1 The organization of the FN. *Source*: Authors, based on Ivaldi (1998: 53). *Note*: Lightest grey indicates executive bodies, slightly darker grey stands for representative bodies, again slightly darker grey are regional and departmental bodies and last is the party basis, namely the members. Bold arrows: 'elects' or 'appoints,' thin arrows: 'supervises' or 'holds accountable'.

channels of communication between the local and national leaderships. Departmental secretaries were asked to act as 'administrative prefects' for their party in the local community. Moreover, there were no horizontal connections between the local units of the FN.

The FN's executive bodies were dominated by a small cohort of Le Pen's close supporters among the top officials at the highest levels of party hierarchy, whose influence was often attested by their appointment as party vice-presidents. New members of the political bureau were in practice co-opted or appointed by Le Pen himself, and formally approved by the central committee. The composition of the political bureau reflected the factional structure of the party. Policy-making and administration were vested in the party chairman and the executive bureau. The top national organs included also the general secretariat and general delegation, which were conceived as interconnected, although they had separate responsibilities. Beyond strict organizational purposes, this dual structure aimed primarily to diffuse power among top party executives, therefore strengthening Le Pen's personal leadership (Ivaldi 1998: 48).

Although the party congress formally elected the chairman and the central committee, the latter was not a governing body. It consisted of

representatives from departmental federations who were elected by party members at the local level. FN's party congresses were mostly symbolic events, serving to show party unity and shoring up grassroots support for Le Pen. Both the central committee and the national council had very little power over the executive bodies. They both exercised a purely advisory role.

Party Factionalism

The FN was characterized by a high degree of political elite turnover, with sub-groups of power holders successively competing for influence. Since 1972, the party has accommodated various strands of the French extreme right and has been internally factionalized. As such, FN elites have exhibited substantial heterogeneity, often resulting in factional fights, party purges, and organizational splits (Ivaldi 1998, 2003).

Initially, the FN was divided into two major groups of elites which originated in the conservative and neo-fascist segments of the post-war extreme right. During the 1970s the FN accommodated also new contingents of extremists such as François Duprat's Groupes nationalistes-révolutionnaires (GNR) or Marc Fredriksen's pro-nazi Fédération d'Action Nationale et Européenne (FANE). By 1978, these activists left the FN only to be replaced by Jean-Pierre Stirbois's Solidaristes, another group in France's neo-fascist universe. Solidaristes such as Michel Collinot, Marie-France Stirbois, Roland Gaucher, and Bruno Gollnisch emerged as an influential faction acting as a force of radical opposition within the FN.

In the mid-1980s the FN formed new alliances with Bernard Antony's far right Catholics of the Comités Chrétienté-Solidarité (CCS), intellectuals from the French Nouvelle Droite (New Right) of the Club de l'Horloge, such as Yvan Blot and Jean-Yves Le Gallou, as well as former members of the mainstream right such as Bruno Mégret. By opening the party to external elites, the FN sought to give itself the profile of a more respectable actor of government, while simultaneously creating opportunities for tactical alliances with the mainstream right. Non-traditional actors, operating outside the far right, rose to prominence within the party throughout the 1990s, influencing both party strategies

and policies. This was illustrated by the appointment of Bruno Mégret as delegate general in October 1988. His personal influence over the FN's rank-and-file grew throughout the 1990s. The rise of Mégret inside the party challenged Le Pen's leadership and ultimately provoked a split in the party. Mégret left the FN in 1999 together with about half of the party members and elites, which created a favourable opportunity for more traditional FN leaders such as Bruno Gollnisch and Carl Lang to reclaim control of the party apparatus (Ivaldi 2003).

The early 2000s saw the rise of Marine Le Pen within the party. Despite the role of the FN as an electoral nuisance, Jean-Marie Le Pen's poor performance in the 2002 presidential runoff demonstrated that the party had hit its electoral ceiling. This acted as a catalyst for party change. Internal turmoil created opportunities for Marine Le Pen and those, such as Louis Aliot, who wanted to modernize the party. The electoral debacle of 2007 where Jean-Marie Le Pen received only 10.4 per cent of the presidential vote accelerated the transformation of the FN while putting the issue of leadership change to the forefront of the party's internal agenda. Marine Le Pen emerged as the most serious contender for taking over the party and began to organize her faction through Générations Le Pen, a think-tank created in 1998. Her personal success in the city of Hénin-Beaumont in the 2008 and 2009 local elections, and in the 2010 regional elections in Nord-Pas-de-Calais, gave her critical political momentum to win the 2011 leadership contest with 67.7 per cent of the members' votes at the party congress in Tours.

Let us note here that the concept of factionalism captures various aspects of division and sources of dispute such as over ideology, issues, leadership, and strategies (Janda 1980: Chapter 11). Looking at the period of Jean-Marie Le Pen's leadership, the factional partitioning of the FN showed low levels of ideological and leadership factionalism, moderate party division over issues, and a higher degree of strategic factionalism. FN elites exhibited congruence in their attitudes, values, and behaviour over time. They adhered to the ideology of the radical right, which featured ethno-nationalist xenophobia, and authoritarianism. This was true, for instance, of Bruno Mégret who fully endorsed traditional FN policies when he joined the party in the mid-1980s (Birenbaum and François 1989: 93). In this context, Ivaldi (2016b) shows that Marine Le

Pen's current strategy of de-demonization has thus far produced very little change in terms of the FN's programmatic core and niche status.

With the exception of the short period of party infighting between 1997 and 1999, when Mégret publicly challenged Jean-Marie Le Pen's authority, leadership factionalism has remained relatively low in the FN until the mid-2000s. This was mostly a consequence of the authoritarian leadership style imposed by Le Pen and him personifying the party in the public's eyes. During most of the period, national executive bodies remained under the firm authority of Le Pen. Leadership factionalism was more perceptible however at the lower tiers of power. This can be seen for instance in the dual national structure which emerged in 1988 through the creation of the general delegation as a means of counter-balancing the influence of the secretary general (Ivaldi 1998: 50). In 2011 Jean-Marie Le Pen's resignation from the party presidency certainly increased the degree of leadership factionalism and opened a new line of division between supporters of Bruno Gollnisch[2] and Marine Le Pen.

In contrast, strategic factionalism has traditionally been high in the FN, with different sub-groups of elites pursuing diverging tactical goals. The main source of internal conflict concerned the strategic positioning of the party as a more credible and respectable actor of government, as opposed to its traditional role as radical right nuisance in the French party system. This opposition was central to the de-demonization agenda pushed by Mégret in the late 1980s and, more recently, by Marine Le Pen following her accession in 2011, which aimed to 'detoxify' the party's reputation while simultaneously preserving its radical right-wing popu-list potential for voter mobilization. The FN's factionalization on party strategy also played an important role in the 1999 *mégrétiste* split.

In many cases, factional conflicts in the FN have erupted into party splits or purges. Confrontation over party strategy occurred in the early stage of FN development, as shown by the founding members of Ordre Nouveau leaving the FN to form a rival party in 1974. In the late 1970s, the neo-fascist GNR and FANE activists, who had entered the party a

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[2] A veteran member of the FN, Bruno Gollnisch became the leader of the orthodox faction within the party in the early 2000s. After Jean-Marie Le Pen stepped down, he was opposed to Marine Le Pen's strategy of normalization and was defeated in the 2011 leadership election.

few years earlier, left the FN. The most significant split occurred in 1999 with Mégret, Yvan Blot, and other former members of the New Right forming the MNR. Since the mid-2000s, the rise of Marine Le Pen has led to the departure of prominent national figures such as Carl Lang, Bernard Antony, and Jean-Claude Martinez, all of whom left the party in November 2008. Other FN veterans such as Martine Lehideux, Martial Bild, Myriam Baeckeroot, Michel Bayvet, and Michel de Rostolan stepped down in January 2009.

Membership, Involvement and External Relations with Society

In the late 1980s, party membership was estimated at 15,000. Membership grew during the 1990s, to reach an estimated 40,000 in 1999. With the *mégrétiste* split of 1999 taking about half of the party grassroots, membership fell to about 20,000. In fact, the official figure was 22,400 in 2011 when Marine Le Pen took over the party. Despite its relatively small membership and high centralization of power, organizational involvement and party activism have been strong in the FN. It has allowed non-professional activists to play key roles as party ambassadors in their respective communities. In exploring the reasons for the success of the FN, one must emphasize the role of rank-and-file members in mobilizing the FN vote. During the 1980s, individual initiatives were often crucial to the development of local federations, as can be seen, for instance, in the role played by local notables such as André Isoardo in Marseille, Eliane de la Brosse in Toulon, and Jean-Pierre Schénardi in Paris.

Finally, during the 1990s, the FN sought to expand its links with civil society by founding a number of flanking organizations and newspapers, which copycatted the model of 'counter-society' developed by the French communist party (PCF).[3]

While the main objective of FN-affiliated newspapers such as *Présent*, *Minute*, and *National Hebdo* was to maintain the 'umbilical cord' with

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[3] The conception of the French Communist 'counter-society' was developed by Kriegel (1968), describing the PCF as a separate community characterized by its network of flanking organizations, links with labour unions and active mass membership.

the extreme-right milieu, the strategy of flanking organizations, on the other hand, sought to spread the FN's ideological influence. The development of various circles (*cercles*), trade-unions, and affiliated clubs attested to the party's efforts to publicize FN policies and lobby across a wide range of socio-professional groups. This is the case despite the fact that the *cercles* have remained empty shells in most cases (Ivaldi 1998: 56). The FN also began to practice political entryism[4] in existing trade unions to target potential pools of voters deemed the most likely to support the FN, such as workers in public transport, small business owners, and members of the police. In the mid-1990s, the FN also began to increase its electoral support among younger voters. This helped the party reinvigorate its youth organization, the Front National de la Jeunesse (FNJ), which had been dormant after its creation in 1974 and would later serve as a reservoir for recruiting 'born-and-bred' elite members of the party such as, for instance, Carl Lang.

Between Change and Adaption

The 2011 Party Congress represented probably the first most important change in the French Front National organizational path,[5] with Marine Le Pen taking over the party. Following Jean-Marie Le Pen's decision to step down,[6] the party had initiated an internal leadership campaign. Bruno Gollnisch carried a traditionalist message while Marine Le Pen presented a more contemporary vision of the party, which eventually received the official support of her father. During the internal campaign, Marine Le Pen had indicated that she would set up a professionalized and more effective party organization: 'I want to create a renewed, opened

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[4] This refers to a political strategy in which an organization pushes its members and supporters to join another, typically larger, organization for the purpose of expanding the former's influence.

[5] The FN congress took place in Tours (15 and 16 January 2011). Party members voted by mail. During the same congress, party delegates also elected the central committee consisting of 100 members.

[6] Jean-Marie Le Pen announced his resignation on 12 April 2010, during a meeting of the FN Bureau Politique.

and well-functioning party,' she said.[7] By 2011, the FN had experienced its first change of leadership since 1972, together with a new executive team and a new logo.

The FN under Marine Le Pen has pushed an agenda of de-demonization, which aims primarily at shedding its extreme-right profile and achieving credibility. This third section looks at the organizational impact of the current de-demonization strategy. As such, we identify elements of change and continuity between the 'old' and the 'new' FN that is the party before and after Marine Le Pen's accession.

The current FN shows the continuation of Le Pen's familial model of authoritarian leadership and the persistence of a highly centralized hierarchical party organization. The centralization of power has taken the form of a 'Marinization' of the party, both internally and externally. Since 2011, Marine Le Pen has promoted members of her personal inner circle such as Alain Jamet, Louis Aliot, Steeve Briois, and Florian Philippot within the party's national organs. This has been achieved through the use of vice-presidencies and appointments to the political and executive bureau. Externally, the FN has benefited from Marine Le Pen's popularity and political momentum. In March 2011, these changes allowed unknown FN candidates to achieve their best results ever in local elections. The personalization process increased in the 2012 legislative session when the FN was incorporated into the Rassemblement Bleu Marine (RBM), a coalition with other minor Eurosceptic sovereigntist parties and personalities outside the FN. As early as 2010, Marine Le Pen had also set up her own affiliated organization, Jeanne, to collect revenue for her party and counterbalance Jean-Marie Le Pen's financial influence through COTELEC. That Marine Le Pen was seeking greater financial autonomy from her father is evident from the fact that the FN borrowed 9 million Euros from a Kremlin-related Russian Bank (FRCB) in September 2014.

Turning to the FN's ruling bodies, and referring here to the current party statutes officially approved in April 2011,[8] Marine's début as party leader showed little change from the previous period. The 2011 statutes

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[7] Marine Le Pen, inauguration speech, FN Party Congress 16 January 2011.

[8] New party statutes were approved by the political bureau in June 2015 and backed by 94 per cent of the membership vote in July 2015. However, these statutes are currently suspended, pending legal decisions after Jean-Marie Le Pen's suspension was cancelled by a French court on 2 July 2015.

complemented the rules of procedure (*règlement intérieur*) in force since 2007. The most significant change concerned the new role of 'honorary president' (*Président d'honneur*), entrusted to Jean-Marie Le Pen whereby he would become an ex officio member of all executive bodies. In practice, however, the honorary president would have only a formal role, with no significant decision-making power. Moreover, the 2011 statutes confirmed the concentration of power into the triangle consisting of the political bureau, the executive bureau, and the party chairman (*bureau politique*, *bureau executif*, *président*) while neutralizing the role of the general delegation. Additionally, two new committees—on candidate selection and internal discipline—were created, whose constitutions strongly overlapped with that of other ruling organs such as the executive bureau, thus providing further evidence for the concentration of power. The new chairman was given a crucial role in publicly and legally representing the FN and, together with the other decision-making bodies, was given the power to decide on applications for party membership, deletions, and expulsions. Marine Le Pen was re-elected party leader by unanimous vote in November 2014.

While the structure of power inside the 'new' FN exhibits little variation from the previous period, a number of changes attest to the organizational transformation of the party under Marine Le Pen. A first notable effect of de-demonization concerns the generational turnover among party elites. In 2011, Marine Le Pen's accession revealed the decline of the more orthodox factions assembled behind Bruno Gollnisch. A new '*mariniste*' elite rose to all top-level positions taking about 70 per cent of the seats in the political bureau, contrasting with the previous balance of power in the party's middle-level elites in 2007. The 2011 central committee election attested to changes in the factional balance of the party, with the '*mariniste*' camp winning 57 per cent of the seats and Gollnisch's supporters stepping down from all official posts. Under Marine Le Pen, the FN has also distanced itself from the small neo-fascist groups that had continued to orbit the party. The 2014 party congress confirmed the rise of a younger cohort of FN elites such as Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, David Rachline, Stéphane Ravier, Nicolas Bay or Julien Rochedy. Replicating Mégret's strategy of 'de-demonization', Marine Le Pen has also opened the party to new personalities from outside the far right, such as Florian

Philippot, Paul-Marie Coûteaux or Gibert Collard. In contrast, Jean-Marie Le Pen's FN was strongly shaped by characteristics relating to the Second World War and French Algeria. In 2011 the leadership election helped renew the party's image. Being a 42-year-old divorced mother, Marine Le Pen represented a novel phenomenon, thus indicating a clear attitudinal change (Perrineau 2014: 29).

In contrast with the previous period, the current FN also appears more cohesive, mostly as a consequence of the 'Marinization' of its personnel and cadres. The recent public feud between Marine and Jean-Marie Le Pen also demonstrates strong support for Marine Le Pen's strategy of de-demonization among the party's grassroots and sympathizers. In April 2015 Jean-Marie Le Pen caused an internal crisis by reiterating his controversial comments about Nazi gas chambers being a 'detail of the Second World War',[9] leading to his disciplinary suspension from the FN in May and expulsion in August 2015. In July 2015, the proposal to abolish the post of honorary president was backed by no fewer than 94 per cent of party members. Externally, public opinion polls showed also that a vast majority, of 84 per cent, of FN heartland supporters considered Jean-Marie Le Pen's suspension a good thing.[10] However, in August the decision to expel the party founder was approved by only 53 per cent of FN supporters.[11] As was already the case during the 1990s, factionalism is currently latent and occurs at a lower tier of the party leadership. It revolves mainly around FN 'leftist' programmatic shifts on the economy and moral values. These were initiated by Florian Philippot and are opposed by those such as Marion Maréchal-Le Pen and Bruno Gollnisch who want to return to the party's traditional conservative agenda.

The current FN also shows an embryonic process of professionalization amongst the party's grassroots, together with the reinvigoration of its local power base. Consistent with the generational changes among top-level party cadres, the 2015 departmental elections revealed that, of all French parties, the FN had the highest proportion (about a fifth) of local candidates aged under 35 years. This corroborates that the FN

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[9] BMFTV (2015).

[10] *Le Parisien* (2015).

[11] *Le Figaro* (2015).

under Marine Le Pen is drawing greater support from younger voters (Stockemer and Amengay 2015). In 2014 and 2015, the FN won larger numbers of municipal, departmental and regional councillors than previously, which will help the party rebuild its middle-level elite despite its relatively small membership of 51,500 (as of July 2015). Additionally, to underscore the party's greater credibility there has been the creation of think-tanks such as Club Idées Nation and a number of *collectifs*. The latter represent yet another attempt to open the party to civil society,[12] which largely replicates the network of *cercles* of the 1990s. As such, the current *collectifs* tap into new issues ranging from environmental problems and housing to welfare policies.

One final area of change is that of intra-party democracy. Whereas the leadership election represented a first notable step towards greater decision-making power by members, the 2011 party statutes showed little organizational normalization by the FN. Partisan democracy was further enhanced by the new draft statutes of July 2015. With a court decision pending as these lines were written, the new statutes may provide for a number of changes, including an enlarged national council (Art. 23) with power to appoint members of the political bureau (Art. 10), a new council of local elected officials (Art. 24), grassroots party congress initiatives requiring a fifth of the registered members (Art. 26), and the possibility of holding internal party referenda on proposals from the party chairman (Art. 17).

Similarities and Differences within the Party System

As already mentioned, the FN is one of the oldest parties in France, showing stability over time. Since 1972, it has experienced only one change at the top and has retained its name.[13] French political parties are characterized by their instability, organizational weakness, and fragmentation

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[12] *Slate* (2014). See also: Collectif Racine (2015).
[13] According to Janda (1980), name changes are indicators of a lack of party institutionalization (p. 22/23).

(Knapp 2002). The Parti Socialiste (PS) [Socialist Party], currently the most important centre-left party in France, underwent important organizational changes in 1971 as it opened itself to other political forces (Bachelot 2011). During the 1990s and the 2000s, the PS faced strong ideological factionalism and party splits over European integration.

Parties of the right exhibit an even greater degree of volatility over time. In 2002, the loose electoral alliances of the 1980s and the 1990s between the Gaullists and the Centre-Right gave way to organizational merger with the creation of the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) [Union for a Popular Rally], which was an attempt by the centre-right to consolidate its identity and unity under the leadership of President Jacques Chirac. In 2007 the new president of the UMP, Nicolas Sarkozy, was elected in the presidential election. In 2011 however, disgruntled liberals and Christian Democrats such as Jean-Louis Borloo and Hervé Morin left the UMP to form an independent party, the Union des démocrates et indépendants (UDI). Following Sarkozy's defeat in 2012, the UMP entered a period of high ideological, leadership, and strategic factionalism. In November 2014 Sarkozy returned to the UMP and won the leadership election with 64.5 per cent of the membership vote. He pushed through important changes in the party statutes, including a renaming of the party into Les Républicains [The Republicans], which was approved by 83 per cent of the UMP members in May 2015.

Compared with mainstream political actors, the FN seems to be rather a stable and cohesive party. The FN's model of centralized and hierarchical leadership has been key to maintaining party unity amidst fractionalization. In order to better analyze the decision-making power inside the French parties, we undertake a detailed comparison between the FN and other French parties (see Table 5.6 below).[14] Let us note here that we do so on the basis of 2011 FN statutes and not the 2015 project. In terms of the membership's rights and involvement, we can see that the FN allows its members little more power than to formally endorse all the most important party-life decisions which are usually taken elsewhere in the organization.

The 2011 leadership election in the FN showed some convergence with other parties. In the PS, the direct election of the leader originated

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[14] A similar scheme, considering the Italian cases, has been proposed by Lanzone (2015).

Table 5.6 Membership decision-making power inside French parties, 2015

Party	Congress participation	Candidates selection	Leader selection	Programme drafting	Other decision-making participation
FN	5	0	2	0	0
LR (ex-UMP)	2	2	2	0	5
UDI	2	0	2	0	0
PS	2	2	2	0	2
EELV	2	2	2	3	2
MoDem	2	2	2	0	5
PCF	5	1	5	0	2

Source: Poguntke et al. (2015). Codes: *1* formal acceptance, *2* right of vote, *3* right of vote with limitations, *4* vote and acceptance, *5* influence through delegates and/or spokesman, *0* no right or not specified in the statute

in the party national convention of October 1995 and was first used in the 1997 party congress. In the UMP, the reform was well under way in the Rassemblement pour la République (RPR) during the late 1990s and was implemented in November 2002 with the first direct vote for party leader (Alain Juppé). It was reiterated in 2004 (Sarkozy), and then again in 2012 (Jean-François Copé) and 2014 (Sarkozy).

Despite Marine Le Pen's recent move towards greater intra-party democracy, and pending adoption of the new 2015 statutes, the FN still maintains significant differences to mainstream political parties in France. Both the UMP/Républicains and the PS have moved toward party democratization and direct member participation since the late 1990s.

One first element of organizational divergence is the official recognition of internal pluralism. The FN remains strongly organized around its leader and pluralism is absent from the party's official documents. In the PS, factions are crucial features as power resources and main organs of intra-party competition, based on proportional representation in the national party organs (Bergounioux and Grunberg 2005). While the move towards plebiscitary politics reduces the salience of factional cleavages, organized factions continue to provide important cues and incentives for party members. In the recent party congress of June 2015, PS delegates were permitted to support one of four different political motions.[15] In the UMP, in spite of the former Gaullist culture of party unity and strong leadership, factions were given official recognition and access to funding in 2002. In fact, organized factions emerged in the 2012 party congress, where six motions were in competition. This congress gave the largest share of the membership vote (27.8 per cent) to the Droite Forte [Strong Right], a pro-Sarkozy national-authoritarian tendency within the UMP.

In both parties, important changes to party selectorates resulted from the ascent of 'instant members'. In the mid-2000s, the PS launched a recruitment campaign, which combined internet and 'low-cost' membership. As a consequence, membership peaked at 280,000 on the eve of the 2007 elections. It then fell to 173,000 in 2012, to reach its lowest level at 131,000 in May 2015. In the UMP, Sarkozy's popularity helped attract

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[15] Parti socialiste (2015). The motions of orientation are formally planned in the party statute (Title 3, Chapter 1).

new members in the mid-2000s, with a significant rise from around 100,000 members in 2002 to 327,000 in January 2007, compared with about 33,000 and 50,000 in the former UDF and RPR respectively. UMP membership fell after the electoral defeat of 2012 to grow again prior to the leadership election of November 2014 when 268,000 members were given the right to select their leader. In May 2015, there were officially 213,000 members. In contrast, the FN had an official membership total of 51,000 in July 2015.

Both, the UMP and the PS have also improved partisan direct democracy through the use of policy referenda. In the PS, membership policy ballots were introduced in 2003 and used in 2005 for an important vote over the European Constitutional Treaty (ECT). The UMP initiated bottom-up policy-making procedures in 2005, with a vote on both the ECT and Turkish accession to the EU, followed with polling members on party policies for the 2007 legislative elections. In the lead up to the 2012 elections, both the UMP and PS party programmes were formally adopted by party members, receiving overwhelming majorities of 96.4 and 95.1 per cent of the vote, respectively. In May 2015, UMP members were asked to vote on the party's change of name (adopted by 83 per cent), new statutes (96.3 per cent), and political bureau (94.8 per cent).

Finally, the most significant move towards plebiscitary party politics in France is certainly the development of presidential primaries which are absent from the FN (Evans and Ivaldi 2013: Chapter 4).[16] Primaries emerged in 1995 in the PS where a majoritarian two-ballot system was introduced into the party statutes. In 2006 the presidential primary was still restricted to party members. The PS continued its move towards a plebiscitary model of internal democracy with an open competitive primary outside the party's rank and file in 2011. In the UMP, changes to the presidential nominating process were initiated in 2005, gradually paving the way for open presidential primaries to be held in 2016, ahead of the 2017 elections.[17]

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[16] Also, the centre-oriented party, Mouvement Démocrate (MoDem) [Democratic Movement], provides for primary elections to choose the candidate for the presidential election (Statute, Art. 19). The same possibility is provided in the UDI statutes.

[17] In the case of the UMP (Statute, Art. 34), the decision has been announced in the 2014 statute. The statute of Les Républicains is not yet officially available.

Conclusion

Since the mid-1980s, the Front National has established itself as a major force in French politics. It has developed an effective organization to mobilize voters across all arenas of party competition. For nearly four decades, Jean-Marie Le Pen has imposed himself as undisputed leader of the FN and the party has been fully identified with him in the eyes of the public. The level of symbiosis between the party and its leader underscored the model of 'charismatic' party. The FN's party organization has been characterized by a highly centralized, top-down hierarchical system of power, the lack of intra-party democracy and the concentration of its leadership. Reflecting on its status as extreme-right pariah, the FN has had a relatively small membership and weak ties with civil society. It has also suffered from internal factionalism.

The FN is currently at a political and organizational crossroads, showing both continuity and change. Marine Le Pen's accession in 2011 has inaugurated a new phase in the party's history. Marine's agenda of 'de-demonization' captures the dual attempt by the FN to achieve credibility while preserving its populist radical right identity. The 2011 leadership election and the 2015 draft statutes attest to the gradual move by the party towards greater intra-party democracy, which can be seen as correlative of the rise of a younger and more pragmatic cohort of elites. The FN leadership appears to be less concentrated, as revealed for instance by the role played by Florian Philippot and other national cadres as official party spokespersons in the media. Under Marine Le Pen, the FN has also distanced itself from traditional extreme-right groups, and it has recruited new cadres and candidates to expand its local base of power.

Overall, de-demonization has brought about only limited change to the party's organization. The FN remains a highly centralized party while undergoing an effective process of institutionalization. The resulting organizational model appears fully in line with other contemporary populist formations in Europe, despite the fact that, in the past, populist organizations may have had difficulties pursuing institutionalization more fully. The current FN retains most of the idiosyncratic features of the charismatic populist party that differentiate it from mainstream political formations in France. Since 2011, the FN has undergone a process of 'Marinization' whereby Marine Le Pen has successfully replaced her

father as iconic party leader. New '*mariniste*' elites now occupy virtually all top-level positions inside the party. The FN continues to be organized around charismatic leadership with a weaker intermediary structure and a very strong central office (Katz and Mair 1993). The FN grants its members only formal power. Members' rights are not specified in the party's statutes, which ignore also pluralism and undermine partisan direct democracy. Despite growing electoral returns, the party has not significantly broadened its membership base since the mid-1990s, nor has it established stronger links with external society and interest groups. Finally, the 'Le Pen family crisis' of 2015 attests to the presence of strategic factionalism, although the more radical factions now appear to be marginalized within the party.

One final question is that of the significance of party organization for the electoral success of the French Front National. According to Panebianco (1988), charismatic parties have a 'revolutionary' element which goes against the existing political status and which allows those parties to mobilize voter resentment. Betz (1998: 9) sees party organization—in particular the mix of charismatic leadership and centralization of power—as a key determinant of right-wing populist party success, a line of argument which is reiterated by Pedahzur and Brichta (2002). The current FN continues radical policies and strong populist anti-establishment postures (Ivaldi 2016b). As Lanzone (2014: 66) suggests, neo-populist organizations are characterized by their strategic and programmatic adaptability. During the 1980s and the 1990s, anti-establishment populism contributed to the electoral rise and consolidation of the FN. The concentration of decision-making authority in the hands of the national leader increased also policy flexibility and strategic malleability, which helped the party adapt to changes in both its external environment and internal balance of power.

Like other actors such as the Italian Movimento 5 Stelle, the FN faces the paradox of populist party institutionalization, which concerns its ideology, strategy, and organization. With respect to the latter, 'de-demonization' must achieve the balance between two contradictory imperatives: on the one hand, the FN must continue its move towards organizational 'normality' (Mény and Surel 2002: 251) to enhance its credibility and governmental status; on the other hand, this objective can only be achieved by increasing partisan democracy and pluralism,

which could, in turn, affect the party's adaptive capacity stemming from its charisma-based structure.

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6

The Norwegian Progress Party: Between a Business Firm and a Mass Party

Anders Ravik Jupskås

Introduction: The Main Traits

Fremskrittspartiet (FrP) [The Progress Party] in Norway is among the most successful and oldest right-wing populist parties in contemporary Europe. The party was founded as a fairly insignificant and unstable entrepreneurial issue party in 1973. Contrary to expectations, it has been able to persist in the electoral arena for more than four decades. In three of the five most recent national elections, the FrP surpassed the Conservatives as the second largest party. Even after its rather charismatic and media-savvy leader, Carl I. Hagen, stepped down in 2006, following almost three decades as the chairman, the party remained a significant right-wing political force at the national and sub-national level. In fact, in 2013, the party was finally able to enter the government for the first time as part of a right-wing minority coalition with the Conservatives.

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The party's electoral consolidation, successful leadership transition, and the ability to become an influential political actor cannot be explained without taking its organizational development into consideration. While, for a long time, the party resembled a 'personal party' (McDonnell 2013) thus strongly associated with, and dependent on its party chairman, it eventually developed a peculiar party organization. It did so by combining the effective (and authoritarian) structure of the 'business firm model' (Hopkin and Paolucci 1999) with a strong emphasis on the traditional features of the mass party (Duverger 1954; Panebianco 1988), including the creation of ancillary organizations engaging in grassroots activism, training candidates, achieving a local presence, and fostering a distinct party culture.

This chapter presents an in-depth examination of the organizational transformation of the FrP and its relation to the party's electoral performance and parliamentary behaviour. The first part sketches out the general evolution of the party, some of its main ideological features and, following the framework derived from Janda (1970), demonstrates that the party has become quite institutionalized in recent decades. The second part will focus on three core organizational dimensions: degree of organization, centralization, and coherence. The FrP's development along these organizational dimensions suggests that the party has transformed from a populist movement party into a party with a more solid organizational structure, resembling both the business-firm model and the traditional mass party. This makes the party both similar to, and different from the other Norwegian parties. In the third section, the chapter will systematically compare the FrP with other parliamentary parties in Norway. While the FrP has, in organizational terms, become increasingly similar to the established parties, it remains more centralized, as the chapter will show. The unique formative process of the party seems also to have had a persistent impact on the organizational culture; though this influence appears to be fading among the party elites. The chapter concludes by summarizing the main findings and briefly discussing its implications.

Becoming an Institutionalized Right-Wing Party

The FrP is usually considered a right-wing populist party, though it has been described as 'a doubtful case' (Ignazi 1992: 14) or a 'milder version'

(Kitschelt and McGann 1995: 121) compared to the new radical right parties elsewhere. In a more recent study of populist radical right parties, the FrP is not even included due to its alleged lack of a nativist core (Mudde 2007: 47). However, there are many features in which the party resembles other contemporary radical right parties. Anti-immigration is indeed the most important issue for its candidates and voters. In addition, the party mobilizes on law and order, better geriatric care, policies favouring motorists, and the general image of being the party for ordinary people (Jupskås 2013b).

The FrP, which was initially called Anders Langes parti til sterk nedsettelse av skatter, avgifter og offentlige inngrep (ALP) [Anders Lange's Party for a Strong Reduction in Taxes, Duties and Public Intervention], emerged in 1973 as an 'entrepreneurial issue party' (e.g. Harmel and Svåsand 1993) in a multiparty system characterized by 'moderate polarization' (Sartori 1976) and the presence of a 'predominant party' (Blondel 1968). The party's founder, Lange, did not represent any organized interests in civil society and was seen as a political outsider, though he had been the secretary of the most influential extra-parliamentary right-wing organization in the interwar period, Fedrelandslaget [The Fatherland's League]. Accordingly, the party formation falls outside the categories as defined by Duverger (1954).[1] In short, the party was externally created, yet without the support of an extra-parliamentary organization or social movement. Not surprisingly, the ALP was therefore highly dependent upon its leading figures during the first years of its existence.

Against the backdrop of political turbulence and a longstanding non-socialist government (1965–71), the ALP unexpectedly gained 5 per cent of the votes and four seats in parliament (see Table 6.1). The voters came from across the political spectrum, most notably from the Labour Party and the Conservatives (Bjørklund 1981: 16). Many right-wing voters were politically frustrated after having lost the EU referendum and disappointed about the tax increases, growing bureaucracy, and expanding welfare state. Not even six years of non-socialist government had been able to reverse these trends. Other important reasons for the electoral breakthrough were the charismatic personality of Anders Lange, the increased

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[1] Duverger (1963) observed that parties tended to be either internally created by factions in parliament or externally created by organized groups in civil society, most notably trade unions.

Table 6.1 Electoral results, number of representatives and variation between electoral districts in national elections, 1973–2013

Years	Election results (%)	Members of Parliament	Distribution of support[a]
1973	5	4	37
1977	1.9	0	46
1981	4.5	4	42
1985	3.7	2	39
1989	13.0	22	27
1993	6.3	10	39
1997	15.3	25	24
2001	14.6	26	21
2005	22.1	38	19
2009	22.9	41	17
2013	16.7	29	19

[a]This measurement is calculated as the standard deviation of the relative distances between the mean support and the support in each of the 19 electoral districts. High values mean large differences between the electoral districts, whereas low values mean less variation in electoral support between the electoral districts.

Source: Norway statistics (https://www.ssb.no/en)

role of television in campaigning which made it much easier for parties without an organization to 'get the message out', and a contagion effect from similar developments in Denmark (Bjørklund 2000; Jupskås 2009).

Following Janda's (1970: 88–89) criteria for institutionalization, the FrP may be considered as having been weakly institutionalized during its first three decades of existence. In that period, the party suffered from organizational discontinuity, legislative and electoral instability, as well as a lack of leadership competition. The first of three party splits came only one year after the party had been founded. After being internally defeated by Lange and his loyal supporters, two prominent members, one of whom was the future party chairman, Hagen, defected from the party and created an ideologically similar, yet organizationally different party, Reformpartiet [The Reform Party]. However, when Lange died in 1974, Hagen became a member of parliament for the ALP (he had been next in line on the candidate list) despite being a member of the Reform Party, and was eventually able to merge the two parties.[2]

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[2] The merger was not without organizational drawbacks. Most notably, the party was unable to field candidates in the capital, Oslo, in the 1975 local elections.

The second split happened when the libertarian faction defected in 1994 after being internally defeated when the nationalist and Christian-conservative faction joined forces (see more in the section on coherence). Some of the libertarian elites founded a new party called Fridemokratene [Free Democrats], though it never achieved electoral success.

The third and last split (so far) occurred in the early 2000s and was more related to party strategy than to ideology or organization. While the party leadership was ready to seek office and build alliances, a smaller faction of the party in parliament (7 of 25 MPs in total) wanted the FrP to remain in opposition. In the end, six of the seven MPs were either expelled or suspended (four MPs) or left the party voluntarily (two MPs). Members were also expelled at the local level while as many as 1,200 of them defected according to internal party documents (Jupskås 2015: 119). However, in comparison with the party split in the mid-1990s, the party was not really weakened, despite losing some of its longstanding and best-known representatives. The overall membership actually increased (when more than 2,500 members joined the party) and none of the competing party lists launched in the national election by expelled MPs were successful. In fact the list of the FrP's former vice chairman, Kleppe, was the only one to gain more than 1 per cent of the votes. He later founded Demokratene [the Democrats], a radical copy of the FrP, which has been able to gain a few seats locally.

In conjunction with the recurrent challenges of organizational continuity, the party's first decades can be described as a continuous electoral journey of ups and downs. Without Lange as a charismatic mobilizer and with constant infighting, the party obtained only marginal electoral support in the 1975 local elections. Prior to the national elections in 1977, the party had changed its name to Fremskrittspartiet but failed to reach the parliamentary threshold. It re-entered the parliament four years later and successfully penetrated party politics at the sub-national level in 1983 (see Table 6.2). Yet, the FrP remained weak, gaining only 3.7 per cent of the votes and two seats in parliament in the 1985 general election. The main electoral breakthrough came in the late 1980s after mobilizing on anti-immigration sentiments and more generally on the politics of resentment (Aardal and Valen 1989; Bjørklund 1988). Yet, the party's position in the electorate remained tenuous (e.g. Valenet et al. 1999: 111) and in 1993 its support declined to 6.3 per cent.

Not until after the ideological split in the mid-1990s, did the party become more institutionalized. Since 1997, the electoral support at the national level has remained fairly strong and varied between 14.6 per cent (in 2001) and 22.9 per cent (in 2009). Moreover, support has become more equally distributed across the 19 electoral districts (see Table 6.1). The number of MPs has varied between 25 (in 1997) and 41 (in 2009). However, it should be noted that voter loyalty continues to be fairly low (just above 50 per cent) (Aardal 2011: 24), although the party's electoral support and representation has stabilized at the sub-national level. The FrP has consistently received more than 10 per cent of the votes since 1995, gained more than ten mayorships, over 1,000 seats in municipal councils, and, with the exception of 2011, more than 100 seats in county councils since 2003 (see Table 6.2).

As previously mentioned, Janda (1970: 89) suggests also that an institutionalized party is characterized by an identifiable leader at the national level, change of leadership personnel, and a transparent process of leadership selection when this occurs. While the first criterion was already met when Hagen was elected chairman in 1978, the other criteria were not fulfilled until Siv Jensen replaced Hagen as chairman in 2006. Until then, the FrP resembled a 'personal party' (McDonnell 2013: 222) meaning

Table 6.2 Electoral results and number of representatives in sub-national elections, 1975–2011

	County elections		Municipal elections		
Years	Election results (%)	Number of county councillors	Election results	Number of municipal councillors	Number of mayors
1975	1.4	13	0.8	41	0
1979	2.5	23	1.9	78	0
1983	6.3	63	5.3	377	0
1987	12.3	124	10.4	763	1
1991	7.0	66	6.5	502	0
1995	12.0	103	10.5	695	0
1999	13.4	120	12.1	989	1
2003	17.9	127	16.4	1459	11
2007	18.5	141	17.5	1624	17
2011	11.8	92	11.4	1143	11

Source: Norway statistics (https://www.ssb.no/en/), annual yearbooks

that the party would not survive without its leader as the single dominant public figure and without the formal and/or informal concentration of power in his or her hands. Hagen was frequently labelled as a 'party owner' in mainstream media because he held the dual position of party leader and parliamentary chair (see also Svåsand 1998: 81). According to Bjørklund (2003: 143), Hagen created a party unity that otherwise would not have existed. His eventual resignation and the selection of a less charismatic leader were thus considered politically risky (Svåsand and Wörlund 2005: 278). The election of Siv Jensen proved these negative predictions wrong as the transition in leadership caused neither electoral decline nor organizational disintegration. In this sense, the effective leadership succession confirms the impression of a more institutionalized party. In fact, in contrast to Hagen, Jensen was even able to push the party to pass the final institutional threshold which was moving from the 'representation stage' to the 'government stage' (Pedersen 1982). While the FrP has been a relevant party (in a Sartorian sense) since 1985, it has not been perceived as a 'coalitionable' party by the other non-socialist parties. After the non-socialist block gained a majority of the votes (and seats) in the most recent national election, it was decided that the FrP and the Conservatives would form a right-wing minority government and that the Liberals and the Christian People's Party would act as parliamentary support parties.

The following segment considers the extent to which the transformation from a marginal protest party towards an institutionalized right-wing governing party has involved significant organizational change and adaptation.

The Party Organization over Time

Degree of Organization

In its first year of existence, FrP's organization resembled the 'populist model' (Svåsand 1994: 114–116) or a 'movement party' (Kitschelt 2006). From the moment the FrP was founded until its first congress one year after the parliamentary breakthrough, the party had no official

statutes, mainly because the party founder, Anders Lange, but also the self-appointed party secretary and vice chairman Erik Gjems-Onstad, strongly opposed having any formal rules regulating intra-party affairs. The only organ at the national level was the 'interim board' in which only two positions were predefined: the party chairman (Lange) and vice chairman (Gjems-Onstad). However, by 1974 the party had transformed into a multi-level organization similar to that of the political administrative structure of the Norwegian state: party members make up the local branches at the municipality level, local branches send delegates to meetings at the county level, and, finally, the county party sends delegates to the national party congress, which has been defined as the party's highest authority. However, the formal statutes were not fully developed. For example, they stated nothing about how delegates should be elected to county meetings or the party congress and how the county party or the municipal party should organize.

After Lange died, and Hagen rejoined the party, its formal organization developed further. In 1976, only three years after the party had been founded, its statutes already resembled those of a traditional mass party. Not only was the organization of the party at the county and municipal level better developed, the FrP created also a new organ at the national level, the national council, which was considered the second highest authority in the party. The national council consisted of the executive committee, members of parliament, and, most importantly, the leaders from all county branches. Hence, this organ connected the national party elite with the sub-national party units, thereby improving the 'vertical integration' (Thorlakson 2009). By the early 1980s, the party established yet another national organ. The steering committee was to be elected by the executive committee and was responsible for managing the party on a daily basis. Since this development, there have been only minor changes in the structure of the extra-parliamentary party organization. The current organization is depicted in Fig. 6.1. The existence of four organs at the national level with specified selection procedures and clearly defined responsibilities means that within its first decade of existence the party had developed what Duverger (1954: 40–41) calls a strongly articulated organizational structure typically associated with mass parties.
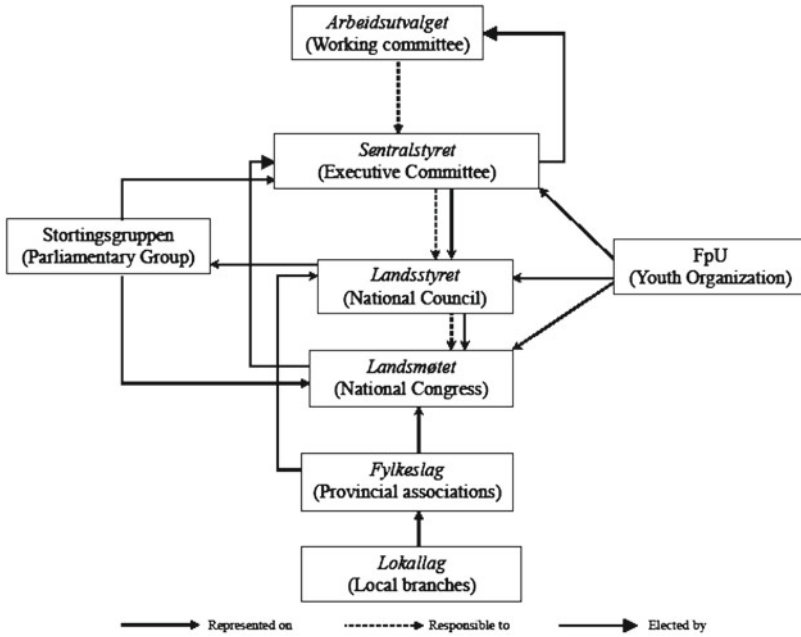
Fig. 6.1 Organogram of the FrP's organizational structure at the national level, 2013. *Source*: Fremskrittspartiet, party statutes 2013

At the same time the FrP was developing a more complex structure by creating a more extensive organization. Nonetheless, the latter happened more slowly and entailed a major setback in the mid-1990s as a result of the ideological party split. While the party fielded candidates in about one of every five of Norway's approximately 450 municipalities in the late 1970s, the share increased to over 50 per cent by the early 1990s (see Table 6.3). After a minor decrease in the first half of the 1990s, the party was able to penetrate organizationally a growing number of municipalities in the 2000s. In the most recent municipal election in 2011, the party fielded candidates in 80 per cent of all municipalities.

Similarly, the number of FrP members increased substantially in the party's first decade of existence—from around 1000 members in 1973 to 10,000 in 1981 (e.g. Demker and Svåsand 2005: 432). However, these figures should be carefully interpreted, as the membership register

Table 6.3 Municipalities in which the FrP fielded candidates in sub-national elections, 1975–2013

Years	Number of lists	National coverage (local branches) (%)	Local branches
1975	52	12	–
1979	96	21	–
1983	158	35	–
1987	172	38	–
1991	241	54	275
1995	195	45	241
1999	259	60	289
2003	304	71	343
2007	334	78	358
2011	344	80	367

Source: Figures from 1975–2003 are from Svåsand and Wörlund (2005: 265). Figures from 2007 and 2011 are from Norway Statistics (https://www.ssb.no/en/) and calculated by the author. The number of local branches is from the party's annual reports. This number is higher partly due to the inclusion of local city district branches in Oslo. Oslo only counts as a single municipality in elections.

was poorly managed and irregularly updated. Even at the beginning of the 1990s, the party's annual reports indicate a significant discrepancy between the number of members who were registered and those who actually paid their annual fee. Mass party membership has been considered important by the party leadership for many years, especially after the ideological split in the 1990s and the appointment of General Secretary Geir Mo (who remained secretary until 2012). Between 1996 and 2008, the party in central office carried out four nationwide recruiting campaigns. New members were offered extensive training and social events to allow for sufficient exposure to party culture, identity, and ideology. The party reached more than 10,000 fee-paying members in 1999 and more than 20,000 in 2007 (see Table 6.4). In recent years membership has numbered around 22,000 despite a small decline after 2011.

While the mass-bureaucratic parties are first and foremost characterized by local presence and mass membership, they also feature members who are strongly committed to, and quite active in the party (Janda 1970: 111). The FrP members seem to have become increasingly attached to the party and are no less active than members of the Labour Party or the Conservative Party (Jupskås 2015: 137). Membership turnover is decreasing and membership surveys demonstrate that the share of members who

Table 6.4 Paid-up party members in FrP and its youth organization, 1993–2013[a]

Years	FrP	FpU	Years	FrP	FpU
1993	4370		2004	17660	1016
1994	3671		2005	16848	1233
1995	4976		2006	19581	1747
1996	5654		2007	20961	1284
1997	6816		2008	21019	1424
1998	7905	520	2009	22876	2160
1999	11224	827	2010	22623	1978
2000	11824	920	2011	22310	2202
2001	12567	916	2012	18596	1673
2002	16746	904	2013	18894	1374
2003	18839	998			

[a]This table shows only the number of members who actually pay their fees. The total number of registered members is higher for both the 'mother party' (almost 30 per cent higher) and the youth organization (between 30 and 50 per cent higher). The FrP does not consider their figures prior to 1993 reliable.
Source: Numbers for the FrP are from annual reports by the executive committee. The confirmed numbers for the youth organization in 1998–2009 are from Ødegård and Bergh (2011: 34), while the most recent numbers have been sent to the author by the Norwegian Children and Youth Council (LNU).

have been in the party for more than six years has increased from 30 per cent in 1990 to 42 per cent in 2000 and 58 per cent in 2009. Moreover, when analyzing the reasons for joining the party, we can conclude that purposive motivation (commitment to ideology and specific issues) seems to dominate, though that analysis suffers from an incomplete set of indicators of other possible motivations (Heidar and Saglie 2003a: 778ff).

In terms of 'organizational linkages' (Poguntke 2002) beyond the party's own membership organization—Janda (1970: 107) calls this 'the pervasiveness of the organization'—, the FrP has remained more limited. However, even this organizational dimension has changed over time. For example, the Progress Party youth organization, FpU (Fremskrittspartiets Ungdom), has been closely integrated in the mother party since its foundation in 1978. It has been allowed to send delegates with voting rights to annual meetings at the national, regional, and local level. It has also been represented on the national executive committee, the county branch board, and local branch board (see Fig. 6.1). In the late 1970s and 1980s, the youth organization certainly played an important role with regard to organizational work and ideological development, partly because the

party desperately needed someone to carry out voluntary work and partly because the youth organization recruited many skillful libertarian ideologues (Jupskås 2015: 138ff.). However, as already mentioned, when the mother party adopted more nationalist and authoritarian policies in the late 1980s, the youth organization represented the most vocal internal opposition. After many years of ideological conflict, the FpU eventually decided to dissolve itself. In turn, the FrP immediately founded a new and more loyal youth party. The 'new' FpU has never been able to gain its predecessor's strength, but its membership has been steadily increasing. In 2012, FpU had 2,200 members, which means that it represented approximately 10 per cent of FrP's membership pool. It should be noted also that the youth organization has been an important socializing and recruiting platform. For example, five of the seven ministers from the FrP when this was written had been active in the youth party in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Centralization

According to Janda (1970: 107–108), centralization in a party is a question of power distribution between different units within the party, and especially the relationship between the national and sub-national level. To gauge the extent of centralization in the FrP, five indicators will be employed: leadership selection, candidate selection, policy formation, exercising control through sanction mechanisms, and the allocation of party funding.[3]

Formally, the leader of FrP is selected by the party congress rather than directly by members, which would otherwise be an even more decentralized process. Yet, the leadership is also not selected by a small party elite or the incumbent party leader. By this measure the FrP is neither extremely centralized nor the opposite. The only exception to this rule in the party's history was the selection of the party's first leader, Anders Lange, who, at the time, had 'nominated' and 'appointed' himself.

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[3] Janda also includes the nationalization of structure, control with communication, and leadership concentration as indicators of centralization. Though they might be important as well, they will not be discussed here.

His successor, Arve Lønnum, was elected at the party convention in 1975 after having been nominated by the national council.[4] Hagen and Jensen gained the leadership through a similar procedure in 1978 and 2006, respectively. In practice however, leadership succession can also be a more centralized process: when the leadership passed from Hagen to Jensen it was more like a 'managed transition' than a 'waiting game' or 'power struggle' (Bynander and t' Hart 2008: 389). This is because Jensen was more or less hand-picked by Hagen and turned into a 'crown princess' by the late 1990s. In this sense, the leadership succession was formally decentralized (she was unanimously elected at the party congress) but *de facto* quite centralized (Jensen's ascent in the party was carefully guided by Hagen).

A similar distinction between the formal and the substantive is also important with regard to candidate selection. According to the party statutes, the process of nominating candidates for office has always been completely controlled by the sub-national level. In comparative perspective, this makes these procedures highly decentralized (Bille 2001: 367). However, history shows that this is not so: in several counties the party leadership interfered with the candidate selection process throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Jupskås 2015). Most notably, in early 2001, the national council almost unanimously decided that the party's chairman and the vice chairmen should be automatically nominated for the top spot on the candidate list thereby violating the principle of sub-national autonomy. Whereas Hagen's position was not threatened, the leadership was afraid that the county branches would not nominate his protégée Jensen for second place (after Hagen) in Oslo and his other favorite, Søviknes, for first place in Hordaland. After the election, party leader Hagen admitted that the party leadership had in fact been meddling in process of drawing up the candidate list (Valen et al. 2002: 181).

The influence over policy formation in FrP is—as in all parties—difficult to assess. However, several insightful observations can be made. In Norway, party manifestos tend to be fairly detailed and are regarded as written contracts between the voters and party. Therefore, policy influence

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[4] In some accounts, Eivind Eckbo is listed as the party chairman between Lange and Lønnum, but he was only acting leader.

is closely associated with controlling the process of manifesto formation. In the FrP, manifesto development involves—at least it has since the late 1980s—the following steps. First, the party congress elects a programme committee responsible for working out a draft of the party's manifesto(s) and programme of principles. In this programme committee, which consists of around ten individuals headed by one of the vice leaders, different party units are represented: the party leadership, the parliamentary group, the youth organization, and county branch representatives. Secondly, based on the policies developed by the various policy committees at the national level and input from the sub-national level, the programme committee presents the draft to the national council. Thirdly, after being discussed there, the manifesto is formally adopted at the party congress. It votes only on the issues on which the national council disagrees. Thus, in contrast to parties in which the leader (or the party elite) develops the party policies, the FrP seems to have a rather decentralized manifesto formation process at the national level. Surveys among party members confirm that quite a large share of the membership is satisfied with the responsiveness of the party leadership (Jupskås 2013b: 221–222). However, it should be noted that the autonomy both at the local level and for the parliamentary party to develop their own policies is very restricted (Allern and Saglie 2012: 964; Svåsand 1998: 81). In the early 1990s, after the FrP experienced a significant increase in its parliamentary group, the party in public office became completely subordinated to the party in central office. The latter—both the executive committee and the national council—were even granted representation in the meetings of the parliamentary party. Lange's original idea of MPs as trustees with considerable independence was thus fully replaced by the notion of MPs as delegates needing to be constrained by majority decisions taken either by the party at large (the party congress, national council, or executive committee) or the party's parliamentary faction (and indirectly the party at large). If MPs do not vote according to the manifesto, they may very well be expelled. At the sub-national level, municipal and county party units are only allowed to develop their own policies as long as they do not challenge the official national policy or programme of principles.

Hagen has metaphorically referred to the party as a corporation—a business-firm—in which the executive committee was the equivalent of

the corporate executive board (Bjørklund 2003: 132). The party leadership strongly emphasized the importance of 'selling the same product' to voters all over the country and across different political-administrative levels (i.e. at national, regional, and municipal level). Municipal and county branches were simply regarded as subdivisions of the party, expected to implement loyally the leadership's decisions.

What really makes the FrP a centralized party is the authority of the executive committee to initiate and decide on whether members or representatives should be temporarily suspended or permanently expelled. Interestingly, the party leadership has typically formalized its hold on power by amending the party statutes. In this way, its interference with, and top-down control of the party could be more easily legitimized. In 1990, the party adopted a new clause stating that members or representatives who act against the interest of the party should automatically consider themselves resigned. In 1994, the party congress also adopted—with 94 votes in favour and 50 votes against—a now infamous so-called 'Stalin-clause' resolution stating that the executive committee may sanction those who infringe on a good organizational culture (Jupskås 2015: 128).

The final indicator of centralization concerns the allocation of party funds. In line with what has been dubbed 'cartel parties' (Katz and Mair 1995), the FrP's most important source of income is public party financing (approximately 90 per cent of party revenue in recent years). In 2012, the public support amounted to 70 million Norwegian Kroner (or 9.3 million Euros).[5] The generous public funding of the party has contributed to an internal power shift in favour of the central party organization. Most of public support went to the national level (81 per cent in 2012), while the rest went to either the subnational level (14 per cent) or the youth organization (4 per cent). Other, less important, sources of income are also controlled, to a large extent, by the national party organization. Since 1990, membership fees (ranging from 2.8 to 4.9 per cent of income between 2005 and 2012) have been collected at the national level before being partially (50 per cent in 2014) distributed back to the subnational

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[5] Overview of political parties' income provided by the Ministry of Local Government and Modernization (Norway Statistics 2015b):

level. Moreover, it was decided that the national level would be entitled to the property and fortune of those local chapters that dissolved or were stripped of their status as subnational units of the FrP.

Coherence

In its first two and a half decades, the FrP was heavily plagued by a lack of internal coherence. Already from the very beginning there have been internal disagreements as to how the party should properly behave and whether or not it should even conform in its organization to the dominant paradigm of Norwegian party politics: adopting the mass party model and engaging in consensus-seeking. The conflict between the so-called 'populists' (who were loyal to the ideas of Anders Lange) and the so-called 'pragmatists' (who wanted to develop a party which would be less dependent upon Lange) resulted temporarily in a party split (between the ALP and the Reform Party) until the dissidents eventually re-joined the party. For a short time, the merger of the two formations actually increased the level of internal factionalism.

The replacement of Lange with Hagen in the FrP faction in the Storting, the Norwegian Parliament, triggered almost immediately a power struggle in which Gjems-Onstad, who had been a key player in the formative phase, was first removed as the chairman of the parliamentary group and then expelled for disloyal behaviour (after recommending to vote for the Conservatives). With neither Lange nor Gjems-Onstad in the party leadership, the 'populist' faction was severely weakened. When the party selected a new chairman in 1978, both of the candidates—Hagen and Jens Marcussen, a former county branch chairman for the Conservative Party—were considered part of the 'pragmatist' faction.

Under the leadership of Hagen, the party re-entered parliament in 1981 and has since then always displayed a high degree of legislative cohesion, thus receiving close to maximum score on voting consistency (when calculating the corresponding index based on the Rice (1925) method). However, despite acting as a unified faction in parliament, there have been several examples of ideological and strategic factionalism. The ideological factionalism was strongest in the early 1990s after the party had experienced significant growth in electoral support and parliamentary representation. In short, the FrP was profoundly divided

between the libertarians on one side as well as the nationalists and the Christian-conservatives on the other. Throughout the 1980s, a group of libertarian ideologues had come to dominate the party elite (including several of the vice chairmen), the youth party, and parts of the parliamentary party. These ideologues wanted the party to advocate a consistent libertarian position—not only with regard to economic issues and the EU (i.e. support for Norwegian membership of the European Union), but also with regard to value issues such as opposing both a special emphasis on Christianity in school and general conscription. Finally, this also led to disagreements over the extent to which anti-immigration should be actively pursued by the party as an issue for political mobilization in election campaigns. The libertarians objected and were temporarily able to remove the topic from the party's agenda as a campaign issue.

Many of these policy positions and strategic considerations were unacceptable for other parts of the FrP (and large segments of its electorate) which were far more authoritarian (for example pro-military), nationalist (for example anti-immigration), and/or culturally conservative (for example pro-Christian preamble in public schools) (e.g. Saglie 1994; Aardal and Valen 1989). In no other parliamentary party were the members equally split on the market liberal-socialist dimension as well as the modern-traditional divide as in the FrP (Saglie 1994: 67, 70). Only with regard to the so-called 'new politics' (called materialism-idealism by Saglie [1994: 67]) were the FrP's party members quite united. The high level of ideological factionalism limited the party's ability to effectively communicate simple messages (for example the party slogan in the EU-debate was 'Yes to the European Community, no to the Union') and the authority of the party leader was repeatedly undermined both publicly and internally, for example, at the party congress in 1994, only 72 per cent of the delegates supported the re-election of the chairman despite the absence of competing candidates. The party also lost significant support in the electoral arena (e.g. Aardal and Valen 1995: 29) due to a confrontation which had become inevitable. After an agonizing party convention in 1994 in which Hagen told libertarian dissidents to 'pack off' and leave the party if they were unwilling to accept majority decisions, the libertarian faction—including a majority of the youth organization, four members of parliament and vice chairman Ellen Wibe—left the party.

Indeed, the exit of the libertarian faction made the party far more coherent, especially at the elite level as well as between the 'mother party' and the youth organization. However, neither strategic nor ideological factionalism disappeared completely. While the party leadership was increasingly eager to manoeuvre the party into government and, in the words of Hagen (2007: 359), 'to continue the development toward a more serious party', a small, yet highly visible faction of the parliamentary party was more vote-seeking and anti-establishment oriented.[6] As noted earlier, most of the MPs in this faction were either expelled or forced out of the party. In terms of ideological factionalism, Heidar and Saglie (2002: 130) have demonstrated that the party in this period continued to be divided between a libertarian faction on one side and a more nationalist and welfare chauvinist one—called populist (ibid.) on the other. In the party leadership, Siv Jensen represented the first and John Alvheim, a former member of the Christian People's Party, the latter of the two tendencies. Even today, traces of the three ideological factions can be identified among party members (see below).

Between Change and Adaptation

In the last decade, the party has cultivated a more distinct party culture through special events such as large summer camps for the whole family in 2009 and 2013. Auxiliary organizations such as the party's newspaper *Fremskritt* [*Progress*], Fremskrittspartiets studieforbund [The FrP schooling association, FrS], and Fremskrittspartiet Senior [The FrP senior branch, FpS] also played a part in fostering party culture. The newspaper used to be a subscription medium before being converted to a membership magazine in the early 2000s. Today it constitutes an important asset of the FrP's internal communicational infrastructure (Jupskås 2015). The party's (political) schooling association has existed only since 1998, but there had been similar auxiliary organizations dating back to the 1980s. In recent decades, between 1,000 and 3,000 politicians have participated annually in party-organized training programs on ideology, policy, organization,

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[6] The local branch in Oslo was also highly skeptical about the new strategies of the party leadership and its attempt to control the nomination processes.

and the media. Finally, the FrP recently founded an integrated senior citizens' branch, initially headed by the former party chairman Carl I. Hagen himself. Its main goal has been to attract a greater number of older voters, to present FrP's policy to the voting block of senior citizens, and help elected representatives in the national parliament as well as in county and municipal councils to pursue policies on behalf of the elderly.

The party not only continued to institutionalize so as to extend the scope of its appeal but also engaged in further centralization to create a more reliable organizational basis. In 2001 it decided that anyone 'seeking to harm the party, the party's representatives, and the reputation of elected representatives through public action' would be automatically designated as 'actively resigned' (Jupskås 2015: 128). This clause quickly became not only an effective instrument of discipline by implying a thinly veiled threat; it was also explicitly used to expel several of the most oppositional members in the early 2000s. As was the case in the Danish People's Party (Ringsmose and Pedersen 2005), this attempt to further centralize the party organization should be interpreted as part of an office-seeking strategy (see also Bolleyer 2008: 27–30). While the populist behaviour and the strong anti-immigration position of some prominent MPs most likely attracted many votes, such programmatic features were incompatible with the aspiration of entering the government. Without expelling the populist faction, the party would probably not have been considered a viable potential coalition partner by other non-socialist party elites. In recent years, the clause has been frequently used to expel members and representatives also for allegedly disloyal behaviour (Jupskås 2015: 101).

Yet in terms of coherence, factionalism remains a potential challenge for the party and its organizational unity. A preliminary hierarchal cluster analysis of the party membership in 2009, conducted by this author and based on 22 issue statements, suggests that the party consists of at least four different ideological groups of almost equal size whose profiles can be summarized as follows:

1. *Libertarians* (27 per cent), who are highly active within the party, right-wing oriented, and ideologically committed. They are also higher educated, located in urban areas, pro-EU and concerned with market-liberal policies.

2. *Nationalists* (22 per cent), who are also right-wing oriented, though not necessarily market liberal, more anti-establishment and anti-elitist. They are overrepresented in the class-polarized periphery in the North and profoundly nativist in orientation (for example, hostile toward the EU and immigration).

3. *Christian-conservatives* (25 per cent), who are more centrist in their views, represent younger cohorts and, disproportionally, women. They are based in the so-called 'bible-belt' along the western coast, tend to be nationalist but are less xenophobic than the nationalists themselves.

4. *Authoritarian social democrats* (26 per cent), who are also more centrist oriented, based in eastern Norway, somewhat overrepresented among workers, less ideologically committed, and also less active.

Disagreements between these four groups of party members have occasionally been played out internally, such as about elections to the executive committee, strategic considerations concerning campaign issues, and the relations vis-à-vis other non-socialist parties. The current vice leader[7], Per Sandberg, for example, who is seen as the main representative of the authoritarian social democrats and the nationalists, has recently referred to some of the libertarians as a group of 'smoothly polished billiard balls' (TV2, 20-02-13). Apparently, Sandberg is afraid that the party is about to be dominated by academics and political careerists and might thus lose its core identity as an opposition party. Sandberg is also the only representative in the party leadership who openly expressed profound skepticism toward the two centrist parties, the Liberals and the Christian People's Party, providing the FrP with parliamentary support. In doing so, he reflected the sentiments present also at the grassroots level. Moreover, Christian Tybring-Gjedde, another prominent representative of the nationalist faction, has voiced criticism toward the government for its lack of radical nativist policies. As the only MP in the FrP, he refused to accept the government deal on immigration policies, arguing that the anti-immigration position was a matter of conscience.

Despite these instances of internal conflict, the level of grassroots, leadership, and legislative factionalism has been remarkably low. The national

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[7] The title of party's deputy leader changed from 'vice chairman' to 'vice leader'.

council, for example, voted unanimously in support of the programmatic platform of the current Conservative/FrP government. Since the party entered the government, there have been only a few examples of criticism in the national or subnational arena directed at the official party line. This lack of factionalism might be related to the level of centralization within the party which makes it difficult to voice dissenting viewpoints, but it may also reflect a party culture more open to compromise and less oriented toward ideological dogma. Moreover, experience from the local level seems to have contributed to an increasing acceptance of political compromise within the FrP (e.g. Flo 2008). In any case, the party has clearly become more coherent in recent years.

Similarities and Differences within the Party System

In recent decades, most Norwegian parties have come to resemble 'the mass party' model (Svåsand 1994), albeit with features associated with the 'network party' (Heidar and Saglie 2003b) or 'modern cadre party' (Koole 1994). They are characterized by a strong structural articulation with the local branch as the basic unit and are represented in most of Norway's roughly 400 municipalities (although some of the major parties have an even larger presence). However, membership figures are declining across the board and the traditional geography-based branch structure has been supplemented by so-called 'issue networks'. The FrP deviates from some of these general developments. Most importantly, it has experienced a growing rather than declining membership, at least until the party entered government. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the organizational density (member/voter ratio) of the FrP is still lower than for the established parties.

The most striking organizational differences between Norwegian parties are not related to formal structure and the type of party units, but to the linkages between the units, the composition within the party units, and the level of informal vertical integration. In non-socialist formations, the parliamentary party is usually given more autonomy vis-à-vis the extra-parliamentary party (Heidar and Saglie 2002: 236). Only in non-socialist

parties are the members of parliament (and government) entitled to vote in the respective party congress. Moreover, parties still differ in terms of basic incentive structure. Simply put, non-socialist parties are oriented toward the electoral arena because the number of delegates which each county branch is entitled to send to their party congresses is calculated on the basis of previous electoral results. By comparison, left-wing parties are oriented toward the internal arena because the number of delegates is calculated on the basis of membership figures. FrP represents a hybrid of these principles and practices. On the one hand, the party almost exclusively rewards electoral performance rather than membership size (notwithstanding a small modification in 2009) and members of parliament participate as delegates at the annual congress as in other non-socialist parties. On the other hand, the FrP's faction in parliament is formally subordinated to the party at large, which is more similar to the left-wing parties.

The degree of vertical integration in Norwegian parties has only been briefly touched upon in the scholarly literature (Aarebrot and Saglie 2013; Allern and Saglie 2012). Unfortunately, the FrP refused to participate in one of the studies designed to understand this dimension better. Another study suggests that the FrP is somewhat more vertically integrated than other parties (Allern and Saglie 2012: 965–966). Whereas the formal vertical integration is fairly similar across all formations (with the exception of the Socialist Left Party which displays weaker integration), the FrP seems to be most integrated in terms of the actual patterns of vertical coordination and contact. Party officials at the municipal level report higher levels of contact with the national level with regard to both national and local policy making compared with other parties. Furthermore, they also seem to exert a downward push to have the local level adopt procedures and strategies decided by the national party.

Parties may also differ in terms of party culture. For example, the formal structure may hide substantial attitudinal variation between party members in terms of the preferable organizational structure. Interestingly, this seems to be the case with the FrP. As demonstrated by Saglie and Heidar (2004: 400), the opposition toward a bureaucratic and delegatory party democracy is, in fact, particularly strong in the FrP. In this sense, one might argue that there are still traces of a populist organizational mentality within the party, which is in line with what Panebianco (1988: 50) suggested, noting

that 'the characteristics of a party's origin are in fact capable of exerting a weight on its organizational structure even decades later'.

While the FrP has become organizationally more similar to the other parties in terms of structural articulation and complexity, this is not the case with regard to centralization. This concerns not only the fact that the party leadership has tried to influence the selection process of parliamentary candidates to an extent greater than in other parties (Valen et al. 2002). It is also the case that the extensive power concentrated in the hands of the party elite and its ability to define criticism as disloyal behaviour makes the FrP far more centralized than other Norwegian parties. The manifesto process is also more centralized in the FrP than among their political competitors. As the only party in parliament in which the main discussion of manifesto revisions takes place in the national council and not at the party congress, the FrP is also the only formation in which a complete list of all proposed bills is not handed out to the delegates (Heidar and Saglie 2002: 216).[8] Moreover, a recent study suggests that, at the local level, the FrP 'appears to be closer to an overall "top-down" model', as the national leadership frequently interferes in local matters. County branches perform 'to some extent (…) "quality control" of municipal manifestos' (Allern and Saglie 2012: 964).

The FrP has also been significantly more affected by internal divisions than other parties. Although ideological and strategic conflict occurs in other parties too, there have been very few such incidents in parliamentary groups other than the FrP.[9]

Conclusion: Between a Business-Firm and a Mass Party

This chapter has discussed the organizational development of one of the most successful and institutionalized right-wing populist parties in Europe, the Norwegian FrP. Overall, we may draw the following

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[8] Delegates may propose new bills at the congress, but this is neither the normal procedure nor part of the party culture.

[9] The only two incidents are one MP from the Labour Party in 1992 and one MP from the Conservative Party in 2001.

conclusions. First, the organizational development of the party represents a transformation away from the populist model based upon charismatic leadership, low degrees of coherence, and no vertical integration, towards an organizational structure blending the logic of a business-firm party with the logic of a mass-bureaucratic party. On the one hand, the party has created a fairly centralized organization (especially by Norwegian standards) in which the executive committee enjoys comprehensive powers (most notably with regard to sanctions) and in which the autonomy of subnational branches and the parliamentary party are quite restricted. The party also resembles the business-firm model along other dimensions than those discussed in this chapter, such as the permanent struggle for media attention (Jupskås 2013a), its focus on certain issues and personalities (Karlsen and Narud 2004: 127), and its comprehensive usage of external campaign expertise (Karlsen 2010: 202).

On the other hand, the party leadership has also borrowed organizational aspects from the mass party model. In short, it has gradually developed a comprehensive structure with a powerful party organization, nationwide coverage of local branches, and a stable core of party members. And while the issue of economic resources is primarily a question of public party financing, other kinds of ideological and social capital fit the mass party model, such as the existence of ancillary organizations, and the party press. Together with the party's bureaucracy, these organizations help the party to recruit, train, and socialize both new members and representatives. In combination with a more centralized organization, the infusion of core ideological and organizational values has certainly made the party more coherent in recent years.

Secondly, the aforementioned presentation of FrP's organization suggests that the party has to a large extent become more similar to the established parties in Norway, which in turn implies a kind of 'normalization' (see also Heidar and Saglie 2002: 59; Svåsand and Wörlund 2005). However, there are still organizational patterns associated with the FrP that may be identified as unique in the Norwegian context: (a) The current structure represents a hybrid of organizational features usually associated with either the socialist or the non-socialist parties, (b) the party is far more centralized and somewhat more vertically integrated than the

established parties, and (c) party members are still more sceptical about the mass party model than members of other parties.

Summing up, it appears that the FrP's development fits well with Panebianco's (1988) expectation of how parties founded upon charismatic leadership may develop organizationally. According to Panebianco (1988: 67), we would expect such parties either to remain highly dependent upon charismatic leadership or institutionalize by maintaining their 'highly centralized internal authority pattern'. In order to survive their founding leader and develop a fairly consistent ideological and programmatic position, right-wing populist parties would need to develop an organization in which the power rests within the party elite. The FrP seems to be a case in point. At least, this chapter shows that the party leadership has resorted to centralizing measurements whenever confronted with different kinds of party crisis or change in party goals, such as the shift from pursuing primarily a vote-seeking strategy to primarily an office-seeking strategy after becoming the largest right-wing party in the 1997 general election (see also Bolleyer 2008: 27–30).

This chapter demonstrates that whereas right-wing populist parties may very well be leadership-dependent as the FrP was in its formative phase, and throughout its first two decades of existence, such parties have the ability to develop a party organization that is more similar to those of the established parties. By overestimating the role of the leader and underestimating the role of the party organization, we most likely fail to explain why right-wing populist parties have been able to persist electorally, survive leadership changes, and become (accepted as) governing parties.

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7

The Sweden Democrats

Ann-Cathrine Jungar

Introduction: The Main Traits

This chapter analyzes the organizational development of the Sweden Democrats (SD). During the last ten years they have built a highly bureaucratic and centralized party organization capable of accomplishing crucial party goals such as winning votes, office, and parliamentary influence as well as party cohesion (Sjöblom 1968; Müller and Strøm 1999). The primary objective of the present party leadership is to overcome the 'pariah status' that has been attributed to the party by the political establishment and the media. The party leader, Jimmy Åkesson, has repeatedly underlined the necessity for the SD to 'grow up', mature, and moderate in order to gain political influence and the credibility to serve in government or support another party in government.

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Since 2005 the SD has established a presence in large parts of Sweden and it entered the Swedish Parliament for the first time in 2010. As the political establishment upholds a strategy of political isolation, a so-called '*cordon sanitaire*,' against the party whose democratic credentials have been called into question, the votes and offices gained by the SD have thus far not translated into direct political influence.[1] Yet, political isolation has clearly not impeded electoral growth (Kitschelt 2013: 241) which, along with a larger parliamentary presence, has been shown to have a moderating effect on such parties (Minkenberg 2001; Meret 2011).

The SD is a good example of this type of development, given that the present party leadership prioritizes ideological moderation and has created a centralized party organization designed to achieve this goal. A party organization with a national scope is a prerequisite for long-term party development and stability because (fast-growing) radical right-wing populist parties experience an influx of new and inexperienced members while looking for activists to represent the party in various political assemblies. The SD has put in place structures for the party leadership to control an expanding party. However, this has come with deteriorating party cohesion as party members and party bodies—local associations and, above all, the youth organization—have criticized both the ideological moderation and the increasing control the party leadership has assumed. This chapter analyzes the development of the SD's party organization with respect to its structure, centralization, and factionalization.

Ideology, Electoral Results and Parliamentary Status

The SD belongs to the family of populist radical right (PRR) parties combining nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde 2007; Jungar and Jupskås 2014). The SD formed in 1988 out of three connected and overlapping nationalist political parties and organizations: Sverigepartiet [the Sweden Party], Framstegspartiet [the Progress Party], and Bevara Sverige Svenskt (BSS) [Keep Sweden Swedish] (Rydgren 2005: 118;

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[1] Some authors have claimed that radical right-wing populist formations treated as pariah parties tend to remain radical or radicalize even further whereas those that are not isolated may moderate (Van Spanje and Van der Brug 2007).

Sverigedemokraterna 2013b). Sverigepartiet (SP) was formed as an amalgamation of the Progress Party (PP) and the BSS in 1986, but the party split in 1987 due to internal conflicts. The origin of the SD resides in neo-fascist and neo-Nazi subcultures and represents the neo-populist nationalist and anti-immigration mobilization of the 1980s (Rydgren 2005: 118; Ekman and Poohl 2010: 21–75). Nationalism constituted the core ideological principle, but from the beginning the SD made authoritarian appeals for stricter criminal policies (i.e. the re-introduction of the death penalty), traditional family values (restricted abortion rights), but also animal rights, in addition to socio-economic issues aimed at pensioners and families with children. Until 2011 the SD defined itself exclusively as a nationalist party: the nation is defined in terms of loyalty, a common identity, language and culture (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2011). Nationalism is framed as 'open and non-racial,' meaning that membership in the nation can be accomplished by birth or assimilation. Social conservatism was—after heated debates—added to the party's ideological profile at the party convention in 2011. 'The Sweden Democrats is a social conservative party with a nationalist outlook that considers value conservatism and solidary welfare as the most important tools for building the good society' (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2011). Social conservatism is presented as a complement to nationalism in the sense that 'the central aim of conservatism is to safeguard well-functioning and deeply rooted communities. The nation is, besides the family, the primary example of such a community' (ibid.).

It is often claimed that both the past and the present version of the SD has been a single-issue party because it frames policy issues from a predominantly nationalist perspective and as being connected to problems arising from immigration and multiculturalism (Mudde 1999). For example, in the party's chauvinist welfare rhetoric, immigration is juxtaposed with welfare for the Swedes whereas organized crime and violence against women is said to be the result of immigration and foreign patriarchal cultures. Nonetheless, the single-issue party thesis has lost validity because the SD mobilizes voters increasingly through issues other than immigration. People voting for the SD are also motivated by concerns such as law and order, gender equality, and economy (SCB 2011: 71; Erlingsson et al. 2014: 10; Jungar and Backlund 2014). However,

immigration is still by far the most salient issue for the party and its voters (Jungar 2015: 62–63). On the socioeconomic left-right cleavage, the SD has occupied a centrist position since its inception: it is pro-welfare state and in favour of redistributive taxation and market regulation.

The electoral success of the SD was unremarkable until 2002. In 1994 the party received its first five seats in three municipal assemblies. In the 2002 parliamentary (regional and municipal) elections, the SD obtained 1.4 per cent of the votes and the number of SD representatives in the municipal assembly increased five-fold. The SD differs from the other Nordic populist parties because the former established themselves locally well before their parliamentary breakthrough. The SD gained substantial local representation with 50 elected seats by 2002. The parliamentary elections of 2006, resulting in a 2.9 per cent vote share, entitled the SD to public funding. Consequently, it has had significant financial resources available for organizational development and electoral campaigning during the past decade. The party's parliamentary breakthrough came in 2010 when the SD surpassed the required 4 per cent threshold: with 5.7 per cent of the vote, the party claimed 20 of the 349 parliamentary seats. In the 2014 parliamentary elections, it more than doubled its share, gaining 12.9 per cent of the vote. In doing so, it (SD) achieved its goal of being in the position as the tipping-point power in the Swedish two-bloc system by holding the power to decide which of the two blocs – the red-green government or the liberal-conservative opposition-is supported by a parliamentary majority. This resulted in a turbulent post-election period when the SD supported the opposition and thereby blocked the new government to pass its budget in the parliament. In order to avoid unscheduled parliamentary elections, the parties of the government and opposition formulated an accord, the so-called 'December agreement', which implied that the opposition would abstain from voting against the budget of the government. However, this agreement, which was supposed to last until the parliamentary elections of 2022, was annulled in October 2015.

In the European parliamentary elections of 2014 the SD received 9.7 per cent of the votes and two of the seats in Sweden's allotment. After some hesitation, the party was accepted as a member of the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) group. The era of Swedish 'exceptionalism', which found expression in the fact that no radical right party had made it to parliamentary representation had thus come to an end (Widfeldt 2008; Rydgren 2002).
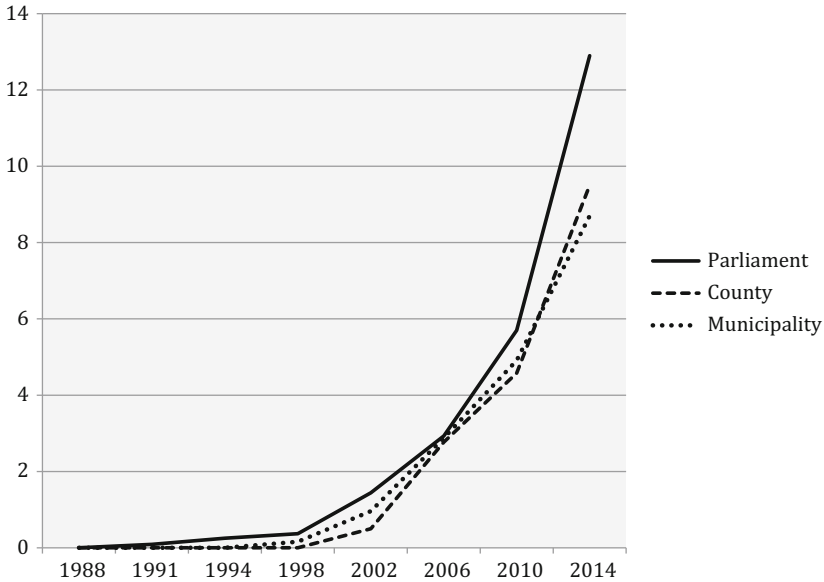
Fig. 7.1 SD vote (per cent) in parliamentary, regional and municipal elections. *Source*: author's illustration based on Statistiska Centralbyrån [Statistics Sweden]

The influence of the SD has been limited because of its treatment as a 'pariah party' by the other parliamentary groups (Downs 2001). The latter stated that they will not negotiate with the SD and the government has declared that it will not actively seek parliamentary support from the SD party, which amounts to an informal '*cordon sanitaire*' (Geys et al. 2006; Van Spanje and Van Der Brug 2007). However, with the electoral growth of the SD in 2014, there are discussions within some of the centre-right parties to initiate cooperation with the SD (Fig. 7.1 and Table 7.1).

The Party Organization over Time

The SD is organized along the structures of Sverigepartiet (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2013b) and was initially run by a small and closed circle of extremist activists, who gave priority to the establishment

Table 7.1 Election results for the Sweden Democrats, 1998–2010

		National elections	Regional elections	Local elections	European elections	
1998	Vote share (%)	0.4	N/A	N/A	2004	1.1
	Mandates	0	0	8		0
2002	Vote share (%)	1.4	0.4	1.4	2009	3.3
	Mandates	0	0	49		0
2006	Vote share (%)	2.9	2.8	2.9	2014	9.7
	Mandates	0	0	280		2
2010	Vote share (%)	5.7	4.6	4.9		
	Mandates	20	70	612		
2014	Vote share (%)	12.9	9.5	8.7		
	Mandates	49				

Source: SCB Statistiska Centralbyrån

of local party branches. In 1991 there were approximately 43 local/ municipal SD organizations according to the party's official documentation, but the level of activity in the local groups varied.[2] There were different ideas on how to structure the party, such as whether, among other things, small cells or groups should form the core party units. However, ultimately the party leadership opted for a traditional party organization with municipal and district units. The party leadership also planned to form a women organization, Kvinnor för Sverige [Women for Sweden] in 1988. Even though a programme was formulated, this project initially failed. The youth organization, SDU (Sverigedemokraternas ungdomsförbund), was established in 1992 but has twice (1995 and 2015) been dissolved and integrated into the mother party. Regular annual party conventions were held from the start and members were able to influence the party through the election of party leaders, introduction of changes to party programmes and personal submission of initiatives. The party organization, during the first decade, has been described as 'chaotic' and 'secret' (Blomqvist and Slätt 2004). Party members were not informed of party activities or economic resources of the party in any systematic way. Besides ideological differences, the lack of transparency was a constant source of internal party conflict and distrust.

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[2] The data is not reliable. In my analysis of the *SD Bulletinen* (the SD internal membership paper with approximately four to five issues per year I found information on 33 local organizations in 1991.

Degree of Organization

The SD can be characterized as a traditional political party with a democratic chain of delegation. The party congress consists of representatives of party districts who represent all the party members. It is the party congress that elects the party board and the party leader, and also decides on the party programme. With increasing financial resources following from growing representation in municipal assemblies, the SD has developed more efficient mechanisms for membership recruitment and local organizational development. Unlike other Swedish political parties, the SD has increased its membership base during the last decade from some 1,000 members in 2003 to almost 16,000 members in 2015. The membership figures from the early years are unreliable, but it is estimated that the SD had 400 members in 1994 (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2013b). Since SD party membership is known to cause problems for employment and in social life in general, it is estimated that the party has had more activists than formal party members. Given their small financial resources, the party was highly dependent on the party activists for financial donations and party work (Fig. 7.2).
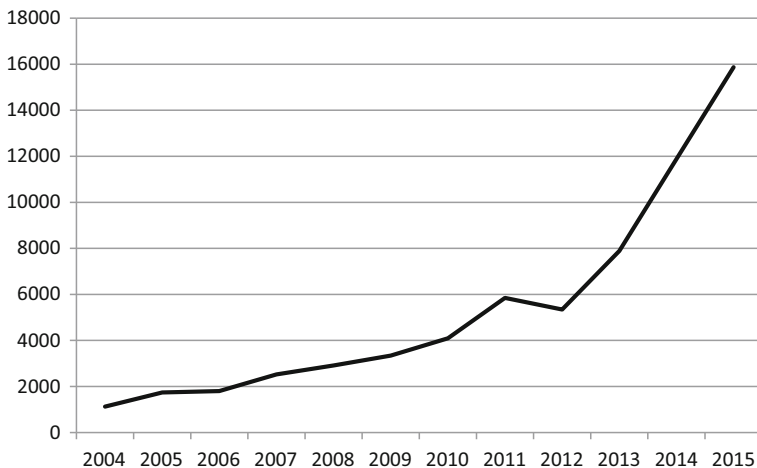
Fig. 7.2 Party membership development of the SD, 2004–2015. *Note*: Number of members registered at the beginning of each year: 2003 (1,126), 2004 (1,740), 2005 (1,802), 2006 (2,523), 2007 (2,913), 2008 (3,343), 2009 (4,094), 2010 (5,846), 2011 (5,343), 2012 (5,846), 2013 (7,890), 2014 (11,876), 2015 (15,871). *Source*: The Sweden Democrats

A member is expected to adhere to the SD ideology and not join any other political party (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2013d) There is a gender gap among the party members as 77 per cent are male (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2014b). The parliamentary group is male-dominated as well: 77.6 per cent of the 48 SD representatives are men. The disproportional representation of men in the SD is larger than in other Swedish parties.[3] There are no special qualifications for party members when assuming representative functions and the party board can even nominate candidates for elections who are not members of the party (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2013d). This is because there has been a shortage of party members to fill the mandates the party holds, particularly in the municipal assemblies: 8.3 per cent of their mandates (51 seats) were left vacant during the 2010–2014 legislature.[4] The SD has a far higher number of representatives that defect from their representative functions than the other political parties: at the municipal level, every second representative has defected; 52.1 per cent of the party's total mandates (315 of 612 representatives), and every third at the regional level; 30 per cent of their total mandates (21 out of 70 representatives) between 2010 and 2013.[5] These defections are due to a large number of new and inexperienced members and can occur as voluntary or forced departures from the party, some of which are reactions to party centralization. Moreover, the SD representatives have been rather passive in the local assemblies since their average rate of attendance; the number of private bills they introduce and the frequency of speeches they give in the local assemblies are lower than that of other political parties (Fig. 7.3).

Generally, party districts are divided up according to 29 electoral constituencies established by Swedish law on the election of parliamentary representatives (Vallag 2005: 837§2). The number of party district organizations of SD has increased from 14 in 2007 to 24 in 2015 and municipal organizations grew from 69 in 2007 to 188 in 2015 (own compilation,

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[3] The party average male to female distribution shows a ratio of 56 to 44 per cent in the national parliament (SCB Statistiska centralbyrån [Statistics Sweden] 2011).

[4] The Christian Democrats have one unfilled mandate (0.016 per cent of their mandates), the Left-wing Party has two vacant mandates (0.028 per cent of their mandates) and the Green Party has five vacant mandates (0.073 per cent of their mandates). No other party has any vacant mandates. (These numbers were compiled 6 June 2013.)

[5] The average percentage of defectors in the municipal legislatures among the eight parliamentary parties is 20.9 per cent and 13.2 per cent in the regional assemblies (*Valmyndigheten* 2010).
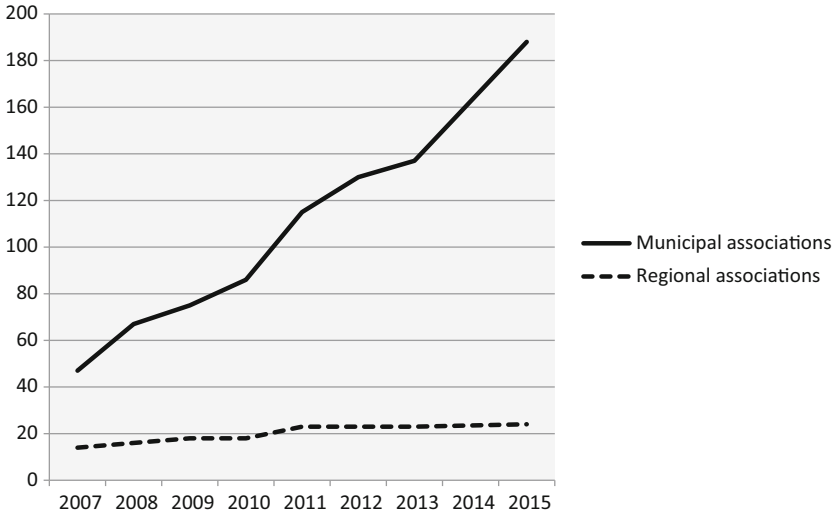
Fig. 7.3 The number of SD municipal and district associations, 2007–2015. *Note*: Municipal associations: 2007 (47), 2008 (67), 2009 (75), 2010 (86), 2011 (115), 2012 (130), 2013 (137), 2015 (188). Regional associations: 2007 (14), 2008 (16), 2009 (18), 2010 (18), 2011 (23), 2012 (23), 2013 (23), 2015 (24). *Source*: author's illustration based on information from the Sweden Democrats home page (www.sd.se), and the party journal, *Sverigedemokraten* (Sverigedemokraterna 2013c, 2015)

Sverigedemokraterna 2013c, 2015). At the regional level, district boards organize the party at the behest of district's annual meeting. At local level, there are municipal associations with local representatives having voting rights at the party congress. Thus, they have power to influence the party at the national level through decisions and proposals for party policies as well as through the election of the party board. The national organization, for its part, has formal powers to dissolve local associations which misbehave (Fig. 7.4).

There are two types of rule-making bodies in the SD. The party congress, Landsdagarna, is the party's highest decision-making body and meets every second year, electing the party board and the party leader for the next two years (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2013d). The members representing the party districts, the three recognized party sections and the members of parliament form the party congress. The three special SD organizations
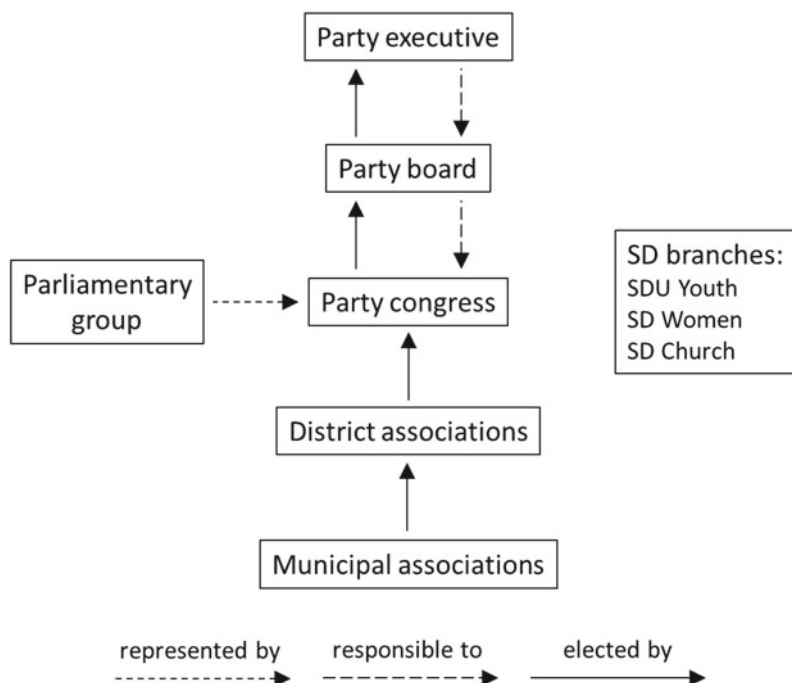
Fig. 7.4 Party organization of the Sweden Democrats

recognized and regulated by the party statutes are: the youth organiza-
tion SDU (Sverigedemokratisk Ungdom),[6] the women's organization
(SD-kvinnor), and the Christian religious organization (Fädernas kyrka).
The last one is an association to help the SD engage in church-related
political work. It was formed in 2001 when the SD took part in the
elections of representatives for the national Swedish Church (Lutheran)
central meeting (and municipal church assemblies). The women's orga-
nization of the SD was formed after the parliamentary debut in 2010.
Its aim has been to attract more women voters and female members to
the male-dominated party and also receive public funding available in

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[6] The SDU has approximately 3,000 members. The SD formed a youth organization in 1992 which
became quite radical with the involvement of skinheads and neo-Nazis, organized radical demon-
strations, and had a radicalizing effect on the party. In the official party history, this is depicted as
'infiltration from extreme environments' (Sverigedemokraterna 2013b).

that connection.[7] A biannual municipal and regional conference is held every even-numbered year. SD representatives in regional and municipal assemblies are entitled to participate in the conference if they are members of the party. It acts as a consultative venue for the local party politics and is a 'forum for the education and the development of ideas within the field of regional and municipal policies'. (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2013d). However, the conference can assume a legislative function and 'take decisions on general questions of importance for regional and municipal policies' (ibid.) at the delegation from the party board, in order to achieve a coherent party policy.

The party board (6–20 members) is elected by the party congress. Until 2013 the youth organization, the chairman of the SDU, had, ex-officio, one seat on the party board. The SDU's seat was removed when the SD statues were changed in 2013 following a period of heightened conflict between the mother party and SDU over both ideology and party leadership (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2013d). The party board is the highest decision-making body when the party congress is not in session and tasked with achieving the party's goals and handling its finances. It appoints the national executive committee (*VU Verkställande Utskott*) that manages the party's day-to-day work. The party board can delegate decisions to the executive committee, which, as a rule, has had between seven and nine members (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2013c, 2015). After the SD entered parliament in 2010, a parliamentary group was formed, constituting a new unit in the party organization. It has since assumed a central position in the party's policy development.[8] The coordination and cohesion between these three central party units—the party board, the executive and the parliamentary group—has been secured by drawing considerably on overlapping personnel. At present, all national executive committee members are on the party board and in the parliamentary group.

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[7] The aim of the women organization is to 'work for the interests of women and for women's influence in the party as well as in society at large, and it has therefore an important task to recruit more women as members in the association and to give them courage to engage themselves, and to support and encourage women so that they can develop and advance in the party' (Sverigedemokraterna 2015).

[8] Author's interview with Björn Söder, SD party secretary (2005-2015), group leader of the parliament group 2010-2014, parliamentary representative (2010 to present), 5 May 2013.

Moreover, the party secretary was the group leader of the SD parliamentary group during the first four parliamentary years of the SD. The top party leadership has been able to control a majority of the votes in the executive committee, and even though the party leadership has expanded in size, the top positions are shared between a limited number of trusted persons.

Centralization

Unlike several other PRR parties, the SD has not had a highly personalized and charismatic leadership, so that type of '*Führerprinzip*' is not a characteristic of this party (Johansson 2014). As a matter of fact when it formed in 1988, the party leadership model first adopted was meant to prevent personalized leadership: the SD copied the dual party leadership (male/female) model from the Swedish Environmental Party. The idea was that party leadership should be shared and time-limited so as to differentiate them from 'ordinary' parties and the 'mainstream' in general. Between 1988 and 1991 Madeleine Larsson and Anders Klarström were the spokespersons for the SD. However, this structure was not considered effective enough and the party adopted a traditional single leader model in 1991. Since then the SD has had three party leaders. Anders Klarström, who had been socialized in a neo-Nazi milieu, was elected party leader in 1991. During his leadership, the party radicalized, partially disintegrated and lost party members. In 1995 Mikael Jansson, a more moderate nationalist with previous experience in party organizational development, having been a former member of the Centre Party, replaced Anders Klarström following a vote taken in the party congress. In 2005 Jansson had to step down as the result of a 'coup' orchestrated by the SD's southern party districts, which are the electoral strongholds of the party. Subsequently, the SD's electoral committee unanimously proposed Jimmy Åkesson as the new party leader who then bested Jansson by a margin of 91 to 50 votes at the party congress. The so-called 'gang of the four'—Jimmy Åkesson, Björn Söder, Mattias Karlsson and Richard Jomshof, who had originally met each other when studying in Lund—assumed the leadership of the party and now constitute the innermost circle of the SD.

Allocation of Funds

The party executive's control of the financial resources is said to be a key factor in the centralization of Swedish political parties (Pierre and Widfeldt 1994: 344): In no Swedish political party can the party congress decide on the party's budget but it audits and approves the party financial reports. The party congress of the SD acquired this power rather recently, in 2003 (Blomqvist and Slätt 2004: 69). Previously, the party board had had full discretion over the party economic resources according to the SD's statutes, which state explicitly that the congress may take no decisions on the budget whereas the party board decides on all budgetary matters (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2013d). As there is no specific finance committee in the SD, the aforementioned election committee is responsible for decisions on the remuneration of party representatives in elected party organs. As a result of increased public funding following the SD's electoral growth, the party executive has now much greater financial resources available. Nonetheless, the power of the rank-and-file members within the organization has been strengthened after the party congress acquired the power to approve the financial reports. This innovation constitutes a clear departure from the situation prevalent during the first 15 years of the party's existence.

Program and Policy Formation

Party activists with a strong influence on policy formulation can interfere with strategic choices, affecting vote-seeking opportunities for targeting specific segments of the electorate, and may compromise the chances to enter government (Sjöblom 1968; Müller and Strøm 1999). Besides electing the party leadership, the main function of the SD's party congress is to decide on the general policies by debating and deciding party programmes. The present party statues regulate the decision-making procedure but not the processes for agenda-setting and the party internal deliberations before the final decision is taken. Until 2008 revisions of the party programme were prepared by a programme committee consisting of between five to eight members elected by the party board who then

formulated a draft programme (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2005). This was not different from other parties like the Social Democratic Party, which also employs a specific programme committee elected by the party congress to prepare party programme revisions. Subsequently, a more centralized process of programme preparation has taken shape in the SD after the old rules were removed. Thereafter, agenda setting, or rather the formulation of a new programme proposal, has in fact been delegated to the party board and, specifically, to Mattias Karlsson who belongs to the innermost circle of the party leadership. He is perceived to be the chief ideologist of the SD.[9] Thus, the party leadership managed to secure for itself, by means outside the formal party rules, control over agenda-setting and the policy formulation process. It should be noted that this has caused substantial conflict at party congresses. In addition, the debates and the opportunities for changing the programme have remained limited for the party congress delegates. Before the 2011 congress, the proposal for a revised party programme circulated for approximately six weeks within local party organizations. However, there were no explicit procedures on whether and how proposals by party members and districts (new issues or amendments) would be incorporated into the final programme. At the congress, the rules of the debate were explicit: no amendments were permitted to be introduced or debated, leaving only the party congress with the choices to approve, reject, or send back (to the party board) any proposals.

SD representatives in national and legislative bodies are involved in policy formulation. However, political parties like the SD, oriented toward a narrow range of issues face particular challenges when their members in the legislature are expected to take a stance on certain policy matters on which the party has not yet formulated any official position. Thus, after the parliamentary breakthrough, the SD's parliamentary group became a key factor in the formulation of party positions. Furthermore, given the considerable overlap in terms of personnel between the party board, the party executive, and the parliamentary group, policy coordination has been rather effective.

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[9] Since 2008 Mattias Karlsson has been considered the main ideologue of the party as he has prepared the revision of party programmes and other major policy documents. Johan Rinderheim, the previous chief ideologue left the SD in 2008 due to a conflict with the party leadership.

The Power of Sanctions

A number of scandals involving SD representatives and members occurred after the 2010 parliamentary debut. The media and anti-extremist organizations like Expo have been active in scrutinizing SD delegates. The Expo Foundation is a privately-owned research organization founded in 1995 with the aim of studying and mapping anti-democratic, right-wing extremist and racist tendencies in society.[10] Importantly, the SD employs no systematic policing and screening of party representatives and members, but has sporadically checked on members with official SD email accounts. Nonetheless, several cases of alleged extremism have been flagged internally by members and reported to the party. The SD has expelled over 75 activists since 2010, which is a number substantially higher than in any other Swedish party. Several of the members accused of misbehaviour or under investigation have also preferred to leave the party voluntarily so as not to risk being publicly expelled. The majority of the expulsions were related to unacceptable extremist, nationalist, and racist statements deemed not in line with the official SD ideology. Other sanctions were based on transgressions such as the mismanagement of party funds. The SD launched a 'zero tolerance' policy in the autumn of 2012 against those whose acts and statements violate party statutes and/or are not in line with its stated ideology and norms. The 'zero tolerance approach' is considered a vital element in the strategy of becoming a credible party. However, the issue of zero tolerance also reflects an ideological conflict between those who want the SD as primarily a nationalist party (hardliners) and those who prefer to add, or as they phrase it, 'return', to social-conservatism. Party leader Jimmy Åkesson formulated the rationale for this policy as follows:

> Now and then a few local representatives harm the party by their behavior. I have to say that there have been too many of those cases and I want to clarify how I and the party leadership perceive the situation and what we aim to do about the problem. The Sweden Democrats is a democratic, social conservative party with a nationalist outlook. There is no place for extremists, racists or troublemakers and others with a personal need for

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[10] For further details see www.expo.se.

political or private extravagancies. With the rapid growth of the party, a number of such persons have joined the party. It is a very small portion of the local party representatives and I refuse to let these tragic cases create the image of how the party is perceived by the voters. (…) From now on there is zero tolerance and our work to clean up the party is given the highest priority. Those who feel affected or have a problem with these sharp formulations should immediately and voluntarily leave the Sweden Democrats. That would save us a lot of work. Those who choose to stay will be cases for a personal investigation and exclusion. (Åkesson 2015, author's translation)

When it comes to regulating membership, a majority of the Swedish political parties can expel members if they are deemed to have 'harmed the party'.[11] The history of the SD has been shaped by ideological conflicts and radicalization, resulting in party splits and departures. These experiences have led the party to adopt stern rules on expulsions. Until 2011 the right to expel members lay with the respective level (national, regional, or municipal) of party organization (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2005) that had to deal with a given issue, but in 2011 decision-making power was transferred to the national party board. (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2011). There is, however, a member committee (appointed by the party executive) that has the task of investigating individual cases. It can either issue a warning to a member or take the case to the party board for further sanctioning. The membership committee met monthly between 2011 and 2015, indicating the scope of membership issues (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2013c, 2015). Nevertheless, the goal is to have the regional and local branches deal with such cases to the extent possible.[12] The general impression is that the party board seldom gets support from regional and local branches when deciding to expel members. Moreover, a person under investigation generally receives no information as to who has made the accusation of 'harmful behavior'. The party leadership has therefore been criticized for handling expulsions in a non-transparent and unsystematic manner.

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[11] Besides the SD, the Conservatives, the Liberal Party, the Left Wing Party, the Centre Party and the Environmental Party formally regulate expulsion.

[12] Author's interview with Björn Söder, party secretary and group leader of the SD parliamentary group.

Coherence

Throughout its existence, the SD has been characterized by repeated conflicts between extremists and moderates, that is, divisions between 'old' and 'new' nationalists, which also corresponded to different views on party institutionalization. If we recall the importance of activists for the success of nationalist parties—especially the right balance between moderates, extremists, and opportunists (Art 2011: 20–21)[13]—we understand the SD leadership's attempt to control the extremist tendencies within their party. This was true after the leadership changed in 1995 and especially in 2005 when the SD leadership embarked on a course toward institutionalization and professionalization, which has shaped the party ever since. This process has resulted both in party splits and a disciplinary action against the youth faction, which has been dissolved twice.

The issue of party activists has been especially sensitive for the SD. This is because only three years after the SD was formed, the populist anti-immigration and economically liberal party New Democracy gained seats in the Swedish Parliament between 1991 and 1994, after which it dissolved. This competition led to radicalization within the SD both in terms of policy and behaviour. The racist formation Bevara Sverige Svenskt (BSS), which was one of the organizations in the context of which the Sweden Democrats were formed, and the SD youth section, became strongholds for the radical activism. Nonetheless, the moderate faction of the SD was successful in having their candidate Mikael Jansson elected as party leader in 1995. Subsequently, the youth faction SDU was dissolved in 1995 and incorporated to the mother party. In response, activists from the BSS formed the party, Hembygdspartiet, because they did not approve of the moderation. Eventually, in 1997, that party changed its name to the Konservativa Partiet and then dissolved in 1999. Meanwhile the SDU became an independent section in the party in 1998. Shortly thereafter, in 2001, the Stockholm SD faction, which had a more radical orientation, was expelled by the party congress not only because of the former's extremism, but also because it

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[13] Extremists are hostile to parliamentary democracy, essential racists and hold anti-Semitic attitudes, whereas moderates are ethno-pluralists condemning Nazism and fascism. The opportunists are fortune-seekers who are attracted to new (successful) political parties for power positions.

stood accused by the party leadership of preparing a takeover of the entire party organization. The expelled members subsequently formed a new party, Nationaldemokraterna (ND) [National Democrats], in 2001, which maintained representation in two municipal assemblies south of Stockholm (Södertälje and Nykvarn) until its dissolution in 2014.

The party members expelled from the Sweden Democrats represented the most radical tendencies of the party, who had been critical of the trend toward moderation. Above all, the tension between the mother party and the youth section ultimately resulted in the dissolution of the youth organization, SDU, by the party in 2015 and the formation of a new youth section within the mother party (SDU/Ungsvenskarna).[14] The increasing tension between the youth organization and the mother party dates back to 2011 when social conservatism was added as the second ideological pillar to the party programme (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2011). The introduction of the zero-tolerance policy further aggravated the situation and the SDU supported some of the nationalist-minded party members that had been excluded. Another source of conflict was when the party statutes were changed in 2013 so that the youth organization lost its reserved seat on the party board (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2013d). In 2014 the SDU formed the international nationalist youth organization Young European Alliance for Hope (YEAH) together with the Front National, Vlaams Belang, and FPÖ (European Alliance for Freedom 2014). The central party leadership had not been informed despite the fact that the mother party carefully avoided revealing during the European parliament (EP) election campaign with which political parties it was prepared to cooperate in the EP. Nonetheless, the SDU withdrew from the YEAH after only some months which probably was instrumental in the SD's acceptance into the Europé of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) party group in the EP. Moreover, the party leadership had used the nomination procedure and the electoral committee to ensure that none of the SDU candidates was nominated in electable position on the party list for the parliamentary elections of 2014. After the parliamentary elections of 2014, the situation escalated as the SDU took control of the Stockholm district of the SD. In April 2015 the SDU chairman, Gustaf

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[14] See https://sdu.nu

Kasselstrand, and the vice chairman , William Hahne, were expelled from the SD but continued in their positions until the youth party congress in 2015 (*Svenska Dagbladet* 2015). The competition over the chairmanship of the SDU was between Jessica Olsson, loyal to the old, more nationalist leadership, and Tobias Andersson, who was supported by the SD leadership. The SD leadership stated that they would dissolve the SDU if Jessica Olsson were to be elected chairperson, which indeed happened (*Dagens Nyheter* 2015). Immediately after the election of Jessica Olsson, the SD party board dissolved the SDU and closed down those SDU websites connected to the SD. Jessica Olsson was also expelled from the SD. The SDU continued as a separate nationalist youth organization,[15] and the party now operates a new youth organization under its control.[16] The legal status of the SDU is not yet resolved as a decision has to be taken formally at the party congress to dissolve the old youth section. Those critical of closing down the SDU have been punished, such as the previous party secretary of the SD, Björn Söder, who was not re-elected as a member of the party board at the SD party congress in 2015. Consequently, the events unfolding since 2013 reflect the party leadership's ambition to moderate the SD. The exclusion—deliberately exposed in the public media—of members and representatives with a radical nationalist conviction, has been a major instrument for the achievement of this goal.

Legislative Factionalism

Cohesion and party discipline among the SD representatives in municipal and regional assemblies as well as the parliament is considered instrumental for the party in order to attain political credibility. The SD's statutes regulate in detail how members must act to prevent discordant action and identify penalties for dissenting representatives. Moreover, the party has set in place both *ex-ante* as well as *ex-post* mechanisms for securing coordinated action in legislative assemblies. The party leadership has created a centralized process for nominating candidates to the parliamentary elections, even though the SD does have formal democratic procedures for candi-

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[15] See http://www.sverigedemokratiskungdom.se
[16] See https://sdu.nu

date nomination. The electoral conference of the SD draws up the national party list for the parliamentary elections based on nominations made by the party districts.[17] The electoral conference consists of representatives of party districts, the party board, the parliamentary group, and representatives of the women's and youth organizations. However, the representatives from the party can decide on the candidates for the elections, but may also delegate the decision to the party board. In actuality, the party leadership has secured agenda-setting powers by having the electoral committee propose a ranked list of parliamentary candidates prior to the electoral conference where the list is subsequently voted on. In this manner, the SD candidate selection has been centralized. This procedure was utilized for the parliamentary elections of 2010 and 2014 when the SD had one national party list and the party leadership could therefore be confident that those elected would be loyal and competent so as to 'form a coherent and disciplined parliamentary group' (Björn Söder 2013-04-18).[18]

The strategy of screening and monitoring the parliamentary candidates has been successful in terms of parliamentary party group cohesion. Party discipline has been high in the SD parliamentary group during the first legislative period, but did not come at the expense of the opportunities for individual party representatives to influence the party position (Wängnerud 2012: 97–103; Andersson 2013). However, the SD parliamentary group experienced its first splinter when the party leader, Jimmy Åkessons's mother-in-law, Margareta Larsson, left the parliamentary group in September 2015 (*Expressen* 2015). She had a long track record in the party and had criticized the party leadership's effort at exercising control and the centralizing tendencies in the SD in general.

According to Björn Söder, who was the leader of the SD parliamentary group between 2010 and 2014, the SD representatives have consistently anchored the policies they pursue as members of various standing parliamentary committees within the group.[19] This has been particularly important in areas where the SD—as a new parliamentary party—does

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[17] Sverigedemokraternas (2011), article 13.
[18] Author's interview with Björn Söder, party secretary and group leader of the SD parliamentary group.
[19] Author's interview with Björn Söder, party secretary and group leader of the SD parliamentary group.

not have a clear policy. To summarize, the SD leadership has enjoyed control over candidate nominations for the parliamentary elections, benefitting also from the Swedish closed list system, which provides voters with few opportunities to modify the candidate rankings.[20] This has also secured disciplined behaviour in parliament.

Between Change and Adaptation

The political isolation pursued by the other parties against the SD has been motivated by the latter's nationalist origin as well as its history of anti-immigration policies and ethno-cultural nationalism. The party leadership of the SD has systematically taken measures to distance itself from its nationalist and 'neo-populist' origin in order to enlarge its electoral base and attain credibility (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2013b).[21]

The party's ambition has been to grow electorally such that it attains an absolute blackmail potential, which was achieved in the parliamentary elections of 2014. This makes it difficult to ignore the SD when it comes to assembling a parliamentary majority. The preferred position in parliament is one that resembles that of the Danish People's Party between 2001 and 2011 which supported a conservative government: 'We would like to get our core values realized in exchange for support, but without full governmental responsibility'.[22] Consequently, the SD leadership took several measures to improve the credibility of the party prior to, and after entering parliament in 2010. The SD's leadership also wanted to ensure that the party does not suffer the same fate as New Democracy—a populist anti-immigration and economically liberal party that had achieved 6.7 per cent of the votes between 1991 and 1994 and 25 seats in the Swedish Parliament along with 335 municipal representatives (Rydgren

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[20] Voters elect party lists where the ranking of the candidates has been decided beforehand, but can cast a preferential vote for a candidate on the party list. A candidate has to receive 5 per cent of the party vote in the relevant district to be elected. The personal vote is rarely used and only a few candidates are elected on the basis of personal votes.

[21] See on this point also the speech given by Jimmy Åkesson, at the SD 25th anniversary seminar on 11 March 2013.

[22] Author's interview with Björn Söder, party secretary and group leader of the SD parliamentary group.

2005: 75–79; Taggart 1996**)** —which subsequently disintegrated due to internal conflicts, personal rivalries, and a weak organization.[23]

The SD was founded by extremists—old national-socialists and fascists—with a background in the so-called 'Swedish national movement' that has its roots in the prewar period. During the first years the SD was led and dominated by extremist activists who were in favour of the repatriation of foreigners and the introduction of the death penalty. The party leadership changed in 1995 following a conflict over both ideology and the need for organizational restructuring. In 1996 the new party leadership expelled some of the extremist founding members of the SD for not distancing themselves from Nazism and anti-Semitism (Blomqvist and Slätt 2004: 25). The expelled veterans formed a new party, Hembygdspartiet, which later fell apart. Another party split occurred in 2001 with the foundation of the National Democrats (ND) by a Stockholm-based faction of former SD members. The exodus was a reaction to the ideological moderation of the SD that had taken place in the late 1990s. The ND was based on ethno-pluralism, opposing the assimilation of people born abroad and favouring their repatriation instead. The electoral success of the ND was slim (never controlling more than three seats in municipal assemblies) and it dissolved in 2014. However, the forced and voluntary departures of ideological extremists did not calm the party's internal conflicts. A group of party activists based in southern Sweden—in the Skåne area—challenged the party leadership by criticizing weak party growth and poor electoral results. Previously, in 2005, a group, popularly called the 'gang of the four', had taken control of the party when Jimmy Åkesson was elected party leader. What followed was a period of party institutionalization initiated by these 'reformers' with the purpose of achieving electoral growth and parliamentary representation. This implied transforming from what many considered a 'pariah party' into an 'electable' contender by moving toward ideological moderation and enforcing greater party discipline. As a consequence, the reformist party leadership was criticized, especially by its youth organization and the western (Gothenburg) districts for betraying the nationalist core ideology and exercising heavy-handed leadership.

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[23] As a matter of fact, one of the founding party leaders of ND, Ian Wachtmeister, has been an advisor to the Sweden Democrats.

In the course of leading the party to greater respectability, the SD leadership has defined formal (and informal) rules of acceptable and, above all, unacceptable behaviour which serves as the basis for disciplining and expelling misbehaving party members. The leadership has also engaged party members in discussions on norms for acceptable speech. As a result, the SD formulated communication guidelines (involving representatives from the different branches) for the parliamentary elections of 2014 in order to be 'united, responsible and professional' (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2014a). The present party leadership justifies this approach by arguing that the party is 'new' and 'requires stability and team work' (interview with Jimmy Åkesson on Sveriges Television 21 November 2013).

Similarities and Differences within the Party System

Centralization has taken place in all the Swedish political parties despite efforts to maintain the image of mass parties. The principal explanations for this general trend have been the influence of the media and the need to control party funding on the part of executive bodies (Pierre and Widfeldt 1994: 341). The SD is the most centralized of all Swedish parties: its members have less influence over both the formulation of policy and candidate selection compared to other Swedish political parties. Moreover, the party leadership has systematically ejected undisciplined and misbehaving members to an extent proportionally greater than in other parties.

The scope of internal party democracy is reflected in the instruments the party members have at their disposal to select their representatives. The candidate selection process 'determines the nature of the party; he who can make nominations is the owner of the party' (Schattschneider 1942: 17). In all Swedish political parties, the party leadership choices are mediated. The election of the party leader is prepared by an electoral committee (*valberedningen*) which has been elected by the previous party congress and is equipped with agenda setting powers as it prepares and nominates persons for the position of party leader, vice chairman and the party board to the party congress (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2013d).

Nonetheless, party delegates representing regional organizations at the congress have the right to propose candidates as well. In 1995 and 2005 there has twice been open competition for the office of party leadership in the SD, but the candidates proposed by the electoral committee have always been elected. In short, it is a clear advantage to be the candidate nominated by the electoral committee. Interestingly, the competition between several candidates for the party leadership of the SD is unique among Swedish political parties as they invariably propose to their party congress the one candidate for the office of leader that had previously been nominated by the election committee. The informal norm in the established political parties, except for the Environmental Party, has been that the other candidates withdraw from competition when the electoral board has made its choice as to whom to put forward as the party leader. A similar procedure applies to the elections of persons to the party boards. If the party members want to propose other persons (counter-proposals) a complicated and time consuming procedure is required. Hence, even though democratic procedures are formally in place, the actual process reflects considerable influence by party leadership in all the Swedish political parties.

With respect to party funding, there are three channels for how political parties in Sweden finance their activities: public party funding, private donations, and membership fees. First, public national party funding depends on the number of seats in the national parliament or on having received 2.5 per cent of the votes in parliamentary elections. There is an electoral threshold of 4 per cent in the Swedish Riksdag. By comparison, the subnational levels—the counties and the municipalities—may, but are not obligated to provide financial assistance to political parties represented in the respective subnational assemblies. Generally, political parties receive public party funding in relation to the number of parliamentary mandates, but require at least 2.5 per cent of the votes to be eligible. The SD received access to national public party funding after having polled 2.9 per cent of the vote in the 2006 parliamentary elections. Subsequently, it received 8.6 million Swedisk kronor (SEK) in 2010 and almost 12 million SEK (€1.2 million) in 2012. The SD's women's organization was awarded public financing of 1.4 million SEK (€140,000) in 2013. For several years the youth organization SDU had been denied public funding from the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society,

but in 2014 the SDU received 1.3 million SEK (€130,000). The mother party also restricted the transfer of funds to the youth organization due to the conflicts between them, and the latter even approached the district organizations for funding (*Expressen* 31 October 2012).

At the regional and local levels, the amounts are hard to calculate because of the different sets of rules and the variation of grant levels between municipalities and regions. Public financing for parties at the local and regional level is not regulated by law and therefore varies by the manner of implementation. For the period after 2008, SD party statues mandate that 25 per cent of the grants received at each subnational level are to be transferred to the national party organization. No other Swedish political party has such detailed financial regulations about the transfer of funds from the subnational to the central levels in its statutes.

From the start the SD has received private donations from party supporters, ranging from small sums, which have been made public in the party newspaper (*SD Bulletinen*), to larger anonymous contributions. Private donations were crucial before the SD gained representation in the subnational assemblies and thus received public funding. A substantial part of party financing is derived from party members and private donors.

According to a study by Transparency International, private donations of the SD have varied: in 2010 the SD received two million SEK, in 2011 156,000 SEK (€15,000) and in 2013 5 million SEK (€450,000) (Transparency International 2013). Until April 2014, no public legislation regulating the transparency of private donations to political parties had existed. As a result, Sweden had repeatedly been criticized by the European Council anti-corruption agency, Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO) (Acevedo 2013: 17–21). The parliamentary parties preferred voluntary agreements to binding rules on transparency (SOU 2004: 22).[24] However, since April 2014 a new law regulating public party financing has mandated that political groupings make public how they are financed and reveal all donations over 22,000 SEK (approximately €2500) otherwise a party is not entitled to any public funding.[25]

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[24] In particular, the Conservative Party (*Moderaterna,*) which receives private donations from organized business interests, but also the Social Democratic Party which has received economic support from labour market organizations, have opposed regulation that would allow for greater transparency of private donations.

[25] Lag 2014:105 *Lag om insyn i finansiering* [Law on transparency in party funding].

The SD has opposed legislation on making private donations more transparent and voted against the law, arguing that such legislation implies a public registration of political opinion and also expressing concern for the security of their donors who might be harassed and threatened and would thus withdraw their economic support if they were made public (as a matter of fact, other political parties have used the same argument in the past). It is not unreasonable to draw the conclusion that the speedy implementation of the legislation (it entered into force for the EP elections and the parliamentary elections of 2014) and its unexpected acceptance by the Conservative Party was a means of drawing public attention to the SD's financing. Hence, the electoral growth of the SD has provided a window of opportunity for the emergence of a political coalition among Sweden's mainstream parties to move ahead with such legislation. For the parliamentary elections in 2010, the SD issued bonds that supporters could purchase so as to get a return based upon the electoral result. This resulted in the SD receiving 5 million SEK, which the party was able to use for the 2010 parliamentary elections campaign. The money was paid back to the bond buyers with dividends when the SD received its public party funding.[26] The party also financed the parliamentary campaign of 2014 by selling bonds.

A third method of party financing is party fees. These correspond to the two forms of membership available for the SD supporters. One is based on an annual membership and the other involves a permanent affiliation. Of all the fees raised, some 50 per cent go to the national organization whereas the regional and local organizations receive 25 per cent each (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2013d).

Conclusions

The evolution of the Sweden Democrat (SD) party organization reflects distinct stages in the party's development (Harmel and Svåsand 1993; Pedahzur and Brichta 2002). The party organization has been adapted to

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[26] Author's interview with Björn Söder, party secretary and group leader of the SD parliamentary group.

manage party membership growth, representation in subnational assemblies, the 2010 entry into the national parliament, and also the 2014 entry into the EP. When the party secretary of the SD, Björn Söder, was interviewed at the SD's Party Congress in 2013 about the most significant transformations of the party during his eight years in office, he stated:

> …above all, the organization. We have been successful in establishing ourselves and grown throughout the country. We have more regional and district associations than previously. Moreover, the organizational stability has improved.
> (Björn Söder, SVT Forum, 23 November 2013)

Summing up, we find that, *firstly*, after 2003 the SD established a highly *structured* and *bureaucratized* party organization. Its statutes have been changed almost annually, expanding in terms of both scope and length.[27] The party statutes outline in detail the structures and relational hierarchies of the party while institutionalizing and regulating the internal distribution of power. As a matter of fact, the very extent of SD's party statues indicates the need of a conflict-prone party to formally regulate power and minimize dissent.[28] *Secondly*, the party has professionalized in that it has developed administrative mechanisms for linking the party organs horizontally and vertically, while also establishing professional communication structures. Against the background of rapid electoral growth and representation in legislative assemblies at national and subnational levels, the party has put in place instruments for the control, socialization, and education of both party representatives and activists. *Thirdly*, the party has both formally and, even more in practice, put in place a centralized structure with the party leadership—the party executive— at its core, which is equipped with mechanisms to steer and monitor the party members. These developments have been met by

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[27] Only in 2010 and 2012 were there no changes made to the party statues. The length of the manifesto has increased from 11 to 70 pages between 2001 and 2013 which is an indirect reference to the fact that more aspects of the party have been regulated.

[28] The order of the party manifestos by size in terms of pages is as follows: (1) Moderaterna 206 pages; (2) Sverigedemokraterna 70 pages; (3) Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti 47 pages; (4) Centerpartiet 28 pages; (5) Kristdemokraterna 16 pages; (6) Vänsterpartiet 11 pages; (7) Miljöpartiet de gröna 7 pages; (8) Liberalerna 5 pages.

growing internal conflict, resulting even in party splits as well as voluntary or forced departures by members. This has, in large part, been due to the present leadership's priority to build a party that would not repeat the dismal fate of New Democracy. The final question is whether the all too centralizing tendencies of the SD, compared with to the all too loose structures of ND, could have similar consequences in that they each exacerbate party factionalism and eventually cause fragmentation, or alternatively, moderate SD delegates so that they become more mainstream.

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8

Comparing Populist Organizations

Reinhard Heinisch and Oscar Mazzoleni

Our volume set out to examine the role of populist party organization in the context of successful radical right-wing populist parties in Western Europe. Among the structural and demand-side theories of why populist parties emerge and subsequently endure, an explicit focus on aspects such as institutionalization, complexity, centralization, and coherence has been largely lacking in the otherwise copious literature on this subject (Mudde 2007; Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008; among others). Instead, the role of ideology, leadership, and party strategies has taken centre stage (e.g. Kitschelt and McGann 2005; Norris 2005) and as such Western European populist parties have become more or less implicitly framed as 'charismatic parties' with largely authoritarian leadership. The overarching loyalty to the leader paired with feeble organization and little

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institutionalization, were often said to be the central features of populist parties (cf. Panebianco 1988; Schedler 1996: 101; Taggart 2000: 100).

More recent scholarship has indeed begun to identify the organizational dimension as more important, especially in connection with understanding the ability of populist parties to withstand setbacks and adapt to new political circumstances (Bolleyer 2013; De Lange and Art 2011; Art 2011; Jupskås 2015). The role of organization has also come into focus following the departure and replacement of many of the supposedly singular and indispensable political figures at the helm of such parties. Instead of turning out to be a 'flash in the pan' or withering slowly, all the affected populist parties regrouped and retained positions of significant political strength, which in some cases even exceeded the successes enjoyed under the old leader.

Even a superficial understanding of the political dynamics inside parties would suggest that it is highly unlikely that populists were merely 'lucky' in replacing uniquely talented old leaders with equally charismatic new ones. It is equally implausible that under conditions of personalized leadership, in which loyalty to a particular individual runs deep, one would find it easy to transfer such loyalty to new individuals without an institutional context constraining, incentivizing, and guiding this process. This is even more the case in parties where the old leader is no longer around to guide the transition process.

In our effort to better understand how such formations survive without their leaders, we posed our central research question: 'Which organizational features make up a populist party beyond the leader?' Echoing an appeal by Cas Mudde to put populist parties 'at the center of research on the phenomenon' and to undertake 'original research' (Mudde 2007: 295), the scholars who contributed to this volume have closely scrutinized the organizational dimension of seven successful West European right-wing populist parties and examined the interconnection between leadership and organization. In doing so, the approach chosen was one that did not seek to develop a new theoretical framework specific to populist parties but instead relied on standard concepts within the conventional literature on party organization, specifically the works of Angelo Panebianco (1988) and Kenneth Janda 1970a, 1970b).

It should also be reiterated that this emphasis on organization does not negate the importance of leadership, nor do we wish to replace existing theories with an organization-centred approach. What we intended to do

was first, draw attention to the fundamental importance of organization in the context of right-wing populist formations. Second, we also wanted to highlight the fact that such parties are not static but dynamic and that their adaptation processes are also connected to the organizational dimension. Third, we can show that 'charismatic' leadership, which is in itself an ambiguous concept (cf., McDonnell 2016), requires a specific level of organizational centralization and mastery of party institutions to be effective and stable. Fourth, we intended to point to the importance of organization when it comes to managing leadership change and political re-grouping. Finally, we hoped to demonstrate that tracing the organization of populist parties can be undertaken by drawing on standard theoretical concepts from the party literature so as to build on the existing body of scholarship.

The Origin of Populist Party Organization in Comparison

Panebianco (1988) argued that charismatic parties have a 'revolutionary' element which disrupts the existing political status quo and is necessary for voter mobilization. Yet after their foundation, parties face the need for normalization and, thus, have to embrace to varying degrees the paradox of institutionalization. Betz (1998: 9) has viewed the combination of charismatic leadership and the centralization of power as key factors in the success of right-wing populist parties, which was also echoed by other scholars (e.g. Pedahzur and Brichta 2002).

Converted Mainstream Parties

A comparison of the seven populist parties analyzed here shows considerable diversity in their situation of origin, which also affected the initial impetus for organization. The FPÖ and the SVP had existed as established but less important parties long before they transformed into populist parties. As such, these parties were organizationally rather 'conventional' from the beginning, incorporating national patterns of party organization shaped by anti-centrist ideological sentiments. As a result,

these formations were conceived as relatively decentralized parties in which much of the political power was originally retained at the regional level. Subsequently, they became the clearest cases in the sample of 'converted' parties (Mény and Surel 2000: 260) or insider-radicalized parties. When the FPÖ and SVP moved toward populist positions, both had to find ways to reduce local autonomy and transfer power to the national organization to ensure coherence. The approach of the two parties differed in the sense that Haider mounted a 'coup' and took over the central party outright whereas Blocher used the superior resources of his Zurich branch and his connection to wealthy donors as a means to influence other branch organizations. Both parties had already created the organizational structure to become 'mass parties' in the sense that they had a local presence and grassroots activists. What they lacked was centralization, which became a priority for both. The referendum process in Switzerland afforded the SVP and Blocher numerous opportunities to unify the party by expanding the tried and tested but capital intensive model of campaigning to other cantonal branches. Haider achieved this through a process of expulsions and rule changes as well as by announcing a new political direction via the media.

Converted Personalistic Parties

In contrast to the FPÖ and SVP, both the FrP and VB were organized top-down and shaped by charismatic individuals. Both parties were formed around rather narrow agendas and became weakly institutionalized but highly personalistic. However, and contrary to conventional wisdom, these parties became more institutionalized after transforming into right-wing populist parties because this step allowed them to develop more effective linkages to activists at the local level. In the case of the VB, Karel Dillen was the dominant figure while amateurs and volunteers largely made up the ranks of party activists during its early phases. As a result, its local organizational presence remained limited. Anders Lange played a similar role in Norway by creating the FrP as a business-firm party. Even after Carl Hagen assumed the leadership, institutionalization did not make progress until the party began to assume mass party features.

In short, in all of the above cases, strong organizational adaptation occurred when the parties broke out of their electoral niches and succeeded in the electoral market place. Election breakthroughs also turned the Austrian and Swiss populists into political players at the national level because they were required to overcome their decentralized character to be able to offer a more coherent political response—although the Swiss political model ultimately imposed far greater constraints on the SVP than Austrian federalism did on the FPÖ. SVP had already been represented in federal government for several decades.

Electoral success also contributed to pushing the VB and FrP towards parties with mass followings. In none of these cases do we see a move toward greater de-institutionalization or a rolling back of organization—when Haider tried to convert his party into a citizen movement in the mid-1990s, the model failed and was quietly abandoned.

The 'Standard' Model

The remaining cases started out as more fully formed right-wing populist parties combining nativism (or regionalism in the case of the Lega Nord), authoritarianism, welfare chauvinism, and populism, from inception. As such, they were either newly founded or had broken away from other far-right formations. In both the Front National and the Lega Nord, charismatic individuals dominated their parties, which shaped their organizational evolution from the start. Nonetheless, they developed into organizationally complex and highly institutionalized parties. As they grew in size and scope, leaders could no longer control their parties based on 'charisma' and on personal loyalties but instead had to develop organizational mechanisms for maintaining power. Nonetheless, in comparison to the converted party type, the leader-founded parties did not harbour reservoirs of dissenters from before the conversion that constituted an organizational reserve of sorts from where an attack on the leadership was possible. Although the SD did not have the kind of charismatic authoritarian leadership associated with the Front National and the Lega Nord, it too shared many of these parties' developmental and organizational characteristics and came close to what may be considered the 'standard' model of populist party organization.

Establishing Leadership and Organizational Control

If we survey all seven cases then we find the 'classical' model of the charismatic and quasi-authoritarian leader dominating the party in every aspect only in the French and Italian examples. The FPÖ comes close but its leaders are not automatically assured such a dominant role. Haider initially required tactical alliances to consolidate his political position. Later on he learned to rely on adapting party rules to retain his control. This resembles the situation of the FrP in which Carl Hagen, who succeeded the party's founder, needed to control the organization to retain his dominant position. Unlike his predecessor, Lange, who appointed himself party leader, Hagen had to worry about prevailing with his political preferences. This prompted him to tamper with party rules to remain in control, for instance when it came to candidate selection. In the cases of both Hagen and Haider, aspects of institutionalization became means of party control.

The VB and SVP are interesting in that the parties' best known and politically most influential figures—Dewinter and Blocher—were never the formal party leaders. Thus, both were operating in an organizational context different from one shaped by a single authoritarian party leader. Both individuals were starting out from a politically highly successful home base and looking for ways to extend the model to the national party. Therefore, the impetus for institutionalization was the need to fill the organizational vacuum at the national level, so as to make the party overall more effective and allow for the successful branch to shape the centre. However, whereas Blocher was a singular political figure in the SVP, pushing the party in the direction of right-wing populism, Dewinter had to contend with other important political actors which made the leadership of the VB more collective.

The SVP shares also an important characteristic with the SD. Both formations are a long way from being 'charismatic parties'. Especially, the SD's foundation is not at all associated with a charismatic leadership figure but the party was run by a small and closed group of activists held together by ideology and opposition to the political mainstream. In fact, to prevent a type of *Führerprinzip* from asserting itself, the SD even briefly opted for a dual-leadership model and focused on expanding the party's local organizational scope.

Overall, the Sweden Democrats also represent the most 'collective' personalistic leadership model of all the parties in our sample. Founded by a small group of political entrepreneurs, the SD developed a division of power among several top party officials who form an inner leadership circle. The party also instituted periodic leadership changes (three in all) and has embraced aspects of the mass party organization. Despite its origin as a top-down creation, the Sweden Democrats have been making a great effort to improve their presence at the local level and resemble a more conventional Swedish party organization. The challenge for the party elites was how to prevent power from shifting to subordinate units while remaining unified within the context of a collective leadership. In the SD, as in all other cases in our analysis, organizational development in the direction of a mass party was the path pursued, despite a variety of points of departure and very different origin situations. Greater institutionalization became an inherent part of the evolution of successful populist parties.

Comparing Organizational Development and Centralization

When it comes to the distribution of power within the party organization, theory would lead us to expect populist parties to be highly centralized (cf., Betz 1998; Pedahzur and Brichta 2002). In fact, the notion of a right-wing populist party as one where political power is concentrated in a charismatic authoritarian leader has been prevalent in both popular and scholarly conceptualizations. As we have seen, it is indeed the case that the seven parties analyzed in this volume tend to concentrate power in the leadership to an extent greater than in other parties in their respective political systems. The tendency toward centralization can therefore be considered a core characteristic that we observed. Moreover, the concentration of power in the leadership is frequently accompanied by formal or informal mechanisms designed to restrain intra-party democracy. Thus, right-wing populist parties find ways of not only reducing the autonomy of subordinate organizational units but also restricting the influence of ordinary party members on candidate selections and fundamental

decisions affecting the direction of the party. However, our analysis does show that the idea of the authoritarian leader in control of every aspect of the party, as if neither rules nor organizational reality mattered, is also a myth. Instead, we see that the ways in which centralization is achieved vary widely, generally corresponding to national party-political and organizational conventions. In addition, it is often precisely the organizational dimension through which the leadership is able to exercise control over the party.

Centralization in Single Leader Parties

First of all, it is important to distinguish those populist parties in which leadership is not divided, meaning that the formal party leader is also the party's figurehead and politically most influential personality. This applies more directly to the Front National, the Progress Party, the Lega Nord and the Freedom Party but less so to the Sweden Democrats, the Swiss People's Party, and the Vlaams Belang. However, even those four parties where the concentration of power in the hands of their leaders is greatest differ in degrees of organization, specifically with respect to the nationalization of power and the means by which centralization is achieved.

The Austrian Freedom Party is perhaps the case in which the two aspects—charismatic leadership and a highly articulated organization with considerable autonomy at the regional level—come together as they do in none of the other parties examined here. The traditionally federated structure of the FPÖ, reflecting Austria's model of state organization, has equipped regional party units with a significant measure of nominal and factual organizational independence from the centre. This serves as a permanent check on the national leadership. Only under certain conditions, a well entrenched and electorally highly successful leader, such as Haider in the 1990s and Strache after 2013, is able to use formal (the power of sanctions, statutory changes), political (loyalty pledges), and/or informal means (selective recruitment and promotions, appeals to the base, blackmail, etc.) to operate more or less at will. Otherwise, the FPÖ's high degree of organization (i.e. considerable organizational intensiveness and extensiveness, sizeable membership, and vertical articulation)

provides organizational spaces for autonomy to reassert itself, even allowing for grassroots initiatives of sufficient strength to topple the leadership.

In the cases of the Front National and Lega Nord such autonomy of organizational units outside the leadership is not in evidence. Although these parties boast complex and highly articulated organizations that are intensive and extensive in scope, they have adopted a design of the interaction between leadership and organization that ensures the concentration of power in the hands of the leader(ship). In the FN, power is vested in executive institutions which exert direct control over the local branches and are dominated by individuals close to the party leader who thus retains full control over the party. In the Lega Nord centralization is achieved in a somewhat different way. In fact, its dense network of municipal branches would suggest a bottom-up organization and significant local autonomy. To negate this possibility, the LN has opted for a model of restricted full ('activist') membership. Thus, the party uses gatekeeping, socialization into the organization, and demonstrated loyalty as a means of strengthening the central leadership while preventing deviations from the party line.

The relatively privileged position enjoyed by the FN and LN leadership compared with that of the FPÖ also extends to candidate selection. In the LN this may be decided at the top without consulting party activists, whereas in the FPÖ the regional chapters determine the candidates on their respective lists, although the leadership has been able to veto undesirable choices. In the FN, the leadership has been able to control the selection process but recent efforts toward greater intra-party democracy may make this process more open in the future.

In all three parties, FPÖ, FN, and LN, statutes provide for party congresses that could potentially act as a check on the leadership. Yet, in the case of the FN, the congress traditionally (despite formally being tasked to elect the leader and central committee) has had only a symbolic function and little influence on the party's executive bodies. In the LN, party congresses have simply not been convened except for in extraordinary circumstances (election of a new leader). Only in the FPÖ did party congresses play a crucial role in the organization in removing party leaders. However, popular party leaders were in a position to appeal to the

sentiments of ordinary delegates and instrumentalize these gatherings to overcome resistance to the leadership from elsewhere within the party apparatus. In all cases, the party congresses proved important in managing leadership transitions and bestowing the imprimatur of legitimacy on decisions, even if these had, de facto, been taken elsewhere.

The Progress Party represents a different case in that it started out as a personal and thus highly centralized party but changed subsequently. Organizationally, the party has become increasingly complex and extensive in scope, attested by its presence in 80 per cent of the municipalities and its over 20,000 members. Since the death of the party's founder, FrP leaders have been elected by party congresses. However, despite the appearance of decentralization and open contest, leadership transitions have been rather managed affairs. Thus, the process of leadership succession and candidate selection tends to require significant behind-the-scenes meddling by the leadership to ensure the latter's favoured outcome. Yet, what makes the FrP a rather centralized party, especially by Norwegian standards, is the national party's control over policy and political messaging as well as the use of sanctions, including expulsion, against those who deviate from the party line.

Centralization in Divided Leadership Parties

With respect to the other parties in our sample, the question of centralization is less straightforward. The SVP had been a fairly well-developed, highly differentiated, and also regionally well-established party. Yet, its national organization was probably the least developed and powerful compared to that of any other party in our sample. The SVP's enormous success in national referendum campaigns and its rise as a national force was owed especially to the efforts of the Canton Zurich branch and Christoph Blocher, who not only served as its charismatic figurehead but also as an important financial benefactor. Thus, the push toward greater centralization and a more effective national organization came as a result of these developments. Although Blocher did not become national party leader, he used his influence over key national committees to impose greater uniformity on the rest of the party. By Swiss standards,

this centralization and personalization—especially when Blocher entered government in 2003—is clearly striking but less fully developed than in the French, Italian, and even the Austrian cases. The SVP has remained a party characterized by significant areas of autonomy at the regional level. Nonetheless, a noteworthy means of increasing centralization has been Blocher's success in enlisting wealthy donors to provide new revenue streams for the national party, allowing the SVP to engage more fully in modern campaigning. The relative decline in the importance of regional fund raising shifted power to the national organization, thereby reducing the autonomy at the cantonal level.

Likewise, the Vlaams Belang is shaped by a regional powerbase (Antwerp) and a formal division of leadership roles among several individuals, which reflects ideological and, importantly, functional differences. Whereas Filip Dewinter became the party's political figurehead and best known politician, Frank Vanhecke served as its formal leader in charge of party organization. Ostensibly, the VB adopted a party structure that resembled that of other Belgian parties. Barriers to membership are low and the party has an extensive vertical organization, all of which would suggest effective curbs on the national leadership and significant autonomy for subnational party units. Yet, the VB achieves centralization by delegating nearly all decision-making power (programmatic and strategic decision-making) to the national executive bodies (e.g. party president, party executive) while the more open party institutions, the party congress and party council, play de facto lesser roles. Recruitment into the party executive is tightly controlled by the leadership, which has benefited from the vagueness of statutory rules. This has allowed the leaders to confine subordinate party bodies to lesser tasks. The main challenge for the VB leadership is less the autonomy of party institutions than preserving unity within the leadership itself, especially in light of the party's electoral setbacks. The party's decline, arguably the result of the *cordon sanitaire* and the competition from a politically more palpable alternative, would seem to require a political response along the lines carried out by the FN, but given the divided leadership, these changes have proved difficult to implement under the existing organizational structure.

In our sample, the Sweden Democrats represent the party where charismatic and authoritarian leadership is least in evidence. Although the SD

therefore corresponds in part to the conventional mass party model with its clearly defined division of functions, influential affiliated organizations, and a general party congress to elect the leadership and executive bodies, it is nonetheless the Swedish party where power is centralized the most. This is achieved through the leadership's control of the recruitment process into executive bodies (e.g. through overlapping memberships). The leaders also shape programmatic development, determine the allocation of party funds, and exercise the power of sanction when dealing with deviating members or party units. In the SD, the power of the party congress is comparatively strong. It may not only determine the leadership selection but, as in the FPÖ, also serves as a forum for staging 'coups' against the leadership by regional factions. Nonetheless, the party leaders can generally rely on a pliant election committee with agenda-setting power. The power of sanction is also used by the SD leadership as an instrument of ensuring centralization. In fact, the ability by central and national party bodies to discipline, remove, and expel those who digress from the party line or pose a challenge to the leadership is widely used, in all the parties examined here, to cement the power of the leadership. Expulsions or voluntary departures of key party officials also often occurred after a power struggle for control of the party when the losing side was banished so as not to pose a threat to the leader.

The Leadership's Control over the Party Programme

Controlling the manifesto process is an important means of party centralization in general. In the FN, manifesto development is formally assigned to a special body—the general delegation—close to the national leadership and thus removed from the influence of lower level and regional party institutions. Similarly, the SVP under Blocher's direction has sought to curb attempts by regional officials to deviate from the party line and ensure overall ideological consistency in political campaigns. Overall, programmatic development, even if the process involves formal steps of approval by general party bodies, is the preserve of the leadership and closely associated party institutions. By contrast, in the FrP, manifesto development appears more decentralized when compared with

that in other parties in our analysis. This is remarkable given the overall importance attached to this process in Norwegian party politics and thus one would assume that the leadership would do all it could to shape this process.

The Austrian Freedom Party deviates from this pattern in that party manifestos are largely de-emphasized in favour of short-term actions, programmes and political messages given out by the party leadership. Yet there, the process of party splits and expulsions over time has created a programmatically more unified party so that differences between the leadership and the grassroots have become less likely.

Leadership and Centralization in their Contexts

We may conclude that all parties analyzed here typically represent the most centralized political formations in their respective political systems although the levels of centralization vary considerably among them. The methods for achieving centralization differ depending on national political conventions and regulations. To the extent that national practices privilege more decentralized forms of organizations, right-wing populist parties appear to follow the same blueprint but find other ways to structure the interaction between leadership and party activists, such that power is concentrated in the former and the autonomy of other party institutions is tightly controlled. The instruments used include privileging one type of party membership over another, controlling elite recruitment, sidelining the most open party institutions such as party congresses, using selective financial allocation, delegating important tasks to special bodies beholden to the leadership, using a leadership-friendly interpretation of statutory vagueness, and relying on the power of sanction to neutralize challenges to the leadership.

Of all the parties examined here, the FN and the LN have been the most centralized. However, the FN is in the process of an image makeover in favour of being associated with greater party democracy. Any move toward greater openness presents the leadership with a dilemma—tolerate undesirable outcomes or find a 'backdoor solution' to preserve power. It is the latter strategy that has been pursued by the FPÖ, the SVP,

the VB, and the SD where the leadership has had to contend with greater levels of intra-party democracy and autonomy.

Organizational Coherence in Comparative Perspective

If we take centralization to be a defining characteristic of right-wing populist parties then the struggle for coherence is the other side of the coin. The fractious nature of these parties is not surprising given the leadership's efforts to centralize power, the near constant campaign mode in which populist parties operate, and the general level of mobilization of party activists. These aspects, together with relative importance of personalized politics and the generally polarizing effect of populist parties on the political system at large, produce tensions within the organization that cannot always be successfully channelled by the normal patterns of interaction within the party. Moreover, by generally engaging in vote-seeking strategies, party leaders feel great pressure to deliver consistent and unified messages to voters. This entails a process of ridding the party of areas of organizational autonomy and internal factions while concentrating power in the leadership, which at times leads to complete ruptures in cohesion. The Freedom Party is perhaps one of the more extreme cases in our sample as it has undergone several major splits since its inception and another regional one as late as 2015. The FPÖ is also a rather extreme example in that its major populist figurehead, Haider, left the party with the rest of the old leadership team to form a competing party. Yet, serious divisions and splits have also occurred in other cases in our sample: leaders also left their respective parties or were removed in the VB, LN, FN, and the FrP (at least temporarily).

Ideological Party Fragmentation

Generally, we may distinguish several types of fragmentation and division: in the murky origin situation before a political direction is yet established, an eventually populist party may start out with extremist or ideologically dogmatic bedfellows that threaten to lock the party into a

political ghetto. In order to escape marginalization and pursue a more opportunistic voter-seeking strategy, right-wing populist parties shed members that are even more extreme. For example, in 1996 the leadership of Sweden Democrats tried to rid itself of neo-Nazi extremists by expelling even some of its founding members. Overall, the SD has eliminated more than 70 members for unacceptable extremely nationalist and racist statements. The FPÖ had undergone a similar process several decades earlier when the Nazi and German nationalist broke away. The Front National was moving through such a process much later when in the context of 'Marinization' and 'detoxification' the party appears to have broken with Jean-Marie Le Pen and his unrepentant extremism and anti-Semitism. Also the FPÖ under Strache. and Vlaams Belang under Vanhecke have taken action against more radical members in an effort to widen the parties' appeal.

By the same token, right-wing populist parties may themselves be the more radical descendants of earlier moderate or multi-factional parties. In these 'converted' parties radicalization required the expulsion of individuals or entire factions deemed ideologically too moderate or incompatible with the new populist direction. The Progress Party had started out as a libertarian entrepreneurial issue party that moved steadily toward populist identity politics. This gave rise to conflicts between the party's pragmatists and populists; the former wanting the party to become a responsible right-wing party, whereas the latter preferred to remain protest oriented. The internal conflicts in the FrP eventually led to the defection of the libertarian and more pragmatic faction. Also, the FPÖ had traditionally included a significant liberal wing, which was forced out of the party in the 1990s. Factional conflicts over ideology and direction have plagued the VB as well, dividing those for whom the Flemish cause has been paramount from others favouring the populist issues of immigration and identity. The LN saw a serious conflict between hardline secessionists and their opponents. The SD was divided between 'extremists' and 'moderates' as well as between 'old' and 'new' nationalists. However, as the examples of the FrP and the FPÖ show, splits do not have to be permanent, given that Hagen's faction re-joined the Progress Party in 1974 when the conditions changed. Likewise, Haider's Carinthian branch of the BZÖ re-affiliated with FPÖ following his death in 2008.

Party Fragmentation and Regional Diversity

Another source of internal conflict is the strong influence of regional parties which other parts of the organization try to contain or counteract. The predominance of Antwerp in the VB has been a frequent source of tension as has been the role of Blocher and his Zurich branch in the SVP. In the FPÖ, the Carinthian party chapter had a disproportional influence over the rest of the party. In similar ways, the LN has been marked by a division between the Veneto and Lombardy factions, the latter of which came dominate the party. Also in SD there is a strong division between the Stockholm faction and the Skåne faction.

Party Fragmentation and Leadership Centralization

A frequent source of division in right-wing populist parties can be found in efforts to challenge the authoritarian and personalized leadership. In the VB and SVP there has been resistance to the powerful figureheads Dewinter and Blocher, who were ultimately blocked from assuming the overall party leadership. In the FrP where the leader, Hagen, was in too unassailable a position to be challenged personally, there were concerted but ultimately futile efforts to thwart the nomination of his hand-picked confidants. In the Austrian Freedom Party, Haider's growing power was met with internal resistance by different groups within the organization but which were themselves divided. The most well-known challenge to an entrenched personified and authoritarian populist party leader is probably the attempt by Bruno Mégret to move against Jean-Marie Le Pen, resulting in a major split in the Front National in 1999.

The frequent challenges to the centralization of leadership along with the fractious nature of populist formations have led to persistent struggles for cohesion. In response, leaders employ measures to secure and defend their positions. Often these measures are taken in addition to the exercise of the formal power the leadership has at its disposal. In the case of the FPÖ, Haider used strategic alliances, blackmail by threatening to turn against his own party, and the imposition of behavioural rules for party members, to fend off challenges to his leadership. Among the most effective formal

means available to the leader is the power of sanction, often resulting in the aforementioned summary expulsions of potential and real opponents. Another tool is the reliance on cadres of close confidents who have been moved into strategically important positions within the organization: Bossi could count on his 'magic circle', Haider on his 'boy-gang', and Hagen on his 'crown princess/prince'. In fact, in the FPÖ, the LN, and the FN, the role of family members, relatives, and personal friends in organizational roles so as to secure the leaders' hold on the parties has been a striking feature. By comparison, in the SVP and VB, Blocher and Dewinter enlisted their respective powerful local branch organizations so to prevail in internal power struggles. As previously mentioned, it was Haider's hold on his regional FPÖ chapter that allowed him to maintain influence over the national party even after his resignation as party leader.

The Struggle for Party Coherence

The history of splits and expulsions has, over time, made right-wing populist parties ideologically and organizationally more cohesive. For example, after the Conservative Democratic Party split from the SVP, the latter became more coherent and once again successful at the polls. Having rid itself of party liberals and moderates on two occasions, the FPÖ consolidated its position and returned to political strength in the 1990s and after 2005 respectively. After its third split, the Progress Party became more institutionalized and unified, which in turn created the foundation for the political success enjoyed under Hagen's leadership. Especially noteworthy is the fact that, despite episodes of virulent factionalism, all the parties in the sample show a high degree of legislative cohesion and unity in policy formation. This suggests that, as contentious as the struggle for cohesion at times seems, it may have helped right-wing populist parties adapt to political circumstances and thus compete even more effectively with political formations more tolerant of deviation but also more diffuse in their profile. In both Scandinavian cases in our sample, the FrP and the SD, there have been ideological clashes between the respective mother parties and their more radical youth organizations, which were both disbanded and refounded.

Is Rightwing Populism a Challenge to the Theory of Party Organization?

Within the context of national party systems, right-wing populist parties generally appear to be outsider formations and challengers to the status quo. A significant part of their appeal lays in their discourse and style, that is in their cultivation of the image of anti-politics and a departure from established political conventions. Yet, this perception masks the fact that when we compare these parties across Europe, they conform to some extent to conventional forms of party organization. However, and importantly so, they also challenge the current party organizational patterns in important ways.

Moving Toward Organizational 'Normality'

All parties in our sample not only fulfill Janda's criteria for institutionalization but have continued moving toward organizational 'normality' (Mény and Surel 2001: 251) by seeking to enhance agency credibility and by adopting a complex party organization. Their structure became more complex, conforming to mainstream trends in Western democracies. To the extent we notice radical new forms of party development and organization—i.e. the FPÖ's attempt to embrace the idea of becoming a disarticulated citizen movement behind a leader—, they have not succeeded and have been abandoned. If the focus on authoritarian party leaders has been justified by evidence of relative autonomy, recent leadership transitions have introduced changes in the dynamics between leaders and the activists: the FN is making an effort to increase intra-party democracy and the leadership of the FPÖ was forced to provide regional chapters with a greater say in national decision-making bodies. Even the LN under its new leader, Matteo Salvini, has sought to establish new forms of participation of party members (a new intra-net platform and greater use of social media).

Despite changes in leadership and internal dynamics, we have seen no evidence that these parties engage in radically new forms of organization or seek fundamentally novel means of connecting with their membership, notwithstanding the fact that right-wing populist leaders often use social

media very effectively or differ in style and discourse from other politicians. Moreover, populist parties are also partaking in a mainstream trend of increasing personalization and presidentialization by concentrating the leadership's power outside and inside the party organization (Blondel and Thiébault 2010; Poguntke and Webb 2005).

In fact, if anything, some parties in the sample appear in certain ways organizationally more conventional by international standards than do their national competitors. The SVP may seem less 'Swiss' than other national parties but its approach to organizing and campaigning is rather typical across Europe. Likewise, the FN has been a rather more stable and cohesive party compared to its mainstream political competitors. A growing or stable membership and the relative importance of grassroots support for the leadership have already been mentioned as characteristics shared by the many of the parties in our sample but no longer found in all national mainstream parties.

Differing from Organizational 'Normality'

Despite the fact that right-wing populist parties have embraced, in part, the conventional model of party organization, they differ in other ways from their mainstream competitors. This is first and foremost in the centralization of power in the leadership, which goes hand in hand with a persistent struggle for coherence. Although leaders tend to create a 'unitary command and control structure where all roads lead directly to them' (Johansson 2014: 36), there is sufficient structural integrity and organizational autonomy that the loss of a leader does not spell the end of the party. In fact, leaders can even be removed if they endanger the party and personal rivalries along with ideological divisions can be managed. In this context, the personalization of relationships is undoubtedly a prevalent feature in right-wing populist parties (ibid.) but may be overemphasized in terms of its assumed political effect. Long-serving and entrenched leaders in mainstream parties may also draw on extensive networks of close confidants more beholden to the leaders themselves than the party as such.

The other side of centralization is the 'limited nature of democracy' (Johansson 2014: 37) in populist parties, notwithstanding the fact that

certain areas of regional autonomy persist in some cases. The tendency towards centralization is also mitigated to some extent by the requirement that the leadership retain its legitimacy with the activist base. Another core feature of populist parties is the struggle for cohesion and thus the factious nature of their evolution. Party splits and attempts by one faction or one regional branch to gain control of agenda-setting and enforce a single party line are frequent occurrences. Yet, such episodes weaken populist parties only temporarily and have surprisingly little impact in terms of continued legislative and programmatic cohesion.

Centralization also has a huge impact in terms of internal discipline. In the case of the LN, activist status has to be 'earned'. In the Front National intra-party democracy and pluralism still lag behind that of their national competitors. In several parties, membership growth is skewed toward particular groups, such as the young in the VB and the FPÖ. The organizational convergence toward the 'national standard model' in the FrP or the SD does not necessarily indicate a change in party culture which remains much more accepting of top-down decision-making than is otherwise the norm in Norway and Sweden. The evidence also suggests that the harsh enforcement of party discipline, especially expulsions, to silence internal critics, such as reflected by the SD's zero tolerance policy, is much more common in right-wing populist parties than among mainstream parties.

Another difference with respect to mainstream parties is provided by the importance of private funding. While the increased public funding in almost every European country tends to shape a collusive relation between parties and state (Katz and Mair 1995; 2009), several populist parties tend to benefit from private funding which also contributes to enhance the leadership. A source of power, buttressing personalized leadership, has been the financial wealth of people like Jean-Marie Le Pen, Christoph Blocher, and Jörg Haider. Even after his resignation Le Pen maintained a strong financial link with the FN and has supported regional candidates in the 2015 elections. Also Blocher continues to use his private fortune for shaping the SVP to conform to his preferences, independent of other party institutions. It was Jörg Haider's personal wealth, following an inheritance, which gave him a measure of political independence from both party coffers and influential donors. Yet, the FN and FPÖ are also recent examples to the contrary: to counterbalance Jean-Marie Le

Pen's financial influence through his own fund-raising organization, his daughter, upon becoming the party leader, set up her own one, Jeanne, and even took out a Russian loan. Strache was able to succeed Haider as a dominant leader despite not having the latter's personal financial wealth.

Connecting with the Mass-Party Legacy

The most striking finding is that populist party organization does challenge our assumptions about the relationship between outsider parties and mainstream forms of organization, but in ways it was perhaps not expected. It is not the case that outsider parties eschew 'normal' party organization but rather that aspects of the mass party model appear alive and well in populist parties despite their decline elsewhere. This appears rather paradoxical: while mainstream parties seem to move to professional-electoralist cartel and business-firm party organizations, leaving the mass party model (Krouwel 2006; Katz and Mair 1995), several right-wing populist parties have embraced aspects of the mass party legacy theorized by Maurice Duverger and many others. By suggesting that right-wing populist parties adopt a mass party related organization, we want to highlight that these formations develop a grassroots following, with strong centralization, a locally rooted, complex, and durable organization with institutionalized routines, which appears close to, or aspires to emulate, the mass party model (Duverger 1963).

Regardless of the origin situation—either as a top-down personalized business-firm party or as a bottom-up decentralized multi-factional formation—the phases of 'normalization', 'unconventional' as they may appear in their respective national contexts, along with electoral growth, invariably led the right-wing populist parties in our sample to converge on a highly articulated organization close to the mass party legacy. They undertook efforts to develop (or preserve) an extensive structure, institutionalize internal processes of decision-making and interaction, and achieve a local presence ensuring a connection between the grassroots and the leadership. For example, the LN under Bossi was clearly heavily dominated by an authoritarian and centralized leadership but the party's organization is highly reminiscent of a traditional Italian mass party. Even

in cases where centralization restricts the input of ordinary party members and where decisions taken by party organs, such as party congresses, are largely more formal than substantive, we have seen evidence that the grassroots matter. In the parties in our sample, the organization serves as an important linkage between the activist base and the leadership which typically tend to reinforce each other.

While the number of activists in some right-wing populist parties may not come close to the membership sizes of their respective competitors, these parties have nevertheless recruited large numbers of members. More importantly, their membership registers tend to be increasing while those of other mainstream parties are declining. This process of rooting a party in a population and territory stands in contrast to the erosion of grassroots membership in European mainstream parties, many of which have all but abandoned 'any pretensions to being mass organizations' (Van Biezen et al. 2012: 42).

Although all cases in the sample differ from their respective national competitors by showing greater levels of centralization, they clearly also vary according to national trends and constraints. In some cases, such as the SVP, centralization has made the party organizationally perhaps 'less Swiss' but more conventionally 'European' in a broader sense.

We may summarize our findings by emphasizing that our research indicates that the parties examined here draw on distinct strengths of elements of the mass party model in their political competition. Thus, right-wing populist parties represent not only an ideological but also an organizational challenge within their respective party systems. The fact that right-wing populist parties tend to recover from challenges by drawing on the mass party model and its underlying organizational structure shows their diversity is not limited to discourse and style but includes also organizational features.

Insights for Further Research

Our findings suggest some directions in which future research may develop. First of all, for the literature on populism, we argue that the role of leadership has to be conceived in a more complex manner by moving away from an all too simplistic but common view of the charismatic

leader. The necessity to go beyond a leader-centred focus does not mean the role of the leader is less important but that its charismatic nature should not be taken for granted. Consequently, further close analysis of the leader and, importantly, also the team surrounding the leader, may deliver new and more precise insights as to how populist mobilization occurs. Secondly, although the study of party populism is based on an old continental divide, investigations of populist organization will need to look at examples beyond Europe and especially to South America—our findings suggest apparent similarities regarding the capacity of populist parties to adapt internal dynamics to changing environments (Burgess and Levitsky 2003; Levitsky 2003). Thus, further research should develop more systematic comparative analyses among continents, as recent studies such as those by Mudde and Kaltwasser (2012) already do.

Another important avenue of further research is the political repositioning underway in several right-wing populist parties. While we have seen little change on the core issues on which these parties compete, there have been concerted attempts to become more acceptable to both mainstream parties and broader groups of voters, especially women Ackerman et al. (2016). Marine Le Pen's effort at 'de-demonization' is probably the best known example of this development. There is similar evidence from the FrP, the SD, the LN, and the FPÖ as all these formations have expelled groups or individuals whose extremism or notoriety was deemed a threat to the party's broader appeal. By comparison, the SVP already sees itself along the lines of a national conservative party and thus as more broadly based than the others. Also the LN has promoted new forms of political participation and digital activism to reach people beyond its traditional base and compete more effectively. In the case of the VB, the relative decline in electoral fortunes has given rise to internal conflict precisely over the party's direction and efforts to broaden its appeal. These developments are likely to have consequences in terms not only of electoral competition but also party organization, which require careful study. This book has documented numerous examples of organizational measures, notably sanctions, undertaken by parties to escape their roles as twentieth century niche parties and become major political actors in twenty-first century party systems. Yet, scholarship has only just begun to study this transformation.

Finally, despite the fact that important scholarship seems to exclude the possibility of a resurgent 'mass party' model in Western countries (e.g. Katz and Mair 1995), our findings suggest that more attention needs to be paid to cases presented as outliers. As these 'outliers' become relevant parties (Sartori 1976) with an increasing influence within party systems and national governments (e.g. Wolinetz and Zaslove 2016), they represent formidable challenges to the conventional wisdom and need to be included in the research agenda on party development. In this sense, our findings suggest a more systematic link between the party populist sub-field and the literature on party organization, which may represent a 'win-win' strategy for further studies in political science and political sociology.

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