

**Capacity Building in Parliaments and Legislatures:
Institutionalization, Professionalization and
Evolutionary Institutionalism**

Ronald D. Hedlund, Northeastern University
Werner J. Patzelt, Technical University of Dresden
David M. Olson, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

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Representative assemblies, an old type of institution, have changed substantially over centuries and across continents. As they are currently undergoing extensive and rapid changes in the post Cold War period, research and theory are correspondingly changing as well.

While representative assemblies – with many names reflective of language and constitution, such as Sejm, Assemblée Nationale, Bundestag, Lok Sabha, Congreso - are, in the western world, closely associated with democracy, representative assemblies have distinctly pre-democratic, if also western, origins, and are currently often found in non-democratic political systems around the world. Of the almost 200 members of the UN, all but a handful claim to have some type of representative body. How can we understand the durability, mutations, transferability and the long record of successes and failures, of representative bodies over time and around the world?

INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT: AMAZING ELEMENTS OF POLITICAL LIFE

Parliaments and legislatures are surprising institutions. While other core elements of political systems, like armies and administrative bodies, are structured along a command-order-scheme to guarantee their cohesiveness under pressure, representative bodies work exactly the other way around: They are meant to contain intense social conflicts and fierce political disputes within themselves. They must do so without putting at risk the stability of the overall system. Equally remarkable is their ability to integrate, and even to tame, protest movements and fundamentalist leaders of all kinds. On balance, it is really notable how parliaments and legislatures are able to gain, and so often preserve stability and political steering capacity.

The development of institutional capacity and of capable members has been, and continues to be, at a very uneven pace in representative assemblies. Attributes of ‘institutional

learning' by members and of 'institutional forms' of structure and procedure¹ are more or less transferable through time and across boundaries (cf. Patzelt 2007). Varied short-term departures from established (or inherited) rules and procedures, though perhaps discordant at any one time, may also create the potential for adjusting an institution's fit with its changing environment. There is a constant interplay and tension between contingent behaviours and the constraints of established institutional form.

One recurring problem faced by a representative assembly is to transfer skills and values from one generation² to successor generations through processes of professional socialization. Another recurring problem has been to transfer the forms and practices of an existing assembly from one socio-cultural setting to a different one, through institution import (as the German electoral system by New Zealand) or institution export (as of British parliamentarianism to many former British colonies). Contingency also marks the ever new challenges that an institution's changing environment (such as the breakdown of communist rule or phenomena of globalization) generates for an institution.

We can, as social scientists, look beyond every single case for a theoretical understanding of the how and why, and of the patterns, of an institutional form's origins and subsequent development. And because representative assemblies have withstood tremendous political challenges in an incredibly successful way over the centuries, their 'evolutionary understanding' should be of particular value for research on other political institutions as well.

¹ The 'institutional form' of a parliament consists of its fixed social and legal structures that, on their part, are reproduced in everyday interactions as long as background expectancies, formed during institutional socialization, are mutually not discredited. How this is achieved, is a central topic of Evolutionary Institutionalisms and of parliamentary construction analysis (see Patzelt 2007: 287-323, and below).

² A 'parliamentary (or legislative) generation', for instance, is a cohort of parliamentary freshmen. They enter parliament, receive parliamentary socialization, become possibly 'competent MPs', may contribute to the maintenance of their parliament's institutional form, and will convey memes that are used for parliamentary reality construction to new cohorts of freshmen. On day they retire from parliament: Individuals come and go – the institution remains.

CHANGING REALITIES: Representative Assemblies AND LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH

Our ability to examine representative assemblies – and all other parts of political systems – has been altered with the changing realities of political life. As legislatures and democracy have spread and then disappeared and reappeared, scholarly attention has also waxed and waned.

Most research on representative assemblies is confined to single countries, mainly western and democratic. Books covering other regions and types of legislatures often include single chapters for single legislatures, leaving comparisons to the last chapter's summary (Norton and Ahmed 1998, Crisp and Botero 2004).

The same format is found also in more thematic comparative books such as presidentialism (Elgie 1999), policy formation (Olson and Mezey 1991, Haggard and McCubbins 2001), post-communist committee institutionalization (Olson and Crowther 2002) and party cohesion and discipline (Hazan 2004).

Several multi-author books, however, point to innovative ways to conduct and present research. The four country comparison of Kenya, Germany, United Kingdom and United States (Loewenberg and Patterson 1979), the analysis of organization and procedures of 18 west European parliaments (Döring 1995a), and the examinations of the Scandinavian parliaments (Esaiasson and Heidar 2000) and of several Latin American legislatures (Morgenstern and Nacif 2002) are examples.

The most sustained and additive comparative research, however, is found in the unique array of studies of American state legislatures (Wahlke, Eulau, Buchanan and Ferguson 1962; Patterson, Hedlund and Boynton 1975; Jewell and Whicker 1994; Squire, Hamm, Hedlund and Moncrief 2004; Squire and Hamm 2005). Much of this work has a clear theoretical orientation as well as being cross-system in design and seeks to explain various legislative as well as political phenomena both across political systems and through time.

Each of these examples of collaborative legislative research has been funded and organized very differently, and each suggests the surrounding circumstances which can lead to a genuinely comparative research effort.

The combination of one powerful Congress and 50 state legislatures with a large political science profession has given legislative studies in the post World War II period a marked American accent. In addition, English (especially the American version) has become the current *lingua franca* of international discourse. While methods (if data are available) are easily transported across national boundaries, theoretical perspectives about representative assemblies are more likely to reflect constant attributes of the American political system which, in other systems, are more variable (Gamm and Huber 2002 321-27, Morgenstern 2002 15; Crisp and Botero 2004 330-334).

The current American emphasis on viewing institutional and collective behavior from the perspective of individual legislators may become useful in beginning parliaments as, and if, they stabilize, and also as they make more data available (Geddes 2002 359). The perspectives of individual actor based analysis, in the context of both role theory and systems analysis, as we suggest in subsequent sections, provide links to the broader perspective of institutional approaches.

Comparative studies tend to view aggregate phenomena across legislatures at any one time period (Gamm and Huber 325-327, 337), while variations in individual behavior and internal structures, can be examined within single legislatures over time, either as whole bodies (Schickler 2001) or as discrete sets of behaviors illustrated by U.S. congressional responses to presidential vetoes (Sinclair 2006). The growth of historical institutionalism (cf. Thelen 2002), and the suggestion in this paper of “evolutionary institutionalism” provide intellectual means to think systematically of institution formation and change over time.

Attention to legislatures in the third world and developing countries has been stimulated by the growing independence movement among former colonies beginning in the 1960's. For-

eign aid programs, the American in particular, included assistance with legislatures, which, in turn, both stimulated and funded comparative legislative research, with publications through the Consortium for Comparative Legislative Studies (Kornberg 1973, Smith and Musolf 1979, Mezey 1983 733).

Following the end of the Cold War, legislative assistance efforts, as part of much broader democracy-building and economic stabilization programs, have been stimulated both by international organizations (e.g., Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, UNDP, EU, World Bank) and by foreign assistance efforts by individual countries such as Britain, Sweden, Canada, and the United States (Nijzink 2006 314, Johnson 2007).

There appears to be growing “kinship” sets of assemblies, best illustrated by the spread of the Westminster tradition throughout the former British Empire. The French in Africa and the United States in Latin America have been other sources of kinship groupings. The international assistance programs referenced immediately above are an additional means of institutional transfer, increasingly across former cultural and economic boundaries and military alliances.

The proliferation of new parliaments in new countries, and of energized parliaments in former authoritarian systems, has greatly increased scholarly attention to the beginning stages of legislatures in which neither activity level nor any organizational or institutional form have stabilized. “Legislative studies are on the research frontier for those working on new democracies” (Geddes 2002 258). As a review of the early U.S. congresses noted, “the richest treasure trove of data will lie with those legislatures that have most recently experienced democratic transitions” (Wilson 2002 292). There has been an equivalent growth of research in the originating periods of currently stable democratic parliaments (Aydelotte 1971, Thompson and Silbey 1985, Gamm and Huber 2002 331-37).

There remains, however, a sizeable gap between the reality of representative assemblies in authoritarian and hybrid systems on one side, and our knowledge about that reality, on the other (on socialist parliamentarianism, however, see Patzelt / Schirmer 2002 and the references

given there). The relative lack of attention to either executives or representative assemblies in authoritarian systems in the post-World War II period continues in the post-communist period (but see Nelson 1982 and Roman 2004). Legislative selection without competition and legislatures without decisions were, and remain, of little interest to western scholars, while neither third world countries nor authoritarian systems possess the intellectual resources for empirical research. As a result, “the scarcity of useful theories of day-to-day authoritarian politics remains as severe as ever”(Geddes 2002 343-44, 369-70).

There are real world consequences from neglect by western social scientists for the development of the intellectual capital which becomes badly needed whenever authoritarian systems become, or attempt to become, less authoritarian if not democratic. One of the challenges faced by transitional societies, following censorship and suppression of social science inquiry, is to quickly develop the intellectual skills by which they can understand themselves. The European Union’s work with post-communist countries’ universities, the long term American Fulbright program, the Scandinavian program with Baltic universities, have all attempted to provide training and assistance in organizing and conducting research in contemporary politics, including representative assemblies, political parties, elections, executives, and constitutions. IPSA in all fields has participated in this effort, as has the Research Committee of Legislative Specialists through conferences and publications (Longley 1994, Longley and Agh 1997, Longly and Zajc 1998, and Longley, Agh and Zajc 2000).

Two sets of questions and thought about representative assemblies have persisted through time and space. One concerns their interactive relationships with the two components of its external environment, the electorate (however defined, including the intermediary parties, interest groups and mass media) and the chief executive (however selected and empowered, and the associated bureaucratic structures). The second concerns the internal organization of the representative body, through which it interacts with both the electorate and the executive. While these two strands of thought are often phrased in terms of impact, or even power, a broader perspective could be expressed in terms of capacity and institutionalization.

This paper explores institutionalization and evolutionary institutionalism as concepts and approaches to the study of representative assemblies. We anticipate that the theories and concepts identified by parliamentary/ legislative scholars and included here will provide guidance for the analysis of other political institutions in a variety of settings. The focus on parliaments/ legislatures as institutions within a context of constant change and evolution is intended to portray this most important political structure in a fashion consistent with much existing cross national research. An institutional approach also is conducive to sharing theoretical orientations and concepts in a fashion that may be useful for our colleagues who study other political structures—the executive, the courts and various political organizations.

Prior to our discussion of this theory of evolutionary institutionalism, however, is a summary of how political institutions have been defined and conceptualized in the discipline.

Classic Political Institutionalism

Regardless of the country of origin, the study of governmental institutions has a long and honored tradition in political science. Since its emergence as a separate discipline in Europe and the United States during the late 19th century, the description and subsequent analysis of political institutions like representative assemblies, bureaucracies, the courts and executives (and their comparisons across time and countries) has been a prominent concern in the study of politics and constitutional history (see for example, Wilson, 1885; Winslow, 1931; Finer, 1932; & Finer, 1958; with many further references: Rausch 1974 & 1980).

For decades, political scientists “understood” politics in terms of the formal structures and processes identified with the major institutions involved in policy making and implementation — the “machinery of government.” At that time “[t]he focus on institutions was a matter of common sense, an obvious starting point for studying a country and therefore there was no need to justify it. The assumptions and practices in the study of political institutions were taken for granted.” (Rhodes, 1995: 42)

The goal was to describe accurately and systematically the nature of the organizing documents, the governing institutions and the procedures used in order to understand the successes and failures of these political institutional systems in formulating and administering public policies. The method used was descriptive and largely inductive, concentrating on the formal and legal structures but providing a historical and comparative perspective. (See Rhodes, 1995) The focus was on founding documents (*e.g.*, constitutions), laws, organizational structures and how the political system performed. Great success was achieved in describing the nature of political institutions and “how they worked.” As Lowndes noted “Institutionalism *was* political science.” (2002: 90)

A feeling developed, however, that understanding the political world via a concentration on formal institutions and processes alone was insufficient. Reflecting on this approach in U.S. political science, Heinz Eulau noted that

A study of politics which leaves man out of its equations is a rather barren politics. . . . Political science has studied political ideas, values, customs, symbols, institutions, processes and policies without reference to their creators for a long time, but the cost has been high. (1963: 3)

Many critical political concepts like policy and power as well as individual political actors had been largely ignored in the classic institutional tradition. A belief emerged that the research approach needed to be transformed to lead to the development of general explanatory theories, the use of empirical-quantitative data for a rigorous/ analytical treatment of phenomena, and the adoption of a scientific-based methodological approach, as well as an explicit recognition of the individual actor in politics.³

Additional motivation for this concern grew from the research taking place in cognate disciplines like sociology, psychology and economics so that many political scientists began to focus on the roles ascribed to individual actors in politics. By the middle of the 20th Century, the two theoretical orientations of behavioralism and rational choice created an emphasis on the individual political actor and on the assumption that an individual’s political choices and ac-

³ One of the best descriptions of this conviction as manifested in the U.S. is found in Chapter 12, Somit and Tannenhaus, 1967.

tions were initiated autonomously without significant institutional structuring or constraining on individual choice.

This shift resulted in a diminished importance for political institutions in the study of politics and led to a focus on individual actors largely devoid of any role for political institutions. While the two orientations differed regarding what aspect of the individual political actor is important (behavioralism focusing on individual social and psychological attributes as they affect political behavior and rational choice assuming that economic motivations and calculations maximize individual utility-governed political behavior), each argued that the important “political action” took place at the individual level and this was where political analysis must take place. (Peters, 1999)

In describing the “behavioral creed,” Somit and Tanenhaus cited as one distinguishing “behavioralist article of faith” which was especially characteristic of American political science:

Political science should concern itself primarily, if not exclusively, with phenomena which can actually be observed, i.e., with what is done or said. This behavior may be that of individuals and/of political aggregates. The behavioralist deplors the “institutional” approach because it is impossible properly to study institutional behavior other than as manifest in the actions and words of those who carry out institutional functions. (1967: 177-8)

By contrast with the American approach, German legislative role studies always were interested in the interplay between individual role behavior and institutional constraints in particular. The paramount importance of political parties for MPs never could be ignored in parliamentary systems of government and also in PR electoral systems as major constraints on individual actor behavior (see Müller/Saalfeld 1997, Patzelt 2004 and the references given there).

New (Neo-) Institutionalism

As behaviorally-oriented research progressed in the U.S., several practitioners discovered that the explanations being offered for political outcomes were inadequate—something was missing. Typical of this sentiment were the statements of March and Olsen, “. . . What we observe in the world is inconsistent with the ways in which contemporary theories [behavioral and rational choice] ask us to talk.” (1984: 747, see also Evans, Rueschmeyer & Skcopol, 1985)

Suggestions began to appear indicating that perhaps political institutions were important and that their role in explaining politics should be re-examined; however this movement was not a simple “reversion” back to the old or classic institutionalism. Rather, a “new-institutionalism” emerged in the 1980s, with several variations each of which provided a somewhat different theoretical perspective compatible with and complementary toward both behavioralism and rational choice.

The effect of this re-introduction was to view institutional arrangements (*e.g.*, agenda powers of legislative committees, legislative rules & procedures, committee jurisdictions, veto rights as well as informal norms and standards) as “structuring” the settings in which individual-level, rational actions take place. The result was a more multi-faceted and inclusive approach to the study of politics that recognizes the importance of both individual- and institutional- level factors in explaining political phenomena. (See March & Olsen, 1984; Peters, 1999; Lowndes, 2002)

In describing how the discipline responded to this “re-introduction” of political institutions into the explanation of political phenomena, Terry Moe noted that “Suddenly, institutions were where the action was, and everyone wanted to be counted as an institutionalist.” (1991: 115) In recounting these “new” or neo-institutional approaches to studying politics, Peters identified four distinguishing characteristics:

- The institution is a structural feature in society or politics, being formal as well as informal in nature, that includes many individuals within and affecting it so that groups of persons are involved in some sort of patterned interactions;

- The institution exists with some level of stability over time;
- The institution will, in some way or other, affect the behavior of individuals while individuals will also affect institutions so that there is meaningful interaction between institutions and individuals; and,
- The institution will display, among its members, some type and level of shared values and meaning. (1999: 18-19)

Regarding the affinity between rational choice and institutions, Peters noted:

Institutions are conceptualized [in rational choice] as collections of rules and incentives that establish the conditions for bounded rationality, and therefore establish a ‘political space’ within which many interdependent political actors can function. Thus, in these models, the individual politician is expected to maneuver to maximize personal utilities, but his or her options are inherently constrained because they are operating within the rule set of one or more institutions. Thus . . . there are clear actors contained in the picture, rather than just a set of rules and norms. (1999: 44)

In describing the role of institutional factors within a rational choice perspective on legislative decision making, Shepsle stated that the theoretical work on social choice models needed to include institutional arrangements as “endogenous” factors.

In this paper institutional properties are given more prominence. In particular, I focus on three aspects of organization: (1) a division-of-labor arrangement called a *committee system*; (2) a specialization-of-labor arrangement called a *jurisdictional arrangement*; and (3) a monitoring mechanism by which a parent organization constrains the autonomy of its subunits called an *amendment control rule*. . . . The principal thrust of this paper is a demonstration of the ways institutional arrangements may conspire with the preferences of individuals to produce structure-induced equilibrium. (1979: 27)

Thus, organizational/structures arrangements of political institutions were viewed as important elements for political decision making in the explanatory models postulated by rational choice theorists.

This change meant that political institutions were no longer viewed only in terms of formal powers and relationships, as in the “old institutionalism”, but rather as a set of rules channeling and constraining what individual political actors can do. This focus on rules, however, is not limited to the formal, written constraints, but, rather includes the informal norms and conventions that are very much a part of institutional life and affect individual behavior.

While the stability of institutions is an important attribute in new institutionalism, institutions are viewed more as extant processes, subject to change and evolution rather than as static structures resisting change. The institution is seen as responsive to the needs of individuals and to functional requirements stemming from its environments.

Further, rather than having an inherent normative commitment to “good government” identified with “old institutionalism”, the new perspective seeks a more value-neutral perspective studies the ways in which political institutions embody and form social and political values. Institutional values as an institution’s ‘guiding idea’ or ‘guiding principle’ (on this concept by Maurice Hauriou, see Broderick 1970).

While the old institutionalism focused on the totality of the institution for analysis and comparison, the new also identifies various components that can be disaggregated and studied separately.

New institutionalism sees political institutions as existing within (‘embedded’) and dependent on particular contexts rather than being independent entities, able to operate without reference to time and location considerations. As a consequence, while there is an obvious legacy and carryover from the old institutionalism, there also is a new and altered conceptualization of political institutions. (Lowndes, 2002) The common denominator of these observations is systems theory.

New institutionalism actually includes a variety of approaches for considering political institutional phenomena based to some extent on the theoretical or subject matter orientation taken. Peters (1999) identifies six different neo-institutional approaches common within political science, each with its own rich literature and findings—Normative Institutionalism, Rational Choice Institutionalism, Historical Institutionalism, Empirical Institutionalism, International Institutionalism and Societal Institutionalism. In addition, other social science disciplines

including economics, sociology, population ecology⁴ and evolutionary economics also have theoretical and empirical approaches to institutional research.

What is then the most fruitful way to think/talk about institutions? As Patterson has pointed out to students of representative assemblies (and perhaps also courts and cabinets), political institutions are more than regularized patterns of behavior, reflecting formal and informal rules; rather they are separate entities having distinguishing properties of their own amenable to analysis. In particular, institutions exist and are composed of people with their own attributes and preferences that affect the organization and its activities; at the same time, institutions have characteristics of their own distinct from the individuals—separately or in combination—comprising them; institutions have structural properties which organize interactions as well as relationships among individuals; and, organizations provide a context within which goal directed activity takes place. (Patterson, 1995, 13)

Institutionalism, however, is not generally viewed as an “explanatory theory” utilized to account for political phenomena. It is probably better understood as an “organizing perspective” (Gamble, 1990: 405), or an approach to understanding politics and the evolution of political systems. An institutional approach suggests a wide range of questions about representative assemblies, including questions, among others, of origins and changes through time, and of similarities and divergences among assemblies, both through time and across countries.

Its contributions are in the guidance it provides researchers regarding the research questions to be answered as well as in the structuring it provides regarding “where to look” for answers to

⁴ Population ecology, as developed by Hannan/Freeman 1977 and Aldrich/McKelvey 1983, is an early application of social evolution theory in the field of economics. Having no access to the work by Riedl 1978, these authors unfortunately followed an old ‘metaphorical tradition’ and treated institutions as though they were organisms or ‘individuals at large’. Therefore they end up with implausible, misleading, or not really useful results. Different from what these authors thought, institutions have, however, their ‘biological parallel’ in *species*, not in individuals. Individuals are – as detected by Dawkins; see below – only something like ‘vehicles’ of the cultural patterns out of which institutions are (re-) produced in the processes of social reality construction. Hence individuals come into institutions and are socialized into ‘competent members’ of the ‘group’ supporting an institution; subsequently they maintain this institution, and they leave it one day – usually after having transferred their knowledge and skills to their successors, that is, those ‘memes’ formerly conveyed to them.

these questions. Multiple alternative explanatory theories are associated with institutionalism, but institutionalism itself should not be treated as a single theory.

The renewed importance for the role of institutions in the study of politics and decision making has impacted greatly the study of parliaments and legislatures. The amount of research evaluating the role of representative assemblies (for example, rules, constraints and understandings) as well as the findings is impressive. Further, its impact on the *comparative* study of political systems and their components as well as on *across time* (diachronic) change and evolution has reinforced new research themes and approaches within the discipline.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND EVOLUTIONARY INSTITUTIONALISM

One of the persistent questions in the study of political institutions relates to how political organizations evolve and develop after their formation. Political scientists and sociologists have used the concept “institutionalization” to characterize the transformation of fledgling, emerging organizations into mature, stable ongoing institutions having form, values, norms and boundaries. S. N. Eisenstadt, writing in 1964 about the process of change and evolution on societal and political structures and organizations, noted:

The process of institutionalization is the organization of a societally prescribed system of differentiated behavior [associated with the institution] oriented to the solution of certain problems inherent in a major area of social life . . .

The organization of such systems of behavior involves the creation and definition of norms to regulate the major units of social behavior and organization, criteria according to which the flow of resources is regulated between such units, and sanctions to ensure that such norms are upheld. All these involve the maintenance of the specific boundaries of the system, *i.e.*, the maintenance of the units that constitute it, of its relations with outside systems, and of the norms that delineate its specific characteristics. (1964: 235–6)

The central means to do so is an institution's guiding idea or a set of – sometimes competing – guiding ideas of an institution. This guiding idea or these guiding principles define which cultural or behavioral patterns 'belong' to an institution and which others to the institution's environment. In the same way, they define which cultural or behavioral patterns are either 'meaningful' for / within an institution or are merely 'contingent', 'coincidental' by chance, or simply irrelevant. In performing as decision making centers in society, these institutions seek to maintain values or to establish norms that help to regularize and regulate activities associated with generating relevant activities and problem solving in their area of responsibility. In addition, institutionalization is seen as assuming different levels or forms depending on the stage to which the evolution of the institution has progressed, and it is definitively not viewed as irreversible. On the contrary, institutions can "erode" to a level of less differentiation from society, of greater value and norm ambiguity, of lower levels of interaction, and of less clarity of roles which individuals play. In this way, this concept of institutionalization is much more complex than its influential rival suggested by Polsby (1968).

But what does the wide-spread formula that institutions 'evolve' and undergo 'institutional evolution' really mean? Is the notion of evolution simply a metaphor borrowed from biology? Or is it a trivial counter-notion to the concept of 'revolution', meaning no more than simply 'incremental change' in the development of an institution? Is evolution always a process 'toward greater ...', be it capacity, professionalization, or institutional power in general?

How does one handle the processes of (institutional) 'evolution into an impasse', as in the case of the French National Assembly of the IV Republic? How about (institutional) 'evolution into a regulative catastrophe', as the German Reichstag during the Weimar Republic? How can we analytically grasp how changing institutions interact with such changing environments that – at least in part – are themselves shaped by the impact of evolving institutions? And what can be learned from such insights regarding institutional capacity building, institutional learning, and institutional reform? (cf. Demuth 2007)

The perspective of Evolutionary Institutionalism (see Patzelt 2007, Lempp 2007) attempts to respond to such questions. This recently developed approach builds on a broad body

of research around the phenomena of social, cultural and biological evolution, and tries to integrate historical research on the development of institutions with systematic social science theory-building. At its core lies the observation that all processes of structural development work in the same way while being shaped by the interplay of contingent events and path-dependent constraints (on the biological application of this theory see Riedl 1978, on its application in institutional research see the contributions in Patzelt 2007).

The kernels of that theory can be summed up in seven major components:

- (1) Every system, however elementary and simple, is in continuous exchange with its environment. A representative assembly exhibits this, for example, by recruiting new members from outside via free elections, or by legislation and responsive reaction to its outcome. As long as a system fulfils instrumental or, at least symbolic functions for its environment, it will get resources in return. Functions are ‘services’ rendered to the surrounding environment. They come into being, together with structures fulfilling them, at the system’s juncture with the environment. For instance, along with the role of a monarch’s strong prime minister, the parliamentary function emerged of supporting (and subsequently of overthrowing or even creating) a cabinet. By the same token, a parliament – like the Reichstag of Germany’s Weimar Republic – will lose public trust as its vital resource, when it continuously fails to provide cabinet stability.
- (2) The component elements out of which a system or institution is made, like members of a parliament, are in a continuous process of change. Therefore the established order among the elements of a system, and hence its structure, needs continuous transferral to new elements of the system. In a parliament, e.g., its culture of rules and procedures needs to be conveyed to each new generation of members if the established institutional form of this parliament is to be reproduced among a new generation of its members.⁵
- (3) In this process of transferring order (norms, routines, knowledge, values ...) distortion or ‘errors’ will occur, created – among other reasons – by defects of socialization, crea-

⁵ It should be noted that, in Evolutionary Institutionalism, generations are not groups or types of institutions that follow each other but cohorts of institution members that enter an existing institution, maintain and modify it, and leave it some day.

tive misunderstandings or simply by the desire to be different from one's predecessors.⁶ In this way, variation is created within the reconstructed order, and new structural possibilities are offered for the system. Examples include cases where new political generations, formed by new political or cultural events, will – after arrival in a legislature – not accept or practice the established rules in the same way as did the preceding generation of legislators. Changing parliamentary manners or reforms will be a consequence.

- (4) There are two sets of 'selecting instances' affecting which variations will have a chance of retention and which will not. Those retained will – so to speak – create a 'mutation' within the 'institutional form' having subsequent effects:

a. First, *internal selection factors* like established standing orders affect acceptance of variations. A variation will have greater chances to be retained if it fits with the existing structure of the system. In this way, new layers are put on top of an existing structure, or new links are created between existing elements of the system. For instance will radical changes of an assembly's standing orders, even if voted for by a vast majority, not gain effectiveness in real legislative life, or will in practice be used according to hitherto established procedures. In turn, successfully implemented changes of an assembly's standing rules will usually fit with the existing basic structure of that assembly and its rules, thereby creating variation only in details. Although these will usually not drastically transform the current legislature, they will sometimes open quite new, and in hindsight even surprising, paths of development for the future.

b. *Second, external selection factors* like the functional requirement of parliamentary support for a cabinet will also affect variation adoption. Those variations

⁶ To give some examples: Parliamentary freshmen may erroneously interpret what is meant by experienced MPs, or they may prefer to see things differently from how their 'established colleagues' see them. Also, newcomers may simply want to think, talk and behave in new and different ways or experienced MPs may advise newcomers to handle certain things differently from how they were handled in the past. Finally, neglect by established MPs toward large numbers of newcomers, or giving other duties priority in the latter's formative period, may lead to 'mislearning' or 'unlearning' of well known patterns of thought and behaviour; etc. ... All of that will lead to (attempted) changes in the practiced institutional form of the parliament.

that fit with old or new functional requirements from the system's environment will have greater chances to be retained and to continue as 'mutations'. A good case in point is the emergence of the role of a strong prime minister at the beginning of England's 18th century: George I, as the first king from a new and non-English dynasty, could benefit from a self-assured politician like Walpole and his practices that opened, via the mechanisms of 'government by corruption', the path towards the parliamentary system of government.

- (5) By contingent variation in the process of transferring systemic or institutional order to a new generation of system elements or institution members, a system or an institution can adapt to changes in its environment. In the same way, it can open quite new paths of development with new functions in the system which, in turn, provide new resources for it.
- 6) However, these processes of development are shaped by a double 'hierarchy' (or 'asymmetry') in the 'architecture' and working of a system:
 - a. Structure: In every (complex) system or institution, there are some basic structures, or underlying layers of elements, that carry other ('higher') layers as their 'burdens'. That means that the 'upper parts' of a system, the party structure of a legislature for example, is dependent on 'lower parts' of the system, like the constitutional guarantee for a multi-party system. As a first of two consequences, variation in the higher layers of this architecture (e.g., emergence of a new party in parliament) has greater chances to fit with the rest of the system than would variation in its basic structure (like growing uneasiness with a given multi-party system or even popular calls for 'strong authoritarian leadership'). As a second consequence, variation in the higher layers of a system or of an 'institutional form', will have greater chances to pass through internal selection processes than variation in the lower or more basic layers of the system. This mechanism is the central reason for path-dependent processes (sometimes called 'structural inertia') that continue even during changing challenges from a system's environment.

- b. Function: In every complex system or institution, there are some basic functions that need to be executed if other, more dependent functions shall be properly performed. A parliamentary majority, for instance, can fulfil the function of carrying a stable cabinet only as long as it is able to create political cohesion within itself. Further, a parliament's function of transferring legitimacy to a cabinet can work only if previously the parties' function has been fulfilled to engage in fair, or at least legal, elections. Thus, any system (or institution) can be seen as a bundle of 'function chains.' Variation in the 'far ends' of such function chains have considerably greater chances to pass through external selection processes, and this fact leads to 'functional inertia'. We observe, for instance, in many parliaments great flexibility of previously highly antagonistic party groups when it comes to forging an (albeit not overt) coalition if a cabinet is in need of a formal vote of confidence, thus finding 'functional imperatives' at work at the end of a function chain. In turn, we observe in many legislatures great party cohesion even though there may be no need for supporting a cabinet. Here, the basic parliamentary function of creating profit-promising team spirit is at work.
- (7) Functional requirements for a system may change in a very contingent way, because they depend very much on the system's environment and its many, often-times turbulent, changes. As a consequence, asymmetry of function chains will not contribute to path-dependent development to the same extent as do structural constraints. But since functions are always fulfilled by structures, there are highly important interaction effects between internal and external selection factors and between the differently effective asymmetries in structural layers and function chains. A good case in point is the development the People's Chamber of the German Democratic Republic. This assembly maintained many structural elements of bourgeois parliamentarianism (like parliamentary party groups and committees) even though there was no functional need for them in a socialist minimal parliament. The leadership of the People's Chamber made sure that virtually no use was made of the functional possibilities of that retained structure. But new leadership groups simply 'enabled' the previously suppressed functions of those same structures as soon as the communist party's claim for political

leadership ended and new functional requirements emerged between November 1989 and July 1990 (see Schirmer 2005). In this way, the basic asymmetry of functional chains becomes apparent: Variations at the far ends of ‘function chains’ need not to be detrimental for the overall ‘functional structure’ of a system or institution, but variation in the basic functions (here: end of the rubber-stamp function) necessarily is.

This double hierarchy of ‘structural layering’ (with a hierarchy of structural burdens) and of ‘function chains’ (with a hierarchy of functional burdens) has an important effect on the development of every complex system or institution: Not all contingent variations of structures and functions can have equal chances to be retained and thus to lead to ‘mutations’ of an institutional form. Instead, certain paths of system development are always more probable than others, and this is why we see so many ‘directed processes’ whenever we look at institutional history.

But there is no need to refer to teleological or historicist reasoning. No ‘master plan’ of history nor any ‘unfolding blueprint’ brings order into such processes, but simply there is an uneven probability distribution for the retention of variation results. And since there is no guarantee that future contingent changes in a system’s environment will really be matched by future fit of contingent variation in that system’s development, it is equally easy to explain impasses of system development with subsequent system collapse.

By the same token, changes in a system’s environment may drastically alter the probability distribution for the retention of contingent changes of every structural or functional element of that system. What yesterday would have been detrimental for fulfilling the system’s functions in its environment, can tomorrow open up new functions (with a gain of new resources in return), simply because the functional requirements of the system’s environment have changed. Then new structures are built over old ones (like prime ministerial government over the monarch’s personal ruling in Britain), or old structures are converted – under impact of different functional requirements – to new purposes (like the position achieved by the English crown in the late 18th century into the institution of the US-American presidency).

In the same way, systems may preserve much of their structural architecture, although that architecture has been modified at so many points over time that it may now work quite differently - in spite of the fact that it looks very much like in earlier times. (The German Bundesrat of the Federal Republic, in comparison with the Bundesrat of Imperial Germany, is a good example.) And one can, of course, try to transfer a structural solution for a functional problem from one setting to a quite different one – with satisfying results like in the case of implementing responsible party government in post-Nazi Germany, and with less satisfying results like in the case of implementing Westminster parliamentarianism in Britain’s African colonies.

Some of the ‘factors’ that contribute to a parliament’s ‘capacity’ or power (cf. Patzelt et al. 2005) seem in fact to work like ‘blueprints’ for institutional engineering: Tried out in one parliament, other emerging parliaments may use them easily and be able to avoid their own processes of solution seeking via trial-and-error. Other ‘factors’, however, seem not to ‘travel’ as well, being rather home-grown preconditions for parliamentary capacity rather than importable resources.⁷

But as far as ‘institutional elements’ do travel or are directly transmitted from one generation of institutional actors to the next generation or from one setting to another, the question becomes both intellectually exciting and practically relevant of how the manifold instances of an institutional form, like those of a parliament or of a legislature, are linked together at all. This question includes two sub-questions: (a) How is any contemporary parliament individually connected with its various ‘genealogical’ predecessors – for instance the German Bundestag with the Reichstag of the Weimar Republic and of Imperial Germany respectively, with the Bundestag of 19th century’s German Federation, and with the Imperial Estates of the Holy Roman Empire? (b) How are representative assemblies linked together across different areas and different times at all? Have, for instance, the ecclesiastic councils – from the synods of the old Christian church to the general chapters of religious orders – anything to do with parliaments, and if so, how and why? Or how did any specific element of British parliamentarianism

⁷ The cultural acceptance of party competition in a given society may be an instructive example: It cannot be ‘imported’ or be created in a voluntaristic way, but is nevertheless the precondition of powerful parliamentarianism in contemporary political systems.

‘travel’ to which other part of the world, and with what variations and consequences? Those are typical empirical research questions of Evolutionary Institutionalism, and they lead to – hopefully inspiring – cross-national and cross-historical comparative research (see Patzelt 2007a).

Historical institutionalism, as elaborated in Thelen 2002, uses concepts like ‘institutional layering’, ‘institutional conversion’, ‘institutional drift’ or ‘institutional displacement’ to grasp the processes described above. Evolutionary Institutionalism gives precise explanations, why institutional history unfolds exactly in these ways. It can do so, because its theory covers all kinds of structural evolution processes.⁸ Its basis has been created in the analysis of biological evolution processes. In fact, the preceding paragraphs did no more than to rephrase the central arguments of the ‘systems theory of evolution’ formulated by the Vienna zoologist Rupert Riedl (1978) three decades ago.⁹ The important link between biological evolution theory and the many time-honored attempts toward a ‘theory of history’ was, however, offered by Richard Dawkins (1989). He discovered that organisms, in addition to whatever else they may be, are also (and very consequentially) *vehicles* for genes. From that he concluded that the core of evolution is not the history of organisms, but the history of genes as ‘blueprints’ for the construction, transfer and reproduction of biological structures.

⁸ On the challenging test case of the co-evolution of European music and European musical notation see Patzelt 2008.

⁹ This theory goes far beyond the ‘synthetic theory of evolution’, the actual dominant paradigm of evolution biology. That theory is ‘synthetic’ insofar as it combines Darwin’s selection theorems with the more recent insights into the DNS-based genetic replication processes. Riedl, however, integrated into the theory of evolution all the interactions between an evolving organism or species, respectively, and its environment. Doing so, he (re-)opened evolution theory for the consequential facts of ‘recursive causation’ and made sure that the nexus between a species’ impact on its environment and the odds for or against specific changes of the form of this species was no longer neglected. These are modeled as different ‘probability densities’ for the selection success of different mutations. As a result, Riedl’s theory gives a straightforward explanation of how in evolution processes ‘path dependency’ comes into being and works, and how it interacts with contingency. This theory can demonstrate that even pure chance ends up with ordered probabilities, thereby giving evolution – without be ‘determined’ – clear direction and irreversibility. This fits nicely with what is known on cultural, social, economic and political history and makes Riedl’s theory highly attractive for attempts to explain exactly the same features of contingent path dependency etc. in institutional history. For this purpose, a non-reductionist interface has to be created between biological and institutional evolution theory. In Evolutionary Institutionalism this has been achieved by simply replacing the genetic theory of biological structure building in Riedl’s theory by the memetic theory of institutional structure building, as suggested by Richard Dawkins (1989) and Susan Blackmore (1999). As a result, a quite complex theory of institutional evolution emerged, drawing fully on the insights gained by evolutionary biology, but avoiding any biological bias or trend towards reductionism. From this theory, a toolset can be derived for the analysis of ‘genealogical relations’ between institutions and for the interaction processes between ‘conveyed institutional forms’ and ‘impacting environmental factors’; see Patzelt 2007a).

At the end of his influential book on ‘The Selfish Gene’, Dawkins (1989) hypothesized that similar ‘blueprints’ would exist in the world of social and cultural structures, and that they would basically work like genes, in the processes of production, transfer, and evolution of social or cultural structures. These ‘blueprints’ he called ‘memes’.¹⁰ Of course, social scientists have known such ‘memes’ as ‘cultural patterns’, ‘thought figures’, or ‘patterns of behavior’, and they have carefully studied how these can be conveyed from one person, or one generation, to another, and what distortion processes may occur in such transfer processes (‘enculturation’, ‘socialization’, ‘proselytizing’ etc.).¹¹ Social scientists have also known for a long time that institutions are – in Dawkins’ words – powerful and highly attractive vehicles for the ‘cultural patterns’ out of which they are (re-) produced, which they promote (like religious faith in the case of churches and political faith in the case of parties), and on which they are based as their ‘guiding ideas’ (like representation, deliberation and decision-making in the case of legislatures and parliaments). As a result, the processes of how cultural and social structures are created and conveyed, with what means, and by whom, have been well known among social and cultural scientists long before biology disclosed how biological structures are created, transmitted and reproduced in the 20th century. Dawkins, therefore, addressed – albeit unknowingly – well developed research fields when he suggested application of this theory to the transfer and the reproduction of cultural and social structures in the same way that was found so useful in the analysis of the transfer and reproduction of biological structure.

Now we can benefit from all these approaches. A three-fold advantage is offered, in particular, by exploring interconnections between the recently emerging field of memetics and well-established social science research like legislative studies. First, the generic notion of a ‘meme’, meaning a ‘cultural pattern’ or a ‘bit of skills’ that is used as a resource of cultural and social reality construction, widens our analytic perspectives, makes possible comparisons of phenomena so far treated as ‘too different for comparison’, and allows thereby new insights or

¹⁰ When Susan Blackmore(1999) elaborated Dawkins’ theory sketch on memes, she added a large variety of illustrative materials from social and cultural life to Dawkins’ ideas and enriched them by – in particular: psychological – theories from her field of training. Social and cultural scientists – from art history via microsociology and communication studies towards political science – will find many inspiring ‘interfaces’ between Blackmore’s and their own work.

¹¹ Many branches of microsociology (like ethnomethodology or symbolic interactionism) have used such or similar concepts in order to analyze how social reality along with its institutions is constructed in everyday life; see – with further references – Patzelt 1998).

pattern recognition ('Gestalterkenntnis'). Second, thinking about the processes of transferring and reproducing social structures along the terms of 'memes' and their 'vehicles', allows us to use evolution theory to understand and to explain institutional development as demonstrated above. Third, the categories of Evolutionary Institutionalism make it possible to measure varying degrees of institutionalization and to make them comparable across different instances of an institution. This is done along the two dimensions of 'retention of achieved properties' and of 'capacity of adaptation to new challenges' (cf. Demuth 2007a). Retention of achieved properties may be measured by the following indicators: satisfaction with the institution's efficacy (on part of institutional actors and their addressees); acceptance of the institution's normative and factual claims; existence of and degree of acceptance for competing claims of other institutions; degree of fixation of the institutional form; practical performance of the institution; balance of institutional transaction cost ('costs for repression of variations' vs. 'returns from functioning'). Capacity of adaptation is measured with those indicators: frequency and success of adaptive processes in the past; existence and manoeuvrability of learning structures; kinds, degrees and causes of institutional fitness gaps. In this way, Evolutionary Institutionalisms can also be connected with the work by Samuel Huntington (1965). He suggested using the notion of institutionalization for explaining change in levels of political stability. In describing how varying levels of institutionalization differentiated political systems including components thereof, Huntington noted:

Institutions are stable, valued, recurring patterns of behavior. Organizations and procedures vary in their degree of institutionalization. . . . Institutionalization is the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability. The level of institutionalization of any political system can be identified by the adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence of its organizations and procedures. So also, the level of institutionalization of any particular organization or procedure can be measured by its adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence. If these criteria can be identified and measured, political systems can be compared in terms of their levels of institutionalization. (1965: 394)

Specifically his notion that, using empirical data, one could place political and societal institutions along a continuum based on the degree to which ". . . they exhibited adaptability versus rigidity, complexity versus simplicity, autonomy versus subordination and, finally, coherence versus disunity" (Blyth, 2002: 297 – 8) has inspired this part of Evolutionary Institutionalism.

An Outline and Examples of Needed Research

1. A Map for Legislative Research

As in other disciplines, there are two branches of research in the field of legislative studies: ‘applied research’, serving practical needs beyond academic interests, and ‘basic research’, that is driven by intra-discipline motivations and fashions.

With applied research, legislative specialists have the double task of documenting and giving advice. Because parliaments are ever changing institutions, documentation is a never ending process and demanding when no special institutions for that purpose are established. Documentation is demanding in particular, where data bases for recently emerging parliaments have to be created at all. In addition to the collection of legal documents like constitutions, electoral laws, standing orders etc., such data bases should include data on MPs and their staff during their ‘parliamentary life cycle’ on the one side, and data on a parliament’s institutional functions on the other. As to data on MPs and their staff, the best possible documentation would encompass personal background information; candidate recruitment and selection; campaigning; legislative socialization and professionalization; parliamentary roles and parliamentary behaviour (‘hill style’); legislative careers; MPs’ networking both on their fields of legislative specialization (interest groups, executive branch of government, i.e. the ‘iron triangle’, and media) and back in their voting districts (‘home style’); de-recruitment and post-parliamentary careers; and parliamentary infrastructure (staff, offices, further resources; personal pay ...). Documentation of parliamentary functions would comprise data and findings on legislation and on control of the executive branch of government, both constituting the field of legislative-executive relations, on coalition formation and cabinet support in the case of parliamentary systems of government, and on representation in particular, that is, on practiced parliamentary responsiveness and leadership.

Giving advice – both in domestic politics and in parliamentary training projects – relies on historically recorded experience with well established legislatures and on research regarding

viable legislative structures and their logic of functioning. Concerning that, there is competition between different theories of legislative behaviour and functioning that claim to explain, to predict and – sometimes – even to advise. But there are not enough efforts to compare and to verify or falsify these theories beyond partial tests, to choose among competing theories, and to integrate basically complementary theories or compatible elements thereof. But since there is nothing ‘more practical’ than a good theory, legislative research should invest more effort into such work on theory comparison, testing, and integrating. Doing so, it should cover the functional logic and the working patterns of the structures for parliamentary leadership, deliberation, and decision-making; in addition, it should take a special look at parliamentary party groups, their ever problematic cohesion, and the various forms of ‘parliamentary opposition’. Moreover, it should include the analysis of those time structures that give order and coherence to parliamentary activities; and in particular it should focus on the institutional mechanisms¹² by which a legislature operates effectively. Finally, the specific functions and effects of staff (and its organizational patterns) and of think tanks etc. working for parliaments and their members should be studied.

On the basis of reliable documentation, basic research is expected to generate those insights on which scientifically and practically useful theories can be based. Such research will be inspired by importing theories from other fields of social and social-psychological research, and it will come to generalizing insights in particular by doing extended comparisons that include both contemporary and historical representative assemblies. In all of these respects, legislative studies demonstrate considerable possibilities for growth. It is true that economic theories have been widely used in form of rational choice models of legislative processes, sociological theories in form of role theory or of delegation theory, and social-psychological theories in the studies of political motivation and ambition. More recently, some varieties of advanced institutional theories have been included as well. But theories of (parliamentary) knowledge structures, belief systems and – on basis of that – of legislative ‘reality work’ are still not in widespread use. And since there is no well-developed common theoretical background characteriz-

¹² An ‘institutional mechanism’ is a chain of actions that can be used intentionally and reliably. Such chains of action emerge from the interplay of institutional *positions* (endowed with resources), formal and informal *rules* connecting these positions, and *interests* of institutional actors. They are typically used to fulfil an institutions functions, e.g. in form of institutional mechanisms for holding office holders accountable.

ing legislative research, comparative legislative research also has no common theoretical framework either. As a result, much comparative work is devoted more to ‘parallel description’ of different cases than to striving for generalizing theoretical insights based on comprehensive data. This, in turn, is consequential for the social integration of the field of legislative studies: Except for the field of rational choice approaches, cooperative work is rather based on common interest for cases than for theoretical questions, approaches, and insights. As a consequence, small n-studies – using either most similar-designs or most-dissimilar designs – prevail over large n-studies, in particular including historical cases, because sampling follows personal expertise for particular cases rather than the data requirements of overarching theoretical questions. The result is well-established scholarly research covering modern and mostly democratic legislatures, but much less knowledge on the general institutional type of a – more or less – representative assembly. Noteworthy regarding these limitations is an absence of understanding regarding the general logic of functioning, and on how it can be implemented into quite different political systems, including authoritarian regimes. This, however, limits our possibilities to give practically important advice and does harm to the applied relevance of legislative studies. On balance, much more comparative efforts seem desirable. As to the methodological problems that may dissuade researchers from genuinely theory-driven comparisons, the approach of qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) as developed by Charles Ragin (1987), should open new research possibilities.

Independent from its form as a comparative study or a single-case study, basic research on legislatures and parliaments should be systematically developed on three fields. The first encompasses the processes and practices in which a parliament is socially constructed and might therefore be labeled ‘construction analysis’. Here the (manifold) ‘sociologies of reality construction in everyday life’ will prove to be useful. On the second field, basic research on parliaments and legislatures would deal with how representative institutions evolve in both contingent and path-dependent processes during which they interact with changing environments that are, at least partially, co-influenced by a parliament’s activity. Evolutionary Institutionalism might be a candidate to guide such research. It should be noted, that evolutionary approaches offer quite new possibilities for both cross-historical and cross-cultural comparisons as well. In particular two types of ‘family resemblances’ can be easily distinguished: similar

elements or features of various legislative institutions may go back to common history or to ‘institutional export/import’, what is called a ‘homology’, or they may go back to adaptation of institutional elements of different origin to similar conditions in the political environment (type of regime, electoral system, policy challenges ...), what is called an ‘analogy’. Doing systematic comparative research built on such precise definitions of ‘analogous similarity’ and of ‘homologous similarity’ would disclose the manifold ‘kinship relations’ between historical and contemporary legislative institutions and contribute to a thorough understanding of institutional development and dispersion. In this context, the large variety of ‘second chambers’, that historically have often been the ‘first’ chambers, can be dealt with in line with those more or less elected assemblies that are the usual object of legislative research.

On the third field, the causes of any representative assembly’s features and characteristics are researched in a systematic way. The research goal is ‘pattern recognition’ (‘Gestalterkenntnis’), and therefore much more is required than the understanding of any particular case, and much less than developing a ‘general theory’. For even more than only heuristic purposes such research can be organized along Aristotle’s four categories of causation (see Bastit 2002). For each natural, social or cultural phenomenon, he suggested to look at its ‘matter cause’ (causa materialis), ‘power cause’ (causa efficiens), ‘purpose cause’ (causa finalis), and ‘form cause’ (causa formalis). In the case of parliaments, such research would include the following topics.

When looking at parliaments’ *matter causes* (causa materialis), we should study – on the one side – the personality, the biographical and social background of parliamentary actors along with their socialisation experiences. Research guiding theories and approaches would be those of ‘political personality’, social background analysis, political socialization etc. On the other side, research on parliamentary matter causes would include the resources of parliamentary reality construction (role building, institutionalization ...), such as stocks of parliamentary knowledge, interpretive schemes, shared values, known or applied formal and informal rules etc. Research guiding theories would comprise theories of social construction of reality, of cultural sociology, and of memetics.

Research of parliaments' *power causes* (*causa efficiens*) would equally unfold in two branches. The first encompasses motivations like (progressive) ambition, incentives for running or not running. Source theories and approaches for this research would be, e.g., theories of (progressive) political ambition or demand/supply-theories of political recruitment. The second branch comprises tactical considerations and rational choices of legislative actors. Rational choice models and delegation theory are important theoretical approaches in this field. They should, however, be mirrored by reconstructions of tactical everyday reasoning of parliamentary actors.

Studies of parliaments' *purpose causes* (*causa finalis*) would, on the one side, address the guiding principles and regulative ideas of parliaments: What purpose (e.g. in terms of representation or control of government) does a particular parliament serve? On what convictions are the operations of a given parliament based? Here, relevant theories and approaches include the historiography of parliamentary ideas, institutional analysis and evolutionary institutionalism. On the other side, the concrete way in which such 'guiding ideas' work out in practice are analyzed. This means in particular analyzing role orientations and the role behaviour of parliamentary actors, inspired by the both classical parliamentary role analysis (but never limited to role orientations or even focussed on such misleading concepts like trustee, politico, delegate) and by Fenno's studies of 'home style' and 'hill style'.

Research on the *form causes* of parliaments (*causa formalis*) would focus, first, on the concrete social structures in parliaments: committees, task forces, leadership structures etc. Guiding theories and approaches would include traditional institutionalism as well as the information theory of legislative structures or veto-player theory. Second, basic types of parliaments, studied as 'institutional forms' shaped by the type of the surrounding political system. In this way, research on 'minimal legislatures', as they exist in authoritarian regimes, would be easily aligned with well-established research on the assemblies in presidential, semi-presidential, or parliamentary systems of government. Sample theories and approaches would here include regime analysis or classical constitutional history.

2. **An Example for Well Developed Parliamentary Research: Legislative Evolution as Legislative Capacity Building**

As an illustration regarding one extensive and relatively mature line of research regarding institutional change in representative assemblies offering insights regarding evolutionary institutionalism, we offer a brief overview of legislative professionalism and professionalization studies. This research seeks to explain the effects of institutional change by studying systematically how representative assemblies alter their structures, processes and people in order to enhance their capacity to perform their prescribed roles and functions.

In 1975, H. Douglas Price wrote about changes in U.S. legislative bodies at both the national and regional levels, characterizing their evolution as resulting in more “professional” representative assemblies. In explaining this “professionalization” process, Price described the transformation both in terms of individual legislators as well as the institutions themselves. Individual factors such as membership turnover and stability, member’s time commitment (part-versus full-time) and legislative service becoming a “career” were the differentiating factors for a professionalized legislature at the member level. Similarly, organizational structure and process factors like a reduced influence disparity among members, enhanced capability vis-à-vis the executive, greater autonomy from outside influence, and strengthened legislative committees were also identified with professionalization at the institutional level.

This notion of professionalization was built in part on the concept of institutionalization identified with Polsby (1968 and 1975), but differences were hypothesized to exist. Peverill Squire explored this difference through an examination of the California State Assembly and Congress. “I argue that Professionalization and Institutionalization are distinct but linked concepts and that each is driven by the main career goals of the membership. Thus, it is likely that professionalization will lead to institutionalization, at least along some dimensions.” (Emphasis added, Squire, 1992b: 1027) Squire continued, noting that a professionalized legislature has “. . . higher member remuneration levels, staff support and facilities, and service time demands. Legislatures deemed professional are those which meet in unlimited sessions, pay their members well and provide superior staff resources and facilities. Essentially, such a body offers po-

tential and current members incentives sufficient to consider service as a career.” (1992b: 1028) As representative assemblies professionalize, the members tend to re-shape the organization structurally and procedurally and with regard to relationships with other governmental components thereby becoming more assertive, independent and powerful in policy making.

In his work, Squire accepted Polsby’s definition and description of the nature of a transformed U.S. Congress, as the essence of an institutionalized/professionalized legislature. Based on an impressive data collection and analysis regarding the California Assembly to create a comparison with Polsby’s formulation of the institutionalized U.S. House, Squire concluded:

First, professionalization and institutionalization are not the same thing. On some scores, such as the formalization of the leadership posts and increased speakership tenures, the Assembly was already institutionalizing well before it became professionalized. On some other standards, particularly those involving boundedness, professionalization produced few, if any, changes in the trends favorable or unfavorable for institutionalization. Only in those areas professionalization is intended to yield direct results, like staffing, pay and session length can it be suggested that it necessarily leads to institutionalization, or, perhaps more correctly, that they occur simultaneously. But again, the argument I have advanced is not that one is sufficient to lead to the other but that members of professionalized legislatures are likely to want to make the sorts of changes resulting in institutionalization.

Second, the Assembly’s lapse in not valuing seniority should not be taken as evidence of noninstitutionalization. (1992b: 1046)

Thus, empirical evidence was provided by Squire demonstrating that the professionalization of U.S. state legislatures can be differentiated from institutionalization and that a different set of indicators further differentiates professionalization from institutionalization.

In a more recent retrospective on this work, Squire explicitly connected professionalization in representative assemblies the development of greater capacity for independent and effective decision making (2006); however, there is no assumption that professionalization is a “unidirectional” trend—that parliaments and legislatures evolve to ever higher levels of professionalization. Explicit in its formulation is the recognition that over time, legislative bodies can move in both directions regarding professionalization—greater professionalization as well as de-professionalization. For example, the recent imposition of term limits in 15 U.S. state legis-

latures is seen by some as one example of a movement away from professionalization. (Rosenthal, 1996; Brace & Ward, 1999; Kousser, 2005; and Squire, 2006) As pointed out above, institutions can evolve in multiple directions depending on the nature of the evolutionary cues.

An interesting feature regarding the growth in the professionalization of U.S. state legislatures is the role of two external factors in fostering this organizational change, a role that reinforces the application of “institutional barrowing” central in evolutionary institutionalism. By the late 1950s a once venerated bastion of representative government in the U.S.—state legislatures—was widely criticized for its perceived inability to perform its prescribed political and policy making functions. In 1966, Alexander Heard described the situation in harsh terms.

American state legislatures have changed much since the formation of the Union. The early state constitutions converted colonial assemblies into legislative bodies intended to protect against an executive tyranny the colonists had grown to fear. The resulting large powers and high public favor that early legislatures enjoyed were replaced as the conduct of legislatures themselves destroyed public confidence. The legislatures often fell victim to the selfish ambitions of their own members and to pressures from outside interests.

In addition, as suffrage broadened, segments of the population not hitherto influential gave voice to demands through representatives in the state assemblies. Established orders felt threatened. Out of a variety of motives, the revised state constitutions adopted after the Civil War placed a wide range of restrictions on the legislatures. (1966b: 154)

One issue thus was the skewed representation of citizens that had become prevalent in many state legislatures. In a 1962 landmark decision, the U.S. Supreme Court, after refusing for decades to hear reapportionment cases, accepted a legal challenge to the apportionment of state legislatures (*Baker v Carr*) and ruled that the right of citizens to equal protection under the law applied to how representation was provided through legislative districts in state legislatures. Over the next few years a series of follow-on decisions by the Supreme Court as well as cases before U.S. federal district and appellate courts initiated what became known as the reapportionment revolution—a thorough-going redistricting of virtually every state and national legislative body in America except the U.S. Senate. One result was more equitable representation for all aspects of American society in these representative assemblies. But this was only the beginning in the change of these important legislative bodies.

At about this same time, a group of reform-minded citizens, educators and public officials formed a non-profit organization called the Citizens Conference on State Legislatures (CCSL) to study and improve the effectiveness of state government. (A number of other groups were also interested in changing state legislatures via reform and joined in a broad-based movement, but CCSL differed in that it sought to systematize the evidentiary base for recommending changes across all 50 U.S. state legislatures.) Their major goal was to “. . . respond to requests for educational and service assistance to the modernization of state legislatures in order to elevate the competence and efficiency of the state legislative bodies.” (CCSL, 1971a: 481) The significance of this group comes from their major effort to develop an organizing scheme—a blueprint (a series of memes) for evolution as described above—and relevant concepts for understanding legislative organizational change intended to improve legislative performance and to support the efforts of state affiliated organizations in producing change in these legislative institutions. The results included two books on U.S. state legislative institutions (CCSL, 1971a & 1971b) and significant personal efforts within virtually every state to introduce organizational, process and resource changes that would positively impact legislative chamber operations and policy making effectiveness. This effort provided a stimulus for as well as resources for initiating and supporting institutional change and demonstrates the role and consequences of specific, change directed initiatives can have on organizational evolution.

Relatively less prominence to date has been given to similar research outside the U.S. although the concept of professionalization would seem applicable regardless of the political system one of the goals set out above for meaningful theoretical approaches to institutional evolution. Some of the non-U.S. research using the concept professionalization is based on a somewhat different definition and empirical indicators for professionalization, focusing more on notions of careerism and prior experience. One of the most extensive treatments of professionalization in European parliaments is provided by Eliassen and Pederson in their overview of its evolution in Denmark and Norway over a 150 year period. (1978) This impressive study combines the historical dimension noted above so often missing from research on the evolution of representative assemblies. In defining legislative professionalization, they return to Max Weber’s classic discussion of “Politics as Vocation” (Weber, 1958) and focus on the characteristics of individual legislators, especially as seen in their career evolution and the outlooks de-

veloped. They note that “. . . political professionalization comes to stand for a process by means of which social status gives way to political status as the basic criterion of legislative recruitment: ascription and social achievement are replaced by political experience and political achievement as professionalization unfolds.” (1978: 291) This association of professionalization with careerism is adopted in a number of other non-U.S. studies. (See for example, Cohen, 1980; King, 1991; Graham, 1982; Saalfeld, 1997; Patzelt, 1999) In reviewing research on parliamentary systems in the 1990s, Michael Mezy (1994) noted that a number of authors had identified this theme of professionalized legislatures via the emergence of professional legislators that, in turn, had had an impact on the parliamentary process.

The more prominent the legislature, the larger the number of full-time professional legislators. The presence of such legislators, in turn, will create further pressures for an even stronger, more active legislative role. They will advocate stronger committees, they will be more disposed to question and even oppose the government and their party leaders, and they will wish to pursue public policy initiatives of their own. (437)

Arter’s (2000) study of the Icelandic Althingi applies professionalization to the parliamentary evolution of this legislature in a manner extremely compatible with the definitions and measurements used in U.S. states. In this case study, Arter specifically addresses how the Althingi has evolved in terms of building capacity via aspects like space, sessions, structural change, staff, remuneration, and legislative culture. With frequent reference to studies of U.S. state legislatures, Arter concludes that the capacity of the Althingi has increased along similar dimensions so that it is much more professionalized; however, this research does not use quantitative-empirical indicators for rigorous data analysis nor does it offer systematic cross-legislative system comparisons.

Since a parliamentary system establishes a relationship between the executive and the legislature that is at great variance from a congressional one, a somewhat different concept and its measurement of legislative independence has emerged. In parliamentary systems the concept and its indicator for the relative power of parliament’s *vis-à-vis* their governments has become known as *legislative viscosity*. First suggested by Blondel and his associates in 1970, this refers to the ability of a parliament to remain free and autonomous in its legislation consideration role from the government. Blondel wrote:

Where the legislature is very compliant, bills do not merely pass, they pass very easily and, in particular, the time spent or the number of speakers engaged in the debate is small. As the legislature becomes 'freer', the time spent increases and amendments are discussed and indeed passed. The origin, number and fate of these amendments are all indicative of a number of steps in the viscosity of the process. (80)

Thus, the ability of a parliament to change, delay or deny government-sponsored legislation constitutes the essence of legislative viscosity. Legislative viscosity has been used in several parliamentary case studies as the dependent variable to be explained in terms of the nature of the parliamentary organization, selection and party system. (Scully, 1997; Norton 1998c; and Norton & Ahmed, 1999) Clearly, this concept is a potentially important aspect of the parliamentary organization useful in understanding the independence of the parliament from the government and appears to be related to professionalization studies, but focused on a different aspect of organizational (legislative) strength, capability and autonomy. Legislative viscosity demonstrates the development of varied indicators for a common organizational element (independence from the executive) appropriate for quite different representative assemblies.

Virtually all of this non-U.S. research on parliamentary/legislative professionalism and professionalization has used case study methodologies, with changes being noted across time; however, scant efforts have been made to include comparisons across legislatures or countries. This is in sharp contrast to the research currently being conducted in the U.S. where a theoretical base seems to be emerging that will soon require more far-reaching, cross-system/national, comparative research. Such efforts will probably utilize the existing theoretical framework that focuses on organizational/institutional features related to autonomy, capability and strength as a means of explaining and understanding parliamentary/legislative behavior. Questions remain, however, on the applicability of the measurement approaches which appear to be very system-dependent on the U.S political setting and experience. Hopefully, some of the general suggestions made above will assist the development of this research.

3. Some Examples of Needed Research

Given the limited number of legislative specialists, not all of the research tasks mentioned above can be addressed simultaneously. Preference choices must be taken. Regarding them, we suggest some examples of future research needed on legislatures and parliaments in the contemporary context of both real world developments and of existing research and theory. Some suggestions are descriptive because we need – as argued before - a documentary record of each legislature/parliament; others are broadly theoretical, since we also need a sense of direction in the research; while others are midrange in both theory and data.

One set of suggestions concerns representative assemblies in very different country context which offer possibilities for comparative analysis and theory building:

First: Despite differences across countries and in the assemblies themselves, change is a common theme within a framework of performance expectations and competition to survive and exercise power. How have parliaments and legislatures gone about developing their capacity to perform expected activities and endure competition in governing?

Second: The growing number of new countries presents an opportunity – and certainly a need – for research on new governance structures and practices. This may begin as largely descriptive in nature, but needs to become analytical as well as theoretical. While in this paper our concern has been with representative assemblies, the need for research extends to all institutions of governance. We need to know what new countries begin with, how they change over their initial decades and factors affecting their change.

Third: Some assemblies have come under siege, and have survived general system crises, such as Ukraine, Kenya, and Zimbabwe. How are they able to survive and what broader role do they play (for example, do they contribute to stability in the midst of instability)?

Fourth: Other assemblies are in countries which, slowly over decades, have become, if not more democratic, at least less authoritarian, of which Turkey, Mexico and

perhaps Thailand are examples. What roles have representative assemblies played in this movement and what factors contribute to these roles?

A different set of research opportunities focuses on the working relationships between executives and representative assemblies. The usual functional categories of assembly function – legislation and oversight – lead to a mosaic of daily interactions.

A third set of research needs suggests that both executives and judiciaries can be examined in the same ways as are assemblies, and that an evolutionary institutional approach would be useful. A particular question to be examined: to what extent do assemblies, executives and courts tend to resemble one another over time?

Each of these sets of research topics can be examined cross-sectionally, or longitudinally. Each can be examined with either a small-n or large-n design. While these topics are especially suggested by the emergence of new countries and representative assemblies, they also suggest research questions and strategies for older countries as well. We look forward to the initiation of significant new research efforts pursuing answers to the question listed above within a framework of change and evolutionary institutionalism.

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