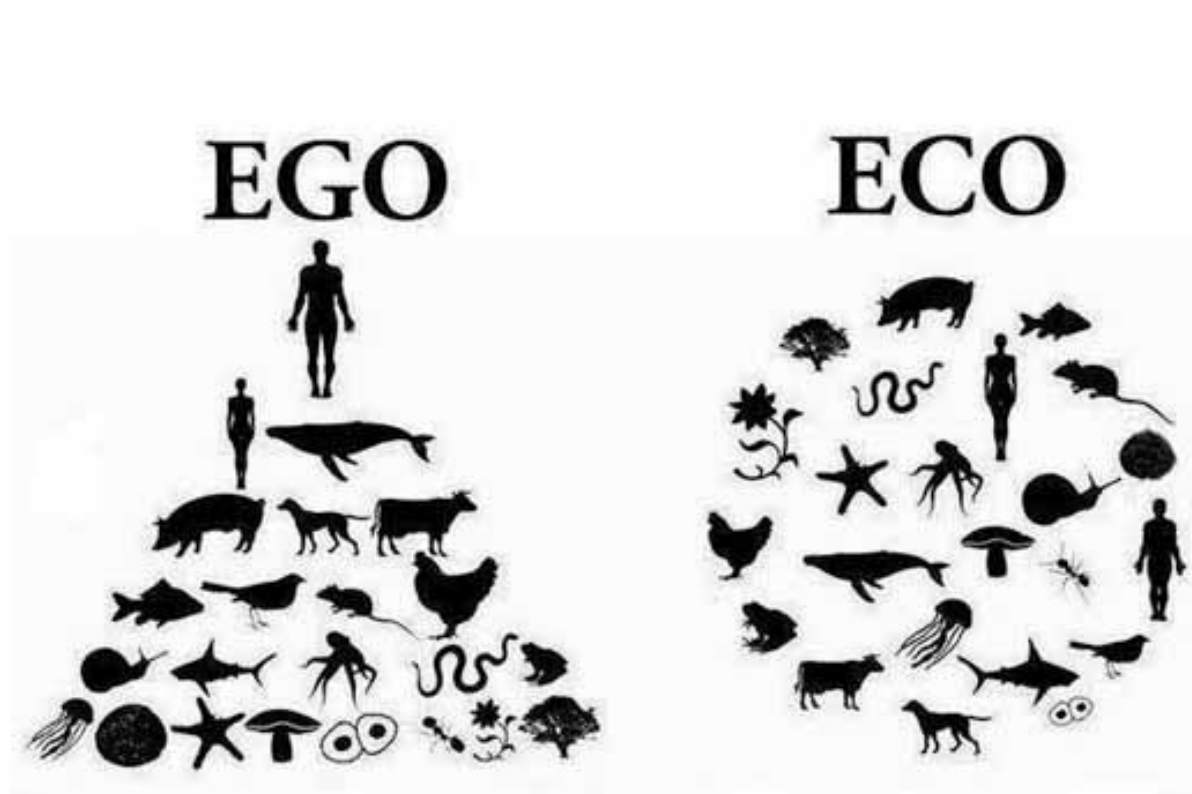


Introducing ecocentrism to politics

The establishment processes of animal advocacy parties around the world, 1993-2020



Research report Animal Politics Foundation

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Introduction

'A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.'¹

These words were written by the famous Albert Einstein. Interestingly enough, this quote perfectly summarises the very *raison d'être* of animal advocacy parties. The ecocentric notion that humans should not be the dominant species, but all life on earth is equally part of the same ecosystem and needs to work together for the whole system to thrive, forms the foundation of the global political animal advocacy movement. This report explores the establishment processes of the political animal advocacy parties that are part of this movement.

In an era of political fragmentation, more political parties are being established than ever was the case. Not all of those parties make it into parliament, but some of them do, which leads to changes of the political landscape and political culture of a country. Political culture refers in this report to the place politics occupies in a society. This is often influenced by a country's history and electoral system, and includes among other things voter turnout and citizen's political participation. In many countries, radical right-wing parties entered the political scene during the last decades, but at the same time animal advocacy parties are increasingly winning seats.

One can decide to go into politics for two reasons. Either in an urge to become part of the governing processes of a country and to become an actor on the political playground. Or to address certain topics to the political agenda that are not yet, or not yet sufficiently, addressed by parties that form the political establishment. The latter factor applies to animal advocacy parties. In fact, many politicians of these parties rather refer to themselves as 'activists in politics' instead of just politicians.²

Political animal advocacy parties are not a completely new phenomenon. Its rise might be one of the more recent changes on the political scene in many countries, but the origin of this movement goes back almost three decades, when the German *Partei Mensch Umwelt Tierschutz* was established in 1993. Before that, animal rights activism was a merely non-political matter.

At this moment, animal advocacy parties exist and function in more than 20 countries all over the world: in the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Belgium, France, Cyprus, Germany, Italy, Finland, Portugal, United Kingdom, the United States, Israel,

¹ Quote from *Goodreads*, see: <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/369-a-human-being-is-a-part-of-the-whole-called>.

² Different interviews and responses to question sheets from different parties.

Spain, Sweden, Brazil, Switzerland, and Moldova. In several other countries, intentions to start a party are in development. Eight parties have one or more elected representatives in their country: The Netherlands (80), France (12), Portugal (35), Germany (18), Italy (1), Australia (5), and the United Kingdom (1). The Belgian party *DierAnimal* gained a seat in the local parliament of Brussels, but the elected representative left the party in 2020 after a conflict and took her seat with her.

Animal advocacy parties are represented in the European Parliament as well. The Netherlands (*Party for the Animals*) occupies a seat and both the Portuguese (*Pessoas-Animais-Natureza*) and the German Party (*Partei Mensch Umwelt Tierschutz*) won a seat but lost it again due to internal conflict in 2020.³

Marco Morini, an Italian political scientist, concludes in a research article from 2018 that we can speak of a party family when it comes to the seven political animal parties that together ran for European elections in 2014. According to Morini, party families can be identified by their (1) origins and sociology, (2) transnational links, (3) policy and ideology, and (4) party name.⁴ On the basis of this categorisation, we can conclude that the 20+ animal advocacy parties that are functioning in different parts of the world can be considered as part of the same family. Most of these parties have been erected in the last decade and the family continues to expand. The *Party for the Animals* considers the parties that are part of their network their 'sister parties', which fits into the family language.

The Dutch political scientist Paul Lucardie elaborates on the political ideology driving animal advocacy parties, which he describes as 'animalism'. In philosophy, animalism is defined as 'the view (...) that each of us is an organism of the species *Homo sapiens* and that the conditions of our persistence are those of animals'. In other words: we are all fellow creatures. Since all animal advocacy parties share this view, it can be appointed as shared ideology and they can be described as 'animalist' parties, according to Lucardie.⁵

However, this report claims that the shared political ideology of animal advocacy parties lays in *ecologism* rather than in animalism. Ecologism distinguishes itself from other political ideologies by changing the perspective on societal issues and solutions from human-centred to eco-centred. Whereas traditional political ideologies remain overwhelmingly human-centred in their beliefs and policies, animal advocacy parties acknowledge that all life on earth is part of the same ecosystem (the concept of *ecocentrism*), and recognise that all participants of the ecosystem have to work together in order for the whole ecosystem to thrive. Ecologist parties strive for a more balanced relationship between people and other animals, and the environment they live in.⁶ Even though most of the parties focus in the beginning of their establishment process mainly on animal-related matters, ecocentrism still lays at the foundation of their message. Moreover, their focus expands in most cases when the party grows. One significant example of this is the Dutch *Party for the Animals*. This party

³ For details about this incident, see the Portuguese and German case study at pages 17 and 24.

⁴ Marco Morini, "Animals first! The rise of animal advocacy parties in the EU: a new party family", *Contemporary Politics*, 24:4 (2018) 418-435, there 429.

⁵ Paul Lucardie, 'Animalism: a nascent ideology? Exploring the ideas of animal advocacy parties', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 25:5, 212-227, there 226, note 91.

⁶ Kevin Harrison and Tony Boyd, *Understanding political ideas and movements* (Manchester 2018) 274-294.

was established in 2002 and started with a party program that mainly focused on animal rights and animal welfare. However, as the party and its electorate grew, its political positions expanded as well. Nowadays, the party defines itself as a political party that defends the rights of our planet and all its inhabitants.⁷ They thus didn't lose their ecocentric point of view when their political message expanded. In fact, this ecocentric notion even became stronger with the expansion of the party program, because it showed that many human problems are related to the way we treat animals and the earth. Therefore, this report will appoint all animal advocacy parties as ecologist parties with roots in ecocentrism.

In late 2012, the *Party for the Animals* founded the *Animal Politics Foundation* (APF), in order to strengthen the international movement by expanding and reinforcing the network and sharing knowledge. Especially since the core themes of the parties involved – animals, nature, and environment – are global issues that require a global approach.⁸ For that matter, the Animal Politics Foundation organises yearly international conferences, where existing parties, potential new ones, NGOs, and guest speakers meet. The last conference took place in September 2019 in Porto under the name 'Eco-Crisis: Turning the Tide'.⁹

The Animal Politics Foundation cooperates with most of the sister parties, yet not with all of them. Some countries count several animal advocacy parties, like Germany, Italy and France. Only one party in those countries liaises with the APF. Not because the APF isn't open to cooperating with more than one party per country, but it is most of the time the result of a natural process in which both the APF and the other party waive cooperation. The majority of the parties that were established still exist and work hard in order to improve animal rights in their country, even if they never won any seats during elections. There are only a few examples of parties that were established and abrogated because of unsuccessful functioning. It's a striking notion that most parties seem to have reasons to keep functioning, although most of the parties do not have elected representatives and therefore mostly function outside the political arena. Yet, this does not mean that they are not politically active. In order to help identify the establishment processes as well as the current state of these parties, the following research question was formulated.

Research question

What socio-political factors explain the rise of political animal advocacy parties in different countries?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this research contains four parts:

1. The *resource mobilisation theory* claims that specific resources are needed for a political party to be established (such as funding, the internet, (social) media, public figures that

⁷ Plan B: Electoral Program Party for the Animals, Parliamentary elections 2021, 'idealism is the new realism', DOI: <https://www.partyfortheanimals.com/uploads/Electoral-Program-Party-for-the-Animals-Parliamentary-elections-2021.pdf>.

⁸ See: <https://www.partyfortheanimals.com/international-movement>.

⁹ Dutch and Portuguese parties for animals organize world conference to address eco-crisis, 3 September 2019, DOI: <https://www.partyfortheanimals.com/en/dutch-and-portuguese-parties-for-animals-organise-world-conference-to-address-eco-crisis>.

publicly support the party, and volunteers).¹⁰ The first hypothesis states that the studied parties have access to these resources and use them in a constructive way.

2. The second hypothesis states that there must be room on the already established political scene of a country for a new political party, in this report referred to as *political opportunity*. This means that the party brings new points of view and action to the political scene that are not mentioned by the other parties that are already present and acting on the scene.¹¹ In some countries, green parties claim the space of sustainable and animal-friendly politics, and therefore many people would not understand the necessity of establishing an animal advocacy party. But when it comes to the promises and outcome of green party politics, we see some discrepancies.

When we look closer, a lot of differences occur between green parties and animal advocacy parties. The Dutch political scientist Simon Otjes points out that - at least for the Dutch case - the *Green Left Party* and the *Party for the Animals* shared less similarities than he thought. Where the *Green Left Party* positions itself loud and clear on the left side of the political spectrum, the position of the *Party for the Animals* is not so clear. Moreover, the electorate of both parties differ as well. The *Party for the Animals* appeals to the more political cynical voters, living in the cities, more women than men, and mostly younger voters.¹² Otjes concluded that the *Party for the Animals* therefore occupies its own political niche, which is difficult to locate on the left-right spectrum but is definitely an activist party.¹³ Is this similar in other countries?

3. *(Re)framing* is essential for political success, especially during the establishment of a new party or during an election campaign. A frame is a 'thought organiser' which highlights certain events and facts as crucial and renders others invisible. It legitimises the existence of the party and endorses the importance of the political points of action the party brings onto the political scene. A successful political party uses urgent and well-constructed frames. Since all the parties involved address issues and beliefs that are not broadly shared by other political parties, mainstream media and the largest part of the electorate, reframing these issues are pivotal in their establishment, since they need to legitimise why they want to exist as a political party.¹⁴

In examining frames, a significant nuance has to be made between a *frame* and a *brand*. Branding is about appearance rather than content. It includes logo, design and a communication style that fits with a targeted audience. A political party has only one

¹⁰ Ashley Crossman, 'What is the Recourse Mobilization Theory?', *ThoughtCo*, 29 February 2020, DOI: <https://www.thoughtco.com/resource-mobilization-theory-3026523>.

¹¹ Ashley Crossman, 'Political Process Theory. An Overview of the Core Theory of Social Movements', *ThoughtCo*, 13 February 2019, DOI: <https://www.thoughtco.com/political-process-theory-3026451>; Marco Giugni, 'Political Opportunities: from Tilly to Tilly', *Swiss Political Science Review*, 15:2, 361-368.

¹² Matthijs Rooduijn, 'Praatjes van de electoraatjes: de Partij voor de Dieren', *StukRoodVlees*, 14 January 2021, see: <https://stukroodvlees.nl/plaatjes-van-de-electoraatjes-partij-voor-de-dieren/>.

¹³ Simon Otjes and Adré Krouwel, 'Two shades of Green? The electorates of GreenLeft and the Party for the Animals', *Environmental Politics*, 24:6 (2015) 991-1013, there 1007-1008.

¹⁴ Charlotte Ryan and William A. Gamson, 'The art of reframing political debates', *Contexts* 5:1 (1 February 2006) 13-18, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/ctx.2006.5.1.13>; Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26:1 (2000) 611-639.

appearance or brand (although this can develop and change over time), whereas it can use several frames in their communication.

4. The electoral system of a country is a decisive factor to the establishment of new political parties. Even when a party is very successful in the three points mentioned above, an electoral system that works against the rise of new parties will be detrimental to the success of the party. In this report, only the national electoral system is examined. In most cases, local elections take place within different systems.

Research approach

The research project on the establishment processes of animal advocacy parties that is summarised in this report, was commissioned by the Animal Politics Foundation. The data for this research is derived from interviews that were conducted with the party founders and/or persons that exercise a key function within the party, information provided by the parties, secondary literature, and theoretical scientific literature.

A list of questions was sent out to all animal advocacy parties that the Animal Politics Foundation keeps in contact with and was answered by eighteen of them. Based on the answers provided by the parties, a selection of six case-studies was made. This selection consists of the *Veganerpartiet* of Denmark, the Australian *Animal Justice Party*, *Pessoas-Animais-Natureza* from Portugal, the *Animal Protection Party of Canada*, the German *Partei Mensch Umwelt Tierschutz*, and Norway (no existing party). These cases were selected because they represent a variety in electoral systems, age of the parties, and political approaches.

The case studies

The case studies are discussed in order of functioning years, from young to older. Starting with Denmark's *Veganerpartiet*.

1. Denmark veganerpartiet

Intro

The Danish ***Veganerpartiet*** (Vegan Party) is one of the youngest animal advocacy parties in the world. Established in 2017 and officially recognised in 2019, it is at least the youngest of the examined case studies in this report. This party is included in this report to shed light on the first years of the establishment process of a party.

The party was more or less formed by accident. Henrik Vindfeldt, in his former profession of video maker, was asked to shoot a video for *Anonymous for the Voiceless*, an international animal rights organisation that organises the Cube of Truth. This is a peaceful demonstration against animal cruelty by people wearing masks and black clothes while standing in a square formation.¹⁵ While making this video, Vindfeldt was confronted with Danish animal welfare facts and he decided to go vegan and start a Facebook group, called *Veganerpartiet*. His intention at that time was not to start a political party, but while shooting a lot of videos and talking to politicians on the issue of animal welfare he noticed that only very few politicians knew about the reality of intensive livestock farming and slaughterhouses. Accordingly, he asked the Minister of Agriculture and Environment what his opinion was of the living conditions of animals in the farming industry, upon which the Minister responded: 'I love bacon'. Vindfeldt made a video about this, that went viral. His Facebook group gained a lot of new members and they were invited to talk about this incident and their group on national television. Eventually Vindfeldt, together with Michael Monberg, decided to start a political party using the same name as their Facebook group.

For this case study, both Lisel Vad Olsson, spokesperson for the party, and Henrik Vindfeldt, founder and current party leader, were interviewed about the establishment process of the *Veganerpartiet*.

Resources

As well as every new political party, *Veganerpartiet* has to work hard in order to gain funding for their party establishment and campaigns. In order to collect money, they do as every new party does: every position within the party is on voluntary-basis and they seek for opportunities to collect money such as crowdfunding and offering a paid party membership. Additionally, they organise special events, that gain attention from mainstream media as

¹⁵ See: <https://www.anonymousforthevoiceless.org/what-is-a-cube-of-truth>.

well as new members and donors. This seems one of the best ways to collect funding.

Due to the professional film and edit skills of Vindfeldt, the social media coverage is quite strong. Especially when it comes to videos. At this moment, their Facebook page has 16,000 followers. To put in in perspective: the biggest political party in Denmark, the Social Democrats, have 116,000 followers on Facebook, which obviously is a huge difference. So, there is still work to be done for *Veganerpartiet* on this area. But the party just started to position itself in the Danish political arena and has room and time to grow. The party is still in a learning process, since they don't work with a particular social media strategy yet. They found out that just posting blunt facts doesn't do the trick but showing reality does. Making the suffering of animals personal works best in order to receive interaction on social media in their experience.

Veganerpartiet is quite successful when it comes to gaining (mainstream) media attention. This might be the case because of the 'newness' of the party, but it also has to do with their networking skills and the public events that the party organises. In this way, media have to pay attention to them.

Veganerpartiet works together with a great deal of well-known Danish figures such as TV personalities and social media influencers. They approached as many people as possible and a large number of them responded positive about working with the party, or at least supporting their message publicly. This is due to the strong networking skills of the party, as well as it can be considered as part of the Danish political culture. Many Danish people are politically engaged and are open to publicly express their opinion on politics, which is not the case in all countries. This can thus be seen as an advantage for the party and they make good use of it. Vindfeldt emphasizes the necessity of networking and working together with other politicians as well, as they are a young party still growing their political capital. The *Veganerpartiet* uses common goals and views to reach out to other parties to increase ties and relationships with them, such as with the only vegan member of the national parliament. This seems to work out for them, since many politicians are open to network with the party.

Political opportunity

There is enough room on the Danish political scene for *Veganerpartiet* to contribute to the political agenda. Almost no other political parties address animal rights. On top of that, the Green Party recently collapsed in Denmark, which leaves a big vacuum for the *Veganerpartiet* to take up the space of green politics as well.

Moreover, Denmark has the most ambitious climate law in the world, but does not act on it, which causes discontent among voters, especially among young people. This could enlarge the political opportunity which was already enlarged by the collapse of the Green Party.

Framing

As written in the introduction, a frame is a thought organiser that helps structuring argumentation. It legitimises the existence of the party and endorses the importance of the positions the party takes. A party's name is the first frame through which a party can express itself to the outside world. *Veganerpartiet's* frame focuses on the, what might seem, free

and personal choice of living a vegan lifestyle. This is an important part of the animal rights' movement, especially since the rights and wellbeing of farm animals are often overlooked.

Inside the party, an ongoing discussion about the party name takes place. Some say it is too strict 'vegans only', whereas others (including Vindfeldt) claim the name is not only clear, but also stimulating. Veganism is becoming a trend and the party would like to act as educator on this field.

During the 2019 animal politics congress in Porto, the party was advised to change their name by the Animal Politics Foundation. A 'vegans only' frame would most likely not lead to a lot of support from non-vegans, according to the APF. Thus far, the party holds on to the name. The upcoming local elections will show if that is a good move, or if they have to reconsider their name.

A frame that is dominant in many countries is the 'positive farming' frame. This means that farmers are seen as one of the backbones of society, since they provide food for citizens and for export matters. By doing so, they are considered essential in many countries. Since animal advocacy parties are sceptical about the role of farmers in society, this is one of the bigger subjects that needs reframing. Many people, especially farmers themselves and politicians that are reliable on farmers for economic growth and their own political success, feel threatened by the frames that animal advocacy parties use. Reframing this subject is therefore a difficult task, in Denmark as well as in other countries.

Since the party is very active on social media, framing is a tool that is used in creating online content. *Veganerpartiet* is still 'learning by doing', as they look for the most successful frames on social media. According to Vindfeldt and Olsson, multidimensional frames work best: dissect a subject, for example farming, to all the different risks that it composes. This includes animal cruelty, climate risks and human health risks should all be part of this frame. But personalisation of farm animals (showing personal facts and figures about these animals, for example about their intelligence or ability to experience emotions) works best, according to Olsson.¹⁶

Apart from this, framing is not a segment that is considered by the party in terms of strategy. But at this moment, the party works on the *Veganerpartiet 2.0*, where framing is the most important factor in creating a narrative.

Electoral system

Denmark has a List Proportional System that consists of two tiers: regional and national. Every party presents an open list with candidates. Voters vote for a party from one of the ten constituencies. 175 members of parliament are chosen from the ten constituencies and an additional four members are elected from the Faroe Islands and Greenland. After constituency seats are awarded, compensatory seats are distributed based on the proportion of the national vote each party receives. Parties must normally reach a two percent threshold to win compensatory seats.¹⁷ More or less 80,000 votes are needed in

¹⁶ Interview Lisel Vad Olsson, 6 November 2020.

¹⁷ The Parliamentary Electoral System in Denmark, see: <https://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/3154/>.

order to win a seat in parliament. This is not an easy task, but it should be possible for a new party to win at least one seat.

But before a party is allowed to run for national elections, a selection procedure takes place. The Danish law requires newly established parties to collect voter declarations. 20,000 'vælgererklæringer' are needed in order to participate in national elections. Therefore, the first task was to collect these signatures. It does not seem like a lot, but because of the circuitous collecting system and the short time span (18 months) that is given for the collecting process, it took a lot of effort to reach the goal. Eventually, the party had to collect 110,000 signatures in order to reach to goal of 20,000 official secured signatures.¹⁸ This process works as a complicating factor in order to eventually join in national elections. But at the same time, it is an effective practice in campaigning. This experience might be useful for the upcoming elections. National elections will presumably take place in 2023, but Denmark's Prime Minister is allowed to call elections at any time. This allows *Veganerpartiet* time to prepare. The next goal on the agenda is the municipal elections of 2021.

Other factors

One factor that is significant to the political approach of most of the animal advocacy parties examined is that the *Veganerpartiet* party tries to place itself outside the political spectrum. They use, what is called in this report, the 'left-right axis contesting' frame, which means that they don't take a stance on the political spectrum, neither on the left side, nor on the right side. Accordingly, they work together with every party or politician that supports their positions. In doing so, the *Veganerpartiet* (as well as most of the other animal advocacy parties) dissociates itself from playing political games and therewith differentiates itself from the 'political establishment'. Since the *Veganerpartiet* did not run for elections yet, the exact position they will take, and the effect of that on their electoral outcome is not yet clear.

Another factor that contributes to the party's appeal is the charisma of the party leader and other visible party members. Their appearance is vivid, brisk and positive, which contributes to a feeling of hope and action. This eventually might lead to electoral success as well.

Thus far, the *Veganerpartiet* is mostly focusing on animal-related matters. Many 'hot topics' such as immigration and integration are mostly addressed in polarising ways. The party doesn't want to create dissension among potential voters and therefore tries to connect most issues with animal issues. In doing so, they are still searching for the right ways to address these issues. The concept of ecocentrism can be used in a more effective way, since this concept shows the interconnectedness of animal- and human matters.

Conclusion

The first years of the establishment process of *Veganerpartiet* seem to be a textbook example of how to successfully start a political party. The founders were able to build a strong organisational party system in a short period of time. A big advantage is the fact that party leader Henrik Vindfeldt has professional video editing skills and charisma, which obviously contributes to their success on social media. It helps that the Facebook group *Veganerpartiet* was already popular before the party was established, which enlarged their

¹⁸ Interview Henrik Vindfeldt, 10 December 2020.

reach. However, the party has not participated in any elections and it has to be seen if this recipe results in electoral success as well. In choosing their topics and frames, some developments are still needed. Ecocentrism can be used more extensively in this case.

But what this case study mainly shows is the importance of networking skills. Because of the broad network they managed to create, the party is able to mobilise all the resources they need in order to get established successfully.

2. Australia



Intro

The Australian ***Animal Justice Party*** (AJP) was founded in 2009 by a small group of activists and installed Steve Garlick, economics professor and wildlife protection activist from Canberra as its first President. The party was started in particular after a Kangaroo massacre took place in Canberra and not one politician or party spoke out against it. This was a turning point for Garlick and other animal rights activists and wildlife care workers to start an animal advocacy party. The Dutch *Party for the Animals* has been an inspiration for AJP since the beginning. In the words of the current party president Bruce Poon: 'You cannot be what you cannot see'.¹⁹ All members had roots in activism and animal care work, not a single member was politically experienced, so many lessons had to be learned along the way. Only Poon brought some political knowledge with him when he joined the party in 2011. He had been active inside the *Australian Greens* for several years, but he struggled with the way the party handled animal rights. After he learnt about the existence of the *Animal Justice Party*, he joined the party.²⁰

In 2015, the party won its first seat, in the state of New South Wales. At the moment, the party has five elected representatives. Three at state level, in the states of New South Wales and Victoria, and two in city councils.

For this case study, an interview took place with Bruce Poon about the establishment process of the party.

According to Poon, there are three big tests that the party faces continually. The most important thing during the first phase of the establishment process is organising. This means working closely together and building the party, putting enough people together to make an organisation that can stand in elections. The second test is being able to win elections. Before you win elections, most people that do not follow the political process closely assume you cannot win elections. After you win elections, people are more likely to assume you can win more. The third major test, having won elections, is being able to use political

¹⁹ AJP answers to question sheet, September 2020.

²⁰ Interview Bruce Poon, 13 November 2020.

representation to translate into change for animals. Winning campaigns and changing the law is payoff for all the work that volunteers put in. To clarify, Poon states:

‘At all times, the party must be able to pass those three tests. If we fail to organise, the party could collapse quickly. If we fail to win elections, the party will fail slowly. If we cannot use representation to win change, there is no point to the party, and we should kill it. Fortunately, of late, the party is passing all these tests, and the future looks bright.’²¹

Resources

Funding is for AJP, as well as for other small parties, a subject of constant action. In the words of Poon: ‘Money translates into votes quite reliably. All we had was a really good idea. A unique political pitch. And that took us far enough to start winning.’²² The Australian Electoral Act requires public funding for political parties. However, only parties that win at least 4% of the votes in national elections are entitled to this funding.²³ And therefore, a small party such as AJP has to provide for their own budget. Eventually, AJP’s goal is to win enough seats to be able to receive public funding and play by the same rules as the big parties.

There are no A-list celebrities that support the party publicly. But there are some relatively famous vegan people who do. Activists are the most supportive. Filmmaker Chris Delforce (director of the documentary *Dominion*)²⁴ is the most important famous supporter. His films document the treatment of animals in Australia. This undoubtedly contributes to the reach of the party, but mostly within the vegan community, even though the party wants to reach oversight the vegan community as well. It seems to be relatively difficult to get public figures to support your political message in Australia, since most people are reluctant to express their political opinions publicly. Celebrities support animal shelters and NGOs rather than political parties, according to Poon.

This problem does not apply to volunteers, since a lot of vegans and vegetarians seem to be interested in activism and ‘doing good’ for animals. It is not particularly difficult to keep volunteers around, especially because the party grows and expands and actually wins elections. Running elections and winning seats motivates people to stay around. Volunteers notice that that the party’s approach is successful and the party actually can get things done. This works as a motivating factor in volunteer participation.

Social media is a quite successful area of the *Animal Justice Party*, although some strategy would help in reaching their goals more easily. The animal community was already on social media, which made it easy for the AJP to join and collect followers in this community. This was an audience that they could quite easily connect with, since this audience already was convinced of AJP’s core messages. This translated into the current electoral strategy: getting animal lovers to vote for them. It takes a lot of political time and effort to convince the

²¹ Opening speech Bruce Poon, AJP National Conference 21 November 2020.

²² Interview Bruce Poon, 13 November 2020.

²³ Parliament of Australia, Chapter 6 Public Funding, point 6.4, See:

https://www.apf.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Completed_Inquiries/em/political_funding/Report/Chapter6.

²⁴ Watch the full documentary here: <https://www.dominionmovement.com/watch>.

people who think you're wrong, or the people who never thought about it. If all vegans and vegetarians in Australia would vote for the AJP, the party would already gain a lot more seats. So, focusing on people who already think animal welfare is important, is a cost-effective strategy: getting the most out of the limited resources available. Accordingly, on social media the AJP mostly tries to mobilise new voters to vote for them and therefore most of their funds go into Facebook advertisement. The party has almost 50,000 followers on Facebook, but this is not much compared to the *Australian Greens*, who have almost 300,000 followers on this medium. AJP's MPs are however quite active on their own social media pages. Emma Hurst, MP in the state of New South Wales has more than 27,500 followers on Facebook and Andy Meddick, MP in the state of Victoria has 23,100 followers. They are also active on Twitter and Instagram.

Political opportunity

The *Australian Greens* claimed the space of 'being nice to animals' before the AJP came onto the political scene. This party, and for some part the *Labor Party* (mainstream centre left) as well, tries to fill up the space of animal rights and climate matters. AJP needs to make it clear they have more honest policies on animals. But this space is still something that needs to be fought over with the *Greens*. On some issues, they work together, but on a lot of issues, they disagree about some important points. However, the problem is that people often think: why vote for the AJP, when the *Greens* have more policies on other issues as well? This is something that the AJP has to work on in order to reclaim this space.

Framing

According to Bruce Poon, the party struggles with dominant frames regarding animal welfare. It is difficult to change the 'zeitgeist' on how people think about things. Poon:

'The big parties spend a lot of money on framing. And in doing so, they set the ground rules on how people think about things. And very often, they don't think about animals.[...] They think: 'I like animals and I agree with what you say, but I need a job and therefore I vote for the party that makes the best promises on getting the economy right.'

This is a problem many animal advocacy parties have to deal with. This is where smart and strategic framing and reframing proves its usefulness. And subsequently, this might be the very reason that parties eventually have to expand their party program in order for them to win more votes. The Dutch *Partij voor de Dieren* and the Portuguese *Pessoas-Animais-Natureza* are good examples of how to successfully expand a party's program without losing the ecocentric key message.

Electoral system

Australia's members of the national parliament are elected by means of a Single Transferable Vote System (also sometimes known as 'Instant Runoff' or 'Preferential voting'), which means that voters can rank candidates by preference on their voting ballot. The candidate that receives the absolute majority (50% plus 1) of first preferences wins the election. If no candidate receives the majority, the least successful candidates are eliminated and their votes, according to their second preferences, are redistributed over the remaining participants until one reaches an absolute majority. Voters choose candidates rather than

parties.²⁵ The national parliament is bicameral. The upper house or Senate uses a similar Single Transferable Vote system, but with 6 senators per state to be elected, this gives smaller parties a better chance of winning a seat.²⁶

This voting system works broadly quite well for minor parties. Voters can express their preference for a party, putting them first, without ‘wasting their vote’ if the party is not elected. In the case that the minor party is not elected, the citizen’s vote will flow through to their next preference, perhaps contributing to the major party of their choice winning the seat. In addition, many voters express their approval of the party by putting it 2nd or 3rd on the ballot paper. This will rarely but sometimes result in the party winning a seat in a multi-member electorate (like the Senate).

Interestingly, the Australian voting system has an opportunity to test whether there is a political opportunity big enough to exist, since it gives people the opportunity to vote for minor parties without costs. Because of this system, parties gain insights about their electorate and are able to choose a campaign direction accordingly.

Roughly 10% of the Australian population is vegan or vegetarian²⁷ In the last national election, the *Animal Justice Party* received only 2-3% of the votes. The current goal is to mobilise the other 7% vegetarians and vegans to vote for them as well. But at the same time there is a next, much bigger group of 40-50% of the Australian population that has broadly positive feelings for animals and give the party their preferences (vote for them in second to sixth position), but only 2-3% of the voters put AJP on no. 1. That means that roughly half of the Australian electorate thinks favourably of the AJP. This actually gives a lot of insight in the Australian voting psychology. People want to vote for AJP, but, in order to win more seats, the party needs to find a way for more of them to vote for the AJP as their first preference.²⁸

Secondly, parties running in an election are presented with the opportunity to work together in order to attract more votes. Parties provide ‘how to vote’ cards for their members, and many members follow this advice. Since the second preference is in most of the cases quite important, this often leads to cooperation between parties. In order to put a party on the second place on the ‘how to vote’ card, deals are made between parties. According to Bruce Poon, this is how the AJP already received ‘political capital’ before even running in an election.²⁹ It helped the AJP to carve out a space on the political scene. Poon: ‘We were able to build political capital quite quickly, even when we weren’t winning seats. We knew we had political capital and we were able to get results. Getting results – changing the laws to help animals – is always very encouraging. Now we negotiate with everyone and we have built some long-term relationships.’³⁰ Although major parties would never admit making deals with small parties, clever cooperation is needed in order to make the system work in favour of your party.

²⁵ Andrew Reynolds, Ben Reilly, and Andrew Ellis, *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook* (Stockholm 2008) 47-49.

²⁶ Interview Bruce Poon.

²⁷ This number is based on a variety of not entirely reliable polls, according to Poon.

²⁸ Interview Bruce Poon, 13 November 2020.

²⁹ Interview Bruce Poon, 13 November 2020.

³⁰ Interview Bruce Poon, 13 November 2020.

However, the system works partly detrimental to small parties as well. The preferential voting system provides major parties a head start, since the votes of minor parties are most likely to be distributed over the large parties. The biggest problem with the voting system for minor parties like the AJP is that a large proportion of the Australian electorate does not fully understand the system and thus the importance of putting minor parties at number 1. Moreover, since the large parties end up running the government and receive taxpayer's funds, they make the rules. And their rules are naturally mostly in favour of themselves. When voters put a small party in the 2nd (or 3rd) place on the ballot paper, this party will most likely not receive any votes. However, by putting a major party in the second place, this party has a bigger chance to win those votes. Since major parties have more members and therefore more voters who follow their 'how to vote' advice, the system works in their advantage.

Minor parties must strive to affect the results achieved by the major parties. If your 3-5% of the vote is crucial in deciding which major party wins, this definitely attracts their interest, and negotiation on policy issues affecting animals becomes possible.

Other factors

Within the party, there have been significant discussions about the extent to which non-animal related matters have to be addressed by the party. Thus far, these discussions and resulting deliberative votes by the delegates, have landed on the side of not including more 'human-centred' issues to be incorporated into their political party platform.

Instead, these things are covered off in a couple of ways. First, any number of general issues can be responded to using the core values of the party – kindness, equality, rationality and nonviolence – in order to formulate positions on issues outside their expertise.

Second, the party developed 'positions' (differentiated from policies) on a number of issues of interest to voters. These positions are presented on their website, but in very few words. In doing so, they so to speak promise to vote in a certain way when they get elected. In the words of Poon: 'This is the way we'll vote, but don't ask us to spend all of our time campaigning on it... can we now talk about animals again?'³¹

However, it has to be stressed that this struggle to represent ecocentrism is most visible for the national program. The individual members of parliament, especially Andy Meddick in Victoria and Emma Hurst in New South Wales, represent the holistic message of the interconnectedness of animal rights, environmental and human rights in a clear way. An example of this can be found in Andy Meddick's Maiden Speech, on February 6, 2019

Meddick speaks up for the rights of all marginalised groups in society. In his words: 'It is the duty of us all to look after our fellow inhabitants of this planet, both human and non-human alike. It is our obligation, the willing price we must pay for civilisation. It is one of our party's key values: compassion.'³² In the past two years of representing AJP in the Victorian

³¹ Interview Bruce Poon, 13 November 2020.

³² Andy Meddick MP's Maiden Speech to Victorian Parliament, for the whole speech see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRPAXpb7pPg>.

Parliament, Meddick showed that these were not just beautiful words. Recognition of indigenous peoples, anti-racism, and queer rights are themes that are well represented by Meddick and his team.

Another factor the party seems to still struggle with is their positioning on the political spectrum. Poon: 'We try to present ourselves and what we're doing as orthogonal to left-right politics. But our representatives often present as 'more left than right' [An example of which is shown in the paragraph above]. At the same time, this sometimes causes consternation inside the party and among some voters, since the party receives a great deal of centrist-right wing votes as well.

Poon emphasizes the necessity to cooperate with other organisations as well: 'You must work with the people outside the political process as well. The whole animal protection movement must move forward, and the political wing is only one part of that. It's just one wing of what's going on.'

Conclusion

The Single Transferable Vote system shows some advantages to minor parties, but mostly compared to the First Past The Post System that is used in Canada, the UK and the United States of America. When compared to a one-tier Proportional Vote system, such as The Netherlands uses, the advantages are less significant.

Like in most countries, the few large well-established parties in Australia, such as the *Australian Labor Party* and the Liberal / National Coalition, are in charge. They make the rules, create the dominant frames, reach the most people with their messages, and profit most from all of that. The electoral system is one of the things they profit from, mostly because large part of the Australian electorate is not fully aware of the way the system works. According to Poon, major parties maintain this ambiguity since it works in their advantage.³³

³³ Interview Bruce Poon, 13 November 2020.

3. Portugal



Intro

Pessoas-Animais-Natureza (PAN), literally translated as People-Animals-Nature, was established in 2009 and received a legal status in 2011. This was also the year that their first representative was elected.

PAN is the most successful party of the case studies examined in this report in terms of electoral success. PAN has 4 seats in the national parliament (since October 2019)³⁴, councillors in 32 municipalities (78% of all Portuguese municipalities)³⁵, and one seat in the European Parliament, although they lost this seat again in 2020.³⁶

For this case study, interviews took place with Bebiana Cuhna, who is a member of the national parliament, and media and communications manager Ana Aresta.

Resources

The Portuguese election act enables parties to gain financial state support after reaching 50,000+ votes during national elections. This is not enough to win a seat in parliament, but according to the government, receiving this many votes shows enough public support for a party to be stimulated in the political process. During the 2011 national election, PAN received 57,995 votes (1.04%) and became the 7th political force in Portugal. Since then, the party receives state subsidy.³⁷ This obviously eased the establishment process of the party since then.

Since the beginning of the party formation, PAN has been successful in collaborating with public figures. They created strong network ties with multiple well-known Portuguese people like artists, singers, and actors. Every now and then they reach out to them in order to ask some of these people to promote their message. This happens mostly during significant events, such as bullfighting season, and during elections.

Social media was in the beginning mainly used as a tool for PAN to position itself as a political party. According to Ana Aresta, the use of social media also supported the local election campaign in 2014, that resulted in an elected representative. The 2015 national

³⁴ Quadrupling of Portuguese Party for the Animals, Website Party for the Animals, 15 October 2019, DOI: <https://www.partyfortheanimals.com/nl/quadrupling-of-portuguese-party-for-the-animals>.

³⁵ Historical win for Portuguese Party for the Animals during local elections, Website Party for the Animals, 11 October 2017, DOI: <https://www.partyfortheanimals.com/en/historical-win-for-portuguese-party-for-the-animals-during-national-parliament-elections?lang=en-US>.

³⁶ Successful Animal Politics EU Movement wins 2 million votes and 3 seats in the European Parliament, Website Party for the Animals, 4 June 2019, DOI: <https://www.partyfortheanimals.com/en/successful-animal-politics-eu-movement-wins-2-million-votes-and-3-seats-in-the-european-parliament?lang=en-US>.

³⁷ Answers PAN to first list of questions, September 2020.

election eventually caused a 'boom' of publicity, which helped them become the party on Facebook with the most followers in Portugal, in total 166,000.

PAN only uses 'organic content' on social media, which means that they don't pay for the posts), but they are rethinking this because of the extreme right parties that get more attention by using paid advertising on a large scale. PAN's social media strategy is 'friendly' communicating to their followers, as if they are friends. And creating a movement for positive change: you change your behaviour, we change laws. You change your way of approaching big companies, we change how politics treats them. About 'hot topics', communication can become a bit harsher, for example about bull fighting. PAN can become, in the words of Ana Aresta, even a bit 'aggressive' in addressing the horrific practices of bull fighting. Balancing those two approaches turned out to be the most effective.

When it comes to volunteers, some bumps on the road occurred. Especially because difficulties with and among volunteers are frequent. But at the same time, enough volunteers are available for their support which doesn't make it a big problem. Since the party is expanding and becoming more successful, people are eager to ride the wave with them.

Political opportunity

PAN successfully seized all the opportunity left on the political scene in Portugal. Because of their size and affiliation with the Communist Party, the Portuguese Green Party can be considered more red than green. Even though the Green Party calls itself 'ecologist', their political agenda does not reflect this claim. Animal rights NGOs do not advise people to vote for the Green Party, which is a clear sign of lacking an animal rights agenda. The shortcomings of the Green Party in this area left room for PAN to position itself in this political niche. Changes in political culture also helped pave the way for PAN. Where a few years back, people solely voted for major well-established political parties, minor parties became increasingly popular over the last few years. When PAN elected their first representative in national parliament, two other new political parties were elected for parliament as well. At the other hand, this might be a complicating factor for political opportunity as well, since the competition wasn't only represented by the major parties, but by small parties representing new political ideas as well.

The history of dictatorship that dominated Portugal in the time period 1926-1974 still affects Portuguese political culture. Since this dictatorship was fuelled by right-wing political ideologies and it was overthrown by a left-wing military coup, left-wing parties still predominate in Portuguese politics. This might be one another reason that PAN was able to expand and win seats quite quickly.

Framing

PAN is busy developing a framing strategy at the moment. This party seems to be on a similar development path as the Dutch *Party for the Animals*, since PAN started in 2009 under the same name. After a while, they started to broaden their political message to animal rights and environmental matters and eventually they incorporated human rights and other human-related matters in their party program as well. This development eventually

evolved their name into *People-Animals-Nature*, which obviously refers to either of those three categories. The scores (-) refer to the interconnectedness of the matters.

PAN is the only animal advocacy party, together with the German *Partei Mensch Umwelt Tierschutz*, whose party name directly refers to their ecocentric political agenda. Although, ironically enough, the party name starts with 'people', even though the core message of ecocentrism is about not placing people at the forefront. When it comes to 'human matters', frames are still under construction within the party, since their positions on these issues are under construction too. At this moment, PAN is involving positions on economics and finance in their political program.

During the last elections, PAN chose to use a narrative of hope versus polarisation, with PAN obviously representing hope. They offered voters the opportunity to choose for honest solutions and therewith for a better future. Subsequently, they position themselves as 'activists in politics' in opposition to the traditional established politicians.

Another frame that PAN uses in a convincing way is the 'left-right axis contesting' frame. According to Bebiana Cunha, the left-right axis is ineffective and encourages polarisation. Therefore, PAN distances itself from the spectrum and presents itself as a party that is open to work with every party that has progressive ideas and plans about the themes PAN works on. PAN presents itself in this way as a political spectrum transcendent party that rather seeks for solutions than perpetrating political games and customs.

Electoral system

Portugal has a List Proportional Representation System, functioning in districts.³⁸ Officially, the system has no threshold, although the chances of winning seats vary from district to district. In a small district, where just a few seats can be distributed among the running parties, larger parties have an advantage. Therefore, a natural threshold is present in some districts. Chances for small parties to win seats thus vary from district to district.

The financial state support for parties that gain 50,000+ votes in national elections increases the chances for small parties to become part of the political scene in Portugal. Together with the changing political culture, in which small parties gain ground, this system can be labelled as and 'easy' electoral system for small parties.

Other factors

In 2020, two crises occurred inside PAN. Two representatives left the party within three weeks and took their seats with them. First, their only member of the European parliament left the party and three weeks later a member of the national Portuguese parliament did the same. Both people left because they could not identify their own ideas with the party's ideas anymore. Subsequently, a public disagreement lurked, and the party had to make clear that it wasn't willing to fight in public and they closed off all public communication. Towards their members, they explained the situation and tried to close this chapter as quick as possible. Their approach towards the public is to show that the party 'stayed', whereas the

³⁸ Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis, *Electoral System Design*, 171; Electoral Assistance, *Council of Europe*, Portugal, DOI: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/electoral-assistance/elecdata-portugal>.

representatives 'left'. This year, the local elections will prove whether these crises affect the party in electoral sense.

Conclusion

The electoral system, zeitgeist, and political culture of Portugal are all beneficial for small parties to arise. Together with the political opportunity that was available, which PAN made good use of, all these factors can be assigned as beneficial and supportive for PAN to get established and develop into a medium sized party. PAN utilises all these aspects quite well, which clearly contributes to their success.

4. Canada



Intro

The **Animal Protection Party of Canada** (APPC) was established in 2005. During that year, the Canada Election Act changed in a way that made it possible for small parties to run for elections. Before 2005, each party present at least 50 candidates during national elections, but that changed in 2005 to only one candidate. The non-profit entity Animal Alliance of Canada (ACC) existed from 1990 on and decided to make the jump and run for elections.

Establishing a political party was a big discussion inside the community, since the chances of winning were 0. Nonetheless, 75% of ACCs members were positive about going into politics. APPC was built by the input of all their supporters. The founders asked them: what do you want us to put in our program? They received near to a thousand answers, including the notion that non-animal related issues had to be involved, because of the interconnectedness of all the issues. The most important question was: what is it that our country needs to do to turn around the climate crisis that we're in?

Since 2005, the party has been unsuccessfully participating in (mostly national) elections. This might raise some questions about the goal of establishing a political party. The question is: how does APPC function and what are their goals?

For this case study, Liz White was interviewed about the establishment process and the current challenges the party faces. White was already part of Animal Alliance of Canada since 1990 and was one of the founders of APPC. She is party leader since 2005.

Resources

APPC experiences difficulties with obtaining all of the resources examined in this report. This is partly a result of the electoral system, which makes it difficult for political parties to raise money, of the fact that APPC's scope doesn't reach very far and of the Canadian political culture that shows a decrease in political engagement of especially younger people.

Fundraising is, together with membership fees, the only source of income for the party. But it is only allowed to yearly receive donations not higher than \$1625 per donor. These laws are made to prohibit entanglements between political parties and big industries. But it has the most impact on smaller parties. Facebook is used to find more monthly donors.

No public Canadian figures present themselves to support the party publicly. There are a number of high-profile people that donate to the party, but don't advocate for the political message. APPC, however, is eager to work together with other organisations such as charities and NGOs, but these organisations have to stay impartial in order to not lose their charitable status. Nevertheless, some organisations work together with APPC, especially the ones who see possibilities for change because in this cooperation. Together, they form a bigger movement, in which every actor or organisation uses their own power and possibilities to work for improvements.

APPC's Facebook page has approximately 7500 followers, which is not much compared to the number of followers of the Green Party (107,000) and especially when compared to the largest party in Canada, the Liberal Party (almost 400,000). Since the goal of the party is to reach new members and donors through Facebook, it is necessary to increase their number of followers.

All of the candidates are volunteers. People that want to become candidates, are often younger and they tend to be very engaged and motivated during elections, but afterwards their motivation decreases. The volunteers that stay active the year round, are 'older' people. APPC's attempts to attract younger volunteers have not been successful yet. One explanation can be that young people are quite disengaged in politics for the last years in Canada. According to White, the Canadian electoral system might be causing this disengagement. 'In a First Past The Post System, candidates can win without a majority of the votes, I think the whole voting process is disenfranchising to people. I think young people look at it and say: why would I bother?'³⁹

Political opportunity

Political opportunity is not solely dependent on the space in the political arena. When a party brings new ideas and points of action to the political scene, there has to be some form of support for this new political message. From citizens, in the form of votes and legally in the form of room for action. Some countries are less open to these new ideas than other countries, which is reflected in legislation as well. In Canada, several states have passed Ag Gag Laws, that makes it illegal for people to go on investigation on farms and in slaughterhouses. These laws create prohibited spaces around farms, slaughterhouses, and the trucks the animals are being transported on. The fines to enter those spaces are enormously high, which makes it impossible for animal rights activists to shoot footage of the living conditions of animals in these spaces. As such laws have been passed in several states, this means that the agricultural lobby is strong and the sentiment for changing the living conditions of farm animals is absent.

³⁹ Interview Liz White, 4 December 2020.

On the one hand, APPC's political opportunity can be considered quite big, since the existing political parties are not in favour of animals whatsoever. The Canadian Green Party is a quite small but established party that occupies three seats in national parliament. This party fills up some of APPC's political opportunity, but according to Liz White, this party has nothing to say about animals, they even voted for the Ag Gag Laws. 'Once parties gain a political foothold, they tend to become very cautious about the kind of issues that they advocate for', according to White.⁴⁰

The minor parties, with among them the Green Party, are open to cooperating with APPC. But the only work they do with those other parties is about human-related matters and environmental matters. On the animal-issues, they're alone.

To conclude: the Canadian political scene holds a big space for animals to be represented by a new party. Canada's political culture, however, complicates the situation for APPC to an extent where it's almost impossible to win a seat in national parliament.

Framing

APPC's most important frame is about compassionate politics. To animals, but also to people. In the words of White: 'In a compassionate world, it's about sharing and equity and caring for each other and the broader universe.' Opposite to the global polarizing political atmosphere, APPC seeks for inclusion, compassion and bringing people together. This is a strong and possible successful frame, although it needs a lot of strategic thinking and 'fitting' in order for it to work.

Electoral system

Canada has a First Past The Post System. This is very similar to the United States System, but with more parties.⁴¹ From the perspective of voters, this means that the risk of voting for a small party is huge, since the chances of losing your vote and therefore influence on the political landscape are enormously high. This system makes it almost impossible for a small party to gain electoral support and elect representatives on a national level.

However, the federal system is a complete separate system from the provincial and municipal level. The systems (top to bottom) each work very different legally, so they have to meet different requirements on every level, which makes it very difficult to run for elections on every level. The municipal level is probably the easiest level to run, but APPC doesn't have candidates that run on a municipal level yet. The party currently considers running for municipal elections, since the chances of winning seats are higher on that level.

Other factors

At this moment, the *Animal Protection Party of Canada* seems to act more like an NGO than a political party. According to White, this is important, since it is the only way the party can get things done outside the political arena.

⁴⁰ Interview Liz White, 4 December 2020.

⁴¹ Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis, *Electoral System Design*, 166.

‘Because of the system we operate in, parts of us have to behave like an NGO in order for us to move the issue forward. It’s very important to build our party, but if that’s our only focus in a First Past The Post system, frankly I don’t know why people would give us money to continue. Because people want animals protected, no matter what.’⁴²

Moreover, APCC shows what a political party without elected representatives is able to do. They for example effectuated a national ban on the use of certain poisons that were used against ground squirrels, and other poisons are being looked at at the moment. Also, livestock transports are now prohibited when the temperature rises above a certain heat. These might seem small victories, but it is of fundamental impact on the system. ‘The tactic is to pick things that are going to make a fundamental change, that look small but are indefensible by the industry and the government’, says White.

Still, this is an ongoing discussion within the party. Some people think the party should behave more like a political party and less like an NGO. This is an understandable critique, since the party did not yet fully engage in local elections so far. Even though the party makes the most chance to win seats and increase their political impact on this level. Accordingly, the party has no political party program. APCC’s positions are presented on its website and the party uses that platform for all the elections. This makes them more comparable to an NGO as well.

One way in which APCC works similar as other animal advocacy parties is their position on the political spectrum. The party chooses to differentiate itself from the left-right axis that other existing parties use. In Liz White’s words: ‘A lot of people that look at our platform would say it’s left, but it’s neither [left nor right]. It’s about making change. It’s about a revolution. What we truly need is a revolution and we need to talk about that in non-scary terms.’⁴³

Conclusion

The Canadian electoral system works strongly against the rise of new small parties. A loophole here can be found in the local political level. It seems a level in which little impact can be made, but this is a misunderstanding. If most of the resources and energy is focused on local elections, some political points can be gained. Moreover, a boost of social media channels and website are important to reach more possible local candidates. Especially because political opportunity is available in Canada, but it’s almost impossible to utilise this opportunity on a national level. Building the party from the bottom up would be the best option for APCC to grow. Grassroot politics is the best option for the *Animal Protection Party of Canada*.

⁴² Interview Liz White, 4 December 2020.

⁴³ Interview Liz White, 4 December 2020.

5. Germany



Intro

Partei Mensch Umwelt Tierschutz (PMUT) or short **Tierschutzpartei** is the oldest animal advocacy party in this report and in the world. The party was founded in 1993 by the German professor Ingeborg Bingener. It is also the very first animal advocacy party that was established. From the beginning on, the goal of the party was to form a holistic party program, with ecocentrism as leading principle.⁴⁴

Currently, the party holds 18 seats in local parliaments: one seat in the district council of Oberbayern (Bavaria), three seats in county councils and the rest in county-level city councils and city councils spread across the country. The party thus established a place for itself in several places across the country, but it wasn't able to occupy a solid position on the German political scene yet. On the national political level, the party never was a serious contender for a seat in parliament. How come?

In order to learn more about the establishment process as well as the current matters of the party, and interview with Matthias Ebner, the federal chairman of the party, took place.

Resources

In Germany, each political party that wins at least 1% of the votes during national elections is entitled to state subsidy. The German government matches the yearly budget of a political party up to a million euros. This is called 'the absolute barrier of 1 million euros'. Obviously, major parties benefit the most from this law, since they already receive a lot of money from donors and members. For the *Tierschutzpartei*, it's both an advantage and a disadvantage, since the party has the right to state subsidy and thus receives more money than they collect themselves. But at the same time, it gives the major parties a head start and makes it even more difficult for a small party such as the *Tierschutzpartei* to compete with other parties on the national level. To compare, their campaign budget during the last national elections was 25,000 euros, while the German Green Party spent 1 million euros on online campaigning only. *Die Grünen* occupy at the moment 9.4% of the seats in national parliament, which makes them by no means the biggest party in Germany. In order for the *Tierschutzpartei* to make a chance during national elections, they thus have to find a way to collect more campaign funding.

No real famous people support the *Tierschutzpartei* and their political message publicly. Over the last years, some actors and singers supported the party, but these people weren't always the ones you want your party to be represented by. Young public persons that are

⁴⁴ Parteichronik, Website *Tierschutzpartei*, see: <https://www.tierschutzpartei.de/partei/parteichronik/>.

very active on social media are either not interested in supporting the party, or never heard of the party.

The *Tierschutzpartei* uses social media, especially Facebook, in order to get into contact with possible new candidates and to raise money for their campaigns. According to Ebner, the party experiences difficulties in reaching those goals. This might have something to do with the reach of their social media platform. The party only counts 35,000 followers on Facebook, which is less than half of the followers of the Green Party (81,000). In order to increase this number, the party might think about diversifying their shared content. Currently, the party page only posts 'sharepics': pictures of a certain topic with written text on it, and the party logo. These sharepics are easily produced and give a quick glance of the party's position on a certain topic. According to Ebner, they are easy to share as well (hence the name). However, the use of these sharepics results in a monotonous Facebook page, that doesn't keep people engaged. Short videos and clips do, provided that they are made by a professional video maker and tell an interesting story. This might be a way to expand the reach of the party's Facebook page. Since German media is not interested in providing the party a stage to present their political message, the party's own social media channels are the main tool for presenting themselves to the public.

Moreover, on the subject of volunteers, things haven't gone so smoothly as well. The party experiences quite some friction between volunteers who very often expect a more solid position within the party than the party can offer them. The party also experiences difficulties in finding new volunteers, especially in parts of the country where the party is small. Most volunteers are motivated during elections, but in between elections, they don't stay around. Only new members seem motivated to become active inside the party.

Political opportunity

Die Grünen take up all the space on the political scene about climate and animal rights matters. It is questionable whether they occupy this space 'rightfully', since their positions on animal rights and climate are way less radical and holistic than the positions of the *Tierschutzpartei*. However, since *die Grünen* are represented in national parliament, this is for most voters a safer choice during elections. This situation complicates the political journey of the *Tierschutzpartei* and is one of the factors that prevents the party from gaining seats on the national level. Yet, this position can be used to become more successful as well. The *Party for the Animals* successfully showed how exposing voting practices of the other parties can contribute to the party's own success. They proved that many parties don't vote according to their party program. These parties may have promised to improve animal rights, but do they commit to this promise? Showing voters these discrepancies might contribute to the position of the *Tierschutzpartei* as well.

An additional complicating factor is the fact that the *Tierschutzpartei* is not the only animal advocacy party in Germany. Several other animal advocacy parties exist and compete for electoral representation. The *Tierschutzpartei* thus has to compete with not only *die Grünen*, but also with other small parties for their place on the political scene. This position makes them invisible for the majority of German society. Even NGOs don't recognise the party when they present their 'how to vote' lists during elections.

At the moment, the party discusses the possibility to merge with the *V-Partei*. This party was formed as a critique to the *Tierschutzpartei* and in an attempt to establish a more successful animal advocacy party. So far, they are not more successful in terms of electoral success, but they are quite successful in gaining new members, which is something the *Tierschutzpartei* is lacking in the last years. A merge can be beneficial to both parties, since both parties possess strengths the other party lacks and together, they might form a front towards the Green Party. This might be a step in the right direction for the econcentric movement in Germany.

Another complicating factor seems to be Germany's political culture. People don't easily affiliate themselves with political parties. This might be because of Germany's politically turbulent history.

Framing

During the establishment process, problems regarding the party name occurred. Since *econcentrism* is the party's core message, its party name had to reflect this message. Therefore, the party name included animals as well as people and environment. But with a long party name, a clear and concise abbreviation was needed. The first attempt was the abbreviation MUT ('mut' means courage in German). But another company used that name as well and obstructed the party from using it. Eventually they decided to use to name *Tierschutzpartei*, which is a more concrete and clearer name than MUT, but only refers to the animal rights part of their political program. This leads often to the misunderstanding that the party's political message is only about animal rights.⁴⁵

Also, on social media, as discussed above, the party has some improvements to make when it comes to framing. Apart from this, their party program represents a strong ecocentric message, but not many people actually get to read it, since the party still is quite unknown to the German public. This might be rather a matter of branding than of framing. Branding is not about *what* information the party presents, but *how* it is presented. The party leaders might want to reconsider their branding strategy in order to reach a bigger public with their message. Social media, as well as their website design plays a large part in this process. Adding a younger, more energetic appearance to their work might help in enlarging their scope of their audience as well.

Electoral system

Germany has a Mixed Member Proportional System. This is a mix between a List Proportional Representation system (which means that the percentage of votes a party receives determines the amount of seats a party wins) and a First Past The Post System (in which the candidate that receives the most votes in a district wins, even though it does not have to be an absolute majority). Voters vote two times: on a party and on a local representative of a party. First, people vote on a representative of a party in their district, which is called the *Erststimme*. This tier consists of 299 seats. Secondly, people vote at the national level on a party, the *Zweitstimme*, which distributes the rest of the seats between all the parties that win at least 5% of all the votes, which makes quite a high threshold. When parties received more *Erststimme* than *Zweistimme*, the number of parliamentary

⁴⁵ Ingeborg Gräßler, 'Tierschutzpartei: Wie alles begann', PMUT website, DOI: <https://www.tierschutzpartei.de/partei/parteichronik/wie-alles-begann/>.

seats is increased, and those parties receive extra seats. The goal of this mixed system is that the Proportional Representation part compensates for the inequality that the First Past The Post System can cause. At this moment, the German Bundestag consists of 709 seats, but this number can be increased to 800.⁴⁶

Thus far, the party has not been able to win any parliamentary seats. The system makes it difficult for small parties to win seats. Since 2019, the party focuses more on municipal elections, which turns out to be a more fruitful approach, since the party won in 15 municipalities during the 2019 elections.

Other factors

Germany won a seat in the European Parliament in the last elections in 2019. However, Martin Buschmann, who took the seat, was expelled by the *Tierschutzpartei* in early 2020 after information about him being chairman in the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party (NPD) in his younger years was released by the press. The party was unaware about this and immediately expelled him. Buschmann, however, did not give up his seat to be taken by another *Tierschutzpartei* politician, but kept it to represent himself as individual MEP, not affiliated to any party.⁴⁷ This is something that happens to other parties as well. Although it leads to bad press, it does not have to harm the party when public communication about the situation is transparent, clear and appeasing.

The fact that their ecocentric message is not heard by the bigger public leads to some frustration inside the party. According to Ebner, the *Tierschutzpartei* is 'the most progressive party of Germany'.⁴⁸ The fact that the party isn't seen as a valid opponent in national politics has obviously something to do with the electoral system and lack of media coverage. Yet, another factor might be the position the party takes on the political spectrum. The party still struggles in how to present itself on the national political scene. As in other countries, the left-right axis on the political spectrum works polarising among parties and voters. Germany's mischievous experience with extreme right-wing politics in the past increases the distance between left-wing and right-wing politics and adds pressure to the political debate. Using the 'left-right axis contesting' frame might be a solution for the *Tierschutzpartei*, because it withholds them from picking a side and joining debates about these different positions of parties.

Conclusion

Many factors complicate *Tierschutzpartei's* wish to grow and expand. The German electoral system favours the chances and opportunities of major political parties. The system makes it somewhat impossible for a small party to win seats in parliament. This can be demotivating for party members. Moreover, their political opportunity is small, since the Green Party and other minor animal advocacy parties compete over it.

⁴⁶ Jon Henly, 'Germany's general elections: all you need to know', *The Guardian*, 24 August 2017, DOI: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/24/germanys-general-election-all-you-need-to-know>; Reynolds, Reilly, and Ellis, *Electoral System Design*, 91, 95, 168.

⁴⁷ GUE/NGL, Statement on Martin Buschmann, 28 January 2020, DOI: <https://www.guengl.eu/statement-on-martin-buschmann/>.

⁴⁸ Interview Matthias Ebner, 10 December 2020.

However, improvement on some areas definitely can increase the party's chances. Improvement of social media and website by different branding and extending their network simultaneously might lead to more publicity of the party's political message. Besides, focusing on local elections rather than on national elections will almost undoubtedly lead to expansion of the party. In the German case, as well as in the Canadian case, grassroots politics might be the only and best option for growth and increasing political influence.

6. Norway



Intro

The case study of Norway was added to this report in order to test the hypotheses in a country without any animal advocacy party. The question here is: what explanations can we find for the absence of a political animal advocacy party in Norway? The exact case of Norway was selected because the political breeding ground of this country seems to be similar to some of the European countries in which well-functioning animal advocacy parties do exist, such as Portugal and the Netherlands. Besides, animal advocacy parties are active in all of Norway's surrounding countries and Norway's electoral system is quite similar to its neighbours'. At first glance, it thus wouldn't be more or less difficult for a Norwegian party to be established. In order to find explanations for the establishment of animal advocacy parties, it can be helpful to search for reasons to *not* establish a party.

In order to get a closer look of the Norwegian case, I interviewed Siri Martinsen, director of NOAH, a large and well-established Norwegian NGO fighting for the improvement of animal rights. NOAH represents the rights and welfare of animals of all kinds in Norway, from companion animals to endangered top predators like wolves and bears, to cattle used for intensive livestock farming. In doing so, NOAH is the only organisation in Norway that operates on all facets of animal rights and welfare.⁴⁹ As NOAH has been operating for over thirty years (the NGO was founded in 1989), they most likely can tell us more about the political and societal state of animal rights in Norway.

Resources

NOAH's resources are quite extensive. A striking fact is that a lot of famous Norwegians support NOAH and their messages. During the ban fur campaign, 250 well-known figures in Norway supported NOAH's message. Among them were scientists, politicians, authors and influencers.

NOAH is successful on the aspect of (social) media as well. The NGO counts more than 160,000 followers on Facebook and more or less 15,000 members. The organisation reaches a lot of people on social media with their message and subsequently get invited on television, radio, and other mainstream media channels to express their views. NOAH's

⁴⁹ Interview Siri Martinsen, 8 January 2021.

biggest goal on social media is creating awareness around animal rights. Especially when it comes to subjects which are not, or only minimally covered by mainstream media.

When it comes to funding and matters regarding volunteers, NOAH experiences comparable difficulties as minor political parties. NOAH is, as NGO, entitled to state subsidy, but funding is always something an activist organisation or party can use some more of. Moreover, enough volunteers present their services to NOAH, but managing volunteers properly is always a challenge.

The one resource that seems to be the most important to NOAH is their network. This network ensures their strong position. It helps to find public figures to support their message publicly, as well as it increases their influence. NOAH almost seems to function like a political party, since the organisation collaborates with most of the political parties in order to improve the rights of animals in Norway. On the local and at the national level, NOAH participates in talks with politicians, political parties and cabinet regarding animal welfare and animal rights. These talks result in collaborations on different levels regarding different subjects. For example, in this way NOAH was able to effectuate the establishment of a nation-wide animal police and a local prohibition of the use of animals in circuses. However, it has to be stressed that the NGO misses the direct influence a political party can exercise within the political system. Political parties can submit propositions, vote against other propositions and feature a set of other political tools to influence the political system. Even NGOs with strong ties to political parties will always be dependent on political parties to support their ideas and plans.

Political opportunity

According to Siri Martinsen, NOAH fills up most of the political opportunity in Norway when it comes to animal rights, since the NGO represents this subject and cooperates with political parties in this field. Besides, the Norwegian Green Party and Socialist Party cover animal rights in their party programmes as well. Also, the Green Party uses the 'left-right axis contesting' frame, which would make it difficult for a new animal advocacy party to occupy this niche on the political scene. In doing so, the Green Party gives the impression to be radical green and at the same time distances itself from 'mainstream politics', which is the exact position an animal advocacy party would want to take.

One might therefore conclude that not much space is left in the Norwegian political arena for a new animal advocacy party to arise, since NOAH and the Green Party strive to occupy this space. Yet, that conclusion can only be made when we solely look at animal-related matters. Even though the subject of animal rights is represented in politics and by NOAH, the interconnectedness of animal rights, climate- and environmental matters and public (human) health is not appointed by those actors. This leaves some space to be filled by an ecologist political party. Moreover, exposing the voting practices of the Greens might lead to a clearer picture of their level of constancy on the subject of animal rights and nature.

Framing

NOAH uses strong and clear frames. Their frames are being seen as credible, since they often get invited by several media platforms to explain different matters regarding animals. Nevertheless, regarding two topics the dominant frame in the media is opposite to NOAH's

frame. These dominant frames regard the hunt of endangered predators (wolves and bears) and farmed animals. When it comes to topics, the dominant frame works against the rights of these animals and NOAH is not invited in the media to explain their point of view. When it comes to the meat industry, Norway's politicians and society are still oblivious for reality. Apart from the fact that there is no room to show the suffering of animals in that industry, NOAH is thus far the only organisation that linked the current Covid-19 pandemic to the way animals are treated in the meat industry. The latter two points show that political opportunity is still present for a new animal advocacy party to join the political arena, even though NOAH and the Green Party attempt to claim the space.

On social media, the organisation uses multidimensional frames. Sometimes they show the suffering of animals, sometimes the personality of one particular animal, or they show facts about certain species. Alternating these different frames works best, according to Martinsen. NOAH's director also warns for the dangers of framing certain groups of people, such as farmers as 'the enemy'. The effect might be that people only talk about your aggressive language and the fight between you and the farmers.

Electoral system

Norway's electoral system is a one-tier List Proportional Representation system. This means that each party presents a list of candidates for an electoral district. Voters vote one time for a party and parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the vote. This is one of the simplest electoral systems and it is quite easy to participate as a new party. One difficulty in Norway is the threshold of 4%.⁵⁰ This reduces the chances for small parties to enter the parliament. However, the Portuguese PAN managed to win a seat during the 2019's European Parliamentary elections, winning 5.1% of the votes.⁵¹ This obviously shows the possibility for small parties to win seats, albeit high thresholds.

Other factors

Quite similar to most of the animal advocacy parties discussed in this report, NOAH withholds itself from taking a stance on the political spectrum. Most activist NGOs position themselves on the left side of the political spectrum, but the danger of this, according to Martinsen, is that not everyone feels welcome to join your organisation. NOAH therefore does not present itself as a left-wing organisation but as an organisation that wants to improve animal rights, and in order to do so, has to work together with as many people, organisations and political parties as possible.

Another similarity between NOAH and most of the animal advocacy parties is their science-based work. Every standing point or action is backed by extensive scientific research. Because of resistance to animal activism, due diligence is crucial. When opponents and possible new members or supporters know that every piece of information offered by an organisation is thoroughly fact-checked, they eventually cannot ignore this organisation anymore.

⁵⁰ Reynolds, Reilly, and Ellis, *Electoral System Design*, 60, 171; Electoral assistance, *Council of Europe*, see: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/electoral-assistance/elecdata-norway>.

⁵¹ Successful Animal Politics EU Movement wins 2 million votes and 3 seats in the European Parliament, 4 June 2019, DOI: <https://www.partyfortheanimals.com/en/successful-animal-politics-eu-movement-wins-2-million-votes-and-3-seats-in-the-european-parliament>.

Even though many similarities between NOAH and animal advocacy parties can be named, Martinsen is clear about not wanting to go into politics, 'because political parties get caught up in political games and running for elections. This distracts from the real goal of improving animal rights.'⁵² Interestingly, this is the exact view of animal advocacy parties and this is the reason why these parties try to contest the left-right axis in politics and stay true to their 'activist nature'.

Conclusion

Norway turned out to be a more interesting and valuable case to this research than expected. On each of the hypothesis, they performed on the same level as successful political parties. On additional factors, like their position on the political spectrum, NOAH also shows similarities with the case studies discussed in this report. By trying to stay impartial and 'a-political', NOAH's position is similar to the parties that contest the left-right axis on the political spectrum.

In Martinsen's view, the political opportunity in Norway is taken by NOAH. This might be the case when we solely consider animal rights. However, the ecocentric, holistic notion that animal rights are connected to human living conditions is not represented yet on the Norwegian political scene. Moreover, an NGO has no direct political influence and will always be dependent on political parties to support their plans. Therefore, there will most likely be room left on the Norwegian political scene for a new party with a clear ecologist stamp.

⁵² Interview Siri Martinsen, 8 January 2021.

General conclusions

This report started with the statement that someone can go into politics for two reasons: either to become part of the political power structure, or to make significant changes in policies. Naturally these two reasons are intertwined in most cases, since you have to become part of the political power structure to be able to change policies. However, changing policies seems to be the only goal for animal advocacy parties. All of the founders established their parties out of activist beliefs that turned out to not be effective enough outside politics. Their goals are based on the shared concept of ecocentrism: all life on earth is part of the same ecosystem. Mainstream politics is largely driven by egocentrism, which considers humans to be the dominant and most important species on the planet.

The rise of this new political movement moreover resulted in the rise of the political ideology of ecologism. Ecologists challenge the widely adhered notion that the human position on this planet is dominant over other species. Moreover, constant economic growth is unsustainable and therefore undesirable, according to ecologism. At the same time ecologists distance themselves from other political ideologies by noting that the vast majority of the remaining ideologies still hold onto the human-centered point of view and the assumed need for constant economic growth.⁵³

What then is the most effective way to change human behaviour regarding animals and the planet? All of the animal advocacy parties that were established over the last decades had the same answer: by participating in the system where laws are being made and amended and so effecting change from within.

The goal of this research was to find socio-political explanations for the fact that so many animal advocacy parties were established in different countries over the last three decades. In doing so, the research started with four hypotheses: 1) there has to be room on the political scene in a country for a new party to address new topics and values to the political agenda. In other words: new parties need political opportunity in order to be able to function as a political party; 2) the party has to be able to collect the following resources: money, volunteers, (social) media, and public figures that promote their message in order to function as a political party; 3) the party has to create its own 'brand' and accordingly use clear and multidimensional frames and thus distinguish itself from other parties and/or organisations; 4) the electoral system in a country has to make it possible for new and small parties to run for elections and allow for a chance of winning seats.

In this last section, the conclusions of this research will be summarised and advice for the establishment of future parties will be presented.

Political opportunity

Determining if there is space left on a political scene for new political ideas and values turned out to be an accurate method of measuring the possible success of a new animal advocacy party. However, space for new ideas about animals and nature exists in most

⁵³ Ecologism, key concepts and divisions, *Tutorhunt*, 18 January 2016, DOI: <https://www.tutorhunt.com/resource/16273/>.

countries, since most established political parties are not interested in addressing animal rights in their political agenda, which is mainly human-centric. This leaves open a big vacuum for new parties to address issues regarding animals and nature and formulate coherent solutions from an ecocentric instead of an egocentric point of view.

A little side note here of course is that the political opportunity theory does not apply to every new party that adds new ideas and values to the political scene. Some ideas and values are more pressing in certain times, which makes this theory partly dependent on 'zeitgeist' or general morality of the time. Animal advocacy parties benefit from the current zeitgeist, because climate change and sustainability are becoming more pressing issues in the public sphere. This is for a big part instigated by research on climate and animals that has been conducted and shared in the last decades. Human knowledge about animal sentience, the practices of intensive livestock farming, and the dangers of climate change expanded significantly over the last years. The Internet and social media platforms naturally contributed to the distribution and better understanding of this knowledge. It is only a reasonable effect of this easily accessible knowledge that animal advocacy parties gain an increasingly bigger space in the political arena.

Interestingly, the parties that do address issues of animal welfare and rights in parliament are, apart from the usual suspects such as green parties and socialist parties, also radical right-wing parties. However, they focus mainly on companion animals and do not incorporate rights for farm animals as well as nature and climate issues into their agenda. This is true for most of the parties that function in the political establishment in almost all countries: they are lacking in understanding the connection between animal rights, climate change, decreasing biodiversity and human welfare. Especially Green parties, from whom one would expect understanding of and actions on these issues, disappoint in many countries by missing a holistic view on these issues.

Although phenomena such as climate change gain ground in the agenda of more political parties, no other party goes as far as animal advocacy parties on their action points against climate change, biodiversity loss, and animal rights. The biggest asset of these parties is their unique point of view towards the whole of society, summarised in the notion of ecocentrism. These parties have the ability to show how most of the problems in modern-day societies are interrelated: why intensive live-stock farming is not only damaging for the animals and disastrous for the climate (and thus impacts our living conditions), but also dangerous for public health and human welfare. Since this is the key message of animal advocacy parties, no other political party is able to convey this notion so clearly. In doing so, they take up a unique space on the political scene, in which other parties are not able to participate. This may allow us to conclude that political opportunity of new animal advocacy parties is present in almost every country and political system.

It can be the case though, that some of the political opportunity is filled up by other actors in the animal rights field. In many countries, NGOs regarding animal rights take up some of the space on this subject. Some of the bigger NGOs (or other organisations) that work in the animal rights field participate in politics as well, by working together with political parties, participating in elections by supporting certain parties, and campaigning for certain matters. This seems to be the case in Norway, where no animal advocacy party exists. It would be an

easy conclusion to state that the animal rights NGO NOAH claims the space and in doing so causes a barrier for a new political party to work in this space as well. Yet, neither NOAH nor existing political parties in Norway show the connection between animal rights and human living conditions and address the concept of ecocentrism in their views. This notion might advocate for the opportunity for the establishment of a political animal advocacy party in Norway, even though some of the space is already being taken.

Resources

The Resource Mobilisation Theory proved to be another important factor in the process of establishing a political party. This research started looking at funding, (social) media, volunteers and public figures that publicly support the political message of the animal advocacy parties. All these resources turned out to be very important in the establishment process of a party.

Funding as well as (mainstream) media attention contributes quite reliably to building the party and successfully running for elections. However, most new parties don't have easy access to either of those things. They thus have to either find smart ways to gain funding and media coverage, or find a solution to work their way around it. For example, by building their own media channels and working effectively with volunteers.

There are large differences notable when looking at social media and website practices of the examined parties. Some parties built professional websites that are clear and user-friendly. In most cases, along with a professional looking website, social media channels of these parties are also well coordinated. These parties have a significant number of followers as well as engagement on their posts. Unsurprisingly, these parties turn out to be the most successful parties as well in electoral success, membership numbers and the scope of their political message. Although the importance of a social media network may vary from country to country, it can be concluded that strong (social) media channels are important for gaining attention, support, and creating fertile ground for your political message to grow in scope and reach.

Many parties shared the same difficulties regarding volunteers. It seems to be difficult to find enough and/or the right volunteers and encourage them to also stay active outside of campaign times. Many parties experience difficulties with volunteers regarding political and strategic decisions the party makes. A new party evolves all the time and not all decisions a party makes, or all directions a party chooses match all volunteers. Resistance from volunteers and members is a natural result of the evolvments a party makes during its establishment process. Tension between volunteers can also be an issue. However, this is naturally a part of building a political party and building a network.

Renowned people who openly support the party's message turned out to be an interesting resource, since it contributes in obtaining the other discussed resources as well. This research showed that parties that have been able to use this resource successfully extend their reach as well as contribute to their political success. It works in both ways: parties that are not supported by public figures in sharing their message are less likely to successfully establish a party and make use of the other resources as well.

Now that we have pointed out how important all of these resources are to the establishment of new political parties, the question is: how to acquire these resources? The most striking notion was the extent to which the parties engage in the process of networking. Some parties started networking right at the beginning of their establishment process, while others did not yet find the right tools to start building a broad network. Obviously, some people have more charisma and network skills than others, and some political cultures and electoral systems stimulate networking between politicians and others don't. The practices of networking therefore differ from country to country. Although political culture and electoral system work against small parties in building their network, it is never impossible. This research showed that networking is key in obtaining all the resources that are necessary for successful party building.

Framing

When interviewing the different party affiliates, I noticed that most parties are not fully aware of the frames they use in expressing their political message. In fact, most of them see framing as a misleading tactic that big parties and corporations use to expand their power. This perception of the practice of (re)framing might be explained by their roots in activism. Party founders have a clear image of their core message that does not need much reconsideration. However, framing is not about reconsidering your core message, it is about getting voters to understand it. The majority of the world population is not familiar with the concept of ecocentrism. In fact, quite the opposite is the case: frames that are opposite to ecocentrism regarding farming, meat and dairy consumption and nature, dominate our societies. This narrows the space for political parties to address these topics as problematic. Reframing these topics is nonetheless crucial for animal advocacy parties to gain political success, since only seizing political opportunity will not inherently lead to success. If a party doesn't know how to present itself within this opportunity, not many people will vote for it. Framing is therefore the one factor that might turn political opportunity into political success.

Despite their lack of awareness, most parties use frames quite successfully. But the problem is that they are not aware of the frames they use, and therefore are not completely able to use them strategically. When using the right frames, animal advocacy parties might be able to expand the political space they operate in and in doing so, increase their electorate.

Electoral system

Interestingly, the case studies showed that the hypothesis on the impact of electoral systems on the success of party establishment was not entirely correct. The research shows that the electoral system does have a great impact on parties, but this impact is not that all-determining as assumed, because of three reasons:

First, the case of Australia shows that although the electoral system favours larger parties, tricks can be used and loopholes can be found to let the system work in favour of a small party as well. Although at the moment chances are low that the Animal Justice Party wins federal elections, the ranking system enables small parties to work together with larger parties. Because of this system, small parties are able to obtain some electoral support and broaden their networks at the same time. This can eventually increase chances of winning a seat on the federal level as well.

Secondly, the case of Canada shows that even when it is far from possible to gain electoral success during federal elections, local politics can be a good option for small parties to get a foot in the door. This report only examined electoral systems that are used for national elections, but electoral systems differ between electoral levels. Local politics might be a better place to start for parties that function in countries that disadvantage small parties in national elections.

Thirdly, small parties without elected seats can be quite successful too when it comes to improving animal rights. Parties in countries with an electoral system which obstructs new parties from arising are still able to use their political power, by cooperating with other organisations, or even political parties, on certain matters. In this way, the APPC, for example, achieved a national ban on certain poisons and a ban on livestock transports above a certain temperature. In this sense, these parties function in a similar way as NGOs.

Thus, electoral systems impact electoral success for minor parties, but this impact is not that crucial as assumed. It does not have to be a big obstacle in party establishment.

Other factors

Of course, several other factors explain the rise of political animal advocacy parties in the last 30 years. For example, an obvious factor is the growing recognition in societies of the risks of climate change and the fact that quick and decisive action is needed. Zeitgeist could be another factor. Societies around the world are becoming more aware of marginalised groups and becoming more open to inclusion of marginalised groups. This clears the path for a better position for animals and nature in politics as well.

Another interesting factor that most parties examined share is where they position themselves on the political spectrum. All other existing parties position themselves between left-wing and right-wing and propagate their position loud and clear. However, most animal advocacy parties restrain from positioning themselves on the spectrum. They claim that they are 'neither left-wing, nor right-wing', and in doing so they place themselves outside that traditional political spectrum and arguably outside the political establishment as well. In times where research shows an increasing disappointment and decreasing trust of citizens in the political system, this might be a smart move. This, together with the 'ecocentrism frame' provides animal advocacy parties a unique space on the political scene, which entails a completely new way of political thinking and acting. Therefore, we could conclude that animal advocacy parties bring a new political ideology to the political arena, ecologism: a radical new way of thinking that is not human-centred, but eco-centred. In doing so, animal advocacy parties introduce the concept of ecocentrism to politics.

Last but not least, the Dutch *Party for the Animals* and the *Animal Politics Foundation* play a role in the establishment of animal advocacy parties. Several parties stated to be inspired by the *Party for the Animals* in their establishment process. Some, such as the Australian *Animal Justice Party*, the Finnish *Eläinoikeuspuolue*, and the Italian *Partito Animaliste Italiano* state that the success of the *Party for the Animals* in the Netherlands was an impulse for the establishment of a party in their own country. In the United Kingdom, one of the founders of the *Party for the Animals* was involved in establishing the *Animal Welfare*

Party. Besides this, the yearly conferences and online workshops organised by the *Animal Politics Foundation* are said to have an impact on the development processes of the participating parties. Although not all parties are interested in joining the international movement and exchanging information and knowledge, the majority of animal advocacy parties worldwide are involved and work together to strengthen and amplify the movement. Hence, we can conclude that the *Party for the Animals* functions as an instigating force for this movement that is now expanding on a global scope.

Recommendations for future & current parties

1. Examine the 'political opportunity' in your country. Is there space left on the political scene for a political animal advocacy party? Or is this space already taken by other parties or organisations? If there are already one or more successful operating actors on this field in your country, examine what topics they address and what frames they use accordingly. In many cases, existing parties (mainly green parties and socialist parties) present themselves as animal-friendly and green. However, their presentation and their voting practices are very often not aligned. Besides, even though green parties claim to have green goals, ecocentrism is not their key principle. This clears a space for new parties with a radical different point of view.

During the establishment process, it might be helpful to work together with the established parties and/or organisations that operate in this field. At the same time, you have to be careful in doing so, since distinguishing yourself from other parties is crucial for political success. Avoid merging with other parties and losing your unique (ecocentric) point of view. Working together with other parties and organisations means keeping eyes on your own goals and at the same time being aware of the other actors in the same field who see you as a rival and will, in many cases, try to manipulate your success.

2. Networking is key. As such, put a lot of time and effort into building a strong and broad network. Involve people that are skilled networkers with strong social capabilities. Try to get into contact with everyone that you can think of, such as scientists, public figures of all kind, politicians, people that already operate on the field of animal rights, etc. Obviously, it is important to first check these people's background. Collaborating with people that made questionable choices in the past, such as justifying racism, can blemish your party in the future. Compassion should be the core theme of the party and therefore the people that you work with have to fit into this narrative. Most people will not engage in your mission, but some will, and that is how building a network works. Use social media to make connections, but also street activism and old-fashioned calling and emailing.
3. Conduct some research on the electoral system in your country. As a small party, winning seats on the national level might be futile (at least in the first couple of years), but there might be some loopholes and tricks to use. Working together with other (small) parties is an effective way to get your foot in the door. But then again, stay true to your ideals and be aware of the dangers of compromising, because it can make you lose your credibility in the eyes of the public. If the electoral system in your country does not work in favour of small new parties, shift your focus on local politics. It takes a lot of time, but you might be able to work your way up on the electoral scale. Moreover, local politics are good practice before getting involved in higher level politics and can provide a spotlight on your work. Also, many state tasks

a being decentralised over the past years, which leads to increasing political ownership of municipalities. Political parties that operate on the local level therefore gain more power.

4. Do some research on the political culture in your country. In this report, political culture refers to the place politics occupies in a society. This is often influenced by a country's history and electoral system, and includes voter turnout and citizen's political participation. Politics take up different space in different societies. Therefore, the political engagement of people differs from country to country. If you can find out what politics means to the people in your country, how many people vote during elections and the level of trust people have in mainstream political parties, it can help you finding an effective approach. You don't have to conduct in-depth scientific research and writing a report like the one you're reading now, but just reading about it will provide insight on whether it will be easy or difficult to find volunteers and public figures to support your political message and goals. It will also provide insight on the form and way your party will be functioning best and on what political level you should focus.
5. Take social media seriously. Especially when mainstream media will not cover your story, you have to build your own media channels, and you want them to reach far. Let skilled and capable people do the job for you if you don't have the knowledge or skills to make it work successfully. It's not easy to use social media in an effective way, but there are a lot of people with expertise in this field. You might not be interested in likes and shares in the first place, but rather in finding donors and coming into contact with possible new candidates or volunteers. However, remember that likes and shares eventually bring you on the path towards those goals, although it might not be a straight path. It takes time and investment to build a social media network, but it will pay off in the end.
6. One of the first things that you should do is create your 'brand' and decide which frames you will use accordingly. First, ask yourself: what is your core message and how does the name of your party reflect that message? Make sure your frames are simple and clear and that they reflect your core message. Then, decide how you want to present yourself, what communication style, logo, colours, and platforms you want to use. Align these choices to your target audience. Keep in mind that creating your own 'brand' and developing effective frames is a process and it will change over time. This is not a problem (if you don't switch between opposite frames), but there are some frames that can be clear and consistent from the beginning. Think about the obvious issues like intensive live-stock farming, climate change and the loss of biodiversity and create clear, but also multidimensional frames. For example: farming can be framed in terms of animal welfare as well as in terms of climate and public health threats. Likewise, the 'left-right axis contesting' frame is a very strong and innovatory frame that might especially work well in countries where voters increasingly distrust mainstream political parties. Pay attention to the fact that these

frames need to be thought-through and well-constructed. Just ‘kindness’ will not bring you there.⁵⁴

7. Write a political party program. Make it easily accessible on your website and social media page and send it to your members. Your message has to be loud and clear, and easy to find. Incorporate the ecocentrism frame into your program. One of the strongest parts (and one of the biggest pull-factors for voters) of animal advocacy politics is that all animal- and climate-related problems are intertwined with human-related problems. When you can show people that destroying nature and biodiversity and increasing livestock is not only horrible for animals and the planet, but also intensely dangerous for people and public health (that would be the one thing we learn from the Covid-19 pandemic we are currently facing, but still most governments and societies do not see the correlation), this legitimises the fact that your party not only exists, but is also very much needed.

If you experience difficulty in incorporating human-related issues in your party program, it can be helpful to make use of ‘core values’, as several parties already do. The values of the Dutch *Party for the Animals* are compassion, sustainability, personal freedom, and personal responsibility. These values can be used to formulate stances on issues that are not directly related to animal rights, like discussions about housing, basic universal income and abortion.

8. Create a modern, clear, and user-friendly website. Find people to make it for you if you don’t have the knowledge or know-how. Learn from good examples by studying other successful parties or organisations. Your website is, together with your social media accounts and party program, your business card to potential new members, donators, voters, and collaborators of all sorts. If you want people to take you seriously, you need to present yourself as the professional organisation that you are.
9. Growth and development of the beginning parties comes with internal disagreement, sometimes followed by members leaving the party. In some cases, these leaving members are elected representatives, taking their seat with them. This is especially the case when decisions are being made about the party line, such as incorporating non-animal matters in the party program. At first, this may seem like a big loss, but it is also part of the maturing process of a political party. If these incidents don’t happen too often, and do not cause an overextended internal crisis, they don’t cause real harm to the party. If such a situation occurs, make sure communication is simple and clear. Never fight internal battles in public and be transparent towards your members about the situation. Subsequently, close this chapter as soon as possible and keep going with the same energy and motivation.

⁵⁴ To learn more about effective (re)framing strategies, see: Charlotte Ryan and William. A. Gamson, ‘The art of reframing political debates’, *Contexts* (Winter 2006) 13-18.

Points for additional research

Because of the short time span in which this research took place, additional research is needed in order to make stronger claims and find deeper causes of specific occurring difficulties and opportunities. Therefore, a list of research topics is presented. Foregoing points of advice are however sufficiently substantiated by this research and can be used as tools for parties to improve their political work.

1. Framing is a complicated matter. In order to find ways in and segments on which the parties can improve their framing strategies, more extensive research has to take place on party programs, campaigns, social media, and other ways in which parties express their frames.
2. More research is needed to get a better understanding of the way in which political culture affects the chances for minor parties in general and animal advocacy parties in particular for winning seats in elections.
3. There has been a lot of research done on how to use social media successfully. It can be effective to dive into that research to make it easier for parties to gain their skills.
4. In order to get a better understanding of the next phase in establishing a political animal advocacy party, joining (and winning) in elections, more and different research is needed. This research should focus on electorate, the impact of charismatic leadership, and the impact of electoral systems on election results.
5. During the first few years of their establishment process many parties focus only on animal-related issues and don't include the interconnection between animal rights and human-related issues in their political message. Is it desirable to start with focussing on animal matters only, or do parties with a holistic party program from the start on have more chances during elections?
6. To get more insight on countries that have no animal advocacy party yet, more factors of that country have to be examined.

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