THE RISE IN POPULARITY OF THE LITHUANIAN POLITICAL PARTY *DRASOS KELIAS*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the genesis of a new Lithuanian political unit, the *Drasos kelias* party, which was created in 2012 and successfully participated in the 2012 Lithuanian parliamentary elections, reconstructing it in three stages based on the analysis of news portals. Reconstruction of the first stage is based on the competing "conspiracy versions" (two different interpretations of the unsolved criminal story in the news media) in 2009-2010. Two archetypal characters (criminal and/or hero) were sought in the interpretation of the two aforementioned versions. Agenda setting and media framing theories were used as explanatory theories. The second stage (2011-2012) is reconstructed through further analysis of the news portals as well as through the analysis of some additional research from the interviews and focus group discussions. This data allowed us to retrace the logic of collective thinking. This logic of collective thinking contributed to the formation of a continuous "single issue" protest community which was united by the slogan "do not hand the child to a paedophilia clan". This group of people constantly hindered the governmental institutions from the implementation of the court decision to hand the child to her mother, and over a long period of time its protest arguments expanded from "not handing the child to her mother" to protests against the entire Lithuanian legal system. Further, the third stage associated with formal institutionalization of political party and its rising of popularity among the voters in the 2012 Lithuanian parliamentary elections is analyzed. The analysis stresses the importance of social and personal networks for the regional dispersion of party election results.

KEYWORDS

Political party, elections, 'single issue' political party, collective thinking, institutionalization of political party

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of a new political party is not a frequent phenomenon, and it can be determined by a variety of factors. The contexts of long-term as well as short-term political and societal processes, the cultural environment, values and their changes, and formal institutional circumstances should be taken into account. Despite the wide range of common factors and circumstances, every new political party formation is somehow unique. The analysis of these cases creates methodological challenges for the researcher and is followed by further trajectories of new insights about the political space examined and provokes comparative research.

This article tries to analyse one interesting and rather specific case of the newly created Lithuanian political party *Drasos kelias*. This party was created at the beginning of 2012 and successfully participated in the 2012 Lithuanian parliamentary elections by winning 7 mandates. Although the party dreamed about 40 mandates, for some Lithuanian analysts such success party was unlikely.[1] Immediately after the elections, media journalists began a discussion about the emergence of the party and the longevity of its political activity. These discussions forced the authors of the article to analyze the genesis of *Drasos kelias*. Thus the main aim of this article is to reveal the most important periods of the formation process of the political party *Drasos kelias* by trying to identify and describe the basic factors important to the creation of the new party. The goals of the article are as follows: first, to discuss some theoretical assumptions which may be useful to the analysis of the new emerging party; second, to describe and discuss the main periods of party formation by taking into account the importance of value orientations, normative environment and the media as a main actor of the process.

Our main hypothesis: The media's activity and its competing discourses were the most important factor(s) in the formation of the political party Drasos kelias.

The initial analysis shows that the case is rather complex and complicated. We decided to combine different theoretical approaches implying different analytical logics to the interpretation of the newly created Lithuanian political party *Drasos kelias*. There was a need to make a chronological reconstruction of all the developments of the political party. An important reason for this chronological analysis was pragmatic: the reader should be familiar with the long-term processes,

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[1] Karolis Jovaišas, "Kada bus užsakytos mišios už 'Drąsos kelią'?" *delfi.lt* (2012-10-17) // http://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/lit/kjovaisas-kada-bus-uzsakytos-misios-uz-drasos-kelia.d?id=59780143#ixzz2GkEVDF1O (accessed December 6, 2012).

and important events. The analysis is complicated due to the sensitivity[2] of the topic involving deeply divided societal values, and long-lasting exposure of the topic in media.

Our analysis is mainly based on the results of the monitoring of news portals. The primary quantitative analysis of the reflections of the story in the media (see illustration 1) suggested us to divide a story into the periods. The three periods have their own titles: (1) the development of the "single story" with two incompatible "versions of conspiracy"; (2) rallying the community to protest; (3) formal institutionalization of political party. The developments within the two first stages (prior to the idea of a new political party) seemed to be different from the last one. This is the reason for different theoretical approaches.

"Agenda setting"[3] and "media framing"[4] theories as well as subsequent analytical tools were used in the analysis of the first chronological period.

The main object of this analysis is the reflections of the story's development in the main Lithuanian news portals. Moreover, the portals themselves serve us in two ways - not only as a research object but also as a tool (we gather the basic information from the news portals). It was important to understand to what extent the media may be called as an impartial mediator and whether the media may be an important actor of the process. As the analysis of further chronological periods showed, two competing media interpretations of the story's events which were escalated in the society were critically important for the further developments of the process. We are testing the possibility of basing the analysis of the first period on the rational choice institutionalism[5] approach. But already analysis of this first chronological period suggested to us that the approach of the other "new institutionalisms", such as historical institutionalism, might be useful for the analysis by discussing concepts of path dependency and critical junctures. For the reconstruction of possible patterns of collective thinking, we used additional research material from the focus groups. Three focus group discussions in various parts of Lithuania were organized in June, 2012.[6] As discussions indicated, their participants were firm enough in reconstructing events although it has passed

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[2] Authors do assume that sensitivity of the topic within public discourse of Lithuania can lead to ethical problems rather atypical for academic publications. Thus we do stress that the attitudes defined in this article may but not necessarily coincide with personal position of each of the authors.

[3] Joe Bob Hester and Rhonda Gibson, "The Agenda-Setting Function of National Versus Local Media: A Time-Series Analysis for the Issue of Same-Sex Marriage," *Mass Communication and Society* 10:3 (2007); Denis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994).

[4] Lee Gan Heong, "Reconciling cognitive priming vs. obtrusive contingency hypotheses," *Gazette: International Journal for Communication Studies 66* (2004); Robert M. Entman, "Framing U.S. coverage of International news: Contrasts in narratives of the KAL and Iran air incidents," *Journal of Communication* 41 (4) (1991): 6.

[5] Kathleen Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism and Comparative Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* No. 2 (1999).

[6] The reason for using focus groups interviews was to re-construct patterns of collective thinking.

already a couple of years from the beginning of the story (including "what exactly was not decided/ remained unclear"). In their spontaneous discussions the respondents easily reconstructed two competing interpretations of the events framed by the media. Both the content of focus group discussions and analysis of media material suggested the use of mythology archetypes as explanatory factors of the process.

The second chronological period, rallying the community to protest, should be taken as a crucial period due to its consequences. At the same time this period is the most difficult to explain. We assume this was already determined by the developments of the first period. More sophisticated logic of explanation is needed here. Therefore we consider the logic of historic institutionalism[7] to be fruitful here.

It is methodologically difficult to consider appropriate value normative equilibriums within society during the second period of the processes analyzed. Our efforts to interpret them through the path dependency led us to particular results. As "new institutionalisms" argues, "institutions" are interpreted here as value normative, where "formal" institutions are the actors of the processes, more active or more passive. Media is among the most active actors, as we noticed. Analysing this stage of events, agenda setting and framing theories were helpful again, and news portals remain both, as an object and as an analytical tool. The focus group analysis and the interviews with the participants of the processes were of great use as well. Concretely, in June 2012 interviews were conducted with two activists from the protest community and with the Children rights ombudsman, E. Žiobiene. Supplementary explanatory logic could be based here on the networking model: rallying the protest community was both personal (some possible arguments about specific features of neighbourhood where events were happening will be given) and virtual (inhabitants of other territories of Lithuania and also emigrant communities were involved mainly through the virtual social networks).

The third and final stage of political party institutionalization, the formal one, may be characterized by the chronological sequence of facts, such as party establishing, formation of electoral party list, and quantitatively described electoral support. All these aforementioned instruments are the instruments of "traditional" institutionalism. Rising public support also follows the logic of path dependency. Additionally, some comparative context is used proposing the categorization of newly formed political party looking for indirect similarities with party formation cases in the neighbouring countries.

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[7] *Ibid*.

At the end of the article, the possibility of dynamic modelling of developments through employing "disequilibrium"[8] typical for constructivist institutionalism[9] is discussed.

The authors do recognize the limits of this research: it is based on the combined methodology of qualitative and quantitative research using only descriptive quantitative statistical analysis, such as a number of publications and reactions in news media portals, or electoral support. Another limit of this research is that all the analysis of legal facts, formal institutional actors, etc., is mainly reconstructed from the reflections of the mentioned factors in media portals.

1. THE FIRST STAGE OF THE GENESIS OF THE POLITICAL PARTY *DRĄSOS KELIAS*: TWO COMPETING NEWS MEDIA INTERPRETATIONS OF THE STORY – "CRIMINAL" OR "HERO"?

According to Karin Sanders, there are several "significant ways the media are influential": "They set agendas. [...] They frame issues [...]".[10]

Walter Lippmann argues that public opinion responds not so much to the actual environment but to a pseudo environment constructed in great part by the news media.[11] Later Bernard Cohen summed up this idea and announced that "The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about"[12] McCombs and Shaw in their research tested a hypothesis related to the media and voters' agendas. They argued that there should be a close relationship between the issues that voters indicate as important and the issues that the media discusses.[13] On the basis of this research an "agenda setting theory" has been formulated. Its basic argument is that there exists a congruence between the stress of particular problems in the press and the public salience of some issues. This theory pays great attention to the cognitive effects of media, specifically awareness- and information-supplying functions. Because of the lack of direct experience,

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[8] Stephen Bell, "Do We Really Need a New 'Constructivist Institutionalism' to Explain Institutional Change?" *British Journal of Political Science* Vol. 41, No. 4 (October 2011) // DOI: 10.1017/S0007123411000147; Calin Hay, "From Historian to Constructivist Institutionalism"; in: R.A.W. Rhodes, S.A. Binder, and B. Rockman, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions* (Oxford [etc.]: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[9] Vivien A. Schmidt, "Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse," *Annual Review of Political Science* Vol. 11 (June 2008) // DOI: 10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.060606.135342.

[10] Karen Sanders, *Communicating Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 189-190.

[11] Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997 [Original: New York: Macmillan, 1922]), p. 214-230.

[12] Bernard Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 13; The World Bank, *The Communication for Governance and Accountability Program (CommGAP), 'The Media effects'* // http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTGOVACC/Resources/MediaEffectsweb.pdf (accessed December 11, 2012).

[13] Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The agenda-setting function of mass media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36 (1972).

individuals must rely on mass media for information and interpretation of these issues.[14]

Media framing theory can be understood as an extension of agenda setting. It is used to describe the effect of the salience of problems framed in media on the ways in which the public thinks and talks about particular issues and problems. Here, social constructivism serves as meta-theory. It is based on the assumption that media is constructing social realities because it frames images of reality and in a predictable way.[15] As Robert M. Entman writes, "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described".[16] Individual frames are treated as some "mental clusters of ideas helping individuals to process the information".[17] Long-term and short-term political attitudes are differentiated. They are related to particular issues.[18]

When in the summer of 2009 Lithuanian mass media started to expose film materials offered by Drasius Kedys, the main hero of the story, about the presumptive abuse of his child by paedophiles, it was improbable that this story would develop into political campaign, let alone become a part of an electoral campaign. However, we know that the paedophile story finally was used as one of main electoral campaign messages of one political party. This happened with the active involvement of the media. The first involvement of the media – translating a film where the child is telling her father about her abuse with all the intimate details – was a rather exceptional one. It was aimed at provoking active reactions of legal authorities and attracting the attention of society. Though the story was shocking, camera visualization created some strange impression of a "rehearsed story", especially when the story was repeated day after day.

The reaction of legal authorities was not very active. The police treated the case like routine cases: a "routine" police case on suspected paedophilia was started based on a statement by the father, Drasius Kedys. Due to inactivity of legal authorities the father decided to choose another way of the fighting with paedophilia. In the autumn of 2009, two people were killed: a judge (a colleague of the sister of Drasius Kedys', Neringa Venckiene), and a sister of the mother of the child.

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[14] Lee Gan Heong, *supra* note 4; Joe Bob Hester and Rhonda Gibson, *supra* note 3: 302.
[15] Denis McQuail, *supra* note 3, p. 331.
[16] Robert M. Entman, "Framing: towards clarification of a fractured paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43(4) (1993): 52.
[17] *Ibid*.: 53
[18] *Ibid*.

This event already attracted the attention of all the legal authorities as well as of political authorities and the public. On October 6, 2009, messages about the killing of these two people were published in all the media channels. Drasius Kedys was suspected as a killer of the mentioned persons, but he disappeared and was found dead after a half year. As the main motive of the killing, abuse of his child and connections of the victims with paedophilia were discussed. The media reported all the details of the event as well as involvement of the institutions into the solution of the case. Soon society was divided into two groups: those who supported the idea that the killing of two people is a crime and no one has a right to make its own adjudication, and the second group that believed that Drąsius Kedys is a victim of inactivity of legal authorities and hero who is fighting for his child.

The legal inquiries started then. The mainstream Lithuanian media started to describe and discuss the story every day with day-to-day exposition of the events. This allowed us to make a simple quantitative analysis of the four news media portals.[19] Figure 1 shows (we made a search of publications according to the key word "Kedys" in the news media portals search systems) the intensity of attention of media portals and portal users towards the topic from the beginning of the story in 2009 to the end of 2012. Two "waves" of the flow of information are evident. The first one is considered by us as the "first chronological period" of the events (*see* also Table 1).

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[19] Data for this article were collected during the project supported by the Lithuanian Research Council "Influence of non-electoral campaigns for political processes in Lithuania" (group of the researchers: Liudas Mazylis, Jovita Tirviene, Ingrida Unikaite-Jakuntaviciene, Bernaras Ivanovas, Sima Rakutiene, Ausrinė Jurgelionyte). Other non-electoral campaigns were analysed during the project, too, enabling us to compare quantitative characteristics and dynamics of different campaigns (*see*, e.g., Liudas Mažylis and Aušrinė Jurgelionytė, "The Lithuanian Referendum on Extending the Working of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Station: The Rationality of Actors within (Un-)Changing Structures," *Baltic Journal of Law and Politics* 5:1 (2012)).
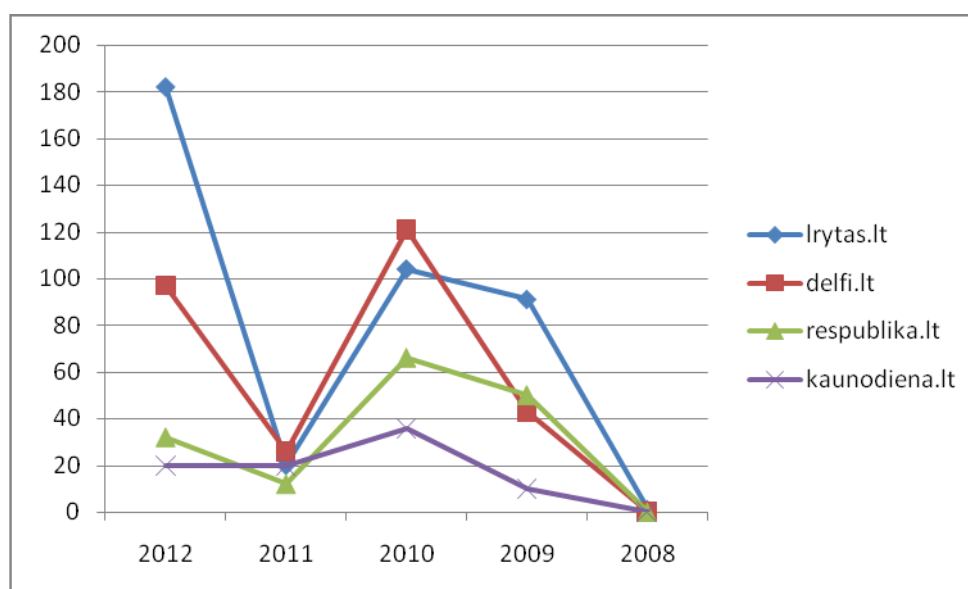
Fig. 1. Reflections of the „Drasius Kedys" story on the internet

Source: created by authors from the data of monitoring of news media portals

During the first month after the killing there were a huge number of comments on the publications. For instance, there were 17904 comments in Delfi.lt, and 35915 in lrytas.lt. There was great interest demonstrated by trying to guess who is guilty and where Kedys is hiding. A new wave of publications and comments came in April, 2010, when the body of Kedys was found, and court procedures were discussed (10986 in *lrytas.lt*, 22480 in *delfi.lt*). Doubts on how Kedys died, non-confidence in experts, and discussions about "who is directing events" were expressed in these comments.

Table 1. Events and their depiction in the news portals during the first and second phases of the story (future party genesis)

Dates	Facts reflected in media portals	Framing	Equilibrium of counter-position of moral values/ norms	Mythology archetypes
Summer 2009- summer 2010	Drąsius Kedys is filming his child. Lukewarm reaction of legal institutions. Killing of the judge and the sister of mother of the child in Kaunas. Main suspect, Drąsius Kedys, disappearing and found dead after months. Andrius Ūsas, exposed as suspected abuser, also found dead.	Drąsius Kedys – criminal or/ and hero	Counter-positioning "legal routine" vs "holly war" against pedophilia	„Killing is unconditionally bad" *vs* „Killing for the "holly" sake is excused" („Hero against the system")
2011-2012	Following court decision, the child is taken from the house of her aunt using the force exposed an excessive, and given to her mother	Excessive force from the system to give the child to mother suspected having relation to the clan of paedophiles	"Legal routine" of the system protects the child *vs* they should protect the child from the system	„Mother the witch" (may give her child to paedophiles)

Source: prepared by the authors, according to the data of *www.delfi.lt* and *www.lrytas.lt*

Four court cases constitute an important segment of all the developments of the story and events (Table 2). As if these were not enough, there was one more suspicious case: the death of the son of judge Milinis, President of the District Court

of Kaunas, where "warriors against paedophilia" may be suspected killers.[20] They were/are parallel but overlapping and influencing each other. They were constantly reflected in media, including interviews with case parties. An important person who was very frequently interviewed was the sister of Drasius Kedys, called Neringa Venckienė, leader of *Drasos kelias* party (established in 2012). She was a skilled part of all the cases mentioned, participating as a professional judge, and, at the same time, a harsh critic of the system itself.

Table 2. Court cases as reflected in the media portals

Chronology	The case	Case subjects	Result
2007-2011	Child care: mother or father Drasius Kedys (his relatives)	Drasius Kedys, later his sister Neringa Venckienė vs mother of the child Laima Stankūnaitė	Child to the mother
2008	Killing of two persons	Prosecutor vs Drasius Kedys as prime suspect	Not finished
2008-2012	Pedophilia	Father of (dead) A.Usas and L.Stankunaite vs Neringa Venckiene, and D.Kediene	A. Usas discharged (after his death); appeal possible
2011	Case of non-accordance of Neringa Venckiene as a judge	Prosecutor, Council of Judges vs Neringa Venckiene	Suspended after acquiring N. Venckiene parliamentary immunity

Source: made by authors, according to the data in *www.delfi.lt* and *www.lrytas.lt*[21]

Analyzing this period of the campaign in terms of media agenda setting and framing, it is quite clear that all of the mainstream media wished to expose the story. All the media from the first days and during the entire three-year period paid constant attention to it. Evidently, the media was acting as a public opinion maker. Two clear lines were proposed by particular media. The news portal respublika.lt

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[20] Nerijus Povilaitis, "M.Milinienė: mano sūnų nužudę žmonės gali kėsintis ir į mane," *lrytas.lt* (2012-12-27 // http://www.lrytas.lt/lietuvos-diena/kriminalai/m-miliniene-mano-sunu-ir-a-usa-nuzude-zmones-gali-kesintis-ir-i-mane.htm (accessed December 29, 2012).

[21] Asta Kuznecovaitė, "A. Ūso bylos teisėjas A. Cininas: 'Tai yra absoliuti reabilitacija'," *lrytas.lt* (2012-11-30) // http://www.lrytas.lt/-13542801221352809306-a-%C5%ABso-bylos-teis%C4%97jas-a-cininas-tai-yra-absoliuti-reabilitacija.htm (accessed December 10, 2012); "Panevėžio apygardos teismas atsisakė priimti N.Venckienės prašymą stabdyti L.Stankūnaitės ir D.Kedžio dukros perdavimą motinai," *lrytas.lt* (2011-12-23) // http://m.lrytas.lt/-13246322331324626153-panev%C4%97%C5%BEio-apygardos-teismas-atsisak%C4%97-priimti-n-venckien%C4%97s-pra%C5%A1ym%C4%85-stabdyti-l-stank%C5%ABnait%C4%97s-ir-d-ked%C5%BEio-dukros-perdavim%C4%85-motinai.htm (accessed December 10, 2012); Anatolijus Lapinskas, "Reakcijos į D. Kedžio bylą: nuo atgimimo iki... išsigimimo," *delfi.lt* (2012-04-24) // http://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/lit/alapinskas-reakcijos-i-dkedzio-byla-nuo-atgimimo-iki-issigimimo.d?id=58441740 (accessed November 30, 2012).

was permanently stressing the problems of legal authority; the story of D.Kedys has been discussed in the context of the aforementioned problems. The image of Drasius Kedys as a fighter against a corrupted bureaucratic system was consequently developed by this portal. All the activities of legal authorities were portrayed negatively. In contrast, lrytas.lt was discussing a radically different position by looking at the events and processes through the prism of those aspersed in paedophilia. Qualitative analysis of the news portal publications clearly shows the efforts of particular media to present a "framed" problem by suggesting its solution. This bias was noticed by the majority of the society. The situation created the feeling that somebody is trying to impose particular solutions. All the different positions made it difficult to reach a consensus in the society on the issues under discussion.

According to Karin Sanders, "governing paradigms [underlying approach of much communication research] make two assumptions about human behavior, each of which is extremely narrowly focused. First, human conduct is considered as primarily rational". However, Sanders citing Westen "[...] describes the political brain as being emotional [...] (2007)". She also is citing George Lakoff who (1996 and 2004) "argues for the importance of incorporating core values into political rhetoric [...]. [...] Lakoff refers to overarching value frameworks – the big issues – the questions of values on a personal level may be also significant [...]."[22] Thus, concentration on individual level – "[...] focus of analysis [...] individual attitudes and perceptions or aggregations of these – leaves aside the impact of larger contextual issues related to culture, history and political economy".

As individuals that lack individual experience, they should then trust the media to inform them about problems and interpreting those problems for them.[23]

Following this logic, it seems to be useful not to limit ourselves by looking for "media effect" but analyze what media "frames" orient towards particular values, normative or cultural factors.

It seems that two contradictory interpretations were formulated. Either there was a criminal act (if Kedys shot two people), or Kedys is a hero (the system connected with a paedophilic clan made a criminal of him), or both (all possible ways of fighting with that monster system are legitimate). Kedys disappeared: somebody was hiding him; or he was kept in any secret prisons (similar to those of CIA).

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[22] Karen Sanders, *supra* note10, p. 190.
[23] Gan Heong Lee, *supra* note 4.

Not one of the mentioned versions was proven to be correct or properfly rejected. Thus, through long months of its exposure in the mainstream media it acquired all the features of two competing "conspiracy" versions.

As discussions in focus groups showed, the typical logic of the discussants is also dual, coinciding with the two "conspiracy versions" exposed by particular media.

Finally, it is fixed in an understanding of society that the Kedys story is an exclusively important story, but when the facts are "competing" their interpretations are not an object of consensus. The questions remained open, while the discussion in media decreased.

2. THE SECOND PERIOD: RALLYING THE COMMUNITY TO PROTEST

This period is exposed in the media in a far less sophisticated manner. The controversy is rather simple: "to whom the child should belong". This presentation of the issue has similar features with the so-called Rinau story of 2008: the statement " the child should belong to the mother" was contrasted with "following the court decision" (according to it, the child will be given to the father).[24]

However, when analysing this second chronological period of events, it is not enough to explain that the private story of "child belonging" was a sufficient factor for rallying a protest movement. It is sufficient to explain this rallying of the protest movement in society by the intense activity of media or the power of emerging virtual social networks.

No doubt, developments of this period are rooted in the first period. Thus, we think the model of "path dependency" can be used here; events can be explained through the way they came to it.

Thus, is the long presentation of "incompatible versions of conspiracy" by the actively engaged media, besides the sensitivity of the topic ("belonging of the child" with paedophilia suspected), and emerging virtual social networks, insufficient for this story to become a major national problem discussed by Lithuanian citizens in Lithuania and abroad, dividing the public into two "fronts"? Do we have enough arguments to go to the final stage: the formal institutionalization of a new relevant political party?

One more fragment of the events must be described—the "Personal" rallying of the community to protest—besides to the virtual one.

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[24] "Luisai Rinau likti Lietuvoje – vis mažiau vilčių," *delfi.lt* (2008-03-21) //
http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/law/luisai-rinau-likti-lietuvoje-vis-maziau-vilciu.d?id=16413800 (accessed October 11, 2012).

The analysis of the political participation phenomenon in Lithuania shows that "personal" protest actions became a systematic form of political participation in 2000.[25]

However, long-lasting continued protest action in the Garliava settlement near the house of Neringa Venckiene where the child of D. Kedys lived, was the most visible among the other protest actions, much shorter, in 2011-2012. This group of people was waiting weeks and months, seeking to protect the child from the enforcement of a court decision which demanded the return the child to her mother. Approaching days of police actions (there were one unsuccessful attempt to return a child and the second successful action on May 17, 2012) people were staying in the street and the yard near the house days and nights.

Summarizing two first chronological periods, one coinciding factor can be clearly seen: the presentation of "unprofessional" work of legal authorities, their bureaucratic behaviour during the process of investigation of killings and suspected paedophilia, and inadequate actions in the enforcement of "routine" court decision on child care (more than 200 policemen were involved in the action to squeeze through the crowd). At the same time, "competing versions" of the event remained: is this operation a purposive operation of paedophile clan, or merely lack of concern and unprofessional action. The third, lesser known version of the event was presented in some media outlets. It speculated that a criminal organization was manipulating the crowd. ("One day they put all the cases of 'violets' in one place").[26]

As the experiences of Central/East European states show, a kind of catalyst is needed for channelling social protest. The nature of that catalyst can be diverse, for instance, a taped recording of the lies of the government such as in Hungary, or a corruption scandal such as in Latvia. Public protest develops very quickly, spontaneously. In our case, during the second period of the story, after the court decision on child care was announced, soon the first quick gathering of people coming from a very close neighbourhood took place. This process of people gathering can be compared with a "flash mob", where formal leaders are not needed. It was quite easy to come and gather into a crowd, taking into account well developed virtual social networks in Lithuania in 2012. They were continually used for internal communication within the protest community. Approaching police action in May 17, 2012, there was an ongoing translation of the events through TV channel TV3.

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[25] Remigijus Riekašius, "Politinis dalyvavimas": 239; in: Algis Krupavičius and Alvidas Lukošaitis, eds., *Lietuvos politinė sistema. Sąranga ir raida* (Vilnius: Poligrafija ir informatika, 2004).
[26] The information provided in *www.lrytas.lt* (2012-12-28).

The processes analysed indicate that the spontaneous action was without any direct influence of any economic or political groups.. As protest action participants testify in their interviews, they "share their own food" and other resources. Thus rallying of action participants, physical proximity and "personal" networking besides to virtual one were very important additional factors influencing the electoral success of the party in the next period of the events (see further).

As is typical for the social networks, the ideas and values positioned are spread immediately. Thus the process is goes more quickly than in older times. Similarly, spontaneous social networks initiated protest in Moldova in 2009 after the elections of 2009. However, this protest was without long-term perspective due to the absence of strategic aims.[27]

There are some specific features of the territory where during the first two periods of the story a majority of events happened. First, exiles and political prisoners coming back from Siberia settled in late 1950s in the region near Kaunas city. For this generation archetypal constructs such as "shooting", "taking children", and "taking out" are still in the cultural memory. Moreover, "quadrate faced guys" (Lithuanian policemen) are still assumed as a continuation of the soviet police ("*milicija*") which has changed during 20 years of Independence. Assuming "they" are able to keep a person "somewhere in cellars" is also not a fantastic suggestion. Even more symbolically, Drasius Kedys has been found dead on the bank of Kaunas Sea (parallel with famous Lithuanian fairy tail where the sea is archetype symbol of foreignness).

This is one of the possible explanations of the sincere engagement of the political wing of former Soviet exiles into the story. For instance, one signatory of Lithuania's Independence acts in March 1990 became a very active participant of the protest community in 2011-2012 in Garliava and became a winner of elections to the Lithuanian Parliament in 2012.

This continuous protest action, according to the participants was created and supported it in order to stimulate formal institutional changes including a fight with paedophilia, children's rights, and, more broadly, changes to the entire legal system. In reality, the factual changes were rather modest. Just one of the officers was changed: the Chief Prosecutor was changed in 2009. As the Child Rights Ombudsman E. Žiobienė told us in an interview, politicians were eager to be involved into the process of protecting rights of this child but had no wish to do so for all the Lithuanian children. Media analysis also supports this statement.

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[27] International Election Observation Mission, "Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions," Parliamentary Election, Republic of Moldova (April 5, 2009) //
http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/moldova/36823 (accessed October 10, 2012).

3. THIRD PERIOD: FORMAL INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE PARTY *DRĄSOS KELIAS*

The third period of the political party's genesis chronologically overlaps the second one. The civic protest action was not finished yet when, in March, 2012, a new political party called *Drasos kelias* was registered at the Ministry of Justice. But the first message in the media on the possible political party establishment appeared already in August 2011. In the public discourse the idea that Neringa Venckiene will possibly leave her post as a judge and may engage herself in politics was discussed much earlier. The "status of parliamentarian gives to N.Venckiene new possibilities to organize press conferences and interfere to put the final dot."[28]

Fabula from this final period—the formal party institutionalization—is somehow easier compared with the other two periods. To identify the party mobilization in the sub-stages, different analytical tools are needed, too.

Table 3. Stages of formal institutionalization of the party Drasos kelias

Dates	Actions	Remarks
March 19, 2012	Party registered in the Ministry of Justice	Political movement formally institutionalized
July-August, 2012	Recruiting members of electoral party list, preparing program	Politicians invited without clear uniting political platform
Summer 2012	Website of political party created	Party program published, internet blog of politicians
August-September, 2012	Electorate recruiting	Presentations of the book of N,Venckiene as episode most reflected in media
October 2012	Party winning seats in multi-mandate electoral district	7 Members of the Seimas
November 2012	Eventual splitting off of the party according to the first voting facts in Seimas	Voting on the State budget and abolishing parliamentary immunity of a number of Seimas' Members: 4 votes in favour, 3 against.

Source: prepared by authors, according to the information from www.delfi.lt, www.lrytas.lt[29]

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[28] "Laiko ženklai," *Lietuvos rytas* Nr. 283 (6646) (2012-12-04): 2.

[29] "D. Kuolio partijos paramą kai kuriems 'Drąsos kelio' kandidatams vadovybė vadina 'neetišku kišimusi'," *delfi.lt* (2012-08-31) // http://www.delfi.lt/archive/dkuolio-partijos-parama-kai-kuriems-drasos-kelio-kandidatams-vadovybe-vadina-neetisku-kisimusi.d?id=59422575 (accessed September 25, 2012); "'Drąsos kelio' partija palaikys A. Butkevičių," *lrytas.lt* (2012-11-02) // http://www.lrytas.lt/-13535043961351189469-dr%C4%85sos-kelio-partija-palaikys-a-butkevi%C4%8Di%C5%B3.htm (accessed December 15, 2012); "Prokurorai nesako, kada kreipsis dėl N.Venckienės neliečiamybės panaikinimo," *delfi.lt* (2012-12-20) // http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/prokurorai-nesako-kada-kreipsis-del-nvenckienes-nelieciamybes-panaikinimo.d?id=60279301 (accessed December 21, 2012).

Although the appearance of new effective political parties is not an everyday practice, in Lithuania a new political party has been able to surpass the 5 percent hurdle in every parliamentary elections since 2000. Thus a new effective party was somehow expected in 2012 as well. For transforming political movement into the party, formal provisions of the laws regulating political parties and electoral laws are essential. The legal rules for the establishment of a party in Lithuania are rather favourable. 1000 persons or their representatives are needed to establish a new political party. That is why a number of new political parties were established prior to the 2012 Lithuanian parliamentary elections: political party *Sąjunga TAIP (Union "Yes")*, or *Demokratinė darbo ir vienybės partija* (Democratic labour and unity party).[30] Another question is about their relevancy. Additionally, there are suggestions of reforming the electoral process in the program of political party *Drasos kelias* itself.[31]

Table 4. Electoral support for the Drasos kelias *party in Lithuania's regions (the results above Lithuanian average are bolded)*

Region	Number of single-mandate districts	Votes collected (percentage interval)	Average vote percentage
Vilnius City	10	4-10	6,58
Kaunas City	8	16,47-18,89	**17,6***
Kauno kaimiskoji	1	20,11	**20**
Kedainiai, Kaunas-Kedainiai, and Prienai-Birstonas	3	7,51-10,52	**9,46**
Klaipeda City	4	8.08-9,7	8,57
Siauliai City	3	10,14-10,83	**10,5**
Panevezys region	3	7,77-11,54	**9,76**
Marijampole and Alytus	2	9,51-10,59	**10,05**
Silute, Silale, Gargzdai	3	3,48-8,55	6,34
Zemaitija region	9	5,05-9	6,65
Aukstaitija region	5	4,34-7,29	5,98
Vilnius region	5	1,24-4,86	2,96
Totally in Lithuania (regions presented here)	56 (from 71)		9

Source: prepared by authors, according to the data of www.vrk.lt

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[30] The data on the number of parties registered for the 2012 Lithuanian parliamentary elections was provided in the website of The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania:
http://www.vrk.lt/rinkimai/416_en/KandidatuSarasai/index.html (accessed November 12, 2012).
[31] "'Drąsos kelias' politinės partijos rinkimų programa" (The election manifesto of the political party 'Drąsos kelias') (2012) // http://www.dkpartija.lt/partijos-programa/rinkimuprograma2012/ (accessed November 25, 2012).

Looking at the voting preferences for *Drasos kelias* party, there is a clear pattern of geographic proximity. The highest score is in *Kauno kaimiškoji (Kaunas rural)* electoral district where the protest was taking place. Kaunas City has the second highest score (this is the closest city to the location of the events).

A Single Issue?

At first glance, it seems that *Drąsos kelias* is a typical single issue party. The clear thread of all the three periods of the party genesis is the theme of paedophilia. Some parallels in terms of similarity of the issue may be visible with a paedophilia case in Belgium when six children died. Powerful protest rallies were taking place in reaction to the events; especially a big protest was in 1996[32]. However, no political structure was formed in Belgium due to the fact that the problem was gradually solved by legal means.

It can be assumed that in our case during the second period of the process of community protest was concentrated on the issue of children's rights. It is true but only to some extent. One argument is that there were no systematic efforts to talk about the rights of children in general. A second argument is that, after the formal institutionalization of the party, neither paedophilia nor children rights are "single" issues of the party program. The party is trying to present itself in a very broad spectrum of problems. It is possible to position this party according to various ideological attitudes which are much broader than "children's rights". The party is positioning itself as striving for legal system reform, and proposes particular institutions etc. Issues of the legal system reforms are usually stressed by the party leader in the media.[33] For political analysts the program statements of *Drasos kelias* party look superficial. The program lacks an ideological platform and serious integrating program statements.[34]

However, this party seems rather anti-systemic than a single-issue party.

Protest party? Niche party?

Taking into account the form of the second period of the party genesis, continuous mass rallying, it looks like "protest", or a "niche" party. To some extent,

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[32] Marc Dutroux (born Nov. 6, 1956, Ixelles, Belg.) Belgian serial killer whose case provoked outrage at the lax response of law enforcement agencies. So intense was the public's reaction that more than one-third of Belgians with the surname Dutroux changed their names. The information was found in the webpage of *Encyclopedia Britannica* http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1012618/Marc-Dutroux.

[33] "Neringa Venckienė: siektume teismų ir prokuratūros reformos," *delfi.lt* (2012-10-14) // http://tv.delfi.lt/video/6NPHbpMm/ (accessed October 20, 2012).

[34] Vytautas Bruveris, "Drąsiųjų keliai – į priešingas puses," *lrytas.lt* (2012-11-29) // http://www.lrytas.lt/-13541673451353999707-dr%C4%85si%C5%B3j%C5%B3-keliai-%C4%AF-prie%C5%A1ingas-puses.htm (accessed December 30, 2012).

there are similarities to political in Poland (*Samoobrona*)[35] and Ukraine (*Udar* of V.Klychko)[36].

However, it is a kind of convention: Wagner who cites Elias, argues that these kind of parties should be categorized as already "mainstream" since it "alters its problematic offer".[37]

"Simply, a new party"?

Belief in the "party as saviour" is very typical for Lithuania. As previously mentioned, after the 2000 Lithuanian parliamentary elections, when a new previously non-existent party entered the political spectrum, this process has been repeated both in 2004, and 2008 Lithuanian parliamentary elections.

Permanent disappointment in new established parties, stimulating scarce public involvement into the political process, inertia, as many writings of transition researchers have noted, is typical for Central and Eastern Europe.[38] "Provoking nature of electoral system" here also should be taken into account.[39] Strong government based on disproportional representation leads to additional legitimacy problems.[40]

However, formation process of the *Drasos kelias* is rather unique.

Nevertheless, this type of political unit is usually created on the level of political elites, or it is based on the finances of interested business groups, thus marking re-distribution of resources between elites. The *Drasos kelias* case is different: its supporters were recruited as volunteers offering their own resources.

Perhaps this party can be categorized as proposing legal system reforms. Especially great attention is paid to the Prosecutors. However, no conceptual proposals are given. They only propose one more controlling institution supervising the recruitment of officials into the groups of Prosecutors, Security Department, courts and different power structures. According to the party, public non-confidence in legal authorities should be solved through seemingly "independent" control, offering also the institution of "special prosecutor".[41]This involves one more

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[35] Andrzej Lepper, "Ogólne postulaty ideowo-programowe Samoobrony" //
http://www.samoobrona.org.pl/pages/02.Partia/02.Program/index.php?document=02.postul.html
(accessed November 25, 2012).
[36] Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform, "UDAR elects faction's leadership in parliament," *Kiyv Post* (2012-12-12) // http://www.kyivpost.com/content/politics/udar-elects-factions-leadership-in-parliament-317537.html (accessed December 20, 2012).
[37] Markus Wagner, "Defining and measuring niche parties," *Party Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 6 (November 2012).
[38] John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization* (London: SAGE Publications, 1999), p. 197.
[39] Phillippe Schmitter and Guillermo O'Donnell, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies, Vol. IV* (Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 57.
[40] Arend Lijphard and Bernard Grofman, *Electoral Laws & Their Political Consequences* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2003), p. 13-15.
[41] *Ibid*.

bureaucratic instrument. Spontaneously, here is an assumption that the Prosecutor as a relict of the Soviet system has too much power and constitutionally these powers are not described in detail in Lithuania; there were rulings of the Constitutional Court on it.[42] In a majority of democratic states, the role of Prosecutors usually is limited by court prosecution when pretrial is under police and courts. Ukraine is also similar in this regard.[43]

However, a lack of confidence in the legal system is a keynote rather than a single issue; it seems that this lack of confidence is a reflection of broader non-confidence in state authorities.

Thus the best definition of the *Drasos kelias* party should be expanded and named as a "single story initiated anti-systemic" party.

4. GENERAL DISCUSSION

We based our research on an inter-disciplinary and combined theoretical approach. For the particular stages of it, we were basing them on the media agenda setting and media framing, allusions into search for mythology archetypes, also discussing possibilities to use approaches of "new institutionalisms".

When interpreting the first period of the process, we found the explanation that individuals were choosing their interpretation of events individually with the help of particular media. By that, an "equilibrium order" assumption should be taken.[44] Collective positions are formed by aggregating individual ones within institutions (understanding them as value normative frames; here archetypal experiences of the nation are important). Thus developments and consequences of the first period, incompatible "conspiracy versions", can be explained by a rational choice institutionalism approach.

Events of the second period can be explained through the historical institutionalism approach. Concentration on the issue during the first period, discussions in the society quietened down but unresolved issues have formed an institutional environment for the second period. Society was prepared to discuss the problem of "child belonging", and what is legitimate: care of child "by the system", or "protect the child from the system". As Thelen argues, "historical institutionalists see institutions as enduring legacies of political struggles".[45] It recalls the concept of path dependency. The second period was crucial for rallying a mass protest

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[42] Arturas Bučnys and Gintaras Žilinskas, "Teisminė valdžia"; in: Algis Krupavičius and Alvidas Lukošaitis, eds., *Lietuvos politinė sistema. Sąranga ir raida* (Vilnius: Poligrafija ir informatika, 2004).
[43] Inna Pidluska, "Civil Society, Public Information and Media" //
http://www.globalintegrity.org/reports/2004/2004/countryb506.html?cc=ua&act=ia   (accessed September 12, 2009).
[44] Kathleen Thelen, *supra* note 5.
[45] *Ibid*.

within society, with active supporters who believed that the system is bad. The "physical" end of the "child care" story—the child taken from the aunt by massive police force—coincided chronologically with the approaching Lithuanian parliamentary electoral campaign. It oriented supporters towards formal institutional action, establishing the political party and its electoral success (finish of the third stage).

When trying "to capture, describe, and interrogate institutional disequilibrium"[46], constructivist institutionalism could be useful[47]: the institutions of discursive institutionalism, moreover, are not external-rule-following structures but rather are simultaneously structures and constructs internal to agents whose "background ideational abilities" within a given "meaning context" explain how institutions are created and exist and whose "foreground discursive abilities," following a "logic of communication," explain how institutions change or persist". It discovers another way of discussion: "how agents operate within institutions with 'bounded discretion'", and "how institutional environments can shape and even empower agency in change processes".[48]

CONCLUSIONS

The genesis of a new political party has been reconstructed through analysis of the genesis periods.

In order to reconstruct the genesis of the new political unit in post-communist Lithuania, an inter-disciplinary approach and combination of theories led to a number of methodology challenges and controversies.

The problem of "ontology shift" is evident: media texts should be taken not only as reflections of today's political processes' resounding mythology archetypes and conditions of post-communist society, but also as an active driving force of these processes not only fixing events but also actively influencing them.

It implies also epistemological challenges. Approaches of the importance of values and norms and, at the same time, the will and interests of actors should be used. A number of "new institutionalisms" chosen and applied for analysis of this particular case allow the assumption of both advantages and limits of these theories. Fragmenting the process into its chronological periods, each of them would be explained through path dependency.

When going from period to period, rather static models, fixed in a time flow, occur. It enables an explanation of the events statically rather than dynamically.

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[46] Colin Hay, *supra* note 8.
[47] Vivien A. Schmidt, *supra* note 9.
[48] Stephen Bell, *supra* note 8.

Analysis of the first period shows that exposing brutal criminal facts and constantly maintaining two contradictory versions of the event – criminal or hero, paedophilia, killings, disappearances – and constantly stressing the importance of these happenings, it is possible to frame and to fix the events as having symbolic meaning, raising questions about basics of political system but not allowing societal consensus. A combination of different assumptions, such as rational choice of the individual (e.g. "what is happening, what is important, and what is clear is not clear", mythological archetypes, individual against system, exceptional criminal story with "who was killed or was killing", "was there abuse and who did it", competing values and norms, "ours and that of strangers" created sufficient basis for further developments. Here, the media becomes the most important actor forming scenarios between values and norms and actively influencing them.

The second period is characterized by rallying community to protest and long-lasting protest action. The logic of historical institutionalism helps to explain this period of the genesis by the events during first period, and, additionally, by networking (neighbourhood cohesive enough, and modern social networking instruments). A shift of the society towards another value normative equilibrium – the fate of the child – could be logically explained by the first period events. For the process actors – undoubtedly media are among most active ones – it was useful to fix the attitude of the society instead of on "who the killer was" towards "the fate of the child".

Both the first two stages are united by an anti-systemic mood and a lack of confidence in the legal system. Ties of the system with a possibly existing paedophilic clan is now an object of discourse, and the point of consensus is that the system works non-professionally.

The third period, the formation of new political party and the rising of political support, does not raise any methodological challenges. When civic action lost its object (there was nobody to protect any more), the political party was already formally institutionalized; the Lithuanian legal system is favourable for new parties. There were only a few months until the Lithuanian parliamentary elections.

The party *Drasos kelias* itself can be categorized in different ways: as single-issue, protest, niche, or anti-systemic, but it can also be described as sui generis. However, if we have a wish to make comparisons, it can be categorized as "single story based anti-systemic" political party.

All in all, reconstruction of the phases of the party's genesis led to construct one important conclusion: competing *conspiracy* versions of the *single* criminal *story* reflected in the *media*, which played an active role, has recruited a *protest* society eager to combat *paedophilia* and the system ostensibly protecting it. The

new political *party* was here just a formal outcome of long-term actions as *Courage* (*Drasos*) was just a summoning, associative and attractive name.

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