

GUNTHER AND DIAMOND: SPECIES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

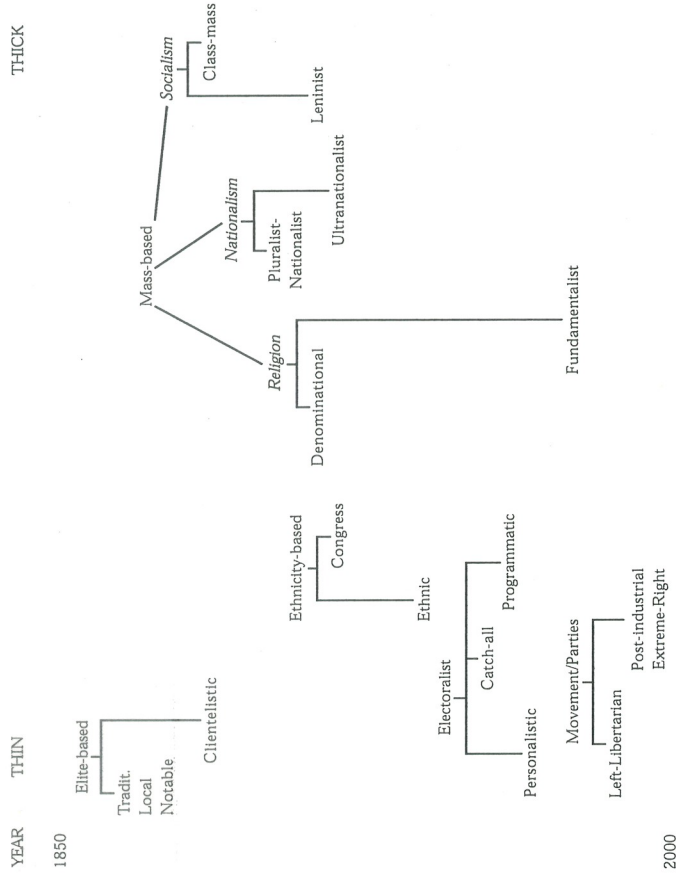


Figure 1. Extent of organization

historical periods towards the top of the diagram, and more recent entrants on the scene appearing towards the bottom.

The correlation between the degree of organizational thinness/thickness of the party and the temporal dimension is not accidental. A political party comes into existence within a specific social and technological context that may evolve over time, and this 'founding context' can leave a lasting imprint on the basic nature of the party's organization for decades to come. Parties are channels of intermediation between political elites and voters, and a particular organizational type ability to mobilize voters effectively is highly contingent upon that context. As we argue, in the nineteenth century in most Western (especially Southern) European countries and well into the twentieth century in most Latin American countries, 'politically unmobilized' peasants, many of whom were illiterate and lived in isolated rural areas, made up a sizeable segment of the electorate. Within these sectors of society, traditional elites, or 'local notables', exercised considerable influence.