## Contents

List of figures List of tables

Preface

- What this book is about
   Why focus on committees to understand intra-PPG politics? 3
   The plan of this book 4
- A review of theories and literature on committees' roles and purposes 7 The theoretical debate – congressional perspectives and 'keeping tabs' 7 The distributive theory of legislative organisation: 'high demanders' in 'outlying' committees 7 The informational theory: committees as representative 'microcosms' of the chamber 10 Committees controlled by the PPG leadership? The partisan theory 11 A non-congressional perspective: keeping tabs on coalition partners 13

viii

X

X1

21

The empirical debate 14

Committee research in the United States 14

Committee research outside of the United States: parliamentary

systems of government and the European Parliament 16 Conclusion 19

Notes 20

 3 Theoretical framework: Congressional rationales in a PPGcentred context
 Using congressional theories outside of the US congress 21
 Addressing the 'elephant in the chamber': PPGs and the internal organisation of parliaments 22

## vi Contents

Using congressional rationales in parliamentary systems 24
Empirical implications for committee structures, compositions, and working procedures 26
Method of the study: large-n cross-national analysis of committee structures, small-n focused comparison of intra-PPG dynamics 35
Case selection for large-n and small-n country comparison 36
Data used per analysis 39
Notes 40

Analysing structural features of committee systems
 Committee structures in 33 parliaments: an overview 41
 The general features: committee system for legislation/control, number, and jurisdiction 42

41

69

Committees' powers in the legislative process 46 The information-gathering powers of committees 50 Analysing structural variation: the concept of committee autonomy 51 Analysing variation in committee autonomy: operationalising the independent variables 55 Results: what explains the variation in committee structures? 60 Conclusion: informational gains and coalition logic 66 Notes 67

5 Analysing criteria to select committee members The committee systems of the Bundestag, the Dáil, and the Tweede Kamer 69

Determining the size of committees and allocating seats 73 Assigning members to committees: 'self-selection' or 'dictated'? 74

What explains committee assignments? 77

Data set: operationalising the variables 78

Analysis and results committee assignment: who gets what and why? 86

The effect of 'advantages in knowledge' of MPs 88
Committee membership and external interests 112
District characteristics and 'outlying' committees 116
Evidence of a leadership-controlled composition of committees? 120
Gender and country-specific influences 127
Are committees used to 'shadow' coalition partners? The

frequency of 'watchdog' chairs 132

Conclusion: specialisation, outliers, and country-specific factors 135 Notes 154

6 Committee workings: What can committee members do? 155
Individual committee members and their PPG 155
Working procedures of committees in the Tweede Kamer and the Bundestag 156
Dynamics between spokespersons and other MPs: the 'standard protocol' in the Bundestag and the Tweede Kamer 156
The influence on the initial position: internal 'layers' of PPGs in the Bundestag and the Tweede Kamer 159
The discussion in intra-PPG working groups 162

The discussion in the PPG meeting 165 In case of no agreement: the 'escalation ladder' 170 The interaction between spokespersons and the leadership 171 'Outside of the PPG': the interaction between spokesperson from coalition partners and the opposition 174 Individual MPs in committees of the Dáil 176 The interaction between committee members and other MPs at 'committee stage' 176 MPs' involvement during pre-legislative scrutiny and discretionary issues 180 Conclusion: an informational rationale to 'keep the sludge moving' versus executive-dominated committees 182 Notes 185

 7 Conclusion: Specialised committees in parliaments with strong parliamentary party groups
 Are committees microcosms, outliers, watchdogs, or 'under the

thumb'? 186

The substantive performance of the theoretical framework 188 A final defence for using congressional theories 190 Suggestions for future research 192 Note 193

Appendices Bibliography Index

195 254 270

186