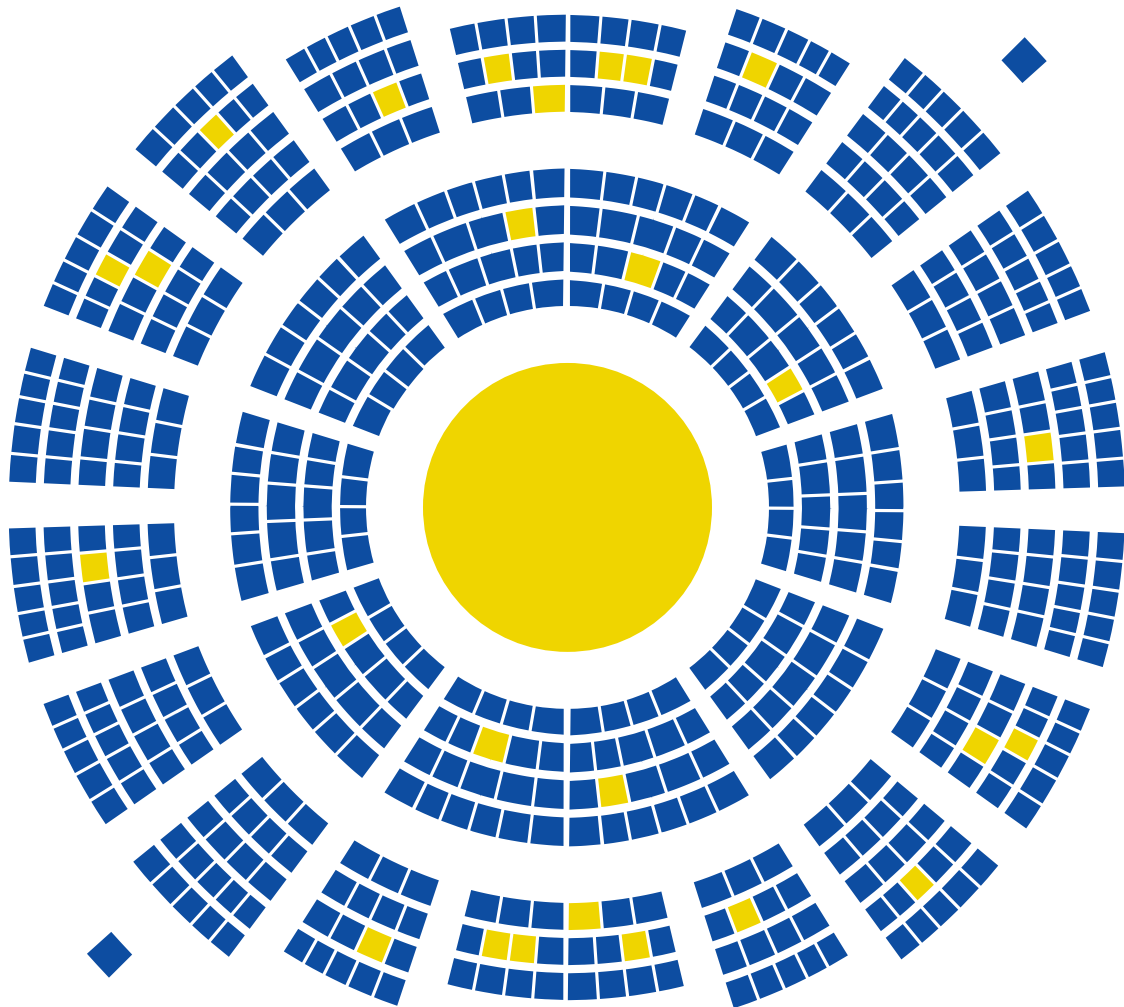


BEYOND THE SECRET GARDEN OF POLITICS: INTERNAL PARTY DYNAMICS OF CANDIDATE SELECTION

EDITED BY: Guillermo Cordero, Eva H. Önnudóttir and Xavier Coller
PUBLISHED IN: Frontiers in Political Science





frontiers

Frontiers eBook Copyright Statement

The copyright in the text of individual articles in this eBook is the property of their respective authors or their respective institutions or funders. The copyright in graphics and images within each article may be subject to copyright of other parties. In both cases this is subject to a license granted to Frontiers.

The compilation of articles constituting this eBook is the property of Frontiers.

Each article within this eBook, and the eBook itself, are published under the most recent version of the Creative Commons CC-BY licence.

The version current at the date of publication of this eBook is CC-BY 4.0. If the CC-BY licence is updated, the licence granted by Frontiers is automatically updated to the new version.

When exercising any right under the CC-BY licence, Frontiers must be attributed as the original publisher of the article or eBook, as applicable.

Authors have the responsibility of ensuring that any graphics or other materials which are the property of others may be included in the CC-BY licence, but this should be checked before relying on the CC-BY licence to reproduce those materials. Any copyright notices relating to those materials must be complied with.

Copyright and source acknowledgement notices may not be removed and must be displayed in any copy, derivative work or partial copy which includes the elements in question.

All copyright, and all rights therein, are protected by national and international copyright laws. The above represents a summary only. For further information please read Frontiers' Conditions for Website Use and Copyright Statement, and the applicable CC-BY licence.

ISSN 1664-8714

ISBN 978-2-83250-831-2

DOI 10.3389/978-2-83250-831-2

About Frontiers

Frontiers is more than just an open-access publisher of scholarly articles: it is a pioneering approach to the world of academia, radically improving the way scholarly research is managed. The grand vision of Frontiers is a world where all people have an equal opportunity to seek, share and generate knowledge. Frontiers provides immediate and permanent online open access to all its publications, but this alone is not enough to realize our grand goals.

Frontiers Journal Series

The Frontiers Journal Series is a multi-tier and interdisciplinary set of open-access, online journals, promising a paradigm shift from the current review, selection and dissemination processes in academic publishing. All Frontiers journals are driven by researchers for researchers; therefore, they constitute a service to the scholarly community. At the same time, the Frontiers Journal Series operates on a revolutionary invention, the tiered publishing system, initially addressing specific communities of scholars, and gradually climbing up to broader public understanding, thus serving the interests of the lay society, too.

Dedication to Quality

Each Frontiers article is a landmark of the highest quality, thanks to genuinely collaborative interactions between authors and review editors, who include some of the world's best academicians. Research must be certified by peers before entering a stream of knowledge that may eventually reach the public - and shape society; therefore, Frontiers only applies the most rigorous and unbiased reviews. Frontiers revolutionizes research publishing by freely delivering the most outstanding research, evaluated with no bias from both the academic and social point of view. By applying the most advanced information technologies, Frontiers is catapulting scholarly publishing into a new generation.

What are Frontiers Research Topics?

Frontiers Research Topics are very popular trademarks of the Frontiers Journals Series: they are collections of at least ten articles, all centered on a particular subject. With their unique mix of varied contributions from Original Research to Review Articles, Frontiers Research Topics unify the most influential researchers, the latest key findings and historical advances in a hot research area! Find out more on how to host your own Frontiers Research Topic or contribute to one as an author by contacting the Frontiers Editorial Office: frontiersin.org/about/contact

BEYOND THE SECRET GARDEN OF POLITICS: INTERNAL PARTY DYNAMICS OF CANDIDATE SELECTION

Topic Editors:

Guillermo Cordero, Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain

Eva H. Önnudóttir, University of Iceland, Iceland

Xavier Collier, National University of Distance Education (UNED), Spain

Citation: Cordero, G., Önnudóttir, E. H., Collier, X., eds. (2022). Beyond the Secret Garden of Politics: Internal Party Dynamics of Candidate Selection. Lausanne: Frontiers Media SA. doi: 10.3389/978-2-83250-831-2

Table of Contents

- 04 Editorial: Beyond the Secret Garden of Politics: Internal Party Dynamics of Candidate Selection**
Guillermo Cordero, Xavier Coller and Eva H. Önnudóttir
- 07 Voters' Motivation for Selecting the Party Leader: The Case of the Italian Democratic Party**
Stefano Rombi
- 17 A Comparative Analysis of Selection Criteria of Candidates in Belgium**
Audrey Vandeleene and Emilie van Haute
- 30 Changes in Candidate Selection and the Sociodemographic Profile of Greek MPs. Evidence From the 2019 General Elections**
Manina Kakepaki
- 42 Strategies of the Party Selectorate: The Two-Level Game in District Selections in Germany's Mixed Member Electoral System**
Marion Reiser
- 53 Digitalization in Candidate Selection. Support and Resistance Within Established Political Parties in Germany**
Claire Bloquet, Isabelle Borucki and Benjamin Höhne
- 67 The Impossible Stability? The Italian Lower House Parliamentary Elite After a "Decade of Crises"**
Luca Verzichelli, Bruno Marino, Francesco Marangoni and Federico Russo
- 82 Forwards-Backwards: Internal Party Democracy in Irish Political Parties**
Theresa Reidy



OPEN ACCESS

EDITED AND REVIEWED BY
Jorge M. Fernandes,
University of Lisbon, Portugal

*CORRESPONDENCE
Eva H. Önnudóttir
eho@hi.is

SPECIALTY SECTION
This article was submitted to
Elections and Representation,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Political Science

RECEIVED 22 September 2022
ACCEPTED 01 November 2022
PUBLISHED 10 November 2022

CITATION
Cordero G, Coller X and
Önnudóttir EH (2022) Editorial:
Beyond the secret garden of politics:
Internal party dynamics of candidate
selection. *Front. Polit. Sci.* 4:1051376.
doi: 10.3389/fpos.2022.1051376

COPYRIGHT
© 2022 Cordero, Coller and
Önnudóttir. This is an open-access
article distributed under the terms of
the [Creative Commons Attribution
License \(CC BY\)](#). The use, distribution
or reproduction in other forums is
permitted, provided the original
author(s) and the copyright owner(s)
are credited and that the original
publication in this journal is cited, in
accordance with accepted academic
practice. No use, distribution or
reproduction is permitted which does
not comply with these terms.

Editorial: Beyond the secret garden of politics: Internal party dynamics of candidate selection

Guillermo Cordero¹, Xavier Coller² and Eva H. Önnudóttir^{3*}

¹Department of Political Science and International Relations, Faculty of Law, Autonomous University of Madrid, Madrid, Spain, ²Department of Political Science and Administration, Faculty of Political Science and Sociology, National University of Distance Education, Madrid, Spain, ³Faculty of Political Science, University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland

KEYWORDS

candidate selection, primaries, selectorate, Europe, crisis

Editorial on the Research Topic

[Beyond the secret garden of politics: Internal party dynamics of candidate selection](#)

Gallagher and Marsh (1988) referred to candidate selection as the secret garden of politics. At that time, little information was available about the process of candidate selection in most countries. Since then, inclusiveness and decentralization of the selection process has been focused extensively in the literature on candidate selection, and to a lesser extent the openness of candidacies when it comes to selection criteria (Hazan and Rahat, 2010).

During the last decade the outlook of party systems in Europe has been transformed where some have begun to fragment, in some realignment or dealignment has occurred, and in many countries new parties have entered the stage (Chiaromonte and Emanuele, 2017; Hellwig et al., 2020). In several cases those changes seemed to have been triggered by the Great Recession which started in 2008 (Kriesi and Pappas, 2015).

Many of those new parties used intra party democracy to a greater extent than older parties, for example in the form of online platforms to take decisions and select candidates implementing more inclusive mechanisms (Coller et al., 2018). Following a pattern of contagion effect, some older parties did adopt more open selection methods, while others did not.

Now more than a decade since the Great Recession it is timely to evaluate whether this trend of more intra party democracy has survived, or whether parties, old and new have taken a step back to a more exclusive and centralized candidate selection.

The seven articles included in the Research Topic can be divided into three overlapping themes, candidate and party leader selection (Vandeleene and van Haute; Reiser; Rombi), descriptive representation (Verzichelli et al.; Kakepaki; Reidy), and support within parties for use of online tools for candidate selection (Bloquet et al.).

Vandeleene and van Haute focus on the interplay between formal party rules for candidate selection and the informal preferences of the selectors about certain types of candidates. They find centralized selectors that value offices are more likely to prioritize the competence of the candidate for office instead of ideology, while decentralized selectors are more likely to select candidates that they believe can win votes in their constituency.

Reiser explores the strategies of selectors of district candidates in three German parties. Her findings reveal that when the district seat is safe selectors prioritize candidates that are more likely to be loyal to the party. Whereas, when the seat is not safe, they prioritize the electability of the candidate. Given that the selection process in the parties is highly decentralized the selectors prioritize local representation over other types of representation such as social representation.

The paper by Rombi is about voters' motivation behind their choice of a party leader in leader primaries of the Italian Democratic Party. Younger voters, more educated, more interested in politics, left-wing, members of the party and those who are loyal to the party, are more likely to base their choice for a party leader on their own personal values and on the values of the party—which in both cases are soft reasons for voting a leader. Those who are motivated to vote for a leader based on hard reasons, such as the electability of the party leader or the personal characteristics of the leader, are in general older, less interested in politics, more centrist and more likely to have voted for the winner of the leader election.

Considering whether descriptive representation has been transformed in Italian politics, Verzichelli et al. find that the number of younger MPs, females MPs and MPs that have less political and institutional experience have grown in the last decade. That could indicate that today the composition of Italian MPs is closer to reflecting the background of Italian voters than were before. However, the career paths of Italian MPs once elected has changed less where less experienced MPs and female MPs are less likely to obtain a parliamentary office compared to more experienced ones and male MPs.

In Greece, Kakapaki argues that the Great Recession offered opportunities for parties to become more democratic and open in their candidate selection. Parties' responses to the long-term discontent of Greek citizens and protests in the years after the Great Recession, seemed in some cases to move toward a more descriptive representation and open selection for party leaders and candidates. However, it turns out that those Greek parties as for example SYRIZA, have later taken a step back and made the process more centralized and moving closer to the cartel model of politics instead of emphasizing intra party democracy.

Reidy argues that while Irish parties were among the early ones in Europe to move toward more inclusive candidate selection in the 1990's, the increase in intra party democracy is only part real. The Irish electoral system and the locality of Irish

politics creates an incentive for the party leadership to interfere with candidate selection at the constituency level, making the selection more exclusive. While the socio-economic background of Irish MPs has in some way diversified, Irish parties continue to favor those with family connections in politics and incumbents over newcomers.

The last paper by Bloquet et al. examines the level of support within German parties for the use of online tools for a more open and inclusive process of candidate selection. Selectors who opposed online consultation were more likely to be closer to the decision-making centers of their party and were more satisfied with the level of inclusion that was already in place. This indicates that those selectors will not risk loss of power and control over the selection by moving it online and by that creating an opportunity to make it more inclusive and less centralized.

Taken together, papers show that while from a formal perspective some parties have moved toward more open and inclusive candidate selection, the party leadership and leaders in many of the parties still very much control or impact the selection process through informal mechanisms. The outlook of the parties could in some ways be said to be more democratic in the sense that there is more intra party democracy in terms of candidate selection and that they are more diverse than they were before. However, electability and personalisation of politics creates incentives for party leader and party leaderships to impact candidate selection, making the secret garden of politics more exclusive and centralized than it appears.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's note

All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

References

- Chiaromonte, A., and Emanuele, V. (2017). Party system volatility, regeneration and de-institutionalization in Western Europe (1945–2015). *Party Polit.* 23, 376–388. doi: 10.1177/1354068815601330
- Coller, X., Cordero, G., and Jaime-Castillo, A. M. (2018). *The Selection of Politicians in Times of Crisis*. London: Routledge.
- Gallagher, M., and Marsh, M. (1988). *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective: The Secret Garden of Politics*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Sage.
- Hazan, R. Y., and Rahat, G. (2010). *Democracy Within Parties: Candidate Selection Methods and Their Political Consequences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hellwig, T., Kweon, Y., and Vowles, J. (2020). *Democracy Under Siege? Parties, Voters, and Elections After the Great Recession*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kriesi, H., and Pappas, T. S. (2015). *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*. Colchester: ECPR Press.



Voters' Motivation for Selecting the Party Leader: The Case of the Italian Democratic Party

Stefano Rombi*

Department of Political and Social Sciences, University of Cagliari, Cagliari, Italy

OPEN ACCESS

Edited by:

Eva. H. Önnudóttir,
University of Iceland, Iceland

Reviewed by:

Aldo Paparo,
Guido Carli Free International
University for Social Studies, Italy
Sorina Soare,
University of Florence, Italy

*Correspondence:

Stefano Rombi
srombi@unica.it

Specialty section:

This article was submitted to
Elections and Representation,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Political Science

Received: 15 July 2021

Accepted: 15 September 2021

Published: 29 September 2021

Citation:

Rombi S (2021) Voters' Motivation for
Selecting the Party Leader: The Case
of the Italian Democratic Party.
Front. Polit. Sci. 3:742232.
doi: 10.3389/fpos.2021.742232

Political parties suffer from a lasting, consolidated and, probably, irreversible crisis. However, they have begun a laborious process of adaptation which, among other things, has led to the spread of some new organizational practices. In general terms, looking at the party on the ground, we have seen a significant spread of inclusive procedures in party decision-making, which, in other words, has meant a strengthening of intra-party democracy. In particular, the inclusion of party members and, sometimes, sympathizers concerns not only the formulation of a policy position, but also the selection of party candidates and leadership. This article focuses on the inclusive process of leadership selection of the Italian Democratic Party (DP) occurred in 2013, 2017 and 2019. Since its inception, the Democratic Party has introduced the figure of the supporter, i.e. a voter not formally enrolled in the party but authorized to participate in a number of internal decision-making processes, including the selection of the party leader. Using the survey data from the research group Candidate and Leader Selection (CLS), the article explores the relationship between selectors and the primaries, looking particularly to the motivations behind the choice of vote. The analysis is based on over 8,000 interviews conducted through the exit poll technique and collected from 2013 to 2019. The article shows that voters self-positioning on the left-right axis and their strategic orientation are, in all three cases of primaries, the most relevant variables for explaining the selectors' motivations.

Keywords: primary elections, political parties, voting behavior, electability, personalization

INTRODUCTION

The reasons behind voters choosing one candidate over another continue to excite an increasing number of researchers in different fields of the social sciences from political science to sociology and from socio-political psychology to economics (Bartels, 2000; Lewis-Beck et al., 2008; Ohr and Oscarsson, 2011). The research question underlying this literature can take on a dual role. On the one hand, it is possible to ask how the voter's motivations determines the choice of vote, that is, whether and to what extent a different motivation also implies a different vote (Van Spanje and De Vreese, 2011; Blumenstiel and Plischke, 2015). Alternatively, one can ask what voter characteristics motivate the choice of vote in one way and not another (Sozzi, 2015; Smith and Hanley, 2018). This last approach allows the researcher to draw a profile of the voters based on the motivation behind their vote.

This article will adopt the second perspective, focusing on the voting motivations indicated by the participants in the leadership primaries, organized by the Italian Democratic Party (PD) in 2013, 2017, and 2019.¹

Although the study revolving around the current selection of candidates has a long tradition that goes beyond the borders of the United States (US), there has been very little research done on reconstructing the characteristics of the selectors, their preferences, and the motivations behind their choices (Sozzi, 2015). Therefore, this article can help increase the knowledge in an under-investigated area of electoral studies. From a methodological perspective, this article is based on a pooled analysis through which, on the one hand, we will build the profile of the selector according to the motivation behind their choice of vote; on the other hand, using a multinomial logistic regression model, we will understand which variables are most relevant in explaining the use of one motivation or another.

As anticipated, the analysis will focus on the case of the Italian Democratic Party whose primary elections are open to the vote of the supporter (Pasquino, 2009; Pasquino and Venturino, 2010; Pasquino and Venturino, 2014; Sandri and Seddone, 2015; De Luca and Fasano, 2018; Rombi et al., 2019). In a European context in which primary elections are becoming more and more popular among parties, the case of PD is particularly relevant for at least two reasons. Firstly, the PD has included the primaries in its statute and, consequently, has selected its first leader, in 2007, through that selection mechanism. For the PD, the primaries constitute an organizational and identity element. Secondly, since its birth, the PD has organized more than 1.000 primaries, at municipal, regional and national level, both for selecting candidate and leaders.

Among the five primaries for the PD leadership, we examined those of 2013, 2017 and 2019 for two reasons: firstly, there is a big difference in the intra-party and inter-party context among the three primaries; secondly, unlike the 2007 and 2009 primaries, those examined were investigated using a very similar questionnaire. The first reason increases the possibility of generalizing the results of the analysis, since it allows us to understand the behavior of selectors in the same electoral arena, but in different political contexts. The second reason facilitates the comparison of the three cases examined, while their inclusion in the analysis of 2007 and 2009 primaries would have made the results less reliable.²

To sketch out the political context, it is useful to know that in 2013 the competition took place a few months after the PD unsatisfactory result in the parliamentary elections, so much so that the primary's victory went to an outsider—Matteo Renzi—who had been defeated a year earlier in the coalition primaries. In 2017 the primaries were held about a year before the

2018 parliamentary elections and a few months after the defeat suffered by Renzi—at the time Prime Minister—at the constitutional referendum. That primaries were aimed at relaunching the political figure of a leader in free fall. Finally, in 2019 the primaries took place after the heavy defeat of the PD in the parliamentary elections of 2018, and led, with the victory of Zingaretti, to a substantial return to the past, in opposition to the Renzi's phase.

Although there are some systematic analyses of primaries based on survey data (Seddone et al., 2020; Venturino and Seddone, 2020), «there are very few individual-level analyses of the behavior of voters in primaries» (Simas, 2017, p. 1). This article, therefore, contributes to filling the gap in this line of research.

In the next section, we will focus on the hypotheses put forward by the literature in relation to the determinants of the vote and the reasons for voting and also look at the treatment of the variable “motivations” within the questionnaires administered to the selectors. In the third section, after providing some information about the methodology of the research, we will build a profile of the selectors, characterizing them according to their motivation type. The results of the inferential model will be discussed in the fourth section and follow up with some concluding remarks.

VOTERS' MOTIVATIONS IN PRIMARY ELECTIONS

The study of the formation of electoral preferences and their translation into voting choices is a pillar of political science, in general, and in electoral studies, in particular. If we look at the general election, early studies on electoral behavior have followed two alternative approaches. On the one hand, the choice of vote has been interpreted through the Michigan School's social-psychological approach and starting with *The American Voter*, it has been focused on long-term party identifications. However, it has been studied following the sociological approach of the Columbia School, whose first and fundamental product was the volume *The People's Choice*, based on the influence exerted on electoral behavior by the social groups to which the voter belongs. Both schools based their studies on the persistence of long-term attitude based on social position or partisanship. When those predisposition declined, the basis of electoral studies shift to short-term factors, such as voters' opinion on issues and candidate image (Dalton and Klingemann, 2007).

Primary elections in general, and those for the leadership of the PD in particular, are an atypical electoral context. The primaries, in fact, fit perfectly with the emergence of centered candidate parties (Wattenberg, 1990), in which the image of the leader acquires a very relevant weight in every electoral competition (McAllister, 2007; Garzia, 2014). The mediatization of politics (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999; Esser and Strömbäck, 2004) and the erosion of traditional social cleavages (Ford and Jennings, 2020) have increased the centrality of leaders both as an organizational and electoral resource. In this context, open primary elections are an

¹The PD leadership selection procedure is complex and the open primaries constitute only a phase, albeit certainly the most important one, of a mechanism that also involves the party members and the National Assembly (Venturino, 2019).

²The database relating to this article has been derived from the surveys organized by the Candidate and Leader Selection research group.

attempt to democratize the selection of the leader, that is the main political resource currently available to the parties, also in order to offer supporters alternative opportunities for militancy (Scarrow, 2014). This mechanism reinforces the process of personalization of politics, with respect to which the primaries represent both a response and a booster.

Examining the voting motivations essentially means understanding what guided the selector's voting choice for a given candidate. The primaries, in fact, are participated by selectors which differs from each other in terms of closeness to the party, strategic orientation, sociographic characteristics. Therefore, the basic argument of this article is that the motivations for voting in primary elections are explained mainly by the socio-political characteristics of the selectors.

The reasons for voting in the primaries can be grouped into two categories: soft reasons and hard reasons (Sozzi, 2015; Seddone and Sozzi, 2018; Seddone, 2019). The former include motivations related to values, ideological adherence and long-term identity ties with the party. The latter, on the other hand, include instrumental—linked, for example, to the possibility of the chosen candidate to win the subsequent general elections—and short-term motivations, connected for example to the personal characteristics of the leader (Markus and Converse, 1979; Markus, 1982; Lau and Redlawsk, 2001; Barker et al., 2006).

While motivations based on “values” may relate to virtually all types of election, other reasons can be traced back to the very nature of primary elections, even if they are aimed at selecting a party leader. To learn more about what these additional (hard) reasons for voting are, we should refer to two aspects. On the one hand, we must remember that primaries, which establish an unmediated link between selectors and candidates, are a particularly attractive tool for contemporary personalized politics (Poguntke and Webb, 2005; Samuels and Shugart, 2010). On the other hand, you have to consider that primaries are called upon to select a candidate who will have to challenge opponents in subsequent elections. This also applies to the direct selection of party leadership, especially as the PD statute provides that the secretary is also the party's “candidate” for the presidency of the Council.³

The first argument refers to reasons based on personalization. Although often accused (not always wrongly) of promoting plebiscitary politics (Ignazi, 2019), primaries, especially in the Italian case, cannot be held responsible for the genesis of personalization in politics. Not only because a certain degree of personalization has always characterized politics (Pasquino, 2016) but above all because the personal and personalized Italian party par excellence was born in 1993, many years before the primaries appeared on the scene of Italian politics. It is, of course, Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia. Personalization then covered

numerous other political forces and, in any case, was mainly because of the extreme exposure to the mass media by the leaders as well as by changes in the same citizenship (Norris, 1999), party organizations, and electoral rules. This idea of bringing leadership closer to the public (Manin, 1997) has contributed to generating the direct relationship between voters and/or party members and leaders that forms the core of the concept of personalization (Calise, 2016). As is the case in other electoral contexts, the choice of vote of primary participants can be influenced by the personal characteristics of the candidate. Moreover, these characteristics do not necessarily have to concern character traits or attitudes since « voters may make inferences about character traits based on the issue and policy positions with which a candidate aligns » (Peacock et al., 2021, p. 543).

The second argument refers to reasons related to the concept of electability, i.e., the candidate's prospects of winning the general election (Abramowitz, 1989; Abramson et al., 1992; Steger, 2003; Steger, 2007). This opens the door to a strategic vote, that is, the possibility of not voting for their first preference but for the leader to whom the selector gives the best chance of defeating opponents in the general election. The literature on primaries focused both on how to measure electability (Abramowitz, 1989; Rickershauser and Aldrich, 2007) and on the number of strategic voters. Both in the Italian (Cavataio and Fasano, 2013; Carreri, 2019) and US case (Peacock et al., 2021), scholars show how electability is a relevant driver in the construction of the selectors' voting choice. This relevance, unsurprisingly, varies with the timing in which the primaries occur and the political context (Minaldi and Soare, 2018). Of course, electability is closely influenced by the opinion polls disseminated by the mass media (Erberl et al., 2017), which contributes to the formation of public opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1993), favoring the activation of a circular mechanism that is self-feeding, and ends up further strengthening the strongest candidate (Peacock et al., 2021).

The selectors' profiles will be drawn by considering three sociographic and four political variables. The former includes gender, age, and education. The latter includes the level of interest in politics, self-positioning of the selector on the left-right axis, PD membership, and their strategic orientation. Each variable corresponds to a question in the questionnaire, barring the last, which combines the attitude of the selectors toward the PD depending on the outcome of the primaries with the selectors' vote⁴. The variable “strategic orientation” consists of four

³“Il Segretario nazionale rappresenta il Partito, ne esprime la leadership elettorale ed istituzionale, l'indirizzo politico sulla base della piattaforma approvata al momento della sua elezione ed è proposto dal Partito come candidato all'incarico di Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri” (PD Statute, article 5, paragraph 1).

⁴This attitude was noted by asking respondents the following question: “If the candidate you voted for in these primaries were to be defeated, how would you behave at the next elections?” The options to answer were as follows: a) I will certainly vote PD; b) I do not know, it depends on who wins the primaries; c) I will not vote for the PD. In the construction of the variable, options b and c have been merged. In the case of the choice of vote, the possible alternatives have been reduced to two: vote for the leading candidate vote for the others candidates. The second option combines those who voted for the runner-up and those who voted for the outsider. This amalgamation stems from the fact that, from the perspective of attitude toward the PD, the behavior of the runner-up selectors, and that of the outsider's selectors are completely similar.

categories: defectionist winners; defectionist losers; loyal winners; and loyal losers.⁵

Based on those variables and considering the considerations made for each type of motivation, it is possible to put forward the following hypotheses:

1. Gender: no hypothesis can be put forward.
 2. Age: we expect older voters to have a propensity to vote on the basis of soft reasons, by virtue of a long-term link with the party.
 3. Education: we expect that the most educated selectors tend to motivate their vote on the basis of instrumental-rational reasons such as the electability of the candidate. Conversely, we expect that the less educated motivate their vote on the basis of contingent factors such as the candidate's personal characteristics.
 4. Interest in politics: established that selectors are generally quite or very interested in politics, we expect interest in politics to induce selectors to vote on the basis of ideological and value-driven factors.
 5. Left-right self-positioning: given their relative distance from the party's political position, we expect centrist selectors to motivate their voting choice by looking at the electability and personal characteristics of the candidates. Conversely, we expect left-wing selectors to orient their vote on ideological-value grounds.
 6. PD membership: we expect PD members to have a relatively higher propensity than non-members to vote on the basis of soft reasons.
 7. Strategic orientation: we assume that loyal selectors—regardless of their choice of vote—tend to vote on the basis of ideological-value motivations, given their identification with the party. Conversely, we assume that defectionists selectors—regardless of their choice of vote—tend to vote on the basis of instrumental and contingent motivations.
- In the following paragraphs we will empirically verify the hypotheses just formulated.

THE PROFILE OF THE SELECTORS BASED ON MOTIVATIONS

The data examined in this article are pooled from three distinct exit poll surveys conducted between 2013 and 2019. Overall, our analysis includes 8,582 cases distributed in all Italian regions, with the sole exception of the Aosta Valley⁶. The 2013 primary

includes 2,341 cases⁷, the 2017 primary 3,699 and, finally, in 2019 there were 2,541 cases. The questionnaire provides information on the sociographic and political characteristics of the selectors, with a particular focus on their attitude toward the party and motivations behind their choice of vote.

The exit poll among the selectors in 2013, 2017, and 2019 captured the voting motivations by resorting to the following question: "What is the main motivation that led you to choose your candidate?" Respondents were able to choose between one of the following options: 1. He/she represents my political values better than others; 2. He/she represents the ideals of the PD better than the others; 3. His/her personal characteristics; 4. I want someone who can win the next general election.⁸ Each option explicitly recalls the four possible motivations described in the previous paragraph: adherence to the voter values, adherence to the party values, the candidate's personal characteristics, and the candidate's electability.

Before proceeding with the selectors' profile based on the voting motivations, it could be useful to show how the different motivations were distributed among the selectors during the three leadership primaries under examination.

In this regard, **Table 1** shows how the relative majority of selectors interviewed in the three primaries have chosen the candidate who can best reflect their personal values. Conversely, the strategic choice, which was based on the candidate's ability to lead the party to victory in the general election, involved a minority of selectors (19.5%). Overall, the motivations related to party and personal values applied to 54.5% of the selectors. The strategic motivation or the motivation related to the personal traits of the candidate, on the other hand, helped determine the vote of 45.5% of the participants in the three primaries.

Looking at each primary, some differences emerge. To begin with, in the 2013 primaries (won by Matteo Renzi who became the party leader for the first time), more than 30% of the considered selectors had relied on their preferred candidate's ability to win the general election. Perceived electability was indicated by a much lower percentage of selectors, in both 2017 and 2019. Moreover, the percentage of selectors who indicated electability as their principal motivation in 2013 would have remained higher than in subsequent years even if we had not excluded the fifth option from the analysis (see Note 7 in this paragraph).⁹ It is quite surprisingly that the motivation based on electability has been so successful, as it was a leadership primary that occurred more than 4 years before the general election. In fact, the explanation should be traced back to the interweaving of the radical with the past, promoted by Matteo Renzi, and the disappointing results achieved by the PD, led by

⁵Since the favorite candidate actually won the primary on all three occasions, we decided to use the label "winners" in naming the variables. The same happened in the case of the runner up and the outsider, who were actually defeated. So, in this case, we used the label "losers" when naming the variables.

⁶The number of questionnaires to be administered in each region was determined in proportion to the share of turnout in previous primaries. In each region, questionnaires were subsequently distributed among the capital cities and all the others on the basis of their resident population. The poll stations, where the interviews were conducted, were randomly chosen.

⁷A total of 3,505 selectors were interviewed during the 2013 primaries. However, for reasons explained in note 11, 1,164 were excluded from the analysis.

⁸In 2013 it was possible to choose the option "I share his/her vision of the future of the PD". In order to make the 2013 questionnaire comparable with those of 2017 and 2019, we decided to exclude from the analysis the respondents who indicated that option.

⁹More specifically, if we had also considered the selectors who were motivated in their choice of vote on the basis of the candidate's vision of the PD future, then the percentage of those who had indicated electability would have been 20.2%.

TABLE 1 | Voting motivation in 2013, 2017, and 2019 leadership primaries (% of respondents).

Primaries	Personal values	Party values	Personalization	Electability	Total	N
2013	35.7	13.8	20.1	30.4	100	2303
2017	36.1	16.5	30.0	17.3	100	3628
2019	29.4	32.4	25.6	12.6	100	2492
Total	34.0	20.5	26.0	19.5	100	8423

Source, Own elaboration on Candidate and Leader's Selection data.

Pierluigi Bersani, in the general election of February 2013. Renzi was perceived as the one who could revive the party's electoral fortunes. It is, therefore, not surprising that 93.1% of those who based their vote on the electability of the candidate chose the former Prime Minister.

Compared to 2013, the relationship between electability and personalization was reversed in 2017, while the percentages of selectors who made their decisions by referring to their personal values and party ideals remained substantially unchanged. If the candidate's ability to represent selector values and to win the general election (as well as his vision of the PD's future) prevailed in 2013, in 2017, we find that the candidate's personal traits combined with his ability to represent the values of the selectors play a large part. More specifically, in this case, 30% of the selectors declare that they base their choice on the personal characteristics of the candidate. In an election context that is largely unfavorable to Democrats, the selectors are mainly concerned with respect for their values and the characteristics of the leader, caring less about the general election and even less for the values of the party (Seddone and Sozzi, 2018). The driving force of the personalization was no different for Renzi's and Orlando's supporters, while, in contrast, it was less relevant among Emiliano's selectors, where motivations based on personal and party values applied to 73% of the supporters.

Nevertheless, in 2017, the issues relating to values and the representation of the party's ideals contributed to determining the vote of 52.6% of selectors. In 2019 this percentage reached 61.8% and, for the first time, the selectors that based their voting choice on party values prevailed, forming 32.4% of the participants. This particularly interesting fact identifies the difference between the 2017 and 2019 primaries. The first one has been useful to Renzi for regrouping the party around his figure after the disappointment of the constitutional referendum (Pasquino and Valbruzzi, 2017). The second one was aimed at redefining the internal balance of the party, starting from the repositioning of the intra-party factions which were forsaken by Renzi and shaken by the heavy defeat in the parliamentary elections of March 2018. In this context, the selectors, many of whom had only 2 years earlier once again trusted Renzi, re-trusted the party's collective identity (Seddone, 2019). Finally, it should be stressed that personalization and electability are both minority motivations and are distributed among the three candidates. More specifically, the motivation of electability was a little more favored among Zingaretti's selectors (14.7%), compared with both Martina's (8.8%) and Giachetti's selectors (7.2%). However, the most important difference concerns Giachetti (a candidate closely linked to Renzi) and the fact that among his supporters, the motivation linked to the voter's personal values

prevailed (41%), while among Zingaretti's and Martina's supporters the reference to party values prevailed.

As we have already pointed out, selectors can be grouped into four categories on the basis of the motivation behind their voting behavior. By combining this classification with sociographic and political information about individual voters, it is possible to draw a profile of the selectors according to their chosen motivation. We can, therefore, understand whether, for example, the selectors who place the emphasis on party values are younger than those who look at electability or whether the latter are more educated than those who consider the candidate's personal traits. In addition, with regard to voting motivation, we can determine whether there are differences in those who voted for the front-runner candidate, depending on whether they are loyal selectors (i.e., willing to vote PD regardless of the outcome of the primaries) or defectionist selectors (i.e., those whose vote for the PD depends on the outcome of the primaries).

From Table 2, we can see how female gender selectors are over-represented among those who chose hard motivations, such as electability and personalization. Conversely, men (who make up almost 60% of the participants) are over-represented among those who based their voting decision on personal values and, above all, the ideals of the party.

Regarding the age of the selectors, there is a tendency showing that as age increases, there is an overrepresentation of those who make their decision on the basis of the electability of the candidate and, especially on the basis of his/her personal characteristics. If we compare the three competitions under examination, this dynamic has no significant differences. This trend is clearly contrary to our hypothesis. The only notable exception concerns 2013, when occurred an overrepresentation of over-65s among those who are motivated to vote by referring to the ideals of the party. In particular, those older voters who strongly identified with the PD feared the effects of Renzi's victory and, therefore, in 55.8% of cases opted for the leftist, Gianni Cuperlo, a percentage far higher than the 18.2% collected overall by the representative of the leftist faction of the party. The Renzi's threat disappeared in 2017, when older people, the most willing to follow the indications of the PD factions, became Renzi's supporters. While younger selectors, motivating their vote mainly on an ideological-value basis, seemed to ask for a return of the party to the pre-Renzi phase.¹⁰

¹⁰To confirm this, it is worth pointing out that: firstly, the percentage of Renzi selectors over 65 was 45% in 2017 and 29.8% in 2013; secondly, the percentage of Renzi selectors aged between 16 and 34 was 13% in 2017 and 29% in 2013.

TABLE 2 | Socio-political profile of the PD selectors based on voting motivation (% of respondents).

		Personal values	Party values	Electability	Personalization	Total
Gender	Female	40.8	39.4	44.7	43.7	42.0
	Male	59.2	60.6	55.3	56.3	58.0
	N	2842	1715	1640	2184	8381
Age	16–24 years	7.7	8.3	4.4	6.3	6.8
	25–34 years	10.1	10.5	8.0	8.0	9.2
	35–44 years	11.3	10.8	8.8	9.7	10.3
	45–54 years	14.8	13.7	15.6	13.7	14.4
	55–64 years	22.5	18.0	24.9	19.2	21.2
	65 years and over	33.6	38.7	38.3	43.2	38.1
	N	2864	1726	1644	2190	8424
Education	Primary school	5.1	5.9	5.7	9.0	6.4
	Middle school–	12.9	15.0	14.5	17.1	14.7
	Secondary	41.9	41.4	39.4	39.1	40.6
	University	40.0	37.7	40.5	34.7	38.3
	N	2843	1717	1639	2183	8382
Interest in politics	Not at all	2.7	2.6	3.7	4.3	3.3
	Not much	12.3	13.7	14.7	17.9	14.5
	Somewhat	49.2	48.1	50.5	53.7	50.4
	Very much	35.8	35.7	31.2	24.1	31.8
	N	2859	1723	1642	2191	8415
LR self-placement	Left	39.3	42.5	33.8	33.3	37.3
	Center-Left	44.3	43.5	49.0	45.2	45.3
	Center	14.6	12.4	14.5	17.7	14.9
	Center-Right	1.5	0.9	1.7	2.4	1.6
	Right	0.3	0.6	1.0	1.5	0.8
	N	2821	1697	1604	2145	8267
PD membership	Yes	30.8	38.9	22.4	21.4	28.4
	No	69.2	61.1	77.6	78.6	71.6
	N	2860	1724	1638	2187	8409
Strategic orientation	Defectionist winners	20.3	12.2	28.1	27.1	21.9
	Defectionist losers	16.4	12.6	6.2	10.7	12.2
	Loyal winners	38.6	42.8	58.8	45.9	45.3
	Loyal losers	24.6	32.4	6.8	16.3	20.6
	N	2763	1640	1576	2099	8078

Source, Own elaboration on Candidate and Leader's Selection data.

Concerning the level of education, in accordance with our expectations, it can be seen that among the less educated selectors there is an overrepresentation of those consider the personal traits of the candidates when they vote. However, in relation to the same motivation, selectors with university-level education are underrepresented. The motivations related to personalization are particularly appreciated by the less educated selectors in all three respective elections. In contrast, on all three occasions, especially in 2013 and 2017, those with university education have a relative propensity to choose by looking at the electability of candidates.

In general terms, from a sociographic perspective, we can, therefore, say that the motivations linked to party ideals and personal values attract male and young people more than the overall figure, while they are distributed quite evenly in relation to the level of education. In contrast, electability reasons attract relatively more women, people aged 45–64, and selectors with a university education. Further, the personal traits of candidates are relatively more attractive to women (but to a small extent), over-65 s, and poorly educated selectors.

Interest in politics is the first political variable under consideration. As can be seen, in line with our hypothesis, those

who are little or not at all interested are over-represented among the hard motivations, especially concerning electability. In contrast, the interested selectors are over-represented in terms of both personal and party values. These trends are repeated with few and negligible differences in all three primary elections considered.

Regarding the self-positioning of selectors on the left-right axis, in line with the expectations, it should be firmly pointed out that left-wing selectors are over-represented among those who have indicated motivations related to the personal values and ideals of the party. Center-left selectors, on the other hand, are distributed in a rather balanced way, with a slight overrepresentation in relation to the electability motivation. The rest of the selectors (who make up only 17.3% of the sample) tend to be over-represented on hard motivations. Centrists, in particular, are over-represented among those who chose based on the candidate's personal traits and underrepresented in relation to party values. In 2013 and 2017 there were no particular differences from the pooled figure. For example, the propensity to attach great importance to electability for center-left selectors was confirmed, although in 2013 this was accompanied by an underrepresentation in relation to soft motivations, while in 2017 there was a slight overrepresentation also in relation to personal values. This

indicates that during Renzi's leadership, the party has continued to lose ground among the PD's electoral base. In 2019, on the other hand, there was an overrepresentation of the center-left selectors among those who decided on the basis of party values (as well as on the basis of electability). This indicates that after the Renzi phase, there was a return to the party by a significant share of selectors (Rombi et al., 2019).

Party membership is another important variable potentially able to distinguish selectors according to their voting motivations. In fact, **Table 2** shows that, as we predicted, PD members are over-represented in soft motivations related to personal and party values, while non-members show opposite tendencies, being over-represented in the motivations related to electability and personalization. Moreover, this trend does not show any particular differences between the three competitions in question.

The last political variable that we included in the analysis is "strategic orientation". Defectionist winners, who make up 21.9% of the sample, are over-represented among those who use the electability of the candidate and his/her personal traits as a voting criterion. Unsurprisingly, they are largely underrepresented among those who base their voting choice on the party's ideals. In contrast, defectionist losers (12.2%) are over-represented among those who consider the candidate's level of adherence to the selector's personal values to be the most important voting motivation. Conversely, they are underrepresented in relation to hard reasons, such as the electability of the candidate and his/her personal characteristics. Regarding the selectors who declare themselves loyal to the PD regardless of the outcome of the primaries, we can see that those who voted for the winner of the competition (45.3%) are over-represented with reference to the electability of the candidate, while they are underrepresented in relation to personal values. Further, loyal losers (20.6%) are underrepresented among the hard motivations and over-represented among the soft ones, especially regarding party values. In relation to this variable, our hypothesis is not confirmed. Renzi's candidacy in 2017 and, especially, 2013 gave centrality to the dimension of electability. The main objective of Renzi's selectors, regardless of whether they had a loyal or defectionist attitude towards the PD, was the victory of the following elections, especially in 2013, when the PD came from unsatisfactory parliamentary elections. This mechanism is confirmed, by opposition, by the fact that in 2019—when the Renzi's phase was ending—its functioning began to fail.

To better clarify the theme, we can note the differences between the three primaries. Even in the case of strategic orientation, those differences can mark a certain divergence between the primaries won by Renzi (2013 and 2017) and those of 2019. In 2013 and 2017, the trends are similar to those emerging from the pooled analysis. In 2013, we only need to highlight a much higher overrepresentation than that recorded in the pooled analysis of "loyal winners" among selectors whose vote is motivated by electability and the "loyal losers" among those who vote based on party values.¹¹ First, in

2019, the "defectionist losers" are underrepresented in relation to party values, mainly because of the attitudes of the voters of Giachetti, a member of the Renzi area of the party, considered far from attractive by most of the identitarian voters. Second, there is an overrepresentation of "loyal winners" not only in terms of electability but also among those who justify their choice of vote by referring to the ideals of the party. This situation, moreover, cannot be surprising considering the strong identity profile (in open contrast with the Renzi experience) of Nicola Zingaretti, the winner of the competition.

WHY DO VOTERS THINK THIS WAY? A MULTINOMIAL ANALYSIS

The description of the relationship between the main socio-political peculiarities of the selectors and their voting motivations has revealed significant affinities and differences. However, to deepen and explain the reasons behind the choice of voting of the selectors, we should provide an inferential model. The categorical dependent variable of the model consists of the voting motivations and is divided into four modalities, each corresponding to an option in the questionnaires: personal values, party values, electability, and personalization. Just as in the case of the dependent variable, the independent variables (that are all categorical variables) also correspond to those used for the descriptive analysis (see **Table 2**). The model also includes a control variable aimed at considering the influence of the electoral context and indicating whether the respondent has been interviewed in 2013, 2017, or 2019.

If we are dealing exclusively with categorical variables, the analysis should be based on a multinomial logistic regression model in which the effects of each variable are estimated using odds ratio. A test of the model with the eight independent variables in contrast with the model that includes only the constant is statistically significant (chi-square = 1553.50, $p < 0.0001$). Given that almost all the variables are categorical with more than two modalities, the model considers one of the categories for each variable as a reference one. More precisely, for both the dependent and independent variables, the reference category is the last one (Field 2009). In the case of the dependent variable, we have considered the category "personalization" as a basis for comparing the other three.

Table 3 shows that numerous categories are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). As we can see, regarding the motivations based on the candidate's personal traits, the statistically significant categories associated with an increased chance of basing the vote on personal values are all age groups except 35–44 year olds, all categories related to self-positioning on the left-right axis in relation to the reference category consisting of those who are positioned on the right, and defectionist losers in relation to the reference category consisting of loyal losers. Conversely, the categories associated with a decreased chance of basing the vote on personal values are as follows: having a low level of education (primary and middle school), all levels of interest in politics in relation to those who are

¹¹In the first case, loyal winners accounted for 59.7% compared with 37.4% in the sample. In the latter case, loyal losers accounted for 52.7% compared with a 23.3% incidence in the sample.

TABLE 3 | Multinomial logistic model—Explaining selectors' motivations.

		Personal values			Party values			Electability		
		Odds ratio	SE	Sig	Odds ratio	SE	Sig	Odds ratio	SE	Sig
Gender	Female	0.926	0.062		0.935	0.071		1.055	0.071	
	Male ^a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Age	16–24	1.519	0.131	***	1.692	0.146	***	0.742	0.171	*
	25–34	1.316	0.117	**	1.317	0.133	**	0.886	0.142	
	35–44	1.205	0.109	*	1.129	0.125		0.810	0.132	
	45–54	1.232	0.097	**	1.046	0.114		1.102	0.111	
	55–64	1.370	0.083	***	1.031	0.098		1.287	0.094	***
	65 and over ^a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Education	Primary school	0.590	0.133	***	0.740	0.153	**	0.517	0.154	***
	Middle school	0.706	0.096	***	0.899	0.110		0.656	0.110	***
	Secondary	0.912	0.070		0.990	0.081		0.798	0.082	***
	University ^a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Interest in politics	Not at all	0.573	0.179	***	0.582	0.221	**	0.562	0.214	***
	Not much	0.563	0.100	***	0.800	0.111	*	0.653	0.115	***
	Somewhat	0.697	0.071	***	0.782	0.082	***	0.723	0.084	***
	Very much ^a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
LR self-placement	Left	5.086	0.392	***	2.332	0.376	**	1.186	0.337	
	Center-Left	4.406	0.391	***	1.864	0.376	*	1.182	0.336	
	Center	4.270	0.395	***	1.524	0.383		0.941	0.343	
	Center-Right	2.970	0.444	**	0.942	0.489		0.667	0.421	
	Right ^a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pd member	No	0.739	0.073	***	0.502	0.081	***	1.002	0.088	
	Yes ^a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Strategic orientation	Defectionist winners	0.571	0.095	***	0.315	0.114	***	2.825	0.136	***
	Defectionist losers	1.119	0.112		0.885	0.128		1.394	0.175	*
	Loyal winners	0.608	0.083	***	0.522	0.089	***	3.754	0.125	***
	Loyal losers ^a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Electoral Context	Primary 2013	1.471	0.086	***	0.497	0.098	***	3.930	0.100	***
	Primary 2017	1.103	0.074		0.440	0.081	***	1.316	0.093	***
	Primary 2019 ^a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Constant		−0.555	0.409		0.744	0.086		−1.578	0.376	***
N		2.679			1.591			1.533		

Note: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$; dependent variable: type of motivation (personal values, party values, electability, and personalization as a reference category); a = reference category. The value for the constant is the β coefficient.

very interested (reference category), not being PD members, and being defectionist and loyal winners.

Regarding the second type of motivation, it is evident that the statistically significant categories associated with an increased chance of basing the vote on party values are as follows: being between the ages of 16 and 34 and aligning yourself on the left of the left-right axis. The categories associated with a decreased chance of basing the vote on party values are as follows: having a low level of education (primary school), having some interest in politics, not being a PD member, and being defectionist and loyal winners.

Finally, the statistically significant categories associated with an increased chance of basing the vote on the candidate's electability are as follows: first, being between 55 and 64 years of age; second, being defectionist winners; and third, being loyal winners. In contrast, the categories associated with a decreased chance of basing the vote on a candidate's electability are as follows: having an elementary certificate, secondary certificate, or

a diploma as opposed to a university-level education (reference category); and being only slightly or not at all interested in politics, compared with being greatly interested (reference category).

Having identified the variables and their categories, helpful in explaining the selectors' behavior and, in particular, their adherence to one or another type of motivation, it seems useful to look at the most statistically important ones, focusing, in particular, on political variables.

To begin with, we should emphasize that, compared to those on the right, leftist and center-leftist selectors are more likely to motivate their vote based on their personal values being greater than more than 5 times the former and about 4.5 times the second, referencing the same types of selectors who motivate their vote based on the personal characteristics of the candidate (reference category of the dependent variable). However, not being PD members reduces by 30% the probability of voting based on the voter's personal values, compared with being PD

members. Moreover, compared to being greatly interested, being at all or only slightly interested in politics reduces the probability of voting based on personal values by between 43 and 30%.

Even the strategic orientation of the selector provides a relevant explanation for the reasons behind the choice of vote. As can be seen from **Table 3**, those who have a defectionist orientation toward the party and are voters of the competition's winner are less likely to have built their decision on the level of representation of their personal values. The same goes for those who have a loyal attitude toward the PD. Compared to loyal losers, this percentage is 43% lower for defectionists and 39% lower for loyals. Given the small difference between defectionists and loyals, the most important element is the selectors' voting orientation.

Regarding the party's ideals, in the first instance, we should mention an analogy with the selectors who have indicated "personal values" as their main voting motivation. The attitude of these two groups of selectors is, in fact, essentially explained by the same variables. However, it is worth delving into the subject further as some differences exist, mainly relating to the intensity of the effect of the categories. In this case, for example, compared to being on the right, positioning yourself on the left increases the probability of motivating your vote based on the candidate's ability to represent the ideals of the party, by about twice. Quite predictably, compared to being a member of the PD, not being enrolled reduces the probability of motivating the vote according to the party's ideals by 50%. Even in relation to this motivation, defectionist and loyal winners are less likely than loyal losers to motivate their vote on party ideals. This percentage is about 70% lower in the first case and about 50% in the second case. Voting for the winning candidate (for both defectionists and loyals) lowers the likelihood of voting based on party ideals, compared with those who vote for one of the defeated candidates and declared themselves loyal to the party.

CONCLUSION

Although the analysis of the determinants of electoral behavior is a pillar of political science, systematic research into the behavior of selectors, i.e., those who take part in the selection of a party leader or candidate for monocratic office, is rare. This article has helped bridge this gap by examining the voting motivations of participants in the direct election of the PD leader in 2013, 2017, and 2019. In particular, the analysis has focused on the identification of sociographic and, above all, political variables that push a selector to motivate his/her vote on the basis of one of

the four possible motivations taken into account: personal values, party values, electability, and personalization.

The descriptive analysis has shown that selectors who base their vote on reasons such as personal or party values are relatively younger, more educated, more interested in politics, tending to be left-wing, members of the PD, and with a greater propensity to support one of the defeated candidates while being loyal to the party, especially in the case of those reliant on party values. Selectors who motivate their vote by referring to the electability of the candidate or his personal characteristics have a different profile. In both cases, these are relatively older voters, less interested in politics, more centrists (i.e., center-leftists for the former and centrists for the latter), and with a greater propensity to support the winner. Moreover, those reliant on electability are relatively more educated and loyal to the party, while those reliant on personalization are less educated and tend to defect.

These trends have been confirmed by a multivariate analysis, which has highlighted the importance of both the self-positioning on the left-right axis and the strategic orientation in explaining the reasons that lead a selector to base his/her vote on one motivation rather than another.

The analysis has also revealed the relevance of the political context, where it has been shown that compared with 2019, the 2013, and 2017 primary elections are characterized by two elements. First, by a greater propensity of the selectors to motivate the vote on the basis of the electability of the candidate and on his personal characteristics. Second, by a lower propensity of selectors to choose based on the candidates' ability to represent party ideals. A clear break, therefore, exists between the Renzi phase of the PD and that inaugurated by Zingaretti, which, although interrupted early in March 2021, marked a return to the party, to its ideals, and to its collective identity, both by its voters and sympathizers and by its main leaders.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms sole responsibility for the following: study conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation.

REFERENCES

- Abramowitz, A. I. (1989). Viability, Electability, and Candidate Choice in a Presidential Primary Election: A Test of Competing Models. *J. Polit.* 51, 977–992. doi:10.2307/2131544
- Abramson, P. R., Aldrich, J. H., Paolino, P., and Rohde, D. W. (1992). "Sophisticated" Voting in the 1988 Presidential Primaries. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 86, 55–69. doi:10.2307/1964015
- Barker, D. C., Lawrence, A. B., and Tavits, M. (2006). Partisanship and the Dynamics of "Candidate Centered Politics" in American Presidential Nominations. *Elect. Stud.* 25, 599–610. doi:10.1016/j.electstud.2005.09.001
- Bartels, L. (2000). Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952–1996. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 44, 32–50. doi:10.2307/2669291
- Blumenstiel, J. E., and Plischke, T. (2015). Changing Motivations, Time of the Voting Decision, and Short-Term Volatility - the Dynamics of Voter Heterogeneity. *Elect. Stud.* 37, 28–40. doi:10.1016/j.electstud.2014.11.003

- Calise, M. (2016). *La Democrazia Del Leader*. Rome-Bari: Laterza, 159.
- Carreri, L. (2019). "Selettori strategici e non ideologici: un'analisi dell'electability dei candidati alla Segreteria del PD," in *L'elezione di Zingaretti*. Editors S. Rombi and F. Serricchio (Novi Ligure: Edizioni Epoké), 203–214.
- Cavataio, M., and Fasano, L. (2013). "L'immagine dei candidati. Come logica di voto, viability e electability influenzano il successo alle primarie," in *Perdere Vincendo. Dal Successo Delle Primarie 2012 All'impatto post-elettorale*. Editors B. Gelli, T. Mannarini, and C. Talò (Milano: Franco Angeli), 146–167.
- Dalton, R. J., and Klingemann, H. D. (2007). "Citizens and Political Behavior," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*. Editors R.J. Dalton and H.D. Klingemann (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 3–23.
- De Luca, R., and Fasano, L. (2018). *Il Partito Democratico dei nativi*. Novi Ligure: Edizioni Epoké, 210.
- Eberl, J.-M., Wagner, M., and Boomgaarden, H. G. (2017). Are Perceptions of Candidate Traits Shaped by the media? the Effects of Three Types of media Bias. *Int. J. Press Polit.* 22, 111–132. doi:10.1177/1940161216674651
- Esser, F., and Strömbäck, J. (2004). *Mediatization of Politics. Understanding the Transformation of Western Democracies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 246.
- Field, A. (2009). *Discovering Statistics with SPSS*. London: Sage, 821.
- Ford, R., and Jennings, W. (2020). The Changing Cleavage Politics of Western Europe. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 23, 295–314. doi:10.1146/annurev-polisci-052217-104957
- Garzia, D. (2014). *Personalization of Politics and Electoral Change*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 137.
- Ignazi, P. (2019). *Partito e democrazia: L'incerto percorso della legittimazione dei partiti*. Bologna: il Mulino, 438.
- Lau, R. R., and Redlawsk, D. P. (2001). Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 45, 951–971. doi:10.2307/2669334
- Lewis-Beck, M., Nadeau, R., and Elias, A. (2008). Economics, Party, and the Vote: Causality Issues and Panel Data. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 52, 84–95. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00300.x
- Manin, B. (1997). *The Principles of Representative Government*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 254.
- Markus, G. B., and Converse, P. E. (1979). A Dynamic Simultaneous Equation Model of Electoral Choice. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 73, 1055–1070. doi:10.2307/1953989
- Markus, G. B. (1982). Political Attitudes during an Election Year: A Report on the 1980 NES Panel Study. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 76, 538–601. doi:10.2307/1963730
- Mazzoleni, G., and Schulz, W. (1999). "Mediatization" of Politics: A Challenge for Democracy? *Polit. Commun.* 16, 247–261. doi:10.1080/105846099198613
- McAllister, I. (2007). "The Personalization of Politics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*. Editors R.J. Dalton and H.D. Klingemann (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 571–588.
- Minaldi, G., and Soare, S. (2018). "Strategie di voto e percezione dei candidati. Validità partitica e competitività alle elezioni generali, dal breve al lungo termine," in *Il Partito Democratico dei nativi*. Editors R. De Luca and L. Fasano (Novi Ligure: Edizioni Epoké), 135–146.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. (1993). *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion-Our Social Skin*. Chicago: The Chicago University Press.
- Norris, P. (1999). *Critical Citizens. Global Support for Democratic Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 303.
- Ohr, D., and Oscarsson, H. (2011). "Leader Traits, Leader Image, and Vote Choice," in *Political Leaders and Democratic Elections*. Editors K. Aarts, A. Blais, and H. Schmitt (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 187–214.
- Pasquino, G. (2009). *Il Partito Democratico. Elezioni del segretario, organizzazione e potere*. Bologna: Bononia University Press, 256.
- Pasquino, G., and Venturino, F. (2010). *Il Partito Democratico di Bersani. Persone, profilo e organizzazione*. Bologna: Bononia University Press, 236.
- Pasquino, G., and Venturino, F. (2014). *Il Partito Democratico Secondo Matteo*. Bologna: Bononia University Press, 244.
- Pasquino, G. (2016). Primaries, Parties, People. *Contemp. Ital. Polit.* 8, 103–111. doi:10.1080/23248823.2016.1147217
- Pasquino, G., and Valbruzzi, M. (2017). Italy Says No: the 2016 Constitutional Referendum and its Consequences. *J. Mod. Ital. Stud.* 22, 145–162. doi:10.1080/1354571x.2017.1286096
- Peacock, C., Dugger, H., Fanelli, J. K., Harris, A. J., McLelland, J. B., and Richardson, L. A. (2021). Choosing a Candidate: Traits, Issues, and Electability. *Am. Behav. Scientist* 65, 540–557. doi:10.1177/0002764220978458
- Poguntke, T., and Webb, P. (2005). *The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 376.
- Rickershauser, J., and Aldrich, J. H. (2007). "It's the Electability, Stupid" – or Maybe Not? Electability, Substance, and Strategic Voting in Presidential Primaries. *Elect. Stud.* 26, 371–380. doi:10.1016/j.electstud.2006.09.003
- Rombi, S., and Serricchio, F. (2019). *L'elezione di Zingaretti. La rivincita del partito?* Novi Ligure: Edizioni Epoké, 250.
- Samuels, D. J., and Shugart, M. S. (2010). *Presidents, Parties, and Prime Ministers. How the Separation of Powers Affects Party Organization and Behavior*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 295.
- Sandri, G., and Seddone, A. (2015). *The Primary Game. Primary Elections and the Italian Democratic Party*. Novi Ligure: Edizioni Epoké, 187.
- Scarrow, S. E. (2014). *Beyond Party Members: Changing Approaches to Partisan Mobilization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 256.
- Seddone, A. (2019). "Le ragioni dietro la scelta del leader," in *L'elezione di Zingaretti*. Editors S. Rombi and F. Serricchio (Novi Ligure: Edizioni Epoké), 77–89.
- Seddone, A., Sandri, G., and Sozzi, F. (2020). "Primary Elections for Party Leadership in Italy," in *Innovations, Reinvented Politics and Representative Democracy*. Editors A. Alexandre-Collier, A. Goujon, and G. Gourgues (London: Routledge), 46–59.
- Seddone, A., and Sozzi, F. (2018). "The leader I want! L'analisi delle motivazioni di voto alle elezioni del leader del PD," in *Il Partito Democratico dei nativi*. Editors R. De Luca and L. Fasano (Novi Ligure: Edizioni Epoké), 81–93.
- Simas, E. N. (2017). The Effects of Electability on US Primary Voters. *J. Elections Public Opin. Parties* 27, 274–290. doi:10.1080/17457289.2016.1270287
- Smith, D. N., and Hanley, E. (2018). The Anger Games: Who Voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 Election, and Why? *Crit. Sociol.* 44, 195–212. doi:10.1177/0896920517740615
- Sozzi, F. (2015). "Choosing the Party Leader: Are Voters' Motivations Shaped by Tradition, Strategy or Identification," in *The Party Game*. Editors G. Sandri and A. Seddone (Novi Ligure: Edizioni Epoké), 107–127.
- Steger, W. P. (2003). Presidential Renomination Challenges in the 20th Century. *Presidential Stud. Q.* 33, 827–852. doi:10.1046/j.0360-4918.2003.00086.x
- Steger, W. P. (2007). Who Wins Nominations and Why? *Polit. Res. Q.* 60, 91–99. doi:10.1177/1065912906298597
- Van Spanje, J., and De Vreese, C. (2011). So What's Wrong with the EU? Motivations Underlying the Eurosceptic Vote in the 2009 European Elections. *Eur. Union Polit.* 12, 405–429. doi:10.1177/1465116511410750
- Venturino, F. (2019). "Le Regole Delle Primarie," in *L'elezione di Zingaretti*. Editors S. Rombi and F. Serricchio (Novi Ligure: Edizioni Epoké), 21–33.
- Venturino, F., and Seddone, A. (2020). The Politics of Loyalty: Understanding Voters' Attitudes After Primary Elections. *Gov. Oppos.* 1–20. doi:10.1017/gov.2020.24
- Wattenberg, M. P. (1990). "From a Partisan to a Candidate-Centered Electorate," in *The New American Political System*. Editor A. King (Washington: American Enterprise Institute), 139–174. doi:10.1007/978-1-349-12337-7_5

Conflict of Interest: The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

Copyright © 2021 Rombi. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.



A Comparative Analysis of Selection Criteria of Candidates in Belgium

Audrey Vandeleene^{1,2*} and Emilie van Haute²

¹Gaspar, Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium, ²Centre d'étude de la vie politique (Cevipol), Department of Political Science, Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Brussels, Belgium

The literature on candidate selection has focussed extensively on the degree of inclusiveness and decentralization of the selectorate, as part of the debate on intra-party democracy. However, much less attention has been paid to the degree of openness of candidacies, or selection criteria within parties. Yet parties have a lot of leeway in how they design selection criteria internally. Which guidelines do parties follow when making the crucial choice on which candidates to select for elections? This paper investigates selection criteria from two perspectives: the formal rules set by parties that restrict the candidate's pool and the (informal) preferences of selectors that shape who gets selected. We aim first at contrasting the degree of party institutionalization and parties' formal rules in candidate selection and so, we shed light on whether parties formalise their candidacy requirements and candidate selection processes to the same extent as other party activities. Second, the paper investigates the role of the selectorates, and how selectorate's characteristics matter for the kind of (informal) selection criteria, be they intended at maximizing offices, votes or policies. Drawing on party statutes coded in the Political Party Database (PPDB) and 23 in-depth interviews with selectors, we study three francophone Belgian parties that differ both in terms of inclusiveness of the selectorate who has the final say on candidate selection and in terms of degree of centralisation, and in terms of party institutionalisation: the green party (Ecolo), the socialist party (PS), and the liberal party (MR). Our comparative analysis of parties, selection criteria provides new insights into the secret garden of politics and highlights in particular the major impact of parties, degree of centralization.

Keywords: candidate selection, selection criteria, political parties, institutionalisation, Belgium, intra-party democracy

OPEN ACCESS

Edited by:

Guillermo Cordero,
Autonomous University of Madrid,
Spain

Reviewed by:

Raul Gomez,
University of Liverpool,
United Kingdom
Gideon Rahat,
Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

*Correspondence:

Audrey Vandeleene
audrey.vandeleene@UGent.be

Specialty section:

This article was submitted to
Elections and Representation,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Political Science

Received: 15 September 2021

Accepted: 22 October 2021

Published: 25 November 2021

Citation:

Vandeleene A and van Haute E (2021)
A Comparative Analysis of Selection
Criteria of Candidates in Belgium.
Front. Polit. Sci. 3:777747.
doi: 10.3389/fpos.2021.777747

INTRODUCTION

Candidate selection processes are not only a matter of internal party life. Political parties are the major gatekeepers impacting who enters politics through their key function of candidate selection (Katz, 2001; Lovenduski, 2016). They decide on the pool of candidates that will be offered to voters on the ballot, and ultimately the personnel and groups represented. It has important political consequences, for instance on party unity in parliament (Close and Nunez, 2017), or on policy decisions, among others regarding issues of relevance to women (Tremblay, 1998).

Scholars have progressively opened the black box of the 'secret garden of politics' (Gallagher and Marsh, 1988). However, the literature has heavily focussed on the first two dimensions: inclusiveness and decentralization. Surprisingly, little research has been conducted on selection criteria set by parties, even though it is one of the foremost predictors of the outcome, above

inclusiveness or decentralization. There is a limited literature on selection criteria of candidates that focusses on candidacy requirements, i.e., the formal rules set by parties to be nominated as candidate. Still, we do not know much about the dynamics that lead parties to apply these formal candidacy requirements. We know even less about the mechanisms that lead parties to develop informal selection criteria that further restrict the pool of potential candidates (Bjarnegård and Zetterberg, 2019). This calls for a more qualitative study that would uncover how parties develop their formal and informal selection criteria, which criteria they value, and why. This is what this paper intends to do.

More specifically, we link selection criteria set by parties to their level of institutionalization and the type of selectorate in charge of candidate selection. First, we expect that higher degrees of institutionalization of political parties lead to higher levels of formalization of selection criteria in the candidate selection processes. Second, we expect that different selectorates (on the inclusiveness and decentralization dimensions) have different goals, and hence different views on what makes a ‘good’ candidate, be it in terms of ideological, political profile or competences.

To investigate these questions, we study three Belgian French-speaking parties: the Green party Ecolo, the Liberal party Reform Movement (MR–*Mouvement Réformateur*), and the Social Democratic party Socialist Party (PS–*Parti socialiste*). They share common features in terms of institutional setting but strongly vary on our two key factors: their level of institutionalization and the type of selectorate(s) in charge of candidate selection processes.

Contrarily to the scarce extant research on selection criteria, we do not only rely on official data (Bjarnegård and Zetterberg, 2019; Rehmer, 2020) nor on survey data (Bochel and Denver, 1983; Schindler, 2020; Van Trappen 2021). On top of an in-depth analysis of party statutes coded in the Political Party database (PPDB), we draw on original in-depth interview data with selectors within these three parties. No less than 23 party officials involved in selection choices at different election levels provided some insights on how the selection takes place and which criteria were formally and informally put forward in the selection meetings.

The contribution is structured as follows. We first sketch the main theoretical understandings on candidate selection and selection criteria, before digging deeper into mechanisms of party institutionalisation and types of selectorates as potential factors affecting how parties develop their selection criteria. The following section describes our case selection and data sources—mainly, party rules and interviews with selectors—and outlines our data analysis strategy. We then present our results. This paper demonstrates that party institutionalization is not a prerequisite for formalism in candidate selection, contrarily to normative pressure to follow the existing rules. Our analysis also details how centralization, to a larger extent than inclusiveness, is a major factor impacting the priorities of selectors. We conclude with a discussion of our findings and an outlook for further inquiry drawing on qualitative data retrieved from selectors.

CANDIDATE SELECTION PROCESSES AND THE BLACK BOX OF THE SELECTION CRITERIA

There is a growing literature on candidate selection processes. Scholars have progressively opened the black box of the ‘secret garden of politics’ (Gallagher and Marsh, 1988). They have emphasized how parties differ on four crucial dimensions: the level of inclusiveness (the size of the so-called ‘selectorate’, the party body selecting the candidates: a few party elites, delegates, all members or voters?), the level of (de)centralization (the location of the main decision-maker in the party hierarchy, e.g., centralised or at constituency level?), the decision-making method (how decisions are made: acclamation, nomination, vote?), and openness (who can apply, or the selection criteria).

However, the literature has heavily focussed on the first two dimensions: inclusiveness and decentralization. Interestingly, scholars have shown that different candidate selection processes can lead to different outcomes. Especially, the effect of inclusiveness and level of centralization on gender representation has been investigated. (Rahat et al., 2008) emphasize the tensions between intra-party democracy as a process (more inclusiveness and decentralization) and as an outcome (more representativeness). They show that larger, more inclusive, or more decentralized selectorates tend to produce a selection of candidates that is less balanced in terms of gender (Martland and Studlar, 1996; Caul, 1999; Krook, 2010; Kenny and Verge, 2013; Vandeleene, 2014). This would be due to atomization and coordination issues in inclusive, decentralized processes, opposed to more centralized processes that can look at equilibrium across electoral districts and be held accountable (Kittilson, 2006; Hazan and Rahat, 2010; Matthews, 2014; Pruyssers et al., 2017). However, as Pruyssers et al. (2017): 214 note, these two dimensions and their effect on representation ‘interplays closely with quotas and formal rules that exist (either at the level of the party, or the state) to facilitate women’s representation’. It stresses the importance of selection criteria set by parties, that would be the foremost predictor of the outcome, and not much the process of selection (Hazan and Rahat, 2010).

Yet surprisingly little research has been conducted on selection criteria (Rahat and Hazan, 2001; Siavelis and Morgenstern, 2008; Shomer, 2012; Cordero et al., 2016). As King (in Stark, 1996: 124) puts it, ‘it is odd that very few writers have addressed themselves, except in passing, to the whole question of criteria, which one might have supposed was central’. When they do, they often work by proxy, by looking at the outcome of the selection process (Put, 2015; Vandeleene, 2016), or by looking at leadership selection processes (Stark, 1996; Kenig, 2009; Pilet and Cross, 2014) or the selection of ministers (Bäck et al., 2016). While theoretical arguments could be retrieved from this literature, one may expect the criteria for leaders and ministers to differ at least slightly from those for regular candidates.

The limited literature on selection criteria of candidates tends to focus on candidacy requirements, i.e., the formal rules set by parties in their internal documents to be nominated as candidate (Krook, 2009; Vandeleene, 2014). Increasingly, comparative

datasets and studies of political parties allow to compare these requirements across a large set of parties. Indeed, Rahat and Hazan (2001) shows how that, next to legal requirements set in national law (e.g., quotas, citizenship, age—Rehmert, 2020), some parties set additional barriers or restrictions. For instance, Pilet et al. (2015) have compared the criteria set by 145 parties in 27 EU countries. They highlight party-specific requirements that can have either a collective or an individual dimension. The most common collective condition among parties in Europe are gender, ethnic, geographical, linguistic quotas or balance, or for affiliated organizations or civil society candidates. In terms of individual requirements, the most common conditions are party membership, minimum length of membership, age, link to affiliated organizations, sponsorship, and endorsement by elected officials, leaders, factions, or members, but also fee deposit, incumbency, or incompatibility with other professions.

Still we do not know much about the dynamics that lead parties to apply formal candidacy requirements, and even less about the mechanisms leading them to develop informal selection criteria that further restrict the pool of potential candidates (Bjarnegård and Zetterberg, 2019). One early study analyzed the preferences of selectors in terms of characteristics and qualities of candidates based on a large survey among selectors in the Labour party in United Kingdom (Bochel and Denver 1983). However, this has not been followed by many works until very recently. Recent works by Van Trappen (2021) or Schindler (2020) have started to remedy this gap but adopt a quantitative perspective using surveys or experiments. Only Schindler (2021) provides a more qualitative account on the informal selection criteria. This lack of knowledge forms the starting point of this research. Using qualitative data and methods, we uncover how parties develop their formal and informal selection criteria, which criteria they value, and why. We consider in this paper the selection criteria from two complementary perspectives: we posit that criteria to select candidates encompass both formal rules set by parties (among which candidacy requirements) and the informal preferences of those who select.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION, SELECTORATES, AND SELECTION CRITERIA

This paper links (in)formal selection criteria set by parties to their level of institutionalization and the type of selectorate in charge of candidate selection.

First, we expect that the degree of institutionalization of political parties is related to the level of formalization of selection criteria in the candidate selection processes (Reiser, 2014). Party institutionalization refers to ‘the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability’ (Huntington, 1968: 12), or ‘the way the organization “solidifies” (Panebianco, 1988: 49). Authors have developed multiple typologies of dimensions of party institutionalization (Huntington, 1968; Janda, 1980; Panebianco, 1988; Randall, 2006; Bizzaro et al., 2017). These typologies distinguish between internal and external dimensions (Randall and Svasand, 2002). Internal aspects refer to developments within the party itself, such

as organizational development (see Mainwaring, 1998; Kuenzi and Lambright, 2001; Webb and White, 2007; Basedau and Stroh, 2008). External aspects have to do with the party’s relationship with the society. Scholars also distinguish between organization and value-infusion (Levitsky, 1998). In this paper, we are interested in the internal, organizational dimension of party institutionalization. Following Panebianco’s, (1988) view, we define an institutionalized internal organization as characterized by a certain level of regularity, organizational complexity, routinization, and the development of prevalent conventions guiding behaviour. In that line of reasoning, we expect that highly institutionalized parties will also be formal when it comes to candidate selection. Hence they would develop more formal selection criteria in the form of candidacy requirements written in the party statutes and will provide more guidance to (or control over) selectors in the process, leaving less room for maneuver for informality in selection criteria. Conversely, we expect that less institutionalized parties will develop more informal selection criteria, letting some leeway for candidates not meeting them. Our first hypothesis thus reads:

H1: Party institutionalization leads to a formalisation of candidate selection and of selection criteria.

Second, we investigate whether different selectorates lead to varying selection criteria. The literature on selectorates has already emphasized that different selectorates ‘produce’ different outcomes in terms of candidates selected and representativeness (Hazan and Rahat, 2010; Pruyssers et al., 2017). These differences are often attributed to coordination issues in large groups. While we acknowledge the role of this factor, this view hides the fact that various selectorates might also have different views and preferences. We want to unpack these mechanisms by looking not at the outcome, but at the process. More specifically, we are interested in the criteria that various selectorates value in the process of selecting candidates. We assume that different selectorates have a different view on what makes a ‘good’ candidate, be it in terms of social, political profile or competences. Next to the formal criteria, these informal accounts likely play a key role in shaping the candidate’s choices.

Different selectorates might prioritize different goals, between vote-seeking, office-seeking and policy-seeking (Strom, 1990). This might affect how they prioritize between the three main selection criteria developed by Stark (1996) for leadership elections, namely acceptability, electability, and competence. As commonly done in the literature, we distinguish between two analytical dimensions of selectorates: their degree of centralisation and of inclusiveness (Hazan and Rahat, 2010). Along the centralisation axis, we expect that the party in central office might prioritize office-seeking goals, and hence prefer competence as selection criteria given their care for a competent party in public office for the good health of the party as an organization in general. Central party selectors are indeed portrayed in the literature as the ones prioritizing unity the most (Schindler, 2021). Decentralised, constituency organizations might prioritize vote-seeking goals, and therefore electability,

because that would be their main evaluation criterion on Election Day: how successful was the constituency. This has been highlighted by Bochel and Denver (1983) based on survey results among delegates participating in selection conferences at the constituency level. He showed how these types of selectors ranked vote-seeking goals the highest. Along the inclusiveness axis, we expect grassroots to prioritize policies and party ideology (Sjoblom, 1968), and therefore acceptability (Quinn, 2016) much more than the less ideologically committed exclusive selectorates. Schindler (2020) has conducted a survey among various types of selectors to investigate whether they differ in terms of selection criteria. He showed how more inclusive selectorates are less guided by vote-seeking goals. We hence develop a threefold hypothesis:

- H2a: Centralized selectorates tend to favour office-seeking goals, and hence competence as selection criteria.
- H2b: Decentralized selectorates tend to favour vote-seeking goals, and hence electability as selection criteria.
- H2c: More inclusive selectorates tend to favour policy-seeking goals, and hence acceptability as selection criteria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Case Selection

This paper investigates parties, selection criteria in the candidate selection processes among three Belgian French-speaking parties: the Green party Ecolo; the Liberal party *Mouvement Réformateur* (MR–Reform Movement); and the Social Democratic party *Parti socialiste* (PS–Socialist Party).

Ecolo was founded in 1980. The party has known ups and downs in its electoral success, fluctuating between 4 and 20% of the francophone seats in the federal and regional parliaments (Pilet and Talukder, 2021). The most recent examples are the major defeat at the 2014 regional and federal elections followed up by a large success at the most recent elections in 2019 (Reuchamps et al., 2019). On average, the party ranks 4th in the French-speaking landscape, after the PS and the MR and close to the Christian Democrats, and more recently to the radical left. It tends to perform better in Brussels than in Wallonia.

The MR traces back to the first political party established in Belgium, the Liberal party, then a nationwide party. It relabelled itself *Parti de la liberté et du progrès/Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang* (PLP–PVV–Party for Liberty and Progress) in 1961. Like other mainstream parties in Belgium, it split along the Dutch–French linguistic divide in 1972. After a period of turmoil, the *Parti réformateur libéral* (PRL–Party for liberal reform) was founded in 1979. In 1993, it enlarged to a federation including the regionalist party FDF, expanded to the MCC (splinter of the Christian Democrats) in 1999. In 2002, this federation relabelled itself MR (Delwit, 2017). The FDF left the federation in 2011 after disagreements on state reform. The party has mainly occupied the second place in the francophone party system, with a short exception of 2007 where it ranked first (Delwit, 2021). The party historically performed better in Brussels than in Wallonia,

but the sociological changes among the Brussels electorate has eroded their dominance in the capital city.

The *Parti socialiste* also dates back to the 19th century. Its roots lie in the *Parti Ouvrier Belge/Belgische Werkliedenpartij* (POB–BWP–Belgian Workers’ Party) founded in 1885. The party relabelled itself *Parti socialiste belge/Belgische Socialistische Partij* (PSB–BSP–Belgian Socialist Parti) in 1945. It was the last of the three main parties to split along the linguistic divide in 1978, when it became the *Parti socialiste* (Delwit, 2021). It has been the dominant parti in French-speaking Belgium since after the war, especially due to its strong local anchorage in Wallonia. It has maintained its status of first party throughout the period, with the exception of 2007. The party has increased its performances in Brussels while its electoral grip on Wallonia has decreased.

The selection of these three parties for our analysis relies on a Most Similar System Design strategy, with the three parties sharing several characteristics, but differing on their level of institutionalization and the selectorate in charge of candidate selection, our two main independent variables.

Indeed, the three parties share similar characteristics. They operate in the same federal multilevel setting with regional and federal elections¹. They also function in the same party system and under the same set of institutional and electoral rules. For instance, they operate under the list system, where the selection outcome is a group of candidates. More specifically, Belgium applies a flexible list PR system with multiple preference voting (André et al., 2015). However, it has often been labelled a closed-list system in disguise (Crisp et al., 2013) given the difficulty for candidates to break the list order and bypass candidates ranked higher on the list (1,4% of all elected regional and federal candidates from 1995 until 2014 according to Cogels, 2020). Parties have to draft one electoral list for each constituency, and possibly one for each level of election when elections are held simultaneously (which was the case for the last two elections). Moreover, parties draft a so-called substitute list next to the effective list, presenting candidates who will be entitled to sit only if an elected representative renounces her/his mandate during the term (except for the regional election in Brussels). Given these characteristics, parties, selectors remain extremely powerful in determining the future elected representatives (Hazan and Rahat, 2010).

The position of all three parties in the party system implies that they can all count on several realistic positions on most electoral lists and may even hope for some ministerial posts, a factor to keep in mind when the selectorates proceed to the candidate selection. Uncertainty around electability is probably the highest for Ecolo given its history of electoral yoyo.

Even if parties resemble each other in terms of structure (Legein and van Haute, 2021), they vary in terms of level of institutionalization and selectorate in charge of the candidate selection process. To assess the level of institutionalization of our three parties, we rely on Mainwaring’s (1998) operationalization,

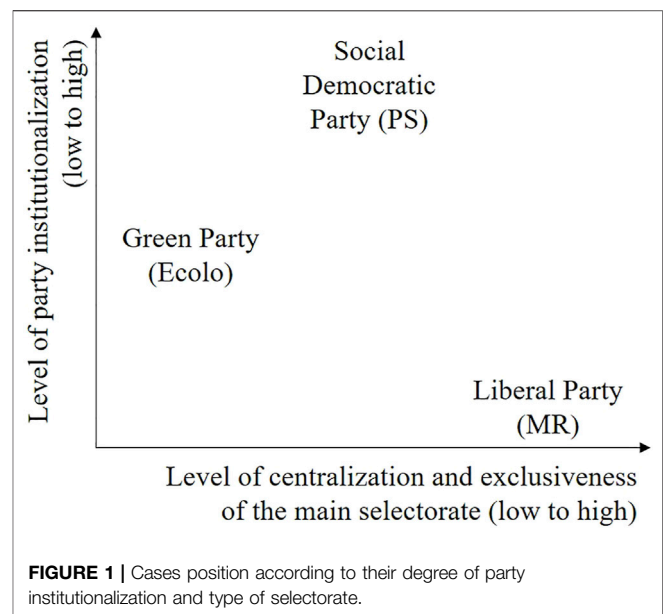
¹This paper does not directly consider the local level (provinces and communes), or the European level.

refined by Basedeau and Stroh (2008). We focus on the internal organization dimension of institutionalization, measured by four indicators: membership strength, regular party congresses, material and personal resources, and nationwide organizational presence and activities beyond election campaigns. To these indicators, we add Baer's (1993) dimension of relatively clear authority structure and division of labor. We retrieve the information from the Political Party Database (PPDB). The dataset focuses on the 'official' story regarding the most important aspects of party organization, based on party statutes and resources (Poguntke et al., 2016; Scarrow et al., 2017). We used the most recent round (Round 2, 2016–19) to retrieve the data on our three selected parties.

In Belgium, parties, level of resources is mainly determined by law, as parties are eligible for public funding and private donations are very limited (Gaudin, 2020). Parties are also eligible to staff based on their electoral results (Moens, 2021). Given their respective ranking in the party system, the PS displays the highest level of resources, followed by the MR and Ecolo. There is no party law that provides specifications as to how parties should select their candidates.

On the other criteria too, the PS is the most institutionalized of the three parties. With its roots as mass party, it still has the largest membership base, albeit in decline (68,254 in 2018, see van Haute and Paulis, 2017). The party holds regular congresses at all levels (see party statute's articles 15, 20, 28, and 30–34). It has a nationwide organizational presence, with 289 local party branches covering all municipalities in French-speaking Belgium, and 115 lists submitted using the party label at the last 2018 local elections (Legein et al., 2020). Its authority structure and the division of labor is clearly stated in its statutes, including the incompatibilities, motions of distrust, appeals, etc. When it comes to candidate selection, the party's selectorates correspond to the constituency organizations. They attribute the PS logo to a list, have the initiative in proposing a first draft of the lists in accordance with the directives from national executive and congress, and have formal final input. The national party has formal but overarching input: the national executive and the congress set directives for the building of the lists.

Ecolo displays an intermediate level of party institutionalization. Founded on participatory principles as a militant party, Ecolo's membership base is more restricted but stable, around 5–6,000 members in the last decade (5,938 in 2018). While its membership is more limited, the registered members are proportionally more active (van Haute, 2015). The party holds regular congresses called *Assemblées générales*, open to all members (Title III, chapter 1 of party statutes). It has a nationwide organizational presence, with 286 local party branches covering all municipalities in French-speaking Belgium and has a strong policy of using the party label at local elections with 144 party lists submitted under the party label in 2018. Its authority structure and the division of labor are clearly stated in its statutes, including incompatibilities and appeal procedures. When it comes to candidate selection, the party's selectorates correspond to constituency member's assemblies depending on the level of election (i.e., all party



members registered on the territory of the electoral constituency). The constituency organization has the initiative to propose a draft list via a list committee set up at the occasion of the elections and gathering both constituency and national leaders (or their delegates). The constituency level has thus formal input (can amend the list) but also the formal final places on the list and later for all other places, and vote in Assembly (quorum of at least 20% of members required) (Vandeleene, 2018). The national party can have formal input besides its involvement in the list committee. The so-called Council of Federation can adopt a procedure of codecision (article 155) and sets the calendar (article 157).

The MR displays the lowest level of institutionalization. The party emerged as a cadre party and has transformed into an electoral party. Its membership base is hard to assess given the lack of information provided by the party's headquarters. The leadership elections are therefore the only indirect method to assess its membership figures. In 2019, 24,477 members were listed as potential voters in the leadership race (Vandeleene et al., 2020). The party has a nationwide presence with 282 local party branches. However, only 91 lists were using the party label at the last local elections in 2018. The party statutes are relatively short and outdated (last revision was in 2005; since then, one member has left the alliance, but new statutes have only recently been revised and not approved). The statutes do not specify how frequently a party congress must be held (article 8). Finally, the authority structure is much less clear, flexible, and frequently adapted to the needs of individuals holding the reins of the party at a specific moment in time (Sierens and van Haute, 2017). When it comes to candidate selection, the statutes are relatively vague on the party's electorate. The national level controls all steps of the process via the electoral commission, from initiative, to formal input to formal final approval. The electoral commission is composed of the Party Leader, the

TABLE 1 | Summary of expectations by party.

Independent variable	Hypothesis	Dependent variable	Party
H1: Institutionalization	High level Intermediate level Low level	High level of formalization of selection process Intermediate level Low level	PS Ecolo MR
H2a: Type of selectorate	Centralized	Office-seeking priorities and emphasis on competence as selection criteria	MR
H2b: Type of selectorate	Decentralized	Vote-seeking priorities and emphasis on electability as selection criteria	PS
H2c: Type of selectorate	Inclusive	Policy-seeking priorities and emphasis on acceptability as selection criteria	Ecolo

Governmental Leader, and the members of the National executive (article 26). Party members, constituency organizations or affiliated organizations do not have a formal role. This is to ensure an equilibrium between the partners in the alliance. Yet the outdated character of the MR statutes requires to nuance the relevance of these written rules, especially considering the already mentioned flexibility of the party structure (Vandeleene, 2018).

Ultimately, our three cases vary in terms of level of party institutionalization (high for PS, intermediate for Ecolo, and low for MR) and selectorates formally in charge (decentralized inclusive members assemblies for Ecolo, decentralized delegates for PS, and centralized executive for MR). **Figure 1** summarizes each party's position on both analytical axes.

Accordingly, our expectations regarding our three parties are summarized in **Table 1**.

Data and Information on Selection Criteria

The formal candidacy requirements as stated in the party statutes are retrieved from PPDB. To go beyond the formal rules, we conducted individual in-depth interviews with party selectors. These interviews aim at collecting information on our dependent variables. First, interviews were used to gather information on the level of formality of selection criteria (H1): how candidates are selected in the party in practice, compared to party statutes? Which role assumed the interviewees, i.e., to what extent they were in the driving seat to select candidates, which kind of candidates this was and for which electoral level(s), and did they experience being an aspirant and/or a candidate themselves? We also asked to what extent candidate selection was steered by the party as an organization or instead whether the selectors felt that they were rather free in their choices of decision-making procedures and criteria, whether they received guidelines prior to the selection phase or whether they had to report to some other party body during and after the selection. The second major layer of the interview tackled selector's preferences in terms of selection criteria (H2). We started with a broad and general question of "what is a good candidate according to you?" before digging deeper in the selection criteria depending on the provided answers. Selectors were then prompted based on a set of vignettes to address three theoretical selection criteria based on parties' strategic goals (Sjoblom, 1968). If not spontaneously mentioned, we proceeded to ask about potential differences between candidates on (un)realistic positions.

We interviewed no less than 23 respondents (seven to nine per party) who were all involved in at least one recent selection process at the regional or federal level. Even though the focus of this research does not lie on local elections, the point of comparison proved to be relevant for many interviewees who

could rely on insightful examples from their local experience. Almost all interviewees have also been candidate themselves (with a great variation from head of list to substitute candidate) and some could rely on a parliamentary and even cabinet experience. Being able to understand the other face of the coin by experiencing being the aspirant to a candidate position oneself was extremely useful to encourage respondents' reflection on the critical choices made by selectors. Some interviewees openly declared having been disappointed not having been selected on a particular position at one selection process and reflected on why their profile did not fit the criteria of the selectors on that occasion. The respondents are politically active in various Belgian provinces with varying local contexts (in terms of own party success or population characteristics, e.g., more rural or more urban). For Ecolo, we have about the same number of women and men, but parity was not realistic in the other two parties considering how candidate selection takes place (i.e., most decision-makers are still men). Respondents' level of experience in politics varies, as does their age (from 30 to 60 years old, mean age of 52 years old). Details about the interviewees can be found in the appendix.

The interviews took place in two phases. For Ecolo, interviews were conducted in February and March 2020, at various places (respondents' office, home or in a coffee shop). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews for PS and MR took place online via the Zoom or Teams platforms, in May–July 2021. Interviews lasted on average 47 min. All interviews, conducted in French, were recorded and entirely transcribed, either by the authors or by job students. The analysis of the interviews' transcribed texts has been undertaken according to a cross-sectional code and retrieve method in NVivo, starting with a categorization of chunks of text into large categories (chiefly, types of selection criteria, role and kind of selectors, features of selection process) combined with a later refining of categories, both during the coding process and afterwards (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). A systematic comparison of categories emerging from the data helped uncover the relative importance of more or less formalized practices of candidate selection and the related criteria put forward by selectors.

RESULTS

Party Institutionalization and Formal Rules in Candidacy Requirements

Our first goal is to uncover whether more institutionalised parties develop more formalism in their candidate selection process, in

particular regarding the establishment of formal selection criteria, of guidance to people in charge of the selection decisions and of a reduced room for maneuver for informality in candidate selection. We selected three cases varying on their level of party institutionalization. Based on these levels, we expect the degree of formalism in candidate selection to be high for PS, intermediate for Ecolo, and low for MR. We first sketch the formal candidacy requirements at the legislative level and party-specific requirements based on the PPDB. Next, we rely on our interview data to investigate the extent to which respondents reported the process to be formal, before digging deeper into the formalism of the selection criteria as such and in particular the control by the party over selectors.

In Belgium, the electoral law sets individual and collective formal candidacy requirements. Individual candidates for the Lower House must have civil and political rights, be 18 years old or more, and be Belgian and residing in Belgium. Collectively, they must submit a list with gender parity, with a maximum difference of one for odd lists. Moreover, the first two positions on the list shall be occupied by a man and a woman (note that for regional elections in Wallonia, full gender alternance on the list is applied, i.e., the so-called zipper system).

Parties sometimes develop additional formal candidacy requirements in their statutes. It is the case for the three parties under study, but to different extents. The PS applies collective selection rules. It reiterates the national rules regarding gender parity whatever the level of election (article 7). It introduces an additional age criterion, stating that a list cannot have more than 15% of candidates older than 65 years old on the day of the election (article 68). In terms of individual rules, candidates must be member of the party and sign a loyalty pledge committing to party group discipline in the legislature (the 'Charter of the candidate', see below). There are no formal rules regarding links to groups, no endorsement or fee deposit required.

Ecolo also reiterates the gender parity rule in its statutes. At the individual level, to be allowed to be listed as candidate on an Ecolo list, one should 1) be a member of the party (or of the sister party Groen or another party with which Ecolo has an agreement), 2) be a non-member but be approved by a 2/3 majority by the selectorate (article 152). Candidates must also sign a loyalty pledge. There are no formal rules regarding links to groups, no endorsement or fee deposit required. The Council of Federation can impose additional conditions, specific to the context of the elections (article 153).

The MR is much more unclear regarding candidacy requirements in its statutes. There is no mention of collective rules regarding gender or ethnic background. In terms of individual requirements, there is no need to be a party member, but candidates must sign a loyalty pledge. There are no formal rules regarding links to groups, no endorsement or fee deposit required.

Yet one knows that candidate selection goes beyond formal rules and candidacy requirements. *De jure* and *de facto* procedures do sometimes not match, and scholars should at least consider the divergences between both (Meserve et al., 2018; Kelbel, 2020). The accounts of selectors retrieved from

in-depth interviews allows to assess how much room for maneuver for informality is left for selectors.

Our interviews confirm the high degree of formalism in candidate selection for the Socialist party (PS). However, some degree of informality prevails in the early and most relevant stages of the list drafting. What is striking from the interviews is the importance granted by most respondents to the statutes together with the acknowledgment that the most important decisions are taken informally by one or some party elites. The candidate selection core leverage is clearly situated at the decentralised level with the Federation presidents steering the processes. The federations, one per *arrondissement* (a sub-territory of the province, corresponding to the regional constituencies), form the backbone of the party structure. These local leaders are responsible for the list drafting and are rather free to organise their own selection process like they wish, resulting in a potential variety of processes across the different federations. Some take advantage of the formal party bodies and rely for instance on the federation board to validate their choices while some only informally consult the main local party *sages* (e.g., former top politicians, powerful mayors or local party chairs) or the head of list when they do not self-designate.

Most processes rely on an open call for candidacies, which sometimes results in a formal endorsement of some candidates by their local party branches (i.e., an even more decentralised selection process). Besides, most lists are at the end of the day formally validated by the federation congress gathering delegates or rank-and-file members. These large gatherings seemingly never hamper the decisions made by the federation leader(s)—one may rather talk about rubber-stamping. The congress votes '*en bloc*' on the list either by secret ballot or more informally by a show of hands.

The national party level does not seem to strongly interfere in the process even though respondents refer to a validation by the national headquarters. A continuous coordination throughout the process guarantees selectors that their proposal will be accepted. This coordination is likely to happen rather formally, for instance during the meeting of all Federation's presidents with the party General Secretary. At this meeting, "*there is of course inevitably a progress report on the constitution of the list on the agenda and therefore each federation can report on the difficulties it encounters or not in the framework of the drafting of the list*" (P2). But the national and the constituency levels also informally come together, primarily to determine the candidates on the most realistic positions, and this starts long before Election Day.

In terms of selection criteria as such, PS respondents claim not being given instructions by the national headquarters. There is however a 'Charter of the candidate', mentioned by several interviewees, originating from the national party but that can be fine-tuned by each Federation. The very usage of this loyalty pledge and its respect also seem to vary from constituency to constituency. This written document to be signed by all candidates theoretically compels them to follow the party rules, but respondents admit that the party is sometimes powerless when a candidate deviates from the party line at campaign time or once elected. Apart from excluding the

freerider, there is not much the party can do. Next to the formal Charter, some selectors report the existence of some guidelines set by the national party board: *“These are not injunctions, instructions or pre-established grids by the big war party machine which has a research department that almost sends you the age and sex of the third candidate of the second list.”* (P4). Examples of these guidelines are paying attention to the so-called opening candidates, i.e., non-member candidates, to prevent disorder during the campaign. A respondent recalls the received instructions from the party: *“If you appoint opening candidates, pay attention to the way they will communicate, assist them. We don’t say no to you, but we don’t say yes.”* (P9). The representation of some population categories would also be encouraged, be it to remind selectors to select enough young but also senior candidates. Beyond these recommendations, selectors feel rather free in their decisions, what -they report-is for the good of the list quality given their knowledge of the constituency, counter to national leaders.

We expect an intermediate level of formalization of the candidate selection processes for our second case, Ecolo. Based on the interviews, it appears that the written rules are narrowly followed in the party: the constituency organization holds the power via the members’ General Assembly, entitled with the nomination of who might sit in the list committee on behalf of the constituency organisation (and will decide together with representatives from the party national leadership and from the Council of Federation—the party national delegate’s assembly) and after the list committee has drafted a list proposal, is charged with the final approval of the draft list. The selection process starts with a formal call for candidacies. Lists are constituted according to an assorted process: first the eligible positions and later the other list positions, determined by another committee in which the heads of list hold a key role. Respondents from various constituencies reported very similar decision-making procedures and they all highlighted the importance of respecting the rules, and in particular the extent to which party members grant importance to these rules ensuring fair decisions as well as a smooth intraparty competition (as opposed to the poll system formerly in place in the party that proved to be harmful for party cohesion, see Vandeleene and De Winter (2018)). There is still some room for informalism in the working of the list committees that are free to organise their decision-making how they want: some foresee (several rounds of) individual interviews with aspirants and others gather all aspirants who have to defend their candidacy before the group.

Ecolo formalises the establishment of selection criteria in two respects. First, the Council of Federation sets general guidelines for candidate selection, such as gender parity among heads of list in the same constituency or trying to avoid local office-holders on the list. Second, beyond these national instructions, each members general assembly gathers before the list committee starts the selection process and establishes a set of selection criteria: *“We made working groups of five-six people. . . And we gave them half an hour to create the criteria. And then the working groups came back. They said: ‘We saw the similarities in the working groups, the differences’. Then we had another informal discussion.”* (E1). The result is a non-constraining list of criteria

that the selectors have to follow when drafting the list: *“It makes the General Assembly accountable to criteria. It’s as if they gave us a mission statement.”* (E6) The interviewed selectors acknowledge the necessary degree of informalism in the selection process, in particular to stimulate some candidacies or to decide between two very similar profiles, but also emphasize the importance of the final vote by rank-and-file members: *“We are required, as we know, to respect the balances because if we don’t respect the equilibrium that has been decided with the members, it automatically won’t be accepted because there is a vote.”* (E2) All in all, both the process and the criteria are rather formalised. It is not so much the national party who controls selectors, but selectors themselves feeling compelled to abide the rules.

We expected our third case, the liberal party MR, to have the least formalised selection procedures and criteria. Respondents consistently report that the formal rule is that the party national leadership holds the power to designate the head of list (possibly with the provincial party leaders), after which the head of list becomes the main decision-maker to select the remaining candidates. Some heads of list let a party constituency body (the board or even the members’ assembly) formally validate their proposal, but most acknowledge that the validation is rather a formal approval that denotes the launch of the electoral campaign rather than a moment when the list composition is discussed. There is no systematic call for candidacies; this is let at the discretion of the main selector/head of list. A large degree of informalism prevails in the list drafting process, and the number of decision-makers varies depending on how much the head of list is willing to share the power with other constituency figureheads or with the national party leaders.

No MR respondent reported formal selection criteria. On the contrary, they rather highlighted the subjective character of their decisions. The decisions fall on the shoulders of the heads of list (often the constituency party chairs) who choose candidates on their own: *“There are no directives from above, we do it ourselves and we have the wisdom to know our territory well enough to represent it at best.”* (M6). This results in the extreme importance of individuals and their own preferences. Moreover, *“there is also a courting logic that takes hold with the president, especially in the months before the lists are drafted, when everyone is nice to him or her.”* (M2). Yet some informal coordination takes place, between the heads of list for regional and federal elections running in the same constituency, and with the national and/or provincial leadership who might interfere especially when conflicts arise. For instance, when there are only a few realistic positions, *“there is a need for arbitration by the party leader, who must not only arbitrate on the human dimension, but who must also arbitrate on the dimension of the party’s interest, and the human dimension is not always in line with the interest of the party”* (M4). This informal logic is also emphasized to be conform to this cadre party centred around individualities and office-holders’ relative freedom.

Our first hypothesis stated that highly institutionalized parties will develop more formal selection procedures and criteria, and will closely control the selectors, resulting in a narrow room for maneuver for informality. Our findings slightly nuance this assertion. It appears first that party institutionalization

interacts with the degree of centralization and inclusiveness of candidate selection procedures. The degree of centralisation of the selection processes affects the possibilities for parties to have homogeneous list drafting procedures, i.e., following the same rules. The highly institutionalised PS knows rather heterogeneous selection processes due to the pivotal role of the constituency organizations and the prevalence of their own rules. Yet the national party strives to coordinate and influence the decisions via the meeting of the federation presidents. The story is different for Ecolo, which is less institutionalised as a party but manages to have homogeneous selection processes thanks to a deep concern of party members, and so of selectors, for a respect of the rules. National leaders (or their representatives) are part of the selectorate in charge of the main list draft, what allows them to possibly steer the decisions. The least institutionalised party of our research, MR, follows our expectations by acknowledging the occurrence of informalism in the selection processes, apart from a formal designation of the heads of list who later select the other candidates in a rather informal way. The national level might informally provide guidance, in case of problems only.

Second, we show that the degree of institutionalisation can also affect the establishment of formal selection criteria. Again, the most institutionalised party in our analysis is not the party relying on the most formal list of criteria for candidates. Although a so-called PS Charter of the candidate does exist, this document is not widely used nor is it similar across constituencies given the decentralised authority. The party board rather sets guidelines but these are not seen as formal requirements for selectors. On the contrary, the intermediate party in terms of party institutionalisation, Ecolo, relies on a very formal set of selection criteria systematically established by the members' assemblies prior to the selection of the candidates. The list committee's members consider this criteria list as their contract to which they feel accountable. Besides, similarly to PS, the national Council of Federation sets general guidelines for candidate's preferred profile. The weakly institutionalised MR is in line with our hypothesis as no formal selection criteria, nor from the central or the decentralised level seem to exist.

Selectorates and Selection Criteria

Our second research objective was to investigate whether different selectorates favour different selection criteria. Centralized selectorates would prioritize office-seeking goals and competence as selection criteria, while decentralised selectorates would prioritize vote-seeking goals and electability. More inclusive selectorates would prioritize policy-seeking goals and acceptability. Drawing on the insights from our interviewees, we sketch in the following paragraphs the main priorities and criteria respondents reported, depending on the selectorates' characteristics.

Leaders at the central party level are expected to prioritize office-seeking goals and competence as selection criteria (H2a). This is confirmed in the interviews. Interviewees refer to the importance of a balance of competences among the would-be MPs so they can cover as much portfolios as possible once in Parliament. *"We wanted to have a group that was both diverse and coherent [...] in order to be functional and effective."* (E6). We

argue that the prioritization of office and competences is related to the centrality of the selectorate. Centralized selectorates enjoy the helicopter view on the lists' drafting processes and can steer the selection of candidates on realistic positions to ensure some balance of profiles within the parliamentary group. Their ability to achieve these goals is linked to their size and ability to coordinate the selection on the eligible positions (Hazan and Rahat, 2010). Making wise choices in terms of candidates' competence would be easier: *"The list committee, it's what they would have chosen. 'We know him, we know him well.' But, 'we know him', that means: he is able to handle a project."* (E1). They also have the power to allocate resources to achieve these goals. To boost a candidate's chances to be elected, the party in central office can increase her visibility, with the expectation that voters will follow suit and cast preference votes accordingly: *"At some point you will even have to tell yourself: 'I want this one to be elected for my political work'. And we're going to make videos, we're going to make things and posters and for others not, because this one must be elected."* (E1).

However, centralized selectorates are not only about office-seeking. Interestingly, interviewees also emphasize vote-seeking goals, especially in highly competitive constituencies, and their core message is that electoral lists have to succeed in getting candidates elected: *"It's a like the player who gets on the pitch: he can get on, but he has to win."* (P9). To achieve this goal, centralized selectors focus on balance and diversity of profiles of candidates. Central selectors can identify and recruit votes-boosters like celebrity candidates, to maximize votes. The recruitment of these categories of candidates is easier for party leaders and central elites. Besides, they also favour balance in the socio-demographic composition of the list: *"Each regional selectorate could select a male head of list. And then it would be nothing but a group of male MPs. So, the federal level intervenes."* (E1). This is often done in coordination with more decentralized bodies, who are better positioned to draft lists that nicely meet the needs of their own constituency, and to avoid the potential drawbacks of centrally chosen candidates who would not be supported by constituency elites: *"If at some point you impose on the heads of lists candidates that they don't necessarily want to have on board, that can result in problems."* (M5). Finally, centralized selectorates can also lead to selection criteria that prioritize personal interests: *"I think the people who were on that committee were mostly looking out for their own personal interests and not developing a collective synergy."* (M7).

We expect decentralized selectorates situated at the constituency level, typically the head of list or local leaders in a committee, to prioritize vote-seeking goals and electability (H2b). These selectors might indeed above all seek to win elections and maximize their constituency party's strength. Some interviewees point to the importance of vote-attracting candidates and the added-value of decentralization. They put forward their knowledge of the local context to recruit candidates with eligible profiles: *"It also allows, with successes and failures, eh, but to each one to be responsible actually, but of a responsibility, I find, which is appropriate because it is integrated in a sociology, in a geography which sometimes is deeply different [from one constituency to the other]."* (P1). Eligibility also means to come up with geographically balanced lists representative

of the various sublevels in the party. To assess eligibility, selectors report evaluating candidates retrospectively based on their individual electoral results. Yet many acknowledge the trade-off to be made between popular and competent candidates. While constituency organizations would like to recruit candidates meeting both requirements, the lack of ideal candidates might force them to take a popular candidate on board despite poor skills potentially harming the constituency party's reputation as well as the substantive representation of the constituency best interests by the future MP: *"It's not about being a potentially excellent representative. It's not about being a certified jurist because we're going to do legislation, no. The first quality of a candidate is to be known, so sometimes you have a fool who is, who is well-known in the area where he lives."* (M5). In other cases, respondents refer to the opposite choice: they selected a competent candidate despite a low electoral popularity. *"Someone who was very, very good, but he doesn't get any votes. And we told ourselves: 'Well, we'll put him there, so that if we have prospects of entering the majority, we know that. . . he'll go straight up [to the Parliament].'"* (E6).

Finally, we assume that larger, more inclusive selectorates prioritize policy-seeking goals and acceptability as selection criteria (H2c). We found this assertion directly in some respondents' accounts. Our interviews suggest that larger selectorates are less office- and vote-seeking than more exclusive selectorates, what could play in favour of policy-seeking objectives and prioritize aspirants' involvement in the party, and thus acceptability: *"The activists, their first argument, it is always difficult to make them understand other arguments, it is the loyalty to the party. And so, we need people [candidates] who are committed, who come to the General Assembly, who are present in the party, . . ."* (E7). Contrarily to more exclusive selectorates, inclusive ones are portrayed by respondents as lacking the strategic skills to help them make strategic informed choices to pursue vote- or office-seeking goals—as already reported in the literature (Kittilson, 2006; Pruysers et al., 2017). First, inclusive assemblies are said to be less able to grasp what makes a popular or competent candidate: *"They managed to designate candidates who were not at all, uh, who were not made for it and where the incumbents were well aware of it but, as it is the base who decides, it is very democratic [but] we arrive at, sometimes, also bad casting."* (M4). Furthermore, the coordination issue in larger selectorates is underlined: *"The general result is not guaranteed, because obviously as we do, we focus on the individuals and not on the collective or collectives: it necessarily has an impact."* (E5).

Yet, even inclusive selectorates are not fully exempt of focus on candidates' competence: *"I think that the members have a clear and mature view, and very. . . I would say full of competence. That's not unreasonable actually. When they, in general [. . .] come with questions 'Why this person and not that one?' [. . .], these are questions we were prepared for, because we have often been faced with them in the list committee."* (E2). Similarly, they also tend to focus on some aspects of profile and electability, especially when it comes to territorial balance and representation of their own local chapter on the list: *"This municipal mechanism was stronger than we imagined, and we became aware of it as time went by. And so, in the end, we realized that. . . it was stuck on that side. And so you say: 'The candidate from X that we put [. . .] on place thirteen, we're going to*

put her eleventh." (E6). Inclusive assemblies often also select candidates based on their personal (lack of) acquaintances with them: *"We often get reactions from an angry guy because he had an argument with someone from his chapter and says 'I don't want her, she did this, she didn't do that in her municipality, that's shameful, you are taking her!'"* (P3). This personal, proximity dimension is even a mobilizer for selectorates: *"There's a bus coming to the general assembly, whose mission will be: I have to vote for candidate X, because he's my friend and that's it."* (E4).

Our second hypothesis expected different selectorates to be driven by different goals and selection criteria. Our findings corroborate our expectations in that selectors point to varying preferences depending on the party body in charge of candidate selection. Our interview data allow to qualify and nuance our explorative hypotheses. More centralized selectorate do indeed benefit from more coordination power. This allows them to focus more on office and competence of candidates. Yet winning seats and office requires winning votes, and centralized selectorates often take into account electability, in coordination with decentralized constituency party bodies. They are also prone to the influence of personal interests of selectors. Decentralised selectorates prioritize winning lists in terms of the local specificities, seeking a balance between profiles, groups, and territories. Yet they cannot fully ignore competence as selection criteria, and sometimes face a tradeoff. Finally, more inclusive selectorates focus less on votes and office, partly due to the coordination issue linked to larger groups, and more on policy. They also focus more on candidates' acceptability and favour aspirant candidates who can demonstrate an involvement toward the party.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

When parties select candidates, they have to abide the legal eligibility rules but they also set their own rules and hereby restrict the pool of potential candidates running for elections. Building on the literature on candidate selection processes and party institutionalization, this paper intended to shed light on this largely understudied aspect of selection criteria. More specifically, we linked selection criteria set by parties to their level of institutionalization (Panebianco, 1988) and the type of selectorate in charge of candidate selection. First, we expected that higher degrees of institutionalization of political parties lead to higher levels of formalization of selection criteria in the candidate selection processes. Second, we expected that different selectorates (on the inclusiveness and decentralization dimensions) have different goals (Strom, 1990), and hence different views on what makes a 'good' candidate, be it in terms of ideological, political profile or competences. We tested these expectations in a qualitative analysis of three Belgian political parties (Ecolo, PS, and MR), using party statutes retrieved in the PPDB and original interview data among 23 selectors. These three parties display rather common features of party organizational models in terms of level of institutionalization and types of selectorates (Scarrow et al., 2017). Hence, we expect our findings to travel to other contexts.

Interestingly, and contrary to our expectations, our results show that, in the three parties under study, formalism in candidate selection is not per se linked to party institutionalization, as the

most institutionalized parties do not automatically strongly formalize their selection processes and criteria. What our data reveal is rather that party institutionalization interplays with the degree of centralization and inclusiveness of the selection procedure. The authority of central party structures can trigger or hinder formalism in candidate selection. A loyalty pledge is for instance officially in use in all three parties under study in this research but its usage has been unevenly mentioned by selectors, emphasizing not only the obvious relevance of examining party practices next to written rules, but the pivotal role of the party in central office in guaranteeing homogeneous selection procedures following the party official rules. When the power is decentralized, the degree of formalism weakens at least in some of the decentralized party entities caring less for the existing rules. Another major finding from our analysis is that party culture matters, and the feeling of being or not compelled by formal rules appears to be more relevant to predict the degree of formalism in candidate selection than the extent of party institutionalization. When selectors feel concerned by the existing rules, they are likely to respect them, whereas the absence of central rules might even be a source of pride for some selectors, highlighting their high degree of freedom and even self-rule. A case in point is the set of selection criteria established by the member's assembly of the Belgian francophone green party and serving as a mandate given to a list committee charged with the draft list. This list committee's members feel accountable towards the assembly to abide the criteria they collectively determined. In contrast, the Socialist party officially provides a Charter of the candidate (the loyalty pledge) to be signed by all aspirants but irregularly in use in the various decentralized party structures who hold the real selection power. We encourage party researchers to test this link between centralism and formalism in other settings to strengthen our knowledge on what stimulates or hinders the formalization of selection processes and criteria.

Regarding our second set of expectations, our results corroborate the idea that different selectorates value different goals and hence different priorities in terms of selection criteria. Centralized selectorates care primarily about offices and value competent candidates, while decentralized selectorates are more concerned with winning votes for their constituency's candidates and value electability, while more inclusive selectorates prioritize policy and acceptability. Yet these are trends rather than hermetic categories. Centralized selectorates also care about votes, and seek out the expertise of constituency bodies. Decentralized selectorates also care about competence, and inclusive selectorates also seek out balanced lists in terms of competence or profiles.

More generally, our interview data confirm the coordination issue in larger, more inclusive selectorates who are often described as lacking the strategic skills to efficiently prioritize office and votes goals, and the capacity of centralized bodies to benefit from more coordination to design and implement an informed strategy. Yet we did not interview ordinary rank-and-file members directly. Rather, we collected information from party figures who took on responsibilities in the selection processes. Our report of the priorities of inclusive selectorates thus relies on how these party figures perceive inclusive selectorates, their priorities, and the criteria that guide their decisions in terms of candidate selection. It limits our conclusions on the preferences of inclusive selectorates. Our findings

also point that centralization and inclusiveness matter more than institutionalization when it comes to selection criteria.

Lastly, our findings emphasize that the 'secret garden of politics' (Gallagher and Marsh, 1988) is definitely a black box. Even in highly institutionalized parties, a large degree of informalism prevails in the implementation of candidate selection processes. Much has yet to be uncovered in this secret garden. This study has advocated for the added value of an in-depth analysis of selectors' views on the process, beyond the formal story of candidate selection and candidacy requirements. We hope this study can inspire other works investigating different combinations of degrees of party institutionalisation and selectorates to disentangle in particular the role of central party bodies in designing the formal processes and the preferred selection criteria. Extended analyses of selector's insights in various contexts will certainly prove valuable to understand who our political elites are and how they eventually reach office.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The PPDB dataset is available on <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/politicalparties>. The qualitative dataset presented in this article is not readily available because the interview data contain information that is hardly made anonymous. Therefore we do not publicly disclose our dataset. Requests to access the dataset should be directed to audrey.vandeleene@ugent.be.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

FUNDING

This manuscript benefited from the funding FWO-FNRS EoS Excellence of Science O026018F (ID: 30431006) for the project "RepResent" and from the *Bijzonder Onderzoeksfonds* of Ghent University (Grant BOF. PDO. 2018.0032.01).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our gratitude goes to Joana Segonds, Matthias Vandevooort, and Brieuc Vandeleene for helping us with the transcription of the interviews. We are also indebted to the interviewed politicians who granted us their valuable time and insights.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpos.2021.777747/full#supplementary-material>

REFERENCES

- André, A., Baudewyns, P., Depauw, S., and De Winter, L. (2015). "Les Motivations Du Vote de Préférence," in *Décrypter L'électeur: Le Comportement Électoral et Les Motivations de Vote*. Editors K. Deschouwer, P. Delwit, M. Hooghe, P. Baudewyns, and S. Walgrave (Tiel: LannooCampus), 58–76.
- Bäck, H., Debus, M., and Müller, W. C. (2016). Intra-Party Diversity and Ministerial Selection in Coalition Governments. *Public Choice* 166 (3–4), 355–378. doi:10.1007/s11127-016-0327-6
- Baer, D. L. (1993). Who Has the Body? Party Institutionalization and Theories of Party Organization. *Arp* 14, 1–38. doi:10.15763/issn.2374-7781.1993.14.0.1-38
- Basedau, M., and Stroh, A. (2008). Measuring Party Institutionalization in Developing Countries: New research Instrument Applied to 28 African Political Parties. *GIGA Working Pap.* 69.
- Bizzaro, F., Hicken, A., and Self, D. (2017/2017). The V-Dem Party Institutionalization Index: A New Global Indicator (1900-2015). *V-Dem Working Pap.* 48.
- Bjarnegård, E., and Zetterberg, P. (2019). Political parties, formal selection criteria, and gendered parliamentary representation. *Party Polit.* 25 (3), 325–335. doi:10.1177/1354068817715552
- Bochel, J., and Denver, D. (1983). Candidate selection in the Labour Party: What the selectors seek. *Br. J. Polit. Sci.* 13 (1), 45–69. doi:10.1017/S0007123400003136
- Caul, M. (1999). Women's Representation in Parliament. *Party Polit.* 5 (1), 79–98. doi:10.1177/1354068899005001005
- Close, C., and Núñez, L. (2017). Preferences and agreement in legislative parties: testing the causal chain. *J. Legislative Stud.* 23 (1), 31–43. doi:10.1080/13572334.2017.1283173
- Cogels, M. (2020). *Representation amidst Candidates: the Balance of Electoral Lists A Longitudinal Analysis of the Belgian Political Parties*. PhD dissertation. Louvain-la-Neuve: UCLouvain.
- Cordero, G., Jaime-Castillo, A. M., and Coller, X. (2016). Selecting Candidates in Multilevel Democracies. *Am. Behav. Scientist* 60 (7), 773–780. doi:10.1177/0002764216632818
- Crisp, B. F., Olivella, S., Malecki, M., and Sher, M. (2013). Vote-earning strategies in flexible list systems: Seats at the price of unity. *Elect. Stud.* 32 (4), 658–669. doi:10.1016/j.electstud.2013.02.007
- Delwit, P. (2017). *Du parti libéral au MR. 170 ans de libéralisme en Belgique*. Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles.
- Delwit, P. (2021). "Le MR," in *Les partis politiques en Belgique*. Editors P. Delwit and E. van Haute (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles), 275–300.
- Delwit, P. (2021). "Le PS," in *Les partis politiques en Belgique*. Editors P. Delwit and E. van Haute (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles), 225–252.
- Gallagher, M., and Marsh, M. (1988). *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective: The Secret Garden of Politics*. London: Sage.
- Gaudin, T. (2020). La régulation juridique des partis politiques. *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP* 2483-2484, 1–65.
- Hazan, R., and Rahat, G. (2010). *Democracy within Parties: Candidate Selection Methods and Their Political Consequences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Huntington, S. (1968). *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Janda, K. (1980). *Political Parties: A Cross-National Survey*. London: Macmillan.
- Katz, R. S. (2001). The Problem of Candidate Selection and Models of Party Democracy. *Party Polit.* 7 (3), 277–296. doi:10.1177/1354068801007003002
- Kelbel, C. (2020). 'I bend, indeed, but never break': Formal rules and informal processes of candidate selection for European elections. *Party Polit.* 26 (1), 43–55. doi:10.1177/1354068818754602
- Kenig, O. (2009). Classifying Party Leaders' Selection Methods in Parliamentary Democracies. *J. Elections, Public Opin. Parties* 19 (4), 433–447. doi:10.1080/17457280903275261
- Kenny, M., and Verge, T. (2016). Opening up the Black Box: Gender and Candidate Selection in a New Era. *Gov. Oppos.* 51 (3), 351–369. doi:10.1017/gov.2016.5
- Kittilson, M. C. (2006). *Challenging Parties, Changing Parliaments: Women and Elected Office in Contemporary Western Europe*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press.
- Krook, M. L. (2009). *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Krook, M. L. (2010). Why Are Fewer Women than Men Elected? Gender and the Dynamics of Candidate Selection. *Polit. Stud. Rev.* 8 (2), 155–168. doi:10.1111/j.1478-9302.2009.00185.x
- Kuenzi, M., and Lambright, G. (2001). Party System Institutionalization in 30 African Countries. *Party Polit.* 7 (4), 437–468. doi:10.1177/1354068801007004003
- Legein, T., Sierens, V., and van Haute, E. (2020). "Partis nationaux, sections locales et listes électorales locales," in *Les élections communales du 14 octobre 2018 en Wallonie et à Bruxelles: une offre politique renouvelée*. Editors J. Dodeigne, C. Close, V. Jacquet, and G. Matagne (Brussels: Vanden Broele), 79–102.
- Legein, T., and van Haute, E. (2021). "Les partis politiques au prisme de l'organisation," in *Les partis politiques en Belgique*. Editors P. Delwit and E. van Haute (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles), 43–66.
- Levitsky, S. (1998). Institutionalization and Peronism. *Party Polit.* 4 (1), 77–92. doi:10.1177/1354068898004001004
- Lovenduski, J. (2016). The Supply and Demand Model of Candidate Selection: Some Reflections. *Gov. Oppos.* 51 (3), 513–528. doi:10.1017/gov.2016.7
- Mainwaring, S. (1998). Party Systems in the Third Wave. *J. Democracy* 9 (3), 67–81. doi:10.1353/jod.1998.0049
- Martland, R. E., and Studlar, D. T. (1996). The Contagion of Women Candidates in Single-Member District and Proportional Representation Electoral Systems: Canada and Norway. *J. Polit.* 58 (3), 707–733.
- Matthews, N. (2014). Gendered Candidate Selection and the Representation of Women in Northern Ireland. *Parliamentary Aff.* 67 (3), 617–646. doi:10.1093/pa/gss079
- Meserve, S. A., Palani, S., and Pemstein, D. (2018). Measuring candidate selection mechanisms in European elections: Comparing formal party rules to candidate survey responses. *Eur. Union Polit.* 19 (1), 185–202. doi:10.1177/1465116517729539
- Panebianco, A. (1988). *Political Parties: Organization and Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pilet, J.-B., and Cross, W. (2014). *The Selection of Political Party Leaders in Contemporary Parliamentary Democracies*. London: Routledge.
- Pilet, J.-B., and Talukder, D. (2021). "Ecolo," in *Les partis politiques en Belgique*. Editors P. Delwit and E. van Haute (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles), 325–348.
- Pilet, J.-B., van Haute, E., and Kelbel, C. (2015). *Candidate Selection Procedures for the European Elections*. Brussels: European Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs.
- Poguntke, T., Scarrow, S. E., Webb, P. D., Allern, E. H., Aylott, N., van Biezen, I., et al. (2016). Party rules, party resources and the politics of parliamentary democracies. *Party Polit.* 22 (6), 661–678. doi:10.1177/1354068816662493
- Pruysers, S., Cross, W., Gauja, A., and Rahat, G. (2017). "Candidate Selection Rules and Democratic Outcomes. The Impact of Parties on Women's Representation," in *Organizing Political Parties. Representation, Participation, and Power*. Editors S. E. Scarrow, P. D. Webb, and T. Poguntke (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 208–233.
- Put, G.-J. (2015). "All Politics Is Local: The Geographical Dimension of Candidate Selection," in *The Case of Belgium (1987-2010)*. PhD dissertation (Leuven: KULeuven).
- Quinn, T. (2016). The British Labour Party's leadership election of 2015. *The Br. J. Polit. Int. Relations* 18 (4), 759–778. doi:10.1177/1369148116664268
- Rahat, G., and Hazan, R. Y. (2001). Candidate Selection Methods. *Party Polit.* 7 (3), 297–322. doi:10.1177/1354068801007003003
- Rahat, G., Hazan, R. Y., and Katz, R. S. (2008). Democracy and Political Parties: On the Uneasy Relationships between Participation, Competition and Representation. *Party Polit.* 14 (6), 663–683. doi:10.1177/2F135406880809340510.1177/1354068808093405
- Randall, V. (2006). *Party Institutionalization and its Implications for Democracy*. Fukuoka: Paper presented at the IPSA Congress.
- Randall, V., and Svásand, L. (2002). Party Institutionalization in New Democracies. *Party Polit.* 8 (1), 5–29. doi:10.1177/2F135406880200800100110.1177/1354068802008001001
- Rehmert, J. (2020). Candidacy Eligibility Criteria and Party Unity. *Comp. Polit. Stud.* 53 (8), 1298–1325. doi:10.1177/0010414019897700
- Reiser, M. (2014). The universe of group representation in Germany: Analysing formal and informal party rules and quotas in the process of candidate selection. *Int. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 35 (1), 55–66. doi:10.1177/0192512113507732

- Reuchamps, M., Baudewyns, P., Dandoy, R., Gallina, M., and Niessen, C. (2019). From a green high tide to government participation: the successes of ECOLO and GROEN in the 2019 Belgian elections. *Environ. Polit.* 29 (2), 344–348. doi:10.1080/09644016.2019.1686207
- Ritchie, J., and Lewis, J. (2003). *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
- Scarrow, S., Webb, P., and Poguntk, e, T. (2017). *Organizing Political Parties. Representation, Participation, and Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schindler, D. (2021). District Candidacies for the German Bundestag: What Spurs or Hampers Intra-Party Competition. *J. Legislat. Stud.* (Online First).
- Schindler, D. (2020). More Free-Floating, Less Outward-Looking. How More Inclusive Candidate Selection Procedures (Could) Matter. *Party Politics* (Online First).
- Shomer, Y. (2012). What Affects Candidate Selection Processes? A Cross-National Examination. *Party Polit.* 20 (4), 533–546. doi:10.1177/1354068811436060
- Siavelis, P. M., and Morgenstern, S. (2008). *Pathways to Power: Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Sierens, V., and van Haute, E. (2017). “Structure du MR,” in *Du parti libéral au MR. 170 ans de libéralisme en Belgique*. Editor P. Delwit (Brussels: Editions de l’Université de Bruxelles), 69–88.
- Sjoberg, G. (1968). *Party Strategies in a Multiparty System*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Stark, L. P. (1996). *Choosing a Leader: Party Leadership Contests in Britain from Macmillan to Blair*. London: Macmillan.
- Strom, K. (1990). A Behavioral Theory of Competitive Political Parties. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 34 (2), 565–598. doi:10.2307/2111461
- Tremblay, M. (1998). Do Female MPs Substantively Represent Women? A Study of Legislative Behaviour in Canada’s 35th Parliament. *Can. J. Pol. Sci.* 31 (3), 435–465. doi:10.1017/S0008423900009082
- van Haute, E. (2015). “Party membership in Belgium. From the cradle to the grave,” in *Party Members and Activists*. Editors E. van Haute and A. Gauja (London: Routledge), 34–49.
- van Haute, E., and Paulis, E. (2017). *Data from: mapp dataset*. Zenodo: Zenodo repository. <https://zenodo.org/record/61234>.
- Van Trappen, S. (2021). Candidate Selection and Ethnic Minority Aspirants: Exploring the Effects of Party Selectors’ Biases in a PR System. *Party Politics*. Online First.
- Vandeleene, A. (2016). *Does Candidate Selection Matter? A Comparative Analysis of Belgian Political Parties’ Selection Procedures and Their Relation to the Candidates’ Profile*. PhD dissertation. Louvain-la-Neuve: Université catholique de Louvain.
- Vandeleene, A. (2014). Gender Quotas and ‘Women-friendly’ Candidate Selection: Evidence from Belgium. *Representation* 50 (3), 337–349. doi:10.1080/00344893.2014.951222
- Vandeleene, A. (2018). La sélection des candidats aux élections par les partis politiques. L’exemple du scrutin du 25 mai 2014. *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP* n° 2398 (2398), 5–40. doi:10.3917/cris.2398.0005
- Vandeleene, A., Wauters, B., Bouteica, N., Kern, A., and Moens, P. (2020). *Le triomphe des membres fidèles et satisfaits*. Ghent. Retrieved from <https://gaspargblogt.wordpress.com/2020/07/04/le-triomphe-des-membres-fideles-et-satisfaits-etude-des-comportements-de-vote-lors-de-lelection-presidentielle-interne-au-mr-en-2019/>.
- Vandeleene, A., and Winter, L. D. (2018). “The curious stability of candidate selection methods in Belgium in times of crisis,” in *The Selection of Politicians in Times of Crisis*. Editors X. Coller, G. Cordero, and A. Jaime-Castillo (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge), 49–65. doi:10.4324/9781315179575-4
- Webb, P., and White, S. (2007). *Party Politics in New Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher’s Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

Copyright © 2021 Vandeleene and van Haute. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.



Changes in Candidate Selection and the Sociodemographic Profile of Greek MPs. Evidence From the 2019 General Elections

Manina Kakepaki*

Institute of Political Research, National Centre for Social Research, Athens, Greece

OPEN ACCESS

Edited by:

Guillermo Cordero,
Autonomous University of Madrid,
Spain

Reviewed by:

Sorina Soare,
University of Florence, Italy
Stefano Rombi,
Università degli Studi di Cagliari, Italy

*Correspondence:

Manina Kakepaki
mkakepaki@ekke.gr

Specialty section:

This article was submitted to
Elections and Representation,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Political Science

Received: 15 September 2021

Accepted: 21 December 2021

Published: 15 February 2022

Citation:

Kakepaki M (2022) Changes in
Candidate Selection and the
Sociodemographic Profile of Greek
MPs. Evidence From the 2019
General Elections.
Front. Polit. Sci. 3:777298.
doi: 10.3389/fpos.2021.777298

The July 2019 national elections in Greece marked the return in power of the conservative party of ND, one of the two pillars of the traditional Greek bipartisanship. Turnover in these elections nearly reached 40%; more than two thirds of the current Parliament MPs were first elected during the crisis, since old parliamentarians slowly give away their seats to newcomers. The aim of this paper is twofold: 1) explore candidate selection mechanisms of old and new parties in Greece inquiring what -if any- has changed in these mechanisms after the Great Recession and whether they adopt IPD in a wider extent; and 2) investigate the sociodemographic profile of newcomers vis-à-vis older Parliamentarians in order to check if the outcome of the elections has changed in terms of a more socially diverse profile. Given that the issue of candidate selection (and election) is mostly based on unwritten rules, our findings will rely on written party rules (such as party manifestos), on original sociodemographic data and on personal interviews. We tentatively suggest that not much has changed in the candidate selection mechanisms in Greece. ND made limited use of its open registry of candidates, whilst SYRIZA applied the same rules as in previous elections. We conclude that, the crisis in Greece offered the opportunity structures for the mass renewal of its parliamentary elite and for a somewhat more socially diverse pool of successful candidates, but its effect quickly disappeared since new MPs resemble more independent political entrepreneurs and have less social and political ties.

Keywords: candidate selection, Greece, elite renewal, members of parliament, intra-party democracy

INTRODUCTION

Trust in political parties is declining steadily across Europe for the past 2 decades, whilst latest figures reveal an even bleaker picture (Standard Eurobarometer, 2021). Greece scores extremely low in all measures on trust in political parties during the last decade; the Great Recession, and its much-discussed impact on Greek economy, society, and the political system (Bosco and Verney, 2016; Morlino and Raniolo, 2017; Katsikas et al., 2018) has left its mark on all attitudes regarding political institutions such as parties and the Parliament. Many works investigate this strained relationship between parties and voters (Teperoglou and Tsatsanis, 2014; Verney, 2014; Tsatsanis, 2018). The global financial and economic crisis had an clear impact on the legitimacy of political elites (Vogel et al., 2019). The way political actors chose to respond to the challenging of their position was not uniform; in some cases, they opted for an increase in political professionalization, to secure their positions from challengers; in other cases, they opened the access though more inclusive recruitment

methods (ibid p. 12–16). In the latter case, the “failure of mainstream parties” and the crisis of legitimacy that they faced (Ignazi 2021) was addressed through calls for more representative and responsive models of party organization, with Intra-Party Democracy (IPD) becoming the new focus of analysis.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the candidate selection mechanisms adopted in Greece by mainstream and challenger parties before the July 07, 2019 elections, in order to assess their impact on MPs’ socio-demographic profiles. First, we review main developments in the literature on IPD and candidate selection under the light of the Greek case; then we move on to a short presentation of the background to the elections and the 2019 electoral results. We then proceed to our main section, where we present our data on the selection process and analyze the profile of successful candidates elected in Parliament.

The article addresses two questions: 1) did the Great Recession resulted in more IPD in old and new parties, and following from that, 2) are political parties today more socially diverse than they were a decade ago?

This paper aims to bring together analysis on party changes regarding candidate and leader selection and the impact these changes might have on the socio-demographic profile of MPs, by focusing on two parties, one mainstream (ND) and one challenger (SYRIZA) both during and after the Great Recession. The parties of ND and SYRIZA are the main foci of analysis, because their presence both during and after the crisis, and their share of seats in Parliament, enables past comparisons. Data on MPs socio-political profile come from the Socioscope Database,¹ that collects and codes information on all elected MPs in Greece.² Additional information on the candidate selection process for ND and SYRIZA was collected from three semi-structured personal interviews that were conducted; one with a high-ranking ND party official and two with experienced SYRIZA MPs.

Our findings will provide insight on the organizational developments of a relatively new party system that is usually overlooked when analyzing party developments and party innovation. In addition, the issue of personalization and professionalization will be addressed as potential explanation in an open-list electoral system.

DEVELOPMENTS IN CANDIDATE AND LEADER SELECTION

The recruitment and selection of political elites are critical functions of democracy since who gets elected and how reveals organizational and ideological configurations that can shape the outcome. Although the question of “how parties organize” (Katz and Mair, 1994) has always been central to

the study of parties and elections, in the last decade there is a growing body of work regarding changes in party organization (Gauja, 2017; Scarrow et al., 2017; Borz and Janda, 2020) and in parties’ selection mechanisms (Sandri and Seddone, 2015; Seddone and Sandri, 2021). The Great Recession and the call for more democracy and accountability by the old political elites brought many changes in both established and new parties in their organizational profile and candidate selection methods (Cordero and Coller, 2018; Coller et al., 2018; Alexandre-Coller et al., 2020) since major political crisis and the threat they present to democratic legitimacy mobilize parties and provide the opportunity for change (Detterbeck 2018).

Many such initiatives are analyzed under the framework of Intra-Party Democracy (IPD) a term that, although may mean different things to different parties (Cross and Pillet, 2015, p. 2), has been conceptually clarified (Poguntke et al., 2016, p. 11) and broken down into three basic elements: 1) changes in the way parties select their leaders and candidates; 2) changes in the way parties take their decisions on ideological issues and draft their programs; and 3) changes in the ways parties organize internally their various bodies. In this section we will address the first of these elements.

As past literature suggests (Gallagher and Marsh, 1988) elements of IPD in leader and candidate selection have been around for decades; nevertheless, changes adopted by parties, especially new challenger parties (Hobolt and Tilley, 2016) that emerged during the Great Recession revived the discussion. New parties such as *Podemos* in Spain, *Five Star Movement* in Italy, or *La République En Marche* in France, share some or all the characteristics of the new challenger parties, which evolve around participatory democracy, technological innovations, and new methods of deliberation (Ignazi, 2021), identifying those parties sometimes as movement parties (Della Porta et al., 2017) and others as digital parties (Gerbaudo, 2021). Many of these measures have been adopted by mainstream parties as well in an effort to respond to citizens’ alienation from politics and growing distrust and reconnect with society (Coller and Cordero, 2018; Cordero et al., 2018).

Parties adopt IPD to respond to the legitimacy crisis (Seddone and Sandri, 2021, p. 205), with (some kind of) primaries for the appointment of leaders and candidates being the most common option. Hazan and Rahat (2010) have provided an analytical framework that analyzes candidate selection mechanism, claiming that the outcome of the selection may be more or less representative, depending on the method of selection. According to their typology, the fewer that select the candidates, the more exclusive is the process, and the more central the territorial level where this selection takes place, the more centralized the process. Yet, there is no clear consensus on the effect of more inclusive measures on candidate’s sociodemographic profiles since literature has offered mixed evidence. Sandri and Seddone (2021) suggest that IPD does not seem to trigger a clear rejuvenation of the political elites, although MPs chosen by more inclusive methods tend to be more diverse regarding gender and age (ibid, p. 210); other evidence (Perez- Nievas et al., 2021) suggests that more inclusive methods may help certain social groups (young people) but hinder others

¹<https://socioscope.gr/dataset/deputies>. This article was submitted to Elections and Representation, a section of the journal *Frontiers in Political Science*.

²For the coding process, see here: https://socioscope.gr/content/codebooks/Vouleutes_codebook_FINAL_GR.pdf

(women). Even if there is no clear pattern, primaries or more inclusive methods tend to enable candidates with no previous political experience to enter politics and boost their careers by gaining visibility, which as Seddone and Sandri argue “in times of personalization of politics represents an essential resource” (ibid, p. 211) although this may depend on how strong the leader of their party is (Marino et al., 2021). Therefore, the tendency for “primarization” of politics (Alexandre-Collier et al., 2020) may facilitate the “de-professionalization” (ibid) of parliamentary elites. On the other hand, the opening of candidate and leader selection towards more inclusive mechanism facilitates personalization since candidates compete through personal campaigns (Rahat and Kenig, 2018, p. 149–150). Personalization and professionalization are therefore often regarded as negative side-effects of IPD since in many cases such measures give more impact to the leader and to individual candidates and change the balance of power inside the party.

Regardless of the effect of such initiative, the drivers for change can be external to the party or internal. Harmel and Janda (1994) argue that parties change only when there is a powerful external shock related to their primary goal. If a party’s primary goal is electoral success, then loss of power is the driver for change. Internal factors for change can be leadership changes (Harmel and Janda, 1994, p. 264–265). Sandri et al. (2015, p. 186–188) distinguish between different systems where change takes place: the political, the party and the intra-party. Reaction to party disaffection takes place at the system level; reaction to electoral defeat or the contagion effect when other parties adopt such measures take place at the party level, whilst reaction of party elites or party members take place at the intra-party level. The age and governmental experience of the party are also factors related to party change: Challenger parties respond with direct democracy and innovations whilst they are characterized by a different relation with society; mainstream parties respond by giving more say to ordinary members at the expense of the party base (Ignazi 2020).

Based on the above, we identify three possible explanatory factors as drivers for change regarding candidate selection mechanisms and candidates’ profiles in Greece.

- (1) In terms of party age, we expect challenger parties to differentiate from mainstream parties in their candidate selection mechanism and the profile of their MPs, therefore we expect SYRIZA to have more open candidate selection mechanisms and a less traditional sociodemographic profile of its MPs.
- (2) In terms of the drivers for change, we expect parties that have experienced electoral defeat to be more likely to re-organize and adopt new methods of candidate selection in order to regain their electoral appeal. In the Greek case we would therefore expect ND to adopt new methods after its electoral defeat since for ND, as an office maximizer party, loss of power seems to be the driver for change, that can initiate an internal change (leader change) which will then lead to party change.
- (3) Regarding the personalization/professionalization argument, we would expect both parties to gradually select candidates

without prior political experience, more professional characteristics, and less ties with the party.

THE POLITICAL EVENTS PRIOR TO THE JULY 2019 ELECTIONS AND THE ELECTORAL OUTCOME

The year 2019 was nothing short of elections. For the first time in Greece four elections were conducted at the same year, in a period of less than 2 months: the triple elections of the 26th of May 2019 (European Elections, Regional and Municipal Elections, all held on the same day) and snap National elections shortly after, on July 7. The outcome of the July elections, the first to be conducted in the “post-memoranda” era, since Greece had officially exited the bailout programs in August 2018, was a clear victory for Conservative ND, and Kyriakos Mitsotakis, whom for the first time run elections as its leader. ND gained 39.85 percent of the vote and 158 seats in Parliament, compared to the 28.09 percent and 75 seats of the previous Parliament, and formed a single-party government, after nearly a decade of coalition governments.

Although coalition governments were the exception rather than the rule in Greece, they had come to become a recurring theme in the post-crisis party system. Party fragmentation and electoral dealignment resulted in a fluid political system with the rising of new parties and the electoral revival of former marginal ones (Tsatsanis and Teperoglou, 2019, p. 231). SYRIZA, the party in office since 2015, mostly anticipated its defeat, after its poor electoral result in the preceding European and regional/municipal elections, that caused Alexis Tsipras to call for snap elections. Its share of vote dropped from 35.44 to 31.53 percent, winning 86 seats instead of 145. SYRIZA’s coalition partner, ANEL, did not run in the 2019 National Elections after the party’s disappointing electoral results in the European Elections a few weeks earlier.³ The fallout between Alexis Tsipras and ANEL’s leader Panos Kammenos over the signing of the Prespa Agreement in June 2018, resulted in a major shift in the political agenda and political discourse. The Prespa Agreement, settling a long dispute between Greece and North Macedonia over its name, shifted the agenda from economic issues to issues of national identity and foreign policy (Skoulariki, 2021). Panos Kammenos left the coalition government after the Agreement’s ramification in January 2019, but some former ANEL MPs who became independent, backed the government, and voted for it, together with some MPs from POTAMI (Rori, 2020, p. 1027). The “Macedonian” issue permitted SYRIZA to appeal to another audience, this time not against Troika and the bailout agreements, but on an issue closer to the liberal centre. It therefore re-shuffled the party system bringing it closer to the traditional left/right divide (Tsatsanis and Teperoglou, 2019); some parties that had emerged during the crisis disappeared (Potami, Anel) others emerged on the new Nationalist front (Elliniki Lisi) or the radical left camp (MeRa25)

³In the European election ANEL got 0.80 percent of the vote, a stark decline from its electoral result in the previous European elections in 2014 (3.46%) and the 4.09% of the last national elections in September 2015.

whilst others that had splintered from SYRIZA during the crisis -belonging to the “memorandum” camp- went back (DIMAR).

DATA AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Data on MPs come from the Members of the Greek Parliament (1989–2019) Database. The DB is a census of the entire population of Greek MPs and has information on all MPs that occupied a parliamentary seat -even for a single day- at the Greek Parliament, in the fourteen national elections held between 1989 (the 5th Parliamentary Term) and 2019 (the 18th Parliamentary Term). Currently the DB contains 1474 unique cases and 4367 entries. Biographical information were collected from sources such as the yearbooks published by the Hellenic Parliament, data from the Parliaments’ website and party and personal websites of the candidates and were then coded into variables, divided into two main groups: 1) the socio-demographic variables, which are fixed entries of the database, since the information about the same person does not change over time (e.g., gender, year of birth, place of birth, education), and 2) social and political experience variables which may take different values for the same person in another parliamentary term (e.g., the same person in a parliamentary term gets elected with party x and in another with party y). The selection of the variables that were included in the database followed the guidelines adopted by other similar works (Coller et al., 2014), such as information from official sources and the ability to retrieve information from an adequate number of CVs.

The three semi-structured personal interviews were conducted face-to-face in June and July 2021, two in the office of the subjects and one in an open space, in Athens. All were conducted in Greek, recorded, and then transcribed in a word processing software. All excerpts that are used in the article were translated in English by the author. Since the country was in lockdown until mid-May 2021, contact attempts were made at the beginning of June. After an initial search to identify those holding key positions in the candidate selection process prior to the July 2019 elections, five SYRIZA MPs and Party officials and six ND MPs and Party officials were selected. They were contacted *via* e-mail where the aim of the interview was explicitly stated, together with information on the protection of the interviewees’ data. Although the aim was to conduct face-to-face interviews, alternative modes (such as video interviews) were offered. Out of those contacted from SYRIZA, two current MPs accepted. The first interview was conducted on June 24, 2021 and lasted 25 min. The second interview was conducted on June 29, 2021 and lasted 34 min. Out of those contacted from ND only one senior party official accepted. The interview was conducted on July 16, 2021 and lasted 54 min. All those interviewed received before the interview a list of questions and signed an agreement. The final number of interviews is much lower than initially designed, probably due to time constraints of the individuals that were contacted or hesitation to participate. However, those that accepted had positions close to Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Alexis Tsipras and were well informed on the subject. It is accepted nevertheless that the number of interviews is low and

that some aspects of the informal processes of candidate selection are not adequately highlighted.

Although the article uses a mixed methods research design, making use of both quantitative and qualitative data, the interview findings are expected to supplement the quantitative data that come from the socioscope dataset. Therefore, there use is complementary (Greene et al., 1989) to the main research question, which is that of the sociodemographic composition of ND and SYRIZA MPs elected in Parliament after the July 7, 2019 General Elections. The focus is on ND and SYRIZA since their current parliamentary groups are the only to satisfy the conditions of a continuous presence in Parliament both during and after the crisis, and an adequate number of MPs in numerical terms that will enable groupings and comparisons with the past.

PARTY ORGANIZATION AND CANDIDATE SELECTION PROCESS IN GREECE AFTER THE GREAT RECESSION

The Great Recession and its impact on the Greek party system attracted a wave of attention with a wealth of scholarly work, either on the electoral success of *challenger* SYRIZA, the rise of neo-Nazi Golden Dawn or the downfall and electoral decline of PASOK (for an overview see Tsirbas, 2020). Following SYRIZA’s rise to power after the January 2015 elections, the focus shifted on the two main political actors of the new two-partyism in Greece (Tsatsanis et al., 2020), conservative New Democracy (ND) and radical left SYRIZA. In recent years, a growing wealth of data on MPs’ descriptive and substantive representation has further expanded our knowledge of parliamentary elites in Greece. There is now evidence both regarding the differences in the profile of MPs before and after the Great Recession (Teperoglou et al., 2020) and the different political generations of MPs in recent Parliaments (Kakepaki, 2018; Kountouri, 2018; Koltsida, 2019). Evidence regarding changes in MPs profile are mixed: in some cases, they appear to be the product of slow change rather than the outcome of the crisis *per se*, however MPs from challenger parties had some characteristics that differentiated them from the old parliamentary elite.

In contrast to research on parties and elections, and more recently on candidates and MPs’ profiles, candidate selection mechanisms remain largely unexplored; interestingly, the only work available devoted to a single party, is work on PASOK, a party that electorally collapsed during the great recession. Research on the participatory attempt in PASOK’s party organs from 2004–2009 (Eleftheriou and Tassis, 2019) stresses that wider candidate selectorates were used only in less electorally important constituencies, whilst the impact of IPD in political careers shows that the party’s participatory experiment did not significantly change the profile of successful candidates (Kosmopoulos, 2021). Other work has highlighted that up until 2015 candidate selection mechanisms of ND and SYRIZA diverged and converged gradually once SYRIZA acquired government experience and opted for a more central and exclusive method of selection (Kakepaki, 2018, p. 106).

In the following section we will outline the main developments on candidate selection mechanisms of the two major parties (ND and SYRIZA) before the July 2019 national elections. ND is the most stable pillar of the Greek bipartism and the only party of the Third Hellenic Republic that always occupies either the governmental or the Opposition benches. Most work on NDs organizational profile stresses the importance of leadership changes (Alexakis, 2020), the use of party organization almost exclusively for electioneering purposes (Vernardakis, 2011) and the importance of prominent party cadres and family networks in party life (Pappas, 1998). Although these were often regarded as obstacles to the rebranding of the party, ND seems to be able to reinvent itself after long electoral defeats (Pappas and Dinas, 2006). Past work on ND suggests that over the years the strength of its parliamentary group and mass organization have weakened at the expense of the party leader and the professional cadres (ibid, p. 485). These observations highlight the fact that ND under a new leadership almost always tries to “re-invent” itself, therefore the emphasis on professionalization and innovation that accompanied Kyriakos Mitsotakis’ election could serve as explanatory factors for any innovative measures, together with the party’s positive electoral prospects.

The relationship of NDs candidates with society, either through a previous election to any position in local government or through a mandate in a trade union or professional organization is an important factor and is linked to the election to Parliament. Another aspect that has been particularly stressed is that of family tradition, as the existence of a family relationship seems to constitute a strong personal capital that facilitates (re)election in Parliament (Karoulas, 2019). Even today, the model of the parliamentary representative of ND comes closer to an archetypal image of a middle-aged male, coming from the liberal professions, with previous political expertise in other elected positions. However, changes in the MPs profiles highlight some new trends, such as the weakening of party ties. (Kakepaki, 2019).

In line with the trend towards more inclusive methods in leadership selection (Cross and Pilet, 2015) ND has adopted since 2012 a semi-open method of leader election, where all party members vote for the election of the party leader. Kyriakos Mitsotakis was elected leader of ND after a two-round election in December 2015 and January 2016. All those registered to vote in National Elections could participate in the leadership election, provided they registered, even on the day of the election, as party members. In the first round 404.078⁴ votes were cast and in the second 334.752.⁵ Bearing in mind that in the preceding elections of September 2015, ND had gained 1.526.400 votes, the ratio of voters in leadership selection/voters in national election is high; however, it is acknowledged that K. Mitsotakis mobilized for his election voters that did not necessarily come from ND’s traditional pool of voters (Rori, 2020, p. 1034). “It seems that

Mitsotakis’ [election] creates a new compatibility for ND, which is why he can talk to people who also have very different political starting points, not just those people that were not involved in politics” (ND Interview 1).

After his election, Kyriakos Mitsotakis proceeded to the re-organization of the party at the 10th Party Congress that took place a few weeks after. Many changes were adopted in the party statute, related to its organizational structure, finances, and candidate selection process (Pappas, 2020, p. 65). New Secretaries were appointed, whilst the party was equipped with new faces belonging to a personal circle of trusted colleagues. Regarding candidate selection, although the process has always been centralized (Kakepaki et al., 2018) with the new party statute, it became officially centered around the leader. In article 30 of the ND Statute the candidate selection process is described as follows “*The President of the Party draws up the ballot papers for the National and European Elections. To select candidates, he/she implements an evaluation system, establishes a Registry of Parliamentary Candidates and may consult the members of the Party*” (New Democracy, 2018).

The Executives Registry (Mitroo Stelexon) was adopted as one major innovation in the recruitment process, not only for parliamentary candidates, but for selecting staff for the party machine. This registry, established long before the elections, served as an ongoing “open call” for aspirant candidates or party executives and was very much a personal project of Kyriakos Mitsotakis: “*it was an open call that in fact bypassed the traditional structures of the party, it was a personal open call made by the president towards the society as a response to the very large stream of support that the president of ND had. While he was not supported by traditional party officials, he was eventually elected by the people who came to vote through the open election process [. . .]. from then onwards there were many people who were interested in helping this project of Kyriakos Mitsotakis and he responded to this, to the will of the people, by making this open invitation, and the response was beyond all expectations*” (ND Interview 1). The whole process had clear similarities with the recruitment process by HR departments where aspirant candidates passed interviews to assess their eligibility, whilst the entire process was supervised by the CEO of a large corporation.

Responsible for the ballot structure were a short group of senior party officials and people working close with Kyriakos Mitsotakis. They provided to him a long list of party candidates, built around 1) incumbent MPs, 2) new entries from the Registry and 3) aspirant candidates that had followed more traditional channels of communication (i.e., the party). Kyriakos Mitsotakis had the final say, although it is generally accepted that incumbent MPs may have a say on the ballot of their constituency. The open lists under a personal preference vote on the one hand helps them create an individual electoral base that will secure their re-election, on the other hand cannot secure their re-election if there is strong intra-party competition in their constituency. Therefore, most of the times, ballots are structured around incumbents, and depending on the number of seats in each constituency, make sure not to endanger their re-election with too many ‘strong’ candidates. This time, the fact that ND was

⁴<https://nd.gr/deltia-tipou/dilosi-toy-proedreyontos-tis-kefe-tis-nd-k-ioanni-tragaki-gia-ta-telika-apotelesmata>

⁵<https://nd.gr/deltia-tipou/dilosi-toy-proedreyontos-tis-kefe-tis-neas-dimokratias-k-ioanni-tragaki-4>

expecting to increase its share of seats made things easier both for old and new candidates.

In the end, apart from the institutional provisions (gender quotas) NDs ballots were built around the above, whilst attributes that weighted in favour of prospective candidates were their professional characteristics and overall performance: *“traditionally the area of the self-employed, the private sector, the market, so to speak, are over-represented, without of course meaning that there are no representatives from the public sector, the university community and so on. But, [these are] the priorities, the main priority that we wanted to express, [...] ND wanted to express the transition from the sham, from the madness that had gripped the world in previous years, because of the memoranda and the economic crisis, [and move to] an era of moderation, focusing on the result, without passions, divisions, and divisive dilemmas, [...] so this should be expressed by the candidates, because the local communities, at least in parties like New Democracy, [...] they receive, they understand the political messages that the party transmits mainly through the persons who ultimately make up the ballots. New Democracy was, and remains, an “MP-centric”, party i.e. its MPs play a very important role in shaping its image and its operation.”* (ND Interview 1). Different ideological streams were also taken under consideration, although these are more often referred to as traditions within the party, with family tradition being one of them. Larger or smaller political dynasties are considered ‘brand names’ that it would be foolish not to take advantage of, especially in a system of personal preference vote where the inclusion in the party lists of recognizable names can attract more votes.

In sum, ND’s candidate selection process pretty much followed past knowledge as described in previous research (Kakepaki, 2018). The Registry was the only innovation; however, it did not result in more IPD since its main function was to bypass party structures, especially party bureaucracy at the middle level, whilst its actual impact on candidate election is unclear.⁶ Leadership change was the main force behind these changes, whilst ballots were structured with the aim to offer clear alternatives to SYRIZA in terms of the profile of those that filled them up.

SYRIZA on the other hand seemed rather more skeptical to organizational changes. If leadership change is a force for change, then, the fact that Alexis Tsipras headed the party since 2012, meant that there was no “new leader effect.” The small radical-left party that rose to power in 2015 after the collapse of the old party system, failed to capitalize on its electoral rise in organizational terms (Eleftheriou, 2019, p. 162), whilst the party was pretty much neglected during the same time with no effort for any enlargement that would provide a pool of people capable to fulfil certain positions of power (SYRIZA, 2020). SYRIZA traditionally

lacked a systematic recruitment strategy and preferred a loose approach based on its relationships with social movements and public figures of the Left, such as intellectuals, University Professors etc. This approach was pretty much reflected on the ballot structure: *“there was no [recruitment strategy] within the 5 years that we were in government; the party had been neglected, we had all moved into governmental roles etc. And it was also not easy to join a party that was implementing a memorandum [...], before 2019 our whole effort was directed at [...] the State Ballot [Epikrateias] to include 4-5 people of wider prestige and from then on to have some decent people, women, men, young people, some people from the Environmental movement”* (SYRIZA, Interview 1). The candidate selection process, as described in the party’s statute that has not changed since 2013 (SYRIZA, 2013), follows a bottom-up approach, where the local and regional party branches compile a long-list of candidates that is later approved by the Central Committee. After SYRIZA’s rise to power in 2015 the process became more centralized and exclusive, with a small informal committee of senior party members overseeing the process, to ensure a more unified and less prone to political differentiation parliamentary group (Kakepaki, 2018, p. 102–106). Prior to the July 2019 elections, the process remained unchanged: a small informal committee received the lists of the regional party offices and streamlined the results. Again, in contrast to ND, since SYRIZA was expecting to reduce its share of seats, the committee had a rather “easy” task: position most incumbent MPs in the ballots, include candidates that originated from its former or new allies and try to secure election for several prominent figures that had served in government during the previous period as non-elected members of the cabinet. These criteria did not leave much room for maneuver and certainly did not need much scouting for new faces: *“the formation of the ballot papers was a rather easy process, there was not much participation from non-party members, because they understood that they would take someone else’s place, [...] incumbent MPs mostly were included, those Ministers who were not MPs [were included], the majority of the Ministers who were not MPs were included, [people from] the enlargement were included, and what was actually left as candidacies from below were supplementary, complementary”* (SYRIZA, interview 2).

After the collapse of the coalition government at the beginning of 2019, SYRIZA embarked on a mission that has come to be known, as “enlargement.” This term reflects the effort to attract other forces of the left and center-left around SYRIZA in one unified front against ND. Although this strategy was fully adopted after the elections,⁷ SYRIZA’s ballots reflected to a large extent this attempt. Out of the eight non-SYRIZA MPs that voted for the ramification of the Prespes Agreement, four were included in the party lists either for the European or the National elections of the same year.⁸

⁶There is no official announcement regarding which specific ND candidates included in the lists came from the Registry. In the official presentation of the party lists, prior to the elections, a press release mentioned that 43 out of 419 candidates came from the Registry. How many of them were successful remains unclear, since only 3 out of the 62 newly elected ND MPs state in their CVs the fact that they were scouted from the party’s Registry.

⁷<https://www.syriza.gr/article/id/85255/Al.-Tsipras-Istoriko-bhma-h-dieyrynsh-toy-SYRIZA.html>

⁸Thanassis Papahristopoulos and Elena Kountoura from ANEL and Spyros Danelis and Thanassis Theoharopoulos from Potami.

TABLE 1 | Composition of the 18th Legislature.

	ND	SYRIZA	KINAL	KKE	ELLYSI	MERA25	All
Share of vote (%)	39.85	31.53	8.10	5.30	3.70	3.44	—
Number of seats	158	86	22	15	10	9	300
Difference from 17th Legislature	+83	–59	+5	0	New party	New party	
Newcomers (%)	39.2	30.2	31.8	20.0	90.0	77.8	38.0
Women (%)	15.8	27.9	18.2	26.7	20	55.6	21.3
Under 40 y.o. (%)	10.5	14.8	0	15.4	0	44.4	10.5

Source: <https://socioscope.gr/dataset/deputies> and <https://ekloges.ypes.gr/>

“Then [in July 2019] had entered the ballot papers and people who were not part of our tradition, for example they were the ones coming from Kammenos, when the party of Kammenos was dissolved, many ANEL cadres that were MPs, Ministers, etc. were left behind. [...] They were coming from a completely different route. Perhaps they were honored by the voters for having stayed here during a critical moment, these things can play a role, it’s not that they brought [voters] from the Right [that voted for them], it would be hard to see it that way.” (SYRIZA interview 1).

In the end, the fact that when snap elections were called for the 7th of July, SYRIZA could hardly expect to win the elections, rather facilitated the process of candidate selection. Most incumbent MPs were included *ex officio* in the electoral lists.⁹ Since incumbency gives a clear advantage for re-election, and an electoral defeat would result in a considerable shrinking of SYRIZA’s parliamentary group, that meant a clear advantage for the incumbents and less safe seats for the newcomers. As **Table 1** shows, SYRIZA elected 86 MPs, losing 59 seats from the previous term. Out of the 86 MPs, 60 were returning MPs, with the remaining 26 being elected in Parliament for the first time. Nearly the opposite occurred for ND. Although again, returning MPs occupied *ex officio* positions in the lists,¹⁰ the party increased its share of seats, from 74 to 158, therefore opening the window of opportunity, not just for returning MPs, but for a whole new cohort of candidates.

SYRIZA therefore did not introduce any changes in its candidate selection process, nor did it initiate any changes in the party structure. The only reform during his governance regarding the ballot structure was a change in the legislation on gender quotas: a new law (L 4604/2019) was adopted a few months earlier that increased gender quotas in the ballots from 30

to 40%. In addition, the obligation of the parties to reach the 40% threshold in their ballots was not statewide, as before, but separately in each constituency. Finally, an older development in party centralization/decentralization that had some impact on the ballot structure was the adoption (in 2014) of open lists and personal preference voting in European Elections (Kakepaki and Karayiannis, 2021). Although not directly related with developments regarding national elections, in a handful of cases non-elected candidates with a “good” personal track record in the preceding European elections of May 2019 secured a seat in the electoral lists of the upcoming national elections, opening their way to Parliament. Therefore, the answer to our first question, which is whether the Great Recession resulted in more PD inside parties in Greece, is a clear no. The only party to adopt such measures pre-crisis (PASOK) electorally collapsed therefore reducing any possible contagion effect.

THE PROFILE OF OLD AND NEW MPS

The 18th Legislature was full of new faces. One hundred and fourteen new MPs out of 300 entered the Parliament House for the first time. More than half came from ND (62) with the remaining twenty-six belonging to SYRIZA and the rest coming from the other four parties that gained seats in Parliament. The only legislative reform regarding ballot structure, the increase of gender quotas in the ballots from 30 to 40% generated meagre results. The share of women in Parliament in Greece remained low (21.3%), marginally increasing from 2015; the fact that most newcomers came from ND, a party that traditionally scores low in gender terms, highlighted further this imbalance (**Table 2**), whilst the fact that gender quotas are applied only at the ballot, but may be overturned by the personal preference voting system, makes this reform quite inadequate.

The age distribution reflected past trends, with SYRIZA having more MPs over the age of sixty compared to ND, whilst overall ND MPs have a lower mean age (52.2) than SYRIZA MPs (54.9). The educational profile of all MPs remained high, even more so in ND where nearly nine out of ten of its MPs have a higher education. In terms of their professional characteristics, NDs MPs mostly came from the private sector and the liberal professions. SYRIZA kept its rather more diverse social profile, with a slightly more socially representative sample of MPs. These came not only from liberal and medical profession and the academia but also from clerical

⁹According to personal calculations, out of the 145 MPs elected in the previous parliament, only 11 were not included in the electoral lists, in most cases because they no longer wished to run in the elections.

¹⁰The vast majority of the 75 ND MPs of the previous Parliament were included in the lists since only six were left out. Out of those not included in the lists, four had been elected in other positions in the preceding European (Evangelos Meimarakis and Anna-Michel Asimakopoulou) and Regional/Municipal elections (Kostas Koukodimos and Giorgos Kasapidis). From the remaining two, one had publicly disagreed with ND, was expelled from the parliamentary group in 2017 and moved to SYRIZA, whilst the other had passed away during the previous term. Of those included in the lists only five were not re-elected.

TABLE 2 | 18th Legislature and MPs sociodemographic profile.

	ND (N = 158)	SYRIZA (N = 86)	All (N = 300)
Newcomers (%)	39.2	30.2	38.0
Gender			
Women	15.8	27.9	21.3
Women newcomers	14.5	34.6	22.8
Age			
25–39	10.5	14.8	12.1
40–59	66.4	51.9	58.2
60+	23.0	33.3	29.8
Mean age	52.2	54.9	53.3
mean age of newcomers	47.9	49.9	48.7
Education			
less than Tertiary	3.8	4.7	4.7
Tertiary	38	45.3	40.3
Master and Phd	55.1	37.3	46.3
No information available	3.2	12.8	8.7
Occupation			
Lawyers	27.2	16.3	23
Doctors	12	15.1	12.7
Journalists	10.8	9.3	10
Engineers/Architects	9.5	12.8	9.3
Economists	8.2	9.3	8.3
Bussinesmen/Managers	10.1	2.3	6.7
University Professors	7.6	7	6.7
Armed forces	3.2	0	2
Clerical jobs	3.2	7	5.7
Teachers	2.5	1.2	3
Artists/Athletes	0	5.8	2
Blue collar workers/farmers	0	1.2	0.3
Miscellaneous	3.8	10.5	7.3
No information available	1.9	2.3	3
Family networks	17.1	4.7	12
MPs' social and political roots			
Active in students' unions	22.8	5.8	16
Active in trade unions	22.8	32.6	24.3
Active in social movements	0.6	12.8	5
Active in civil society ^a	17.1	14.0	17
MPs' political experience			
Experience in party organs	58.9	61.6	60.7
Experience in local government	43.7	34.9	40

Source: *Socioscope Database (own elaboration).*

^aDefined as participation in various cultural, local, sports, professional associations etc.

and middle level occupational positions. Regarding their social and political profile, ND and SYRIZA MPs vary significantly in two aspects: 22.8% of ND MPs were active in the party's student branch (DAP, Dimokratiki Ananeotiki Protoporia). DAP, founded in 1975 is a strong and active student's organization, that during the last decades scores high in all elections in Greek Universities with many prominent ND MPs having served in the student's branch during their university years. SYRIZA on the contrary, historically has a very low presence in Greek Universities since an official student's branch with liaisons with the party only appeared in 2015. SYRIZAs much discussed relationship with social movements (Della Porta et al., 2017) remains as a reference in the CVs for several of its MPs, who refer to their participation in a variety of actions. Such references are almost absent from NDs MPs. Finally, traditional paths to election, such as the party, trade unions and local government, remain significant for both parties, with ND

having a stronger presence in local government, and SYRIZA in trade unions.

Figures 1–4 break down these trends by cohort in order to fully assess them. All MPs were divided in three groups based on the time they entered Parliament for the first time. The first group, named “newcomers” includes those that were elected for the first time in 2019. The second group, the “Great Recession” cohort, includes all those MPs that entered Parliament from 2012 until 2015, in the time of the collapse of the old party system. The remaining group includes the ‘Old Guard’ of long-standing MPs that entered Parliament before 2009. If the Great Recession was indeed a force for change, then we expect the newest cohort to be significantly different from the old guard and closer to the Great Recession cohort.

Several differences between cohorts and between parties stand out. Firstly, political expertise rises in younger cohorts of MPs, especially amongst those elected with SYRIZA (**Figure 1**). This trend highlights the fact that politics is more and more regarded

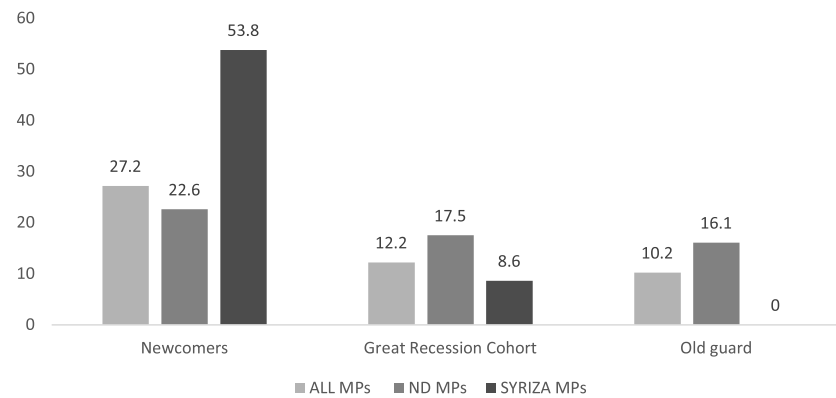


FIGURE 1 | Political Expertise* of 18th Legislature MPs by cohort. Source: Socioscope Database (own elaboration). *Defined as posts in political positions at the Executive or Legislative before entering Parliament for the first time (Ministers, general secretaries, political staff in Parliament, political advisers).

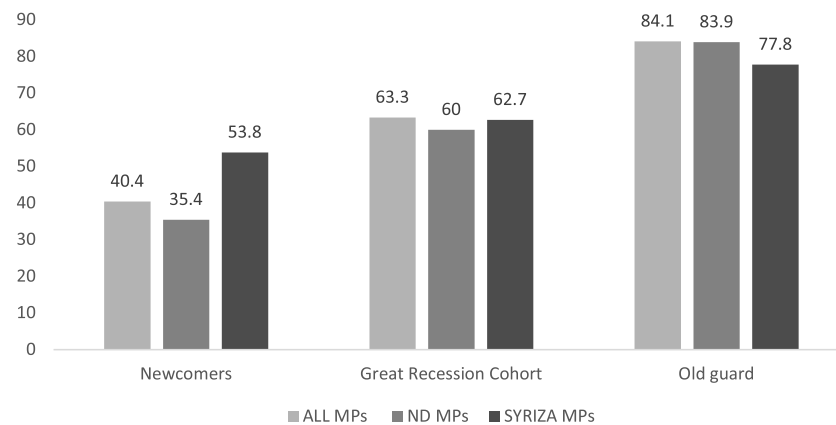


FIGURE 2 | Party Expertise of 18th Legislature MPs by cohort. Source: Socioscope Database (own elaboration).

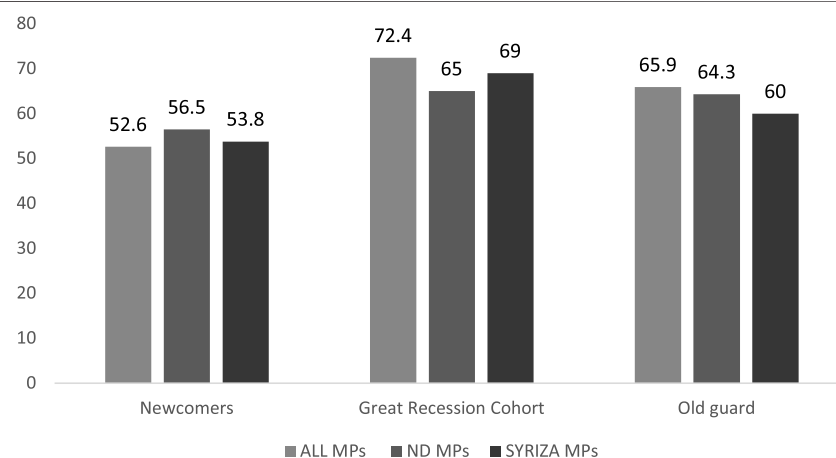
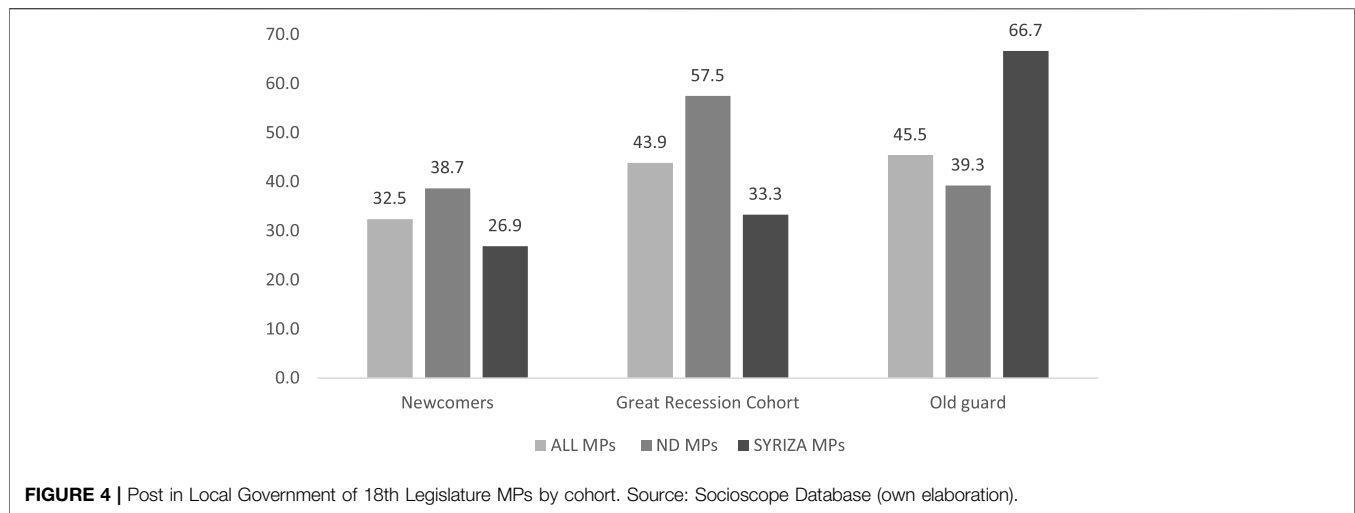


FIGURE 3 | Ties with Civil Society* of 18th Legislature MPs by cohort. Source: Socioscope Database (own elaboration). *Defined as participation in various cultural, local, sports, professional associations etc.



as a profession, with previous experience in political positions (in Ministerial positions, as political advisers, or Parliamentary staff) becoming more and more relevant for election. In the case of SYRIZA, it confirms the fact that the few new parliamentary seats were by and large occupied by figures that had served in the Alexis Tsipras cabinets as extra-Parliamentary Ministers since 53.8% of the party's newly elected MPs had served in such positions. It is reasonable to assume that the ministerial status and the visibility that it secures offers a clear advantage in intra-party competition in the lists.

On the contrary, party expertise, defined as an elected position in the party (**Figure 2**) sharply declines in the post-recession cohort across all party lines. Although this is something to be expected, given that party positions are often occupied by more experienced Parliamentarians, however it appears that service through the party is becoming less and less relevant for election, especially for ND. Ties with civil society, as expressed through membership in various organizations, are still very relevant but are also on decline (**Figure 3**). The trend shows that for newcomers, participation in such organizations has dropped, whereas the highest numbers recorder were during the Great Recession. This showcases that during the crisis in Greece there was a window of opportunity for representatives to form stronger ties with civil society, especially for SYRIZA, since 69% of its MPs exhibited such ties, opposed to 53.8% of the newcomers. Finally, ties with the constituency as expressed through previous election in local government have significantly declined (**Figure 4**) since 32.5% of newcomers have served in local government, compared to 43.9% percent of the Great Recession cohort and 45.5% of the Old Guard. The decline is sharp both for ND and SYRIZA.

Overall, newcomer MPs are more politically experienced (especially from SYRIZA) and at the same time have less ties with the party and with civil society whilst have served less in local government. Social groups such as women and younger people are still underrepresented, whilst the professional and educational capital of MPs remains high. Therefore, the second question that this paper addresses, which is whether parliamentary representatives have become more socially diverse after the

Great Recession, is answered with a contingent no. Although the results are mixed, successful candidates resemble more and more "independent" political entrepreneurs with a personal political capital that is not coming from the mass organizations of the past (parties, trade unions) or rely on their professional political experience that makes them suitable for the job.

CONCLUSION

More than a decade has passed since Greece signed the first MoU in 2010, initiating a long cycle of protest, with the electoral collapse of old actors and the rise of new ones. New faces with barely any experience entered Parliament, whilst veteran Parliamentarians failed to re-elect and disappeared from the political arena. At the same time, citizen's cynicism and distrust towards politicians prevailed with symptoms such as lower turnout in elections and the vote for parties with a clear aversion for democratic politics. If the answer for such phenomena calls for more democracy, then political actors in Greece did not seem to listen. Mainstream parties, in this case ND, adopted the open method of leader selection, but at the same time made the candidate selection process even more centered around the leader, confirming the argument that an open leader selection bypasses the party and moves towards the personalization and presidentialization of the political system. The party's sweeping victory resulted in the elections of many new faces; however, the candidate selection mechanisms did not offer anything close to IPD whilst the registry of Executives that partially supplied candidates may in fact have resulted in the diminishing role of middle level elites in the decision-making process, as suggested in the literature (Ignazi, 2020).

Challenger SYRIZA did not in effect contest the candidate selection process, but, especially after its governing experience, highlighted even more the profile of candidates with political experience and expertise, trying therefore to shake off any previous accusations regarding political amateurism. The result

of these decisions in the profile of successful candidates is evident. Their social ties are diminished, indicating a weakening connection with social movements, whilst emphasis is now on political competences. What SYRIZA learned from its governing experience was that modern policymaking calls for experts' knowledge and technocratic skills, therefore those who enter Parliament must possess those skills at the expense of sociodemographic diversity. In the end, we can argue that in SYRIZA there is a dualism between its declared political and ideological profile in the one hand, and its candidate selections mechanism on the other. Although the party emphasized ties with social movements and mass politics—which for a brief time during the crisis were reflected on its candidates' profiles—its candidate selection process favored professional political skills, moving the party closer to the cartel model (Katz and Mair, 1995). We suggest that this may be the result of an ongoing battle regarding SYRIZA's primary goal. Although for SYRIZA, the rise to power in 2015 was an external shock that clearly altered the party's primary goal from policy/ideology to office/vote, the party's goals are still conflicting. New Democracy appears more consistent with its own ideological profile that is both centered around the party leader and favors the individual attributes of its candidates.

Therefore, the crisis in Greece offered the opportunity structures for the mass renewal of its parliamentary elite and for a somewhat more socially diverse pool of successful candidates, but its effect quickly disappeared. More research is needed to understand the dynamics between candidate selection, internal party structure, and candidates' social and political profile. If new MPs

resemble more independent political entrepreneurs and have less social and political ties, then we must also examine other aspects of the election process; the impact of old and new media in shaping their profile and influencing voters is still an open question, as is “celebrity culture and celebrity candidates” (Arter, 2014) which in an open-list proportional representation system may be gradually replacing traditional routes to the Parliament.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets presented in this study can be found in online repositories. The names of the repository/repositories and accession number(s) can be found below: <https://socoscope.gr/dataset/deputies>.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee (REC -EKKE). The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

REFERENCES

- Alexandre-Collier, A., Goujon, A., and Gourgues, G. (Editors) (2020). *Innovations, Reinvented Politics and Representative Democracy*. 1st ed. (London and New York, NY: Routledge). doi:10.4324/9780429026300
- Alexakis, E. (2020). “The Conservatives,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Green Politics*. Editors K. Featherstone, and D. A. Sotiropoulos (Oxford University Press), 256–268. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198825104.013.16
- Arter, D. (2014). Clowns, ‘Alluring Ducks’ and ‘Miss Finland 2009’: the Value of ‘Celebrity Candidates’ in an Open-List Pr Voting System. *Representation* 504, 453–470. doi:10.1080/00344893.2014.982693
- Borz, G., and Janda, K. (2020). Contemporary Trends in Party Organization: Revisiting Intra-party Democracy. *Party Polit.* 26 (1), 3–8. doi:10.1177/1354068818754605
- Bosco, A., and Verney, S. (2016). From Electoral Epidemic to Government Epidemic: The Next Level of the Crisis in Southern Europe. *South Eur. Soc. Polit.* 21 (4), 383–406. doi:10.1080/13608746.2017.1303866
- Coller, X., Santana, A., and Jaime, A. M. (2014). Problemas y soluciones para la construcción de bases de datos de políticos. *Revista Española de Ciencia Política* 34, 169–198.
- Coller, X., Cordero, G., and Jaime Castillo, A. (Editors) (2018). *The Selection of Politicians in Times of Crisis*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Cordero, G., and Coller, X. (2018). *Democratizing Candidate Selection. New Methods, Old Receipts?* Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cordero, G., Coller, X., and Jaime-Castillo, A. M. (2018). “The Effects of the Great Recession on Candidate Selection in America and Europe,” in *The Selection of Politicians in Times of Crisis*. Editors X. Coller, G. Cordero, and A. M. Jaime-Castillo (Cham: Routledge), 262–277. doi:10.4324/9781315179575-16
- Cross, W., and Pillet, J. B. (2015). *The Politics of Party Leadership. A Cross-National Perspective*. Oxford University Press.
- Della Porta, D., Fernández, J., Kouki, H., and Mosca, L. (2017). *Movement Parties against Austerity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Detterbeck, K. (2018). “Political Crisis and its Effect on Candidate Selection,” in *The Selection of Politicians in Times of Crisis*. Editors X. Coller, G. Cordero, and A. M. Jaime-Castillo (London and New York, NY: Routledge), 19–30. doi:10.4324/9781315179575-2
- Eleftheriou, K. P. (2019). “Syriza from Opposition to Government. Organizational Strategy in the Shadow of Synaspismos,” in *Syriza: A Party on the Move. From Protest to Governance*. Editor Y. Balampanidis (Themelio), 143–173.
- Eleftheriou, K. P., and Tassis, C. (2019). “Intraparty Policy and PASOK's Strategy: PASOK's ‘Participatory’ Attempt (2004–2009),” in *PASOK 1974 – 2018. Political Organization, Ideological Shifts, Governmental Policies*. Editors V. Assimakopoulos and C. Tassis (Athens: Gutenberg), 467–524.
- Gallagher, M., and Marsh, M. (1988). *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective*. London: Sage.
- Gauja, A. (2017). *Party Reform: The Causes, Challenges, and Consequences of Organizational Change*. Oxford University Press.
- Gerbaudo, P. (2021). Are Digital Parties More Democratic Than Traditional Parties? Evaluating Podemos and Movimiento 5 Stelle's Online Decision-Making Platforms. *Party Polit.* 27 (4), 730–742. doi:10.1177/1354068819884878
- Greene, J. C., Caracelli, V. J., and Graham, W. F. (1989). Toward a Conceptual Framework for Mixed-Method Evaluation Designs. *Educ. Eval. Pol. Anal.* 11 (3), 255–274. doi:10.3102/01623737011003255
- Harmel, R., and Janda, K. (1994). An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change. *J. Theor. Polit.* 6 (3), 259–287. doi:10.1177/0951692894006003001
- Hazan, R. Y., and Rahat, G. (2010). *Democracy within Parties: Candidate Selection Methods and Their Political Consequences*. Oxford University Press.
- Hobolt, S. B., and Tilley, J. (2016). Fleeing the centre: the Rise of Challenger Parties in the Aftermath of the Euro Crisis. *West Eur. Polit.* 39, 971–991. doi:10.1080/01402382.2016.1181871

- Ignazi, P. (2021). The Failure of Mainstream Parties and the Impact of New Challenger Parties in France, Italy and Spain. *Riv. Ital. Sci. Polit.* 51 (1), 100–116. doi:10.1017/ipo.2020.26
- Ignazi, P. (2020). The Four Knights of Intra-party Democracy: A rescue for Party Delegation. *Party Polit.* 26 (1), 9–20. doi:10.1177/1354068818754599
- Kakepaki, M. (2019). “Between the Party and the Market: The New Democracy Parliamentary Group before and after the 7th of July 2019 Elections,” in *The Political Portrait Of Greece. Issues And Challenges [The Political Portrait of Greece. Risks and Challenges]*. Editor C. Varouxi (IEEE).
- Kakepaki, M., and Karayiannis, Y. (2021). Ticket to Brussels. One-Way or Return? Profiles and Typology of Greek MEPs, 1981–2019. *Greek Rev. Soc. Res.* 157, 157–181. doi:10.12681/grsr.27621
- Kakepaki, M., Kountouri, F., Verzichelli, L., and Coller, X. (2018). “The Sociopolitical Profile of Parliamentary Representatives in Greece, Italy and Spain before and after the “Eurocrisis”: A Comparative Empirical Assessment,” in *Democratizing Candidate Selection: New Methods, Old Receipts* Editors G. Cordero and X. Coller (Springer International Publishing), 175–200.
- Kakepaki, M. (2018). “New Actors, Old Practices?: Candidate Selection and Recruitment Patterns in Greece,” in *The Selection of Politicians in Times of Crisis*. Editors X. Coller, G. Cordero, and A. Jaime –Castillo (London and New York, NY: Routledge), 98–114.
- Karoulas, G. (2019). “Political Tradition and Political Parties in the Third Greek Republic: Emerging, Reproduction and Evolution of Nepotism in the Period 1989–2012,” in *From Metapolitefsi To Crisis: Aspects And Prospects Of the Third Greek Republic*. *Hellenic Political Science Association*. Editors J. Y. KaragiannisKarayiannis and K. Kanellopoulos, 46–70.
- Katsikas, D., Sotiropoulos, D. A., and Zafeiropoulou, M. (Editors) (2018). *Socio-economic Fragmentation and Exclusion in Greece under the Crisis* (Palgrave Macmillan).
- Katz, R. S., and Mair, P. (Editors) (1994). *How Parties Organize: Change and Adaptation in Party Organizations in Western Democracies* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd). doi:10.4135/9781446250570
- Katz, R. S., and Mair, P. (1995). Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party. *Party Polit.* 1 (1), 5–28. doi:10.1177/1354068895001001001
- Koltsida, D. (2019). “The Multiple Facets of Left’s “First Time”: SYRIZA’s Political Personnel (2012–2018),” in *SYRIZA. A Party on the Move. From Protest to Governance*. Editor Y. Balampanidis (Themelio, 174–201).
- Kosmopoulos, D. (2021). “Impact of Intra-party Democracy on Patterns of Political Career within the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) in Greece, 2004–2009,” in *New Paths for Selecting Political Elites. Investigating the Impact of Inclusive Candidate and Party Leader Selection Methods*. Editors G. Sandri and A. Seddone (London and New York, NY: Routledge), 101–117.
- Kountouri, F. (2018). Patterns of Renewal and Continuity in Parliamentary Elites. The Greek MPs from 1996 to 2015. *J. Legislative Stud.* 24 (4), 568–586.
- Marino, B., Martocchia Diodati, N., and Verzichelli, L. (2021). “Candidate Selection, Personalization of Politics, and Political Careers Insights from Italy (2006–2016),” in *New Paths for Selecting Political Elites. Investigating the Impact of Inclusive Candidate and Party Leader Selection Methods*. Editors G. Sandri and A. Seddone (London and New York, NY: Routledge), 82–105.
- Morlino, L., and Raniolo, F. (2017). *The Impact of the Economic Crisis on South European Democracies*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- New Democracy (2018). Statute of New Democracy. Available at: <https://nd.gr/katastatiko>.
- Pappas, T., and Dinas, E. (2006). From Opposition to Power: Greek Conservatism Reinvented. *South Eur. Soc. Polit.* 11 (3–4), 477–495.
- Pappas, T. (1998). *Making Party Democracy in Greece*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pappas, T. S. (2020). The Pushback against Populism: The Rise and Fall of Greece’s New Illiberalism. *J. Democracy* 31 (2), 54–68. doi:10.1353/jod.2020.0036
- Perez-Nievas, S., Parades, M., Cordero, G., and Coller, X. (2021). “Democratic, yet Representative? Selecting MPs in a Multilevel Polity,” in *Politicians in Hard Times*. Editors X. Coller and L. Sanchez-Ferrez (Palgrave-Macmillan), 109–129.
- Poguntke, T., Scarrow, S. E., Webb, P. D., Allern, E. H., Aylott, N., van Biezen, I., et al. (2016). Party Rules, Party Resources and the Politics of Parliamentary Democracies: How Parties Organize in the 21st century. *Party Polit.* 22 (6), 661–678. doi:10.1177/1354068816662493
- Rahat, G., and Kenig, O. (2018). *From Party Politics to Personalized Politics? Party Change and Political Personalization in Democracies*. ECPX Oxford University Press.
- Rori, L. (2020). The 2019 Greek parliamentary election: *retour à la normale*. *West Eur. Polit.* 43 (4), 1023–1037. doi:10.1080/01402382.2019.1696608
- Sandri, G., and Seddone, A. (2015). *Party Primaries in Comparative Perspective*. 1st ed. London and New York, NY: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9781315599595
- Sandri, G., and Seddone, A. (Editors) (2021). “New Paths for Selecting Political Elites,” *Investigating the Impact of Inclusive Candidate and Party Leader Selection Methods* (London and New York, NY: Routledge).
- Sandri, G., Seddone, A., and Venturino, F. (Editors) (2015). *Party Primaries in Comparative Perspective* Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate.
- Scarrow, S. E., Webb, P. D., and Poguntke, T. (Editors) (2017). *Organizing Political Parties. Representation, Participation, and Power* (Oxford University Press).
- Seddone, A., and Sandri, G. (2021). “Political Elites and Party Primaries,” in *New Paths for Selecting Political Elites. Investigating the Impact of Inclusive Candidate and Party Leader Selection Methods*. Editors G. Sandri and A. Seddone (London and New York, NY: Routledge), 228–243.
- Skoulariki, A. (2021). Political Polarisation in Greece: The Prespa Agreement, Left/right Antagonism and the Nationalism/populist Nexus. *South Eur. Soc. Polit.* doi:10.1080/13608746.2020.1932020
- Standard Eurobarometer (2021). Public Opinion in the European Union. Available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2532>.
- SYRIZA (2020). An Account 2012–2019. Available at: <https://www.syriza.gr/article/id/94170/Apologismos-SYRIZA-2012-2019.html>.
- SYRIZA (2013). Statute of SYRIZA. Available at: <https://www.syriza.gr/page/katastatiko.html>.
- Teperoglou, E., Andreadis, I., and Chadjipadelis, T. (2020). “The Study of Political Representation in Greece: Towards New Patterns Following the Economic Crisis” in *Political Representation in Southern Europe and Latin America: Before and after the Great Recession and the Commodity Crisis*. Editors A. Freire, M. Barragán, X. Coller, M. Lisi, and E. Tsatsanis (London and New York, NY: Routledge), 34–49.
- Teperoglou, E., and Tsatsanis, E. (2014). Dealignment, De-legitimation and the Implosion of the Two-Party System in Greece: The Earthquake Election of 6 May 2012. *J. Elections, Public Opin. Parties* 24 (2), 222–242.
- Tsatsanis, E., and Teperoglou, E. (2019). “Greece’s Coalition Governments. Power Sharing in a Majoritarian Democracy,” in *Coalition Government as a Reflection of a Nation’s Politics and Society. A Comparative Study of Parliamentary Parties and Cabinets in 12 Countries*. Editor M. Evans (London and New York, NY: Routledge), 224–243.
- Tsatsanis, E., Teperoglou, E., and Seriatos, A. (2020). *Two-partyism Reloaded: Polarisation, Negative Partisanship, and the Return of the Left-Right Divide in the Greek Elections of 2019*. South European Society and Politics. doi:10.1080/13608746.2020.1855798
- Tsatsanis, E. (2018). “The swift Unravelling: Party System Change and Deinstitutionalization in Greece during the Crisis,” in *Party System Change, the European Crisis and the State of Democracy*. Editor M. Lisi (London: Routledge), 115–136.
- Tsirbas, Y. (2020). “The Party System,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Greek Politics*. Editors K. Featherstone and D. A. Sotiropoulos (Oxford University Press), 219–238.
- Vernardakis, C. (2011). *Political Parties, Elections and Party System: Transformations of Political Representation 1990–2010*. Sakkoulas.
- Verney, S. (2014). ‘Broken and Can’t Be Fixed’: The Impact of the Economic Crisis on the Greek Party System. *The Int. Spectator* 49 (1), 18–35. doi:10.1080/03932729.2014.877222
- Vogel, L., Gebauer, R., and Salheiser, A. (Editors) (2019). *The Contested Status of Political Elites. At the Crossroads* London and New York: Routledge.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher’s Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

Copyright © 2022 Kakepaki. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.



Strategies of the Party Selectorate: The Two-Level Game in District Selections in Germany's Mixed Member Electoral System

Marion Reiser*

Department for Political Science, Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Jena, Germany

OPEN ACCESS

Edited by:

Guillermo Cordero,
Autonomous University of Madrid,
Spain

Reviewed by:

Jeremy Dodeligne,
University of Namur, Belgium
Antonio M. Jaime-Castillo,
National University of Distance
Education (UNED), Spain

*Correspondence:

Marion Reiser
marion.reiser@uni-jena.de

Specialty section:

This article was submitted to
Elections and Representation,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Political Science

Received: 20 September 2021

Accepted: 09 November 2021

Published: 11 March 2022

Citation:

Reiser M (2022) Strategies of the Party
Selectorate: The Two-Level Game in
District Selections in Germany's Mixed
Member Electoral System.
Front. Polit. Sci. 3:780235.
doi: 10.3389/fpos.2021.780235

The article investigates how the opportunity structure and contextual factors influence the selectorates' strategies in the process of candidate selection. The article argues that these strategies are an under-researched but important explanatory and dynamic link between the parties' goals and context factors of candidate selection on the one side and the adopted selection criteria and the outcome of candidate selection on the other side. Based on a mixed-methods design, the study scrutinizes the selectorates' strategies at district selections in Germany's mixed-member electoral system. The analysis reveals that the local selectorates adopt the traditional inward oriented selection criteria to find the best candidate for the local party branch if the district seat is safe for the party. If, however, the seat is not safe, the selectorates prioritize the electoral goal over the local party organizational goal and strategically adapt the selection criteria to the opportunity structure. By considering both local inter-party competition and regional intra-party competition, they either take up a local voters' perspective or anticipate the selection criteria of the state party lists in order to increase the chances for a seat in parliament. Thus, due to the mixed-member electoral system, the prevalence of dual candidacies, and decentralized candidate selection methods, intra-party selection in German districts is a two-level game.

Keywords: candidate selection, intra-party selection, mixed member electoral system, Germany, selection criteria

1 INTRODUCTION

Candidate selection as the "secret garden of politics" (Gallagher and Marsh, 1988) is a topic that continues to inspire scholars and the scientific debate (e.g., Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Hazan and Rahat, 2010). By referring to the supply and demand model of recruitment (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Norris, 1997), the literature on demand-side factors has focused on the gatekeepers and their selection criteria (Norris, 1997). In particular, there has been broad research on the democratization of parties' internal structures and their impact on the processes and outcomes of candidate selection. Another crucial aspect in this debate is the question how the political parties react and change their candidate selection in the light of the social and political challenges, i.e., the personalization of politics, the increase of populist and other types of challenger parties, disenchantment, and increased volatility (Kriesi et al., 2008; Collier et al., 2018; Cross et al., 2018; Dalton, 2018; Pedersen and Rahat, 2021).

However, despite the intensive research on the demand-side factors of recruitment, only little attention has been paid to the selectorates' strategies in the process of candidate selection (Adams

and Merrill, 2008; Crisp et al., 2013). This is surprising since the parties' strategies are highly relevant as an important explanatory and dynamic link between the parties' goals and context factors of candidate selection on the one side and the adopted selection criteria and the outcome of candidate selection on the other side. In a nutshell, it is argued that the parties' selectorates are regularly forced to set priorities between the—often—competing goals of party loyalty and electability in the process of candidate selection (Ascencio and Kerevel, 2020). This is likely to result in a strategy which is adopted by the selectorate in order to achieve the prioritized goal(s). This suggests that the selectorate nominates under certain conditions candidates for strategic considerations, e.g., electoral goals. By that, the strategies are likely to influence the hierarchy of the selection criteria, the outcome of the candidate selection process, the campaign behavior and the behavior of MPs (e.g., Preece, 2014; Papp and Zorigt, 2016; Ascencio and Kerevel, 2020; Zittel and Nyhuis, 2021).

It is assumed that the specific strategy the selectorate applies is centrally influenced by the opportunity structure and the context factors of the specific selection process (Schlesinger, 1966; Norris and Lovenduski, 1993). However, there is a lack of studies scrutinizing how these factors shape the strategies of the selectorates and whether the political parties react to the social and political challenges by adapting their strategies. Therefore, this article raises the central research question: How do the opportunity structure and contextual factors influence the selectorates' strategies in the process of candidate selection? It is expected that the electoral system, the party system, and the competitive context as well as the candidate selection methods are central contextual factors.

To answer the research question, the study focuses on the district selections in Germany's mixed-member electoral system. Germany provides an interesting case since intra-party candidate selection is highly decentralized and still highly relevant for the representation in parliament due to the electoral system and the high number of safe district seats and safe spots on the party lists (Manow, 2015; Davidson-Schmich, 2016). It also allows to scrutinize the impact of the mixed member electoral system and the prevalence of dual candidacies on the parties' strategies in district selections (Schüttemeyer and Sturm, 2005; Reiser, 2014a; Ceyhan, 2018). The analysis builds on a quantitative analysis of all district nominations for the Federal Elections 2009 and includes next to a content analysis of documents and participant observation in particular qualitative face-to-face interviews with 148 local party officials and (successful and unsuccessful) intra-party candidates, and 35 journalists to reconstruct the selection processes in 32 districts. This research design allows to analyze the informal strategies and thus to go beyond the secret garden of politics.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: PARTY STRATEGIES IN INTRA-PARTY CANDIDATE SELECTION

There has been a growing interest in the processes and outcome of intra-party candidate selection in the last years. One important

framework to analyze candidate selection is the supply and demand model of recruitment (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Weßels, 1997). According to this model, the outcome of the intra-party selection process can be understood as an interactive process between the supply of aspirants aiming to run for office, and the demands of the gatekeepers who select the candidates. Norris and Lovenduski (1995) stress that the interactions and dynamics between the supply and the demand side are embedded and influenced by the wider framework of the structure of opportunities. This includes the political system with its legal regulations, the party system, the electoral system, as well as the broader recruitment process with its party rules and procedures.

With regard to the demand side, research has focused on the one hand on the composition of the selectorates, i.e., the formal and informal committees which select the candidates. Based on the criteria of inclusiveness and decentralization, studies have revealed a process of democratization of the selectorates which also influences the outcome of candidate selection processes (Adams and Merrill, 2008; Hazan and Rahat, 2010). On the other hand, there has been research on the selection criteria of these party selectorates. Selection criteria are those characteristics of prospective candidates which are seen as appropriate by the party selectorates in the process of candidate selection (Hazan and Rahat 2010). While these criteria vary, for instance, between political systems, electoral systems (Norris, 1997), parties (e.g., Reiser, 2014b; Cordes and Hellmann, 2020), and selection methods (e.g., Weßels, 1997; Schindler, 2020), research has also revealed certain commonalities. Several studies show that the most important criteria in electoral districts are incumbency, long-term party service, experience in local offices, qualifications, and localness of the aspirants (e.g., Herzog, 1975; Klingemann and Wessels, 2001; Siavelis, 2002; Crisp et al., 2013; Ohmura et al., 2018; Berz and Jankowski, 2022).

However, so far, the literature has failed to address the question why particular selection criteria are applied by the selectorates in the first place. It is argued in this article that there are underlying strategic considerations of the parties' selectorates which lead to a different prioritization and hierarchy of the selection criteria and thus to a different outcome of the candidate selection process. And indeed, it has been argued that there are two main goals which are relevant for the strategic considerations in the process of candidate selection: party-related organizational goals and electoral goals (Best and Cotta, 2000; Adams and Merrill, 2008; Dodeigne and Meulewaeter, 2014; Ascencio and Kerevel, 2020): From the perspective of the party organization, a candidate should be loyal to the party and should fit in with the ideological and policy-related objectives of the party (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011). Hence, with regard to the organizational goal, party membership, a long-term service in local and party offices, and intra-party visibility are likely to be the most important selection criteria because they serve as cues for party loyalty. With regard to electoral goals, a candidate should be able to appeal to and mobilize voters and win office (Downs, 1957). From this outward perspective, voter oriented criteria such as personal vote-earning attributes (PVEA) are thus assumed to be crucial. These

are characteristics of candidates which increase their reputation in the local context and may help them to develop political support beyond the party loyal voters, such as electoral appeal, public awareness, and name recognition (Carey and Shugart, 1995; Shugart et al., 2005; Tavits, 2009; Crisp et al., 2013)¹.

While an ideal candidate would combine a high level of electability with party loyalty, it can be assumed that in most cases there is a “loyalty-electability trade-off” (Ascencio and Kerevel, 2020). As a consequence, the selectorate is forced to balance these competing goals and has to set priorities (Best and Cotta, 2000). The main argument is that this results in a strategy which is adopted by the selectorate in order to achieve the prioritized goal(s). This suggests that the selectorate nominates under certain conditions candidates for strategic considerations, e.g., electoral goals, and therefore adjust the selection criteria. The specific strategy the selectorate applies, I argue, is—at least partially—shaped by the conditions and context factors of the specific selection process. This refers in particular to the opportunity structure—i.e., the electoral and the party system—and the selection process (Schlesinger, 1966; Norris and Lovenduski, 1993). As such, the strategies of the parties’ selectorate are an important explanatory link between the context factors of candidate selection on the one side and the adopted selection criteria and the outcome of candidate selection on the other side.

The parties’ strategies are thus highly relevant since they are likely to result in a varying prioritization and hierarchy of the selection criteria, in different outcomes of the candidate selection processes, and subsequently in a different composition of the parliament. There is evidence that they also influence the behavior of MPs (e.g., Preece, 2014; Ascencio and Kerevel, 2020). But despite this high relevance, there is only little research on the strategies of the selectorates during the process of candidate selection. In particular, there is a lack of studies scrutinizing how the conditions and context factors shape the strategies of the selectorates. Therefore, this article wants to explore the impact of the contextual factors on the strategies of the parties’ selectorates by focusing on district selections in mixed-member electoral systems.

2.1 Mixed Member Electoral Systems

Mixed member electoral systems are an interesting case to study the strategies of the selectorates. In recent years, numerous studies have analysed the impact of the electoral system on intra-party selection processes (e.g., Hazan and Rahat, 2010; Norris and Lovenduski, 1995). This research has shown that the selection criteria and outcomes of selection processes differ between majoritarian and proportional electoral systems (e.g., Hazan and Voerman, 2006; Ceyhan 2018) which suggests that—despite a lack of empirical studies—also the strategies of selectorates vary. In mixed member electoral systems, there are

two distinct routes to parliament: One part of the MPs is elected in single-member constituencies, and the other part of the MPs is elected from party lists (Shugart and Wattenberg, 2004). According to the “best of two world”-literature, one would expect that the strategies of the selectorates in the electoral districts would resemble those in “pure” majoritarian systems (e.g., Stratmann and Baur, 2002; Zittel and Gschwend, 2008). In contrast, others have argued that the two tiers are *de facto* not independent of one another since there are “contaminations” (Ferrara et al., 2005; Crisp, 2007). One source of contamination between the two groups of MPs is seen in the selection criteria for the intra-party candidate selection processes, i.e., constituency service duties for re-selection on the PR list-tier (Reiser, 2013; Hennl, 2014; Ceyhan, 2018). Double candidacies are seen as a second source of contamination. Typically, mixed member systems allow candidates to run in both tiers simultaneously (Borchert and Reiser, 2010; Papp, 2019; Ceyhan, 2018). Due to these interaction effects between the two tiers, one might expect that the strategies of the selectorate in the electoral districts might also be influenced by candidate selection for the list tier.

2.2 Party System and Competitive Context

Second, it can be assumed that the strategies are influenced by the party system and the competitive context. Carty (1980): 564 stresses that intra- and inter-party competition “are as inseparable as they are interactive” (see also Key, 1956; Selb and Lutz, 2014). From the perspective of the specific party, three different contexts of inter-party competition can be distinguished in electoral districts: safe, contested, and hopeless districts. In a safe district, based on previous electoral results and polls, the party can expect to re-win the district. In a contested electoral district, the candidate of the party has a realistic chance to win the district, but there is at least one other party who also has realistic chances to win the seat. In contrast, in hopeless districts, there is no realistic chance for a candidate of the specific party to win the district (Manow, 2015; Thomas and Bodet, 2012). It is assumed that these conditions shape the strategic considerations of the selectorate (Gallagher, 1998). For instance, Best and Cotta (2000: 12) argue that in a situation when a party has “a significant part of the electoral support market, campaign qualities of contenders will be of less importance than their expected loyalty or their ideological fit.” Thus, the selectors are expected to adopt an inward-looking strategy. In contrast, in competitive districts, it seems plausible that the selectorates strategically nominate candidates who are highly electable in order to increase the chances to win the district (Ascencio and Kerevel, 2020).

2.3 Intra-Party Selection Process

How candidate selection methods influence the outcome of candidate selection has been widely discussed in the academic debate in recent years (e.g., Bille, 2001; Cross, 2008; Hazan and Rahat, 2010; Collier et al., 2018). Analytically, most scholars refer based on the concept of Hazan and Rahat (2010) to decentralization and inclusiveness of the selectorate as the two central dimensions of candidate selection.

Decentralization refers to the geographical level at which candidate selection takes place, hence, at the local, regional, or

¹Certain criteria can be regarded as relevant for both goals. For instance, engagement in local offices is perceived important with regard to organizational goals, but also from an electability strategy since it can also increase public awareness (Put et al., 2021).

national level. Hazan and Rahat (2010: 58) have argued that centralized nomination committees tend to select candidates who follow the party line, while candidates which are selected in a constituency “will respond to the demands of their local base.” This points to different strategies and reference points of the party selectorates at different geographical levels (see also Siavelis and Morgenstern, 2008; Shomer, 2017; Berz and Jankowski, 2022). And indeed, in line with the literature on multi-level parties (e.g., Detterbeck, 2012), it seems to be an oversimplification to assume that the strategies of local party selectorates and national party selectorates are congruent. For instance, a local selectorate striving for the organizational goal of party loyalty is likely to relate this in particular to the local party branch, while a centralized selectorate might understand it rather as loyalty to the national party leader or the faction in the parliament. Therefore, it is plausible that dependent on the degree of centralization, there are different, territorial-related strategies, and there might be a trade-off between local, regional, and national interests.

Inclusiveness refers to the composition of the selectorate. According to Hazan and Rahat (2010), the level of inclusiveness ranges from all voters as the most inclusive selectorate to the party leader as the most exclusive selectorate. Research has shown mixed results regarding the impact of the level of inclusiveness on the degree of representation (Ashe et al., 2010; Spies and Kaiser, 2014) and on the behavior of the MPs (Cordero and Coller, 2015). This link suggests that the inclusiveness of the selectorate has an impact on the strategies adopted by this body. It seems plausible that more inclusive selectorates—such as member committees—tend to be more oriented towards intra-party related goals such as loyalty and are less likely to adjust the selection criteria strategically, for instance, to electoral consideration. In contrast, it can be assumed that more exclusive selectorates—such as delegates and party elites—tend to be more aware of the loyalty-electability trade-off and more open to strategic considerations.

3 THE CASE OF GERMANY

Germany provides an interesting case to study the strategies of the party selectorates in electoral districts in a mixed-member electoral system: In Germany’s mixed-member electoral system (Klingemann and Wessels 2001; Manow 2015), half of the 598 members of parliament (MPs) are elected in single-member constituencies according to the first-past-post-system, while the other half are elected on closed state party lists (proportional representation, or PR, system).

However, the formally equal access to the parliament differs profoundly by party and region which is likely to influence selectorates’ strategies: The smaller parties traditionally only win seats *via* the state party lists. Exceptions are the Left Party in East German districts and the Green party in one electoral district in Berlin. However, at the Federal Elections 2017, the new right-wing party AfD was able to win three districts seats, and at the Federal Elections 2021, the AfD and the Green party have been able to win 16 districts each. With regard to the large

parties—Social Democrats (SPD), Christian Democrats (CDU), and its Bavarian sister party Christian Social Union (CSU)—the strength of the parties in each state (Bräuninger et al., 2020) influences whether the party wins predominantly constituency seats or list seats. In some states, parties win predominantly constituency seats (for instance, CSU in Bavaria) and only few or no mandates on the list; in other states, it is vice versa. Although the share of safe districts has decreased in the last decades due to the changes in the party system², dealignment, and increased volatility (Kriesi et al., 2008; Dalton, 2018), the majority of the districts (56.2%) has been categorized as safe for one party in the last elections (Davidson-Schmich 2016: 141; see also; Manow, 2015; Weßels, 2016).

Hence, formally, there are two independent forms of candidacy. Candidates may, however, run under both formulas simultaneously. Since the early years of the Federal Republic, the two formally independent forms of candidacy became more and more interlinked (Kaack, 1969; Borchert and Reiser, 2010; Manow, 2015). Today, double candidacies are prevalent: After the Federal Elections of 2009, 86% of the MPs had been double-candidates, meaning that they ran both in the district and on the state party list. Only 2% of the MPs had been pure list candidates (Borchert and Reiser, 2010; see also Baumann et al., 2017). There are, of course, also pure party list candidates and pure district candidates—but they are predominantly running on unwinnable spots on the party lists and in unwinnable districts. In addition, there are clear indications for interaction effects between the two tiers since a district candidacy is *de facto* a precondition for a good or promising spot on the state party list (Schüttemeyer and Sturm, 2005; Reiser, 2014a; Ceyhan, 2018; Zeuner, 1970). This points to strong contaminations between the two formally independent tiers which is likely to influence the selectorates’ strategies in the electoral districts.

Candidate selection in Germany is characterized by strong legal regulation and by a high degree of decentralization: While list candidates are selected by party conventions of the state party branch, candidates for the single-member constituencies are nominated by party conventions at the district level. While the Federal or state party executive have formally the right to veto the nominated candidate, this is hardly ever used (Detterbeck, 2016; Reiser, 2018). The inclusiveness of the selectorate continues to be on a rather low level: Currently, about 70% of the district candidates are nominated by delegate conventions and only 30% by member selectorates (see **Supplementary Table S2**; see also Schindler, 2020). It is important to note that electoral districts and party branches are often not congruent: In only 32% of the cases, only one county party branch is responsible for the nomination. In the clear majority of the electoral districts, members or delegates of two to four county party branches

²The German party system has long been characterized by a high stability and continuity (Poguntke, 2015). After unification, the party system had developed in a stable five-party system with the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU), the Liberal Democratic Party (FDP), the Green Party, and the Left Party. At the Federal Elections 2017, the new right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD) entered the Bundestag for the first time.

constitute the selectorate and jointly nominate the candidate (see **Supplementary Table S3**) which might influence the strategic considerations.

4 RESEARCH STRATEGY AND EMPIRICAL BASIS

Candidate selection has been characterized as the “secret garden” (Gallagher and Marsh 1988) of politics. This is in particular true for the informal strategies of the party selectorates. Therefore, the study relies on a mixed-methods design. The core of the study is the reconstruction of the selection processes in 32 electoral districts for the Federal Elections 2009.

The analysis focuses on the four parties Social Democrats (SPD), Christian Democrats (CDU), and their Bavarian sister party Christian Socialist Union (CSU) and the Left party in East Germany and Berlin since these parties had the chance to win an electoral district³. The population for the sample are thus 661 district selection processes (see **Supplementary Table S1**). For each party, there has been a stratified random sample (Behnke et al., 2006) based on two criteria: 1) Candidate selection with or without incumbent; 2) Degree of intra-party competition at the nomination conference. A disproportionate stratified sampling was used in order to allow to identify specific strategic considerations for different types of intra-party selection processes. Overall, the sample allows to explore differences in the degree of intra-party competition, party differences, and specifics of intra-party competition with and without incumbencies. With the exception of one type (incumbent, no competition), for each type, a random sample has been conducted. A descriptive analysis shows that the sample includes seven intra-party competitions with incumbents (21.9%) and 25 intra-party competition without incumbent (78.1%). There is also variance regarding the chances to win a mandate in the district or *via* the party list (see **Supplementary Table S3**), the number of county party branches who are jointly responsible to nominate the district candidate (**Supplementary Table S4**), the candidate selection method (**Supplementary Table S5**), as well as regional variance (see for details Reiser, 2014b).

The reconstruction of the 32 nomination processes is based on semi-structured face-to-face interviews with 148 local party officials and (successful and unsuccessful) intra-party candidates. Additionally, interviews with 35 local journalists in the 32 districts have been conducted in order to be able to include an outside perspective. In addition, qualitative content analyses of the newspaper articles related to the nomination processes and the press releases of the local parties and candidates have been conducted. Furthermore, in 30 of the 32 intra-party competition, the local party leaders (i.e., protocols of the committee meetings of the local party branches and the nomination conferences) and

applicants (e.g., CVs, official application, manuscript for speech at the nomination conference, advertising material for intra-party electoral campaign) provided further documents. Based on a qualitative content analysis of these different sources and of a reconstruction of the different selection processes, the strategies of the selectorates have been inductively developed. This multi-method research design allows an analysis of the strategies of the selectorates in the process of candidate selection.

The analysis of the strategies of the selectorate in this article focuses exclusively on vacant candidacies of the party in the specific district. The main reason is that there is hardly intra-party competition if the incumbent runs again for candidacy (see **Table 1**) and that in these cases incumbency is the most important selection criterion (see also Reiser, 2014b; Weßels, 2016; Baumann et al., 2017).

5 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS: STRATEGIES OF THE PARTY SELECTORATE IN VACANT DISTRICTS

The analysis reveals that the parties' selectorates adopt four main strategies in vacant districts. These strategies vary systematically dependent on the specific opportunity structure:

Strategy 1 is adopted in safe districts for the specific party. In these districts, the local party leaders and the selectorate expect the party to win the district mandate:

“Since 1949, the CDU has always won this district seat. If you become candidate, you made it *de facto* to the Bundestag. A disappointing electoral result for the party here is 48%—and that is of course enough to win the district seat” (I45).

In view of this situation, the interviewed party actors regularly referred to the saying that the party could “nominate a broomstick” and would still win the district seat. This statement clearly reflects that the profile and electability of a candidate is seen as “completely irrelevant” (I56; see also I2, 13, 29, 57) for the candidate selection process:

“There is always an opinion within the party and one outside the party. You can be everybody's darling in the party, and at the same time the voters might be not appealed by this candidate. But it is irrelevant here. We don't pay attention to this” (I113).

Thus, the local party leaders look for “a candidate who is highly accepted within the party” and “who suits the selectorate in this district.” Thus, they take up a local intra-party perspective which distinguishes strategy 1 from the other three strategies. This strategy is also reflected in the selection criteria. The most important selection criterion is the affiliation of the candidate to the specific county party branch. As explained (see **Section 3** and **Supplementary Table S4**), in two thirds of the electoral districts, two to four county party branches are jointly deciding upon the

³At the Federal Elections 2009, six parties won mandates: Social Democrats (SPD), Christian Democrats (CDU) and their Bavarian sister party Christian Socialist Union (CSU), Green Party, Left Party, and Free Democratic Party (FDP).

TABLE 1 | Typology of selectorates' strategies in vacant districts.

		Regional intra-party competition	
		Promising spot on party list possible	No promising spot on party list possible
Local inter-party-competition	Safe district	Type 1: Local intra-party perspective ⇒ Best candidate for local party branch	Type 2: Local voter perspective ⇒ Best candidate for the local voters
	Contested district	Double or contested strategies Type 2 and 3	
	Hopeless district	Type 3: Regional intra-party perspective ⇒ Best candidate for state party list	Type 4: Supply problem and Future-oriented perspective ⇒ Future-oriented strategy ⇒ Sacrify lamb

district candidate. Since all party branches strive to nominate a candidate of their own branch, this criterion tops all other criteria as the following quote shows exemplarily:

“There has been a female aspirant who unluckily lives in the city [thus, in the other county party branch, M.R.]. She has exactly the profile we have been looking for: a young woman, long term active in the party and successful in her job. In addition, she delivered an excellent speech at the nomination conference. However, our rural party branch has the majority of the delegates and that's why we voted for our aspirant—despite the fact that our aspirant was significantly weaker in all aspects.”

Intra-party awareness, intra-party networks, and the current engagement in the party and local offices are seen as relevant since they reflect intra-party engagement, knowledge of local issues, and party loyalty. As regards the social profile age (not too young and not too old; 40–45 years), gender (with clear party differences) and occupation (someone who has proved him and herself in their job but have enough time for the electoral campaign and the political career) have been regarded as important. In contrast, policy positions, competencies, an appeal to the voters, and public awareness have not been perceived as important. Thus, the local party selectorate clearly prioritizes territorial local representation over all other types of representation and looks for a candidate who is loyal to the local party.

Strategy 2 is adopted in districts which are contested between at least two parties. This means that there is a chance for the specific party to win the district seat but there is at least one other party who also has the chance:

“It has been a close race between the three parties [CDU, SPD and Left] (. . .). In Brandenburg, the state party list is hardly relevant for us [SPD]. Therefore, we had to win the race in the district” (I79).

Under this condition, the strategy of the selectorate shifts from the intra-party orientation and party loyalty to the voters' perspective and the electability of the candidate. Therefore,

one central reference point for the candidate selection is the profile of the main competitor in the district race:

“Hence, our guiding question during the whole selection process was: What is going on in the other party? Who is going to be their candidate? And what could be the best counter profile to attract votes?” (I52).

For instance, in a district with an older male incumbent of the SPD, the CDU nominated a young female candidate with only little political experience to have a “candidate who has not this typical profile of a politician and who is not using their typical clichés” (I31). This example also reveals that central selection criteria such as experience in local and party offices are secondary under this conditions: The young female candidate won against three intra-party aspirants who all had a long-term party engagement, a better intra-party awareness, and a better intra-party network but had a profile too similar to the main competitor.

In addition, vote earning attributes are stressed as decisive for the intra-party competition, such as popularity, visibility, sympathy, and success in earlier electoral campaigns, e.g., a high number of preference votes in previous local elections. In addition, moderate policy positions are seen as central in order to attract as many voters as possible:

“You must not nominate a person who is polarizing. In order to win the district, we need to win votes in the red-green city but also in the black urban hinterland.”

Thus, candidate qualities that extend beyond party loyalty and can attract new voters are seen as relevant. Other criteria such as the affiliation to the county party branch, intra-party loyalty, and engagement in local and party offices are still perceived as highly relevant by the selectorate. But because of the competitive context in the district, the party selectorates prioritize strategical electability over intra-party related factors in order to increase the chances to win the district mandate.

Strategy 3 is adopted by the parties' selectorates in those nomination processes in which there are no or very little chances for the party to win the district. But at the same time, there is—as a result of the prevalent form of double candidacies (see **section 3**)—a chance for a promising spot on the party list.

“It was clear that we cannot win the district seat. Therefore, our view was on the state party list (...). Accordingly, the strategy for the intra-party process has been: Who can get a safe spot on the list? This question cannot be answered globally. One has to investigate who will be nominated by the other districts, who also needs to get a safe spot on the party list etc. The result of this exploration defines the profile we are looking for” (I2).

Thus, the perspective of the local selectorate shifts strategically from the local district to the regional intra-party competition for the state party lists. The state party lists are regularly constructed on the basis of quota and proportional rules, i.e., for incumbency, region, gender, age, or interest groups (see Reiser, 2014a; Ceyhan, 2018; Höhne, 2017). The strategy is that a district candidate who meets specific selection criteria for the state party lists has better chances for a safe spot on the state party list and by that guarantees the representation of the district in the Bundestag. Therefore, the local party branches anticipate strategically the selection criteria for the state party list already during nomination process at the district level.

“We knew that the three incumbents who re-run will be given priority on the state party list—these have been two men and one women. Therefore, we knew that the best spot we can get is the second spot for a female candidate of our region. This spot, spot X on the state party list, can be regarded as safe while the third spot for a male candidate from our region is hopeless. That’s why we knew from the beginning that a female candidate will win the intra-party competition in our district. This has been clear to all party members since there has been no single male aspirant—it has been a competition of female candidates” (I100).

This example clearly shows that the anticipated criterion for the state party list is getting the primary selection criterion in the district. The other central selection criteria continue to be relevant if there are more aspirants who fulfil this criterion. Thus, the selectorate does take up a regional intra-party perspective and strategically anticipates the regional selection criteria in order to meet the electoral goal.

A fourth type of strategic considerations is found in districts where there is no chance to win a mandate, neither directly nor *via* the list. In these cases, the perspective shifts from the demand side regularly to the supply side of candidate selection. The interviewed party elites state that there are no or hardly aspirants who are willing to campaign and invest time and money under these conditions. As a response to this, two different strategies have been adopted in the investigated districts:

The future-oriented strategy aims at developing someone for future candidacies and elections. Thus, the current candidacy has the goal to increase the electoral chances for upcoming elections, either by increasing public awareness in the local district or by improving the chances for a winnable spot on the state party list for upcoming elections:

“It is clear that the district is unwinnable for our party. And it was also clear that we would not get a promising spot on the party list. We assume that it will be a long walk and we expect to have a chance in 8 years to get a good spot on the party list” (I24).

While this kind of “development-candidacy” is often adopted as an individual strategy by aspirants, it is rare as a strategy of the parties’ selectorate. The main reason is according to the party elites that it requires a long-term commitment for one candidate which is hardly in the interest of the majority of the party actors.

Therefore, the dominant “strategy” in these hopeless districts is short-term and has the main goal to find a sacrificial lamb (Thomas and Bodet, 2012), hence someone who is willing to run despite the fact that he or she has no chance to win. Accordingly, aspirants in these hopeless districts are nominated even though they often do not fulfil the basic selection criteria of the selectorate, e.g., long-term party engagement.

So, overall, the analysis reveals that the strategies of the selectorate differ systematically along the two central dimensions of inter- and intra-competition on two different levels: 1) local inter-party competition, and 2) regional intra-party competition.

- 1) The first dimension is the inter-party competition in the electoral district since the strategies differ between safe, contested, and hopeless districts for the specific party.
- 2) The second dimension is the regional intra-party competition: Due to the prevalent form of double candidacies in the German mixed member electoral system, the district party can also get a representative of the district in the German Bundestag by winning a mandate *via* the state party list. Therefore, the regional intra-party competition for safe or at least promising spots on the state party list is the second relevant dimension for intra-party candidate selection in the electoral district.

These two dimensions generate four ideal types of strategies (see **Table 1**). They can be explained by the opportunity structure of the German mixed member electoral system which is characterized by the prevalence of dual candidacy and the decentralization of candidate selection.

The analysis clearly reveals that the local selectorate in the German districts strives to achieve both goals: to have an MP of the local party branch (office-seeking) who is loyal to the local party (organizational goal). If the office seems to be secured (in particular in safe districts), the selectorate looks for the “best candidate for the local party,” thus striving for a candidate who is loyal to the local party. This local and purely intra-party perspective is reflected in the most important selection criteria. However, if the district is not safe for the specific party, the selectorate strategically adapts the selection criteria to the specific opportunity structure: If the district is contested, the electability of the candidate becomes priority over party loyalty. Thus, the selectorate strives primarily for the best candidate for the local voters instead of the best candidate for the local party which leads to a higher personalization and an increased role of voter earning

attributes in the selection process. If there are, however, chances for a safe or promising spot on the state party list, the strategy focuses on the regional intra-party competition. Therefore, the selectorate anticipates the selection criteria for the selection process of the state party lists in order to increase the chances for a mandate of the local party branch. Thus, the study reveals that due to the mixed-member electoral system and the prevalence of dual candidacies, intra-party competition in the districts is a two-level game.

Additionally, two significant qualifications have to be made with regard to the strategies of the selectorates:

First, the strategy itself is sometimes contested within the selectorate. This is in particular true for those cases in which the local and regional competitive context is ambiguous and the evaluation how to maximize the chances to win a mandate varies within the selectorate. For instance, in cases where there is both a minor chance to win the district and a minor chance to get a promising spot on the party list, the strategy itself is part of the intra-party competition and selection process.

Second, the role of the local party elites differs systematically dependent on the inclusiveness of the selectorate: Delegates—which usually have party and/or local offices—are likely to be aware of the loyalty-electability trade-off and are willing to act strategically in order to increase the chances to win a mandate. In contrast, the rank-and-file party members are usually taking up an organizational perspective and thus prioritize party loyalty over electability—independently of the intra- and inter-party competitive context. Therefore, the party elites argued in the interviews that they “need” to take up a more active role in the selection process in order to convince the ordinary members of a strategic adaption of the selection criteria and thus to enforce the decision. This points to a trade-off between open and democratic selection processes and the adaption of strategies.

Interestingly, the analysis does not reveal significant differences in the influencing factors on the strategies between the political parties. Of course, the share of the specific strategies varies due to the different party strengths and thus the different competitive context: Since the CDU and the CSU have the highest share of safe districts, strategy 1 was prevalent for these parties. In contrast, the Left party hardly has safe districts why type 1 was hardly applicable. However, if one controls for these factors, the parties’ selectorates react in the same manner to the loyalty-electability trade-off during candidate selection by strategically adapting the selection criteria.

CONCLUSION

The main aim of this article has been to explain the strategies of the parties’ selectorates in the process of candidate selection. At the outset, the article argues that research on intra-party candidate selection has hardly taken into account these strategies as an important element of the demand side of the recruitment processes. Since the selectorate is regularly forced to balance the competing goals of loyalty and electability in the

process of candidate selection, the selectorate—dependent on the opportunity structure—nominates candidates for strategic considerations, and therefore strategically adjust the selection criteria and outcome of selection criteria. As such, the strategies of the parties’ selectorate are an important explanatory link between the goals and context factors of candidate selection on the one side and the adopted selection criteria and the outcome of candidate selection on the other side.

To increase our knowledge on these strategies, the article has analyzed the local selectorates’ strategies in district selections in Germany’s mixed-member electoral system. The analysis reveals that the selectorates strive to achieve both goals: to get an MP of the district who is loyal to the local party. If the seat is safe, the selectorates adopt the traditional inward oriented selection criteria. However, if the seat is not safe, they prioritize the electoral goal over the local party organizational goal and strategically adapt the selection criteria to the opportunity structure. By considering both local inter-party competition and regional intra-party competition, they either take up a local voters’ perspective or anticipate the selection criteria of the state party lists. The strategies are also influenced by the intra-party selection methods: Since candidate selection is highly decentralized, the local party selectorates clearly prioritize territorial local representation over all other types of representation. The default setting of the local selectorate is to look for a candidate who is loyal to the local party and not necessarily to the national and/or regional party. This local focus is, however, strategically adapted by a regional perspective if the selectorate anticipates selection criteria for the state party list. Thus, the study reveals that due to the mixed-member electoral system and the prevalence of dual candidacies, intra-party competition in German districts is a two-level game. Overall, the findings of the study contribute to the existing literature in three ways: First, it contributes to the literature on contamination effects in mixed-member electoral systems (Ferrara and Erik, 2005; Crisp, 2007; Papp, 2019). The study clearly confirms that the two tiers of the election systems and the two formally independent forms of nominations are *de facto* not independent from each other in the German mixed member electoral system. By revealing the ‘anticipation strategy’ at the district level it furthermore reveals a so far overlooked form of contamination. In addition, the inductively derived strategies of the local selectorates provide new insights into the logics of these contamination effects.

Second, the results also add knowledge to the literature on the effect of decentralized candidate selection methods on descriptive representation. In line with previous research, the analysis shows that in safe districts the party selectorates clearly prioritize territorial local representation over social representation (Hazan and Rahat, 2010; Childs and Cowley, 2011). This results for instance in low shares of women being nominated and elected in these safe districts (see Reiser, 2014b; Davidson-Schmich, 2016; Bieber, 2021). However, the analysis has also revealed that in nomination processes in which there are no or very little chances for the party to win the district, the local party

branches anticipate during the nomination process at the district level strategically the logic of ticket-balancing and the selection criteria for the state party list (Reiser, 2014a). Thus, in these cases, gender quota and other informal rules for social representation outplay local territorial representation.

Third, the findings contribute to the existing literature on the personalization of politics (Pedersen and Rahat, 2021). The analysis has shed light on the dynamics of strategic considerations of the party selectorates with regard to the “loyalty-electability trade-off” (Ascencio and Kerevel, 2020) during candidate selection. The results of this study suggest that party loyalty – although it is the highest preference for the local selectorates – is getting less relevant as selection criteria for candidate selection due to new competitors, increased volatility and the subsequent decrease of safe districts. Instead, as part of the vote-seeking strategy of the local parties’ selectorates in competitive districts, it is very likely that the candidates and their vote-earning characteristics are getting increasingly more important during candidate selection. Further research might focus on the impact of the specific strategies of the selectorates and the outcome of candidate selection as an important explanatory factor for the campaign behavior of the candidates, their legislative behavior (Papp and Zorigt, 2016; Zittel and Nyhuis, 2021) and the impact on political parties.

REFERENCES

- Adams, J., and Merrill, S. (2008). Candidate and Party Strategies in Two-Stage Elections Beginning with a Primary. *Am. J. Pol. Sci.* 52 (2), 344–359. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5907.2008.00316.x
- Andeweg, R. B., and Thomassen, J. (2011). Pathways to Party Unity: Sanctions, Loyalty, Homogeneity and Division of Labour in the Dutch Parliament. *Party Polit.* 17 (5), 655–672. doi:10.1177/1354068810377188
- Ascencio, S. J., and Kerevel, Y. P. (2020). Party Strategy, Candidate Selection, and Legislative Behavior in Mexico. *Legislative Stud. Q.* 46, 713–743. doi:10.1111/lsq.12300
- Ashe, J., Campbell, R., Childs, S., and Evans, E. (2010). ‘Stand by Your Man’: Women’s Political Recruitment at the 2010 UK General Election. *Br. Polit.* 5 (4), 455–480. doi:10.1057/bp.2010.17
- Baumann, M., Debus, M., and Klingelhöfer, T. (2017). Keeping One’s Seat: The Competitiveness of MP Renomination in Mixed-Member Electoral Systems. *J. Polit.* 79 (3), 979–994. doi:10.1086/690945
- Behnke, Joachim., Baur, Nina., and Behnke, Nathalie. (2006). *Empirische Methoden der Politikwissenschaft*. North Rhine-Westphalia: Paderborn.
- Best, Heinrich., and Cotta, Maurizio. (2000). “Elite Transformation and Modes of Representation since the Mid-nineteenth Century: Some Theoretical Considerations,” in *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe 1848–2000: Legislative Recruitment and Careers in Eleven European Countries*. Editors Heinrich Best and Maurizio Cotta (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Berz, J., and Jankowski, M. (2022). Local preferences in candidate selection. Evidence from a conjoint experiment among party leaders in Germany. *Party Pol.* Advance Online Publication. doi:10.1177/13540688211041770
- Bieber, I. (2021). Noch immer nicht angekommen? – Strukturelle Geschlechterungleichheit im Deutschen Bundestag. *Polit. Vierteljahresschrift*. doi:10.1007/s11615-021-00360-9
- Bille, L. (2001). Democratizing a Democratic Procedure: Myth or Reality? *Party Polit.* 7 (3), 363–380. doi:10.1177/1354068801007003006
- Borchert, J., and Reiser, M. (2010). *Friends as Foes: The Two-Level Game of Intra-Party Competition in Germany*. Mimeo: University of Frankfurt.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusion of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpos.2021.780235/full#supplementary-material>

- Bräuninger, Thomas., Debus, Marc., Müller, Jochen., and Stecker, Christian. (2020). *Parteienwettbewerb in Den Deutschen Bundesländern*. Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Carey, J. M., and Shugart, M. S. (1995). Incentives to Cultivate a Personal Vote: A Rank Ordering of Electoral Formulas. *Elect. Stud.* 14 (4), 417–439. doi:10.1016/0261-3794(94)00035-2
- Carty, R. K. (1980). Politicians and Electoral Laws: An Anthropology of Party Competition in Ireland. *Polit. Stud.* 28 (4), 550–566. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.1980.tb01258.x
- Ceyhan, S. (2018). Who Runs at the Top of Party Lists? Determinants of Parties’ List Ranking in the 2013 German Bundestag Election. *German Polit.* 27 (1), 66–88. doi:10.1080/09644008.2017.1320391
- Childs, S., and Cowley, P. (2011). The Politics of Local Presence: Is there a Case for Descriptive Representation? *Pol. Stud.* 59 (1), 1–19. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.2010.00846.x
- Cordero, G., and Collier, X. (2015). Cohesion and Candidate Selection in Parliamentary Groups. *Parliamentary Aff.* 68 (3), 592–615. doi:10.1093/pa/gsu008
- Cordes, M., and Hellmann, D. (2020). Wer ist der ideale Kandidat? Auswahlkriterien bei der Kandidatenaufstellung zum Deutschen Bundestag. *ZParl* 51 (1), 68–83. doi:10.5771/0340-1758-2020-1-68
- Crisp, B. F. (2007). Incentives in Mixed-Member Electoral Systems. *Comp. Polit. Stud.* 40 (12), 1460–1485. doi:10.1177/0010414007301703
- Crisp, B. F., Olivella, S., Malecki, M., and Sher, M. (2013). Vote-earning Strategies in Flexible List Systems: Seats at the price of unity. *Elect. Stud.* 32 (4), 658–669. doi:10.1016/j.electstud.2013.02.007
- Cross, W. (2008). Democratic Norms and Party Candidate Selection. *Party Polit.* 14, 596–619. doi:10.1177/1354068808093392
- Cross, W. P., Katz, R. S., and Pruyssers, S. (2018). *The Personalization of Democratic Politics and the Challenge for Political Parties*. Rowmann & Littlefield: ECPR Press.
- Dalton, Russel. J. (2018). *Political Realignment: Economics, Culture and Electoral Change*. Oxford: OxfordUniversity.
- Davidson-Schmich, Louise. (2016). *Gender Quotas and Democratic Participation: Recruiting Candidates for Elective Offices in Germany*. Ann Arbor, MI: New Comparative Politics.

- Detterbeck, K. (2016). Candidate Selection in Germany. *Am. Behav. Scientist* 60 (7), 837–852. doi:10.1177/0002764216632822
- Detterbeck, Klaus. (2012). *Multi-level Party Politics in Western Europe*. Basingstoke: Springer.
- Dodeigne, J., and Meulewaele, C. (2014). *Popular Candidates and/or Party Soldiers? Vote-Seeking and Policy-Seeking Parties' Strategies in Party Candidate Selection at the 2014 Belgian Regional and Federal Elections*. Mimeo.
- Downs, Anthony. (1957). *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Ferrara, Ederico., and Erik, S. (2005). "Herron and Misa Nishikawa," in *Mixed Electoral Systems. Contamination and its Consequences* (Basingstoke: Springer).
- Gallagher, Michael. (1988). "Conclusion," in *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective*. Editors Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh (Bristol: The Secret Garden of Politics), 236–283.
- Gallagher, Michael., and Marsh, Michael. (1998). *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective*. Bristol: The Secret Garden of Politics, 236–283.
- Hazan, Reuven. Y., and Rahat, Gideon. (2010). *Democracy within Parties: Candidate Selection Methods and Their Political Consequences*. Oxford.
- Hazan, R. Y., and Voerman, G. (2006). Electoral Systems and Candidate Selection. *Acta Polit.* 41 (2), 146–162. doi:10.1057/palgrave.ap.5500153
- Hennl, A. (2014). Intra-party Dynamics in Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: How Strategies of Candidate Selection Impact Parliamentary Behaviour. *J. Theor. Polit.* 26 (1), 93–116. doi:10.1177/0951629813489547
- Herzog, Dietrich. (1975). *Politische Karrieren: Selektion und Professionalisierung politischer Führungsgruppen*. Opladen: Springer.
- Höhne, Benjamin. (2017). Wie stellen Parteien ihre Parlamentsbewerber auf? *Parteien, Parteiensysteme und politische Orientierungen*. Editor Koschmieder Carsten (Wiesbaden), 227–253.
- Kaack, Heino. (1969). *Wahlkreisgeographie und Kandidatenauslese. Regionale Stimmenverteilung. Chancen der Kandidaten und Ausleseverfahren*. Bonn: dargestellt am Beispiel der Bundestagswahl 1965.
- Key, Vladimir. Orlando. (1956). *American State Politics: An Introduction*. New York: Knopf.
- Klingemann, Hans-Dieter., and Wessels, Bernhard. (2001). "The Political Consequences of Germany's Mixed-Member System: Personalization at the Grass Roots," in *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds*. Editors Matthew. Shugart and Martin. P. Wattenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 279–297.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter., Grande, Edgar., Lachat, Romain., Martin, Dolezal., Bornschier, Simon., and Frey, Timotheos. (2008). *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Manow, Philip. (2015). *Mixed Rules, Mixed Strategies – Parties and Candidates in Germany's Electoral System*. Essex: ECPR Press.
- Norris, Pippa. (1997). "Introduction: Theories of Recruitment," in *Passages to Power. Legislative Recruitment in Advanced Democracies*. Editor Pippa Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1–14.
- Norris, Pippa., and Lovenduski, Joni. (1995). *Political Recruitment. Gender, Race and Class in the British Parliament*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Norris, P., and Lovenduski, J. (1993). 'If Only More Candidates Came Forward': Supply-Side Explanations of Candidate Selection in Britain. *Br. J. Polit. Sci.* 23, 373–408. doi:10.1017/s0007123400006657
- Ohmura, T., Bailer, S., Meißner, P., and Selb, P. (2018). Party Animals, Career Changers and Other Pathways into Parliament. *West Eur. Polit.* 41 (1), 169–195. doi:10.1080/01402382.2017.1323485
- Papp, Z. (2019). Same Species, Different Breed: The Conditional Effect of Legislator Activities in Parliament on Re-selection in a Mixed-Member Electoral System. *Parliamentary Aff.* 72, 59–75. doi:10.1093/pa/gsx049
- Papp, Z., and Zorigt, B. (2016). Party-Directed Personalisation: The Role of Candidate Selection in Campaign Personalisation in Hungary. *East European Pol.* 32 (4), 466–486. doi:10.1080/21599165.2016.1215303
- Pedersen, H. H., and Rahat, G. (2021). Introduction: Political Personalization and Personalized Politics Within and Beyond the Behavioural Arena. *Party Pol.* 27 (2), 211–221. doi:10.1177/1354068819855712
- Poguntke, T. (2015). "The German Party System After the 2013 Election: An Island Of Stability in a European Sea of Change?", in *Anti-Party Parties in Germany And Italy. Protest Movements and Parliamentary Democracy*. Editors A. de Petris and T. Poguntke. Rome: LUISS University Press, 235–253.
- Preece, J. R. (2014). How the Party Can Win in Personal Vote Systems: The "Selector Connection" and Legislative Voting in Lithuania. *Legislative Stud. Q.* 39, 147–167. doi:10.1111/lsq.12040
- Put, G.-J., Muyters, G., and Maddens, B. (2021). The Effect of Candidate Electoral Experience on Ballot Placement in List Proportional Representation Systems. *West Eur. Polit.* 44 (4), 969–990. doi:10.1080/01402382.2020.1768664
- Reiser, M. (2013). "Ausmaß und Formen des innerparteilichen Wettbewerbs auf der Wahlkreisebene: Nominierung der Direktkandidaten für die Bundestagswahl 2009", in *Faas, Thorsten/Arzheimer, Kai/Roßteutscher, Sigrid/Wefels, Bernhard (Hrsg.): Koalitionen, Kandidaten, Kommunikation. Analysen zur Bundestagswahl 2009*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 129–148.
- Reiser, M. (2014a). "The Universe of Group Representation in Germany: Analyzing Formal and Informal Party Rules and Quotas in the Process of Candidate Selection", in *Int. Pol. Sci. Rev.* 35 (1), 56–66. doi:10.1177/0192512113507732
- Reiser, M. (2014b). *Innerparteilicher Wettbewerb bei der Kandidatenaufstellung: Ausmaß – Organisation – Selektionskriterien*. University of Frankfurt: Mimeo.
- Reiser, M. (2018). "Contagion Effects by the AfD? Candidate Selection in Germany", in *Coller, Xavier/Codero, Guillermo/Jaime-Castillo, Antonio M. (Hrsg.): The Selection of Politicians in Times of Crisis*. New York, London: Routledge, 81–97.
- Schindler, Danny. (2020). More Free-Floating, Less Outward-Looking. How More Inclusive Candidate Selection Procedures (Could) Matter. *Party Polit.*
- Schlesinger, Joseph. A. (1966). *Ambition and Politics: Political Careers in the United States*. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Schüttemeyer, Suzanne. S., and Sturm, Roland. (2005). Der Kandidat – das (fast) unbekannte Wesen: Befunde und Überlegungen zur Aufstellung der Bewerber zum Deutschen Bundestag. *Z. für Parlamentsfragen* 36, 539–553. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24236416>.
- Selb, Peter., and Lutz, Georg. (2014). Lone Fighters: Intraparty Competition, Interparty Competition, and Candidates' Vote Seeking Efforts in Open-Ballot PR Elections. *Elect. Stud.* 39, 329–337. doi:10.1016/j.electstud.2014.04.009
- Shomer, Y. (2017). The Conditional Effect of Electoral Systems and Intraparty Candidate Selection Processes on Parties' Behavior. *Legislative Stud. Q.* 42, 63–96. doi:10.1111/lsq.12141
- Shugart, Matthew. S., and Wattenberg, Martin. P. (2004). *Mixed Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?* Oxford: Oxford University.
- Shugart, M. S., Valdini, M. E., and Suominen, K. (2005). Looking for Locals: Voter Information Demands and Personal Vote-Earning Attributes of Legislators under Proportional Representation. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 49 (2), 437–449. doi:10.1111/j.0092-5853.2005.00133.x
- Siavelis, P. M., and Morgenstern, S. (2008). Candidate Recruitment and Selection in Latin America: A Framework for Analysis. *Lat. Am. Polit. Soc.* 50 (4), 27–58. doi:10.1111/j.1548-2456.2008.00029.x
- Siavelis, P. (2002). The Hidden Logic of Candidate Selection for Chilean Parliamentary Elections. *Comp. Polit.* 34, 419–438. doi:10.2307/4146946
- Spies, D. C., and Kaiser, A. (2014). Does the Mode of Candidate Selection Affect the Representativeness of Parties? *Party Polit.* 20 (4), 576–590. doi:10.1177/1354068811436066
- Stratmann, T., and Baur, M. (2002). Plurality Rule, Proportional Representation, and the German Bundestag: How Incentives to Pork-Barrel Differ across Electoral Systems. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 46, 506–514. doi:10.2307/3088395
- Tavits, M. (2009). The Making of Mavericks. *Comp. Polit. Stud.* 42 (6), 793–815. doi:10.1177/0010414008329900
- Thomas, M., and Bodet, M. (2012). Sacrificial Lambs, Women Candidates, and District Competitiveness in Canada. *Elect. Stud.* 32, 153–166. doi:10.1016/j.electstud.2012.12.0010
- Weßels, B. (1997). "Germany," in *Passages to Power: Legislative Recruitment in Advanced Democracies*. Editor P. Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge University), 76–97.

- Weßels, Bernhard. (2016). "Wahlkreiskandidaten und politischer Wettbewerb," in *Wahlen und Wähler: Analysen aus Anlass der Bundestagswahl 2013*. Editors Harald Schoen and Bernhard Weßels. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 181–204.
- Xavier Collier, Guillermo Codero, M Antonio, and J Castillo (2018) (Editors) *The Selection of Politicians in Times of Crisis* (London,UK: Routledge).
- Zeuner, Bodo. (1970). *Kandidatenaufstellung zur Bundestagswahl 1965*. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Zittel, T., and Gschwend, T. (2008). Individualised Constituency Campaigns in Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: Candidates in the 2005 German Elections. *West Eur. Polit.* 31 (5), 978–1003. doi:10.1080/01402380802234656
- Zittel, T., and Nyhuis, D. (2021): The Legislative Effects of Campaign Personalization. An Analysis on the Legislative Behavior of Successful German Constituency Candidates. *Comp. Political Stud.* 54 (2), 312–338. doi:10.1177/0010414020938103

Conflict of Interest: The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors, and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

Copyright © 2022 Reiser. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.



Digitalization in Candidate Selection. Support and Resistance Within Established Political Parties in Germany

Claire Bloquet^{1†}, Isabelle Borucki^{2†} and Benjamin Höhne^{1,3*†}

¹ Institute for Parliamentary Research (Institut für Parlamentarismusforschung), Berlin, Germany, ² NRW School of Governance, University Duisburg-Essen and University of Siegen, Siegen, Germany, ³ Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

OPEN ACCESS

Edited by:

Guillermo Cordero,
Autonomous University of
Madrid, Spain

Reviewed by:

Raul Gomez,
University of Liverpool,
United Kingdom
Marion Reiser,
Friedrich Schiller University
Jena, Germany

*Correspondence:

Benjamin Höhne
hoehne@iparl.de

[†]These authors have contributed
equally to this work and share first
authorship

Specialty section:

This article was submitted to
Elections and Representation,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Political Science

Received: 15 November 2021

Accepted: 03 March 2022

Published: 13 April 2022

Citation:

Bloquet C, Borucki I and Höhne B
(2022) Digitalization in Candidate
Selection. Support and Resistance
Within Established Political Parties in
Germany. *Front. Polit. Sci.* 4:815513.
doi: 10.3389/fpos.2022.815513

The digitalization of human life has impacted many aspects of politics in the last two decades. Intra-party decision-making is one of them. While new political parties appear to be rather native digital organizations, established parties are increasingly beginning to incorporate online tools into their internal processes. However, not much is known about how intra-party selectorates evaluate the digitalization of a crucial decision-making process. This study asks whether party members who participate in candidate selection support online consultations—or not. Using an original large-N dataset on the preferences of party members attending candidate selection assemblies for the German Bundestag, we determine variables that increase or decrease the likelihood to support the introduction of online consultations as part of intra-party democracy. Our results show that attitudes toward digitalization do not depend on a generational or a partisan factor, as might have been expected. Instead, we highlight that digitalization support is first and foremost related to, on the one hand, the seniority in the party, and, on the other, on one's preferences toward inclusion. We relate these findings to the distribution of powers and incentives within the party and discuss both the implications of these results and what they might mean for established parties trying to reform.

Keywords: e-democracy, intra-party democracy, party membership, candidate selection, information and communication technology (ICT), democratization, inclusion

INTRODUCTION

Candidate selection nests at the core of intra-party democracy (IPD). The selection of the candidates for the next election is a central moment in any political party's life, and the possibility to take part in this decision is an important exclusive feature of party membership (Scarrow, 2014, p. 181–185; Hazan and Rahat, 2010). In the age of digitalization (Mergel et al., 2019), and of an arguable crisis of the political parties (Coller et al., 2018), the introduction of online consultations, be it in addition or replacement of more traditional candidate selection processes, might be a way for established parties to modernize their functioning and adapt to the changing expectations of voters regarding their inner democracy (Barberà et al., 2021b). This paper interrogates the amount of

support for the introduction of such tools amongst the electorate of German parties, and wonders under which circumstances they would be willing to adopt such consultations.

Indeed, existing studies suggest that political parties and their MPs somewhat adapted to the general trend of digitalization (Zittel, 2015; Liroy et al., 2019; Blasio and Viviani, 2020; Dommett et al., 2020; Gerbaudo, 2021), which has sometimes spurred changes in the party organization, interactions between different party levels and actors as well as the distribution of power. Regarding candidate selection, the question of digitalization as a potentially non-hierarchic process of selection has an impact on classical party features such as inclusion/exclusion or centralization/decentralization of the party decision-making (Barnea and Rahat, 2007; Kenig, 2009; Kernell, 2015; André et al., 2017; Cordero and Collier, 2018).

However, the question of digital candidate selection in the light of intra-party democracy in general (Cross and Katz, 2013; see also Bille, 2001; Höhne, 2013; Kernell, 2015; Theocharis and de Moor, 2021) is still new and needs more attention in academic research. When it is studied, it usually investigates how parties deal with these tools once they are in place (e.g., Dommett and Rye, 2018), and rarely to understand the sociological context in which this kind of organizational questions might arise in the first place, especially in long-established parties. Therefore, this study asks which factors explain support or rejection of digitalization of candidate selection processes in long-established German political parties. Our research takes this matter as a case study with a party comparative approach to investigate the broader topics of intra-party democracy, party organization, and how the institutionalization of new processes may occur.

We answer our interrogation by drawing on an original and representative dataset about German candidate selection in the run-up for the 2017 Bundestag election (#BuKa2017). Germany is an exciting case since its candidate selection processes are well-known for their long-standing stability and lack of innovation (Zeuner, 1970; Roberts, 1988; Schüttemeyer, 2002; Schüttemeyer and Sturm, 2005; Höhne, 2017; Schüttemeyer and Pyschny, 2020). We use a hierarchical binomial logistic regression to test our hypotheses and illuminate the rationale for supporting or opposing digitalization in the established German parties in the 2017 Bundestag. In the first section, we will start by exploring the literature on digital intra-party democracy, to develop our main hypotheses. We will then present both the specific case of German candidate selection processes, the data we analyzed, and the details of the methods that were used, before moving on to the results of our multivariate analysis. We then measure the factors that promote or inhibit support for the introduction of online consultations and show that this preference depends both on holding objective positions of power, and on personal preferences toward party inclusion. We conclude by discussing the most critical aspects of our results and their limitations, highlighting the potential for further studies and our contribution to the field of candidate selection and IPD research in general.

INCLUSION, MODERNITY AND PARTY INCENTIVES: THE TRICKY QUESTION OF DIGITALIZING INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY

Digitalization has sometimes been framed as a potential way out of a supposed crisis, affecting representative democracies in general and political parties in particular, as their number of members declined and their legitimacy was increasingly questioned (Margolis and Resnick, 2000, p. 2; Margolis et al., 2003; Dalton, 2004; Armingeon and Guthman, 2014; Kölln, 2014). In this context, it was presented as a potentially more deliberative and inclusive technology (Berg and Hofmann, 2021), from a perspective that assumes the solution would be found through more direct democracy, as opposed to more representative democracy. Whether or not digitalization can indeed lead to more satisfactory intra-party democracy, whether this would then lead to halt parties' decline, and what kind of obstacles parties might encounter in including more online tools in their decision-making arsenal, are reasonably new questions. They have, however, been attracting attention from the academic literature in recent years, specifically through a multiplication of case-studies or small-scale comparisons, which highlighted the fact that not all parties and party systems were equally eager nor equipped to handle digitalization (Thuermer et al., 2016; Bennett et al., 2017; Lisi, 2019) and showed how dependent on party context the general results were. Most studies on parties digitalization were also analyzing new and populist parties (Mikola, 2017; Lanzzone and Rombi, 2018; Caiani et al., 2021), which have been arguably keener in embracing this trend than established parties and have tended to equate this push toward more direct and inclusive democracy as the only path toward more democracy in general. The conclusion of this research is somewhat ambiguous. Some evidence was indeed found of digitalization rekindling interest for political parties. Digitalization has for example been shown to lead to more involvement of party members and supporters, with greater member satisfaction (Liroy et al., 2019; Deseriis, 2020), some authors are going as far as to say it might hold the keys to "party renewal" (Chadwick and Stromer-Galley, 2016), or that it answers to "the need to radically update the organizational forms of politics and adapt them to the digital era" (Gerbaudo, 2019, p. 190). However, not all the evidence supports this positive evaluation (Kernell, 2015; Trittin-Ulbrich et al., 2021), as critics argue that the hyper-centralization of party processes in some countries did not disappear with digitalization (Blasio and Viviani, 2020; Cepernich and Fubini, 2020), or that very low participation rates will lead to parties' attempts at deepening democratization to feel like "empty vessels" (Vittori, 2020).

The assessment of the costs and benefits for parties to include more online tools in their functioning is of course an important question, but one that sometimes tends to overshadow another question: whether parties are indeed likely to introduce such tools. Political parties are not only rational organizations, trying to maximize their voter share to reach power: they are also self-referential human creations, social circles based on interpersonal relations and, at best, a shared ideology. All these features

rely on the involvement of their members—and therefore on members' satisfaction—to reach organizational goals (Harmel and Janda, 1994; Young and Cross, 2002; Neumann, 2013; Spier, 2019). Reforming intra-party democracy has also been proven to have ambiguous effects, with re-legitimization of the “improved” party structure not necessarily leading to better outcomes, be it in terms of legitimacy or membership counts (Ignazi, 2018). In this context, regarding the likelihood of such tools being implemented, it might matter more what the more involved members of the party think about digitalization than what digitalization can indeed be expected to achieve for them. That is the question we focus on here.

In recent years, the tendency has rather been for parties to offer more incentives to their members (Faucher, 2015; Gomez and Ramiro, 2019; Achury et al., 2020). Amongst them, the ability to select the candidates for the upcoming election might be one of the party functions members tend to consider with high interest, as it has been repeatedly found to be part of the most important objects of participation (Scarrow, 2014; Spier and Klein, 2015; Gomez et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the opinions of party members on the digitalization of candidate selection processes—and therefore how likely they are to support structural changes in this direction—have yet to be properly understood (Fitzpatrick, 2021). In a different context in a 2017 paper, Caroline Close, Camille Kelbel and Emilie van Haute assessed the support of “alternative candidate selection procedures” amongst voters in general. They found that their preferences were mixed, and depended on several variables, one of them being political involvement and activity, therefore opening the question of specific preferences of party members, that could very well differ from the general population (see also Shomer et al., 2016).

Our research, therefore, attempts to contribute to the question of the willingness of members of established parties to engage with digitalization, to generate deeper knowledge about the party members' views of intra-party democracy in general. Theoretically, we do so by relying on a set of literature-based hypotheses.

HYPOTHESES

The question of member involvement in political parties has been described by Panebianco (1988) as a tricky balance to strike for parties. According to him, the institutionalization and survival of political parties rely indeed on finding the most effective system of incentives, which must both be inclusive enough of grassroots members that outsiders will want to join the party, and selective enough that they reward the greater involvement of functionaries and party leadership (see also Randall and Svåsand, 2002). The introduction of online consultations in candidate selection processes—because it would be expected to have consequences on the final decision-making—is a change that would modify the ways party incentives are currently distributed in German established parties, and, therefore, raises questions about which type of members would be most interested in this potential new balance of incentives.

The first set of hypotheses about this matter relates to the relative novelty of the possibility for parties to offer online

consultations. In this context, we could assume that this kind of incentives would be more interesting for party members whose social characteristics predispose them more toward the use of the internet. In this regard, previous research has shown that individual factors such as age, gender and education are correlated with how people engage and participate through digital tools, leading to several “digital divides” (Feezell et al., 2016; Hargittai and Jennrich, 2016; Schradie, 2018). A first hint in favor of this hypothesis could be found when comparing the composition of established parties to the composition of new populist parties and party-movements. If the latter tend to rely a lot more on digital tools, they also tend to have younger members and more female members than traditional parties (Lanzone and Rombi, 2018; Lavezzolo and Ramiro, 2018; Gomez and Ramiro, 2019), which hints at age and gender—and more generally social characteristics—being a possible factor. This hypothesis is also supported by the results of Close, Kelbel and van Haute for the general population of voters (Close et al., 2017), and is coherent with a more general discourse about the aspirations to more inclusive or “renewed” forms of democracy, that younger, more educated voters might share. Therefore, our first set of hypotheses can be broken down as such:

H1a: Younger party members are more likely to support online consultations in candidate selection than older party members.

H1b: Higher educated party members are more likely to support online consultations than party members with lower levels of education.

H1c: Female party members are more likely to support online consultations than male party members.

Candidate selection processes that are held in-person can also be assumed to favor more involved party members, or at least those who have enough time to go to candidate selection events. In this context, online consultations might result in the inclusion of usually more excluded party members, and therefore strip the more involved ones of an incentive that typically rewards their strong participation. As a result, more involved party members might be more reluctant to the introduction of such procedures. Literature also tends to show that familiarity and attachment with a specific organizational culture mostly occur among members who have been active in the party for many years, and have developed a kind of attachment over that time to the party's procedures and organizational reality (Walter-Rogg, 2013; Gauja, 2017; Schindler and Höhne, 2020). Therefore, our second set of hypotheses includes the following:

H2a: Party members who entered the party more recently are more likely to support online consultations than members who have been involved for a longer time.

H2b: Party members who dedicate less of their time to the party are more likely to support online consultations than members who are more regularly active in the party.

Similar reasoning pushes us toward our third set of hypotheses. Indeed, the will to protect the intra-party status-quo to guarantee access to important selective incentives might also be shared by another group of party members: those who hold one or several elected positions. Because the current procedures have led to them being selected as candidates or party board members in

the past, and because they usually take part in the selection as it is, they might be more inclined to leave selection practices untouched. Mandate holders might also be concerned about their re-selection and re-election if the procedures were to change. This might be especially true for higher-ranked politicians, for whom political mandates constitute a professional activity from which they derive most, or all, of their income. They might also consider party members less informed about party affairs than they are, making the consultation of grassroots members more of a burden than a resource of interesting feedback (Spier and Klein, 2015, 99).

H3a: Grassroots party members are more likely to support online consultations than members who hold electoral mandates or party board positions.

H3b: The higher the mandate or board position party members hold, the more opposed to online consultations they are.

However, not all preferences regarding party organization must come from a self-serving mindset. They might also be related to what is considered by the respondent to be good in itself, either because of political ethics or of strategy. One of the main results from Close et al. (2017) about voters' preferences toward candidate selection procedures was a strong correlation with voters' conception of democracy. They noted that voters who distrusted representative democracy were more likely to support "alternative" candidate selection procedures, specifically those that involve tools of direct democracy. Regarding digitalization within parties, the process is generally considered jointly with calls for increased deliberation and participation (Gerl et al., 2018) and is often linked to higher levels of inclusion—mostly discussed in line with populism (Font et al., 2021). The topic of inclusion is also tied to the implementation of direct vs. representative intra-party democracy (García Lupato and Meloni, 2021). Party affiliation might also be considered, both because political-ideological opinions might play a role in the matter, and because party culture might also influence respondents. Because center-right parties are traditionally considered to be elite-born and less participation-oriented than leftist parties, this could be taken as an assumption that members of the Christian democratic parties CDU and CSU might be less interested in digitalization than members of more progressive parties. Beyond party affiliation, the perceived ideological discrepancy between one's party and their political preferences might also be a factor. Indeed, party members who feel further away from the line defended by their party might feel this way because they do not feel represented by the chosen candidates. Therefore, a change in the selection process might be an opportunity for them to see the party line shift toward one they would feel is a better choice. Therefore, our final set of hypotheses focuses on the attitudinal level and states as follows:

H4a: Party members who prefer processes based on the inclusion of members and direct democracy are more likely to support online consultations than members who prefer delegation-based processes.

H4b: Party members who are unsatisfied with the current candidate selection processes in their party are more likely to support online consultations than members who are satisfied with the current nomination system.

H4c: Members of left or progressive parties are more likely to support online consultations than members of the right and center-right ones.

H4d: Members who declared to have less ideological proximities with their party are more likely to support the introduction of online consultations than members who feel the party's line is completely coherent with their preferences.

EMPIRICAL DATA AND METHODS

Candidate Selection in Germany

Germany is an interesting case when analyzing candidate selection for several reasons, the first of which being its unique mix of different procedures (Detterbeck, 2016; Deiss-Helbig, 2017; Höhne, 2017; Schindler, 2021; Berz and Jankowski, 2022). Indeed, members of the German Bundestag can be elected by one of two ways: either directly, by winning a relative majority of votes in single-member districts, or by being placed high enough on a closed party list to win a seat in the proportional vote that occurs at the level of the 16 federal states. For candidates, this system typically leads to double candidacies—both as direct and list candidates—to boost the chance to get a seat in the national parliament. For party organizations though, this system means they must organize candidate selections at both district and state-level, with different priorities and amounts of participants for each level.

The way that parties organize this selection is legally regulated in Germany and can only occur in one of two ways: Candidates can be nominated either at a general meeting, which can be attended by all interested party members who wish to participate in the process, or at a delegate conference, which is attended only by party members who have been elected by their lower-level colleagues. At the state level, parties almost exclusively hold delegate conferences for candidate nomination. At the district level, however, the Bundestag parties have made different choices between these two options (Detterbeck, 2016; Höhne, 2017): the Social Democratic Party (SPD) holds mainly—but not exclusively—delegate conferences, while the Christian Democratic Union holds a mix of both, with half of the district candidates being chosen through general meetings. The picture is similar for the Left Party. The Liberals (FDP) and the Green Party routinely have general meetings whereas the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) summons only delegate conferences. This mix of selection processes presents a situation in which inclusion levels and logics of selection vary within the parties and between the parties for the same general election. These recruitment patterns make the German case particularly compelling for candidate selection analysis in general.

German political parties have been described to be stable organizations, enjoying large memberships, with reasonably weak elite-grassroots oppositions regarding party organization (Lübker, 2002). Nevertheless, as in several other representative democracies, established parties in Germany have been in turmoil

in recent years, as socioeconomic and sociocultural cleavages appear to be shifting while the traditional party affiliations of certain social groups are changing (Hutter et al., 2019; Borucki and Fitzpatrick, 2021; Casal Bértoa and Rama, 2021). The 2017 election saw the populist radical right party—the Alternative for Germany (AfD), founded in 2013 and relying on a style of IPD very much based on direct participation (Heinze and Weisskircher, 2021; Höhne, 2021; Kamenova, 2021)—entering the national Parliament for the first time. In more recent years, the Social Democrats, the Christian Democrats, the Left, and the Green Party all engaged in discussions about potential reforms of their internal decision processes. Even so, the SPD installed online topical forums as an additional arena for preparing internal decision-making (Michels and Borucki, 2021).

Data, Methods, and Measurements

The analyzed dataset called #BuKa2017 is based on a large-scale study conducted by the German research institute IParl in the run-up to the 2017 election. Respondents were interviewed using interviewer-assisted standardized paper questionnaires at the respective nomination assemblies. The survey was designed to measure party members' attitudes toward the candidate selection process in which they were attending, be it either general meetings or delegate conferences at the state or district level. The polling institute “Policy Matters” (Berlin) conducted the field research between the autumn of 2016 and summer 2017. The 137 conferences studied were randomly selected (Table 1). The response rates were reasonably high with an overall rate of 54.7 percent, resulting in 9,275 completed questionnaires (Table 2).

TABLE 1 | Number of investigated nomination conferences by party and election level.

Number of investigated conferences:	... at district level	... at state level	Total
... left party	15	8	23
... green party	15	8	23
... social democrats	15	8	23
... liberals	15	8	23
... CDU	12	7	22
... CSU	3	1	4
... AfD	22	8	22
Total	89	48	137

Parties have been arranged from left to right, according to respondents' opinions measured on a left-right-scale.

TABLE 2 | Number of respondents by type of conference and election level.

Number of respondents...	... at district level	... at state level	Total
... at a general meeting	2,187	1,120	3,307
... at a delegate conference	1,794	4,174	5,968
Total	3,981	5,294	9,275

For this analysis, respondents who did not reply to the question about online consultations were excluded. Since the questions we ask in this paper refer to the long-established parties in the German party system, we decided to exclude data on the populist radical right party AfD, which is not considered one of these parties (Berbair et al., 2015; Serrano et al., 2019; Zons and Halstenbach, 2019; Atzpodien, 2020). The resulting dataset includes 7,588 respondents, who represent very different types of party members, from newly arrived grassroots members to well-established professional politicians with a very long party involvement (Bukow and Jun, 2020; Schindler and Höhne, 2020). It should be noted, however, that the party members who participated in the candidate selection process—whether in general meetings or, even more so, in delegate conferences—are not representative of *all* party members. More committed and more interested party members usually tend to go to those events or are chosen to be delegates (Hazan and Rahat, 2010; Baras i Gómez et al., 2012; Close et al., 2017), which means the dataset is likely to overrepresent members who hold a mandate or a board position and underrepresent members who are more distanced or spend less time for in-person party activities. In our sample, 25% of the respondents reported to spend 8 h or less per month on party work, while only 3% of respondents stated to spend no time at all on party work (Table 3).

While the dataset is not generally representative of party membership, it is a more accurate portrait of the party members that parties can rely on every day to do the “donkey work” (Webb et al., 2017), both internally and externally. It is also an approximation of the actual selectorate, which is what we are interested in here. Because they participate in party events, these members are also the ones who are more likely to make their opinions known, and therefore contribute to shape the party's organization and its priorities. It is, therefore, a subset of party members whose preferences might be better reflected in parties' choices of candidate selection processes.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable ordinal scales party members' preferences regarding online consultation for candidate selection. The variable was covered in the questionnaire with the statement: “Online consultations of the party members should additionally be conducted when candidates are nominated,”¹ asking if online consultations should be added to the current processes being used. The word used in the original German questionnaire (“Befragungen”) is stronger than mere polling

TABLE 3 | Description of sample of respondents according to party activity per month (in hours).

Min.	1st Qu.	Median	Mean	3rd Qu.	Max.
0.00	8.00	15.00	24.34	30.00	420.00

¹All survey questions used to construct the statistical models in this paper are available, in the original German and translated into English, in the **Appendix (Table A)**.

for opinions, but not necessarily understood as binding either. Respondents could express their opinion by marking either (1) “fully agree,” (2) “tend to agree,” (3) “disagree somewhat,” or (4) “totally disagree.” The scale did not have a neutral point, but skipping the question was possible —7.2% of the respondents chose to do so. The variable was dichotomously recoded, to include either support or opposition to the introduction of digital consultations. This decision was taken because it makes the results less sensitive to socially determined response bias, such as moderation and extreme response biases (Hui and Triandis, 1985; Greenleaf, 1992), while keeping the focus on what matters here, which is an expression of either support or opposition. **Table 4** presents the responses to the dependent variable before the treatment of the data (**Table 4**).

We deliberately chose not to propose more specific online consultation tools in the question because we wanted to measure gut-feeling support for the general idea of digitalizing intra-party democracy, not the pros and cons of one specific tool or another. It was therefore important that the respondents would be free to give the question the meaning that would come most naturally to them, as it was the condition to reveal what their priorities and anticipations are on the matter, without any suggestions from the questionnaire. Our fourth set of hypotheses was therefore designed to exploit this lack of specificity by capturing the various ideas that respondents might have associated with this question—for example, asking about the inclusiveness of selection processes and their transparency, or their relationship to political leanings.

Independent Variables

The independent variables are all taken from the questionnaire, which was designed to measure descriptive information of the surveyed population—such as age, gender, level of education or numbers of years spent as a party member—as well as personal preferences regarding the modes of candidates’ selection, and indicators of political involvement.

The measure for political professionalization, relevant for H3, is the only variable that was significantly recoded from the original questionnaire. The respondents were asked to declare whether they had a position on the party board, and, if so, at which level (local, district, regional, state, national, or European level). They were also asked if they were an elected official, and if so at which level. Respondents also had the opportunity to declare whether they were a rank-and-file party member. Those three pieces of information were then combined into a dummy variable, that differentiates between grassroots members—who have declared themselves accordingly, and do not hold a position as a board member or elected official at any level—and two

categories of members with specific positions. We have chosen to distinguish between those whose highest position is at the local, district, or regional level and those who hold at least one position at the state level or higher. This choice was made because it seems to us that it reproduces the well-known dichotomy suggested by Max Weber, between politicians who live “for” politics as a kind of hobby or honorary engagement, and politicians who can live “from” politics, as a professional activity (Weber, 1919). Indeed, the wages for those positions can be argued to only become high enough to really live off from at the state level, even if exceptions might exist. We therefore end up with an indicator that discriminates between grassroots party members, non-professional politicians, with only local positions, and professional politicians. Finally, the perceived ideological distance from the party line was calculated by asking respondents to rate their position as well as that of their respective party on an eleven-point scale, ranging from left to right. The difference between the two scores was then used to distinguish between respondents who say they fully agree with their party (no difference), slightly diverge from their party (1 or 2 point difference), or significantly diverge from their party (3 point difference or more).

Models

To identify predictors for support or opposition to online consultations, we decided to rely on hierarchical binomial logistic regression. The results presented here add a new set of variables for each of the hypotheses explained above, from the more individual ones to the more macro-level arguments. The binomial analysis was calculated for the models (including null models, not displayed on the figure) with the `glm`-function from the `lme4` package in R.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The first result that needs to be highlighted here is that most respondents do not support the introduction of online consultations for candidate selection. As a whole, 56% of our respondents reported that they were disagreeing slightly or completely with this statement in the questionnaire, showing that, for most of the electorate at least, digitalization of party processes is not necessarily seen as progress, nor as a generally good thing.

This result is all the more remarkable because it stays true in almost all constellations. In all parties surveyed, there is at least 50% rejection of digitalization (**Figure 1**), with the CDU and CSU expressing a slightly higher degree of opposition.² If we reduce the dataset to grassroots members only and exclude any respondent with a mandate or a board position at any level, 52%

TABLE 4 | Distribution of opinions about online consultations (non-dichotomized).

Completely agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Completely disagree	NAs	Total
13.3%	28.2%	31.3%	21.0%	7.2%	100%
(N = 1,002)	(N = 2,306)	(N = 2,560)	(N = 1,720)	(N = 591)	(N = 8,179)

²Because the CSU only exists at the regional level, our nationwide dataset has a lot less respondents for the CSU than for any other party. For all statistical computation, they have therefore been considered jointly with their sister party, the CDU.

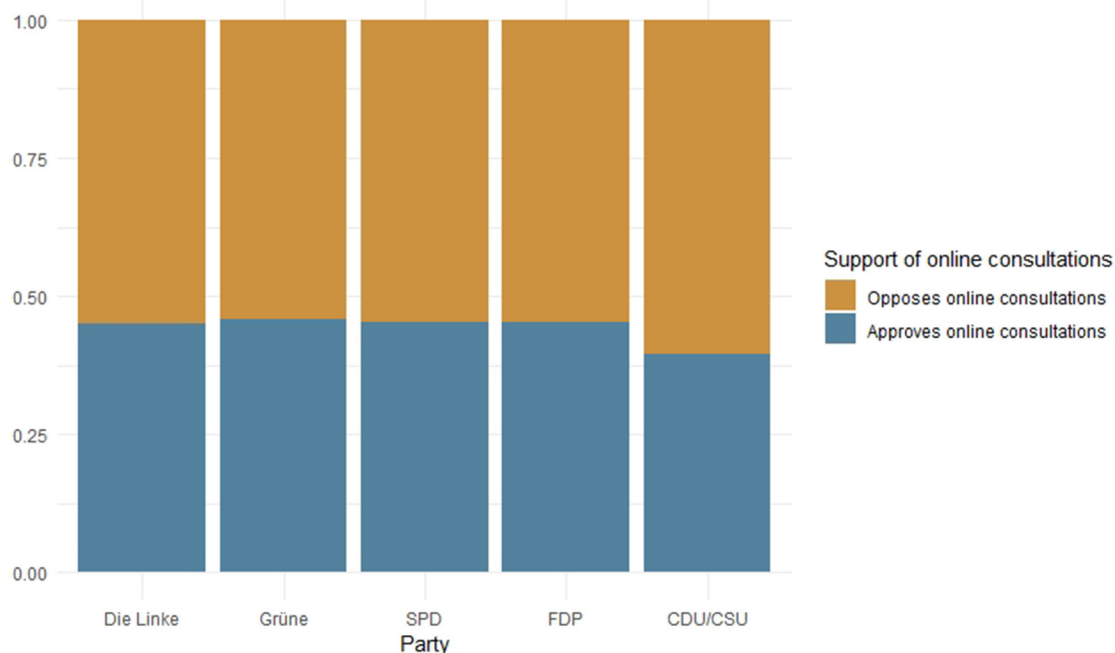


FIGURE 1 | Support of online consultations depending on party membership (in %).

oppose the introduction of online consultations in the candidate selection process.

Given this very stable, albeit short, majority against online consultations, any variables that would reduce support for this prospect would only lower the likelihood of a pre-existing minority opinion. Which of these variables causes lower support for digitalization nevertheless reveals a lot about the party structure, as the multivariate analysis will show.

Multivariate Analysis

The regression models that estimate the support for online consultations as a dependent variable are depicted in the following table (Table 5). As explained above, each model adds new variables that enable us to test one of the four sets of hypotheses that were stated at the beginning of the paper.

Our first hypothesis predicted that a specific type of party members—younger, more educated, and female—would be more likely to support online consultations. As the variables tested by the H1 model show, this is not really the case. Indeed, gender is never a significant variable, and the estimated effect associated with it is very small. If age appears to be significant in the first model, it is no longer so when controlling for other variables, and it is associated with a null or near-zero effect associated with the distributions of respondents' ages that are against or for online consultations (see Table 6)—if the supporters of online consultations seem like they might be slightly younger, it is only extremely marginal.

Whether 17 or 90 years old, party members almost seem to be just as likely to support digitalization.³ However, education does seem to have some influence, albeit a small one, but contrary to our original hypothesis: With each additional degree, the likelihood of supporting the introduction of online consultations decreases.

These results are in direct contradiction with our expectations. They also contradict the narratives often repeated and believed in the media about the necessity for parties to adapt to a new generation of voters with more demanding and direct ideas about democracy and politics by digitizing their IPD. It does not necessarily mean that said ideas are false (Lardeux and Tiberj, 2021), but it does tend to indicate that the party members of 2017, including the “younger” ones, are probably not that different from their elders, at least in terms of their preferences of intra-party democracy. They might, though, differ from younger voters that are not party members—or not part of the electorate, and that parties might be interested in attracting (Borucki et al., 2021). It might also be an indication that the use of the internet, which has been available for public use for over 20 years, is no longer the generational marker it used to be (Initiative D21 e.V., 2021), especially in populations that tend to be highly educated, as is the case for party members

³The age variable is continuous, and party members tend to skew older than the general population. It could therefore be hypothesized that the result is here a consequence of this under-representation of younger party members in the survey. To test for this, the age variable was also recoded as a categorical generation variable and put in the model: the results were similarly not significant.

TABLE 5 | Regression models—dependent variable: support to online consultations.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Odds-ratio	Confidence interval	Odds-ratio	Confidence interval	Odds-ratio	Confidence interval	Odds-ratio	Confidence interval
(Intercept)	1.50**	1.13–2.01	1.44*	1.05–1.98	1.45	0.97–2.17	1.93*	1.18–3.17
Age	0.99***	0.99–1.00	1.00	1.00–1.01	1.00	1.00–1.01	1.00	0.99–1.01
Gender [women]	1.08	0.98–1.20	1.03	0.92–1.15	0.98	0.86–1.13	0.94	0.81–1.09
Education (pseudo metric of degree levels)	0.94**	0.89–0.98	0.94*	0.89–0.99	0.93*	0.87–0.99	0.92*	0.85–0.98
Time spent in party (in years)			0.98***	0.98–0.99	0.99***	0.98–0.99	0.99***	0.98–0.99
Activity [11–30 h/month]			0.89	0.79–1.00	1.01	0.86–1.19	0.99	0.83–1.17
Activity [31+ h/month]			0.86*	0.75–0.99	0.97	0.80–1.16	0.92	0.75–1.12
Position [non-professional politician]					0.90	0.77–1.05	1.07	0.90–1.27
Position [professional politician]					0.44***	0.31–0.63	0.52**	0.35–0.77
Preferred mode [delegate conf.]							0.56***	0.48–0.64
Satisfaction with participation [satisfied]							0.71***	0.59–0.87
Party [Die Linke]							1.30*	1.00–1.68
Party [Grüne]							1.24*	1.02–1.50
Party [SPD]							1.32**	1.09–1.60
Party [FDP]							1.24	0.98–1.58
Distance to party line [moderate –1–2 points]							1.07	0.92–1.25
Distance to party line [important –3 points and more]							1.21	0.96–1.51
Number of obs.		6,597		6,109		3,393		3,583
AIC		9006.1		8282.2		5386.9		4715.5
BIC		9033.2		8329.2		5443.5		4820.6
Log. Lik.		–4499.028		–4134.075		–2684.448		–2340.746
McFadden pseudo-R ²		0.13		0.20		0.48		0.55

Values given are odds-ratio, with confidence intervals. Numbers above 1 show a higher likelihood to support online consultations compared to the base category, number between 0 and 1 show a lower likelihood to support online consultations compared to the base category. 1 shows the absence of effect.

All assumptions for performing binomial logistic regression were checked. Models display no issues of multicollinearity, nor skewed residuals. Linearity of the logit for continuous variables was established. Hosmer-Lemeshow tests of goodness of fit were not significant.

Significance: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

TABLE 6 | Distribution of the age of the respondents (in years) depending on their support or opposition to online consultations in candidate selection.

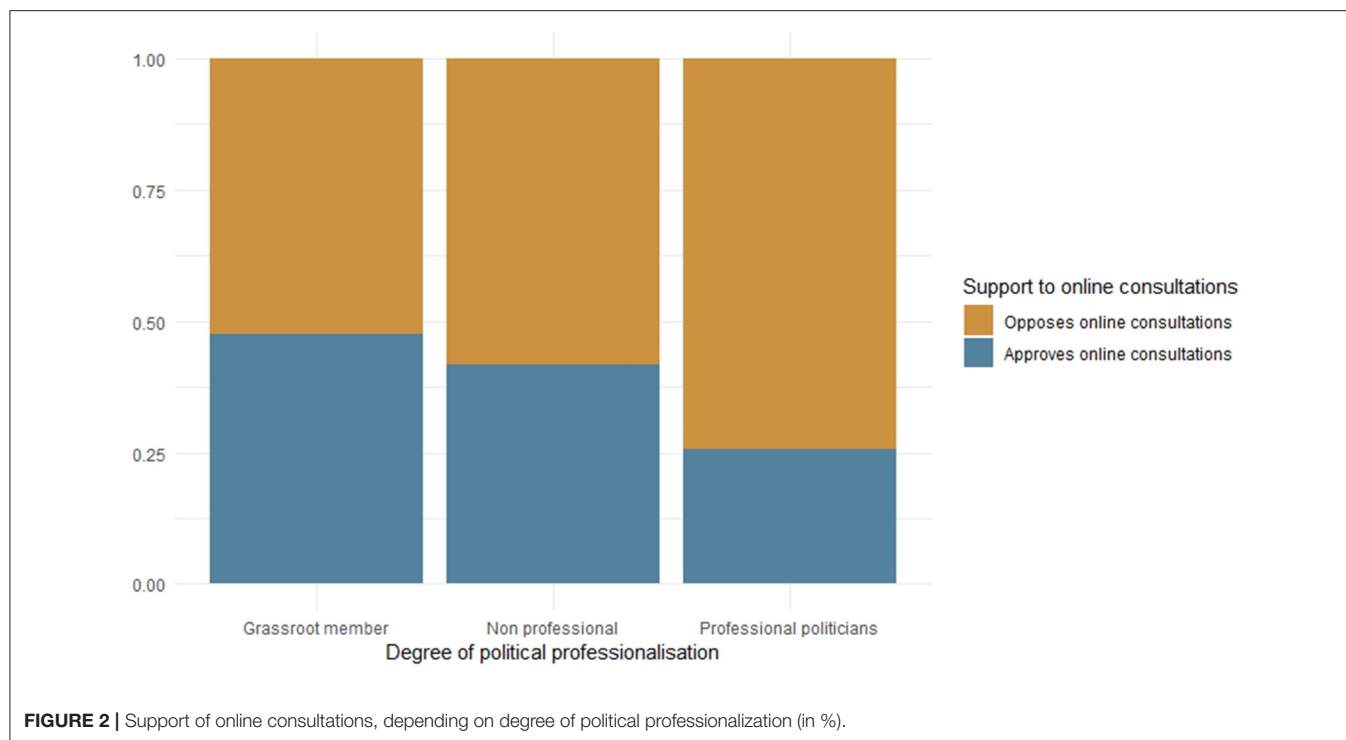
	Min.	1st Qu.	Median	Mean	3dr Qu.	Max.
Opposes online consultations	17	40	53	51,4	63	95
Supports online consultations	17	37	51	49,6	61	91

(Katz and Mair, 1992; Spier and Klein, 2015). The fact that the education variable is contrary to our expectations—a higher degree does not increase support for online consultations, on the contrary—could also support the idea that digitalization is no longer as exclusive as it used to be. It does confirm other findings on the topic that show non-usage of online tools in party members is very rarely linked to technical issues (Gerl et al., 2018). It is also coherent with several of the effects developed below, that we could summarize as follows: the higher the social status, the lower the chances to be in favor of online consultations.

The variables tested in Model 2, related to H2, tend to support this statement. Indeed, we can see that the number of hours a month one is involved in the party cannot definitely be stated as influential. If there is a tendency toward more involved members

opposing digital consultations slightly more, the effect is not clear enough to be considered significant. There is, however, an effect of the number of years spent in the party—of seniority –, as members involved for longer tend to oppose digital consultations more. Although the effect seems to be quite small, it adds up over the years and suggests that the question of introducing digitalization in intra-party democracy may be more a question of party familiarity and party control than a generational issue: the longer people have been involved in the party, the lower are the chances they would want to see their familiar environment change, and the more likely it is that they like the way things are currently being done.

The interpretation in terms of power relations is supported by the introduction of the next variable. Namely, in Model H3 the question of political careers is added. We can see here that,



in the same way as was demonstrated for H2, the higher the position, be it as a party board member or as a mandate-holder, the lower the chances are to support the introduction of online consultations. If the effect is not significant for the category of respondents we labeled “non-professional politicians,” who hold positions at the local level, it is very significant, and has a strong effect for “professional politicians,” with a national or European career background. This effect is also very evident in the data: If 52% of grassroots members opposed online consultations, this was the case for 74% of professional politicians (**Figure 2**).

The pattern that emerges in our first three models is, therefore, one that tends to confirm that the digitalization of candidate selection—and the increasing inclusion that can be expected to happen—poses a threat to members who currently hold a greater share of the power over party decisions, whether through mandates, board responsibilities, or simple seniority.

This hierarchical aversion toward digitalization cannot be understood outside of ideological preferences, and especially preferences for the inclusion of selection processes. Indeed, Model H4 shows that a predilection for more inclusive candidate selection processes tends to go together with the support of introducing online consultations. A leaning toward delegate conferences instead of general meetings strongly decreases the odds of supporting online consultations, and on the other hand, dissatisfaction with the participation opportunities in the party correlates with higher support for online consultations, following the results found in the general voter population (Close et al., 2017).

This interpretation of the results is supported when we analyze the other survey items that measure satisfaction with the current

selection process in a party (**Table 7**).⁴ Indeed, believing that the current process is not democratic, not transparent or is too predictable has a significant effect on the respondents’ support or opposition to online consultations. Therefore, digitalization appears to be supported by party members who perceive the party might lack intra-party democracy. This result highlights very plainly that, no matter what digitalization does to inclusion and democracy, the two concepts appear to be mentally related, at least for people in our sample. In contrast, feeling that the process is complicated, or inefficient, has a much smaller and statistically non-significant effect on the preferences on the issue of digitalization. This shows that global dissatisfaction with the process cannot be the reason for the increased support for digital tools at candidate selection: it is specifically dissatisfaction regarding the inclusion level that is relevant here.

The other variables we included in Model H4 appear to carry less weight in determining attitudes toward online consultations. Indeed, we can find that, as expected, it seems like all parties are more likely than the Christian Democratic Union to favor the introduction of digital tools in candidate selection, therefore, giving some credit to our theory of progressive orientation being a factor, but the measured effects appear to be quite small. We also find some evidence that greater disagreement with one’s party’s ideology might also lead to support for online consultations. In the latter case, statistical significance is not reached, which does not allow us to draw firm conclusions from the model.

⁴These variables were not included in the regression models in **Table 5** to keep the models both synthetic and methodologically sound.

TABLE 7 | Different version of the H4 models, including different set of variables to test for preferences.

	H4 + democratic	H4 + transparent	H4 + predictable	H4 + efficient	H4 + complicated
Predictors	Odds ratios	Odds ratios	Odds ratios	Odds ratios	Odds ratios
(Intercept)	2.07	1.38	1.25	1.35	1.37
Age	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Gender [women]	0.98	0.99	0.97	1.01	0.99
Education (pseudo metric of degree levels)	0.93*	0.93*	0.93*	0.93*	0.93*
Time spent in party (in years)	0.98***	0.98***	0.98***	0.98***	0.98***
Activity [11–30 h/month]	1.03	1.01	1.02	1.02	1.02
Activity [31+ h/month]	0.98	0.98	0.97	0.98	0.97
Position [non-professional politician]	0.91	0.91	0.90	0.91	0.91
Position [professional politician]	0.46***	0.45***	0.45***	0.45***	0.46***
Is process democratic [not democratic]	1.50***				
Is process transparent [not transparent]		1.28**			
Is process predicable [predictable]			1.21**		
Is process efficient [not efficient]				1.11	
Is process complicated [complicated]					1.12
Observations	3,885	3,830	3,824	3,816	3,795
AIC	5232.881	5154.778	5149.795	5150.516	5115.349
BIC	5295.530	5217.284	5212.285	5212.986	5177.763
McFadden pseudo-R ²	0.50	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51

Values given are odds-ratio. Numbers above 1 show a higher likelihood to support online consultations compared to the base category, number between 0 and 1 show a lower likelihood to support online consultations compared to the base category. 1 shows the absence of effect.

All assumptions for performing binomial logistic regression were checked. Models display no issues of multicollinearity, nor skewed residuals. Linearity of the logit for continuous variables was established. Hosmer-Lemeshow tests of goodness of fit were not significant.

Significance: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

In this paper, we assessed the support for the introduction of online tools—namely online consultations—in candidate selection processes among the selectorate of the established German parties. Based on data collected by questionnaires passed at candidate selection conferences in the advent of the 2017 federal election, our analysis highlighted the distribution of such preferences, depending on sociological characteristics, objective individual positions in the party, and ideological as well as evaluative preferences. Our first main result is that support or opposition to the parties' digitalization is not—perhaps no longer—dependent on a generational difference. The stakes of the question do not lie in a supposed technological gap but in the way power and influence are distributed inside the party and how the selectorate conceives inclusion.

Although a narrow majority of respondents opposes digitalization no matter their party affiliation, we were nonetheless able to find a correlation between a higher likelihood of opposing online consultations and position in the party, be it in terms of number of years in the party, mandates and board positions held. Due to the sampling procedure of our respondents, our dataset tends to represent party members who are more involved than most others are. Considering this, the fact that most of our respondents oppose the idea of digital consultations tends to go in the same direction: the closer to the decision-making centers party members are, the less likely they

are to support the introduction of online consultations. What we see here can be understood as a hierarchical reluctance to digitalize intra-party democracy at candidate selection and, more broadly, as a reluctance to make the nomination processes more inclusive at the expense of one's own influence or concerns.

This phenomenon is plausibly explained by a fear of loss of power and control if online consultations were to be introduced since such instruments might change power relations in parties and stimulate participatory demands (Dommett, 2018). Such a loss of power, at least to some extent, is indeed likely when substituting traditional communication channels by dialogical instruments like instant messaging or polls, as it would lower the costs of participation for party members—specifically the costs regarding time (Caletal et al., 2013; Spier and Klein, 2015). The likely consequence would probably be a change in the profile of the selectorate (Vittori, 2020). Such tools might also create an artificial sense of proximity between a charismatic party leader and the grassroots members. This relationship would then be easy to use to weaken the legitimacy of the other layers of the intra-party hierarchy and eventually bypass them, exposing them to becoming irrelevant.

The profiles of the more reluctant subset of our respondents, therefore, hints at this intra-party power-sharing explanation, but our results also highlight that ideological preferences matter too. Indeed, and similarly to Close et al. (2017), our results show that the party members who are dissatisfied with the inclusion level of the process tend to favor the introduction

of online consultations significantly more than those who are satisfied, which hints at the idea that preferences toward inclusion and toward digitalization tend to go hand in hand (Raniolo and Tarditi, 2019). It highlights the fact that for respondents—whether they oppose or support the introduction of online consultations—the general expectation is that these consultations would have some kind of effect on the number of party members actually involved in the decision-making: that, in the end, consultation would be participation. It also makes sense that the dissatisfaction might be greater for the party members who never benefitted from the incentives the party has to offer—in the form of mandates or board positions—than for those who have, therefore establishing a relationship between ideological preferences and objective social positions. Koo (2021) as well as Caletal et al. (2013) found that one's position in the party is related to their confidence and general satisfaction with the party processes. Nevertheless, not everyone dissatisfied with the inclusion level of members supports the introduction of online consultations: a certain level of mistrust toward digitalization might still be associated even in this group, which needs to be further researched to properly explain.

Most of the research on the digitalization of parties so far has focused on native digital parties and, therefore, often left-wing populist parties (Caiani et al., 2021; Gerbaudo, 2021). Our results show that this specific focus probably leads to overestimating digitalization's potential for parties. Our paper, therefore, advocates more interest for long-established parties in research about digitalization, to assess to which extent what seems to be true for newly founded populist movement parties can also apply to traditional ones.

The variables used here as an explanation do not offer an exhaustive analysis of the potential reasons for reluctance against intra-party digitalization. Other explicative factors for our results can also be put forward. We could for example also hypothesize that for some members, the opposition might stem from the reluctance to have party culture be questioned and re-discussed. German established parties specifically rely on “consensus-oriented IPD” (Höhne, 2021), which members might have internalized as the only legitimate mode of internal decision-making, while digital tools could possibly be associated with a more plebiscitary kind of decision-making. It could also be argued that the reluctance for online consultations is related to the fact that members themselves do not wish to participate more (Schindler and Höhne, 2020). They could be happy to delegate their will if the process is efficient, supporting the idea of Hibbing and Theiss-Morse on stealth democracy (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002; Webb, 2013; Lavezzolo and Ramiro, 2018). Stealth democracy suggests an alternative to representative or direct democracy by stating that citizens are happy with democracies being run under the surface. When applied to party organizational research, this optimization implies the assumption that a share of low-active but happy members in parties would support the leadership's decisions for preserving a status-quo they are satisfied with. The fact that our data point toward a theory of power-holding and does not allow to test for the possibility of stealth democracy being prevalent in party members, does

not mean both explanations cannot coexist and be found in further studies.

This paper also did not address what the implications would be for intra-party democracy to have or not have this type of consultations introduced, and notably did not specify how digital consultations would specifically be carried out, which leaves wide open the question of different preferences being potentially expressed should more information be specified. Finally, another limitation of this study comes from the fact that the respondents were members of the selectorate and not party members in general. If it enables us to highlight the strong relationship between power-holding and preferences about digitalization, it also excludes from our sample the members who are the most likely to feel sidelined and dissatisfied by candidate selection processes, as well as the completely inactive members. Again, further research, with slightly different methodologies—surveys of the entire membership, but also interviews or focus-groups of party members—might help to size more robustly our revealed discrepancy.

Looking at our findings and conclusions, the road ahead into the digital for intra-party democracy in established parties depends on the organizational design they want to create for the future (Barberà et al., 2021a). If they were to include more digitalization in their internal processes, they coincidentally might re-integrate grassroots members who are dissatisfied with traditional decision-making procedures. The literature argues that more inclusive processes might end up more representative of the actual electorate of the parties (Achury et al., 2020), and might thus benefit parties in the long run. At the same time, the top and mid-level elites in the parties in charge of implementing those changes might also be less likely to support them, and most of the currently involved party members might not enjoy the change of pace. The ability to select the candidates is part of the important incentives parties can offer their members, and most of our respondents do not necessarily seem keen to have their voice diluted in this process. Pleasing one crowd without displeasing the other might still be a hard balance to strike for political parties.

It should be noted that these results, derived from data collected in 2016 and 2017, would most likely already slightly differ today, as the external shock created by the COVID-19 pandemic has forced parties across the world to adapt very quickly and partly involuntarily to an environment in which in-person meetings were compromised (for a German example: Settles et al., 2021). In the run-up for the 2021 election in Germany, digital nomination assemblies were made necessary (Borucki et al., 2020; Michl, 2021), and have been tested, used, and improved, which is likely to have affected the preferences of party members and party elites alike—though in which direction remains to be investigated. In the aftermaths of this 2021 election, German parties still appear to be looking for the right balance between inclusion and exclusion, as the CDU held an online and postal—non-binding—party primary in prevision of its leadership selection. The question of the different ways, digital or not, to rekindle partisan enthusiasm without the

most involved members feeling betrayed does not seem like it will be settled any time soon. Research on digitalization points out that it is not enough to simply transfer structures to the digital, but that digitalization must be understood as a fundamental and comprehensive transformation. This insight also applies to the intra-party digitalization of candidate selection.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/**Supplementary Material**, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

REFERENCES

- Achury, S., Scarrow, S. E., Kosiara-Pedersen, K., and Van Haute, E. (2020). The consequences of membership incentives: do greater political benefits attract different kinds of members? *Party Politics* 26, 56–68. doi: 10.1177/1354068818754603
- André, A., Depauw, S., Shugart, M. S., and Chytlek, R. (2017). Party nomination strategies in flexible-list systems. *Party Politics* 23, 589–600. doi: 10.1177/1354068815610974
- Armington, K., and Guthman, K. (2014). Democracy in crisis? The declining support for national democracy in European countries, 2007–2011. *Euro. J. Polit. Res.* 53, 423–442. doi: 10.1111/1475-6765.12046
- Atzpodien, D. S. (2020). Party competition in migration debates: the influence of the AfD on party positions in German State Parliaments. *German Polit.* doi: 10.1080/09644008.2020.1860211. [Epub ahead of print].
- Baras i Gómez, M., Rodríguez-Teruel, J., Barberà i Aresté, Ò., and Barrio, A. (2012). Intra-Party Democracy and middle-level elites in Spain. *Working papers Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials*. Bd. 304 (Barcelona: Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials).
- Barberà, O., Sandri, G., Correa, P., and Rodríguez-Teruel, J. (2021b). “Political parties transition into the digital era,” in *Digital Parties: The Challenges of Online Organisation and Participation*, eds O. Barberà, G. Sandri, P. Correa, and J. Rodríguez-Teruel (Cham: Springer International Publishing), 1–22.
- Barberà, O., Sandri, G., Correa, P., and Rodríguez-Teruel, J. (eds.). (2021a). *Digital Parties: The Challenges of Online Organisation and Participation*. Studies in Digital Politics and Governance. Cham: Springer.
- Barnea, S., and Rahat, G. (2007). Reforming candidate selection methods a three-level approach. *Party Polit.* 13, 375–394. doi: 10.1177/1354068807075942
- Bennett, W., Segerberg, A., and Knüpf, C. (2017). The democratic interface: technology, political organization, and diverging patterns of electoral representation. *Information Commun. Soc.* 21, 1655–1680. doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2017.1348533
- Berbuir, N., Lewandowsky, M., and Siri, J. (2015). The AfD and its sympathisers: finally a right-wing populist movement in Germany? *Ger. Polit.* 24, 154–178. doi: 10.1080/09644008.2014.982546
- Berg, S., and Hofmann, J. (2021). Digital democracy. *Internet Policy Rev.* 10, 1–23. doi: 10.14763/2021.4.1612

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

FUNDING

This article was based on the #BuKa2017 study of the Institute for Parliamentary Research (IPar), which was funded by the Foundation for Science and Democracy (SWuD). The work of IB's research group was funded by the Digital Society research program, funded by the Ministry of Culture and Science of the German State of North Rhine-Westphalia (Grant Number 005-1709-0003). Any other financial benefits or interests are not applicable.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpos.2022.815513/full#supplementary-material>

- Berz, J., and Jankowski, M. (2022). Local preferences in candidate selection. Evidence from a conjoint experiment among party leaders in Germany. *Party Politics*. doi: 10.1177/2F13540688211041770. [Epub ahead of print].
- Bille, L. (2001). Democratizing a democratic procedure: myth or reality?: candidate selection in western european parties, 1960–1990. *Party Polit.* 7, 363–380. doi: 10.1177/1354068801007003006
- Blasio, E. D., and Viviani, L. (2020). Platform party between digital activism and hyper-leadership: the reshaping of the public sphere. *Media Commun.* 8, 16–27. doi: 10.17645/mac.v8i4.3230
- Borucki, I., and Fitzpatrick, J. (2021). “Tactical web use in bumpy times - a comparison of conservative parties’ digital presence,” in *Digital Parties: The Challenges of Online Organisation and Participation*, eds O. Barberà, G. Sandri, P. Correa, and J. Rodríguez-Teruel (Cham: Springer International Publishing), 245–267.
- Borucki, I., Masch, L., and Jakobs, S. (2021). Grundsätzlich bereit, aber doch nicht dabei - Eine Analyse der Mitarbeitsbereitschaft in Parteien anhand des Civic Voluntarism Models. *Zeitschrift Politikwissenschaft* 31, 25–56. doi: 10.1007/s41358-021-00251-w
- Borucki, I., Michels, D., and Ziegler, S. (2020). *No Need for a Coffee Break? - Party Work in the Digital Age*. Regierungsforschung.de, 9. Available online at: https://www.regierungsforschung.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Borucki_etal_CoffeeBreaks.pdf
- Bukow, S., and Jun, U. (2020). *Continuity and Change of Party Democracies in Europe, 1st Edn*. Wiesbaden: Springer. p. 366. doi: 10.1007/978-3-658-28988-1
- Caiani, M., Padoan, E., and Marino, B. (2021). Candidate selection, personalization and different logics of centralization in new Southern European populism: the cases of podemos and the M5S. *Government Opposition*. doi: 10.1017/gov.2021.9. [Epub ahead of print].
- Caletat, D., Cochliaridoul, E., and Milz, A. (2013). “Innerparteiliche partizipation,” in *Parteien, Parteieliten und Mitglieder in einer Großstadt*, eds M. Walter-Rogg and O. Gabriel (Wiesbaden: Springer), 49–68.
- Casal Bértoa, F., and Rama, J. (2021). Polarization: what do we know and what can we do about it? *Front. Polit. Sci.* 3, 687695. doi: 10.3389/fpos.2021.687695
- Cepernich, C., and Fubini, A. (2020). Italian parties and the digital challenge: between limits and opportunities. *Contemporary Italian Polit.* 12, 1–22. doi: 10.1080/23248823.2020.1863650
- Chadwick, A., and Stromer-Galley, J. (2016). Digital media, power, and democracy in parties and election campaigns: party decline or party renewal? *Int. J. Press Polit.* 21, 283–293. doi: 10.1177/1940161216646731

- Close, C., Kelbel, C., and van Haute, E. (2017). What citizens want in terms of intra-party democracy: popular attitudes towards alternative candidate selection procedures. *Polit. Stud.* 65, 646–664. doi: 10.1177/0032321716679424
- Coller, X., Codero, G., and Jaime-Castillo, A. M. (eds.) (2018). *The Selection of Politicians in Times of Crisis*. Abingdon, VA; Oxfordshire; New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cordero, G., and Coller, X. (eds.) (2018). *Democratizing Candidate Selection: New Methods, Old Receipts?* Springer International Publishing, 99–121. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-76550-1
- Cross, W. P., and Katz, R. S. (eds.) (2013). *The Challenges of Intra-Party Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dalton, R. (2004). *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Deiss-Helbig, E. (2017). Les modes de sélection des candidats affectent-ils la représentation parlementaire des minorités d'origine étrangère ? Une analyse des élections législatives allemandes de 2013. *Politique Sociétés* 36, 63–90. doi: 10.7202/1040413ar
- Deseriis, M. (2020). Digital movement parties: a comparative analysis of the technopolitical cultures and the participation platforms of the Movimento 5 Stelle and the Piratenpartei. *Information Commun. Soc.* 23, 1770–1786. doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2019.1631375
- Detterbeck, K. (2016). Candidate selection in Germany: local and regional party elites still in control? *Am. Behav. Scientist* 60, 837–852. doi: 10.1177/0002764216632822
- Dommett, K. (2018). Roadblocks to interactive digital adoption? Elite perspectives of party practices in the United Kingdom. *Party Polit.* 26:135406881876119. doi: 10.1177%2F1354068818761196
- Dommett, K., Fitzpatrick, J., Mosca, L., and Gerbaudo, P. (2020). Are digital parties the future of party organization? A symposium on the digital party: political organisation and online democracy by Paolo Gerbaudo. *Italian Polit. Sci. Rev.* 51, 1–14. doi: 10.1017/ipo.2020.13
- Dommett, K., and Rye, D. (2018). Taking up the baton? New campaigning organisations and the enactment of representative functions. *Politics* 38, 411–427. doi: 10.1177/0263395717725934
- Faucher, F. (2015). New forms of political participation. Changing demands or changing opportunities to participate in political parties? *Compar. Euro. Polit.* 13, 405–429. doi: 10.1057/cep.2013.31
- Feezell, J., Conroy, M., and Guerrero, M. (2016). Internet use and political participation: engaging citizenship norms through online activities. *J. Information Technol. Polit.* 13, 95–107. doi: 10.1080/19331681.2016.1166994
- Fitzpatrick, J. (2021). “The five-pillar model of parties’ migration into the digital,” in *Digital Parties: The Challenges of Online Organisation and Participation*, eds O. Barberà, G. Sandri, P. Correa, and J. Rodríguez-Teruel (Cham: Springer International Publishing), 23–42.
- Font, N., Graziano, P., and Tsakatika, M. (2021). Varieties of inclusionary populism? SYRIZA, Podemos and the five star movement. *Government Opposition* 56, 163–183. doi: 10.1017/gov.2019.17
- García Lupato, F., and Meloni, M. (2021). Digital intra-party democracy: an exploratory analysis of Podemos and the labour party. *Parliamentary Affairs* gsb015. doi: 10.1093/pa/gsb015
- Gauja, A. (2017). *Party Reform. Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gerbaudo, P. (2019). *The Digital Party: Political Organisation and Online Democracy*. London: Pluto Press.
- Gerbaudo, P. (2021). Are digital parties more democratic than traditional parties? Evaluating Podemos and Movimento 5 Stelle’s online decision-making platforms. *Party Polit.* 27, 730–742. doi: 10.1177/1354068819884878
- Gerl, K., Marschall, S., and Wilker, N. (2018). Does the internet encourage political participation? Use of an online platform by members of a German Political Party. *Policy Internet* 10, 87–118. doi: 10.1002/poi.3.149
- Gomez, R., and Ramiro, L. (2019). The limits of organizational innovation and multi-speed membership: Podemos and its new forms of party membership. *Party Polit.* 25, 534–546. doi: 10.1177/1354068817742844
- Gomez, R., Ramiro, L., Morales, L., and Aja, J. (2019). Joining the party: incentives and motivations of members and registered sympathizers in contemporary multi-speed membership parties. *Party Polit.* 27, 779–790. doi: 10.1177/1354068819891047
- Greenleaf, E. A. (1992). Measuring extreme response style. *Public Opin. Q.* 56, 328–351. doi: 10.1086/269326
- Hargittai, E., and Jenrich, K. (2016). “The online participation divide,” in *The Communication Crisis in America, and How to Fix it*, eds M. Lloyd and L. Friedland (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan US), 199–213.
- Harmel, R., and Janda, K. (1994). An integrated theory of party goals and party change. *J. Theor. Polit.* 6, 259–287. doi: 10.1177/0951692894006003001
- Hazan, R. Y., and Rahat, G. (2010). *Democracy Within Parties: Candidate Selection Methods and Their Political Consequences*. Comparative Politics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heinze, A. S., and Weisskircher, M. (2021). “No strong leaders needed? AfD party organisation between collective leadership, internal democracy, and “movement-party” strategy. *Polit. Governance* 9, 263–274. doi: 10.17645/pag.v9i4.4530
- Hibbing, J. R., and Theiss-Morse, E. (2002). *Stealth Democracy: Americans’ Beliefs About How Government Should Work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Höhne, B. (2013). *Rekrutierung von Abgeordneten des Europäischen Parlaments. Organisation, Akteure und Entscheidungen in Parteien*. Opladen; Berlin; Toronto, ON: Verlag Barbara Budrich.
- Höhne, B. (2017). “Wie stellen Parteien ihre Parlamentsbewerber auf? Das Personalmanagement vor der Bundestagswahl 2017,” in *Parteien, Parteiensysteme und politische Orientierungen. Aktuelle Beiträge aus der Parteienforschung*, ed C. Koschmieder (Wiesbaden: Springer VS), 227–253.
- Höhne, B. (2021). How democracy works within a populist party: candidate selection in the alternative for Germany. *Government and Opposition*. doi: 10.1017/gov.2021.33. [Epub ahead of print].
- Hui, C. H., and Triandis, H. C. (1985). The instability of response sets. *Public Opin. Q.* 49, 253–260. doi: 10.1086/268918
- Hutter, S., Altiparmakis, A., and Vidal, G. (2019). “Diverging Europe: the political consequences of the crises in a comparative perspective,” in *European Party Politics in Times of Crisis*, eds H. Kriesi and S. Hutter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 329–354.
- Ignazi, P. (2018). The four knights of intra-party democracy: a rescue for party delegitimation. *Party Polit.* 26, 9–20. doi: 10.1177/1354068818754599
- Initiative D21 e.V. (2021). *D21-Digital-Index 2021/2022 - Jährliches Lagebild zur Digitalen Gesellschaft*. Report Initiative D21. Available online at: https://initiated21.de/app/uploads/2022/02/d21-digital-index-2021_2022.pdf
- Kamenova, V. (2021). Internal democracy in populist right parties: the process of party policy development in the alternative for Germany. *Euro. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 13, 488–505. doi: 10.1017/S1755773921000217
- Katz, R., and Mair, P. (1992). The membership of political parties in European democracies, 1960–1990. *Euro. J. Polit. Res.* 22, 329–345. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6765.1992.tb00316.x
- Kenig, O. (2009). Democratization of party leadership selection: do wider selectorates produce more competitive contests? *Elect. Stud.* 28, 240–247. doi: 10.1016/j.electstud.2008.11.001
- Kernell, G. (2015). Party nomination rules and campaign participation. *Comp. Polit. Stud.* 48, 1814–1843. doi: 10.1177/0010414015574876
- Kölln, A. K. (2014). Party membership in Europe: testing party-level explanations of decline. *Party Polit.* 22, 465–477. doi: 10.1177/1354068814550432
- Koo, S. (2021). Does policy motivation drive party activism? A study of party activists in three Asian democracies. *Party Polit.* 27, 187–201. doi: 10.1177/1354068820908021
- Lanzone, M. E., and Rombi, S. (2018). “Selecting candidates online in Europe: a comparison among the cases of M5S, Podemos and European Green Party,” in *Democratizing Candidate Selection: New Methods, Old Receipts?*, eds G. Cordero and X. Coller (Cham: Springer International Publishing), 99–121. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-76550-1_5
- Lardeux, L., and Tiberj, V. (eds.) (2021). *Génération désenchantée? Jeunes et démocratie*. Paris: La documentation française.
- Lavezolo, S., and Ramiro, L. (2018). Stealth democracy and the support for new and challenger parties. *Euro. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 10, 267–289. doi: 10.1017/S1755773917000108

- Lioy, A., Del Valle, M. E., and Gottlieb, J. (2019). Platform politics: party organisation in the digital age. *Information Polity* 24, 41–58. doi: 10.3233/IP-180093
- Lisi, M. (2019). “New challenges, old parties: party change in Portugal after the European crisis,” in *Political Institutions and Democracy in Portugal: Assessing the Impact of the Eurocrisis*, eds A. Pinto and C. Teixeira (Cham: Springer International Publishing), 145–165.
- Lübker, M. (2002). Mitgliederentscheide und Urwahlen aus Sicht der Parteimitglieder: empirische Befunde der Potsdamer Mitgliederstudie. *Zeitschrift Parlamentsfragen* 33, 716–739.
- Margolis, M., and Resnick, D. (2000). *Politics as Usual: The Cyberspace 'Revolution'*. London: Sage.
- Margolis, M., Resnick, D., and Levy, J. (2003). “Major parties dominate, minor parties struggle: US elections and the internet,” in *Political Parties and the Internet: Net Gain?*, eds R. Gibson, P. Nixon, and S. Ward (London: Routledge) 51–69.
- Mergel, I., Edelmann, N., and Haug, N. (2019). Defining digital transformation: Results from expert interviews. *Gov Info Q.* 36:101385. doi: 10.1016/j.giq.2019.06.002
- Michels, D., and Borucki, I. (2021). Die Organisationsreform der SPD 2017–2019: Jung, weiblich und digital? *Polit. Vierteljahresschr.* 62, 121–148. doi: 10.1007/s11615-020-00271-1
- Michl, F. (2021). Anything goes! - Zur Aufstellung von Wahlbewerbern in der Covid-19-Pandemie. *Zeitschrift Parteienwissenschaften* 27, 29–36. doi: 10.24338/mip-202129-36
- Mikola, B. (2017). Online primaries and intra-party democracy: candidate selection processes in Podemos and the Five Star Movement. *IDP Revista de Internet Derecho y Política* 24, 37–49. doi: 10.7238/idp.v0i24.3070
- Neumann, A. (2013). Das “Jahrzehnt der Parteireform” - Ein Überblick über die Entwicklungen,” in *Parteien ohne Mitglieder?*, eds U. von Alemann, M. Morlok, and T. Spier (Baden-Baden: Nomos), 239–247.
- Panbianco, A. (1988). *Political Parties: Organization and Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Randall, V., and Svåsand, L. (2002). Party institutionalization in new democracies. *Party Polit.* 8, 5–29. doi: 10.1177/1354068802008001001
- Raniolo, F., and Tarditi, V. (2019). Digital revolution and party innovations: an analysis of the Spanish case. *Ital. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 50, 1–19. doi: 10.1017/ipo.2019.27
- Roberts, G. (1988). “The German Federal Republic: the two-lane route to bonn,” in *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective: The Secret Garden of Politics*, eds M. Gallagher and M. Marsh (London; Newbury Park, CA; New Delhi; Beverly Hills, CA: Sage), 94–118.
- Scarrow, S. (2014). *Beyond Party Members: Changing Approaches to Partisan Mobilization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schindler, D. (2021). More free-floating, less outward-looking. How more inclusive candidate selection procedures (could) matter. *Party Polit.* 27, 11201131. doi: 10.1177/1354068820926477
- Schindler, D., and Höhne, B. (2020). “No need for wider selectorates? Party members’ preferences for reforming the nomination of district and list candidates for the German Bundestag,” in *Politische Vierteljahresschrift (PVS): Continuity of Party Democracies in Europe*, eds S. Bukow and U. Jun (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien), 283–308.
- Schrader, J. (2018). The digital activism gap: how class and costs shape online collective action. *Soc. Probl.* 65, 51–74. doi: 10.1093/socpro/spx042
- Schüttemeyer, S. (2002). Wer wählt wen wie aus? Pfade in das unerschlossene Terrain der Kandidatenaufstellung. *Gesellschaft Wirtschaft Politik* 51, 145–161.
- Schüttemeyer, S., and Pyschny, A. (2020). Kandidatenaufstellung zur Bundestagswahl 2017. Untersuchungen zu personellen und partizipatorischen Grundlagen demokratischer Ordnung. *Zeitschrift Parlamentsfragen* 51, 189–211. doi: 10.5771/0340-1758-2020-1-189
- Schüttemeyer, S. S., and Sturm, R. (2005). Der Kandidat - das (fast) unbekannte Wesen: Befunde und Überlegungen zur Aufstellung der Bewerber zum Deutschen Bundestag. *Zeitschrift Parlamentsfragen* 36, 539–553.
- Serrano, J. C. M., Shahrezaye, M., Papakyriakopoulos, O., and Hegelich, S. (2019). “The rise of Germany’s AfD: a social media analysis,” in *Proceedings of International Conference on Social Media and Society* (Toronto, ON). p. 214–223. doi: 10.1145/3328529.3328562
- Settles, K., Shahgholi, S., and Siefken, S. (2021). Wahlkreisarbeit in der pandemie: mehr adaption als transformation. *Zeitschrift Parlamentsfragen* 52, 758–775. doi: 10.5771/0340-1758-2021-4-758
- Shomer, Y., and Put, G. J., and Gedalya-Lavy, E. (2016). Intra-party politics and public opinion: how candidate selection processes affect citizens’ satisfaction with democracy. *Polit. Behav.* 38, 509–534. doi: 10.1007/s11109-015-9324-6
- Spier, T. (2019). Not dead yet? Explaining party member activity in Germany. *German Polit.* 28, 282–303. doi: 10.1080/09644008.2018.1528237
- Spier, T., and Klein, M. (2015). “Party membership in Germany. Rather formal, therefore uncool?,” in *Party Members and Activists*, eds A. Gauja and E. van Haute (Abingdon, VA; Oxfordshire; New York, NY: Routledge), 84–99.
- Theocharis, Y., and de Moor, J. (2021). “Creative participation and the expansion of political engagement,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1972
- Thuermer, G., Roth, S., Luczak-Rösch, M., and O’Hara, K. (2016). “use, in- and exclusion in decision-making processes within political parties,” in *Proceedings of the 8th ACM Conference on Web Science* (New York, NY: Association for Computing Machinery). p. 205–214. doi: 10.1145/2908131.2908149
- Trittin-Ulbrich, H., Scherer, A. G., Munro, I., and Whelan, G. (2021). Exploring the dark and unexpected sides of digitalization: toward a critical agenda. *Organization* 28, 8–25. doi: 10.1177/1350508420968184
- Vittori, D. (2020). Membership and members’ participation in new digital parties: bring back the people? *Comp. Eur. Polit.* 18, 609–629. doi: 10.1057/s41295-019-00201-5
- Walter-Rogg, M. (2013). “Parteireformen und ihre Wirkung auf die Mitgliederentwicklung,” in *Parteien ohne Mitglieder?*, eds U. von Alemann, M. Morlok, and T. Spier (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft), 247–271.
- Webb, P. (2013). Who is willing to participate? Dissatisfied democrats, stealth democrats and populists in the United Kingdom. *Euro. J. Polit. Res.* 52, 747–772. doi: 10.1111/1475-6765.12021
- Webb, P., Poletti, M., and Bale, T. (2017). So who really does the donkey work in ‘multi-speed membership parties’? Comparing the election campaign activity of party members and party supporters. *Electoral Stud.* 46, 64–74. doi: 10.1016/j.electstud.2017.02.002
- Weber, M. (1919). “Politics as a vocation,” in *Gesammelte Politische Schriften, Duncker and Humblodt*, ed M. Weber (Munich: Duncker & Humblodt), 396–450.
- Young, L., and Cross, W. (2002). Incentives to membership in Canadian political parties. *Polit. Res. Q.* 55, 547–570. doi: 10.1177/106591290205500303
- Zeuner, B. (1970). “Kandidatenaufstellung zur Bundestagswahl 1965,” in *Untersuchungen zur innerparteilichen Willensbildung und zur politischen Führungsauslese. Martinus Nijhof*. doi: 10.1007/978-94-010-3203-2
- Zittel, T. (2015). Do candidates seek personal votes on the Internet? Constituency candidates in the 2009 German Federal Elections. *Ger. Polit.* 24, 435–450. doi: 10.1080/09644008.2015.1021788
- Zons, G., and Halstenbach, A. (2019). The AfD as a leaderless’ right-wing populist party. How the leadership-structure dilemma left an imprint on the party’s leadership. *Polish Polit. Sci. Rev.* 7, 41–60. doi: 10.2478/ppsr-2019-0003

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher’s Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

Copyright © 2022 Bloquet, Borucki and Höhne. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.



The Impossible Stability? The Italian Lower House Parliamentary Elite After a “Decade of Crises”

Luca Verzichelli^{1*}, Bruno Marino², Francesco Marangoni¹ and Federico Russo³

¹ Centro Interuniversitario di Ricerca sul Cambiamento Politico (CIRCaP) - University of Siena, Siena, Italy, ² Department of Political Science, Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi Sociali (LUISS) Guido Carli, Rome, Italy, ³ Department of History, Society, and Humanities, University of Salento, Lecce, Italy

OPEN ACCESS

Edited by:

Guillermo Cordero,
Autonomous University of
Madrid, Spain

Reviewed by:

Christoffer Green-Pedersen,
Aarhus University, Denmark
Rosa M. Navarrete,
University of Mannheim, Germany

*Correspondence:

Luca Verzichelli
luca.verzichelli@unisi.it

Specialty section:

This article was submitted to
Elections and Representation,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Political Science

Received: 06 October 2021

Accepted: 27 April 2022

Published: 17 June 2022

Citation:

Verzichelli L, Marino B, Marangoni F
and Russo F (2022) The Impossible
Stability? The Italian Lower House
Parliamentary Elite After a “Decade of
Crises”. *Front. Polit. Sci.* 4:790575.
doi: 10.3389/fpos.2022.790575

The article explores recent changes in the Italian parliamentary elite thanks to a novel set of data on Italian MPs between 1946 and 2018. After a first discussion on some crucial long-term trends of Italian Lower House MPs (their turnover rate, seniority, gender balance, party-related or institutional experience), we focus on the possible explanations of the profound transformation that occurred in the past decade: the rise of new party actors, the realignment between citizens and the parliamentary elites, or the use of different electoral systems. Subsequently, we point at three MP categories, taken as the most relevant proxies of the innovations in the Italian parliamentary elite. These categories are based on the length of MPs' parliamentary career, their previous party or institutional experience, and their gender. We discuss the changing numerical relevance of these categories, their parliamentary career patterns, and some features related to the institutionalization of MPs belonging to such categories. Two implications clearly emerge from our analysis. First, the changes occurred in the so-called “decade of the crises” (after the 2013 and 2018 Italian general elections) are critical in terms of a new influx of political amateur, female, and young MPs. The magnitude of this renewal can hardly be compared to any other relevant turning point of the Italian republican age and might signal the existence of a pattern of “impossible stability” for the parliamentary elite. Second, and partly in contrast with the first implication, despite such changes, the perspectives of parliamentary career and parliamentary survival remain very much subordinated to belonging to strong parliamentary party groups. This signals that, despite broad discussions about the positive role exerted by new political actors and the demand for a stronger descriptive representation, what seems to matter in the Italian Lower House is the presence of powerful political parties.

Keywords: Italy, parliamentary elites, political careers, descriptive representation, crisis

INTRODUCTION

This article discusses long-term transformations of political elites in Italy, thanks to an original set of data, including information on profiles and careers of the Italian parliamentary elite since the early days of the Italian Republic (1946). Such a systematic analysis recalls the tradition of comparative studies on political elites (Parry, 1969; Putnam, 1976) that found a fertile ground also among Italian scholars. In this country, it was the study by Sartori and Somogyi (1963) that started a wave of empirical research on parliamentary elites, opening the discussion about the professional qualities of a compound ruling class

representing several parties and a fragmented society. Two following generations of scholars (e.g., see Farneti, 1978; Cotta, 1979; Cotta et al., 2000) discussed the relevance of the (different) models of party selection and elite circulation in explaining the stability of the political system in the second half of twentieth century in Italy.

An update of such classical works looks on time after 75 years of uninterrupted democratic representation in Italy. The central goal of the article is two-fold. First, assessing the changes within the Italian parliamentary elite in the context of broader phenomena of malaise and instability of democratic representation (Mair, 2013; Roberts, 2017; Karremans and Lefkofridi, 2020); second, comparing the diffusion of these changes in today's Italian parliamentary elite with those in the Italian parliamentary elites that operated in the past decades.

The abovementioned phenomena have a global range, but studying the Italian case is of great interest for three reasons.

First, Italy has undergone a crisis of the bipolar party system born in the 1994–1996 period, which manifested itself in the electoral success of a populist party, the Five-Star Movement (*Movimento Cinque Stelle*, M5S) in the 2013 and 2018 general elections. Additionally, the M5S has also been holding governmental positions since 2018.

Second, and consequently, we can compare some relevant parliamentary elite features of the Italian party system between 1946 and the early 1990s (the so-called *Prima Repubblica*, First Republic), of that between the early-to-mid-1990s and today (the so-called *Seconda Repubblica*, Second Republic), and even of that comprised in the 2013–2018 period. These party systems are quite different, with distinct relevant actors. Are there noticeable differences in the features of parliamentary elites across these periods? Or, conversely, are we faced with a long-standing continuity in such features?

Third, the massive challenges faced by many European democracies (Bergmann et al., 2021) are of great relevance in Italy. Indeed, all the typical indicators of political instability, from electoral volatility to governmental vulnerability, from distrust toward politicians to several measures of political polarization, have significantly increased or show worryingly low values (e.g., see Chiaramonte and Emanuele, 2017; Ignazi, 2017). From the elite viewpoint, we can certainly include a higher level of parliamentary turnover (Verzichelli, 2018), while a more in-depth analysis of the qualitative changes in the parliamentary elite is just at the beginning (Coller et al., 2018). These phenomena have been extensively studied (Tormey, 2015; Castiglione and Pollack, 2019) and, indeed, alterations and instability in the processes of elite selection and circulation are evident in several countries (Coller et al., 2018; Freire et al., 2020).

Several factors may be considered as determinants of the recent transformations of parliamentary elites. For instance, the declining trust in the actors and institutions underpinning democratic representation—a phenomenon with long-term causes (Newton and Norris, 2000) accelerated by the Great

Recession of the 2010s—might have favored the emergence of new parties and the rapid growth of previously marginal parties (Petrarca et al., 2022). At the same time, some established parties have been pushed to adopt more participatory ways to select candidates (Coller and Cordero, 2018), even if some doubt that these changes have meant a true “democratization” of candidate selection methods (e.g., see Cordero et al., 2018).

These two trends may have altered the selection of parliamentary elites and may have also changed elite stability and circulation patterns. Observers can take two different stances toward these phenomena. On the one hand, the renewal of the political class can be seen as a sign that democracies can adapt to new pressures and accommodate new demands. So, the sudden influx of parliamentarians who are different from the typical career politician—male, affluent, middle-aged, and well-rooted along some party professional ways of life (Blondel and Müller-Rommel, 2007)—is welcomed as an improvement of the social representativeness of the Parliament (Tormey, 2015). On the other hand, the crisis of the consolidated means of selection and circulation of the parliamentary elite, especially in the absence of a consolidated alternative model, may be the prelude to a systemic crisis of democracy that, in turn, may reproduce, at least in Italy, the same uncertainty characterizing the political scenario of one century ago before the inception of the Fascist regime (Farneti, 1978).

In a nutshell, are we facing a new era of representative democracy, or, conversely, are we witnessing its demise? Studying the magnitude of changes within the Italian parliamentary elite might help us understand, at the very least, whether we are dealing with a relevant transformation or, conversely, with a much more neglectable evolution. Such a diachronic study is made possible by using a novel longitudinal dataset on Italian parliamentary elites maintained at the CIRCaP¹ Observatory on Political Elites in Italy (COPEI)². This article represents the first outcome of an ambitious plan to systematize the available data on the Italian political elites, which will allow deeper analyses of several recent relevant phenomena, including changes in descriptive representation, gender representation, and political careers.

Although the ambition of the COPEI project is that of measuring the long-term variation in the profiles of the whole ruling class in Italy, in this article, we focus on Lower House MPs, the largest and most significant segment of the Italian

¹The CIRCaP is the Centre for the Study of Political Change at the University of Siena (<https://www.circap.unisi.it/>).

²Unless otherwise specified, the data presented in this article come from the COPEI dataset, whose harmonization is currently in progress. The Observatory will include data on Italian political elites such as MPs (from both the Lower and the Upper Houses), the Italian Members of the European Parliament, Ministers, and other members of the government. For more information, see <https://www.circap.unisi.it/elites-and-political-leadership/circap-observatory-on-political-elites-in-italy-copei/>. The number of MPs used to calculate percentages and absolute numbers for figures and tables includes both MPs elected at the beginning of a legislative term and MPs elected as substitute during a legislative term.

political elite, for reasons of size³ but also of comparability with unicameral or weakly bicameral systems.

The article is organized as follows. In Section Lower House Parliamentary Elites in Italy Since 1946: From Marked Stability to Striking Changes, we present some introductory data on the Italian Lower House parliamentary elite from 1946 until today, and we also elaborate on its stability and circulation. Section Mutation or Systemic Adaptations? Interpretations of Parliamentary Elite Changes in Italy briefly connects changes within such parliamentary elite to several possible explanatory factors. Then, Section MPs' Features, Survival, and Careers in the Decade of the Crises: "More of the Same" or "Something New" is devoted to the main descriptive findings we have extracted from the data related to MPs elected to the Italian Lower House, comparing some MP characteristics in the so-called *decade of the crises* (the 2010s) vis-à-vis previous political eras. More specifically, we focus on two different arrays of MP features: on the one hand, their age, gender, tenure in Parliament, and pre-parliamentary party-related and institutional experience; on the other hand, MP's continuation of parliamentary experience and their parliamentary career. The final section puts forward some preliminary interpretative insights and briefly sketches some possible research paths opened at the end of our exploratory attempt.

LOWER HOUSE PARLIAMENTARY ELITES IN ITALY SINCE 1946: FROM MARKED STABILITY TO STRIKING CHANGES

After the unification of the country in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Italian political system has crossed three distinguishable historical phases, characterized by different types of representative elites (Farneti, 1978; Cotta and Verzichelli, 2007):

1. The phase of first democratization (1861–1921), largely dominated by a ruling class of liberal *notables*, who gave way to a first generation of mass-party politicians (Cotta et al., 2000).
2. The phase of democratic interruption (between the early 1920s and the mid-1940s), when the Fascist authoritarian regime was established at the end of a political and institutional crisis characterized by the extreme polarization among party and parliamentary elites.
3. The republican phase, started in 1946 with the election of a Constituent Assembly and then continued with the consolidation of a compound model of parliamentary democracy, which has been undergoing major systemic crises like that ending the First Republic (1992–1994) and the turbulences of the last decade.

In this section, we aim at producing a longitudinal account on the main transformations of the Italian Lower House parliamentary

elite. We do not cover the two earlier historical periods, since we focus on the transformations happening after the birth of the Italian Republic, employing the comparable data that are at the core of the COPEI project.

Figure 1 is based on the most common indicator of elite stability, namely, parliamentary turnover (Cotta and Best, 2007). The figure shows the peaks of parliamentary turnover during the *decade of crises* (2013 and 2018), when the renewal of the ruling class was even higher than the (still remarkable) average level of the 1992–2008 period. Of course, several factors can explain this phenomenon, including different voluntary and involuntary reasons for non-re-election (Matland and Studlar, 2004; Verzichelli, 2018). However, this indicator seems to point at a clear *deviant outcome* in elite circulation. To find similarly deviant points in time, we have to go back to the 1994 Italian general election or even to the first democratic elections of Republican Italy (the 1946 and 1948 ones).

A similar argument applies to the usual indicators of parliamentary seniority (**Figure 2**): if one looks both at the mean number of legislatures and the percentage of senior members (defined as MPs with an experience of at least two legislatures), a decrease in the percentage of experienced MPs and, consequently, a remarkable decline in the *parliamentary life expectancy* is patent. Moreover, the trend looks significantly marked during the two elections of the past decade (2013 and 2018), with an alteration of the seniority of the Lower House elite only matched by that of the 1994 general election.

Let us briefly comment on these data: the stability of the parliamentary elite in the 1946–1992 period was due to the continuity of the main actors of the Italian *partitocrazia* (partyocracy) (e.g., see Bardi, 2004, p. 133), specifically, the two most organized parties, the Christian Democracy (*Democrazia Cristiana*, DC) in the moderate camp and the Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*, PCI) on the left.

These party actors experienced two somewhat different ways to party professionalization: the *clientele-based pattern* (DC) promoted career politicians with solid links to social and religious groups, while the *apparatus-based pattern* (PCI) was mainly relying on politicians with a party *milieu* (Cotta, 1979). Despite this distinction and other specificities, including a remarkable variance in patterns of representation across Italian subnational territorial units⁴, **Figures 1, 2** show that a certain level of parliamentary institutionalization and seniority used to be the strong feature of the Italian elite until the early 1990s. The dissolution of the classical "polarized multiparty system" (Sartori, 1976) of the First Republic and the subsequent transition in the early-to-mid-1990s to the Second Republic did not completely remove political professionalism (Verzichelli, 1998), but surely started a new process of institutionalization within the Italian parliamentary elite.

How shall we interpret the new political turmoil in terms of elite turnover and seniority happening in the past decade? We have good reasons to envisage relevant elements of systemic change. First, the Italian parliamentary democracy suffered an

³Such a size is going to be reduced from 630 to 400 seats starting from the next general election (theoretically to be held in 2023) after a confirmatory referendum, held in 2020, approved a constitutional reform aiming at reducing the number of MPs in the two Italian Houses. As for the Italian Upper House, the abovementioned confirmatory referendum approved the constitutional reform that reduced the number of its members from 315 to 200.

⁴For instance, in the first decades of the First Republic, Southern MPs used to be much less professionalized than the MPs coming from the Northern regions (Cotta, 1979).

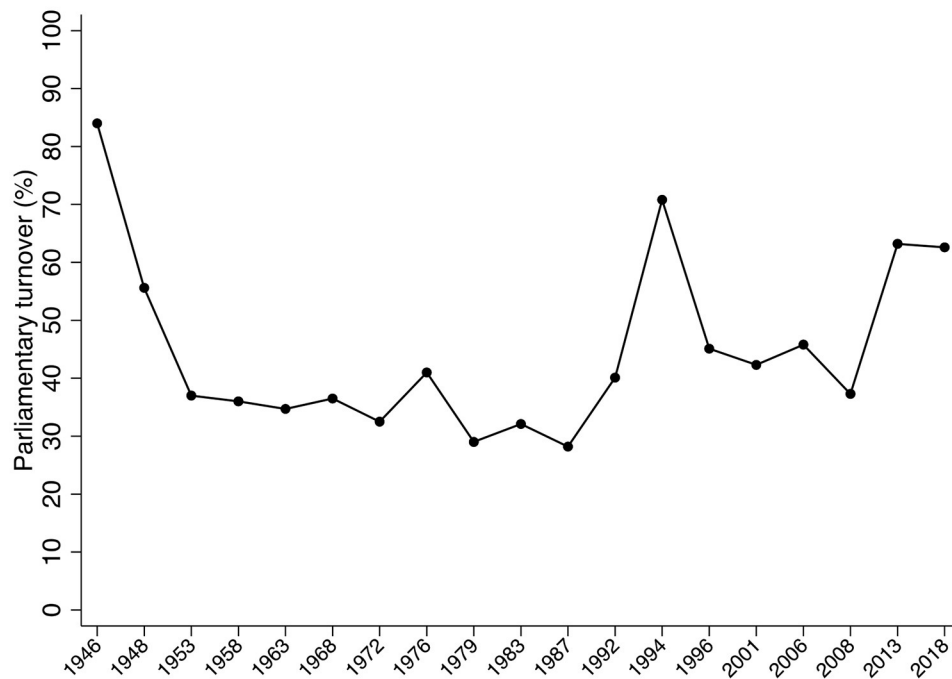


FIGURE 1 | Parliamentary turnover (%), Italian Lower House (1946–2018).

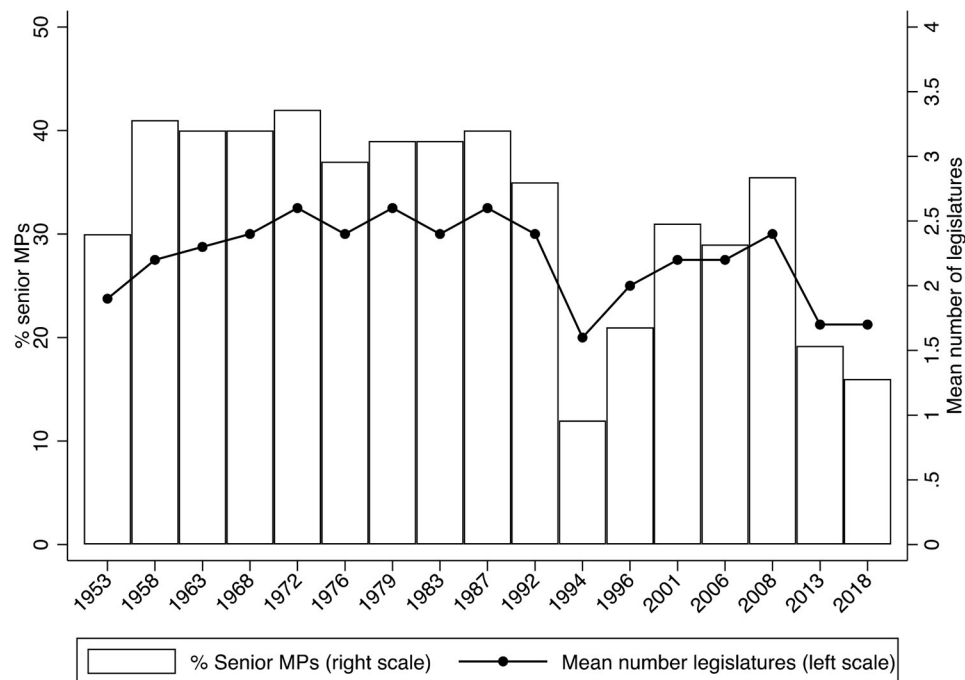


FIGURE 2 | Senior MPs (%) and MPs' mean number of legislatures, Italian Lower House (1953–2018). Senior MPs are those with a tenure of at least two legislatures.

impasse after the emergence and development of the economic crisis of 2008: the end of the Berlusconi IV government in 2011 and the dissolution of the bipolar party system (with a center-left camp opposed to a center-right camp) established since 1996. Second, the last decade saw two critical general elections (2013 and 2018) and the formation of a “volatile and tripolar” party system (Chiaromonte and Emanuele, 2013) with the rise of the M5S. Third, new personalized, populist, and sovereignist parties, such as the abovementioned Five-Star Movement and the Northern League, have played important roles, even at the executive level (Ivaldi et al., 2017; Albertazzi et al., 2018; Caiani et al., 2021; Vittori, 2021). Fourth, much different governments have appeared in the past few years in Italy: just between 2018 and 2021, three governments, corresponding to three different parliamentary majorities⁵, including the current technocratic-led government headed by Mario Draghi.

Therefore, the abovementioned elite changes might be connected to a rhetoric of a new model of descriptive representation that, in turn, could have defeated the resilience of a traditional pattern of (parliamentary) elite formation and circulation. Indeed, in the old days of the Italian partyocracy, this pattern used to be grounded on a solid control by the national party organizations over a body of people that, in turn, represented the compound territorial and functional constituencies of the Italian society (Wertmann, 1988). We have already underlined that such a traditional model of “local involvement” plus “central control” (*ibidem*) somehow survived after the collapse of the Italian First Republic (Verzichelli, 1998). However, this model may have significantly evolved after the emergence of the new challenges we have discussed above. In particular, the new populist and leader-based parties may have innovated the processes of elite selection and circulation.

How to empirically support our conjecture? For instance, by analyzing changes in descriptive representation. **Figure 3** reports the evolution of three elements of descriptive representation that we have selected for our explorative analysis: MPs’ mean age, gender (percentage of women MPs), and what we might call political amateurism (e.g., see Atkinson and Docherty, 1992) (percentage of MPs with no institutional or party-related experience prior to their entrance to Parliament). The figure shows the aggregate values for Italian MPs elected between 1948 and 2018.

Three important processes related to the evolution of descriptive representation emerge from **Figure 3**. First, the acceleration of the increasing trend of female representation. This trend appeared relatively late in Italy compared to other European countries (Cotta and Best, 2007), and the percentage of female MPs remained relatively low until the last decade.

Second, the growing importance of political amateurism. The percentage of MPs with no experience in subnational

governments (including both representative and executive offices) or with no experience in party offices at any territorial level prior to their entrance to Parliament⁶ has increased since 2006. To be fair, this indicator, representing a career opposite to the classical party-rooted professional political career (Cotta and Best, 2007), actually presents remarkable longitudinal variance. For instance, the 1994 peak may be largely explained by the outburst of *Forza Italia*—at that time, a *franchise party* (Paolucci, 1999) of “beginners” dominated by its leader, Silvio Berlusconi. Finally, the past decade presents a new and interesting scenario. Indeed, the increase in political amateurism shown in **Figure 3** in 2013 and 2018 should be mainly (albeit not exclusively) connected to the sudden electoral success of the M5S, with its inclusive candidate selection rules (at least in 2013), and the related “random” election of MPs with a “politically amateur” background (Tronconi, 2015; Kakepaki et al., 2018; Marino et al., 2019). Let us note that the rhetoric of selecting “ordinary citizens” to become MPs has made its way also within some Italian mainstream parties, that have employed somewhat “open” procedures of political recruitment (e.g., see Cerruto et al., 2016; Marino et al., 2021).

Third, the decreasing mean age of MPs. **Figure 3** shows that the passage from the First to the Second Republic in the 1990s did not substantially change the demographic structure of the Italian parliamentary elite, while the general elections of 2013 and 2018 produced a changing scenario. Indeed, since 2013, the mean age of MPs has dramatically collapsed, reaching, in 2018, the lowest value of the whole republican era (45 years). We shall remind that the general decrease in MPs’ mean age has paralleled a marked aging of the Italian population⁷. Let us also note that younger generations are usually underrepresented in parliaments (Stockemer and Sundström, 2018). So, a logical question would be whether the recent entrance of younger MPs has increased the descriptive representation of the Italian Lower House concerning age. To answer this question, we have calculated the dissimilarity between two age structures—that of Italian MPs and that of the Italian population—*via* the Duncan index of dissimilarity (Duncan and Duncan, 1955)⁸. **Figure 4** shows that, during the first two decades of the Republican era, the Italian Lower House gradually became less and less representative of the Italian over-25 population, at least concerning its age structure. Conversely, in 2013, the Italian Lower House was much more representative than its predecessors. To find such a similarity, we have to go back to 1953, that is, 60 years before the arrival of the M5S in the Lower House. Nonetheless, such representativeness decreased again in 2018.

⁶Still building on Best and Cotta (2000), an MP has “no relevant political function” when he/she did not hold any kind of party office or any subnational administrative office before her/his entrance to Parliament.

⁷E.g., see data on Italians’ mean age on <http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx> (Population and Households/Population).

⁸We applied the following formula: $D = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^{15} |p_i - d_i|$, where $i = 1 \dots 15$ represents 15 five-year age classes (25–29, 30–35 and so on, up to 100 and older), p_i is the proportion of the Italian population older than 25 years old falling within age class i and d_i is the proportion of MPs falling in age class i . The range of the Duncan index goes from 0, where there is no difference between the two distributions, and 1, where such a difference is maximum.

⁵The first one, between 2018 and 2019, was the so-called Conte I government, supported by the Five-Star Movement and the Northern League; the second one, between 2019 and 2021, was the Conte II government, supported by the Five-Star Movement, the Democratic Party and some smaller center and left parties; finally, since March 2021, there has been the Draghi government, supported by a grand coalition of many parties in the Italian Parliament.

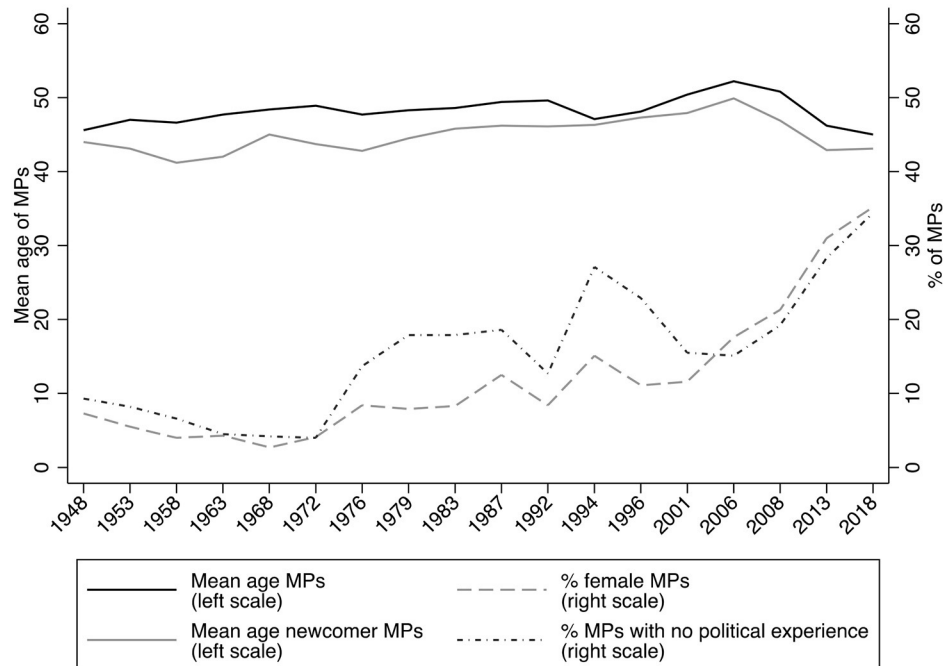


FIGURE 3 | Mean age of MPs and newcomer MPs, percentage of female MPs and MPs with no political experience, Italian Lower House (1948–2018).

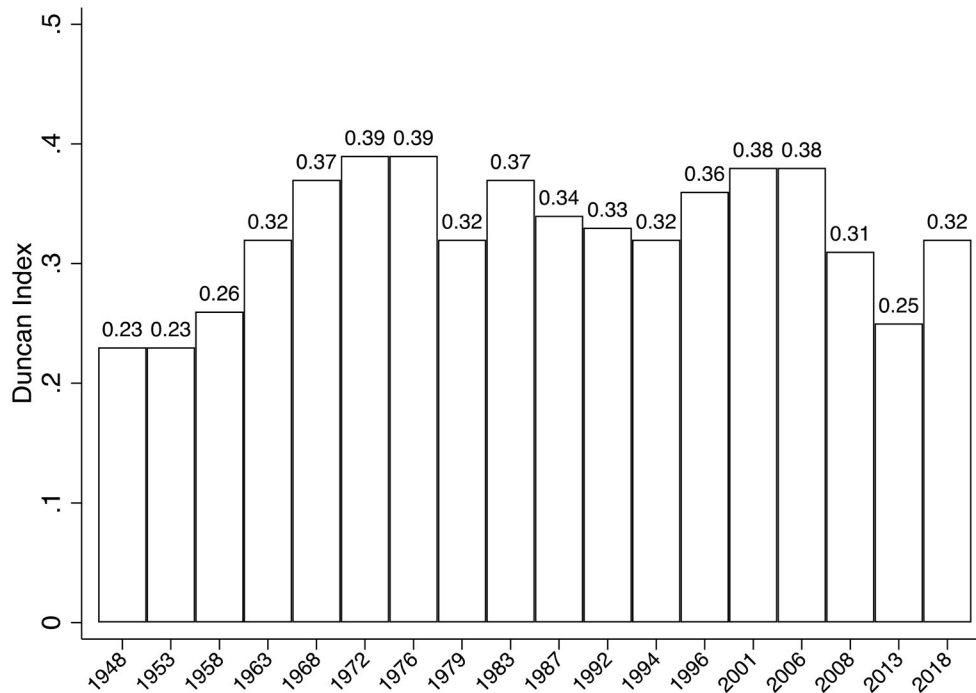


FIGURE 4 | Duncan index of the dissimilarity between Italian population's age and Italian Lower House MPs' age (Italy, 1948–2018). Elaboration from COPEI dataset, official data from the Lower House (www.camera.it), and ISTAT.

MUTATION OR SYSTEMIC ADAPTATIONS? INTERPRETATIONS OF PARLIAMENTARY ELITE CHANGES IN ITALY

The pictures sketched in the previous section are sufficient to capture the magnitude of the recent changes in some relevant features of the Italian parliamentary elite. Obviously, we have a problem of complexity here: what can account for such changes? There might be different elements to consider. For instance, changes in MPs' social profile can be influenced by a system of opportunities differently shaped by electoral systems (Baumann et al., 2017). Also, party-related factors (such as candidate selection methods, or intra-party power distribution) can directly impact the characteristics of representatives (Hazan and Rahat, 2006). Finally, specific contingent factors can become more and more relevant: e.g., the availability of foreseeable candidates from civil society during an historical phase dominated by mistrust in political professionalism and a return of attention for the educational and professional skills of representatives (Bovens and Wille, 2017).

Some of the changes discussed above may be explained in terms of stochastic or contingent effects, while others could be conceived as long-term processes. For instance, the drastic decrease in MPs' pre-parliamentary institutional or party experience may occur due to two separate paths. Either a sudden and temporary "contagion effect" after the emergence of a party (the M5S) explicitly pushing for a total renewal of the political elite (Kakepaki et al., 2018) or a smoother effect of incremental processes like party organizational changes (Gouglas et al., 2021).

Hence, our task here is to produce a parsimonious reading of all the evidence we have presented so far. We can now refine some propositions about the recent evolution of descriptive representation in Italy (for a broader review, see Russo and Verzichelli, 2020).

A first proposition postulates a radical change in the features of the Italian parliamentary elite because of the failure of the previous mechanisms of elite circulation and the advent of new party actors. After all, both Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* (at least in its early days) and Beppe Grillo's M5S have put forward a model of representation in sharp contrast with the classical party-centered one (e.g., see Verzichelli, 1994, 1998; Lanza and Piazza, 2002; Pinto and Pedrazzani, 2015). The problem with such an interpretation is predicting if a process of institutionalization will follow or, conversely, there will be an endless influx of new party actors and a consequential "impossible stability" for the Italian parliamentary elite.

A second proposition can conceive the changes in the features of Italian MPs as patent evidence of an existing social process. For instance, a more balanced gender and generational representation would have been realized anyhow, and the sudden collapse of existing elite groups has simply speeded this process up. In this sense, stronger attention to younger generations, female citizens, and "political amateurs" would simply result from such groups' more powerful social and political influence. More specifically, we know that there is a trade-off between an increase in elites' social mirroring and a decline in political

professionalism (Cotta and Best, 2007). Consequently, the changes in Italian MPs' features would just be a realignment between citizens and political elites, with the waning of the classical figure of the "career party politician" (King, 1981) balanced by a stronger social mirroring and even by new signs of the impact of meritocracy (Bovens and Wille, 2017).

Some would argue that the problem with these two propositions is that they neglect the role of structural constraints, such as the electoral system in place for the election of MPs. Indeed, some electoral systems could have affected the changes in the Italian parliamentary elites' profile. The extended use of closed-list PR (with a majority bonus) between 2006 and 2013—compared to the open-list PR in place between 1948 and 1992 and to the mixed electoral system used between 1994 and 2001⁹—may have limited innovation efforts in parliamentary elites' profile and background. For instance, between 1994 and 2001, candidates' social profile may have been considered as an advantage compared to a strong party experience, at least in some cases (e.g., see considerations in Galasso and Nannicini, 2011)¹⁰.

However, we doubt that the electoral system is the sole determinant to understand the transformations in the Italian Lower House. Indeed, all the relevant changes discussed above and also those discussed in the subsequent pages (that is, the changes after the 1976 general election, after the 1994 one, and after the 2013 and 2018 ones) took place with *different* electoral systems. Moreover, the relevant changes in the MPs elected in these four general elections are evident also if we compare such elections with the previous and/or subsequent ones, taking place with the *same* electoral system.

Clearly, we are not arguing that electoral systems do not matter. On the contrary, their role shall be understood in a wider party-system-related and party-related perspective. Indeed, some signs of change may be connected to new relevant actors of the Italian political system (namely, new party organizations and, above all, new party leaders). Moreover, some forms of a "contagion" or "domino" effect, as observed by the classical works on party elites and party organizations by Robert Michels and Maurice Duverger, should be considered as well (e.g., see above and Barnea and Rahat, 2007; Sandri and Venturino, 2020).

Let us stick to our parsimonious reading of the changes in Italian MPs' features. If we assume that the political party has an important role (albeit in connection with electoral systems), we might elaborate on its importance. First, are there relevant differences in some *crucial features* of Italian Lower House parliamentary party groups (PPGs)? Second, does belonging to different (parliamentary) parties (mainstream ones vs. populist ones; left-leaning ones vs. right-leaning ones) influence Italian MPs' *circulation path*? Third, is it possible to find a place for an *interplay* between political parties and electoral systems? In the remaining part of this article, we explore the changing patterns of MPs' *features*, *parliamentary survival*, and *institutional promotion*.

⁹Between 1994 and 2001, 75% of Italian MPs were elected in a First-Past-the-Post arena, while the remaining 25% were elected in a closed-list PR arena.

¹⁰On the territorial sensibilities of MPs elected in single-member districts compared to the other MPs, see Russo (2022).

More specifically, we have two main targets. On the one hand, we use some features of the Italian parliamentary elite (e.g., their gender or their previous party-related or institutional experience before entering Parliament) to create three categories of MPs which represent the most evident deviations from the traditional dominant profile of Italian MPs. As already argued above, such a dominant profile was the tenured parliamentarian having had a certain career within a political party or in subnational institutional positions (Cotta, 1992; Verzichelli, 2010). Then, we investigate whether and in which PPG such innovative categories have acquired more relevance.

On the other hand, we tackle MPs' capability to continue their carrier in Parliament and MPs' ability to get relevant parliamentary positions¹¹. We want to understand whether belonging to different MP categories, or different PPGs, or different Lower Houses in the 1970s, 1990s, or 2010s, means something for MPs' survival in Parliament and their parliamentary careers.

To put forward this exploration, we focus on the main PPGs of the Italian republican history. For the 1946–1992 period, the DC and the PCI ones¹². For the 1994–2008 period, the FI-PDL-FI¹³ and Progressives-Olive Tree-PD¹⁴ PPGs. Finally, for the 2013–2018 period, we have added the M5S PPG to the FI and PD ones.

MPS' FEATURES, SURVIVAL, AND CAREERS IN THE DECADE OF THE CRISES: "MORE OF THE SAME" OR "SOMETHING NEW"?

Let us start this section with the first task we have just outlined above. We consider four MPs' features: whether they are newcomers or not; their institutional or party-related experience before their entrance to Parliament; their gender; and their age. Then, we categorize MPs into three partially overlapping categories: *Intruders* (namely, newcomer MPs with no previous party and local institutional experience)—using the categorization by Marino et al. (2019)—*Female Beginners* (female

MPs entering Parliament for the first time), and *Young Beginners* (under-40 years-old entering Parliament for the first time).

Figure 5 below reports the percentage of Intruder MPs in the Lower House for each PPG under consideration. The figure also reports the percentage of Intruder MPs for the entire Italian Lower House.

Figure 5 allows us to focus on some key points. First, between 1946 and 1992, but especially from 1963 onwards, there were almost no relevant differences between the Christian-Democratic parliamentary party group (DC) and the Communist one (PCI). Moreover, outsider MPs remained marginal in the entire Lower House population¹⁵, although the 1976 Italian general election confirms to be a turning point in the history of the Italian Parliament (Di Palma, 1977). All in all, in the Italian First Republic, there was quite some *homogeneity* in terms of entrance to the Lower House of MPs with no institutional or party experience, at least when considering the two biggest PPGs (the DC and PCI ones).

Things changed dramatically in 1994, with the electoral success of *Forza Italia*. **Figure 4** shows a sudden increase in the percentage of Intruders with the entrance to Parliament of Berlusconi's party. A clear distinction between the center-left and the center-right PPGs also emerges, as shown by the different percentages of Intruders in the FI and the Progressives PPGs. All in all, the figure tells us that, given the extraordinary result of *Forza Italia* and the center-right coalition in the 1994 Italian general election, a significant percentage of "new people" entered the Lower House, so much so that more than one-third of all MPs in 1994 can be categorized as Intruders. This is in line with previous discussions about the longitudinal changes in the features of the Italian MPs during the transition from the old *partitocrazia* to the new bipolar party system in the mid-1990s (Verzichelli, 1994).

Our story then follows an institutionalization pattern of elite circulation amongst the Italian Lower House PPGs considered here, with an overall declining trend in the percentage of Intruder MPs until 2006. Subsequently, in 2008, the competition between the PD, led by Walter Veltroni, and Berlusconi's PDL was marked by a slight increase in the percentage of Intruders. However, this was just the entree of a much more substantial change.

Indeed, in 2013, the unexpected result of Grillo's M5S led to the entrance of many Intruders to the Italian Lower House (Marino et al., 2019). Consequently, also the percentage of "new people" among the entire population of Italian MPs noticeably increased. Conversely, it is quite interesting to notice that the M5S trend is flanked by a much more traditional pattern of elite circulation for the main center-left and center-right parties. Indeed, in 2013, the PPGs of the PD and FI showed remarkably

¹¹Building on Cotta (1979), for the purpose of this article, we have only considered the dimension of institutional offices in Parliament. The offices covered are those of the Lower House parliamentary bureau (Secretary, Questor, Vice-President, and President), the Chairmanship and Vice-Chairmanship of legislative committees, and the Chairmanship and Vice-Chairmanships of parliamentary party groups (PPGs).

¹²The PCI line also includes data for the *Partito Democratico della Sinistra* (PDS, Democratic Party of the Left), which was its main successor in 1992.

¹³After the 2008 general election, Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* PPG appears together with that of *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN, National Alliance), the main heir of the neo-fascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, (MSI, Italian Social Movement). Such a joint group was called *Popolo della Libertà* (PDL, People of Freedoms), and this latter was also the name of the political party appearing from the merging of FI and AN. However, such an experience was unsuccessful, and Berlusconi's party was renamed *Forza Italia* after the 2013 general election.

¹⁴In the 1994 Italian Lower House, we considered the *Progressisti* (Progressives) parliamentary group; between 1996 and 2006, we considered the *Ulivo* (Olive Tree) parliamentary party group; finally, between 2008 and 2018, the *Partito Democratico* (PD, Democratic Party) parliamentary party group.

¹⁵This should not come entirely as a surprise, given the low percentage of Intruder MPs in the DC and PCI PPGs and the relevant weight of the DC and PCI PPGs in the Italian Lower House from the mid-1940s until 1992. Nonetheless, we shall also remember that there were other non-marginal PPGs between the mid-1940s and the early 1990s [let us just mention the Italian Socialist Party (*Partito Socialista Italiano*, PSI) one and the MSI one]. In a nutshell, the Italian Lower House was hardly a prototype of a two-party House (see, for instance, data on the Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties in Bardi, 2007).

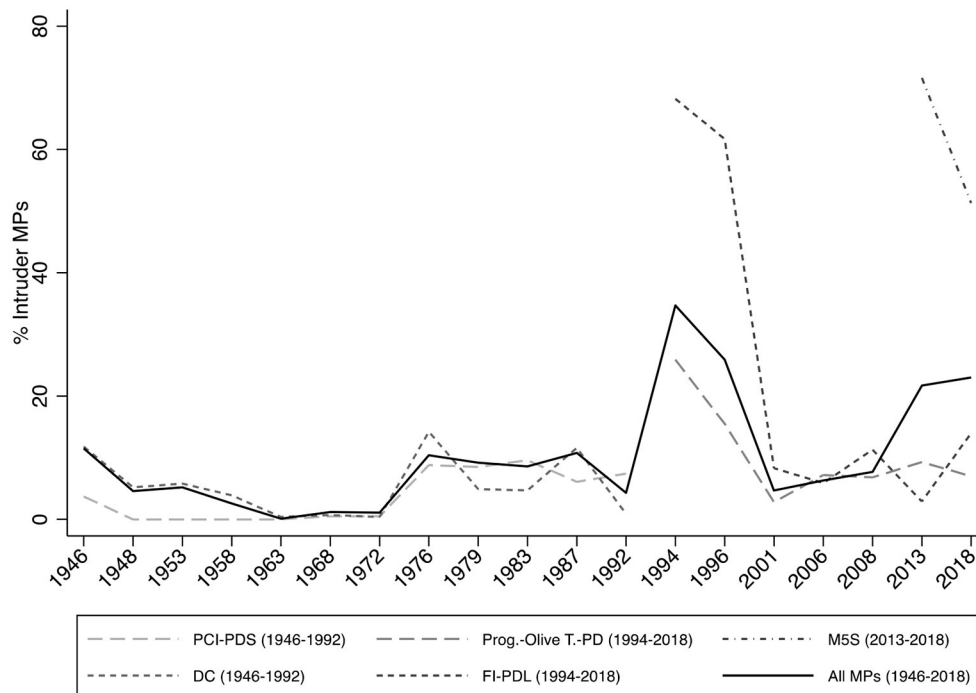


FIGURE 5 | Intruder MPs (%), Italian Lower House (selected parliamentary party groups and entire House) (1946–2018).

low percentages of Intruders, with even much lower values than the DC and PCI figures in 1976. In other words, from this specific viewpoint, the “old” and discredited parties of the Italian First Republic were much more innovative than the “new” parties of the Second Republic.

Finally, the 2018 Italian general election returned a Lower House with a peculiar configuration: a still remarkable percentage of Intruders, but with the M5S PPG showing a declining percentage of such MPs. Only time will tell if this is a sign of the institutionalization of its parliamentary elite. In any case, the data reported so far clearly stress the context of an erratic process of elite formation, with relevant party-specific differences to consider (Marino et al., 2019).

Let us now focus on the evolution of the percentage of Young Beginner MPs (i.e., untenured MPs younger than 40 years-old) shown in **Figure 6**. The slow decrease in the percentage of Young Beginners, at least until the 1980s, can be understood as a sign of institutionalization of the old PPGs of the Italian First Republic. Then, going forward, the now-usual spikes of 1994 and 2013 confirm the innovative character of these two general elections for the Italian parliamentary elite. Turning to party-related differences, we notice a difference between the PCI PPG, more inclined to recruit younger cohorts of candidates, and the DC PPG (Cotta, 1979). Nonetheless, this pattern was overturned in 1994, when the emergence of Berlusconi’s party brought a substantial number of young newcomer MPs to the Lower House, whereas the center-left Progressives had an older

and/or more experienced pool of MPs. In 2006, the center-left seemed to turn the table, but we are still talking about marginal changes, especially if one compares the 1946–2008 figures with the 2013–2018 period, when the electoral success of the M5S determined an exceptional rate of rejuvenation of the Italian parliamentary elite. So, the percentage of Young Beginner MPs in 2018 was still the second-highest registered in the Italian Lower House (being the 2013 one the highest ever registered), while the 1976 peak was even lower than the 1994 one. Finally, let us notice that, even when it comes to Young Beginner MPs, the M5S passage from 2013 to 2018 hints at a possible institutionalization of its elite in the Lower House.

Let us now focus on the third MP category: Female Beginner MPs. **Figure 7** below reports the percentage of MPs belonging to such a group for our selected PPGs and the entire House.

The changes in this indicator are particularly relevant to consider, especially in a country where gender representation has always proved to be particularly difficult (Papavero, 2009). As already noticed in **Figure 5** and especially **Figure 6**, there is a general pattern of stability until the 1976 turning point, plus two peaks (the Lower Houses elected in 1994 and 2013).

Here, however, two comments should be made concerning the impact of structural factors, like the electoral system, or party-related factors. First, the (increasing) trend of Female Beginner MPs records several highs and lows, which have become more and more marked since 1992. The 1994 peak should be somehow

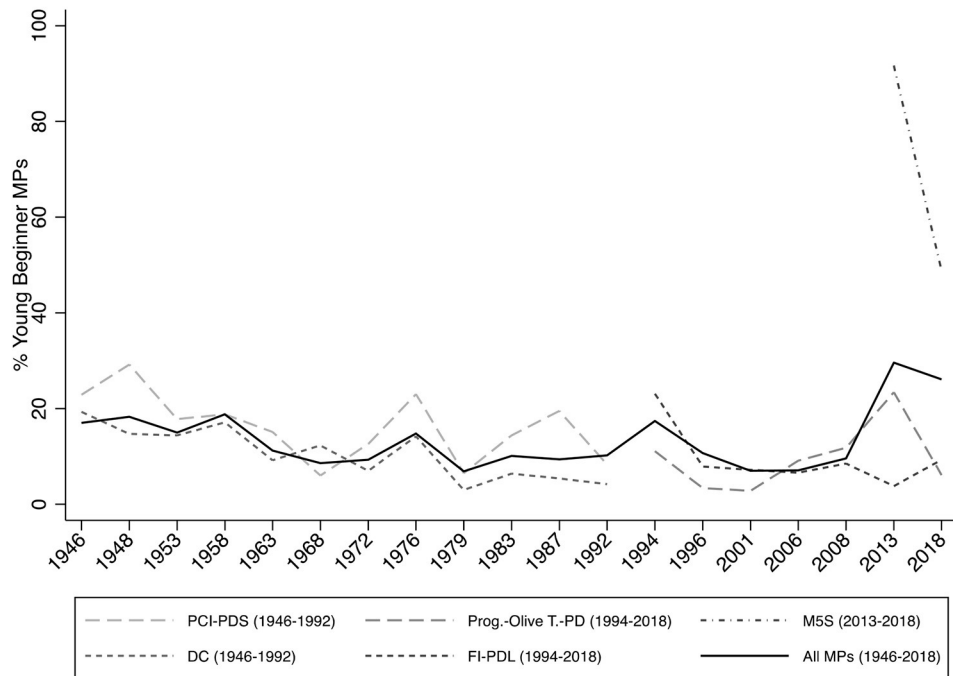


FIGURE 6 | Young beginner MPs (%), Italian Lower House (selected parliamentary party groups and entire House) (1946–2018).

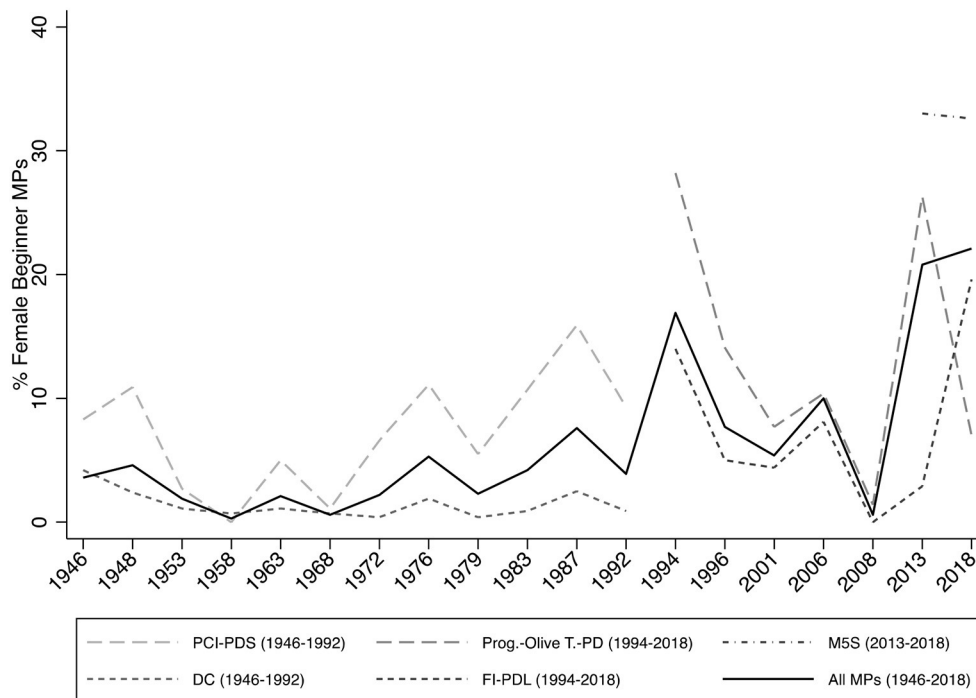


FIGURE 7 | Female beginner MPs (%), Italian Lower House (selected parliamentary party groups and entire House) (1946–2018).

connected to the rule of the male-female alternation in the closed-list PR arena in the Lower House (Verzichelli, 1994). Such a rule was then abrogated but partially re-established with the 2005

reform of the Italian electoral law (that introduced a minimum quota of female candidate in the multi-member constituencies used since 2006).

Second, the increasing trend of Female Beginner MPs has almost always remained more pronounced in the (center-)left camp than in the Christian-Democratic and the center-right ones. In this regard, the 2018 overtaking of FI at the expenses of the PD needs to be evaluated in the mid-to-long term, given the reduced population of these two groups, which became smaller than the M5S and the Lega Nord (Northern League) PPGs after the 2018 Italian general election (Marino et al., 2019). Finally, also when it comes to Female Beginner MPs, it was the M5S to be the main driver of innovation in the Italian Lower House in the 2013–2018 period.

All in all, there are some general elections that, compared to the previous and the subsequent ones, brought about a robust change in some parliamentary elites' features: the 1976, 1994, 2013, and 2018 ones. Such general elections are not connected to an *equal* change among the selected parties, but to the impact of *some* party actors, whose weight is more prominent than others'. Third, and finally, what we have just analyzed seems to point at a complex interaction between electoral systems and political parties, in the sense that both elements shall be jointly considered in the understanding of the changes within the Italian parliamentary elite.

The second task we deal with is the analysis of MPs' parliamentary survival and careers. In particular, we have considered the two most varying MP categories discussed above—*Intruder MPs* and *Female Beginner MPs*—to explore whether belonging to such clusters makes a difference in terms of survival and careers in the Lower House. This final analysis can be extremely useful to better understand *which actors*—if any—can be considered as the main drivers of change in MPs' circulation path.

Table 1 below reports our analysis, conducted on different historical junctures: the inception of representative democracy, after a long dictatorship, and three critical elections already discussed in our comments of **Figures 5–7**. Specifically, we consider all MPs elected in four legislative terms: the one beginning in 1946 (the election of the Constituent Assembly that later would have passed the Italian Constitution in 1947)¹⁶, the one beginning in 1976 (where the DC and PCI together collected more than 70% of the votes), the one beginning in 1994 (with the inception of Berlusconi's Forza Italia), and, finally, the one started in 2013 (with the electoral success of the M5S). Moreover, we focus on the parliamentary career and survival of *Intruder* and *Female Beginner* MPs both from a general viewpoint and from a (parliamentary) party one.

All in all, we compare the percentages of *Intruder*, *Female Beginner*, and all MPs obtaining parliamentary offices, but also their rate of re-election, electoral defeat, and retirement with the beginning of the subsequent legislative term (so, 1948, 1979, 1996, and 2018). Moreover, such percentages are presented for

the main PPGs, the two categories of *Intruder* and *Female Beginner* MPs, and the entire House.

This analysis is clearly descriptive, but there are enough data to suggest that the emergence of new generations of Italian MPs has never created revolutionary effects. Indeed, in terms of *parliamentary career*, belonging to our two categories of MPs does not seem to matter: *Intruder* and *Female Beginner* MPs tend to have very limited success in terms of obtaining parliamentary offices (except for M5S MPs in 2013).

Moreover, *Intruder* MPs seem to have also a limited *parliamentary life expectancy*. Nonetheless, the situation partly changes if we take a closer look at *party-related* figures for *Intruders* and *Female Beginners*. For instance, in terms of re-election, apart from some noticeable exceptions (e.g., the PD and FI *Intruders* and *Beginners* in 2013–2018), belonging to the selected PPGs we have considered increases the chances of re-election, all other things being equal, compared to the entire population of *Intruders* or *Female Beginners* but also compared to the entire Lower House.

In other words, belonging to a numerous and strong PPG gives MPs a potential boost for the continuation of their career. Conversely, the picture for MPs' retirements is more puzzling, but we can again argue that—also here, considering some important exceptions—for an MP is important to belong to a powerful PPG to have more chances to continue her/his career, all other things being equal.

For instance, M5S MPs are much younger, less politically experienced, and with a stronger female component than the other relevant Parliamentary Party Groups. Nonetheless, M5S MPs with no previous party or institutional experience or M5S female MPs entering Parliament for the first time are more likely to get parliamentary offices, more likely to get re-elected, less likely to get defeated in the ballot box, and less likely to retire from politics than other politically unexperienced MPs or other female newcomer MPs. What is clear is that the emergence of a new powerful populist actor like the M5S does not seem to have established a clear innovative pattern of elite careers.

In a nutshell, the descriptive data of this last analysis are in line with a classical rule of selection of an inner circle of *career politicians* (King, 1981): belonging to a strong and powerful parliamentary party group remains important to have more chances to belong to the long-standing parliamentary elite, even when more and more people with no previous political or party-related experience are elected to Parliament. We can also speculate that the activation of some path-dependent practices of parliamentary institutionalization (Cotta, 1992; Verzichelli, 1998) and the importance of being a tenured, male, and party-rooted elite member vis-à-vis outsiders may have helped the persistence of a seniority practice (Polsby, 1968), preventing the representation at the higher institutional level of the most innovative groups of MPs.

Let us conclude by focusing on a final point. The changes in MPs' features and careers brought about by the 2013 Italian general election (and somehow continued with the 2018 general election also thanks to the numerical strength of the M5S PPG) should not simply be wiped off. In this sense, the numerosity of

¹⁶Despite not (always) appearing in the discussion of **Figures 1–7**, we have decided to devote some attention to the 1946–1948 legislature because the 1946 election of the Constituent Assembly was the first democratic election held in Italy after the fall of the Fascist dictatorship and also the first one to be held with universal male and female suffrage.

TABLE 1 | Parliamentary survival and careers (*N* and %), Italian Lower House (selected MP categories, selected parliamentary party groups, and entire House) (1946, 1976, 2013, and 2018).

		<i>N</i>	% Obtaining parliamentary offices	% Re-elected	% Defeated	% Retired
Lower House MPs 1946–1948	All MPs	581	9.6	64.2	19	15.9
	Intruders PCI	4	50	75	0	25
	Intruders DC	25	12	92	0	8
	All Intruders	67	11.9	59.7	29.9	10.4
	Female Beginners PCI	9	12.2	88.9	0	11.1
	Female Beginners DC	9	0	100	0	0
	All Female Beginners	21	9.5	90.5	0	9.5
Lower House MPs 1976–1979	All MPs	644	5.4	83.5	11.3	5.2
	Intruders PCI	14	0	92.8	7.1	0
	Intruders DC	37	0	70.3	29.7	0
	All Intruders	60	0	76.6	21.7	1.7
	Female Beginners PCI	24	0	95	0	5
	Female Beginners DC	5	0	60	0	40
	All Female Beginners	34	0	83.3	13.3	3.3
Lower house MPs 1994–1996	All MPs	639	16.9	52.9	21.0	26.1
	Intruders Progressives	22	0	45.4	27.3	27.3
	Intruders FI	73	8.2	43.8	26.0	30.2
	All Intruders	157	9.7	37.6	24.8	37.6
	Female Beginners Progr.	24	4.2	58.4	12.5	29.2
	Female Beginners FI	15	20.0	60.0	13.3	26.7
	All Female Beginners	76	6.6	48.6	13.2	38.1
Lower House MPs 2013–2018	All MPs	671	28.4	33.8	22.4	43.8
	Intruders M5S	78	26.9	62.8	10.3	26.9
	Intruders PD	29	6.9	27.2	11.7	62.1
	Intruders FI	11	9.1	27.3	27.3	45.5
	All Intruders	146	19.3	39.7	10.3	50.0
	Female Beginners M5S	36	43.3	63.9	11.1	25.0
	Female Beginners PD	82	7.1	30.5	31.7	37.8
	Female Beginners FI	10	10.0	20.0	20.0	60.0
	All Female Beginners	140	16.4	38.6	25.7	35.7

Percentages are reported in *italics*, row totals are provided in **bold** or in *italics and bold*.

Intruders and Female Beginners in 2013 and 2018 is remarkable, especially if compared to the previous critical junctures described in **Table 1**.

CONCLUSION. A LESS “SECRET GARDEN” BUT A RESILIENT “CONTROL ROOM”

Our exploration of COPEI data on the Italian Lower House parliamentary elite is only at the beginning. However, the data tackled so far allow us to discuss our conjectures and offer a first general interpretation.

The longitudinal analysis of the features and career of Italian MPs throughout more than 70 years shows that the impact

of the changes happened during the recent “decade of the crises” is significantly different from the past, both in terms of magnitude and qualitative mutations. In particular, the 2013 and 2018 Lower Houses, especially thanks to the emergence and consolidation of an innovative party like the M5S, saw a much new pattern of parliamentary elite, with important effects on the overall picture of descriptive representation and parliamentary career paths.

Starting from descriptive representation, it is very likely that the organizational evolution of the M5S (or even its possible future dissolution) will leave important legacies in the pattern of the social representation of Italian MPs. Maybe, a broader form of “domino” or “contagion” has started, and other party actors

might bring the evolution of Italian MPs to new levels. Indeed, some other more “traditional” parliamentary party groups have somewhat evolved in a direction like that of the M5S, extending their quota of young untenured (and/or) female parliamentarians or reducing the number of MPs with previous experience within political parties or representative institutions.

However, if the process of parliamentary elite selection seems to be less and less a “secret garden”, in the words of Gallagher and Marsh (1988), because more and more “ordinary citizens” can enter Parliament, our data on elite circulation tell us a different story. Indeed, there is a structural difficulty in providing the fresher generation of MPs with high rates of parliamentary survival, unless MPs belong to a powerful parliamentary party group. Clearly, as already stated, structural factors like party-system-related ones or electoral-system-related ones shall be taken into consideration as well when one evaluates changes in the career features of (specific categories of) MPs.

Finally, a much more uncertain picture emerges if one considers obtaining a parliamentary office: if we exclude the 1946–1948 period (where the Italian Republican parliamentary class was just starting to consolidate after the end of the Fascist dictatorship), there are relevant differences among different parliamentary party groups, possibly because MPs belonging to political parties that have won or lost the previous general election have partially different fates. Moreover, as a general rule of thumb, being an untenured MP without previous party-related or institutional experience is a con when getting parliamentary offices.

The insights from our descriptive study can also pave the way for a new wave of empirical research on parliamentary elites that can depart toward different directions, also thanks to the data on the Italian parliamentary elite provided by the COPEI project. For instance, what are the determinants of the selection of different types of MPs by different political parties? Is it a

matter of “populist rhetoric”? Or is there also a “contagion effect” at work here? Which is the role of stronger party leaders in this process? Another potentially yielding road to take would be precisely understanding the determinants of parliamentary elite re-selection and retirement, in line with some works on MPs’ re-candidacy for general elections (e.g., see Marino and Martocchia Diodati, 2017). Finally, it would also be interesting to understand whether the descriptive results we have sketched in this article—and hopefully also results from more inferential future pieces of research—are overlapping, and to what extent, to empirical research on other Western European countries.

We believe all these research questions can be of great interest to better understand the features and career of Italian and Western European parliamentary elites, not forgetting the central role of an alleged dying actor—the political party. Indeed, besides the rhetoric of “social mirroring” and descriptive representation brought about by populist parties and their leaders, what seems to play an important (albeit not exclusive) role in fostering Italian MPs’ career is belonging to specific powerful parliamentary party groups. As written by Michels (1915[2001], p. 234): “si cambia il maestro di cappella, ma la musica è sempre quella” (the Maestro changes, but the music is still the same).

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

LV devised the design of the study. BM and LV performed the data analysis. All authors contributed to manuscript revision, read, and approved the submitted version.

REFERENCES

- Albertazzi, D., Giovannini, A., and Seddone, A. (2018). ‘No regionalism please, we are Leghisti!’ The transformation of the Italian Lega Nord under the leadership of Matteo Salvini. *Region. Federal Stud.* 28, 645–671. doi: 10.1080/13597566.2018.1512977
- Atkinson, M. M., and Docherty, D. C. (1992). Moving right along: The roots of amateurism in the Canadian House of Commons. *CJPS/RCSP.* 25, 295–318. doi: 10.1017/S0008423900003991
- Bardi, L. (2004). “Party responses to electoral dealignment in Italy”, in *Political Parties and Electoral Change*, eds P. Mair, W. C. Müller and F. Plasser (London: Sage), 111–144.
- Bardi, L. (2007). Electoral change and its impact on the party system in Italy. *West Eur. Polit.* 30, 711–732. doi: 10.1080/01402380701500256
- Barnea, S., and Rahat, G. (2007). Reforming candidate selection methods: a three-level approach. *Party Politics* 13, 375–394. doi: 10.1177/1354068807075942
- Baumann, M., Debus, M., and Klingelhofner, T. (2017). Keeping one’s seat: the competitiveness of MP renomination in mixed-member electoral systems. *J Polit.* 79, 979–994. doi: 10.1086/690945
- Bergmann, H., Bäck, H., and Saalfeld, T. (2021). Party-system polarisation, legislative institutions and cabinet survival in 28 parliamentary democracies, 1945–2019. *West Eur Polit.* 45, 612–637. doi: 10.1080/01402382.2020.1870345
- Best, H., and Cotta, M. (eds.). (2000). *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe. 1948–2000*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Blondel, J., and Müller-Rommel, F. (2007). “Political elites”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behaviour*, eds R. J. Dalton and H. D. Klingemann (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 818–832.
- Bovens, M., and Wille, A. (2017). *Diploma Democracy. The Rise of Political Meritocracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Caiani, M., Padoan, E., and Marino, B. (2021). Candidate selection, personalization and different logics of centralization in New Southern European populism: the cases of podemos and the M5S. *Govern. Oppos.* doi: 10.1017/gov.2021.9
- Castiglione, D., and Pollack, M. (eds.). (2019). *Creating Political Presence. The New Politics of Democratic Representation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cerruto, M., Facello, C., and Raniolo, F. (2016). How has the secret garden of politics changed in Italy (1994–2015)? *Am. Behav. Sci.* 60, 869–888. doi: 10.1177/0002764216632824
- Chiaromonte, A., and Emanuele, V. (2013). “Volatile and tripolar: the new Italian party system” in *The Italian General Election of 2013*, eds L. De Sio, V. Emanuele, N. Maggini and A. Paparo (Rome: CISE), 63–68.
- Chiaromonte, A., and Emanuele, V. (2017). Party system volatility, regeneration and de-institutionalization in Western Europe (1945–2015). *Party Politics* 23, 376–388. doi: 10.1177/1354068815601330
- Coller, X., and Cordero, G. (eds.). (2018). *Democratizing Candidate Selection in Times of Crisis: New Methods, Old Receipts?*. London: Palgrave.

- Coller, X., Cordero, G., and Jaime-Castillo, A. M. (eds.). (2018). *The Selection of Politicians in Times of Crisis*. London: Routledge.
- Cordero, G., Coller, X., and Jaime-Castillo, A. M. (2018). "The effects of the great recession on candidate selection in America and Europe" in *The Selection of Politicians in Times of Crisis*, eds X. Coller, G. Cordero and A. M. Jaime-Castillo (London: Routledge), 262–277.
- Cotta, M. (1979). *Classe politica e parlamento in Italia*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Cotta, M. (1992). "Elite unification and democratic consolidation in Italy: an historical overview," in *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe*, eds J. Higley and R. Gunther (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 146–177.
- Cotta, M., and Best, H. (eds.). (2007). *The European Representative*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cotta, M., Mastropaulo, A., and Verzichelli, L. (2000). "Italy: parliamentary elite transformations along the discontinuous road of democratization", in *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe. 1948–2000*, eds H. Best and M. Cotta (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 226–269.
- Cotta, M., and Verzichelli, L. (2007). *Political Institutions in Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Di Palma, G. (1977). "Christian democracy: the end of hegemony", in *Italy at the Polls: The Parliamentary Elections of 1976*. ed H. R. Penniman (Washington: American Enterprise Institute), 123–153.
- Duncan, O. D., and Duncan, B. (1955). A methodological analysis of segregation indexes. *Am. Sociol. Rev.* 20, 210–217. doi: 10.2307/2088328
- Farneti, P. (1978). "Social conflict, parliamentary fragmentation, institutional shift and the rise of fascism", in *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*. ed J. J. Linz (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press), 3–31.
- Freire, A., Barragán, M., Coller, X., Lisi, M., and Tsatsanis, E. (eds.). (2020). *Political Representation in Southern Europe and Latin America*. London: Routledge.
- Galasso, V., and Nannicini, T. (2011). Competing on good politicians. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 105, 79–99. doi: 10.1017/S0003055410000535
- Gallagher, M., and Marsh, M. (eds.). (1988). *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective: The Secret Garden of Politics*. London: Sage.
- Gouglas, A., Katz, G., Maddens, B., and Brans, M. (2021). Transformational party events and legislative turnover in West European democracies, 1945–2015. *Party Polit.* 27, 1211–1222. doi: 10.1177/1354068820944703
- Hazan, R. Y., and Rahat, G. (2006). The Influence of candidate selection methods on legislatures and legislators: theoretical propositions, methodological suggestions and empirical evidence. *J. Legis. Stud.* 12, 366–385. doi: 10.1080/13572330600875647
- Ignazi, P. (2017). *Party and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ivaldi, G., Lanzone, M. E., and Woods, D. (2017). Varieties of populism across a left-right spectrum: the case of the front national, the northern league, Podemos and five star movement. *Swiss Polit. Sci. Rev.* 23, 354–376. doi: 10.1111/spsr.12278
- Kakepaki, M., Kountouri, F., Coller, X., and Verzichelli, L. (2018). "The socio-political profile of parliamentary representatives in Greece, Italy and Spain before and after the 'Eurocrisis': a comparative empirical assessment", in *Democratizing Candidate Selection in Times of Crisis: New Methods, Old Receipts?*, eds X. Coller and G. Cordero (London: Palgrave), 175–200.
- Karremans, J., and Lefkofridi, Z. (2020). Responsive versus responsible? Party democracy in times of crisis. *Party Polit.* 26, 271–279. doi: 10.1177/1354068818761199
- King, A. (1981). The rise of the career politician in Britain and its consequences. *Br. J. Polit. Sci.* 11, 249–285. doi: 10.1017/S0007123400002647
- Lanza, O., and Piazza, G. (2002). I Parlamentari di Forza Italia: un Gruppo a Sostegno di una Leadership? *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica* 32, 425–457. doi: 10.1017/S0048840200030379
- Mair, P. (2013). *Ruling the Void*. London: Verso.
- Marino, B., and Martocchia Diodati, N. (2017). Masters of their fate? Explaining MPs' re-candidacy in the long run: the case of Italy (1987–2013). *Elect. Stud.* 48, 1–9. doi: 10.1016/j.electstud.2017.05.001
- Marino, B., Martocchia Diodati, N., and Verzichelli, L. (2019). "Members of the Chamber of Deputies" in *The Italian General Election of 2018*, eds L. Ceccarini and J. L. Newell (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 271–295.
- Marino, B., Martocchia Diodati, N., and Verzichelli, L. (2021). "Candidate selection, personalization of politics, and political careers. Insights from Italy (2006–2016)", in *New Paths for Selecting Political Elites. Investigating the impact of inclusive Candidate and Party Leader Selection Methods*, eds G. Sandri and A. Seddone (London: Routledge), 82–105.
- Matland, R. E., and Studlar, D. T. (2004). Determinants of legislative turnover: a cross-national analysis. *Br. J. Polit. Sci.* 34, 87–108. doi: 10.1017/S000712340300036X
- Michels, R. (1915[2001]). *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. Kitchener: Batoche Books.
- Newton, K., and Norris, P. (2000). "Confidence in public institutions: faith, culture or performance?" in *Disaffected Democracies: What's Troubling the Trilateral Countries?* eds S. J. Pharr and R. D. Putnam (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 52–73.
- Paolucci, C. (1999). Forza Italia a livello locale: un marchio in franchising? *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica* 29, 481–516. doi: 10.1017/S0048840200028926
- Papavero, L. (2009). "Donne e rappresentanza parlamentare nell'Italia repubblicana," *La Cultura Italiana, Quinto volume: Struttura della società, valori e politica*, eds A. Bonomi, N. Pasini, and S. Bertolino (Turin: UTET), 296–321.
- Parry, G. (1969). *Political Elites*. New York, NY: Allen and Unwin.
- Petrarca, C. S., Giebler, H., and Weßels, B. (2022). Support for insider parties: the role of political trust in a longitudinal-comparative perspective. *Party Polit.* 28, 329–341. doi: 10.1177/1354068820976920
- Pinto, L., and Pedrazzani, A. (2015). "From 'citizens' to members of parliament: the elected representatives in the parliamentary arena", in *Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement: Organisation, Communication and Ideology*. ed F. Tronconi (Farnham: Ashgate), 99–125.
- Polsby, N. (1968). The institutionalization of the U.S. house of representatives. *Am. Poli. Sci. Rev.* 62, 144–168. doi: 10.2307/1953331
- Putnam, R. D. (1976). *The Comparative Study of Political Elites*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Roberts, K. M. (2017). "Populism and political parties," in *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds C. Rovira-Kaltwasser, P. Taggart, and P. O. Espejo (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 287–304.
- Russo, F. (2022). *MPs' Roles and Representation: Orientations, Incentives and Behaviours in Italy*. Abingdon and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Russo, F., and Verzichelli, L. (2020). "Representation in the Italian parliament," in *Political Representation in Southern Europe and Latin America*, eds A. Freire, M. Barragán, X. Coller, M. Lisi, and E. Tsatsanis (London: Routledge), 50–65.
- Sandri, G., and Venturino, F. (2020). Party organization and intra-party democracy in Italy. *Contemp. Ital. Polit.* 12, 443–460. doi: 10.1080/23248823.2020.1838867
- Sartori, G. (1976). *Parties and Party Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sartori, G., and Somogyi, S. (1963). *Il Parlamento Italiano, 1946–1963*. Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane.
- Stockemer, D., and Sundström, A. (2018). Age representation in parliaments: can institutions pave the way for the young? *Eur. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 10, 467–490. doi: 10.1017/S1755773918000048
- Tormey, S. (2015). *The End of Representative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tronconi, F. (eds.). (2015). *Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement: Organisation, Communication and Ideology*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Verzichelli, L. (1994). Gli Eletti. *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica* 24, 715–739. doi: 10.1017/S0048840200023261
- Verzichelli, L. (1998). The parliamentary elite in transition. *Eur. J. Polit. Res.* 34, 121–150. doi: 10.1111/1475-6765.00401
- Verzichelli, L. (2010). *Vivere di Politica. Come (non) cambiano le carriere politiche in Italia*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Verzichelli, L. (2018). "Degradable elites? Modes and factors of parliamentary turnover in Europe in the early twenty-first century," in *The Contested Status*

- of *Political Elite: At the Crossroad*, eds L. Vogel, R. Gebauer, and A. Salheiser (London: Routledge), 87–107.
- Vittori, D. (2021). Which organization for which party? An organizational analysis of the five-star movement. *Contemp. Italian Polit.* 13, 31–48. doi: 10.1080/23248823.2020.1853373
- Wertmann, D. (1988). “Italy: local involvement, central control,” in *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective: The Secret Garden of Politics*, eds M. Gallagher and M. Marsh (London: Sage), 145–168.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher’s Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

Copyright © 2022 Verzichelli, Marino, Marangoni and Russo. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.



Forwards-Backwards: Internal Party Democracy in Irish Political Parties

Theresa Reidy*

Department of Government and Politics, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland

OPEN ACCESS

Edited by:

Guillermo Cordero,
Autonomous University of
Madrid, Spain

Reviewed by:

Pierre Baudewyns,
Catholic University of
Louvain, Belgium
Carles Pamies,
Universidad Nacional de Educación a
Distancia (UNED), Spain

*Correspondence:

Theresa Reidy
t.reidy@ucc.ie

Specialty section:

This article was submitted to
Elections and Representation,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Political Science

Received: 07 January 2022

Accepted: 31 May 2022

Published: 30 June 2022

Citation:

Reidy T (2022) Forwards-Backwards:
Internal Party Democracy in Irish
Political Parties.
Front. Polit. Sci. 4:850607.
doi: 10.3389/fpos.2022.850607

All political parties want candidates that will win elections but electability is an elusive trait and how it is understood, and pursued varies greatly. Political parties have formal rules, and informal practices and preferences, for selecting candidates and these tend to be dynamic, changing from election to election as parties review their performance and respond to changes in the political and legal environment. Generally, the last thirty years has witnessed a drift toward greater internal party democracy as party members have been given more extensive roles in important decisions such as selecting candidates for election. Ireland is an interesting case study that on the surface embraced internal party democracy (IPD) at an early point. All the major parties have empowered party members to vote for candidates at district level selection conventions. But closer inspection reveals that decision making remains highly qualified with party elites retaining decisive influence over the criteria which structure decisions by party members. Multi-seat constituencies, party finance rules and more recently the introduction of a legally binding gender quota mean that internal party democracy is far more constrained than the widespread adoption of one member, one vote and constituency level selection conventions might suggest. However, even the modest changes in the power balance in selection has contributed to an evolving profile of candidates at Irish general elections.

Keywords: candidate selection, one member, one vote, gender quotas, Irish elections, party finance laws, PR-STV

INTRODUCTION

Internationally, there has been a drift toward greater internal party democracy over the last thirty years. Political parties faced with declining and aging memberships sought new methods of involving their members in policy formulation and decision making (Bille, 2001; Cross and Katz, 2013; Coller et al., 2018). Empowering party members in the selection of candidates for election (Rahat and Hazan, 2001) and in the process of choosing the party leader (Cross et al., 2016) became common reforms. More recently, political parties from the far left and far right have embraced radical member based organizational structures in recent waves of party formation and reinvention (Vittori, 2022).

The onward march of internal party democracy (IPD) is part reality, part illusion among political parties in the Republic of Ireland (hereafter Ireland). Parties enthusiastically involved members in decision making from the 1990s. The Green Party and Fine Gael were early innovators and diffusion to all the established parties followed within two decades. But the democratization reforms are undermined by widely used powers that party elites retain to set the parameters of selection decisions. Most democratic political parties hold some central candidate selection and de-selection powers but in the Irish case, these powers are used frequently and motivated by an incentive structure that includes the electoral system, party finance rules, and legally binding gender quotas.

Party members have limited scope for independent decision making and when they do attempt innovation, they often find their decisions controversial and resisted (Weeks, 2008; Reidy, 2016).

Electoral competition in Ireland tended to follow a stable pattern for much of the twentieth century as can be seen from the election results presented in **Table 1**. Ireland uses Proportional Representation by the Single Transferable Vote (PR-STV) as its electoral system. With its multi-seat constituencies, party elites in larger parties always recruit more than one candidate per constituency in the hope of winning multiple seats. Candidate selection procedures are thus complex; and geography, candidate age and gender, and party succession planning are among the criteria that feature in decision making.

Changing patterns of electoral competition coincided, and no doubt contributed to internal party reforms in the established parties, many enhancing IPD (see Barnea and Rahat, 2007). And this is also a period in which the legal and institutional political landscape began to evolve. Successive political corruption scandals led to major revisions in the laws governing party financing (Byrne, 2013). The economic crisis after 2008 also generated interest in the operation of the political system and led to further important changes relating to party finance, this time directly connected to the representation of women. A candidate gender quota linked state funding of political parties to improved female candidate selection and created a financial imperative for parties to ensure that party tickets had a minimum of 30% women candidates. Candidate gender quotas were first used at the 2016 general election and the quota will increase to 40 percent in any election after 2023. Parties receive state funding in two forms and the funding linked to the gender quota accounts for slightly more than half of the state funds that parties receive. Any party that does not meet the gender quota loses 50% of their potential funding under this allocation. The low levels of female candidacy across most parties meant party elites became significantly more interventionist in candidate selection processes from 2016 onwards.

The number of candidates seeking election was fairly stable until 2011, oscillating in the high 400s. The 2008 economic crisis led to an EU and IMF bailout in 2010 which brought about a

sharp increase in interest in governance and a corresponding increase in candidate numbers. Five hundred and sixty six candidates contested the 2011 election. Candidacy has trended downwards since 2011 but it remains above the norm set from 1992 to 2007. **Table 1** provides an overview of candidate patterns, and also the number of candidates elected for each party. There are some important trends in the table. Political fragmentation has increased and the numbers of candidates being put forward by parties has changed noticeably. Parties of the center left (Labour, Sinn Féin, Green Party, Social Democrats) have been increasing their candidate numbers while parties of the centre right (Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael) are clearly contracting. Combined, centre right parties selected 202 candidates in 1997 and this had dropped to 166 in 2020. In contrast, parties of the centre left selected just 85 candidates in 1997 and this had risen to 169 in 2020.

Independents (non-party) candidates are an unusual feature of Irish elections, they are not considered in this analysis as they do not go through a selection process.

This article will proceed with its analysis organized around two research questions presented in section two. Thereafter section three presents a short note on the data sources used and section four provides an overview of formal party rules and practices to demonstrate that there was a notable diffusion of democratic candidate selection methods in the main political parties and to set the scene for the research. Section 5 uses interviews and party data from elections in the last decade to highlight the changing balance of internal party democracy between members and elites and to concretely demonstrate the limits of the democratization reforms highlighting the limiting institutional factors at work and unpacking the overlapping and conflicting dynamics. The analysis proceeds to demonstrate that despite the limits of the democratization reforms, patterns of candidate selection have evolved and candidate profile data from 1997 to 2020 are analyzed.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

All political parties want candidates that can win elections. But the method to deliver the most electable candidates and

TABLE 1 | Candidates elected and candidates selected by party 1997–2020.

	1997	2002	2007	2011	2016	2020
Fianna Fáil	77–112	81–106	78–107	20–75	44–71	38–84
Fine Gael	54–90	31–85	51–91	76–104	50–88	35–82
Sinn Féin	1–15	5–37	4–41	14–41	23–50	37–42
Green Party	2–26	6–31	6–44	0–43	2–40	12–39
Labour	17–44	21–46	20–50	37–69	7–36	6–31
Sol-PBP	-	-	-	4–20	6–31	5–37
Social democrats	-	-	-	-	3–14	6–20
Number of women elected	20–166	22–166	22–166	25–166	35–158	36–160

Source: *How Ireland Voted Book Series 1997–2020*.

Note: The first figure in each box is the number of TDs (members of parliament) elected for the party and the second figure is the number of candidates that contested the election for the party.

what makes a candidate electable remains the subject of heated debate, discussion and experimentation within political parties and political science.

Beginning with the process of candidate selection, Rahat and Hazan (2001) presented a four dimensional classification system for analyzing selection methods which included rules governing standing for a party, who gets to make the candidate selection decisions, at what level of political organization and finally how are the candidates formally selected (appointment or voting). Candidacy rights determine who can be chosen to present as a candidate for selection by a political party. For example must the candidate be a party member, are there restrictions related to residency within a state. The selectorate is the name given to the group of people who make the selection decision. Including all party members, or indeed all voters, placed a party on the inclusive end of the Rahat and Hazan scale while rules which rested decision making with party elites or the party leader placed the party on the exclusive end. The third consideration of the model was the level at which selection choices were made. The centralized end of the scale involved decision making at the national level within the party while decentralized decisions were taken by members at the district or constituency level. And the final dimension looked at whether decision making was by appointment or voting. This framework informs the presentation of IPD in Irish parties in section four.

The question of who gets chosen as a candidate and why has generated one of the most rich and comprehensive literatures, especially in relation to gendered aspects of political recruitment. This review highlights research on the impact of specific institutional factors on IPD, the electoral system, gender quotas and party finance before also looking at how the revealed preferences of selectors can be used to infer insights in the absence of available data.

In relation to electoral systems, Marsh (1981) elaborated on the complexities presented when an electoral system requires parties to run more than one candidate in a constituency. How this practice is managed and evolves as party support changes is essential to understanding the management of candidate selection. Hazan and Voerman (2006) have argued although electoral systems may not be “causal” to the understanding of outcomes of selection processes, they do play a role. They highlighted candidate centered electoral systems as especially important.

Rahat et al. (2008) posit that there may be an inverse relationship between inclusive selection procedures and the representativeness of the candidates chosen for election (see also Rahat, 2009). This is especially important to note as increased IPD may be making it more difficult for women and minority candidates to emerge. Wauters and Pilet (2015) expand on this point in relation to the election of women leaders arguing that direct membership votes require appeals to large audiences and often greater financial resources to campaign, points which both mitigate against the success of women leadership candidates. They point out that these arguments can also be expanded to those with lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This point is picked up in the examination of candidate backgrounds in the penultimate section. Bjarnegård and Kenny (2016) also highlight

the decentralized aspect of selection processes and argue that local influence over selection contributes to the continued over selection of male candidates.

The field consensus points toward enhanced IPD creating obstacles to the selection of women candidates and potentially impeding other forms of diversity. Many countries have sought to counter low levels of female candidacy with different forms of gender quotas which have become widespread in the last three decades (Hughes et al., 2019). Support for quotas tends to be variable across groups but overall tends to be low (Keenan and McElroy, 2017). Gender quotas interact with internal candidate selection procedures in that they are directional toward the selection of women in most cases (Bjarnegård and Kenny, 2015). Thus, they can limit the freedom of party selectorates. This is especially the case with quota structures that contain financial penalties for failure. If a political party loses resources when it does not meet a quota requirement, strong incentives are created for the party to adopt internal candidate selection procedures that ensure quota targets are met. Across the democratic world, political parties have become heavily reliant on state financing as personal and corporate donations have been heavily regulated.

Party finance rules have notable implications for impact on their strategic priorities of parties. Cross and Katz (2013, p. 3) unpack a variety of these interacting dynamics in their discussion of how IPD is “constrained by state imposed party laws.” The analysis in this article is particularly concerned with the ways in which party funding laws and the legislative gender quota interact with IPD in Irish political parties.

Drawing these threads together leads to a conceptualization of overlapping dynamics where parties internally favor and enact reforms to enhance IPD but these reforms exist within a wider institutional and legislative framework which often constrains or pushes back against IPD (see **Figure 1**).

How these interacting forces impact on the motivations and the decisions made by selectors is a much more open question. Gallagher and Marsh (1988) described candidate selection as the “secret garden” of politics. While some research over the intervening period has revealed how power is distributed within parties, how this distribution has evolved and the consequences for parties remains an important knowledge gap. Strøm (2005) unpacks the dynamics of internal decision making in parties and highlights the information asymmetries at play when parties delegate decisions on candidate selection to party members who may not be fully informed on strategic objectives or indeed immediate requirements. The motivations, priorities and knowledge profiles of party selectors remain substantially obscure. Bochel and Denver (1983) revealed the interplay of selector and candidate ideology, and conceptions of electability. More recently Vandeleene et al. (2016) noted a strong preference among selectors in Belgian political parties for experienced candidates. It is complex to survey party members most especially because parties rarely want to share their inner deliberations with competitors, so the few studies which have been conducted provide valuable insights which can be pursued more widely, although imperfectly, using other forms of data. Thus, the experience, gender and professional profiles of candidates are often observed closely to understand indirectly the preferences of

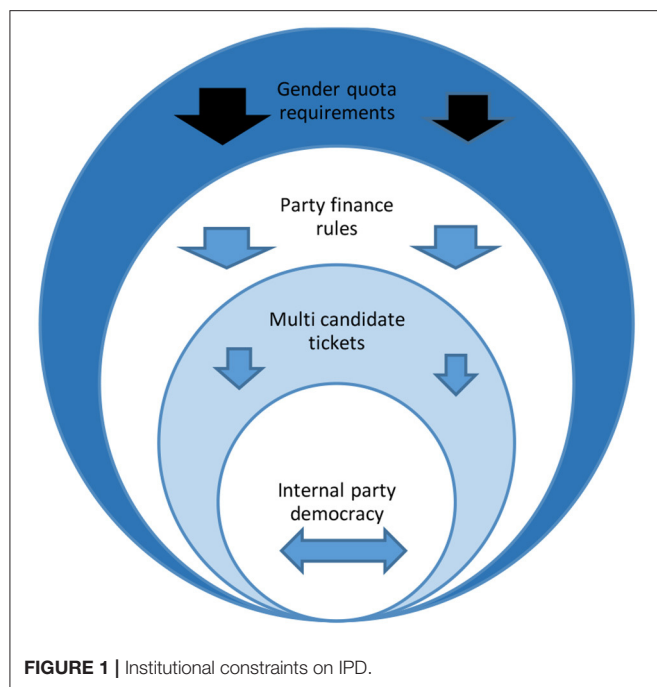


FIGURE 1 | Institutional constraints on IPD.

selectors and how they might be changing. The effect of greater IPD (Galligan, 1999) and the impact of major political crises and events (Kakepaki et al., 2018) on the preferences of selectors can be tracked on one level through observing the outcomes of their decisions in the form of the socioeconomic and demographic profiles of candidates and this is done in the penultimate section.

Bringing the strands in the literature together leads to two central questions guiding this Irish case study:

RQ1: How have institutional factors and legislative changes impacted internal party democracy in Irish political parties?

RQ2: What have been the consequences of these changes for the representativeness of candidates at general elections?

METHOD AND DATA

The research draws on three data sources. In the first instance, IPD in Irish parties is described using party constitutions and rule books. Details of each document are included in the reference list. Interviews with party strategists, candidates and party members are used to interrogate the countervailing democratizing-centralizing dynamics at play. The interview data were collected after the general elections in 2011, 2016, and 2020. Interviews were not recorded but extensive contemporaneous notes from each were taken. Interviewees are not identified given the sensitivity of the strategic party decisions discussed in the research but a list with relevant party labels is included in **Appendix 1**. Evidence from these two sets of sources are used to address RQ1.

To evaluate the changing profile of candidates selected to contest elections in Ireland (RQ2), data on candidate characteristics are presented. An average of 500 candidates contested each of the elections and the gender, occupation

TABLE 2 | Year of adoption of one member, one vote by parties.

Political party and year of foundation	Year of adoption of one member, one vote for candidate selection
Fianna Fail (1926)	2012
Fine Gael (1934)	1996
Green Party (1988)	1997
Labour Party (1912)	2001
Sinn Féin (1986) ⁱ	.. ⁱⁱ
Social democrats (2015)	2016
Solidarity-People Before Profit (1996 and 2005)	Unknown

ⁱ 1986 is not the year of foundation for Sinn Féin, it is the year in which the party ended its policy of abstention from parliament in the Republic of Ireland and opened the way for the party to contest elections.

ⁱⁱ Specific date unavailable from the party.

and family link in politics information are mostly available for each candidate from the five preceding general elections. The occupation classification used is drawn from the *How Ireland Voted* book series and the data were collected initially as part of the research for the book series. The move to one member, one vote at selection conventions started in the 1990s and with some interruptions, data from elections over the period 1997–2020 are presented and any change in the profile of candidates could be expected to be evident over the elections covered in the research.

Table 2 provides a list of parties included in the analysis with the year in which they adopted one member, one vote as their method of candidate selection. The year of party formation is included in brackets for information.

INTERNAL DEMOCRATIZATION

In common with parties across the world, Irish political parties began enfranchising their members more extensively in candidate selection, leader selection, and policy development from the 1990s. There was notable diffusion of democratization patterns among the parties thereafter. Up to this point, selection decisions were usually taken at constituency level but with a restricted franchise operating, the branch delegate model being the most common approach. Usually each branch of the party within the constituency nominated a number of delegates to vote at the selection convention. Most parties had rules about the duration of existence for branches, the number of delegates usually varied from two to four and they were generally drawn from the officer board of the branch.

Fine Gael and the Green Party were the first of the established parties to introduce the system of one member, one vote at selection conventions. Fine Gael initiated the change in 1996 and used the process for its selections at the 1997 general election (Galligan, 1999) while the Green Party codified the procedure in its 1997 constitution (Bolleyer, 2010; Green Party Constitution). The Labour Party adopted one member, one vote in 2001 but it did not use the process for general elections until 2007 (see Galligan, 1999). Of the mainstream, established

parties, Fianna Fáil retained the delegate model the longest. Traditional in outlook and in operation, the party engaged in widespread internal reform at its 2012 national party conference. The impetus for reform came from a catastrophic election defeat in 2011 when the party lost almost three quarters of its members of parliament and its long dominant position in politics. In addition to instituting one member, one vote for candidate selection, the 2012 party conference also voted to give members an important role in the election of the party leader (Fianna Fáil, 2016; Reidy, 2016).

Among the more recent party additions to the electoral competition arena, internal democratic procedures have also been widely adopted. Sinn Féin is a difficult party to study and is generally reticent about engaging with political science research. The party did not contest general elections until the late 1980s and reports that it used one member, one vote thereafter (correspondence with party strategist). The Social Democrats were founded by three TDs (MPs) in 2015. The party used informal procedures to select candidates at its first general election in February 2016 but one member, one vote was formally instituted in the party's first constitution which was adopted in late 2016 (Social Democrats Constitution, 2021). Solidarity-People Before Profit is a fluid electoral alliance of two main groups which emerged from the Socialist Party and the Socialist Workers Party, respectively. Their cooperation works at a number of levels but they retain separate organizational structures and procedures for determining their electoral and candidate strategies. Both sides of the alliance use one member, one vote at constituency level selection conventions. While the parties have rulebooks governing procedures, interviews with party candidates confirmed that selection decisions are rarely contested and an informal approach is taken to decision making (PBP candidate interview, 2020).

Irish political parties apply a common threshold requiring candidates to become members of the party and some also require candidates to sign a party pledge (Fianna Fáil) with policy compatibility assessed by interview in a small number (Labour, Social Democrats, Sinn Féin). For party selectors, membership is a criterion for exercising voting rights and again there is some variation in the duration of membership required (from 6 months to 2 years).

As parties reformed and codified their electoral procedures, many also formally adopted PR-STV as the electoral system for selecting candidates at conventions. While this had been in use by some parties (Fine Gael, Labour) preceding the 1990s, it was not used by all in part because of the small numbers of voters and decisions. Research investigating candidate decision making noted that parties reported increased attendance at selection conventions following moves toward wider enfranchisement (Galligan, 1999; Reidy, 2016).

Following the Rahat and Hazan (2001) classification system, Irish political parties generally have quite inclusive candidacy requirements and the parties are mostly inclusive and decentralized in their approaches to their selectorates and the use of constituency level candidate selection conventions. Parties also have clear voting and ratification rules. These findings on the surface suggests a strong level of internal party democracy.

But closer investigation reveals that decision making is highly qualified with party elites retaining decisive influence over the rules which structure decisions by party members. All of the political parties retained decision making functions for party elites during their reform phases. Political parties had, and have, procedures in place to determine the overall electoral strategy of the party and concretely in the area of candidate selection, each party has a system in place for adding or de-selecting candidates (see party constitutions). The addition of candidates is a power that all parties use, some with regularity, while de-selection is rarely employed (Reidy, 2021). Parties also have procedures to ratify the full slate of candidates. Thus, while there is evidence of drift toward empowerment of party members in selection decision making, it is qualified and next, the role of institutional factors in shaping the constrained empowerment of members is evaluated in more detail.

COUNTERVAILING SELECTION DYNAMICS

This section is concerned with the countervailing incentives emanating from the electoral rules and institutions that act against the drift toward internal party democracy. The introduction and analytical framework identified three important factors shaping the power centralizing incentives of party elites in Ireland: the electoral system, gender quotas and party finance rules. In this part of the analysis, each of these is examined, and interviews with party elites and candidates from elections in 2011, 2016, and 2020 are used to highlight the dynamics at play.

Electoral System

The use of PR-STV with its multi-seat constituencies means that medium to large parties can potentially win more than one seat in a constituency and thus need to engage in strategic assessments of how many candidates they should run. That the electoral system also allows voters to choose among both parties and candidates is a further complicating feature and leads to parties taking account of a suite of local factors including geography, succession planning, incumbency, and political factions. These aspects have been a perennial feature of party decisions on candidate numbers (Marsh, 1981; Weeks, 2008). Parties may lose seats through selecting too many candidates and may also lose seats by not having enough candidates in the race (Gallagher, 1980). Thus, party calculations are complex and furthermore evolve as the election approaches and opinion poll numbers crystallize levels of party support. Changes close to the election rarely involve members and party rules facilitate elite-led decisions as rapid decision making is often required.

Typically Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, the two largest parties, deployed multi candidate tickets at elections. As party support levels fluctuated up and down, Labour and Sinn Féin also ran more than one candidate in a small number of constituencies. Decisions on candidate numbers are in the first instance taken by the electoral strategy committees in all parties. Interviews with party strategists confirm a similar approach to decisions with reviews of opinion poll patterns, performance at the

preceding election, available candidates, especially incumbents and geography all featuring as the party determines how many candidates should contest each constituency. Party strategists often report direct engagement with regional and local branch structures to secure the views of local party activists and ensure that they have a direct input into national strategy (Interviews with Fine Gael strategists, 2016, 2020; Interviews with Fianna Fáil strategists 2016, 2020). The final decision, known as the candidate directive, is communicated to the local constituency organization and critically, structures the decision to be made by members.

The unusual features of the electoral system combined with localist tendencies in politics mean that party elites have a strong incentive to carefully configure the parameters of constituency level selection conventions. Furthermore, on rare occasions, the strategy teams may have already decided on candidates that they will add to the ticket irrespective of the decisions taken locally. Party mergers and the defection of candidates from other parties have occasionally provided clear examples of candidates added by parties centrally where it was clearly expected that they would not have been successful in coming through a local selection convention.

In Ireland's localist political culture, voters and party selectors, favor candidates from their constituency and successive waves of the Irish election study have also demonstrated that a track record of constituency work is valued (Marsh et al., 2008; Farrell et al., 2018). Thus, the geographic location of candidates within constituencies is an important criterion, this has often led party elites to further qualify the candidate directive with additional geographic requirements, obliging that the selectors choose candidates from specific areas. Since the introduction of gender quotas, discussed later, gender has also become an additional qualifying criterion.

To illustrate the complexity produced by multi-seat constituencies, two cases are worth highlighting, over selection by Fianna Fáil in 2011 and under selection by Sinn Féin in 2020. Fianna Fáil experienced a dramatic collapse in support in the years preceding the 2011 general election. The party leader changed just weeks before the election, there was a sharp increase in retirements of incumbents and party tickets were in flux until the close of nominations. Party elites struggled to manage candidate numbers. The party had selected a large number of candidates at conventions but as poll numbers declined, it became evident that the party had far too many candidates on its ticket. Although retirements close to the election helped reduce numbers to 75 candidates, this was still largely judged to have been many more than would normally be run by a party polling at <20 percent (Gallagher, 2021). Interviews with party strategists confirmed that the party worked to reduce candidate numbers by encouraging some candidates to move constituencies and others to stand down. However, in the midst of an electoral meltdown, although party elites retained official power to de-select candidates, in practice it could not do so as this would only have contributed to the febrile political atmosphere (Interview with Fianna Fáil strategist, 2011). Ultimately the party won just 17.4 percent of the vote, down from 41.6 percent in 2007. In candidate and seat terms, just 19 of the 75 candidates that contested the election were elected, a success

rate of 25 percent. While in 2007, 77 of the party's 106 candidates were elected, a success rate of 75 percent (Gallagher, 2008, 2011, see also **Table 1**). Over selection was certainly a component of the party's woes in 2011, it had too many candidates for its reduced circumstances.

In contrast, Sinn Féin entered the 2020 elections with too few candidates to maximize returns on its rapidly rising poll numbers. Party strategists discussed how a poor performance in the local and European Parliament elections and weak poll figures encouraged the party to take a conservative approach to election preparations (Interview with Sinn Féin strategist, 2020). The party did not contest one constituency, selected two candidates in just four constituencies and had one in all other constituencies. Many of the selection decisions had been taken up to 2 years before the election. Indicative of internal concerns about a possible poor performance, in some cases candidates that stood down before the election were not replaced (Reidy, 2021). This was a serious strategic error. Polling numbers tracked upwards as election day approached and the party found itself with too few candidates in the race. Eighty eight percent of Sinn Féin candidates were elected in 2020 (37 of 42 candidates). This contrasts with the party's success rate of 46 percent in the preceding election in 2016 (Gallagher, 2016).

The Fianna Fáil (2011) and Sinn Féin (2020) cases provide insights into extreme examples of how parties can both over-select and under-select candidates. Fluctuating poll numbers when combined with a highly proportionate electoral system mean that decisions on the number of candidates to select can be complex and subject to sharp misalignment especially if party support levels vary as the election approaches. This dynamic provides a strong incentive for party elites to retain important decision levers in relation to overall candidate numbers.

Gender Quotas

The slow pace of improvement in the gender profile of parliamentarians became a notable part of a debate on political reform in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crash. While the gender profile of candidates was mentioned by party strategists in interviews at the 2011 election, it was clearly not an immediate priority shaping decisions. Acknowledged as generally important by the center right Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, they did little in concrete terms to change the overall balance in their candidate slates. After the selection conventions were complete, Fianna Fáil added one woman and Fine Gael two women to their overall candidate tickets, marginal increases on already quite low numbers of women candidates in 2011 (see Buckley and McGing, 2011). The left leaning parties were more proactive and Labour, Sinn Féin and the Green Party had local branches seek out potential female candidates and had been emphasizing gender balance in internal decisions for some years (Buckley and McGing, 2011; Reidy, 2011; see also Labour Party Constitution, 2017; Social Democrats Constitution, 2021).

By 2016, the selection context on gender had been transformed with the introduction of legislative gender quotas. The financial penalties accruing if a party failed to meet the 30% threshold of candidates from both genders (essentially a female gender quota) were such that all parties actively deployed

strategies to improve gender balance. **Table 5** provides an overview of the evolving gender profile of candidates. The parties began by taking direct action at the 2014 local elections when there was a notable emphasis on selecting female candidates. Parties on the left of the spectrum were considerably more successful in achieving their own gender targets with Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael failing to meet even their own internal criteria (see Buckley and McGing, 2011). As the 2016 election approached, parties deployed more structured interventions with training courses and dedicated campaign supports for women offered widely. However, these softer approaches were insufficient especially for the larger center right duo which had sizable numbers of incumbent male MPs and longstanding candidates. Thus, direct intervention by elites in selection decisions increased notably for the 2016 selection cycle.

Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil issued five gender directives each to selection conventions for the 2016 general election. These varied in specifics but all required that at least one woman be selected. Some of the gender directives proved very controversial and the legislation was challenged in the higher courts in the run up to the election. In addition to using their powers to structure decisions at constituency selection conventions, parties also directly added candidates to the party ticket. Fifty six percent of the candidates added by Fianna Fáil were women, sixty percent of Fine Gael additions were women (Buckley et al., 2016; Reidy, 2016). While party strategists in Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael refuted the assertion that the sharp increase in the addition of women candidates by party elites close to the election was a purely expedient exercise in ensuring that they were compliant with the gender quota legislation, they did agree that a more interventionist approach to candidate selection had been required throughout the selection cycle as a result of the gender quota laws. Ultimately both parties met the quota barely (Fianna Fáil at 31%; Fine Gael at 30.7%).

The left leaning smaller parties had stronger gender balance among their incumbents going into the election and this partly explains their somewhat smoother selection seasons. Nevertheless, the parties were not complacent about reaching the target and many wanted to exceed the target as a matter of political intent. The Labour Party required gender balance in all constituencies where it ran more than one candidate and additionally prioritized selection of women candidates. Sinn Féin had a “gender intervention process” devised in advance of the election and this resulted in one gender directive at a selection convention and two thirds of its additions (of a total of three) were women. The Social Democrats had three incumbents entering the 2016 election and two of these were women. This strong gender profile was replicated in the wider ticket of candidates and the party ultimately fielded a slate with 43% women candidates. The Green Party reported few problems with the gender quota but in interviews stressed that it was kept under review throughout the election cycle (Interview with director elections, 2016). The Solidarity-People Before Profit Alliance tends to have a high turnover of candidates at each election and both constituent parties performed well on gender balance with 42 percent women candidates (see Buckley et al., 2016 and Reidy, 2016 for a longer discussion).

By the time candidate selections were initiated for the 2020 general election, the discourse around gender balance had

become more firmly embedded in politics. The 2016 general election exit poll also demonstrated a high level of public support for the measure which party strategists reported as helpful in advancing discussions especially at the 2019 local and European Parliament elections. Although this point contrasts with a view that generally there is low support among publics for legal positive action measures (Coffé and Reiser, 2021). Fianna Fáil strategists noted that there was considerably less direct resistance to requirements for gender balance on party tickets and Fine Gael strategists also reported the need for less direct intervention. Nevertheless, neither party advanced its candidate gender balance at the election selecting 31 percent and 30.5 percent female candidates, respectively. For the Labour Party and Sinn Féin, the picture was one of deterioration with both parties running lower percentages of women candidates than in 2016. These figures are important because the gender quota is due to rise to 40 percent at elections after 2023 and thus party elites are likely to need to resort to 2016 style interventions as the election approaches, providing gender directives and disproportionately adding women candidates to tickets.

The evidence suggests that the gender quota provided a direct impetus for party elites to become more interventionist in selection decision making in 2016. Selectorates were required to pick female candidates in some instances while in others party elites bypassed selectorates and made direct candidate decisions. Direct interventions reduced in 2020 but were still a notable feature of decision making. Thus, while party selectors play a part in the selection of women candidates, these decisions are often directly structured, and supplemented by party elites. The financial penalties faced by parties that do not meet the quota requirements are sufficiently onerous that all parties prioritize gender in the candidate selection process, sometimes at the expense of electability.

Party Finance Rules

The large parties in the system are affected by decisions on the number of candidates to run in each constituency and with larger numbers of incumbent male candidates, they also struggle more with reaching gender quota requirements. Smaller parties however are more directly influenced by party finance laws in their candidate selection decision making. The legal framework governing the funding of political parties was updated significantly in 1997. Parties became eligible for funding in proportion to the number of first preference votes they received subject to meeting a two percent minimum threshold. Individual and corporate donations to political parties and candidates are heavily restricted and parties are largely dependent on the state for funding their activities. As a result, there is a financial imperative for small parties to reach the two percent funding threshold.

All parties seek to maximize the number of votes they get but many smaller parties highlighted the two percent threshold as being an explicit motivating factor in shaping selection strategies (Interviews with Green Party strategists, 2011, 2016; Social Democrats, 2016; Solidarity-People Before Profit, 2020). The Green Party has run a candidate in every constituency since 2007 to offer a choice of voting Green to all voters (Weeks, 2008). But following a severe decline in 2011 and losing its

state funding, meeting the two percent threshold became an important priority at the 2016 general election and was cited in interviews by both the director of elections and candidates interviewed for this research as another contributing reason why the party ran a candidate in constituencies where they had no expectations of featuring in the final competition. The party needed every vote to ensure it met the threshold, which it did comfortably in the end. Having been set up in 2015, the Social Democrats also prioritized the funding threshold at the 2016 election. The party was questioned about running paper candidates in some constituencies purely for funding purposes, a point it denied however having just formed, funding was undoubtedly a priority to build a national infrastructure. Finally the far left leaning Solidarity-People Before Profit alliance are rarely willing to discuss their internal operations with researchers but in one interview in 2020, the funding threshold was highlighted by a candidate who indicated that it was an important incentive which led to candidates being selected in some constituencies where the parties did not have existing branch infrastructures.

The funding threshold requirement thus leads smaller political parties to select candidates in areas where they often do not have a critical mass of supporters and party branch infrastructures. The selection decisions are sometimes not made by members on the ground, rather by party elites that tend to seek out possible candidates that are willing to be flag bearers for their parties. Oftentimes these candidates engage in only the most minimal campaigning. Thus, the funding laws lead to additional incentives that bolster elite decision making and bypasses members.

In combination, the electoral system, gender quotas and party finance laws provide important incentives for political parties to intervene and carefully craft candidate selection decisions. The electoral system is a long standing feature of politics but party funding and gender quota laws were being introduced in the same decades that parties were also engaging in IPD reforms and worked to constrain IPD by creating critical financial imperatives that parties had to meet. Following Strøm (2005) information asymmetry also helps to understand why elites are required to intervene. They have a full national overview of the slate of party candidates, their gender profiles and likely electoral performance. They are usually full time political professionals whereas the selectorate are party supporters that give their time in support of the democratic process. They have more restricted access to information and their decisions are in part structured by this.

Candidate Characteristics

The analysis addressing RQ1 has essentially argued that the extent of IPD has been constrained by party elites but there is evidence to show that patterns of candidate selection in the main parties have evolved over recent elections. Unfortunately, data is not available to identify differences between convention selections and party elite selections but some general trends are clear and important. The data presented in the following tables cover all the major party candidates for the elections

TABLE 3 | Political experience of candidates at elections (1997–2020).

Political experience	1997	2002	2007	2011	2016	2020
TD (MP)	50	42	37	34	37	36
Senator	12	7	7	7	5	7
Councilor/Member of the European Parliament	20	23	29	37	31	31
Other electoral experience	3	-	15	11	13	17
New candidate	15	-	12	11	2	9
Total	100	72	100	100	100	100

Column percentages. Cells with a “-” denote data not available.

Note: Data available for 2002 does not distinguish between previous electoral experience and new candidates. Data extracted from the *How Ireland Voted* book series (1997–2020).

from 1997 to 2020¹. In **Table 3** for completeness, this includes candidates from two small parties that no longer contest elections: the Progressive Democrats was disbanded in 2009 and Democratic Left merged with the Labour Party in 1999. The number of candidates, the size of parliament and the number of public representatives at local government level all varied over the period so figures are expressed in percentages for clarity of interpretation.

In seeking candidates that will win elections, political parties often prioritize experience and the literature in section two suggested that candidates with previous political experience were more likely to be selected. Indeed the benefits of incumbency at elections have been demonstrated widely across election types and electoral systems. The data presented in **Table 3** largely confirms the electoral experience proposition. Fifty percent of candidates selected by parties at the 1997 general election were members of parliament (TDs), the dominance of incumbents has declined but they still account for more than a third of candidates. Members of the upper house (senators) account for on average a further 7.5 percent of candidates and the number of councilors chosen has been increasing since 1997. The percentage of new candidates chosen by political parties is very low and hovers around 10 percent, falling to just 2 percent at the 2016 election. The overall pattern is that parties (selectors and elites) strongly favor experienced political candidates and research that identifies local government as a major pipeline for candidates into national politics is directly corroborated in the data presented. The category other political experience includes people who have previously either contested an election or served in office and returned after a period out of politics, again, this accounts for a relatively small percentage of total candidates.

Political dynasties have been a feature of both local and national politics for generations. There is a long tradition of family members following a parent, or close family relative, into politics and also of siblings entering political life. A change in institutional rules in 2004 precluded members of

¹The data for general elections from 2011–2020 are held directly by the author and data for the 1997, 2002 and 2007 general elections were taken from the *How Ireland Voted* book series. The author is especially grateful to Yvonne Galligan and Liam Weeks who as authors of the candidate selection chapters in each of those volumes collected detailed information on the candidates that contested those elections.

TABLE 4 | Percentage of party candidates with a family link in politics (2007–2020).

Party	2007	2011	2016	2020
Fianna Fáil	33	41	35	37
Fine Gael	19	20	30	35
Green party	4.6	2	5	4
Labour	14	20	31	4
Sinn Féin	0	0	14	4
Sol-PBP (ULA)	-	0	3	1
Social democrats	-	-	0	0
Average	18	14	17	12

Row percentages. Cells with a “-” denote data not available.

Note: Data for 1997 and 2002 elections not available. Data extracted from the *How Ireland Voted* book series (1997–2020).

parliament from also being local councilors at the same time and this led to a notable surge in the number of the family members of national parliamentarians contesting and winning local election seats, thus increasing the percentage of candidates with family connections in politics. Dynasties are occasionally subject to negative political commentary but dynastic candidates prove popular with voters and are generally seen as attractive candidates by political parties as they have a family record in politics and are likely to be able to mobilize existing campaign resources. Dynastic connections thus hint at a more intangible form of political experience. The data in **Table 4** record candidates that have, or had a close family member active in politics. The connection does not have to be in the same party.

The older parties of the center right have the highest percentages of candidates with family members in politics, or previously in politics, but the data also shows that it is a fairly widespread phenomenon with all but the Social Democrats now recording some family political connections. The greater enfranchisement of party members has not diminished the selection of candidates from political dynasties with numbers in parties showing some variation but no sustained downward trend. The largest increase in family connections occurred in Fianna Fáil for the 2011 election. The Fianna Fáil vote collapsed at the election, several candidates withdrew in the run up to the election and the high percentage with a family connection likely reflects that those who remained on the ticket were drawn from longstanding dynasties with the most enduring connections to the party.

Progressing to gender, from **Table 5** and from the earlier discussion, it is clear the gender profile of candidates has notably changed. The first election at which the legislative gender quota applied was 2016 and there was a sharp rise in the proportion of female candidate selected by the main political parties for that election. The percentage of women being selected by parties had been creeping up very slowly since the early 1990s but the pace of change was glacial and indeed this was one of the major arguments advanced to support the introduction of the quotas. The quotas caused a marked change and the

TABLE 5 | Percentage of Women Selected by Party (1997–2020).

Party	1997	2002	2007	2011	2016	2020
Fianna Fáil	13	14	13	15	31	31
Fine Gael	14	18	17	15	31	31
Green Party	35	29	25	19	35	41
Labour	25	24	22	27	36	32
Sinn Féin	15	19	24	20	36	33
Sol-PBP (ULA)	-	-	-	25	42	41
Social democrats	-	-	-	-	43	55
Average	20	21	18	20	36	38

Row percentages. Cells with a “-” denote data not available.

Note: Data extracted from the *How Ireland Voted* book series (1997–2020).

percentage of female candidate more than doubled between 2011 and 2016 in the center right parties and although the left leaning parties tended to have better gender balance to begin, they also selected more women candidates after the introduction of the quota. While the overall percentage of female candidates improved again in 2020, the change was quite small and indeed some parties recorded a dis-improvement (Sinn Féin and Labour).

Finally turning to the occupation profile of candidates chosen by parties, the data in **Table 6** uses the occupational classification system of the *How Ireland Voted* book series. The occupations are as follows: Farmer was a notable occupational background for politicians in Ireland for many decades although as will be shown in the data, as a group they are declining in politics; Commerce refers to those from a business backgrounds and includes small and medium sized business owners and those working in corporate roles in large firms; Higher professional includes the legal profession, architects, engineers, doctors, and pharmacists; The lower professional category includes teachers, nurses, and various types of medical therapists; Non-manual employee includes many types of civil and public servants, community and development workers, trade union officials and administrative staff; Manual workers includes those working in retail, tradespeople, and manufacturing; Others covers a wide variety of occupations that do not fit into any of the other categories but notably students, pensioners, and careers.

Table 6 shows that farmers as an occupational category are in decline across the five elections covered. This confirms a widely discussed pattern in Irish politics. Interestingly, there is also decline in the commerce category, albeit with a slight improvement in 2020. Higher professional is down across the period while lower professional is broadly stable. While non-manual employee percentages are up, the manual category increased between 1997 and 2007 but has been stable since and also accounts for the lowest proportion of candidates selected. The data suggest some small diversification in the occupational backgrounds of candidates across the period but those from professional backgrounds are the most likely to enter politics and account for more than a third of candidates across the whole period. Occupation background provides some insights into the

TABLE 6 | Candidate occupational profiles.

Year	Farmer	Commerce	Higher professional	Lower professional	Non-manual employee	Manual employee	Others	Unknown	Total
1997	11	21	19	24	18	2	1	4	100
2007	8	24	19	16	15	6	8	4	100
2011	7	21	18	24	7	4	15	4	100
2016	6	17	14	24	19	4	16	1	100
2020	5	19	14	23	24	4	10	0	100

Row percentages. Data for 2002 general election not available.

Note: Data extracted from the *How Ireland Voted* Book series (see **Appendix 2** for more information).

socioeconomic profile of candidates. Wauters and Pilet (2015) argued against selectorate votes highlighting that they would favor well-networked individuals with greater access to resources and to a great extent, this is evident in the Irish data with the professions predominating and those from manual employment backgrounds amongst the least likely to enter politics.

There are also interesting cross party variations. Small parties of the left (Labour and the Greens) and the parties of the center right have large concentrations of candidates from professional backgrounds and commerce while farmers are concentrated in the two large center right parties (Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael). Non-manual and manual employees are more likely to become candidates for parties of the mid left and far left (Sinn Féin and Solidarity-People before Profit).

Summing up, striking changes in the gender profile of candidates are visible but this change has substantially been driven by the introduction of binding gender quotas. Patterns of change are of a much more modest order in the other characteristics highlighted. Parties continue to favor experienced political candidates, family links in politics have dropped a little and while there has been some diversification of the occupation profile of candidates, it is difficult to strip out the extent to which the greater presence of left wing parties in politics might be as important in shaping the change as IPD. Parties of the left have become considerably more successful at elections and are running more candidates, and they are more likely to select manual and non-manual employees. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have reduced their candidate numbers underpinning the reduction in the number of farmers and business people contesting elections.

CONCLUSION

The drift toward enhanced IPD and more inclusive decision making has been documented concretely around the world and Irish political parties were early adapters. Fine Gael and the Green Party were the first to use one member, one vote widely in selection decisions and they also allocated roles for party members in selecting party leaders, developing election strategy and voting on policy decisions. Decisions are taken at the constituency/district level using PR-STV as the voting system. All of the mainstream parties followed suit with some minor differences in relation to the membership qualification

periods for becoming a candidate and exercising voting rights at conventions.

However, following Cross and Katz (2013), this article has also sought to demonstrate that institutional features such as the electoral system and party laws have notably qualified the advance of IPD within parties. Multi-seat constituencies under the PR-STV system have always meant that parties invested considerable time and resources in calibrating precise candidate numbers and their distribution across constituencies. The larger parties issue candidate directives setting out the number of candidates to be chosen and from which areas. But increased electoral volatility has made these scenarios more uncertain with changes to candidate numbers required often influenced by opinion polls even after the election is called. The need for continuous management and last minute changes to party tickets has led to greater intervention by party elites and diminution of the role of party members in the selection process. Furthermore, changes to party finance laws have created incentives for small parties to run paper candidates in a clear attempt to reach the funding threshold. And the gender quota has been carefully approached by party elites with a two pronged strategy deployed by the larger parties; requiring gender balanced tickets to be selected by party members at local conventions while also adding extra female candidates directly to the party ticket through elite decision structures. The electoral system has been a constant but increased volatility has required more intervention by elites. And legislative changes on party finance and gender quotas have inadvertently changed the balance of power within parties leading to a resurgence in elite decision making on candidate selection.

Finally, candidate numbers and profiles have evolved. The picture is complex. As Rahat (2009) argued, the more inclusive selectorate did not necessarily lead to more representative candidate selection decisions. It was not until gender quota legislation was implemented that the gender profile of candidates improved noticeably and as discussed this often involved direct intervention and structuring of decisions by party elites. The occupational profile of candidates has diversified with changes in all parties but the larger numbers of candidates from left wing parties has been a major driver in this area. But parties also continue to favor incumbents and those with family connections in politics suggesting that conceptions of electability have widened in some regards but longstanding features relating to incumbency are deep rooted and persist.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation

REFERENCES

- Barnea, S., and Rahat, G. (2007). Reforming candidate selection methods: a three-level approach. *Party Polit.* 13, 375–394. doi: 10.1177/1354068807075942
- Bille, L. (2001). Democratizing a democratic procedure: myth or reality? Candidate selection in Western European parties, 1960–1990. *Party Polit.* 7, 363–380. doi: 10.1177/1354068801007003006
- Bjarnegård, E., and Kenny, M. (2015). Revealing the “secret garden”: the informal dimensions of political recruitment. *Polit. Gend.* 11, 748–753. doi: 10.1017/S1743923X15000471
- Bjarnegård, E., and Kenny, M. (2016). Comparing candidate selection: a feminist institutionalist approach. *Gov. Opposition* 51, 370–392. doi: 10.1017/gov.2016.4
- Bochel, J., and Denver, D. (1983). Candidate selection in the labour party: what the selectors seek. *Br. J. Polit. Sci.* 13, 45–69. doi: 10.1017/S0007123400003136
- Bolleyer, N. (2010). The Irish Green Party: from protest to mainstream party? *Irish Polit. Stud.* 25, 603–623. doi: 10.1080/07907184.2010.518701
- Buckley, F., Galligan, Y., and McGing, C. (2016). “Women and the election: Assessing the impact of gender quotas” in *How Ireland Voted 2016*, eds M. Gallagher, and M. Marsh (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), 185–205. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-40889-7_8
- Buckley, F., and McGing, C. (2011). “Women and the Election,” in *How Ireland Voted 2011*, eds M. Marsh and M. Gallagher (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 222–239.
- Byrne, E. A. (2013). *Political Corruption in Ireland: 1922–2010*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Coffé, H., and Reiser, M. (2021). How perceptions and information about women’s descriptive representation affect support for positive action measures. *Int. Polit. Sci. Rev.* doi: 10.1177/0192512121995748
- Coller, X., Cordero, G., and Jaime-Castillo, A. M. (eds) (2018). *The Selection of Politicians in Times of Crisis*. Routledge.
- Cross, W. P., and Katz, R. S. (eds.) (2013). *The Challenges of Intra-Party Democracy*. Oxford: OUP Oxford.
- Cross, W. P., Kenig, O., Pruyers, S., and Rahat, G. (2016). *Promise and Challenge of Party Primary Elections: A Comparative Perspective*. Montreal, QC; Kingston: McGill-Queen’s Press-MQUP.
- Farrell, D. M., Gallagher, M., and Barrett, D. (2018). “What do Irish voters want from and think of their politicians?”, in *The Post-Crisis Irish Voter.*, eds M. Marsh, D. Farrell, and T. Reidy (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 190–208. doi: 10.7765/9781526122650.00015
- Fianna Fáil (2016). *Córu agus Rialacha*.
- Fine Gael (2014). *Fine Gael Constitution*. Available online at: <https://www.finegael.ie/app/uploads/2017/05/FG-Constitution-2014-Aug.pdf>
- Gallagher, M. (1980). Candidate selection in Ireland: the impact of localism and the electoral system. *Br. J. Polit. Sci.* 10, 489–503. doi: 10.1017/S0007123400002350
- Gallagher, M. (2008). “The earthquake that never happened: analysis of the results,” in *How Ireland Voted 2007: The Full Story of Ireland’s General Election*, eds M. Gallagher and M. Marsh (London: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 78–104. doi: 10.1057/9780230597990_6
- Gallagher, M. (2011). “Ireland’s earthquake election: analysis of the results,” in *How Ireland Voted*, eds M. Gallagher, and M. Marsh (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 139–171. doi: 10.1057/9780230354005_7
- Gallagher, M. (2016). “The results analysed: the aftershocks continue,” in *How Ireland Voted* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), 125–157. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-40889-7_6

and institutional requirements. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

- Gallagher, M. (2021). “The results analysed: the definitive end of the traditional party system?” in *How Ireland Voted*, eds M. Gallagher, M. Marsh, and T. Reidy (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), 165–196. doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-66405-3_8
- Gallagher, M., and Marsh, M. (eds.) (1988). *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective: The Secret Garden of Politics*.
- Galligan, Y. (1999). “Candidate selection,” in *How Ireland Voted* (Routledge), 57–81. doi: 10.4324/9780429499999-3
- Galligan, Y. (2003). “Candidate selection: More democratic or more centrally controlled?” in *How Ireland Voted*, eds M. Gallagher, M. Marsh, and P. Mitchell (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 37–56. doi: 10.1057/9780230379046_3
- Green Party (2018). *Green Party Constitution*. Available online at: <https://www.greenparty.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Green-Party-Constitution-2018-1.pdf>
- Hazan, R. Y., and Voerman, G. (2006). Electoral systems and candidate selection. *Acta Polit.* 41, 146–162. doi: 10.1057/palgrave.ap.5500153
- Hughes, M. M., Paxton, P., Clayton, A. B., and Zetterberg, P. (2019). Global gender quota adoption, implementation, and reform. *Comp. Polit.* 51, 219–238. doi: 10.5129/001041519825256650
- Kakepaki, M., Kountouri, F., Verzichelli, L., and Coller, X. (2018). “The sociopolitical profile of parliamentary representatives in Greece, Italy and Spain before and after the “eurocrisis”: A comparative empirical assessment,” in *Democratizing Candidate Selection* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), 175–200. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-76550-1_8
- Keenan, L., and McElroy, G. (2017). Who supports gender quotas in Ireland? *Irish Polit. Stud.* 32, 382–403. doi: 10.1080/07907184.2016.1255200
- Labour Party (2017). *Labour Party Constitution*. Available online at: https://labour.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/labour_party_constitution_2017.pdf
- Marsh, M. (1981). Localism, candidate selection and electoral preferences in Ireland: the general election of 1977. *Econ. Soc. Rev.* 12, 267–286.
- Marsh, M., Sinnott, R., Garry, J., and Kennedy, F. (2008). *The Irish Voter: The Nature of Electoral Competition in the Republic of Ireland*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Rahat, G. (2009). Which candidate selection method is the most democratic? *Government Opposition* 44, 68–90. doi: 10.1177/1354068808093405
- Rahat, G., and Hazan, R. Y. (2001). Candidate selection methods: an analytical framework. *Party Polit.* 7, 297–322. doi: 10.1177/1354068801007003003
- Rahat, G., Hazan, R. Y., and Katz, R. S. (2008). Democracy and political parties: on the uneasy relationships between participation, competition and representation. *Party Polit.* 14, 663.
- Reidy, T. (2011). “Candidate selection,” in *How Ireland Voted*, eds M. Gallagher and M. Marsh (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 47–67. doi: 10.1057/9780230354005_3
- Reidy, T. (2016). “Candidate selection and the illusion of grass-roots democracy,” in *How Ireland Voted*, eds M. Gallagher and M. Marsh (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), 47–73. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-40889-7_3
- Reidy, T. (2018). “Candidate selection in Ireland: New parties and candidate diversity,” in *The Selection of Politicians in Times of Crisis*, eds X. Coller, G. Cordero, and A. M. Jaime-Castillo (Routledge), 133–148. doi: 10.4324/9781315179575-9
- Reidy, T. (2021). “Too many, too few: candidate selection in 2020,” in *How Ireland Voted*, eds M. Gallagher, M. Marsh, and T. Reidy (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), 41–69. doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-66405-3_3

- Social Democrats (2021). *Social Democrats Constitution*. Available online at: socialdemocrats.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Social-Democrats-Constitution-Updated-27th-February-2021.pdf
- Strøm, K. (2005). "Parliamentary Democracy and Delegation," in *Delegation and Accountability in Parliamentary Democracies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 55–106. doi: 10.1093/019829784X.003.0003
- Vandeleene, A., Dodeigne, J., and De Winter, L. (2016). What do selectorates seek? A comparative analysis of Belgian federal and regional candidate selection processes in 2014. *Am. Behav. Sci.* 60, 889–908. doi: 10.1177/0002764216632825
- Vittori, D. (2022). Vanguard or business-as-usual? 'New' movement parties in comparative perspective. *Int. Polit. Sci. Rev.* doi: 10.1177/01925121211026648
- Wauters, B., and Pilet, J. B. (2015). "Electing women as party leaders in cross," in *The Politics of Party Leadership: A Cross-National Perspective*, ed J. B. Pilet (Oxford: Oxford University Press). P. 73–89. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198748984.003.0005
- Weeks, L. (2008). Candidate selection: democratic centralism or managed democracy? In: *How Ireland Voted 2007: The Full Story of Ireland's General Election*, eds M. Gallagher and M. Marsh (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 48–64. doi: 10.1057/9780230597990_4

Conflict of Interest: The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

Copyright © 2022 Reidy. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1

List of interviewees and year of interview.

Fianna Fáil party strategist	2011, 2016, 2020
Fianna Fáil election candidates	2011, 2016, 2020
Fine Gael party strategist	2011, 2016, 2020
Fine Gael election candidates	2011, 2016, 2020
Greens party strategist	2011, 2020
Greens director of elections	2016
Labour party strategist	2011, 2016, 2020
Socialist Party – People Before Profit alliance strategist	2011, 2016
People Before Profit election candidate	2020
Sinn Féin election strategist	2020
Sinn Féin election candidate	2011, 2016
Social Democrats election strategist	2016, 2020

Appendix 2

Candidate Professional Profile Data Sources

Data for **Table 6** on the occupational profiles of candidates at elections were extracted directly from the *How Ireland Voted* book series. Specifically, see the following:

Galligan, 1999. Candidate selection. In *How Ireland Voted 1997* (pp. 57-81). Routledge. Pp. 72.

Galligan, 2003. "Candidate selection: More democratic or more centrally controlled?" in *How Ireland Voted*, eds M. Gallagher, M. Marsh, and P. Mitchell (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 37–56. doi: 10.1057/9780230379046_3

Weeks, 2008. Candidate selection: democratic centralism or managed democracy? In *How Ireland Voted 2007: The Full Story of Ireland's General Election* (pp. 48-64). Palgrave Macmillan, London. Pp. 59.

Reidy, 2011. "Candidate selection," in *How Ireland Voted*, eds M. Gallagher and M. Marsh (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 47-67. doi: 10.1057/9780230354005_3

Reidy, 2016. "Candidate selection and the illusion of grass-roots democracy," in *How Ireland Voted*, eds M. Gallagher and M. Marsh (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), 47–73. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-40889-7_3

Reidy, 2021. "Too many, too few: candidate selection in 2020," in *How Ireland Voted*, eds M. Gallagher, M. Marsh, and T. Reidy (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), 41–69. doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-66405-3_3

Advantages of publishing in Frontiers



OPEN ACCESS

Articles are free to read
for greatest visibility
and readership



FAST PUBLICATION

Around 90 days
from submission
to decision



HIGH QUALITY PEER-REVIEW

Rigorous, collaborative,
and constructive
peer-review



TRANSPARENT PEER-REVIEW

Editors and reviewers
acknowledged by name
on published articles

Frontiers

Avenue du Tribunal-Fédéral 34
1005 Lausanne | Switzerland

Visit us: www.frontiersin.org

Contact us: frontiersin.org/about/contact



REPRODUCIBILITY OF RESEARCH

Support open data
and methods to enhance
research reproducibility



DIGITAL PUBLISHING

Articles designed
for optimal readership
across devices



FOLLOW US

@frontiersin



IMPACT METRICS

Advanced article metrics
track visibility across
digital media



EXTENSIVE PROMOTION

Marketing
and promotion
of impactful research



LOOP RESEARCH NETWORK

Our network
increases your
article's readership