

The personalization of politics and the importance of party leaders

Blended Intensive Programme | 18.06.2025

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Outline

- Theoretical frameworks
- Institutional personalization
- Party leaders and electoral behaviour
- The selection of party leaders
- Party leaders and party organization
- Concluding remarks

What is political personalization?

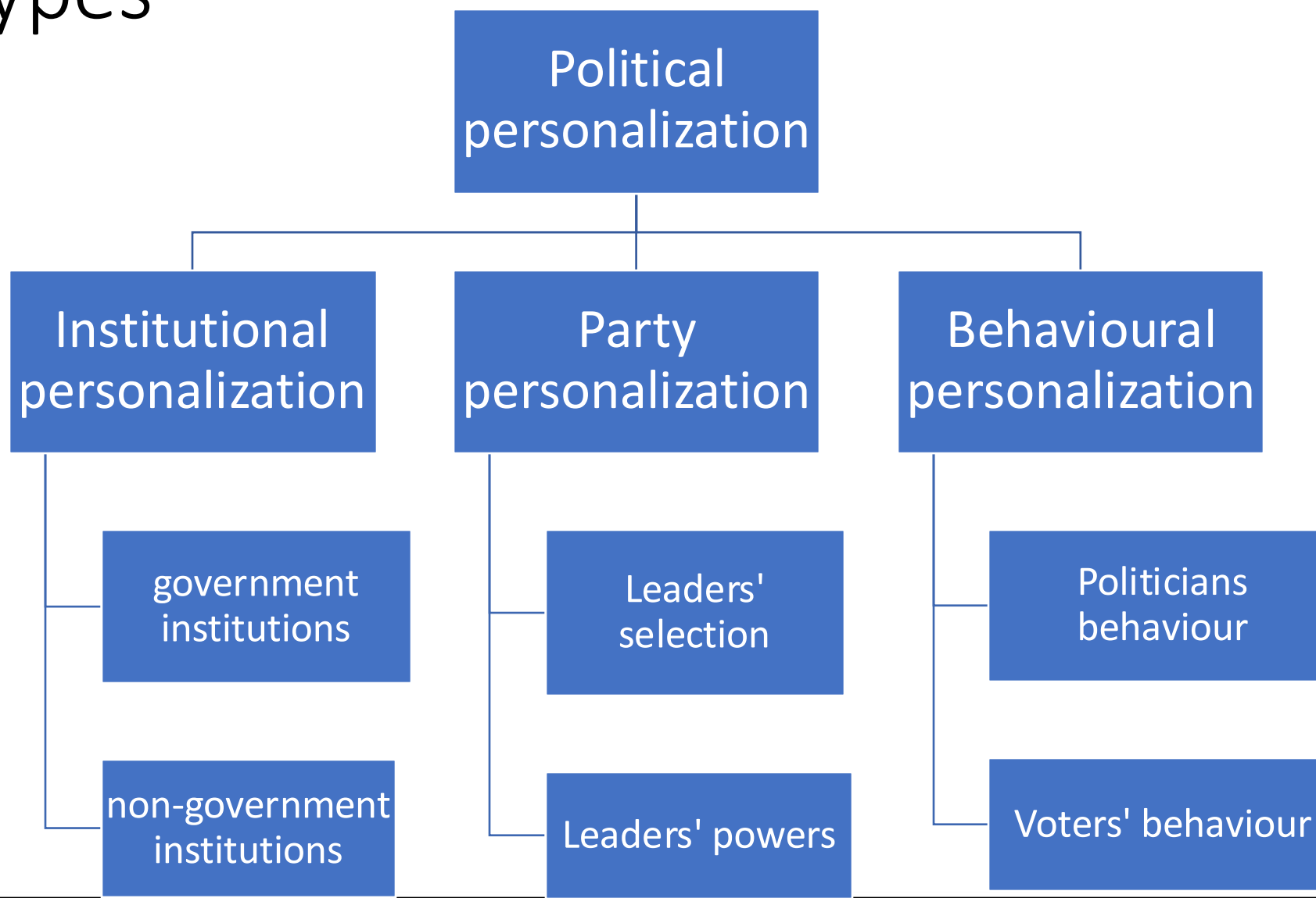
- **Definition:** a process in which the political weight of the individual actor in the political process increases over time, while the centrality of the political group (i.e. political party) declines (Rahat & Kening 2018; Karvonen 2010)
- Personalization as a multidimensional and longitudinal (depersonalization) phenomenon
- Centralized and decentralized personalization
- Distinction between individualization and privatization
- **Democracy of the public** (Manin, Urbinati)

The causes of personalization

- Mediatization of politics
- Party change
- Cultural change: individualization
- Other specific factors
 - Constraints of state action
 - Globalization

Other factors?

Political personalization: types and subtypes



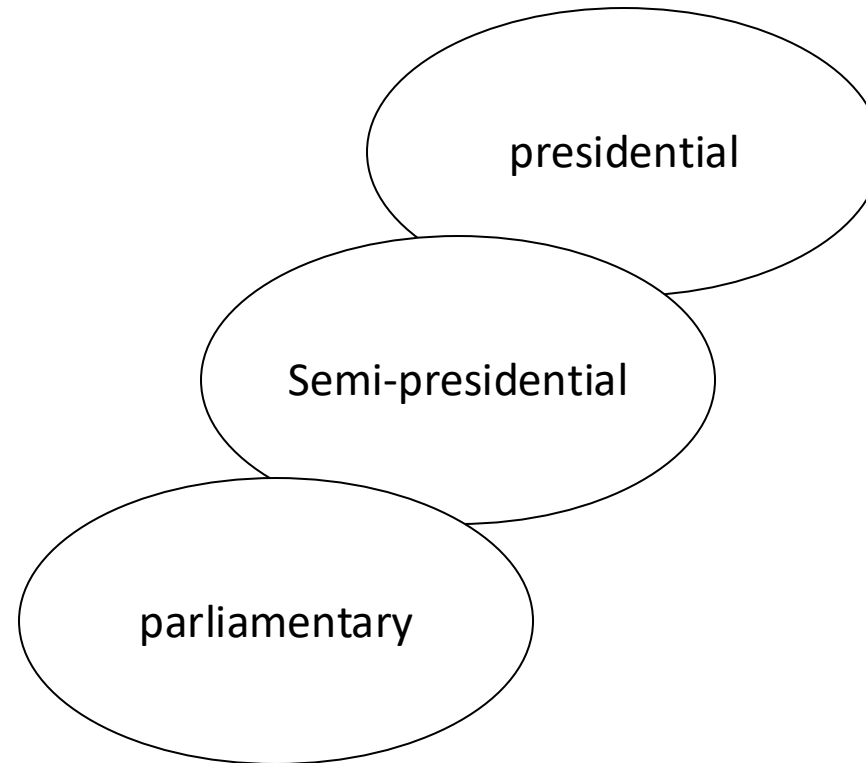
Institutional personalization

- **Presidentialization**: denominates a process by which regimes are becoming more presidential in their actual practice without, in most cases, changing their formal structure, that is, their regime-type (Poguntke & Webb 2005)
- 2 main components: 1) formal rules; 2) media/public opinion visibility
- Distinct concepts: personalization, presidentialization and 'prime-ministerialization'

Presidentialization and political systems

Presidential government

Majoritarian systems



Party government

Proportional systems

Empirical results

- Evolution of the 3 dimensions of presidentialization in 14 European and non-European countries
- Trend towards increasing presidentialization of the executive: the government (and prime minister) has more autonomy from the party
- Conjunctural factors: cohesion and breadth of party support; popularity and personality
- Systemic factors: greater freedom of maneuver for PMs within executives
- Presidentialization in the party and electoral sphere

Party leaders and electoral behaviour

- **Mughan** (2000: 9): a personalization of electoral politics that on the one hand occurs within the parameters of an unchanging parliamentary constitution and on the other persists over time, albeit that the actual impact of the party leaders on mass political behaviour and election outcomes can vary in magnitude from one contest to the next.
- The marketing effect and political communication
- Human “face” of the parties
- Importance of traits as: 1) heuristic tools; 2) cognitive shortcuts; 3) formation of stereotypes

- Thinkg about the last elections, did you vote more for the party or for its leader?



Or go to menti.com and digit the code **5767 2340**

Leaders' image

- Leadership traits: a multi-dimensional image
 1. Personal image: candidate attributes and ability to communicate
 2. Political image: identification between leaders and political themes (issue); re-positioning of candidates and priority of campaign themes
 3. 'Performance' image: competent leader
 4. Empathy or warmth of leaders

To what extent do the following characteristics describe the party leader you voted for in the last election?



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- Results suggest the prevalence of traits associated with 'competence' and 'emotion'

Conditional effects

- Institutional context (presidential system)
- Social context (homogeneity; cleavages)
- Political context (polarization, party characteristics)
- Economic climate
- Systemic crisis or “climate of opinion”
- Mass communication structure (TV and new technologies)
- Type of campaigns (e.g. negative campaigns)

Disentangle leader's effects

- Direct effect (positive or negative)
- Indirect effect:
 - a) long term
 - b) short term
 - c) retrospective
 - d) Prospective
- Problem of the endogeneity of the leader effect

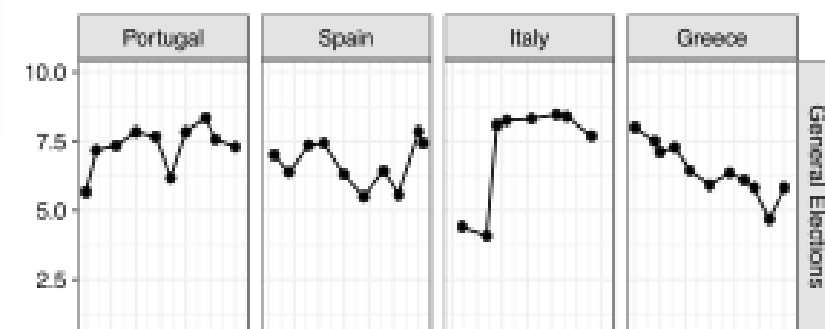
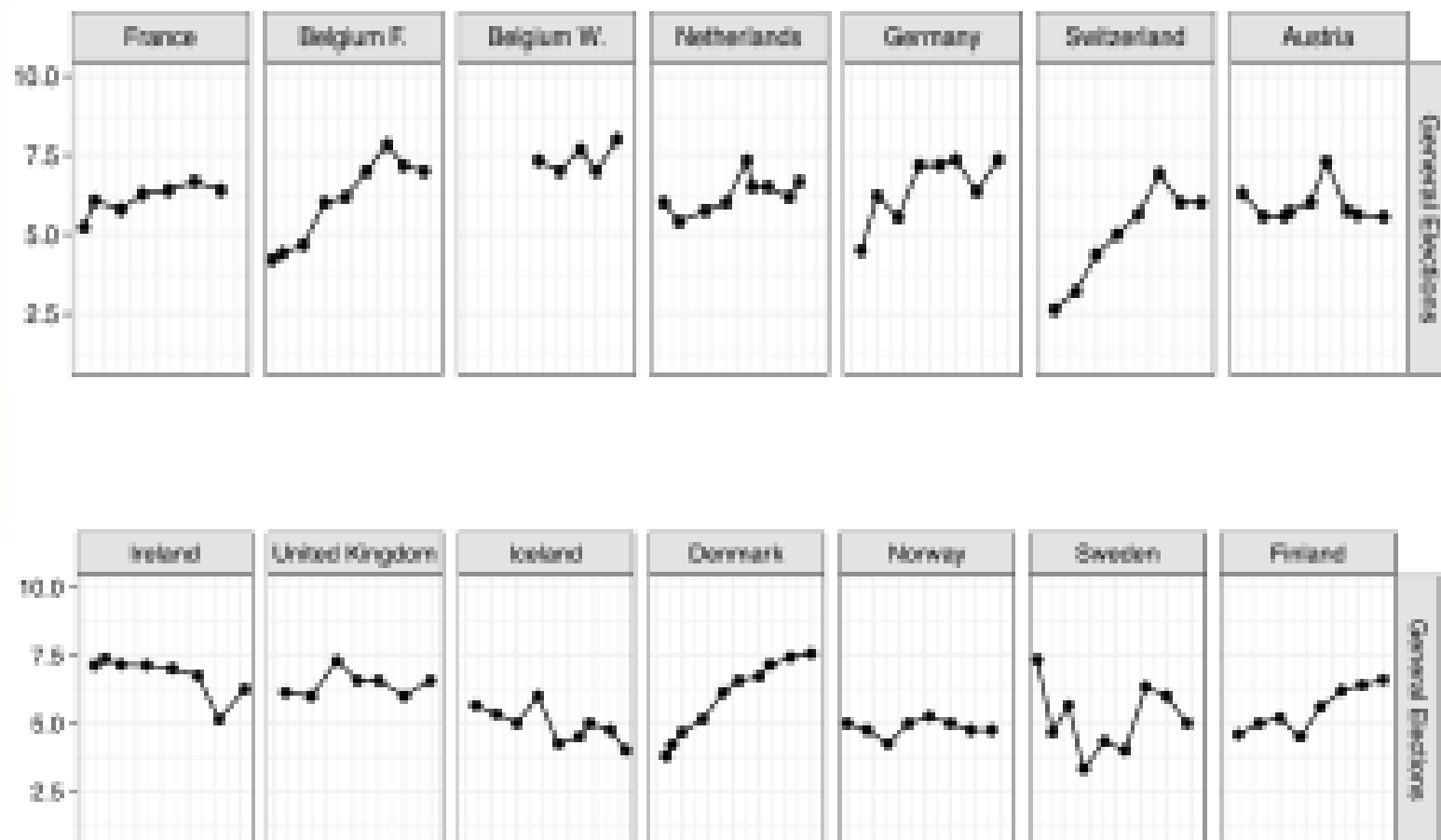
The impact of leaders

- Structural factors (low party polarization and weak party identity) favour a significant impact of party leaders
- Greater impact of leaders in center-right parties
- Left-wing parties: very weak impact of leaders (greater importance of sociological components)
- Leader qualities: performance more important than personality

Longitudinal trends

Strong personalization	Medium personalization	No change	Depersonalization
Austria, Belgium, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands	Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Poland, Portugal	Australia, Canada, France, Iceland, Luxembourg, UK	Czech Rep.; Swtizerland; Sweden
No. of countries (7)	No. of countries (6)	No. of countries (6)	No. of countries (3)

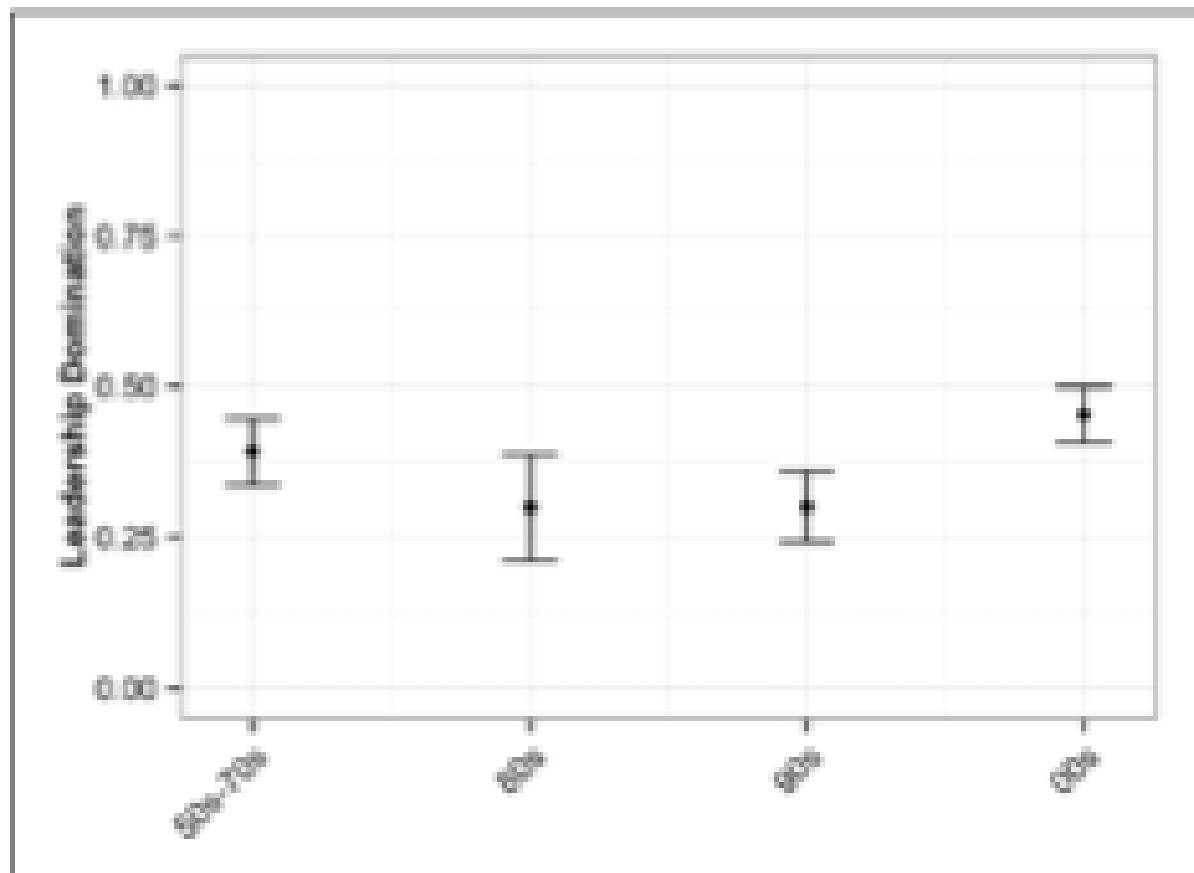
Assessment by expert survey



Leaders and party organizations

- Increasing relevance of party leaders in decision-making processes
- Party models: catch-all, professional-electoral, cartel parties
- Entrepreneur parties: “A party as being formed by one person, who does not hold a position in government. It must have external origins, represent the work of a single entrepreneur and will be closely associated with an issue prioritized by the founder of the ‘party enterprise’” (Arter 2013)
- Personal party: Merger between person and party
- Leader: 1) gives rise to the party; 2) ensures the party's survival; 3) the leader's image coincides with that of the party; 4) the leader controls the party machine; 5) personal recruitment
- Leader as “owner” of the party

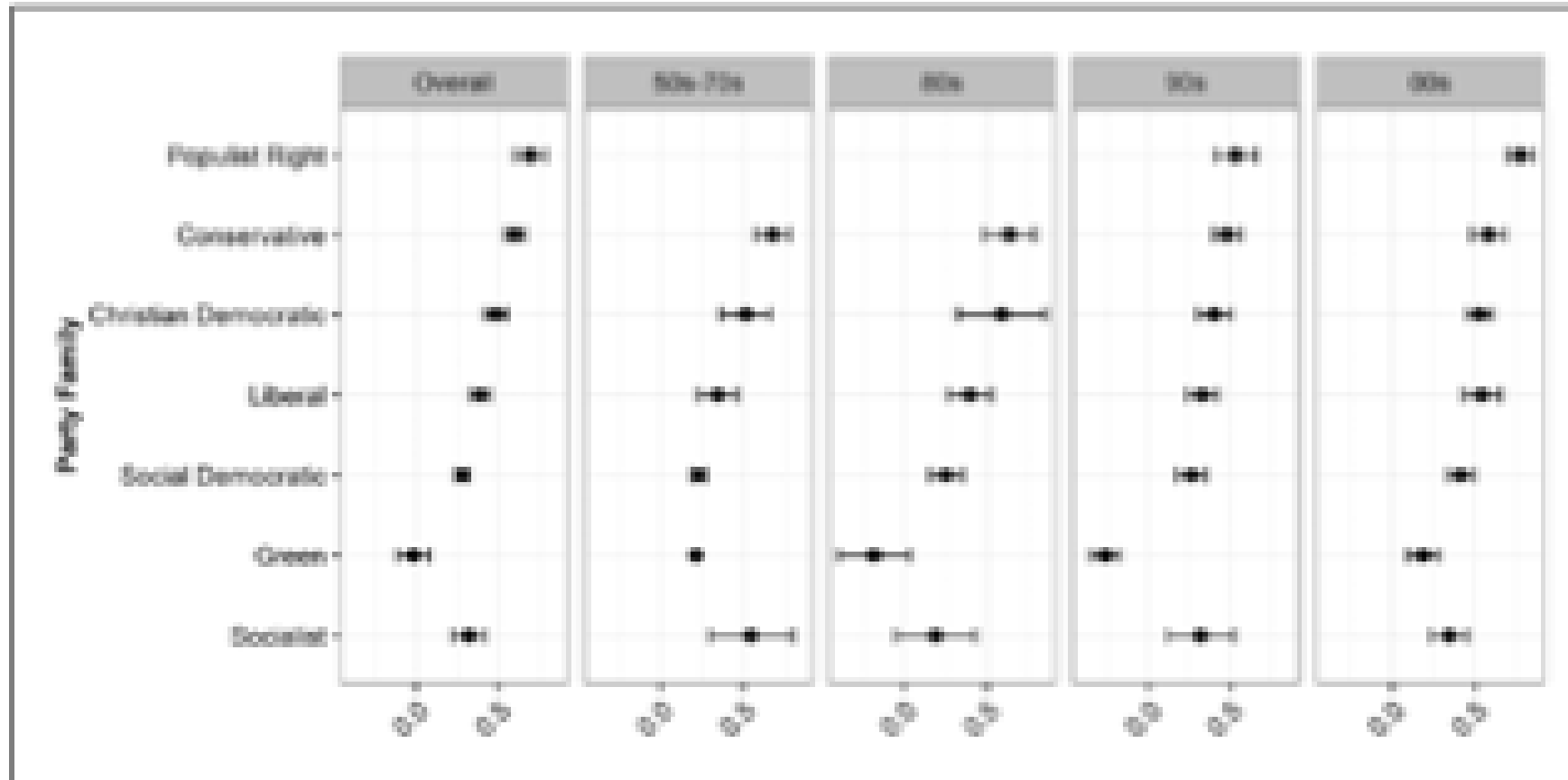
Empirical evidence



Activist vs Leadership dominated parties (scale: -1; +1)

Source: Schumacher & Giger 2017)

Leadership powers by party families

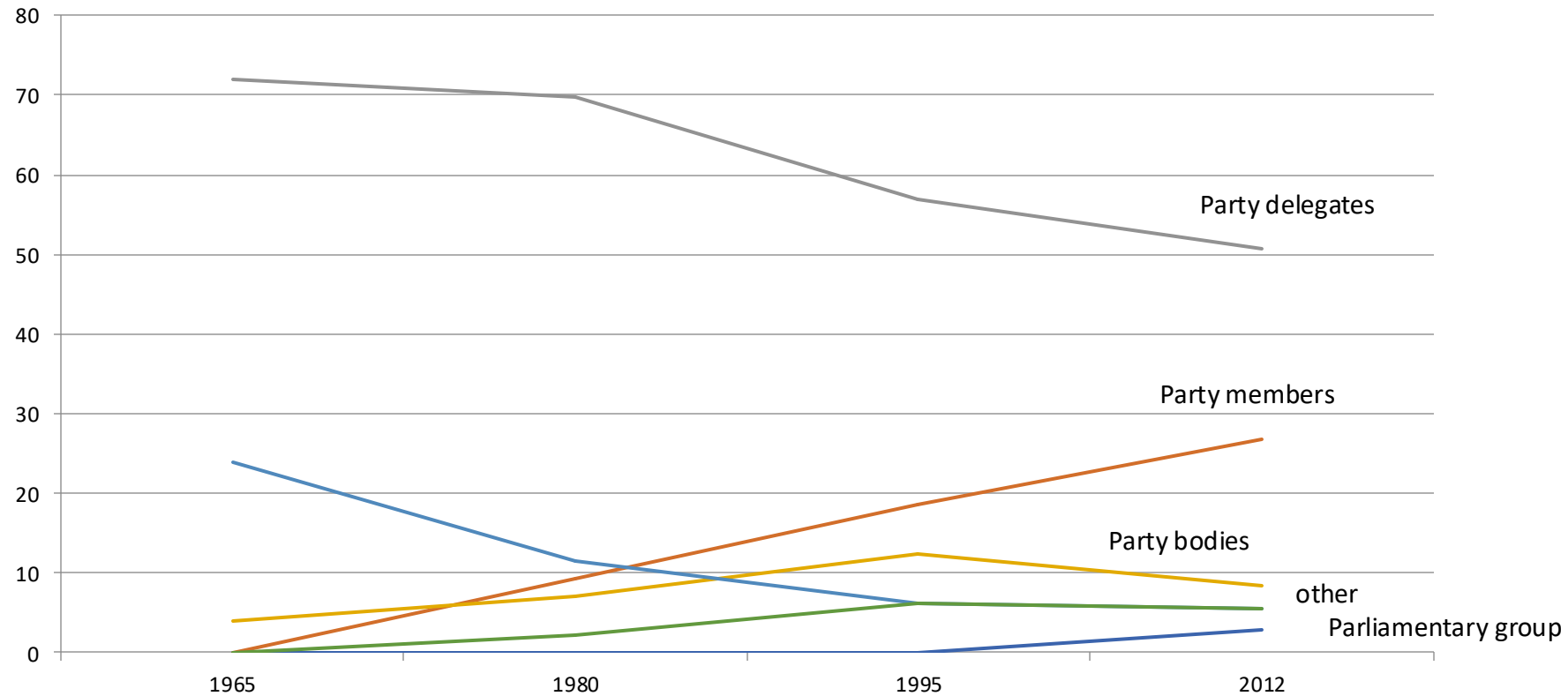


‘The secret garden of politics’



A growing democratization?

Selection methods of party leaders



Source: Pilet & Cross (2014: 227)

When do parties adopt more inclusive methods of leaders' selection?

	<i>All shifts towards more inclusiveness¹ (percentage)</i>	<i>Only shift towards full membership votes or open primaries (percentage)</i>
Defeat in last election	65.5	68.8
In opposition	77.4	77.8
Left-wing	41.9	44.4
New parties (<10 years)	18.7	22.2
Small parties (<10%)	19.4	22.2
N	31	18

Source: Pilet & Cross (2014: 230)

Dynamics of party leaders selection

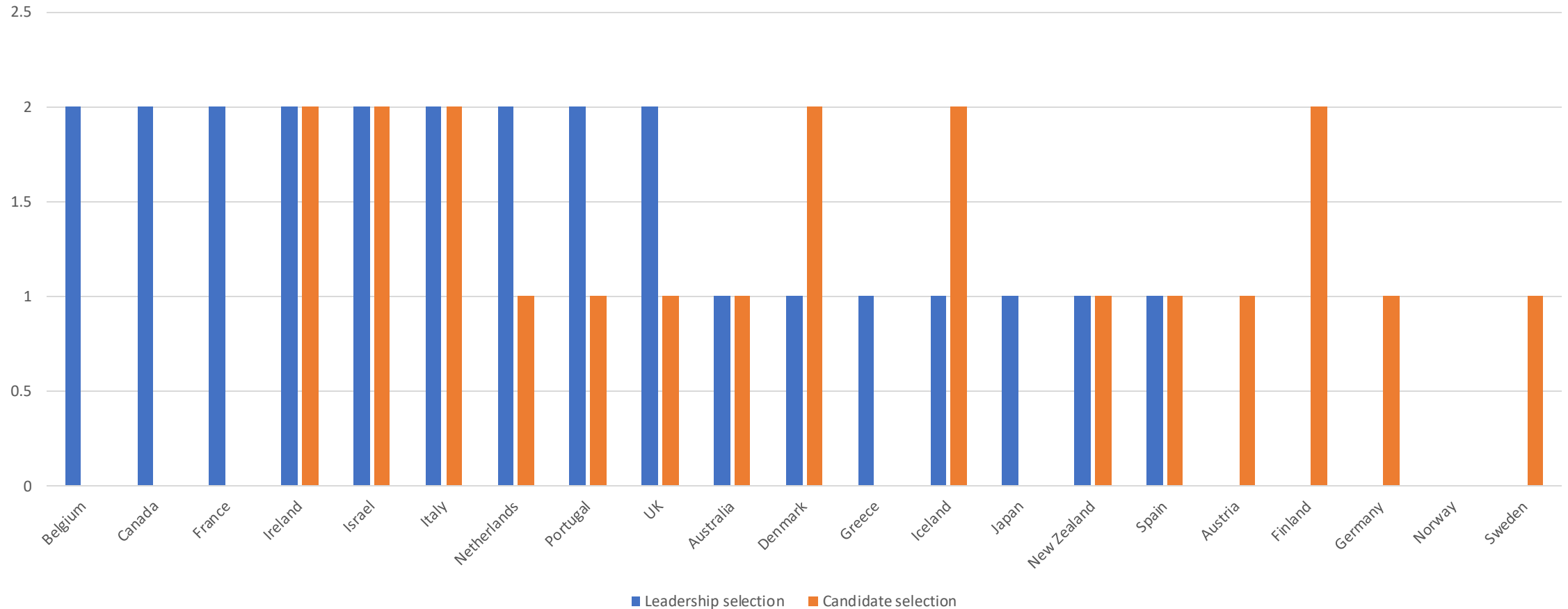
Table 15.4 Competitiveness of leadership races by type of selectorate¹

<i>Selectorate</i>	<i>Full membership vote and open primaries</i>	<i>Party delegates in conference</i>	<i>Party council</i>	<i>Parliamentary party group</i>	<i>All contests</i>
<i>Number of candidates</i>					
1	39.8	80.5	77.6	55.9	71.7
2	20.3	12.0	10.2	28.0	14.7
3	16.3	4.6	10.2	7.5	6.8
4	11.4	0.8	0.0	3.2	2.7
5 or more	12.2	2.1	2.0	5.4	4.0
Average number of candidates	2.6	1.4	1.4	1.8	1.6
N	123	609	49	93	892
Margin between top two finishers (all cases) N=859	54.2	83.9	82.5	66.6	77.8
Margin between top two finishers (min. two candidates) N=244	30.7	38.5	34.5	22.0	33.3
Proportion of tight races (margin <10% with minimum of two candidates) N=244	18.3	22.6	9.1	34.1	22.2

Impact of party primaries in the European context

- Participation: depends on whether primaries are open (+ participation) or closed (no effect)
- Representation: increase in women? Few relevant cases (e.g. Ségolène Royal)
- Intra-party democracy: increase in membership, but manipulation is possible (e.g., Romania)
- Electoral success: no significant effect; positive effect on public opinion, but short-term

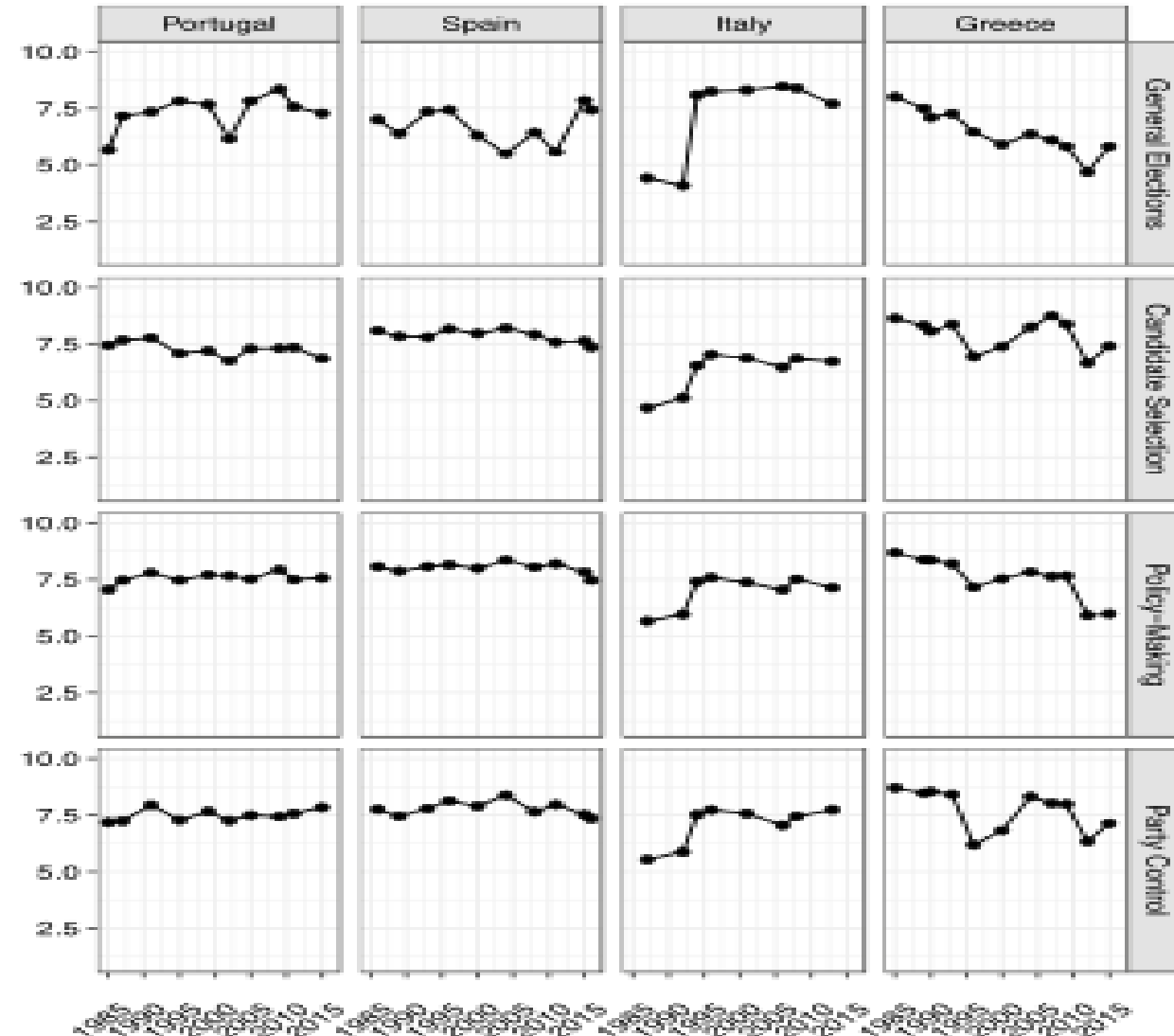
Longitudinal trends of party personalization



2: high personalization; 1: moderate personalization; 0: no change; -1: moderate depersonalization; -2: high depersonalization

Source: Rahat & Kenig (2018:150-5)

The personalization of party politics: Southern Europe



The personalization of politics: overall trend

Personalization in general elections	Personalization in candidate selection	Personalization in policy-making	Personalization in party control
Belgium (Wallonia) +	Greece –	Iceland Ø	Spain Ø
Portugal ++	Spain –	Spain –	Belgium (Flanders) Ø
Italy +++	Portugal –	Belgium (Flanders) +++	Greece –
Ireland –	Belgium (Flanders) +++	Denmark n.a	Iceland +
Spain +	Italy +++	Portugal Ø	Ireland Ø
Germany +++	Belgium (Wallonia) n.a	Greece – –	Portugal Ø
United Kingdom Ø	Ireland Ø	Ireland Ø	Denmark n.a
Greece – – –	France +	Italy +	Italy ++
Netherlands +	Denmark n.a	United Kingdom Ø	Germany –
France +	United Kingdom +	Belgium Wallonia n.a	United Kingdom Ø
Belgium (Flanders) +++	Austria –	Germany +	Netherlands Ø
Denmark +++	Netherlands Ø	Netherlands –	France Ø
Austria –	Germany Ø	France –	Belgium (Wallonia) n.a
Finland +	Finland Ø	Austria –	Austria –
Sweden – – –	Switzerland Ø	Finland +	Finland Ø
Switzerland +++	Iceland –	Switzerland ++	Switzerland +
Iceland – –			
Norway Ø			

For each dimension, countries are listed in descending order by the average expert evaluation; for all dimensions apart from the first one, an average weighted by party votes in general elections has been calculated

+++ strong increase, ++ strong-to-moderate increase, + moderate-to-none increase; Ø no relevant change, – moderate-to-none decrease, – – strong-to-moderate decrease, – – – strong decrease; n.a. not available