

The Personalization of Electoral Systems: Theory and European Evidence

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Abstract

Electoral systems vary widely in the degree to which they encourage candidate-centric or party-centric patterns of competition. For example, some allow voters to choose among candidates from a single party, while others allow no such choice; some are used to elect individuals while others elect slates of individuals. We hypothesize that changes in electoral systems in recent decades should trend towards candidate-centrism and away from party-centrism – a process that we label ‘personalization’. We base this hypothesis upon the widespread phenomenon – charted, for example, by Russell Dalton – that voters are becoming disengaged from and distrustful of political parties. Assessment of this hypothesis requires first that we clarify the concept of personalization, second that we develop our understanding of how various aspects of electoral systems affect personalization, and third that we gather empirical evidence on electoral reforms that increase or reduce personalization. We pursue each of these steps. Our empirical evidence is based on a new database of electoral reform in Europe since 1945.

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Introduction

Electoral reform has become a major item on the agenda of both politics and political science within the last two decades. Many countries have experienced electoral system change, most commonly in new and transitional democracies, but also in such established democracies as New Zealand, Italy and Japan. Even where reform has not occurred, debate has been widespread. The UK held a referendum on electoral reform in May 2011 and there are ongoing debates in, for example, Iceland and Ireland. The Hungarian government plans to introduce legislation on a new electoral system in the coming weeks.

Reflecting these real-world developments, the literature on electoral reform has grown rapidly. Yet it has often had a narrow focus. Though a wide variety of rules have been addressed, including those relating to candidate selection (Hazan and Rahat 2010) and to positive action in favour of women (Krook 2009), the core of the electoral reform literature has overwhelmingly assumed that reforms are interesting only if they affect the proportionality of the system. Lijphart's well known criteria for determining the significance of a reform, for example, relate only to whether that reform can be expected to have a major effect upon proportionality (Lijphart 1994: 13). Correspondingly, much theorizing about processes of electoral reform assumes that actors support or oppose a reform on the basis of its expected effects upon partisan seat shares (e.g., Benoit 2004; Colomer 2004, 2005). Other aspects of electoral systems, meanwhile, have been relatively neglected.

We focus in this paper on one such aspect: namely, the personalization of electoral systems. By this we mean the degree to which electoral rules place more emphasis upon candidates rather than upon political parties. As the subtitle of a recent volume edited by Josep Colomer points out, this is "the neglected dimension of electoral systems" (Colomer 2011).

There is good reason to expect that such personalization is increasing. Individual politicians are said to have gained importance in the choices made by voters (Curtice and Holmberg 2005), in media coverage of politics (Kaase 1994; Rahat & Sheafer 2007) and in the life of political parties (Webb & Poguntke 2005), whereas parties are viewed with growing distrust (Dalton 2004: 29-30; Webb 2002). We posit that such attitudes could push legislators to adopt electoral rules that focus attention upon individual candidates.

This paper is part of a broader research project on electoral system change in Europe since 1945. What we present is a first draft of where we have reached so far. We begin by reviewing existing literature on the personalization of electoral systems. Then we explore why it is plausible to

hypothesize a trend towards greater personalization. In the third section, we examine the definition and operationalization of personalization in greater detail. On that basis, the fourth section presents some preliminary results on the trends towards more personalized electoral systems in Europe since 1945. In the final section, the complexity and limits of studies of personalization are discussed, opening paths for further comparative and case-study research.

1. Existing knowledge of the personalization of electoral systems

Political scientists and commentators have discussed a putative personalization of politics for some years. The underlying idea is that individual politicians are becoming more important in politics at the expense of traditional social and political groups. The individualization of society has weakened traditional ties and cleavages, accompanied by a growing distrust among citizens towards political parties. Another major change has been the growing importance of the media in politics. All these changes have contributed to a deep political transformation in Western democracies (Baumann 2001). The big winners are the individual politicians, who have gained a more central role in the eyes of voters and the media and within the institutional architecture.

These changes have led to a growing interest in research about the personalization of politics (McAllister 2007). Many authors have tried to uncover aspects of the phenomenon. Karvonen (2010) provides an extensive overview. He identifies three major aspects of the personalization of politics. First, several scholars have explored the empowerment of political leaders in contemporary democracies, as exemplified by Poguntke and Webb's (2005) work on the presidentialization of parliamentary democracies. Following the earlier works of Mughan (2000) and Foley (2000), they argue that party leaders, and, even more, prime ministers have gained much power and autonomy in recent years and are the new centre of power in modern politics. They dominate more than ever before their government, their party, and the media landscape.

The second aspect focuses on the growing importance of candidates and party leaders in electoral politics. The general assumption is that voters are basing their choice less on their evaluation of parties and more on their judgments between individual politicians. Many scholars have sought to measure the so-called party leaders' effect on the vote (Curtice and Holmberg 2005, Wattenberg 1991, Aarts et al. 2011). Others have tried to evaluate how all candidates, not just party leaders, affect voting decisions (Raunio 2004, Blais et al. 2003, Marsh 2007).

The third aspect looks at media coverage of politics in order to verify whether individual politicians are becoming central. Most research here concentrates on party leaders (Kaase 1994,

Langer 2007), though a few others explore media coverage of all individual candidates more broadly (van Aalst and van Mierlo 2003).

In this paper we focus on another aspect of the personalization thesis. Our concern is with the relative importance of candidates and parties in the institutional architecture. We thus share in part the interests of Rahat and Sheafer (2007), who study the growing personalization of candidate selection in Israeli politics. But here we are looking at the importance of candidates in the electoral system. We posit that the personalization of politics should have been translated into the rules governing elections, and we assess evidence on whether this has in fact been the case. Have legislators across Europe passed bills that have made candidates more central in the choice offered to voters at the expenses of parties or lists? To adopt Farrell's dichotomy (2001) are electoral system becoming more candidate- rather than party-centred?

Karvonen (2010) offers an initial answer to this question. He looks at the evolution of electoral systems in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Malta, New Zealand and Sweden in order to evaluate whether there is a trend towards more candidate-centeredness, and concludes that the evidence is mixed. Some countries, such as Belgium and Sweden, have passed new legislation making candidates more central. Others, including Italy, New Zealand, and Japan, have reduced the centeredness of candidates.

Karvonen's preliminary analysis points to the need for further research: greater conceptual clarity and broader empirical reach are required. Colomer and colleagues make important steps in that direction in their recent edited volume (Colomer 2011). We offer further progress here. First we discuss extensively how to evaluate the candidate-centeredness of electoral systems. Second our empirical material goes much beyond both Karvonen's and Colomer's. We establish whether a trend towards more personalized systems exists in 31 countries across Western and Eastern Europe since 1945.

2. Why should we expect a personalization of electoral systems?

Early comparative work on electoral system choice often focused very heavily on politicians: politicians were assumed to control the electoral system; and electoral reform would occur only if sufficiently many politicians found change to be in their power-seeking interests (e.g., Benoit 2004; Colomer 2004, 2005). From this perspective, public disengagement from political parties would not be expected to have much impact on the politics of electoral reform: public attitudes, on this account, are just not relevant to outcomes. As research into electoral reform has developed, however, the role of other actors has increasingly been recognized (e.g., Katz 2005, 2011; Norris

2011; Rahat 2008; Renwick 2010, 2011). Quintal recognized long ago (Quintal 1970) that potential electoral reformers must attend to “the costs of voter affect”: that enacting reforms that voters dislike or failing to pursue reforms that voters demand could cost politicians support and hence power. This idea, long largely ignored, has more recently been revived in Reed and Thies’s distinction (2001) between “outcome-contingent” and “act-contingent” aspects of decision-making. It implies that, even if politicians do largely maintain control over the electoral system, they must attend to public opinion when thinking about reform. As Dalton (2004: 181) puts it, “a growing number of contemporary citizens are disenchanted with the political parties, and these sentiments are generating support for reforms to improve the system of representative democracy. This creates fertile ground for elites and other political actors to suggest institutional reform and experimentation”. These experiments include not only the more frequent use of participatory and direct democracy devices, but also the expansion of electoral choices (Dalton and Gray, 2003). Citizens are no longer so satisfied with a ballot just allowing them to mark one single preference for a party. They increasingly demand more sophisticated decision capacity, including the ability to express their preferences among candidates within parties.

And citizens’ demands are not without consequence. As one of us has argued elsewhere (Renwick 2010, 2011), electoral systems can change through a variety of channels. In some of these, public attitudes are central, while in others they are marginal. In France in 1985 or Greece in 1989, for example, electoral reforms were enacted almost purely on the basis of the (outcome-contingent) interests of the politicians in power: those politicians calculated that new electoral institutions would suit their interests better than those in place and therefore enacted change. Public opinion mattered in these cases only in the sense that it was permissive: politicians knew they could get away with manipulating the system without suffering punishment. The reforms in Italy and New Zealand in 1993, by contrast, were strongly driven by popular opinion: most politicians acquiesced in them only because they feared punishment at the ballot box if they resisted. Between such cases, we find others in which the role of public opinion is more passive but nevertheless significant. Politicians in these scenarios may hope that by sponsoring reforms they can curry public favour. They may also genuinely hope that they can re-engage alienated citizens through institutional innovation. Such motivations underlie British politicians’ current support for reforms such as the introduction of recall and candidate selection via primaries.

Given the multiplicity of mechanisms of electoral reform, we do not expect all reforms to trend in a uniform direction: reforms occurring via different routes are likely to show different patterns. Reforms in which politicians have free rein to pursue their outcome-contingent reforms – reforms by elite imposition of one kind or another – should not trend towards personalization. By

contrast, we expect to see a trend towards greater personalization among reforms that are pushed on – whether actively or more passively – by public opinion, specifically, by public disquiet surrounding the political system. Furthermore, given that it is almost impossible to remove politicians entirely from the electoral reform process, we expect the continuing influence of politicians in most cases to ensure that most reforms that increase personalization are likely to be limited in the degree of change they introduce¹. We therefore propose three hypotheses:

H1: A trend towards increasing personalization of electoral systems should have emerged in recent years.

H2: Most electoral reforms that increase personalization should be limited to relatively detailed aspects of the electoral system: major transformations are likely to be rare.

H3: Electoral reforms that increase personalization should emerge from processes spurred by public dissatisfaction with or alienation from existing democratic practice.

3. Defining and operationalizing personalization

Studies on the personalization of electoral system remain rare. As we have suggested, this is probably because intraparty choice has for long been a neglected aspect of electoral systems more generally. Writing in the mid-1980s, Richard Katz observed that “The tendency to think of election results in purely partisan terms has meant that very little research has been done on questions relating to intraparty preference voting.” (Katz 1986: 87). Most scholars working on electoral systems focused on those systems’ effects upon the distribution of seats among parties, not on their effects within parties. Fortunately, in thirty years the maturation of the field has led to the publication of several research pieces on aspects of electoral systems that affect intraparty choice. The central question concerns who decides who will sit in parliament: voters or political parties. Beyond this core, however, different views have emerged. As Karvonen (2010: 35) observes, “The relative importance of candidates as compared to parties can be determined in different ways: candidate-centeredness is not a one-dimensional phenomenon.” It is noteworthy that Katz (1986: 85-6) offers three reasons for studying intra-party voting: which of a party’s candidates gets elected can matter to the nature of politics thereafter; who gets elected matters to individual candidates; and voters may have preferences over individuals as well as over parties. This suggests that intraparty choice

¹ See Renwick (2010) for more details on the actors who can be involved in electoral reform processes and for discussion of how who the actors are influences the most likely outcomes of reform processes.

has implications from (at least) three perspectives. And the ordering of electoral systems in terms of the degree of personalization may be different depending on which of these perspectives we adopt.

In the literature, one perspective has dominated so far: most research adopts the perspective of the candidates. The leading figures for this approach are Carey and Shugart (1995). These authors' concern is to understand the degree to which an electoral system encourages candidates to cultivate a personal vote or rely on party resources. They consider variation among electoral systems on four dimensions, which they label *ballot*, *votes*, *pool* and *district magnitude*. *Ballot* refers to the extent of party control over who is elected. It takes the value of 0 when parties present a ballot that cannot be disturbed by voters, 1 when parties present a ballot that can be disturbed by voters, and 2 when parties have no control over the ballot. *Votes* measures how many votes voters can cast. It ranges from 0 when they can only cast one vote for one party, to 1 when they can support multiple candidates and 2 when they can cast a single vote below party-level. *Pool* distinguishes between systems where a vote cast for one candidate benefits the seat share of the party as a whole (0), systems where a vote cast for one candidate benefits a subsets of candidates from the party (1), and systems without vote pooling (2). Finally, *District Magnitude*, as usual, refers to the number of seats per electoral district.

On the basis of the first three of these dimensions (ballot, pool, and votes), Carey and Shugart provide a rank ordering of electoral systems from that giving the greatest to that giving the least incentive for the cultivation of a personal vote: personal-list PR; SNTV; LV and CV; multi-member plurality; open-list PR in which voters can express a single intra-party preference; STV, open-list PR in which voters can express multiple intra-party preferences, two-round systems, and, finally, SMP and closed-list PR. They then add the variable of district magnitude (M), arguing that incentives to cultivate a personal vote decline as M rises in closed-list systems while rising in all other systems. More recently Shugart alone (2001) has slightly modify this typology. Most significantly, he introduces a category of "flexible list" systems between systems with closed lists and with open lists. He posits that flexible list systems provide more incentive for the cultivation of a personal vote than do closed-list systems, but less than do SMP or any other systems. Furthermore, he posits that, as district magnitude rises, systems with flexible lists behave like those with closed lists: personal vote incentives decline. Karvonen (2010: 35-40) applies Shugart's revised schema in order to assess the degree of "personalization" of electoral systems. He therefore provides a study of the personalization of electoral systems from a candidate's perspective.

In this paper we want to slightly change this perspective. First, as said above, our core hypothesis is that a trend towards the personalization of electoral systems should be driven by public

attitudes: by voters' desire for more direct control over politicians and their disillusionment with existing democratic arrangements. For this reason, it is the perspective of voters upon the personalization of the electoral system, rather than that of candidates, that matters. In that sense we follow authors like Farrell and Gallagher for whom what is crucial is what they call the "openness" of the electoral system, by which they mean "how much choice is given to voters" (Farrell and Gallagher 1998: 56). Similarly, Farrell and McAllister (2006: 11) classify electoral systems in terms of whether they are candidate-centred or party-centred and whether they allow voters an ordinal or merely categorical choice. For voters, the possibility of ranking candidates makes a system more candidate-centred, whereas, for candidates, incentives to cultivate a personal vote are stronger when the choice is categorical.

The second difference with Carey and Shugart's typology, but also with what has been proposed by Farrell, Gallagher and McAllister is that we believe that there is a need for more detailed categorisation. For example, on the 'ballot' dimension the category of semi-open list systems needs further refinement. There is much variety in exactly how list votes and candidate (preferential) votes affect the allocation of seats within lists. The same holds for the 'vote' dimension. This dimension is not only about having the possibility to support multiple candidates, one candidate or none. Many systems fall within the 'multiple candidate votes' category: systems allowing voters to support a few candidates only or as many candidates as there are seats to be filled, as well as ranking systems such as STV or AV, and systems allowing for *panachage*.

Obviously a typology has to be parsimonious and to simplify the complexity of electoral rules. Yet when one tries to identify a trend towards more personalized electoral legislation, a very parsimonious typology could lead us to miss some of the changes that are happening. Often reforms to the ballot structure are minor and change is gradual (Jacobs and Leyenaar 2011). In order accurately to assess the hypothesis of a trend towards the personalization of electoral systems, a more fine-grained typology is, we believe, required.

We propose to evaluate the degree of personalization of electoral systems on the basis of (1) what voters are asked to do in the act of voting and (2) what voters see after the election, in terms of the impact of their vote upon the election outcome and who is finally elected.

The first angle relates to the act of voting itself. What do voters physically vote for? What is the ink on the ballot for? Do they express their support for a candidate, several candidates, or a party? Do voters simply support one or more candidates or do they also have to order them? And the second focuses on what happens to the vote after it has been cast. Three elements are at play here. Are preference votes for individual candidates actually counted at all? How decisive is the vote in

deciding which candidates are elected? And does a vote for one candidate contribute support to other candidates via mechanisms of vote transfer or vote pooling.

The Act of Voting

When we look at the act of voting, we are interested in understanding the degree to which voters can make and express a choice among candidates rather than (just) among parties. In this respect we propose that the following elements should be taken into account:

1. how many preference votes among candidates that voters can express
2. how far voters can differentiate their support for candidates
3. whether voters can distribute multiple preferences across parties or only within a party
4. how free voters are as to whether they express candidate preferences and how many they express
5. how far voters have an effective intra-party choice
6. how great the distance is between voters and individual candidates

The first and most central element concerns how many candidates voters can vote for. At one extreme, voters may be able to express no candidate preference at all, where all they can do is vote for a party list. Or they may be able to express a single candidate preference, as under SMP and some versions of open and semi-open list PR. Or they may be able to express multiple candidate preferences: some PR systems give voters three or four preference votes; in Switzerland, voters may cast as many preference votes as there are seats; under AV and STV they can cast as many preference votes as there are candidates, and to some extent one can argue that two-round systems with single-member districts allow voters to express two preferences.

This first dimension is very close to Carey and Shugart's (1995) 'vote' dimension. But we differ from them in arguing that electoral systems are more personalized the more candidate preferences voters can express. According to Carey and Shugart, incentives to cultivate a personal reputation are greatest when voters can express one and only one candidate preference: it is here that the premium to a candidate for being a voter's first preference is greatest. From voters' perspective, however, a system that allows more preferences to be expressed allows greater scope for saying what one thinks of the various candidates. Thus, personalization rises as voters can express preferences regarding more candidates.

In this and all other dimensions of personalization, we need criteria to determine whether an increase in the number of preferences that can be expressed is significant or not: the difference between expression of no candidate preferences and expression of one such preference is certainly significant, but the difference between the expression of ten preferences and eleven is probably not.

In establishing criteria for determining whether a change to proportionality is significant, Lijphart (1994: 13) follows a 20 per cent rule: changes in district magnitude or assembly size or thresholds are significant if they are of 20 per cent or more. We follow the same rule here: the number of preferences that votes can express must change by at least 20 per cent before we count it.² But we also apply a second rule. Beyond a certain point, changes in numbers of preferences become largely meaningless: a voter is very unlikely to feel more empowered as a result of being able to express forty preferences rather than thirty, for example. We therefore establish a cut-off and say that changes above twenty preferences are never significant, no matter their size. The cut-off of twenty, like the 20 per cent criterion, is, as Lijphart (1994: 13) puts it, “necessarily arbitrary”.

Electoral systems also allow voters in varying degrees to express order among their preferences. Rae’s (1967: 16-19) distinction between categorical and ordinal systems is well known. Categorical systems are those in which voters can order two categories of preference: supported and not supported. Ordinal systems are those asking voters to order more than two levels of preference. Some allow voters to order three levels: for example, the supplementary vote system used to elect some English mayors allows voters to express their first and second preferences (leaving all other candidates unsupported), while the Latvian system of list PR allows voters to express support, neutrality, or opposition to a candidate. The system used Papua New Guinea lets voters express four levels of preference. Systems such as the alternative vote, single transferable vote and Borda count allow voters to express as many levels as there are candidates. In this category we also include cumulative voting systems, as in Luxemburg or in Illinois before 1980. Voters have as many candidate votes as the number of seats to be filled. They can allocate them by giving 2, 1 or 0 preferential votes to candidates within lists, so voters can express three degree of preference.

Unlike Rae, we add a third type of systems: interval systems. These are systems that allow voters not merely to order candidates, but also to say something about the size of the intervals between their preferences. Interval systems include cumulative systems in which voters can give more than two votes to a single candidate: if, for example, a voter can cumulate five votes on one candidate while giving no more than one vote to any other candidate, this allows the voter to express not merely a preference, but a *strong* preference for this candidate. In principle, interval systems also include systems such as “range voting” (rangevoting.org) or Balinski and Laraki’s proposed system of “majority judgement” (Balinski and Laraki 2010), in which voters give each candidate a score. In recent years, free cumulative voting – which allows voters to concentrate more than two votes on a single candidate – has been used for local and schoolboard elections in Texas, Alabama, and Illinois.

² Strictly, again following Lijphart (1994: 13), the change must be at least 20 per cent of whichever of the old and new values is lower. So a change from 5 to 6 is significant and so is a change from 6 to 5.

In principle we could for each electoral system measure the number of levels of preference that voters can express or the degree to which they are able to express the gaps in their preferences between candidates. In practice, we keep things simple by coding differentiation of preferences as an ordinal variable with three categories: categorical, ordinal, and interval. For each electoral system, we look at the highest level of expression available to voters.

Farrell and McAllister (2006: 11) combine these two aspects of electoral system (the number of candidates one can vote for and the degree to which one can differentiate preferences) to determine a *general degree of preference expression*. We agree that these two dimensions take us a considerable distance, and Figure 1 locates the most common electoral systems on them both. Preference expression is lowest in the top left corner and highest in the bottom right corner. M denotes district magnitude and C the total number of candidates. Cells that are coloured grey are logically impossible combinations.

[Figure 1 about here]

But, as said above, we think that we need to go further and to consider other dimensions to describe the degree of personalization in the act of voting. The third element to take into account is whether voters can distribute multiple preferences across parties or only within a party. Some systems – including preferential systems, block vote systems, and list proportional systems with panachage – allow voters to back candidates across party boundaries. Other systems – in particular, non-panachage list systems – by contrast, allow voters to support candidates from only one party. The first of these categories clearly allows a greater range of candidate voting than the second. We code the distribution of preferences as a simple dichotomous variable.

Fourthly, a distinction can be made according to the degree of freedom given to voters in the expression of preferences for candidates. The first element is whether casting a candidate vote is compulsory or not. It is compulsory in non-list systems because not voting for at least one candidate is a blank vote. It is also compulsory in some list systems, as in Finland or the Netherlands, where voters are required to vote for at least one candidate within the list they support. By contrast, in Belgium or Denmark voters can choose to vote for one or a few candidates or to mark a list vote without expressing any preference for candidates. We believe that, in terms of the act of voting, the latter are more personalized: systems in which preference voting is permitted but not compulsory give voters a greater range of options in terms of the preferences that they express (though, as we will see shortly, they can have the countervailing effect of diminishing the effectiveness of those preferences). The degree of freedom left to voters also calls for a distinction between systems in which voters have to support a fixed number of candidates for their vote to be valid and systems

where the maximum number of preferences is fixed but voters have the option to support fewer candidates than the legal maximum. Here again personalization is higher when voters have more options. We code voter freedom in three categories: systems where voters must express a fixed number of preferences (which may be zero or greater); systems where voters can choose whether or not they express preferences, but cannot choose how many preferences they express; and systems where voters can choose whether or not to express preferences *and* have at least some choice as to how many preferences they express.

Fifthly, all of the electoral system features that we have looked at so far relate to voters' ability to express preferences among the candidates. Also important, however, is the degree to which voters actually have a range of candidates to choose from. Most obviously, do voters have an intra-party choice of candidates? On the criteria that we have outlined so far, voters in single-member plurality systems have exactly the same ability to express candidate preferences as do voters in open-list proportional systems with one preference vote. Yet that is clearly misleading: in the latter case, but not the former, voters can choose among candidates from their preferred party, so thinking about candidates makes sense for party loyalists as well as for voters with weaker partisan ties. A slightly more complex case is that of the block vote system. Voters under this system are able to support whichever candidates they wish. A party loyalist, however, effectively has no intra-party choice: the party will put up no more candidates than there are seats available and, in order to give the party his or her full support, the loyalist must vote for every one of these. We can think of the degree of intra-party choice in terms of the ratio between the number of candidates a party puts up and the number of candidates a voter must support in order to give that party the greatest possible support. The higher this ratio, the greater the degree of intra-party choice. The number of candidates can clearly vary from party to party and election to election, but we avoid complexity by using the maximum number of candidates a party is allowed to put up or, if there is no such maximum, the district magnitude. Applying the same approach as before, we say that a change in the ratio of at least 20 per cent is significant, provided the value of the ratio is below twenty. Of course, this aspect of personalization does not apply if candidate voting is impossible; nor is it relevant to the degree that gradations of support can be expressed.

Finally, as Katz (1980: 30–31) argues, the size of a district makes a difference to the degree to which voters are able to connect with individual candidates. We posit that this is the case even in systems that allow considerable expression of candidate preferences. The “size” that matters here is, in significant part, geographical size or population: as Katz (1980: 31) puts it,

Where there are few voters in a district, campaigning is likely to be conducted on a personal basis by the candidate and a few friends of loyal party workers. ... When the candidate must reach tens or hundreds of thousands of voters, however, more reliance must be placed on campaigns through the media and by large numbers of volunteers or paid workers. In this case, the importance of organization (not necessarily formal party organization) and finance is greatly increased.

But changes in geographical size or population are, unless assembly size changes, related directly to district magnitude. And simple magnitude can have a distancing effect too if it encourages voters to use the shortcut of party in order to decide how to cast their vote. Thus, we see higher district magnitude as implying greater distance between voters and candidates and hence, in this sense, lower personalization. As before, we count changes of 20 per cent as significant up to a maximum district magnitude of twenty. It should be emphasized that this is only one of several ways in which district magnitude affects personalization. We sum these various effects up below, after considering the second broad dimension of personalization: the degree to which preference votes actually influence outcomes.

The Effects of Voting

When we turn to the effects of voting, things get a little simpler. As we suggested earlier, three mechanisms are of greatest importance here: whether candidate votes are actually counted; the degree to which candidate votes determine the order in which candidates get elected; and the degree of vote pooling.

We are aware of no electoral system in which voters are allowed to express candidate preferences but these are never even counted. There are some systems, however, in which they are sometimes not counted or in which at least some are not counted. In AV and STV, for example, voters can express multiple preferences on an ordinal scale, but many of these preferences are never looked at at all. This contrasts with cumulative vote and Borda count, where ordinal preference expression is possible *and* all of these preferences are always taken into account. Another kind of variation of this type is exemplified by the Lithuanian electoral system, where voters can express candidate preferences, but parties are free to decide that these will not be taken into consideration when determining the order of candidates on the party's list. We code systems according to whether candidate preferences are never counted (in practice, this applies only to systems where no

candidate preferences can be expressed), or are counted in some circumstances, or are always counted.

Turning to the degree to which candidate votes determine the order in which candidates get elected, we may begin by distinguishing three categories: those in which intra-party candidate ordering is entirely determined by voters, those in which it is determined partly by voters and partly by parties, and those in which it is entirely determined by parties. These categories are summarized in Figure 2.

[Figure 2 about here]

Beyond this simple trichotomy, it is necessary to investigate the intermediate category in more detail because the respective influence of parties and voters on the intraparty candidate ordering can vary considerably. It can go from those in which voters have no more than a theoretical chance of changing list order (as in Norway) to those in which parties have only very limited influence (as in Belgian local elections). We can distinguish between two main families of semi-open list system. In the first, the general rule is that candidates are elected following the list ordering set by the party; candidates who reach a threshold of preferential votes, however, are lifted to the top of the list. In such systems, used, for example in the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, and Sweden, the lower the threshold the more open the system, and the more personalized the elections are from a voter's perspective. In the second family of semi-open list systems, formerly used in Austria and still used in Belgium, the general rule is that candidates are elected on the basis of their preference votes. But votes cast for a list without expression of candidate preferences are taken as endorsing the party's own list order. The degree of openness of the lists is therefore related to the weight of these "list votes" in determining who gets elected.

An electoral reform therefore increases the impact of candidate votes if it either reduces the threshold for election outside list order or reduces the weight of list votes. It is important to recognize that such changes can be effected through a number of channels. The most obvious is a reduction in the legal threshold or the legal weighting. In addition, however, an increase in the number of preference votes that voters can cast or a move from optional to compulsory expression of candidate preferences or a reduction in the district magnitude and therefore the number of candidates over whom those preference votes will be split will all have the same effect as a reduction in the legal threshold or the legal weighting by making it more likely that a candidate will garner sufficient votes to pass the threshold or to overcome the advantage of coming high up the list. We

again apply the principle that changes in the number of preference votes or district magnitude are significant if they are of at least 20 per cent, subject to a maximum value of twenty.

The final aspect of the effect that a vote has concerns whether or not there is vote pooling. That is, can a vote cast for an individual candidate help elect that candidate's co-partisans or does it count in favour only of the individual? We may distinguish systems along two dimensions here. The first concerns whether pooling can occur across all a candidate's co-partisans (within a district) or only to a restricted set of those copartisans with whom the candidate is particularly associated, or not at all. The second concerns whether pooling occurs in all circumstances, some circumstances, or no circumstances. On neither dimension are cases occupying the intermediate categories common, but they do exist, as shown in Figure 3.

[Figure 3 about here]

The degree of pooling can be changed, clearly, by a change in the rules on pooling itself. It is also changed by district magnitude: higher district magnitude implies pooling across more candidates. A voter in a two-member district who wishes to vote for a particular candidate may be willing to put up with the fact that, under list PR, one other candidate will also benefit from the vote cast. In a hundred-member district, however, the support for the individual candidate is vastly more diluted. The district magnitude that matters here is that of the highest tier of seat allocation. Changes of at least 20 per cent are significant, up to a maximum of twenty.

The only point of controversy in respect of pooling concerns whether vote transfers under STV or AV should be regarded as pooled votes. Carey and Shugart (1995) say they should. Shugart (2001a, 2001b: 37) appears to acknowledge that this is problematic, in that he refers to votes that "pool or transfer to other candidates". While allowing a terminological distinction, however, he continues to treat vote pooling and vote transfer as functional equivalents. Looking from candidates' perspective, this may be a reasonable approximation: a candidate can gain support from a voter even when she or he is not that voter's first preference under either pooling or transfer (though it should be said that the migration of votes to copartisans is automatic with pooling but not with transfer). When we take the voters' perspective, however, it is inappropriate to treat transfer as equivalent to pooling. As Lakeman put it forty years ago, "All [list systems] ... have this feature in common: that every vote (whether or not given in the first instance to an individual candidate) is, automatically and without further reference to the voter's wishes, added to the total of the list on which that candidate appears. This feature is entirely absent from the system of the single transferable vote." (Lakeman

1970: 104). Under STV, voters can choose whether to transfer their vote to their preferred candidate's copartisans or to candidates of another party. In no way does a vote for a candidate in itself aid the election of that party's other candidates. Whatever the merits of Carey and Shugart's approach when looking from the candidate's perspective, therefore, it is clear that, looking from the voter's perspective, STV and AV should be treated as non-pooling systems.

An electoral reform increases the degree to which voters can actually raise the election prospects of individual candidates, therefore, to the degree that it:

1. shifts the system from one in which preference votes are never or sometimes counted to one in which they are sometimes or always counted;
2. reduces the threshold for preference votes to count or reduces the weight of list votes in determining list order – whether directly or indirectly;
3. reduces the degree of vote pooling – again either directly or indirectly.

We have identified eight dimensions of personalization and have outlined our operationalization of each. One final note should be added in respect of the operationalization. In mixed systems, we regard a change as significant if it satisfies the criteria above *and* it affects at least 5 per cent of the seats in the legislature.

District Magnitude

We have mentioned district magnitude at several stages. There is clearly an important relationship between district magnitude and the personalization of the electoral system, but defining exactly what that relationship is has proved difficult. The traditional view has been that higher district magnitude implies lower personalization. Katz (1980: 30-31) argued that higher district magnitude weakens personal contact between candidates and voters, increases the salience of party rather than candidate in voters' choices, and encourages the institutionalization of election campaigning. Bowler and Farrell (1993) find that evidence from the European Parliament supports the hypothesis that higher district magnitude reduces personalization: they find that MEPs from larger districts receive less contact from their constituents and are less likely to maintain a permanently staffed constituency office. Wessels (1999), similarly, posits a straightforward relationship between district magnitude and personalization and finds strong support for this in evidence from both the European Parliament and European national parliaments. He concludes: "The smaller the district magnitude, i.e. the more personalized the electoral competition, the more representatives choose to represent the constituency" (Wessels 1999: 223).

By contrast, Carey and Shugart (1995) and Shugart (2001b) argue that the relationship between district magnitude and personalization is more complex: that the effect of district magnitude is contingent on other aspects of the system. They contend that incentives to cultivate a personal vote decline as M rises in closed-list systems while rising in all other systems.

We agree with this intuition, but we believe that things are even more complex. An increase in district magnitude may have the following effects upon aspects of the personalization of the electoral system:

1. In systems where voters can express candidate preferences and the number of such preferences is related to district magnitude, an increase in district magnitude increases that number.
2. Except where there are closed lists, an increase in district magnitude is very likely to increase the number of candidates whom voters can choose from. In list systems without panachage and in STV, this increases the intra-party choice available to voters.
3. In semi-open list systems, if an increase in district magnitude increases the number of candidates, it makes it harder for an unchanged threshold of preference votes to be met (because preference votes will be spread out over more candidates) and similarly makes it harder for candidates to amass sufficient preference votes to overcome the weight of list votes.
4. In all systems with pooling, higher district magnitude increases that pooling.
5. Higher district magnitude may simply make it harder for individual voters and individual candidates to connect. This may be caused by higher district size in terms of population and geography rather than magnitude in itself. In addition, relating directly to magnitude itself, voters may find it hard to relate to very large numbers of candidates: as magnitude rises, they may increasingly turn to shortcuts such as partisanship.

Only for closed-list systems (either closed-list PR or party block vote) do all of these elements point in the same direction: in these systems, higher M means more vote pooling but without any change in the act of voting or in the way seats are allocated within list. Higher district magnitude in these cases therefore unambiguously implies lower personalization. But in all other systems, higher M has opposing effects, reinforcing personalization on one dimension and reducing it on another. In semi-open list systems, for example, higher M can increase the number of preferences and the degree of intra-party choice. But higher M also means more vote pooling, while greater dilution of preference votes among candidates makes it harder for a candidate to reach the threshold for being elected outside list order.

We suggest that it is simply impossible in these mixed cases to define *a priori* the overall impact on personalization of a change in district magnitude. That overall effect depends on which of the various individual effects matter more, and this varies depending on circumstances. If, for example, voters are particularly concerned that politicians are remote from them and do not therefore find the broad range of options available to them very meaningful, then a reduction in district magnitude may bring politicians and voters closer, thereby enhancing personalization. If, by contrast, voters are more concerned that their choices are constrained, then increasing district magnitude could enhance their options. We therefore treat changes in district magnitude on a case-by-case basis, looking at how each change was perceived at the time it was introduced.

This ambiguity in the effects of district magnitude points to several limits on how far it is possible for an *a priori* typology of electoral system personalization to go. We elaborate upon these limits in the following section, before turning to our empirical analysis.

Limits of a priori theory

Our discussion of district magnitude suggests that *a priori* theorizing of electoral system personalization must remain incomplete for two reasons.

First, the concept of electoral system personalization is inherently multi-dimensional: as we have argued, it involves the degree to which voters are free to express (or not express) the structure of their preferences across candidates and the degree to which such preferences in fact influence who is elected. Where a given change affects different dimensions of personalization in different ways, we cannot say *a priori* what the overall effect is.

Some cases do not suffer this problem. For example, an increase in the number of preference votes that voters can cast – such as the shift from two preferences to four enacted in the Czech Republic in 2006 – increases both voters' ability to express themselves and the likelihood that their preferences will change the order in which candidates are elected. In other cases, however, things are more complex. We have suggested, for example, that a shift from optional to compulsory preference expression reduces voters' options in expressing preferences among candidates but increases the likelihood those preferences will influence outcomes. What, then, is the overall effect upon the personalization of elections? The answer to that question appears likely to depend on other aspects of the electoral system and upon traditions of voting behaviour. The capacity to cast a preferential vote for a candidate is unlikely to have much meaning – and unlikely to influence how voters approach an election – if that vote is expected to have no influence on the outcome. Thus, if a

shift to compulsory preference expression changes the system from one in which preference votes are unlikely to make a difference to one in which they are likely to do so, it can be expected overall to increase the personalization of the ballot. If, by contrast, the change does not cause the system to cross this threshold – either because the barrier to effective preference voting remains too high or because it has already been crossed – then the fact of reduced preference expression may be more important. The same difficulty of adding pieces up can also apply to reforms that change more than one aspect of the electoral system. In Sweden in 1997, for example, reforms were introduced that simultaneously reduced the freedom of voters to express their preferences among candidates (limiting them to just one preference among candidates nominated by parties) and increased the likelihood that candidate preferences would influence who was elected. Should we think that this change increased personalization overall or reduced it?

The only way to resolve such a question is to look in greater depth at the problematic cases. In fact, the consensus view among Swedish scholars is that the 1997 reforms increased personalization: the previous preference voting arrangements had been so ineffectual as to be largely meaningless (Möller, 1999). Similarly, in other ambiguous cases, we seek guidance from the case literature as to what the overall effect was perceived to be.

The second difficulty lies in the difference between the formal rules and their actual political use. Our typology is based upon the expected degree of personalization of an electoral system when we consider its mechanical functioning. But there are many examples where parties and voters may use the system differently and change the actual level of personalization of elections under unchanged rules. For example, there is a real debate over how to characterize SMP. Is it a candidate-centred system because voters mark a ballot with the name of a candidate or is it a party-centred system because there is only one candidate per party and therefore no possibility for intraparty choice? This dispute is irresolvable a priori because it depends on the behaviour of parties, not the rules. Formally, parties can present more than one candidate and offer intraparty choice to their supporters. But they will not do so because it is risky to split the vote for their party. Practice changes the degree of personalization of the system. Another example is to be found in Switzerland. The number of candidates per party cannot exceed district magnitude. But parties can decide to present several lists (to represent different groups or geographical areas) and to link their voters with a mechanism of ‘*apparentement*’. This practice increases the personalization of the election for voters because they can remain fully loyal to their party without being obliged simply to endorse the single list presented by their preferred party (Bochsler 2010).

These limits show that a complete a priori ranking of electoral systems according to personalization is impossible. Nevertheless, we can be confident that any of the following changes will, other things being equal, increase personalization:

- any increase in the number of candidates that a voter can support (that is, any shift to the right in Figure 1);
- a shift from a categorical to an ordinal or interval system (any shift down in Figure 1);
- any increase in the freedom with which voters can choose which candidates to support;
- any increase in the freedom with which voters can choose how many candidates to support;
- any increase in the number of intraparty choices offered to voters;
- any increase in the likelihood that preference votes are actually counted;
- any change that increases the formal impact of voters' preferences on intra-party candidate order: that is, any move to the right in Figure 2 or, in semi-open list systems, any change that lowers the threshold for being elected out of list order or reduces the weighting of list votes;
- any change that reduces pooling (moving right in Figure 3).

On this basis, the next section will explore electoral reforms that have occurred in Europe since 1945 in order to assess their effects upon personalization.

4. A trend towards more personalized electoral systems? Preliminary results

In order to assess our analysis of how electoral systems can affect personalization and to explore our hypotheses regarding changes in personalization, we have gathered information on electoral reforms across thirty European countries since 1945 (or, if later, since democratization or independence). Our research design includes all European countries that have attained the status of successful democracies, subject to a minimum population threshold of 100,000. Specifically, we include countries that satisfy three criteria: they must have attained a score of 1 or 2 on both Political Rights and Civil Liberties in the 2010 edition of Freedom House's annual Freedom in the World survey and a Polity score of at least 8 in the 2008 edition of the Polity IV database; if seeking membership of the European Union, they must also have been judged by the European Commission to meet the political

aspects of the accession criteria. In total, thirty-one countries satisfy these criteria: the 27 countries now in the European Union plus Croatia, Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland. Cyprus is not, however, included in this paper, as we have not yet processed sufficient information relating to its several electoral reforms.

Reflecting the bias of the literature, existing databases of electoral system changes (the best of which is Golder 2004) focus largely on changes that affect proportionality and often exclude changes to personalization. Even the one database that is focused on personalization – Johnson and Wallack’s *Database of Electoral Systems and the Personal Vote* (Johnson and Wallack 2007) – excludes key features such as the degree of openness of list formation (and is also based on the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s valuable but sometimes inaccurate Parline database). In order to develop a more reliable database, we have trawled the existing literature (see Renwick 2011) and, supported by the McDougall Trust and the Belgian FRS-FNRS, developed a network of young scholars across Europe who have provided us with basic information. The process of developing our database is ongoing, but the evidence we have gathered already is considerable, and sufficient for us to address the core question of this paper.

Before addressing our specific hypotheses, we survey the evidence. Table 1 summarizes cases of reform since 1945. We include here only reforms to existing democratic electoral systems. We may note, first, that the final column shows what is by now a familiar pattern in the overall incidence of electoral reform: following a period of significant reform activity in the 1950s (including changes in France, Italy, the Netherlands, West Germany, and all Scandinavian countries), there were very few reforms in the 1960s or 1970s. The pace then quickened to a peak in the 1990s, when many new democracies tinkered with their transitional electoral systems and some old democracies – including Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Sweden – also passed reforms. There has been some drop-off in the rate of reform since 2000; we have registered no significant reforms since the beginning of 2010.

[Table 1 about here]

Overall, thirty-one reforms have increased the personalization of existing electoral systems, while twenty have reduced it. A further twenty-five cases are shown as having made no significant change: in most cases, these are reforms that satisfy Lijphart’s criteria for significant change on the dimension of proportionality; we will not consider them further here. Finally, six reforms have had an ambiguous overall effect: they have increased personalization in some ways and reduced it in others, and the aggregate impact is unclear. In Lithuania in 2000, for example, the two parts of the mixed system were changed in opposing directions. The system used in single-member districts was

changed from a two-round system to simple plurality, thereby reducing the number of preferences voters could express and eliminating their capacity to express (in effect) first and second preferences. But in the proportional part of the system the weight attached to voters' preferences in determining the final order of candidates on the list was increased.

The overall figures in Table 1 give initial support for the proposition that a trend towards personalization of electoral systems should be emerging. There is no evidence of any overarching trend before 2000: the number of reforms increasing personalization from the 1940s to the 1990s was virtually identical to the number reducing it. Since 2000, however, thirteen reforms have increased personalization while only three have reduced it.

Table 2 takes the analysis further by disaggregating the various dimensions of personalization. It becomes apparent here that the trend towards greater personalization since 2000 is concentrated heavily in the "weight" variable: the weight of voters' candidate preferences in determining which individuals are elected has been increased since 2000 in twelve cases and reduced in only three. These cases take a variety of forms. In the Czech Republic, for example, the proportion of a party's voters whose support a candidate needs to move to the top of the party's list was reduced from 10 per cent to 7 per cent in 2002 and then to 5 per cent in 2006. Similarly, in Belgium, the weight attached to votes cast without expressing candidate preferences was reduced in 2002. In Estonia's multi-tier system of PR, semi-open lists replaced closed lists in the national tier in 2002. Romania and Bulgaria introduced a single-member-district element to systems of previously closed-list PR in 2008 and 2009 respectively. Other dimensions of personalization, by contrast, show no clear trend, though in only one – the distance between voters and candidates – is the number of cases moving away from personalization greater than the number moving towards it.

[Table 2 about here]

In working through the evidence on these countries, we have remained open to the possibility that electoral reforms might change personalization in ways that are not captured by the analysis presented above. This allows us to assess whether that analysis adequately captures the phenomenon we are interested in. In fact, we identified only one reform that changed personalization in a way that is captured by none of our eight dimensions. This was a reform in Latvia in 2009, which restricted candidates to running in only one of the country's five multi-member districts. Previously, candidates had often run in multiple districts, which mean that, despite the open-list system, those actually elected in a district were often not those who had won greatest support from voters. Under the new rules, it is always the candidates who have secured most votes

who win each list's allocation of seats. We see the lack of further reforms lying outside our eight dimensions as giving support to our framework.³

As the examples cited in the preceding paragraphs suggest, many of the reforms affecting personalization in recent years have been in the post-1989 democracies of Eastern Europe. It is valuable, therefore, to consider whether different patterns are observed depending on the age of a country's democracy. Table 3 summarizes the evidence. A clear trend towards greater personalization over the last two decades appears only in new democracies. In older democracies (countries where transition was completed at least twenty years earlier), cases of reform increasing personalization have outnumbered those reducing personalization, but the numbers are too small to be confident of a general pattern.

[Table 3 about here]

Another way of looking at the evidence is to compare electoral systems today with electoral systems as they have existed at early points of time in order to assess the overall direction of travel. This allows us to eliminate the possibility that we misinterpret the evidence by giving more weight to multiple small reforms than to single large changes. Table 4 therefore compares each country's electoral system today with the systems in place in 1990 and in 2000. It corroborates the previous evidence of a trend towards greater personalization. Comparing 1990 to today, we again find many cases of both increased and decreased personalization. Since 2000, however, only Italy and Norway have adopted less personalized systems. The Norwegian case, furthermore, is in fact of questionable significance: it involves an increase in the number of seats allocated at the national tier, which implies an increase in pooling. It would not be unreasonable to say that Italy is the only European democracy that has clearly reduced the personalization of its electoral system since 2000, while eleven countries have increased it.

[Table 4 about here]

We are now in a position to assess our hypotheses. The first hypothesis – that a trend towards greater personalization of electoral systems should have emerged – is supported by the evidence that we have summarized. Whichever way we look at it, many more countries have increased rather than decreased the personalization of their electoral systems in recent years. As we expected, the trend is not overwhelming: some cases still move in the opposite direction and, as Table 4 shows, many countries have seen no change at all (or only ambiguous changes). This reflects

³ We include the Latvian case in our figures for overall personalization in Table 1 and elsewhere; it is not included in Table 2.

the fact that electoral reform can have many causes and occur through multiple mechanisms. That such a clear trend emerges despite this equifinality gives strong support to our underlying expectations.

Our second hypothesis was that the continuing power of politicians should have restricted most cases of increased personalization to reforms that are significant but not major. In order to assess this, following earlier studies (e.g., Renwick 2010: 3), we define major reforms as changes from one type of electoral system to another. Standard categorizations of electoral system types (such as Norris 2004: 40–42; Reynolds, Reilly, and Ellis 2005: 28) focus primarily on proportionality. In order to concentrate attention on personalization, we consider the following electoral system types:

- closed-list systems (proportional, bonus-adjusted, or party block vote)
- single-member plurality and block vote
- alternative vote and two-round systems
- semi-open-list systems
- open-list systems
- single transferable vote, single non-transferable vote, and cumulative vote

Any move from one of these categories to another is a significant change. In mixed systems, shifts between these categories affecting at least 20 per cent of all the seats are also major changes. Closed-list systems are clearly less personalized than any others, while STV, SNTV, and CV systems are the most personalized. AV and two-round systems are more personalized than SMP and BV systems. Open-list systems are more personalized than all systems besides those in the final category. The overall effects of switches between semi-open-list systems and SMP, BV, AV, and two-round systems depend on just how open the lists are and which dimensions of personalization we focus on. Some cases (for example, where lists are close to being either closed or open) can be categorized; others remain conceptually ambiguous.

Table 5 presents the overall patterns, distinguishing between major and merely significant changes. As expected, major reforms are much rarer than merely significant reforms, accounting for only eighteen of the fifty-seven reforms that have affected personalization. Again as expected, no clear pattern emerges among the major reforms. Romania increased personalization in 2008 by moving from closed-list PR to a form of mixed system including single member districts. But Italy moved from a mixed system to closed-list bonus-adjusted PR in 2005. Lithuania moved from SMP to a two-round system for the majoritarian component of its mixed system in 2004, but this was only a

partial reversal of a complex set of reforms passed in 2000. The evidence is thus compatible with the proposition that politicians have thus far been able to limit increases in personalization to relatively detailed aspects of the electoral system.

Our final hypothesis posits that electoral reforms that increase personalization should emerge from processes spurred by public dissatisfaction with or alienation from the existing democratic system. There are two ways in which this hypothesis may be tested: first, through quantitative analysis of survey data on popular attitudes towards democracy; second, through qualitative analysis of reform processes in specific cases. Both of these approaches have advantages and disadvantages. Quantitative analysis clearly facilitates large-n study based on hard evidence; but given that our cases are few and that electoral reform processes are complex, it may fail to pick up underlying patterns. Qualitative study allows engagement with the complexity of reform processes, but reliable comparisons across multiple cases are difficult. Combining the insights of both methods is therefore desirable.

In a future iteration of this paper, we plan to draw on World Values Survey data in order to replicate Pippa Norris's recent study of electoral reform (Norris 2011) for the specific case of electoral system personalization. For now, however, we limit ourselves to brief qualitative observations. As Table 4 shows, five West European countries have experienced electoral reforms increasing personalization in the last two decades: Austria, Belgium, Iceland, the Netherlands, and Sweden. The case literature is unambiguous as to the sources of these changes:

- The Austrian reform of 1992 illustrates both a concern to respond to voters' alienation and fear of major change among politicians. "Reformers in both major parties considered the large electoral districts (up to 1.1 million voters) of the 1971 electoral system as a (potential) source of popular dissatisfaction with political representation" (Müller 2005: 399). They initially proposed an MMP system with one hundred SMDs and eighty-three seats allocated by compensatory PR, but this met opposition from government backbenchers and opposition parties. "The government parties therefore resorted to the alternative of strengthening the accountability of MPs by increasing the number of electoral districts less dramatically (from nine to forty-three), maintaining multimember districts, and strengthening the preference voting system" (Müller 2005: 400).
- In Belgium, the decision to reduce the weight of list votes in the allocation of seats within lists was taken by the first Verhofstadt cabinet. One of its mantras was the need for a renewal of Belgian democracy after ten years of scandals (political corruption, child abuse), of extreme right growth in Flanders, and of an increased gap between citizens and politics

(Van Aelst and Walgrave 1999). A parliamentary committee for democratic renewal was established in 2000. Many institutional reforms were debated, such as referendums and a shift to a mixed electoral system. In the end only a few reforms were passed, among which was the reduced influence of list votes (Pilet 2007, Jacobs 2011).

- Kristjánsson (2004: 155) observes that Icelandic politics since the early 1970s has been “characterised by vocal demands for a renewal of democracy, increased citizen participation and citizen control of the rulers.” These demands initially contributed to the introduction of open primaries for candidate selection in the 1970s (Kristjánsson 2004: 155), and they appear to have contributed to the strengthening of the weight of preference votes in the electoral reform of 2000.
- In the Netherlands, concern grew during the 1990s about a growing gap between politicians and voters. As Andeweg (2005: 506) observed, “To bridge this gap, it is felt, MPs should be brought into closer contact with their voters and voters should be given more influence over the choice of MPs.” Various major reform proposals were canvassed (Andeweg and Irwin 2002: 83–7), and a limited increase in the weight of preference votes was enacted in 1997 (Andeweg 2005: 506). Reform debates have continued since, including a citizens’ assembly established to review the electoral system in 2006.
- Finally, in reference to the Swedish reform of 1997, Bergman (2004: 221) observes that, “During the second half of the post-1945 period, Swedish politicians have increasingly been faced with expressions of distrust, lower electoral turnout and a loss of party members.” He describes the electoral reform as one of a range of democratic innovations introduced in response to this.

Similar processes are evident in at least some of the East European cases too. Two Estonian reforms, in 1994 and 2002 stemmed from the perception that the existing rules – under which politicians could enter parliament in just a handful of votes nationwide – were delegitimizing the political system (Pettai 2004: 831; Taagepera 1995: 329). The Romanian reform of 2008 emerged after years of pressure for “an elusive person-oriented (‘uninominal’) voting system” based in long-standing concern that Parliament was “remote from the electorate, slow, inefficient and unaccountable” (Birch *et al.* 2002: 102).

Thus, our preliminary review of the qualitative evidence supports the hypothesis that reforms increasing personalization have often been responses to public disquiet about or alienation from the existing democratic system.

Conclusion

Drawing all this evidence together, we can say categorically that reforms that increase personalization have been more frequent than reforms that reduce it, and that this preponderance has emerged within the last two decades. This pattern is clearest in recently established democracies, though this may simply reflect the greater ease of enacting any sort of electoral reform in these contexts: some long-established democracies have taken the same course. Given the small number of cases, we cannot be entirely confident that this pattern signifies a meaningful trend: it is possible that we simply see a coincidence of cases or a snowball effect with no significant initial cause. But we offered a causal story as to why we should expect to see a recently emerging trend towards personalization of just the kind that we do see, and the case evidence supports that story across many countries. All in all, therefore, we believe that there is good evidence for thinking that European electoral systems are undergoing a gradual process of personalization. This trend is grounded in voters' growing disengagement from traditional party politics and their desire for more individualized forms of political expression and representation.

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Figure 1. Degrees of preference expression

		Number of candidate preferences, p				
		0	1	$2 \leq p < M$	M	C
Degree of preference differentiation	Categorical	Closed-list PR; Party block vote	Single-member plurality; SNTV; (Semi-)Open list PR with one preference	Limited vote (Semi-)Open list PR with multiple preferences	Block vote; (Semi-)Open list PR with unlimited preferences	
	Ordinal			Supplementary vote; Two-round systems	(Semi-)Open list PR with ordinal preferences	Alternative vote; Single Transferable Vote
	Interval			Limited cumulative vote; (Semi-)Open list PR with limited cumulative preferences	Cumulative vote; (Semi-)Open list PR with cumulative preferences	Range voting; Majority judgement

Figure 2. Determinants of intraparty candidate ordering

Order determined entirely by parties	Order determined partly by parties and partly by voters	Order determined entirely by voters
Single-member plurality; Two-round systems; Alternative Vote Closed-list PR; Party block vote	Semi-open list PR	Open-list PR; Block vote Cumulative vote Limited vote SNTV Single Transferable Vote

Figure 3. Degrees of vote pooling

	No pooling	Pooling to some co-partisans	Pooling to all co-partisans (in the district)
No pooling	Single-member plurality Block vote Limited vote SNTV Cumulative vote Alternative vote STV		
Pooling in some circumstances			Maltese STV since 1987: pooling occurs where otherwise a wrong-winner outcome would arise
Pooling in all circumstances		Finland before 1954: pooling within tickets within lists	All list PR systems Party block vote

Table 1. Electoral reforms affecting personalization in Europe since 1945: five dimensions

	Impact of reform on personalization				
	Positive	Negative	No significant impact	Ambiguous impact	Total
1940s	2	0	1	0	3
1950s	3	2	6	0	11
1960s	0	1	1	0	2
1970s	0	1	2	1	4
1980s	4	4	3	0	11
1990s	9	9	8	2	28
2000s	13	3	4	3	23
Total	31	20	25	6	82

Table 2. Electoral reforms in Europe since 1945, by aspects of personalization

(a) Effects on the act of voting

	No. pref. votes		Differentiation of prefs		Distribution of prefs		Voter freedom		Intra-party choice		Voter-cand. distance	
	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
1940s	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
1950s	2	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
1960s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
1970s	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	2
1980s	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	0	2
1990s	3	6	1	3	1	3	3	5	3	4	3	6
2000s	5	3	1	1	1	1	3	2	5	1	3	4
Total	14	12	4	6	5	5	10	10	15	6	7	16

(b) Effects on the effect of preference votes

	Pref. votes counted		Weight of pref. votes		Pooling	
	+	-	+	-	+	-
1940s	1	0	2	0	0	0
1950s	1	0	1	2	3	1
1960s	0	0	0	1	0	1
1970s	0	0	0	1	0	1
1980s	2	2	3	2	1	3
1990s	2	1	8	7	3	4
2000s	1	1	12	3	4	2
Total	7	4	26	16	11	12

Note: All positives are increases in personalization; all negatives are reductions in personalization. In the case of pooling, this means that the reforms shown as positive *reduce* pooling, while cases shown as negative *increase* it.

Table 3. Electoral reforms in Europe since 1945, by the age of democracy

	First decade			Second decade			Third decade and older			Total
	+	-	?	+	-	?	+	-	?	
1940s	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
1950s	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	5
1960s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
1970s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
1980s	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	3	0	8
1990s	5	2	1	0	0	0	4	2	1	15
2000s	1	0	1	9	1	1	3	2	1	19
Total	10	4	2	11	1	1	10	10	3	52

Note: We count the first decade of democracy as starting with the first democratic elections in the independent country (except for the Czech Republic and Slovakia, where the first decade begins with the first democratic Czechoslovak elections in 1990). Several countries, including Croatia, Slovenia, and Estonia, experienced extended transitions during which several reforms took place before this point was reached. These cases are not included in the table.

Table 4. Change in electoral systems since 1990 and since 2000

Change in personalization since 1990*			Change in personalization since 2000		
Increased	Reduced	Unchanged or ambiguous change	Increased	Reduced	Unchanged or ambiguous change
Austria	Bulgaria	Denmark	Belgium	Italy	Austria
Belgium	Croatia	Finland	Bulgaria	Norway	Croatia
Czech Rep.	Estonia	France	Czech Rep.		Denmark
Greece	Italy	Germany	Estonia		Finland
Iceland	Malta	Hungary	Greece		France
Latvia	Norway	Ireland	Iceland		Germany
Lithuania	Slovenia	Luxembourg	Latvia		Hungary
Netherlands		Poland	Lithuania		Ireland
Romania		Portugal	Romania		Luxembourg
Sweden		Slovakia	Slovakia		Malta
		Spain	Slovenia		Netherlands
		Switzerland			Poland
		UK			Portugal
					Spain
					Sweden
					Switzerland
					UK

*The first democratic election is taken as the point of comparison where this was later than 1990.

Table 5. Major electoral reforms since 1945

	Significant reforms			Major reforms			Total
	+	-	?	+	-	?	
1940s	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
1950s	2	1	0	1	1	0	5
1960s	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
1970s	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
1980s	2	2	0	2	2	0	8
1990s	8	4	1	1	5	1	20
2000s	11	2	2	2	1	1	19
Total	24	11	4	7	9	2	57