Electoral candidates as Difficult Political Data

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Electoral Candidates in Central and Eastern Europe (ECCEE)

- 11 Central and East European democracies
- 70+ national elections, 1990-2016
- ca. 250,000 candidates
- ca. 1,500 parties
- Primary focus: candidate turnover (novelty/drop-out)
Parliamentary candidates: “difficult political data”

- Many more candidates than seats
- Candidate registers → large-N data sets
- Features of ‘Big Data’: exhaustive and constantly generated
- Limited variables (name, party, district, result)
Challenges

- Qualitative/in-depth knowledge required
- Multiple languages
- Typescripts
- Inconsistent recording formats
How to match candidates between elections?

- Not all names unique (13.7% duplicates in election)
- How to squeeze out maximum information?
- Party / district
- Party (and district) instability $\rightarrow$ congruence
- Fuzzy matching
Getting it right

• Different electoral systems: PR – open/closed, mixed, tiers
• Relative list placement (RLP): top ranked = 0, M$^\text{th}$ = 1
• Weights: turnover matters more at the top
• Candidate importance drops fastest around RLP = V
Candidates and party novelty
Volatility & weighted candidate novelty

Note: Black line for equality of WCN and total volatility. Source: Total volatility from Powell & Tucker (2013)
Candidate movement between political parties (Estonia, V > 5%)

Width of arrows is proportional to the overlap between candidates (weighted by list position), colour indicates time of elections (yellow – earlier elections, red – more recent elections).
Candidates and corruption

- Competing implications from existing research:
  - Corruption negatively affects MPs’ renomination rates
  - Rise of clientelist structures make rejuvenation unlikely

- Our research shows:
  - If corruption increases, less candidate change
  - Only among governing parties