

Candidate Turnover and Party System Change in Central and Eastern Europe

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ABSTRACT. This paper looks at an important but understudied indicator of party change – the turnover of electoral candidates. We analyse 170,000 candidates in 55 elections in Central and Eastern Europe – a region with volatile political parties and party systems. We develop a measure of weighted candidate novelty (WCN) that takes into account the list placement of candidates and party size. There are significant differences in the levels of WCN between countries but at best limited evidence of more stability over time. In the second part of the paper, we contrast the findings on electoral candidate turnover to volatility scores used in previous studies. WCN is correlated to electoral volatility, but there are significant outliers. We contend that these are produced by parties that are: (a) new, but only moderately novel in terms of candidates, (b) old but have experienced significant internal change, resulting in high candidate turnover, and (c) neither genuinely old nor genuinely new. The last category of partially novel parties poses most problems for indices of party system change that assume parties that are either stationary or perfectly new.

How unstable are political parties and party systems? The most widely used indicator of party system change is the Pedersen's electoral volatility index, as it is intuitive and easy to calculate.¹ However, it was much easier to apply in Pedersen's early work on West European party systems characterized by high levels of organizational continuity among parties than it has been in the last couple of decades – particularly in new democracies that have seen very high degrees of organizational innovation among political parties. Perhaps the most important problem facing investigators when calculating volatility in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE, the region that we focus on in this paper) is that calculation of volatility has nearly always been based on dichotomously distinguishing between new and old parties and, in case of splits and mergers, identifying a singular successor or predecessor. This paper is primarily motivated by our desire to explore levels of novelty within parties using an interval scale – an approach that would allow for a more nuanced and adequate approach to the calculation of volatility that takes into account patterns of novelty and continuation

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¹ Pedersen 1979, for applications see Drummond 2006; Lane and Ersson 2007; S. Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Scott Mainwaring, España, and Gervasoni 2009; Powell and Tucker 2014; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Sikk 2005; Tavits 2005, 2008. Still, it does suffer from problems – particularly as it does not necessarily reflect individual level changes, even if it seems to aggregate them (see Dejaeghere and Dassonneville n.d.).

among parties (outlined in Sikk and Köker 2015). Party novelty has several dimensions – including splits, mergers, leadership, names, programmatic profiles etc – but in this paper we focus on perhaps the most neglected aspect of electoral candidate change.²

We start our analysis of candidate novelty and the related phenomenon of candidate dropout by looking at overall trends over time in individual countries. The region has experienced varying and on the aggregate there has at best been a mild overall trend of declining candidate turnover. The second section of this paper explores the relationship between levels of candidate novelty/dropout and electoral volatility – specifically by comparing our indices to the volatility scores calculated by Powell and Tucker (2014). We discover a clear relationship between the two and find that novelty could be more clearly linked to suggested determinants of party system change (e.g. economic growth) than volatility. For some elections, we find a high discrepancy between novelty and volatility measures that, we believe, is related to debatable coding decisions relating to new parties and, more generally, to the impossibility of “correctly” coding parties dichotomously as new and old.

In the final section, we look in more detail at candidate novelty in individual parties. We discover that two groups of large parties – genuinely new parties and established parties – can be distinguished easily based on candidate novelty. However, problems are posed by electoral coalitions and partially novel parties. Electoral coalitions – which are common and often very successful in CEE – often have low levels of candidate novelty, yet have not always been linked to predecessors in volatility calculations.³ Partially novel parties present even more problems. On the one hand, they *are* genuinely novel (e.g. in terms of leadership or name) yet, on the other hand, may field many candidates who have previously run on other parties’ tickets. Once again, it is impossible to dichotomously “correctly” code such elections – to use a joint name for party lists and electoral coalitions (proposed in Sikk and Köker 2015a). However, given their often high levels of success, such coding decisions can lead to very different estimates of party system change. We finish the paper with a discussion of broader implications of our research on the study of political parties and party change.

Candidate turnover in CEE

Our analysis is based on a dataset of over 170,000 electoral candidates in 55 elections CEE elections between 1993 and 2014. Most of the data has been collected from public sources, primarily those available online. The dataset includes all current EU member states from the region, excluding Croatia and Romania, for which data has been more difficult to analyse or obtain, respectively.⁴ Table 1 shows an overview of the data.

² Recent studies that problematize the dichotomous notion of party novelty either do not look at candidates (Litton 2013) or do so only in the passing (Barnea and Rahat 2011).

³ In some cases, such coalitions draw candidates from several previously existing parties yet are linked to a singular predecessor in volatility calculations.

⁴ We plan to include these as well as some of the missing earlier elections in future.

Table 1 Elections included in the study

Election number	BG	CZ	EE	HU	LT	LV	PL	SI	SK
1			1992	1990			1991		
2			1995	1994	1996	1995	1993		
3	1994*	1996	1999	1998	2000	1998	1997		1994
4	1997*	1998	2003	2002	2004	2002	2001		1998
5	2001	2002	2007	2006	2008	2006	2005	2004	2002
6	2005	2006	2011	2010	2012	2010	2007	2008	2006
7	2009	2010		2014		2011	2011	2011	2010
8	2013	2013				2014		2014	2012
9	2014								

* Only data for parties which entered parliament.

Using an elaborate R script, we matched candidates in an election with those in previous election using names and, where impossible due to duplicate names using party labels, party codes in MRG dataset (Volkens et al. 2014) and information about the movement of other candidates between parties, assuming that an unmatched candidate is more likely to have followed others rather than gone their own way.⁵ We checked the accuracy of these matches in a small number of cases and it provides reasonably robust results with no more than 1-3 percent of incorrect codings – certainly not worse than typical levels of mis-reporting and data entry errors in survey data.

Most of the candidates represent small and hence insignificant parties. Likewise, top ranking candidates are obviously more important than those lower down the list as they stand a better chance of being elected and are also more visible to the voters – particularly in open list systems used in most elections under study. Therefore, in the initial analysis we only include parties that won at least five percent of the vote and focus in on top 25 percent of the candidates in electoral districts (national lists in Estonia, Lithuania and Hungary 2014).⁶

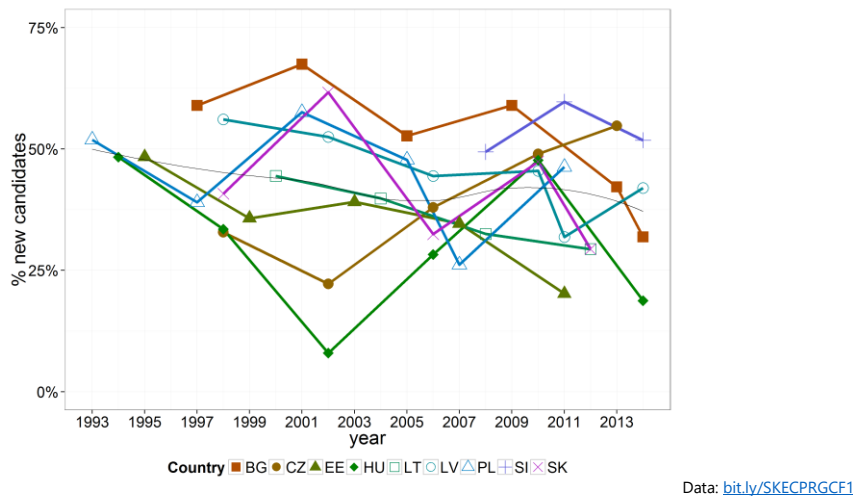
Figure 1 shows that candidate novelty has generally not decreased across the region. Only Bulgaria, Estonia and Lithuania have maintained a solid decreasing trend in the last three elections under study, with respectively 32, 29 and 20 percent of new candidates in the last election. On the other hand, some countries have seen marked increases in novelty (e.g. the Czech Republic) or retain high levels of candidate novelty (e.g. Slovenia). The trend across the region has been mildly decreasing at best. Still, the most notable feature of Figure 1 are the significant fluctuations in candidate novelty. This is usually caused by breakthroughs of genuinely new parties that bring in more new candidates than established parties (see

⁵ We also checked for "fuzzy" matches between names that allows for minor spelling mistakes and identified some candidates who might have changed surnames (usually after marriage). Hence, we manually coded a small number of high-ranking candidates from major parties to improve the accuracy of our novelty and drop-out scores.

⁶ In some elections (particularly in Estonia 1995), some parties ran oversized lists, with the number of candidates more than twice the number of seats in the parliament. To correct for such situations, top 25 percent and "full lists" are defined by district magnitude (i.e. 0.25M and M, respectively), or total number of seats, where national lists were used.

below). The other reason for some downward spikes is pre-term elections – such as those in Poland 2007, Latvia 2011, Slovakia 2012 and Bulgaria 2014.

Figure 1 Candidate novelty by countries



Note: top 25% of candidates, parties with at least 5% of votes. Black solid line shows lowest trend.

As mentioned above, all parties are not equal and not all candidates are equal. Candidates of a party that wins 35 percent of seats should have a stronger impact on aggregate candidate novelty than candidates of a party with five percent of support, let alone one with 0.1 percent. Furthermore, the importance of candidates at list positions varies between parties. For example, imagine two candidates ranked 25 out of 100 (i.e. just included makes in top 25 percent). If one of the parties is likely to win 30 of the mandates and the other one only 4 mandates, the candidate of the bigger party has a real chance of winning a seat and is obviously more significant than the candidate of the smaller party who is bound to be an also-run. Hence, our initial threshold of 25 percent needs to be adjusted by party support.

An alternative approach to adopting strict cut-off points is weighting candidates so that those at the top contribute more and those at the bottom less to the index of candidate novelty.⁷ A negative linear progression of weights – e.g. (1, 0.75, 0.5, 0.25, 0) for M=5 – would be most straightforward. However, this gives too much weight to all low-ranking candidates bar the last very one.

Weights that follow a logistic or sigmoid function are more appropriate, as they allow for small decline in the weights at the top, a more significant drop in candidate importance in the middle and smooth dying off at the end. The weights are based on the well-known formula of the sigmoid function:

$$f(x) = \frac{L}{1 + e^{-k(x-x_0)}} \quad (1)$$

where x_0 is the sigmoid's mid-point, L the maximum value and k the steepness of the curve. For weighted candidate novelty (WCN) we modify the formula:

⁷ We disregard candidates with list placements in excess of M.

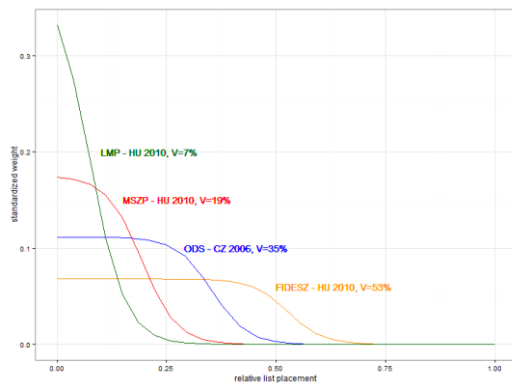
- the values of original logistic equation range from 0 to 1, but as the weights must run from 1 to 0, we subtract the equation from 1 and set L at 1;
- x_0 varies between parties so that the midpoint is always at the party's total vote share – e.g. at the 25 percent list position for a party that won 25 percent of votes;⁸
- K is set at 0.25 as this produces a curve with suitable smoothness;
- the weights for a party in each district must to add up to 1 – therefore, we divide the weighted value for a candidate with a rank of x by the sum of initial weights for all candidates

Thus, we can calculate the weighted candidate novelty (WCN) of party p in district d:

$$WCN_{p,d} = \sum NEW \cdot \frac{1 - \frac{1}{1 + e^{-25(r-v_p)}}}{\sum \frac{1}{1 + e^{-25(r-v_p)}}} \quad (2)$$

where NEW is a dummy for candidates who did not run in previous election and r the relative list position of a candidate $r = (\text{rank} - 1) / (M - 1)$.⁹ Figure 2 illustrates the standardized weights for candidates. It shows that for largest parties, more candidates have substantial weight as more stand a reasonable chance of winning a seat. The smaller the party, the higher the weight of the candidates at the top of the list as few others stand a reasonable chance of winning a seat. We assume that when fielding candidates, parties have some information about the likely number of seats they are going to win and we use the actual share of votes as a proxy for that.¹⁰

Figure 2 Weights for candidates for selected parties



Notes: Relative list placement = $(\text{rank} - 1) / (M - 1)$. Note that areas under all curves add up to 1 that is the total of candidate weights in a district.

⁸ We use the national vote share as our dataset currently does not hold information about constituency level support for parties.

⁹ I.e. for fourth ranked candidate under $M=10$, $r = (4-1)/(10-1) = 3/9 = 0.33$. The calculations were implemented in R using the *sigmoid* function in *pracma* package.

¹⁰ We also considered weights based on a logarithmic function of candidate's distance from the bottom of the list (so that the top candidate has the highest weight, e.g. 1, 0.95, 0.90, 0.85, 0.78, 0.70) and based on declining in geometric progression (e.g. 1, 1/2, 1/4, 1/16 etc). However, the first gives too much weight to very low ranking candidates and the second introduces excessive gaps between top candidates if the tails of lists were to have very small weights.

The novelty scores by district parties can be added up across the country, but need to be weighted by the size of districts relative to the total number of seats in all districts:¹¹

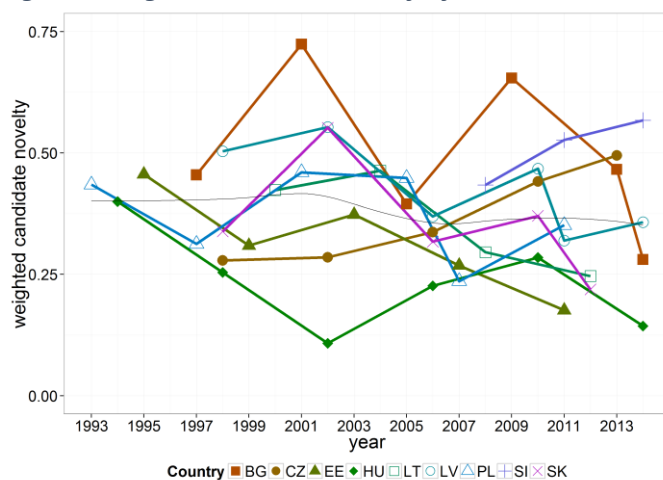
$$WCN_p = \sum \frac{M}{\sum M} WCN_{p,d} \quad (3)$$

Finally, the aggregate weighted candidate novelty in an election is calculated by adding together the party scores, weighted by their vote shares (v_p):

$$WCN = \sum v_p \sum \frac{M}{\sum M} WCN_{p,d} \quad (4)$$

All of the formulas can be easily interpreted as they range from 0 (no new candidates) to 1 (all candidates are new).

Figure 3 Weighted candidate novelty by countries



Data: bit.ly/SKECPRGCF3

Note: The fine black line show loess trend.

Figure 3 shows the weighted candidate novelty scores for the elections under study. On average, the scores are fairly similar to those in Figure 1 (top candidates of parties above five percent of the vote). However, there are some interesting differences. Firstly, elections with highly successful genuinely new parties – Bulgaria 2000, 2009, Latvia 1998, 2002, Slovakia 2002 and Slovenia 2014 – are much more visible. Secondly, the slight trend towards lower candidate novelty in Figure 1 all but disappears.¹²

Figure 4 shows the extent of candidate novelty among established parties – defined here as those who did not run in the preceding election in the Manifesto Project dataset (Volkens et al. 2014).¹³ The levels of candidate novelty are, unsurprisingly, lower for established parties

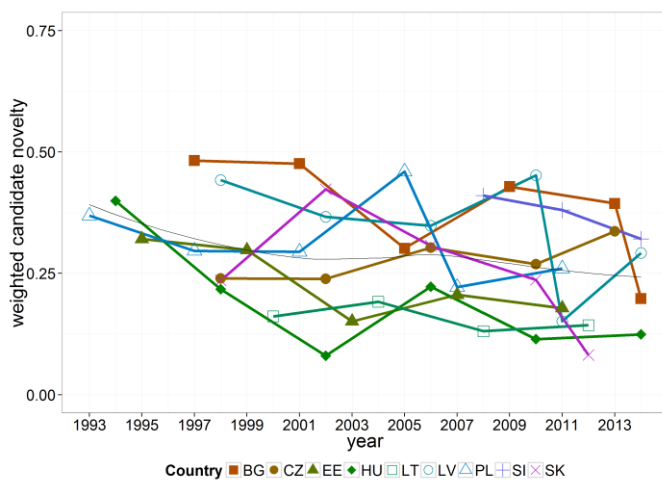
¹¹ Total number of seats in the parliament (S) would be more straightforward, but in multi-tier systems we only look at one of the tiers.

¹² The higher novelty in early 1990s in Figure 1 was caused by more new candidates among top 25 percent in parties that won less than 25 percent of the vote.

¹³ The following parties (mostly coalitions or parties after the break-up of coalitions) had a novel code in Volkens et al 2014, but were manually coded as old: DL (BG 1997), ODS (BG 1997), KZB (BG 2001), KZB (BG 2013), IL (EE 1999), BSDA (LT 2000), UdL (LT 2004), TS-LKD (LT 2008), DP (LT 2012), PCTVL (LV 2002), AWS (PL 1997), SLD-UP (PL 2001), SDK (SK 1998), SDKU (SK 2002).

than all parties. In all elections, weighted candidate novelty score remained below 0.5 and was below 0.3 in most cases. Hence, parties that already contested the previous election, typically list fewer than 30 percent of "significant" candidates. The largest differences between overall weighted candidate novelty and that among established parties in elections with remarkable new party breakthroughs (LT 2000, 2004; BG 2001, 2009; SI 2014; EE 2003; LV 2002; CZ 2010; see Appendix 1 for detail on individual parties). We find a slightly clearer negative trend, with average candidate novelty among established parties decreasing from around 50 percent in early 1990s to around 30 percent in the most recent elections. Established party candidate novelty has generally decreased or remained low in some countries – particularly in Estonia, Hungary and Lithuania where in the last three elections only one in four candidates did not run in previous election. However, the trend is far from uniform and some countries have experienced high or increasing candidate novelty even among established parties.

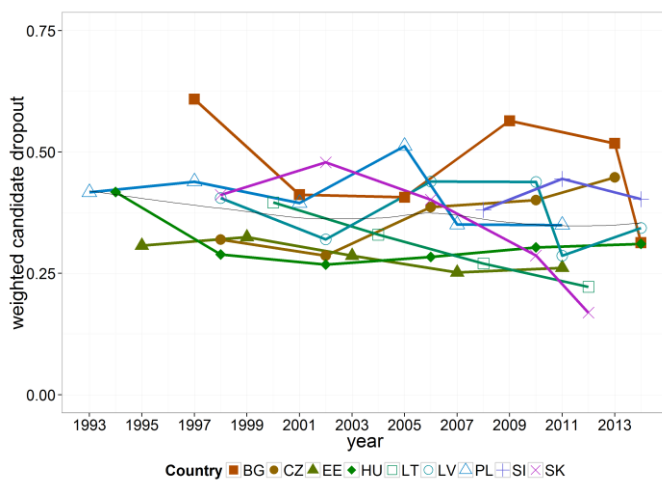
Figure 4 Weighted candidate novelty by countries (established parties only)



Data: bit.ly/SKECPRGCF4

Note: Only parties that were not coded as new in Volkens et al. 2014. The black line show loess trend.

Figure 5 Weighted candidate dropout by countries



Data: bit.ly/SKECPRGCF5

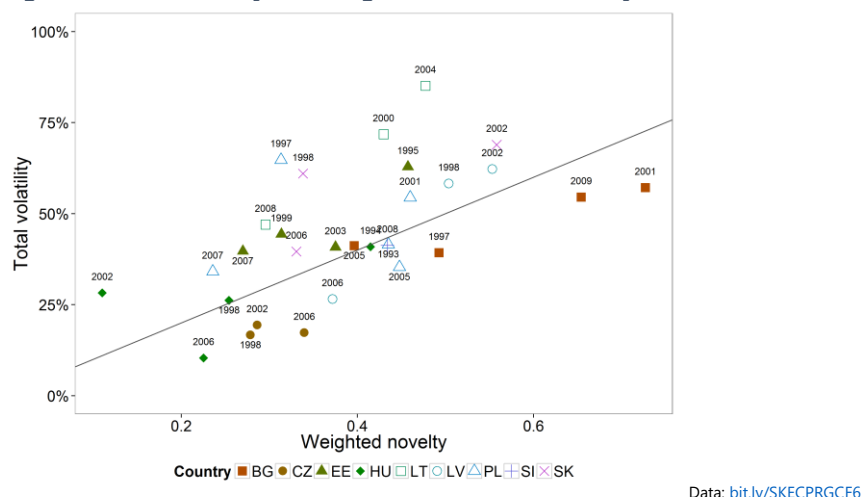
Note: For consistency with novelty scores, the horizontal axis shows years when the candidates that ran in the previous election dropped out. The black line show loess trend.

Finally, weighted candidate dropout levels – i.e. the share of candidates in previous election that did not contest the more recent one – follow broadly similar trends. There are, however, interesting individual parties which have shown remarkable degrees of candidate dropouts that has not always been matched by candidate novelty (see Appendix 2 for detail on individual parties). The two can diverge as the weights assigned to particular candidates can be different in two subsequent elections if their list placement changes. It is hypothetically possible that all high-ranking candidates drop out in the next election (e.g. because of scandals) but are replaced by candidates who had been lower down the list in the previous election.

Candidate turnover and volatility

What is the relationship between candidate change and electoral change? As noted above, candidate novelty has been particularly high in elections with very successful genuinely new parties. Also, established political parties tend to have a significantly lower candidate novelty than new political parties. Hence, we would expect some, although imperfect relationship between candidate and electoral change (as measured by volatility).¹⁴

Figure 6 Total volatility and weighted candidate novelty



Data: bit.ly/SKECPRGCF6

Note: Black line for equality of WCN and total volatility. Source: Total volatility from Powell & Tucker (2013)

As expected, the overall candidate novelty is positively correlated to volatility (based on data from Powell and Tucker 2014, see Figure 6). However, the relationship is far from perfect. Notably, some countries seem to have consistently higher than expected levels of volatility (Lithuania) compared to candidate novelty, while others have consistently relatively lower levels of volatility (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary). This might be related to cross-country variation in the levels of typical candidate novelty, but is more likely to be the result

¹⁴ We should not expect the relationship to be perfect as volatility has two sources: (a) voters moving from old (and disappeared) parties to new parties and (b) voters moving between existing political parties (see Powell and Tucker 2014).

of coding decisions regarding new parties, coalitions and mergers.¹⁵ Election continuity might be more accurately taken into account when calculating the volatility index in the countries with lower than expected volatility, while major coalitions or partially novel elections might have been coded as new in Lithuania (see discussion on partially novel elections and Lithuania below).

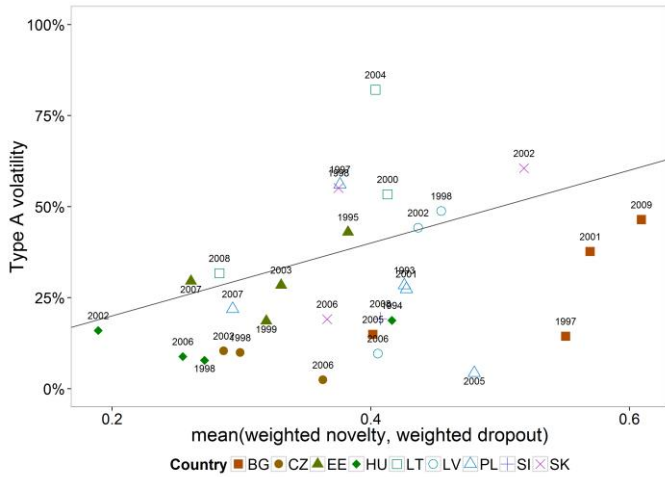
To what extent is candidate replacement related to new party entry and old party exit? Figure 7 shows the relationship between the mean of candidate novelty and dropout, and Type A volatility – i.e. volatility caused by the entry and exit of parties from the political system (Powell and Tucker 2014, 124). The relationship is surprisingly weak. Some of the cases emphasize that the extent of political elite turnover may not always be fully reflected in Type A volatility. The 1997 election in Bulgaria and 2005 election Poland saw many new candidates join and many old candidates leave tops of party lists, yet this is not fully reflected in the Type A volatility scores. Both elections were characterized by the collapse of parties that had been the overwhelming winners of the previous election (Democratic Left in both countries). However, as the parties retained representation in the parliament, Type A volatility score was only average.

Type A volatility for Lithuania 2004 is strikingly high given the medium candidate turnover (see Figure 8 and Figure 9 for details on individual parties). The election did see breakthroughs of an important new elections: (a) the genuinely new Labour Party (DP), the newness of which is corroborated by candidate novelty data (WCN = 0.91), (b) two partially new formations, “For Order & Justice” (UTT) of the impeached president Rolandas Paksas (WCN = 0.44) and Liberal & Centre Union (LICS, WCN = 0.49). Two major parties also disappeared: the Liberal Union (LLS) and the New Union (NS). However, their candidate dropout was rather low at 0.27 and 0.38, respectively – fairly typical level for established parties. Most of their candidates found a place on the lists of one of the new parties or the Working for Lithuania (UdL, in fact a coalition of Social Democratic Party and New Union). UdL had the *lowest* level of candidate novelty (0.16) among main parties,¹⁶ but is coded as a new election in Powell & Tucker dataset. Coding elections with that extent of party transformation is extremely challenging and actually impossible to do “correctly” using a dichotomous scheme (more detailed discussion below).

¹⁵ The first argument is undermined by the fact that Hungary and Lithuania are *both* countries with low aggregate and old parties' WCN.

¹⁶ Tied with Homeland Union (TS), to be more precise.

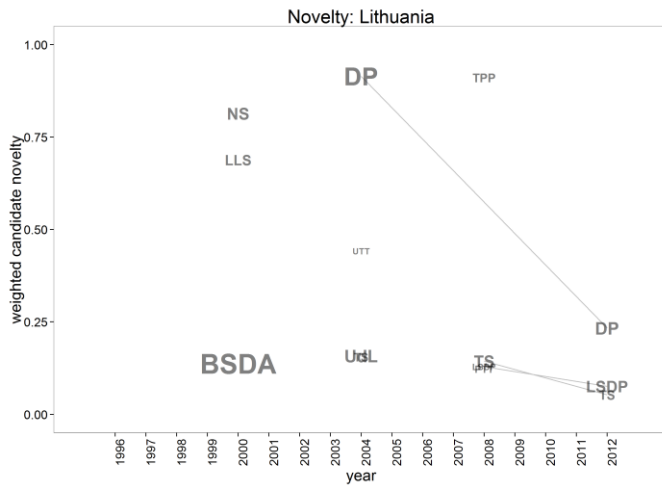
Figure 7 Type A (exit/entry) volatility, and mean of candidate novelty & dropout



Data: bit.ly/SKECPRGCF7

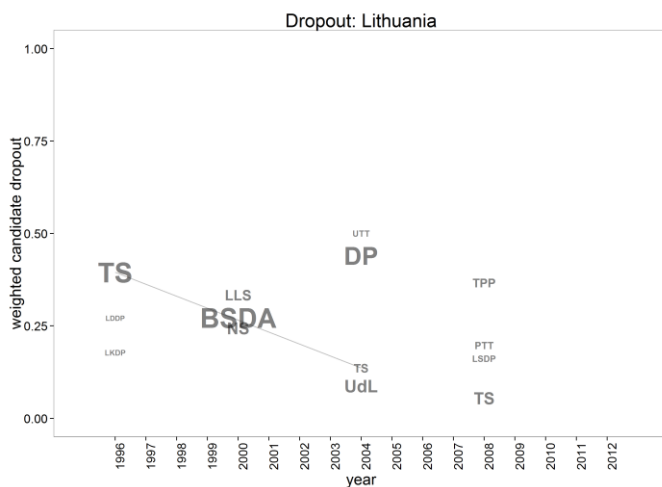
Note: Black line for candidate turnover = Type A volatility. Source: volatility from Powell & Tucker (2013)

Figure 8 Weighted candidate novelty by parties, Lithuania (V > 10%)



Note: label size shows party size.

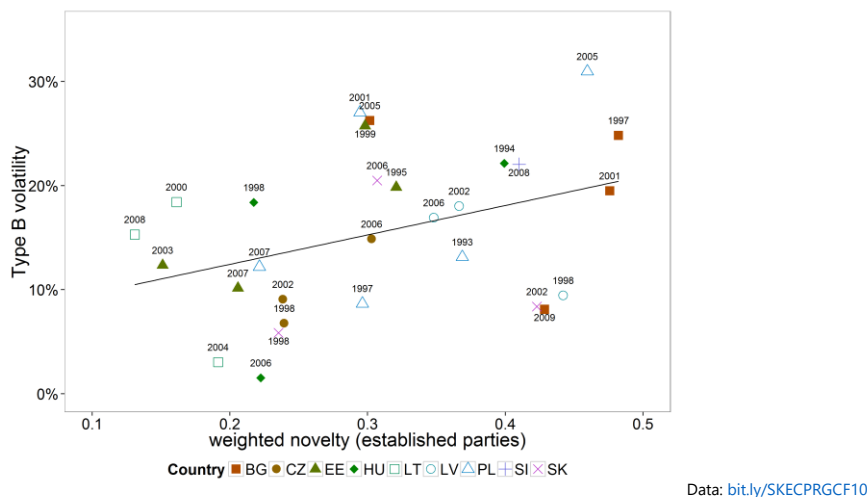
Figure 9 Weighted candidate dropout by parties, Lithuania (V > 10%)



Note: Label size shows party size. For consistency with novelty scores, the horizontal axis shows years when the candidates that ran in the previous election dropped out.

Type B volatility (i.e. volatility between existing parties) and candidate novelty among established parties (Figure 10) are again correlated mildly. There seems to be a general trend that increased candidate novelty leads to increased volatility or, alternatively, existing parties rejuvenate their candidate lists if they anticipate changes in electoral support. In particular, parties that are expected to do poorly may recruit new top candidate, possibly to replace former dignitaries that have left party politics anticipating downfall. However, volatility can obviously come about for different reasons than internal candidate change and rejuvenation of electoral lists can turn the waning tide for parties in decline.

Figure 10 Type B volatility and candidate novelty among established parties



Note: Black line for OLS fit between WCN and Type B volatility. Source: total volatility from Powell & Tucker (2013)

Powell & Tucker (2014, 126) argued in a conclusion to their study of volatility in Eastern Europe that "we know little about what causes swings in votes between existing political parties". Replication of the fully specified regression models (using elections included in Powell & Tucker and our datasets) returns no statistically significant coefficients. However, it is notable that a much simpler model that includes GDP change from previous election¹⁷ alongside country fixed effects (see Table 2) shows that improvement in economic conditions does lead to increased total volatility and lower candidate turnover. The effect on novelty is robust both among established and all parties with a sluggish 10 percent growth over an electoral term leading to 3 percent fewer new candidates among established parties or 25 percent growth (median in cases included) to almost 8 percent fewer new candidates. Hungary and the Czech Republic tend to have lower than average levels of candidate novelty that is in line with literature arguing early consolidation of these two party systems, but has been challenged by recent high levels of candidate novelty. (Powell & Tucker data finishes with 2009).¹⁸ Admittedly, our range of variables is very limited and not all elections are included in the analysis, but the results are essentially encouraging. To paraphrase Powell &

¹⁷ GDP change was one of the variables that Powell & Tucker identified as having a statistically significant impact on volatility. However, it has been since shown that the effect was an artefact solely resulting from lack of quality data for Bosnia & Herzegovina (Crabtree and Golder 2015).

¹⁸ Note that the model fit and magnitude of GDP's effect is higher when WCN is used – in earlier models looking at top 25% of lists among parties with at least 5 percent of votes only had slightly poorer fits.

Tucker – we know little about determinants of candidate change, but we can argue with some confidence that GDP change does have an impact.¹⁹ There is evidence that West European voters increasingly respond to economic downturns by switching parties (Dassonneville and Hooghe 2015) and at the very least we have evidence that electoral politics is not completely insensitive to that in CEE either.

Table 2 Effect of GDP change on volatility, candidate novelty and dropout

	Volatility			Candidate novelty		
	Total	Type A	Type B	All parties	Established parties	Candidate dropout
(Intercept)	79.81 (18.51)***	50.12 (24.36)*	29.69 (11.66)**	91.30 (13.93)***	75.20 (9.98)***	65.11 (8.98)***
GDP _t /GDP _{t-1}	-27.53 (15.07)*	-18.85 (19.82)	-8.68 (9.49)	-29.91 (11.34)**	-28.57 (8.12)***	-13.27 (7.31)*
CZ	-31.13 (9.69)***	-21.41 (12.75)	-9.73 (6.10)	-27.59 (7.29)***	-17.11 (5.23)***	-17.15 (4.70)***
EE	1.11 (9.04)	3.06 (11.90)	-1.95 (5.69)	-18.96 (6.81)**	-15.51 (4.88)***	-19.47 (4.39)***
HU	-22.43 (8.97)**	-16.07 (11.80)	-6.36 (5.65)	-32.53 (6.75)***	-20.07 (4.84)***	-18.72 (4.35)***
LT	25.29 (10.11)**	31.03 (13.30)**	-5.74 (6.37)	-10.87 (7.61)	-20.54 (5.45)***	-14.01 (4.91)***
LV	6.42 (10.12)	9.58 (13.32)	-3.17 (6.37)	-3.24 (7.62)	1.97 (5.46)	-8.37 (4.91)
PL	-1.29 (8.51)	-0.25 (11.19)	-1.05 (5.36)	-18.17 (6.40)**	-8.68 (4.59)*	-7.19 (4.13)*
SI	0.17 (14.66)	-4.38 (19.29)	4.55 (9.23)	-5.87 (11.03)	5.94 (7.91)	-8.39 (7.11)
SK	11.72 (9.84)	18.78 (12.95)	-7.08 (6.20)	-12.32 (7.41)	-6.66 (5.31)	-5.16 (4.78)
R ²	0.66	0.51	0.24	0.64	0.73	0.66
Adj. R ²	0.51	0.29	-0.11	0.48	0.61	0.51
Num. obs.	30	30	30	30	30	30

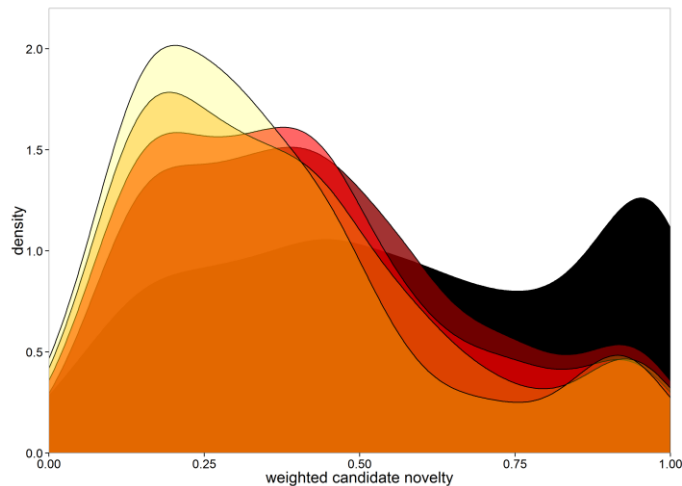
Notes: BG is the reference category for countries, ***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1

Party novelty and partial novelty

We now turn to candidate novelty in individual parties. How many of the parties are genuinely new and how many qualify as old in terms of their candidate lists? Looking at all parties, regardless of their levels of support (the black area on Figure 11), highly new parties dominate – new candidates form a majority in most parties that contest elections. Levels of novelty decrease when we move to progressively more popular parties. The bulk of parties that entered the parliament – roughly corresponding to the two lightest areas on Figure 11 – have a weighted novelty score clearly below 0.50. Among the parties that won more than 10 percent of votes, those with WCN between 0.1 and 0.4 dominate. However, novelty does not entirely tail off among large parties. A considerable portion of parties with more than 10 percent of the vote had more than 50 percent of new top candidates. Most intriguingly, there is another peak in the distribution at close to perfect novelty – that stands for genuinely new parties (Sikk and Köker 2015a; Sikk 2005). Also notably, a slightly smaller number of parties still falls between the two peaks. The parties with WCN between 0.5 and 0.8 are particularly problematic for the purposes of volatility calculation as they are *partially novel parties* (see Sikk and Köker 2015a).

¹⁹ Corruption is another potentially important determinant – see our study with a somewhat different purpose and focus (Sikk and Köker 2015b).

Figure 11 Candidate novelty by vote%



Note: Kernel density curves: black (all parties), dark red ($V > 1\%$), red ($V > 2.5\%$), orange ($V > 5\%$), yellow ($V > 10\%$).

What are these highly successful parties with high levels of candidate novelty? Table 3 shows that all countries except for Hungary have seen breakthroughs of such genuinely new parties with more than 10 percent of votes and WCN above 0.8. At the bottom of the table we find mostly electoral coalitions (or mergers, in italics) that are somewhat novel by the virtue of having a new organization, but are often below the mean level of candidate novelty in our dataset (0.57 percent; indicated by the dashed line). Some of the others are post-electoral coalition electons; notable, fewer are splinters from a previously existing proper party. Finally, a number of parties with candidate novelty between 0.4 and 0.80 are not straightforward cases of coalitions, splinters or mergers. These are mostly formations with novel names and organizational structures, yet include a significant number of candidate at the top of their lists who had been running for other parties previously. In many cases, they have a complex organizational history and can only meaningfully classified as *partially novel parties*. In such cases, the line between continuations and new parties is very blurred. However, as some of the parties won elections, coding them as new or old parties can decisively influence volatility scores. Indeed, we elsewhere we have called for a more nuanced approach to volatility, that incorporates candidate novelty measured on an interval scale (Sikk and Köker 2015a).

Interestingly, sometimes parties which do not undergo any significant organizational (or name) changes, see high levels of candidate turnover (see Table 4). Whether such parties should be seen as genuine continuations is debatable.

Table 3 Candidate novelty in new parties (following party codes in Manifesto Data Collection)

party	country	year	WCN	Vote %
JL New Era	LV	2002	0.965	24.0
RP Palikot's Movement	PL	2011	0.960	10.0
Smer Direction-Social Democracy	SK	2002	0.953	13.5
SaS Freedom and Solidarity	SK	2010	0.947	12.1
SMC Party of Miro Cerar	SI	2014	0.936	34.5
GERB Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria	BG	2009	0.928	39.7
NDSV National Movement Simeon the Second	BG	2001	0.924	42.7
DP Labour Party	LT	2004	0.914	28.4
TPP National Resurrection Party	LT	2008	0.911	15.1
RP Union for the Republic	EE	2003	0.886	24.6
SRP Self-Defence of the Polish Republic	PL	2001	0.856	10.2
VV Public Affairs	CZ	2010	0.824	10.9
NS New Union (Social Liberals)	LT	2000	0.814	19.6
Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary	HU	2010	0.741	16.7
TP People's Party	LV	1998	0.716	21.3
PO Civic Platform	PL	2001	0.698	12.7
LLS Lithuanian Liberal Union	LT	2000	0.688	17.3
PS Zoran Jankovic's List - Positive Slovenia	SI	2011	0.687	28.5
TOP09 Tradition, Responsibility, Prosperity 09	CZ	2010	0.626	16.7
KMÜ Coalition Party and Rural Union	EE	1995	0.583	32.2
PCTVL For Human Rights in a United Latvia	LV	2002	0.547	19.1
<i>ODS United Democratic Forces</i>	BG	1997	0.500	52.2
<i>KzB Coalition for Bulgaria</i>	BG	2001	0.492	17.1
LSDA Latvian Social Democratic Alliance	LV	1998	0.470	12.9
ER Estonian Reform Party	EE	1995	0.461	16.2
UTT Coalition of Rolandas Paksas 'For Order and Justice'	LT	2004	0.442	11.4
DL Democratic Left	BG	1997	0.430	22.1
<i>SDKÚ Slovak Democratic and Christian Union</i>	SK	2002	0.424	15.1
BSP Bulgarian Socialist Party	BG	2013	0.423	26.6
ERL Estonian People's Union	EE	2003	0.412	13.0
<i>AWS Electoral Action 'Solidarity'</i>	PL	1997	0.399	33.8
SDL' Party of the Democratic Left	SK	1998	0.397	14.7
SNS Slovak National Party	SK	2006	0.373	11.7
<i>IL Pro Patria Union</i>	EE	1999	0.333	16.1
<i>SLD-UP Coalition of the Democratic Left Alliance and the Union of Labour</i>	PL	2001	0.308	41.0
<i>FiDeSz-MPSz-KDNP Alliance</i>	HU	2006	0.302	42.5
<i>LiD Left and Democrats</i>	PL	2007	0.291	13.2
<i>SLD Democratic Left Alliance</i>	PL	2005	0.245	11.3
DP Labour Party	LT	2012	0.233	20.7
UW Freedom Union	PL	1997	0.219	13.4
K Estonian Center Party	EE	1995	0.201	14.2
<i>KDU-CSL Coalition of KDU-ČSL and US-DEU</i>	CZ	2002	0.178	14.3
<i>SDK Slovak Democratic Coalition</i>	SK	1998	0.170	26.3
<i>UdL Working for Lithuania</i>	LT	2004	0.158	20.6
<i>TB-LNNK For Fatherland and Freedom National Independence Movement</i>	LV	1998	0.147	14.7
<i>TS-LKD Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats</i>	LT	2008	0.144	19.7
<i>BSDK A. Brazauskas Social Democratic Coalition</i>	LT	2000	0.137	31.1
LSDP Lithuanian Social Democratic Party	LT	2008	0.129	11.7
PTT Order and Justice	LT	2008	0.123	12.7
<i>FiDeSz-MPP-MDF FiDeSz-MPP-MDF-Alliance</i>	HU	2002	0.060	41.1

Table 4 Old parties with candidate novelty over 0.5

party	country	year	WCN	Vote %
FKgP Independent Smallholders' Party	HU	1994	0.754	8.8
DPS Movement for Rights and Freedom	BG	2001	0.695	7.5
Desus Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia	SI	2011	0.670	7.0
ATAKA National Union Attack	BG	2009	0.667	9.4
PCTVL For Human Rights in a United Latvia	LV	2006	0.598	6.0
SRP Self-Defence of the Polish Republic	PL	2005	0.583	11.4
SNS - Slovenian People's Party and Youth Party of Slovenia	SI	2008	0.571	5.4
LDS - Liberal Democracy of Slovenia	SI	2008	0.562	5.2
DPS Movement for Rights and Freedom	BG	2005	0.551	12.8
Desus Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia	SI	2008	0.540	7.4
HZD - Movement for a Democratic Slovakia	SK	2002	0.519	19.5

Note: as defined in Manifesto Research Group dataset

Discussion and conclusion

This paper has analysed candidate novelty in Central and Eastern Europe. We saw at best a limited overall trend towards stabilization of candidate lists, with candidate novelty decreasing in some countries more consistently than in others. The trends in candidate novelty generally correspond to what we know about dynamics of individual party systems. In particular, we see a very clear pattern of disrupted consolidation in the Czech Republic and Hungary, and steady consolidation in Estonia. The index of weighted candidate novelty is correlated to volatility scores as calculated by Powell & Tucker (2014), but the relationship is less than perfect. Indeed, looking at candidate novelty scores has indicated issues with the coding of party entry and exit. However, we argue more fundamentally that electoral volatility scores that rely on dichotomous coding of new and old parties, splits, mergers and electoral coalitions are *bound* to be misleading due to prominent partially novel parties in terms of their candidates (but potentially also other aspects). Such elections – to use a joint term for parties and coalitions – are pervasive in CEE, but they are also present elsewhere – e.g. Israel (Barnea and Rahat 2011) and Denmark (Sikk and Köker 2015a). We do not argue that electoral landscape stays intact if, say, two parties form an electoral coalition that exclusively draws on candidates of these parties (and hence has zero novelty). Certainly, other dimensions of election change need to be accounted for. However, we do argue that such a coalition is not a totally new election and should contribute less to electoral volatility scores than a genuinely new party with only new candidates.

More fundamentally, we also call for a refined conceptualization of what a political party is. With simplification, we can distinguish between two different approaches to political parties. Some of the literature analyses political parties from the perspective of political organizations with internal structures, members, leaders, political ideas etc. Other literature mostly sees political parties through a prism of elections. Much of the literature on party system change and new political parties belongs to the second type, but sometimes struggles with non-partisan political actors (such as electoral coalitions) and partially new

parties.²⁰ We believe that focussing on electoral candidates does not only provide a wealth of highly nuanced data to contribute to a continuous scale of party change, but also offers an excellent link between the two approaches. On the one hand, candidates are the apex of party organization and selected using organizational procedures. On the other hand, they are intrinsically linked to elections. The analysis of candidate turnover also offers to our knowledge the best way to conceptualize political parties as a fluid phenomenon that are seldom perfectly new or old, but can rejuvenate or stagnate to different extent, merge and split, and form and disband temporary alliances. Such party fluidity is particularly common in CEE, but can also be found in at least some Western European countries. As we have shown above and as can be seen by looking at candidate novelty and dropout in Appendices, candidate turnover captures the extent of party change rather well.

Even more fundamentally, we would even suggest that parties as such have received excessive attention in studies on electoral and political change. Much of political science literature assumes almost teleological development of party systems and individual parties towards a specific (West European-like) form of consolidation (the alternative being bust), where parties are reasonably stable and new parties seldom surface. It is also often an implicit or explicit assumption that it would be in the interest of many or most socio-economic and political actors. Given the amount of transformation that political parties can undergo, it might be more instructive to think about them as useful "vessels" for various social actors, such as political entrepreneurs who set up parties, interests, elites, voters or even ideology. Perhaps these actors could be seen as "selfish genes"²¹ that use political parties as carriers in their interest. It is conceivable that political parties (or any organizations) hardly have any interests of their own, apart from those of its leaders, members, supporters and voters. If so, party transformations, rather than stability at all costs, may serve the interests of these constituencies; in some situations, continued party success or even survival might be less than optimal; party "death" is certainly much less regrettable than that of an individual.²² We suggest that electoral candidates are one possible way to look beneath the surface of political parties – they can be conceptualized as a sort of "political DNA" or a genetic marker that operates inside political parties and makes them what they are.

The fact that such transformations are – or, perhaps more accurately, "were" – rare in Western Europe is beside the point. Lack of dynamism in West European party systems was the result of particular historical circumstances until a couple of decades ago. Today, there are signs of increasing dynamism in many West European parties and party systems. Evolution of political parties in CEE has been conditioned by other factors and has taken a

²⁰ The "parties as organizations" school provides a much better perspective on the latter but is not particularly concerned with the former.

²¹ To borrow a notion from Richard Dawkins, 2006 who has suggested that evolution ultimately serves the "interests" of genes rather than individuals or organisms.

²² "Party death" and perhaps also "birth" are somewhat unfortunate anthropomorphic terms that we suggest be avoided. They both proscribe to political parties human instincts, such as survival. Under certain circumstances, the dissolution of a party may well serve the interests of the "genes".

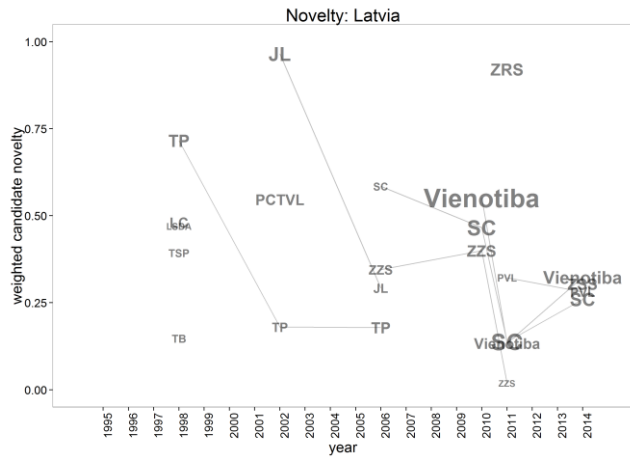
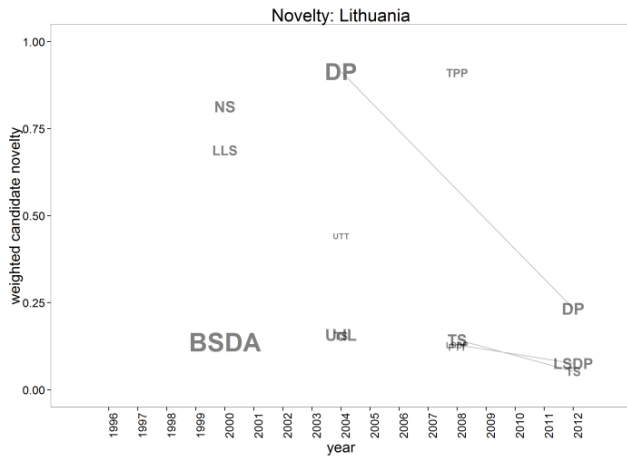
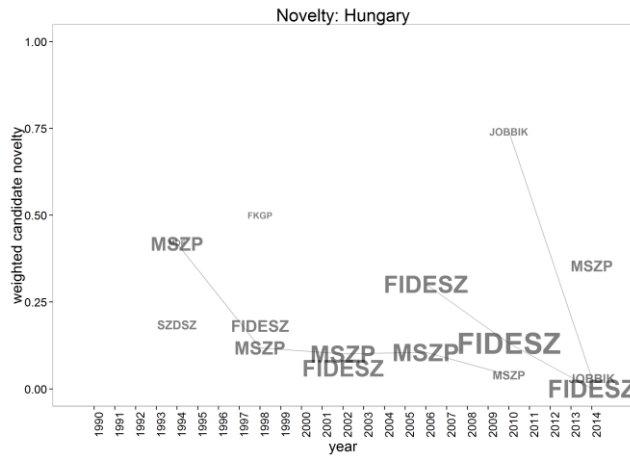
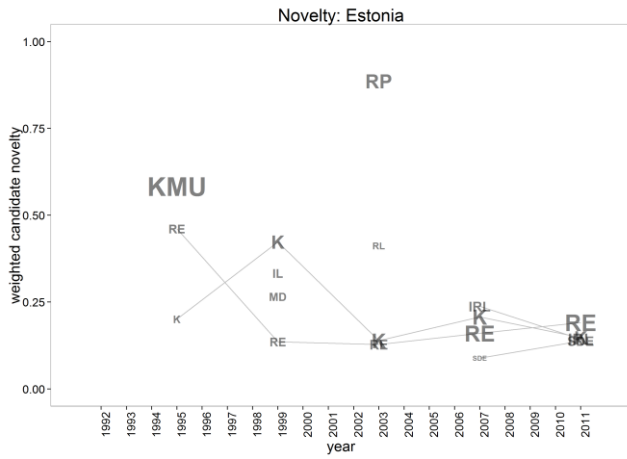
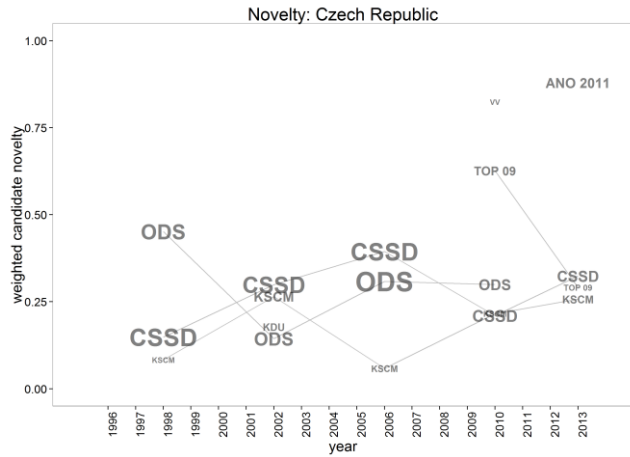
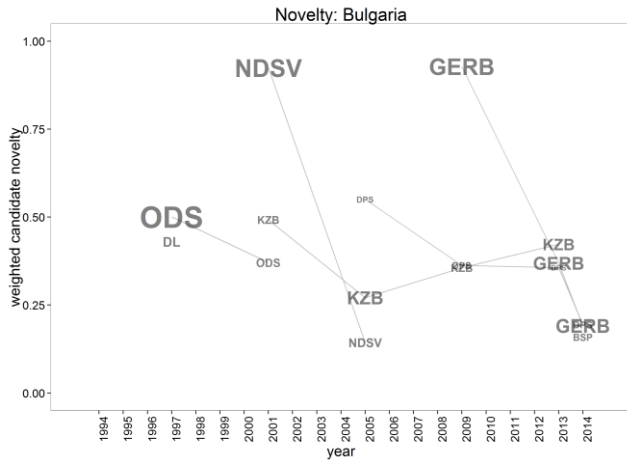
different path, where the "political genes"— or the relatively more dominant ones – can be better served by some fluidity and transformation. There are, of course, strong reasons to believe that democratic stability is better served by strongly consolidated parties and party systems, but this option might as well be off the menu in contemporary societies.

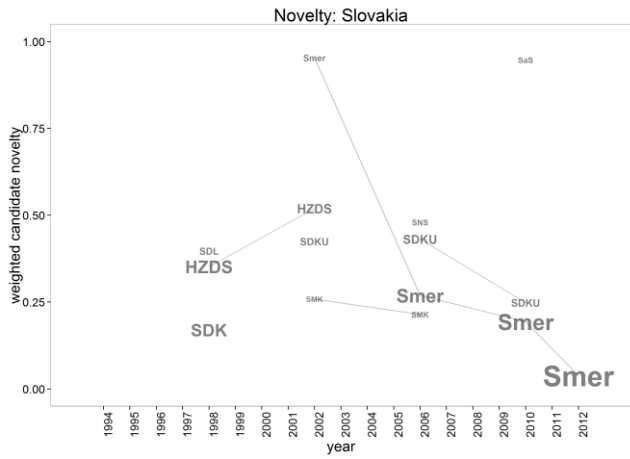
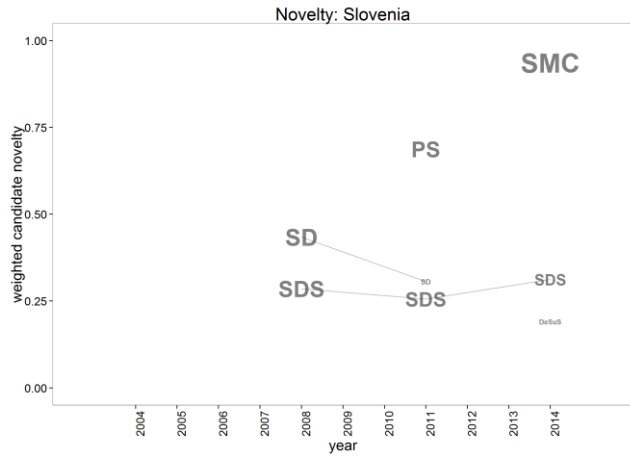
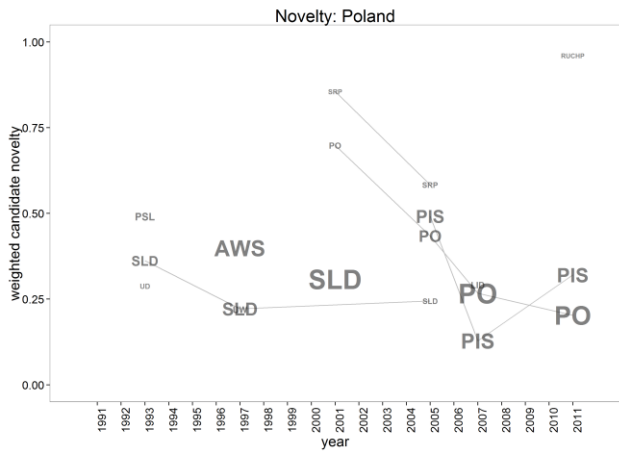
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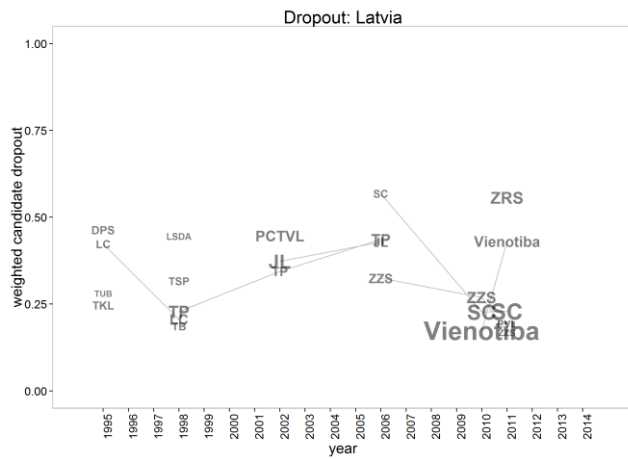
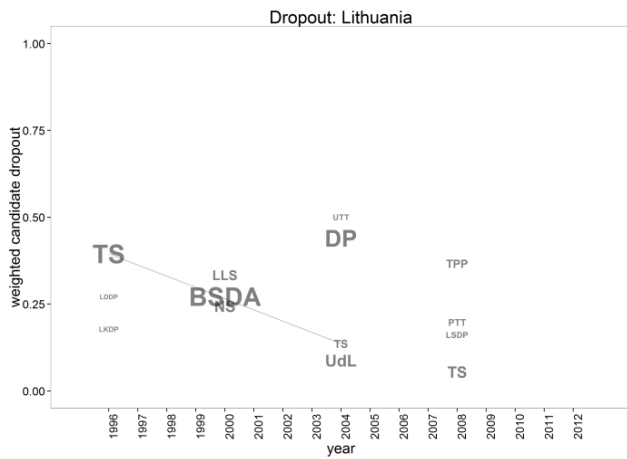
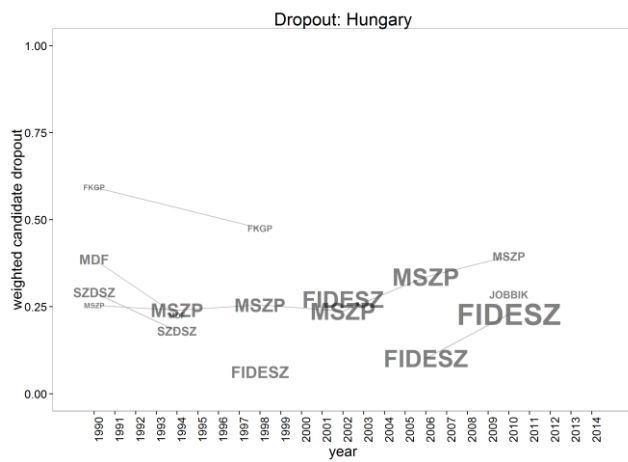
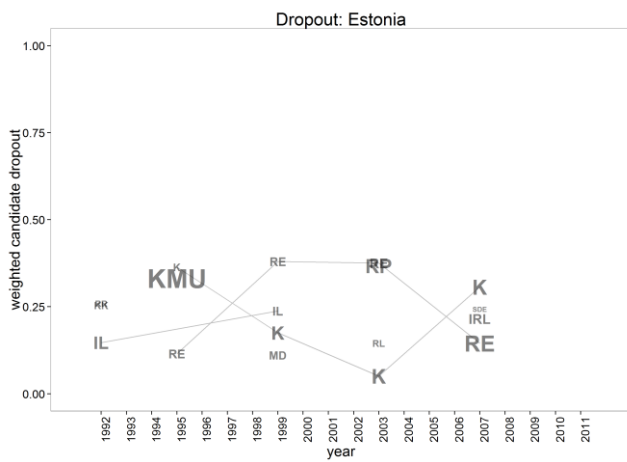
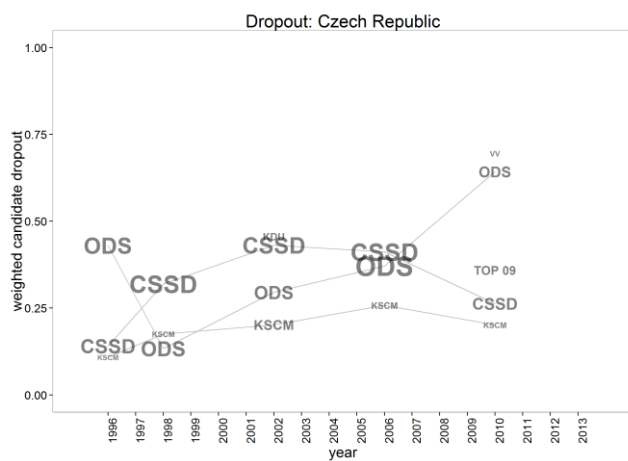
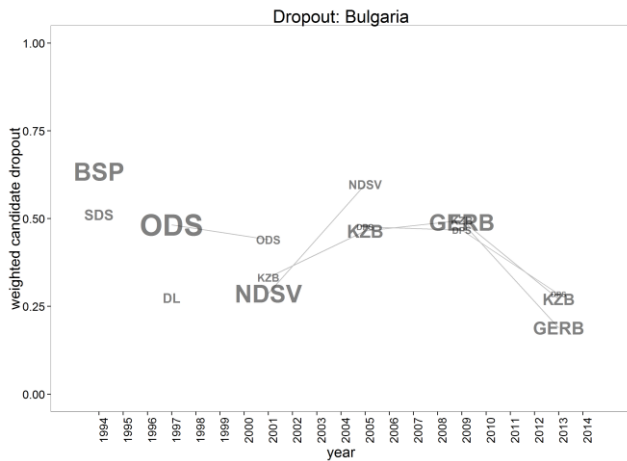
Appendix 1. Weighted novelty among individual parties (V > 10%)



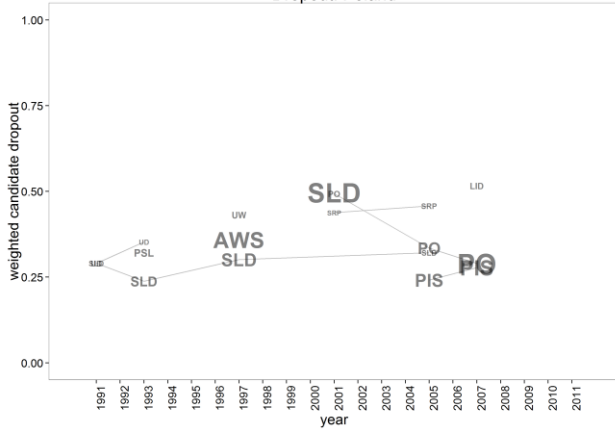


Appendix 2. Weighted dropout among individual parties (V > 10%)

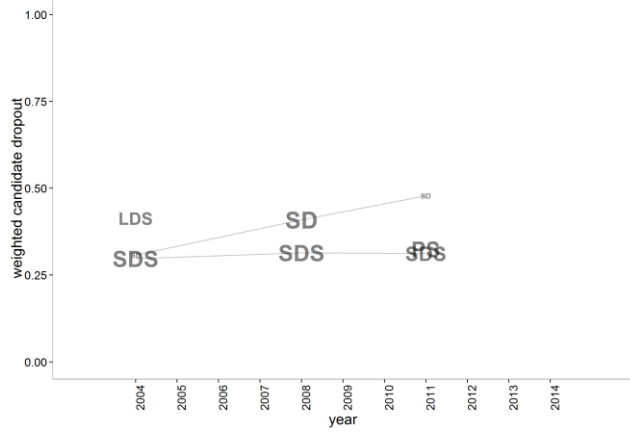
Note: horizontal scales refer to years when the candidates were dropped. Font size (corresponds to V% and party weights) are based on their electoral performance in previous election.



Dropout: Poland



Dropout: Slovenia



Dropout: Slovakia

