



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

## Electoral Studies

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/electstud](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/electstud)

## Winning over voters or fighting party comrades? Personalized constituency campaigning in Austria

Nikolaus Eder, Marcelo Jenny, Wolfgang C. Müller\*

University of Vienna, Department of Government, Rooseveltplatz 3/1, 1090 Wien, Austria

## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 18 October 2012

Received in revised form 7 October 2013

Accepted 16 March 2014

## Keywords:

Campaigns  
Candidate behaviour  
Personalization  
Electoral systems  
Political parties

## ABSTRACT

This article analyses constituency campaigning and personalization when electoral system and party organizational incentives conflict. Providing the first study of candidate campaign behaviour in Austria we show that a sizeable number of candidates in national elections engage in personalized rather than party-centred campaigns. Focussing on behavioural indicators of 'personalized' campaigning, we find that individual motivation and resources play an important role in how candidates conduct their campaigns. Factors such as experience in political office, the probability of winning a seat, candidate goal choice (self- or party-promotion), the district characteristic (urban or rural) and party affiliation influence the numbers of hours spent on campaigning and the kind of campaign resources candidates use and value most.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

### 1. Introduction

Elections pit parties and ideas against each other. They can be consequential for the direction of public policy, who leads the country as the chief executive, and determine a nation's fate. Election contenders often frame the choice of voters in such stark terms. More immediately, however, general elections concern who obtains seats in parliament. Provided that the office of a Member of Parliament (MP) is sufficiently attractive, we can expect the candidates for these offices to take a very active part in the campaign. Yet for most democracies we know very little about this side of elections. While systems that employ single-member constituencies and majoritarian rules have attracted a fair amount of research on constituency level campaigns (e.g. [Jacobson, 1978](#); [Whiteley and Seyd, 1994](#); [Denver and Hands, 1997](#); [Johnston and Pattie, 2006](#); [Fisher and Denver, 2008](#)), multi-member systems with proportional representation have largely been spared (notable

exceptions include [Benoit and Marsh, 2008](#); [Górecki and Marsh, 2012](#)).

At the same time, the vanishing of sharp ideological divisions, the decrease in class voting, and the decline of party identification have made personalization a prominent theme in electoral research. In the words of [Karvonen \(2010: 4\)](#), the 'core notion of personalization is that individual political actors have become more prominent at the expense of parties and collective identities'. While many contributors to the literature seem convinced of the increasing importance of personalization (e.g. [Dalton, 2000](#); [McAllister, 2007](#)), others are more sceptical ([Adam and Maier, 2010](#); [Karvonen, 2010](#); [Kriesi, 2012](#)). With regard to party leaders, the difference is between identifying a secular trend toward an increasing weight of the top candidates' qualities upon the voting decision and seeing ups and downs in the relevance of leaders, depending on the supply of suitable personalities and the issue agenda. Moreover, the personalization literature bifurcates between those who focus exclusively on party leaders and the contenders for chief executive office (e.g. [Wattenberg, 1991](#); [Brettschneider, 2002](#); [King, 2002](#); [van Holsteyn and Andeweg, 2010](#); [Stevens et al., 2011](#)), and those who see

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +43 1 4277 49701.

E-mail address: [wolfgang.mueller@univie.ac.at](mailto:wolfgang.mueller@univie.ac.at) (W.C. Müller).

personalization as a much broader phenomenon. As [Karvonen \(2010: 41\)](#) has put it, ‘from the point of view of the personalization thesis, the study of individual candidates is just as relevant as the focus on party leaders (see also [Zittel and Gschwend, 2008](#); [Balmas et al., 2012](#)). Relevance for answering a research question, of course, is not the same as the relevance of explaining real world phenomena such as electoral results. [McAllister \(2013\)](#), for instance, has raised doubt with regard to the candidates’ effectiveness in Australian constituency campaigns compared to party factors.

Notwithstanding the potential relevance of personalization in constituency campaigns, research on most democracies and especially on list-PR systems is only beginning to emerge (e.g. [Karlsen and Skogerbø, 2013](#)). In these systems, the fate of candidates is indissolubly tied to that of their parties. Yet, in addition to candidates’ concerns for their parties’ electoral performances, individual goals can gain prominence.

We proceed as follows: In the next section we outline the rationale for personalized campaigning. We also introduce the Austrian case. Traditionally, this country has been an extremely party-centred system. Yet in 1992, electoral reform considerably strengthened incentives for electoral personalization. There is thus considerable tension between the traditional normative expectations of the parties as organizations and established behavioural patterns on one side, and the new institutional features on the other. Moreover, the interplay of electoral rules and party characteristics provides different groups of candidates with different incentives for personalized campaigning. Building upon this, we formulate our theoretical expectations and hypotheses. After describing our data and methodological approach, we move on to two empirical sections. In the first section we describe candidate goals. Even when pitted against party goals we find personal goals a prominent motivation among the serious contenders for public office that we surveyed in our study. These goals constitute an independent variable in subsequent analyses. Turning to our primary concern – the analyses of personalized campaign behaviour – we try to explain individual campaign effort, the importance of personalized campaign means as well as the use of resources (staff and budget) to run a personalized campaign. In so doing, we investigate what [Balmas et al. \(2012\)](#) called ‘behavioural personalization’ – individualized campaign activities that distinguish themselves from collective party actions.

## 2. The rationale for personalized campaigning

In this paper we focus on personalized campaigns and the campaign behaviour of individual candidates. According to [Zittel and Gschwend \(2008, 980\)](#) individualized campaigns are characterized by ‘candidate-centred campaign organization, a candidate-centred campaign agenda and candidate-centred means of campaigning’. Their conceptualization is ideal-typical, in the sense that it describes one end of a continuum with party-centredness being the other one.

### 2.1. Electoral system incentives for personalized campaigning

The electoral system ‘affect[s] the extent to which individual politicians can benefit by developing personal reputations distinct from those of their party’ ([Carey and Shugart, 1995: 417–418](#), see also [Grofman, 2005](#)). In a nutshell, the relevant literature on electoral systems suggests that the presence of the following factors encourages individualized behaviour of candidates ([Carey and Shugart, 1995](#); [Shugart, 2001](#); [Karvonen, 2010, 2011](#)). In each of the four dimensions, our examples are not exhaustive and listed in descending order: (1) A large amount of voter-control over the ballot (achieved through compulsory and open primaries, allowing for the voters’ writing-in of candidates not pre-selected by the parties in general elections, etc.). (2) Candidate-centred votes (votes cast for individual candidates rather than party lists, preference votes for individual candidates on party lists). (3) Candidate-centred vote counting (making votes cast for individual candidates the only criterion for seat allocation (open lists) or preferring candidates who have reached a threshold of preference votes over party list candidates (flexible lists)). (4) Small electoral districts when voters cast party votes (which will benefit the candidates immediately) and large electoral districts if the voters cast preference votes (providing candidates with an incentive ‘to stand out in a crowded field of co-partisans’ ([Shugart, 2001, 183](#)).

### 2.2. Party organizational incentives for personalized campaigning

In party democracies, party organizational factors impact their candidates’ campaign strategies. In short, we expect regionalized and factionalized parties to encourage such behaviour. Although party regional organizations and factions are, like parties, collectives, the strategies of their candidates might be individualized in the sense of being different from a common party strategy. Another factor is the parties’ respective organizational culture that, in turn, might relate to ideology. In short, we expect parties with a more individualistic worldview to constitute a more favourable environment for individualized campaigning.

### 2.3. The Austrian case

The present study is the first systematic attempt at understanding campaigning in Austria from the perspective of individual candidates. This perspective is at odds with Austria having been a party democracy par excellence over the post-war period. Its parties have developed encompassing membership organizations with a dense net of local branches and a network of subsidiary organizations ([Müller, 1994](#); [Luther, 1999](#)). Elections have been fought along party lines, candidates recruited within parties (resulting in a large share of party or public sector employees among office holders), public offices filled with party representatives, and their decisions have been made according to party lines. Party cohesion in parliament approaches 100 per cent. In short, parties have been strong organizations in their own right and a far cry from functioning as vehicles for individual politicians. The

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7464194>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7464194>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)