

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 → congruence
- Fuzzy matching



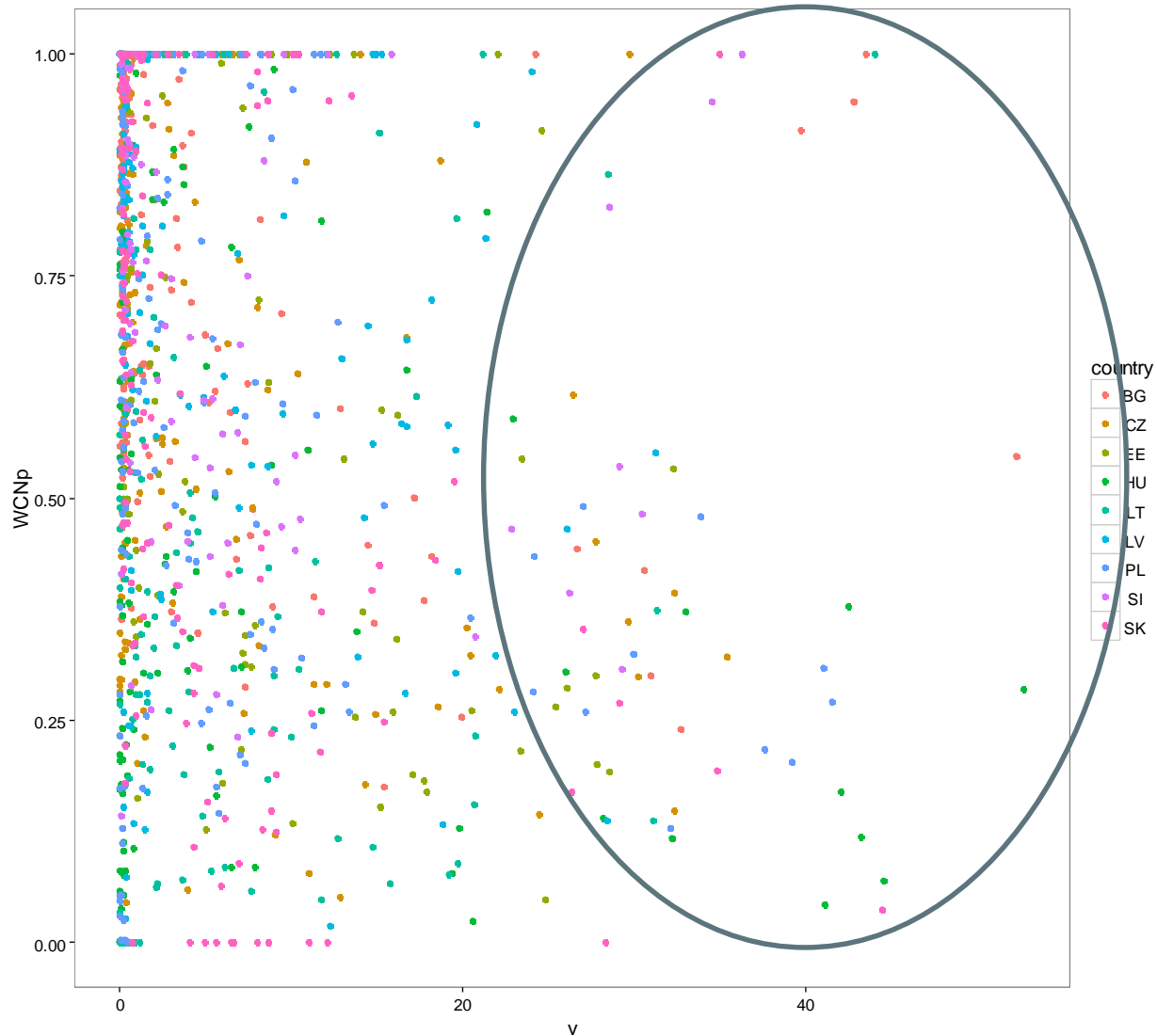
Getting it right

- 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 $\text{RLP} = V$

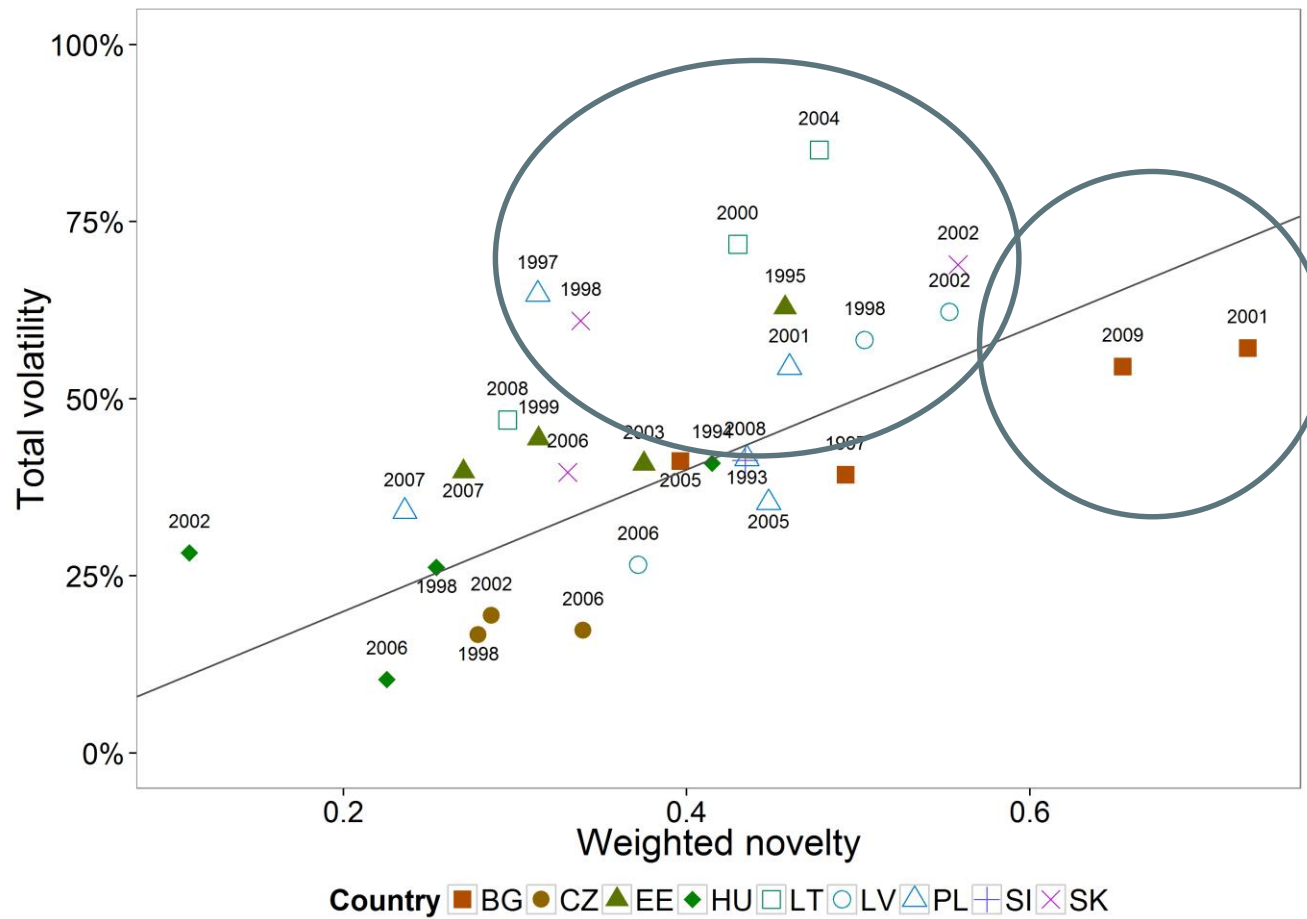




Candidates and party novelty

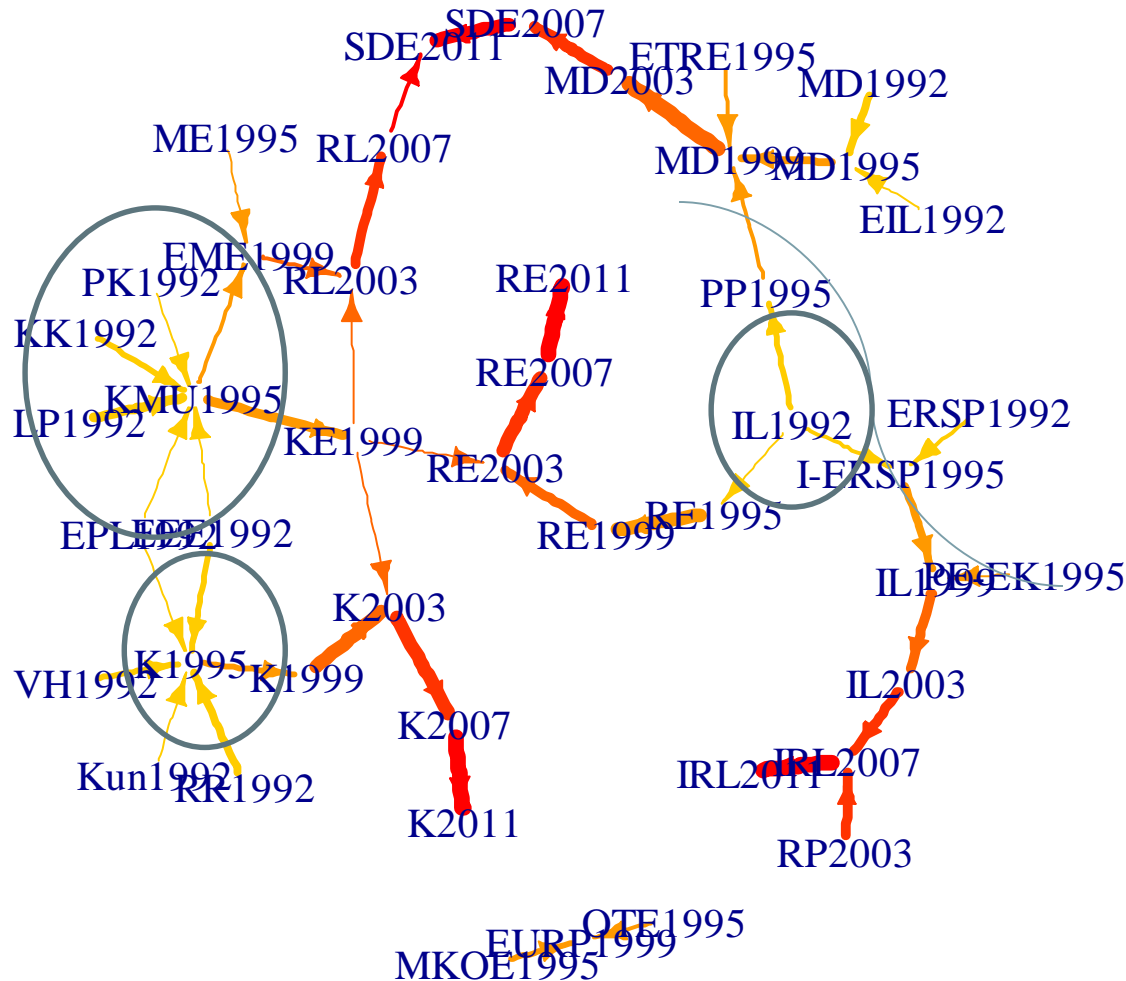


Volatility & weighted candidate novelty



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



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