

DEMOCRATIZING A DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURE: MYTH OR REALITY?

Candidate Selection in Western European Parties, 1960–1990

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to analyse whether democratization of the candidate selection process has occurred in Western European parties in general and in Denmark in particular in the period from 1960 to 1990. The analysis is based on the party rules in force around 1960 and 1990 of 57 and 71 Western European parties, respectively. The general assumption is that the greater the role of the individual party member, the more democratically the parties conduct their internal affairs and, furthermore, the more decentralized the procedure, the greater the possibilities for individual party members to play a role. The analysis indicates that the candidate selection process was more decentralized and the role of the individual party member in the process were greater at the beginning of the 1990s than they were around 1960.

KEY WORDS ■ Candidate selection ■ democratization ■ Denmark ■ political parties
■ Western Europe

It is important, for at least two reasons, to study the parties' selection of candidates for election to the representative assemblies of a political system and to trace whether the selection process has become more democratic.

First, if a political party is defined as 'any group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office' (Sartori, 1976: 64), then it is obvious that the candidate selection process is crucial to any party whatever the type: cadre (Duverger, 1954), mass (Duverger, 1954), catch-all (Kirchheimer, 1966), electoral–professional (Panebianco, 1988), cartel (Katz and Mair, 1995), or modern cadre party (Koole, 1994). It follows from this definition that political parties have a unique position in the political system in so far as:

The political party is the one agency that can claim to have as its very *raison d'être* the creation of an entire linkage chain, a chain of connections that runs from the voters through the candidates and the electoral process to the officials of government.

(Lawson, 1988: 16)

Given this unique position of the parties in the political system, it is reasonable to assert that the way the parties carry out this linkage function will have an important impact on the nature and functioning of a democratic regime. Will the parties provide a participatory link, putting stress on the active involvement of the citizenry in the party – for instance, as party members with influence on candidate selection, party programme, party policies, and so forth? Or will the parties act solely as agents for those in government to maintain control over the behaviour of citizens?

In other words, the way parties are organized is a very important variable when trying to characterize and understand the functioning of a democratic regime. It is hard to imagine how a regime can be classified as democratic if the political parties have an organizational structure that leaves no room for citizens to participate and have influence. The decision-making process within the parties, that is, the degree of internal party democracy, becomes an interesting and even crucial issue for analysis. And of these processes the candidate selection and nomination process stands out as one of the most important:

The quality of candidates selected determines the quality of the deputies elected, of the resultant parliament, often of the members of the government and, to some extent, of a country's politics. A change in parties' selection procedures in any given country might thus have direct consequences for the way politics operate here. Moreover, the way in which political parties select their candidates may be used as an acid test of how democratically they conduct their internal affairs.

(Gallagher and Marsh, 1988: 1)

Secondly, a variety of developments and trends during the past four decades have been identified in the literature on political parties – party decline, shrinking membership, the erosion of the once stable social basis of the parties, an increasing number of floating voters, a rise in electoral volatility, the commercialization and increased importance of the electronic media at the expense of a party controlled or at least party loyal press, the media-ization of political communication, etc., all signalling a weakening of the relationship between the parties and the voters. A democratization of the candidate selection process might be a way by which to increase the sense of involvement of either members or voters (Pennings and Hazan, this issue).

The aim of this article is to analyse whether democratization of the candidate selection process has actually occurred in Western European parties in general, and in Denmark in particular, during the period from 1960 to 1990. Because Denmark experienced the most drastic decline in party membership among the Western European parties during this period (Bille, 1994; Katz

et al., 1992), the Danish case has been selected for closer analysis. So, to what extent have the parties used this method in an effort to strengthen the relationship between voters and parties? Is it possible to trace a general trend? In other words, is democratization a myth or a reality?

The Western European Parties¹

Given the importance of the candidate selection process and the obvious and numerous possibilities of internal controversies and conflicts that are embedded in the actual selection of candidates, it is reasonable to assume that procedures for this process, and changes in the process, will be specified explicitly and in detail in the party rules. An analysis of the party rules in force of 57 Western European parties around 1960 and of 71 parties around 1990 should then reveal if any major changes pointing in the direction of democratization have taken place in this period.

The differences between the procedures adopted by the parties, and the variations in regard to the degree of specificity in the written party rules, are many indeed. Hence, the classic dilemma of the historical approach versus the social scientific approach is at work here (Katz and Mair, 1990: 1). With the historical approach, the danger is that all of the details are taken into account, with confusion rather than clarity the result. If a basic trend has actually developed during the three decades under consideration, it would be lost in listing all particularities. On the other hand, the danger in the social scientific approach, at worst, is that in the interests of '... "rigorous" comparison across time and space, concepts are reduced to their lowest common denominator, so that fundamentally different phenomena are given the same name' (Katz and Mair, 1990: 1).

At the risk of committing the 'crime' of the social scientific approach at its worst, internal party democracy in this article is measured on the basis of the role in the internal decision-making process as regards candidate selection ascribed to the individual party members. The following analysis, then, is based on the assumption that the greater the role of the individual party member, the more democratically the parties conduct their internal affairs.

The phenomenon of decentralization is related to democratization. The less centralized the authority making the final decisions in a party, in the case of the selection and nomination of candidates, the better are the possibilities for a greater number of people to participate in the process, i.e. the process will be more inclusive. Transferring power from one national oligarchy deciding on one nationwide list of candidates to 10, 100, 1000 or more local oligarchies each deciding on their own local list of candidates, all of which together make up the list of the national party, may therefore be seen as a step in the direction of democratization, although in addition to decentralization, true democratization requires reforms that make both

Table 1. Level of final decision regarding candidate selection

		1. <i>National organs control completely</i>	2. <i>Subnational organs propose, national organs decide</i>	3. <i>Nat. organs provide list, subnational organs decide</i>	4. <i>Subnational organs decide subject to national organs approval (b)</i>	5. <i>Subnational organs control completely</i>	6. <i>Membership ballot applied</i>
Austria	1960 (a) 1989		SPÖ SPÖ		ÖVP, FPÖ ÖVP, FPÖ	GA	
Belgium	1960 1989	PCB/KPB PCB/KPB	AGA		PRL/PVV, VU, PSC/CVP CVP, VU	PRL, PVV, ECO	
Denmark	1960 1989				SF, SD SF, SD, KRF, FRP	RV, V, KF RV, CD, V, KF	SF, SD, CD, V
Finland	1960 1989					SKDL, SDP, KESK, SFP, KOK SKDL, SDP, KESK, SFP, KOK	SDP SKDL, SDP, KESK, SFP KOK
Germany	1960 1989					SPD, CDU, CSU, FDP SPD, CDU, CSU, FDP, G	
Ireland	1960 1989		FF FF, FG, PD		WP, LAP, FG WP, LAP, G		G
Italy	1960 1989		MSI, PR DP, MSI, PR		PCI, PSI, DC, PRI, PLI PCI, PSI, DC PRI, PSDI, PLI	PSDI	
The Netherlands	1960 1989	CPN CPN, PSP	PPR PPR, ARP	PvdA, PSP, CHU CHU	ARP, KVP, CDA, VVD KVP, CDA, VVD	D66 PvdA, D66, GL	PvdA, PSP, ARP, KVP, CDA, D66 CDA, D66, GL
Norway	1960 1989					SF, DNA, SP, KRF, V, H SV, DNA, SP, KRF, V, H, FRP	
Sweden	1960 1989					VPK, S, C, FP, M VPK, S, C, FP, M	VPK, S VPK, S
United Kingdom	1960 1989				LAB, LIB, CON LAB, SDP, CON	LIB	SDP
Total	1960: 57 1989: 71	2 (4%) 3 (4%)	5 (9%) 10 (14%)	3 (5%) 1 (1%)	22 (39%) 23 (32%)	25 (44%) 34 (48%)	9 (16%) 16 (23%)

Note: (a) All rows 1960 or first year reported. (b): including the right to add or delete names according to a variety of different stipulations.

Source: All tables labelled D.5 in Richard Katz and Peter Mair (1992)

the candidacy requirements and the electorate more inclusive at the local level (see Rahat and Hazan, this issue).

Democratizing Candidate Selection Through Formal Rule Changes

Based on these assumptions, the stipulations in the formal rules of the parties have been combined into the following six broad categories:

- 1 The national party organs completely control the selection of candidates.
- 2 The subnational party organs propose candidates, but the national party organs make the final decision.
- 3 The national party organs provide a list of names from which the subnational party organs can select the final list.
- 4 The subnational party organs decide, subject to the approval of the national party organs, including the right to add or delete names according to a variety of stipulated qualifications.
- 5 The subnational party organs completely control the process and make the final decision.
- 6 Finally, it is of interest to see whether a membership ballot is introduced, thus making the process more inclusive.

The assertion is that democratization has taken place if the rules have been changed so that the party has to be moved from one category to another with a higher number. In other words, the lower down in the party hierarchy the final decision regarding candidate selection is made, the more decentralized the procedure and the greater the possibilities, other things being equal, for the individual party members to play a role. The result of the analysis based on this categorization is presented in Table 1.

The first thing to note is the relatively high degree of stability in the formal rules regulating the candidate selection process. Around 50 of the parties have not issued any major changes to their official statutes introducing new principles of selection or transforming in any significant way the internal distribution of power. In four countries (Finland, Germany, Norway, and Sweden), none of the parties has made any significant change. In Finland and Germany this is because the basic organizational structure and the central features of the candidate selection process are regulated by national legislation adopted in 1969 and 1967, respectively.

Secondly, Table 1 shows that the predominant candidate selection procedure in force around 1960, as well as at the beginning of the 1990s, is the one in which the subnational party organizations control the process completely. Around 1960, and also around 1990, nearly half of all the parties applied this approach. In 1960 only Austria, Belgium, Ireland and the United Kingdom did not have any parties granting subnational organs this influence. Around 1990 only Ireland and pre-1992 Italy were in this

situation. Furthermore, the absolute number in this category increased by nine during the period.

The second most widely used candidate selection method is the one that gives the right to decide on the subnational party organs, subject to the approval of the national party organization. Around one-third of the parties belonged to this category in both 1960 and 1989.

In sum, then, more than three-quarters of the parties have rules that give the subnational party organizations the power either to control the process completely or, at least, to have a major and substantial influence. The parties in question cover the whole ideological spectrum and they are present in all countries. There is thus no pattern regarding either party families or countries. The subnational organs exercised a very important role around 1960, a role they have maintained at the beginning of the 1990s.

Looking at all the parties, this comes out as the dominant picture. But what about the new parties founded during the period? What selection procedure have they adopted? Do they represent a trend different from the old parties? Are their candidate selection procedures more democratic, or less, from the outset than the established parties? And, further, in what direction have the eight parties that have actually made substantial changes in their rules moved?

In the countries covered by this study, thirteen of the parties founded since 1960 were still in existence around 1990. Six of these have adopted rules conferring on the subnational organs complete control of candidate selection, and four have adopted provisions giving the national party organs prerogatives by which to endorse the decisions made by the lower party echelons. In only three of the parties do the national party organs make the decision on the basis of proposals from subnational organs. Parties as different in ideological orientation as the green parties (which account for five of the new parties), and the Progress Party in Denmark and in Norway, have adopted almost identical procedures. From the outset, therefore, the new parties were very similar to the old ones regarding this organizational feature, and remained so around 1990. Consequently, as far as candidate selection is concerned, they do not represent a new trend or a new type of party.

Only eight parties have made sufficiently substantial changes in their rules that they have to be moved from one category to another (see Table 1), but no dominant trend emerges from these changes. Four parties (FG in Ireland, PSDI in Italy, and ARP and PSD in The Netherlands) have increased the power of the national party organization, while four parties (PRL, PW in Belgium, PvdA in The Netherlands and LIB in the UK) have increased the power of the subnational party organizations.

Finally, and most importantly from the perspective of democratization, membership postal ballots have been applied in an increasing number of parties. Around 1960, members possessed this decisive influence on candidate selection in less than one-fifth of parties. The number had increased by

the beginning of 1990 to around one-fourth of parties, indicating that a democratization has indeed taken place with expansion of the selectorate, thus making the candidate selection process more inclusive.

Assuming that the possibilities of individual party members to play an active and influential role in the candidate selection process are greater the lower in the party hierarchy and the more decentralized the decisions are made, the above analysis, based exclusively on the formal rules of the parties, indicates that a decisive and influential role was formally ascribed to the individual members around 1960 and also at the beginning of the 1990s. The changes adopted have been relatively few, but those actually issued point more in the direction of a democratization of the candidate selection process through an increased importance of the individual party member than they point in the opposite direction.

Democratizing Candidate Selection Through Informal Procedural Changes

An analysis of the rule changes covers only a part of the story, albeit an important part. The conclusion, however, might be different if we look at the real story. One possible explanation behind the relatively high stability concerning stipulations regulating the candidate selection method might be that the rules are phrased so flexibly that they allow the leading echelons of the party, and the central party officials, to increase their control over the process without needing to change the text of the rules. After all, it is common in politics for the written rules to be one thing, while the practice actually adopted when decisions are made and implemented is quite another. Pretending in public that the party members have a major say in internal decision-making might just be ideological window-dressing, a public image that the party wishes to nourish in order to be perceived as truly democratic. What, then, is the real story concerning candidate selection?

In Finland, Norway, Sweden and Germany, the high degree of autonomy of subnational organizations has been fact and not just formal prescription during the entire period (Sundberg, 1994; Svåsand, 1994; Pierre and Widfeldt, 1994; Poguntke, 1994). The subnational branches have always defended their prerogative from direct interference or orders from the central party, with candidate selection being considered one of the most important indications of their autonomy. Indirectly, however, the central and local levels have always collaborated in the nomination of leading or promising politicians in safe constituencies, not least because of an obvious mutual interest in ensuring that a candidate be elected, and that a 'local' person wins through to Parliament.

It is therefore difficult to distinguish between situations in which the local organization has more or less been forced by the central party to select a specific candidate and situations in which it sees its own interests in

accepting a candidate proposed by the central office. Moreover, controversies of this kind rarely emerge before the public gaze. From time to time, however, the public learn that an MP has taken a firm stand in opposition to the party leadership with the confidence that the MP has the full support of his or her constituency and that the leadership does not have the power to replace him or her with another candidate against the will of the constituency. The national party executives are careful to avoid conflicts with the subnational party, and attempts to centralize the nomination process have proved unsuccessful and have been effectively blocked. The real story of the importance and role of the individual members in Scandinavian and German parties is similar to the official story.

Although all the Belgian parties in 1960, as well as in 1989, with the exception of the AGA, are placed in the same two categories in Table 1 as the Scandinavian and German parties, the practice employed by the Belgian parties has developed in a different direction. Because of the increasing need for the national party leadership to be in control of the party, a need rooted in the ongoing complicated and delicate coalition negotiations needed to keep the consociational system going, there has been a downgrading of the role of the individual member.

At the same time, however, the central leadership is not in control of the whole procedure. The constituency level has considerable autonomy . . . but it is the executive at that level which decides how to proceed . . . [and] it must be recalled that almost all national elections in Belgium are premature, which reduces the time available to draft the lists, and which promotes a more centralized and less democratic procedure.

(Deschouwer, 1994: 98)

Contrary to the development in Belgium, the Dutch consociational system has undergone a de-pillarization with the effect that

. . . the parties have become more independent – or, perhaps, more isolated – from the societal organizations and hence the influence of the latter on the candidate selection has declined considerably since 1960.

(Koole, 1994: 294)

Furthermore, the wave of democratization in the late 1960s and early 1970s increased the power of the subnational party organizations, and the process of decentralization culminated with the introduction in D66 of the right of all members to participate, via a postal ballot, in determining the ordering of the lists of candidates. Since the end of the 1980s, however, the decentralization has reversed in the sense that in practice the power of the central party organs has been increased. In D66, for instance, since 1986 a special commission appointed by the national committee has sent to members, along with an alphabetical list, an advisory list with an ordering of the candidates decided by that commission. This list has great steering power (Koole, 1994: 295).

A trend towards centralization has also occurred in Austria in regard to candidates who are nominated for the first round of seat distribution (Bille,

1992). It is worth noting that although SPÖ is placed in one column in Table 1 and ÖVP and FPÖ in another, in practice there is not much difference between the two. In the case of SPÖ, the decision of the national organization *de facto* tends to be a ratification of subnational decisions. The development in SPÖ has gone in the direction of increasing importance of the national executive organs of the party and a decreasing role of the individual members. The development in ÖVP, both *de jure* and *de facto*, is one in which the role of the executive organs of the Land party organization and that of the national executive organs have increased during the period under consideration, while the role of the individual members has been reduced from a right to nominate via delegation to a right to send proposals to higher ranking organs. The development in Austria has therefore moved in the direction of centralization by a reducing of the role of individual party members and an increasing of the role of the executive organs of the national and regional party organizations. This is even more the case when it comes to drawing up the list for the second round of seat distribution. Since 1989, however, a general trend towards granting individual party members a greater say has been initiated (Müller, 1994).

In Italy, before the breakdown of the old party system, only four of the Italian political parties were organized as mass parties – PCI, PSI, DC and MSI. All others, such as the PLI and the PRI, were elite parties with some organizational structure only in very limited areas and with connections to powerful groups such as the association of entrepreneurs (Bardi and Morlino, 1992: 459 ff.). The role and importance of the members in these parties were very limited indeed.

The real story in pre-1992 Italy was always that national organs had more control over the candidate selection process than stipulated in the rules. In general, and for all parties, national organs approved or ratified local level decisions made on the basis of very detailed instructions coming from the national organs themselves, which often refused to approve if they did not like the choices. Furthermore, for the PCI, PSI and DC, it is essential not to underestimate the importance of the quota of candidates whose choice was exclusively attributed to the national organs. Although these candidates were only a fraction of the total number of candidates nominated by the party, they were often a high percentage of those actually elected. In the PLI, for instance, the quota was 63 candidates, which was more than the total number of seats the party had ever obtained (Bardi and Morlino, 1994). The already minor role of the individual party members described in the party rules was further diminished when looking at the real decision-making process. This was the case around 1960 as well as around 1990.

The Irish parties represent a case in which centralization has taken place not primarily by reformation of the rules, but through a growing tendency to make use of existing rules to strengthen the position of the leadership regarding candidate selection (Farrell, 1994: 226 ff.). The central office of the parties has made growing use of its right to add candidates to the list of

those selected at the local level. In the mid-1980s, FF created a Constituencies Committee chaired by the party leader, 'whose role was that of head-hunting prospective candidates, identifying and focussing resources on marginal constituencies, and liaising with the relevant constituency organizations' (Farrell, 1994: 228). A similar involvement in the candidate selection process has increasingly been put into practice by the rest of the Irish parties. Although the rule changes adopted by the parties do not qualify them (except FG) for placement in a different column in the broad categories used in Table 1, the changes initiated in practice nevertheless represent important steps towards increasing the power of the central party office.

A trend in the opposite direction can be observed in Britain represented by the smaller parties (the Liberals, the Liberal Democrats and the SDP), but mainly by Labour's shift towards the 'one-member-one-vote' principle. This shift, however, can be seen as both a strengthening of the role and importance of the individual party members and as a means by which the party leadership can increase its influence by reducing the power of the small and presumably unrepresentative elites of the local party activists. In 1993, the Labour conference adopted the system of direct balloting among individual members and 'registered' members from the trade unions (Webb, 1994: 120).

No clear pattern regarding democratization emerges from this brief account of the practice of candidate selection. The potential of the national leadership to influence the outcome of actual selection through informal and untraceable channels has always existed and has presumably always been used. The analysis has shown some examples of centralization, but mainly it has indicated that the real story is not that different from the official story. In general, party members still exercise an important influence on the selection of candidates for national elections, Italy being the only dubious case. In Belgium, Ireland and, recently, in The Netherlands a slight trend towards centralization has been perceptible. In almost all of the countries, the sub-national party organs have preserved the influence they possessed around 1960. In those cases in which the executive bodies of the subnational organizations have lost some of their influence, the power has mostly been transferred to individual party members via the introduction of a membership ballot, which has meant an empowering of the rank and file of party members. This by-passing of the activists of the party might in fact increase the manoeuvrability of the national leadership (Katz in this issue) but the ultimate power to decide rests nevertheless with the ordinary members, and that is after all what counts in the end. The selectorate has been expanded thus making the process more inclusive.

Subject to the fact that grouping of the party rules into only a few broad categories may conceal minor but nevertheless very important nuances enacted by the parties (such as a centralization at the subnational level), analysis of the party rules, as well as the practice of the parties, indicates

that the candidate selection process is more decentralized at the beginning of the 1990s than it was around 1960. Individual party members have a greater say in the process than was once the case, and in this respect the process has become more inclusive. This provides evidence supporting the assertion that a democratization of candidate selection for national elections actually has taken place among Western European parties during the last third of the century.

Whether this democratization trend has to be characterized as minor, modest or comprehensive depends of course on one's initial expectations. In my judgement, the tale of Table 1 and the account of the real story point to a characterization of the trend as modest. Stability and modest adaptations, rather than major changes, have characterized the majority of parties in relation to their candidate selection and nomination process.

Denmark: Evidence of Modest Democratization

Denmark is an interesting case because it represents an almost ideal-typical case of modest democratization. It serves as an example from which we can extract detailed knowledge on how a process of democratization has developed.

In 1960 the Danish parties organized 21 percent of the electorate as party members, but by 1990 the ratio was only 6 percent (Bille, 1994: 137 ff.). Since democratization of the candidate selection process might be a way to increase the sense of involvement of members or voters it is of interest to find out whether this method actually was used by the Danish parties in an effort to counteract declining membership figures.

The Danish electoral system is basically a list system of proportional representation with provisions for effective preferential voting. The functions of the 103 nomination districts are mainly related to those parts of the electoral system that bear on candidate selection. Each of the 17 multi-member districts contains between two and ten nomination districts.

A party can decide on the organization of its list. With the traditional form, the party has one candidate in each nomination district and that candidate is placed at top of the party's list on the ballot paper in the nomination district in question. The candidate receives all votes cast for the party in the nomination district plus his or her own preferential votes through the multi-member district. If a party chooses this form in a multi-member district, it can further decide to present the candidates in a fixed-order party list, which reduces the voters' possibilities of influencing the candidate selection within the party while it increases the influence of the party organization. Another form is parallel lists, with which votes cast for the party are distributed among the party's candidates in relation to their number of preferential votes. This form greatly increases the influence of preferential voting, i.e. it reduces the influence of the party organization vis-à-vis the voters. Finally, a joint list is

a list with which all nomination districts in a multi-members' district agree on one common list and form (Elklit and Pade, 1992).

The Danish political parties are made up of local branches, constituency organizations, multi-member district organizations, a national conference and national executives. That is, all have a mainly pyramidal structure which stipulates a relatively high degree of subnational autonomy. This is reflected particularly in the candidate selection process. Party membership is direct and individual, and individual members have always played an important and decisive role in the selection and nomination of candidates. Prior to 1960 their influence was exercised mainly at general local and multi-member district meetings, which were open to all members with the right to vote. The point of departure in measuring the role of individual party members and the degree of decentralization is that the members have always played a major role in the process and that decentralization has been fairly high. The question is whether the parties have become even more decentralized since 1960 and whether the power of individual members has been enhanced as a result of the process becoming more inclusive with expansion of the electorate. In other words, has democratization of an already democratic procedure taken place?

The *Socialist People's Party* (Socialistisk Folkeparti (SF)) was founded in 1959 as a consequence of a split in the Communist Party. SF deliberately sought to form an organization that was far less centralized than the Communist Party. This was reflected in the 1959 rules of candidate selection. The candidates were nominated and selected at a constituency organization meeting open to all party members in the constituency. The party members, then, both proposed and elected. The multi-member district organizations had no role to play at all. However, an important element of central control was laid down in a provision stipulating that the National Committee (Hovedbestyrelsen) subsequently had to approve all candidates.

In 1965, two changes were made in the rules affecting the degree of decentralization. If joint candidates in the multi-member district were preferred by a majority of boards of the local branches in the multi-member district, the boards made the nomination, but the selection was still determined at a joint meeting open to all party members in the multi-member district. Furthermore, the influence of the National Committee was weakened in that it no longer sanctioned the selected candidates. The changes indicated a centralization at the subnational level but a decentralization at the national level.

In 1970, a joint list in the multi-member district was made obligatory. A nomination committee formed by representatives from the boards of the local branches proposed a list of candidates. The selection then took place at a meeting open to all members in the multi-member district or at a closed primary in the multi-member district. The National Committee regained its prerogative to approve all selected candidates. The process of centralization thus continued while the role of individual members increased with the introduction of an optional postal membership ballot.

The trend toward centralization was abandoned in 1974, and the obligatory joint list in the multi-member district was made optional, depending on the preferences of the local branches. If a candidate list in the constituency was the choice of only one local branch, nomination and selection took place at a meeting open to all members in the constituency. If a joint list in the multi-member district was preferred by all the local branches in the multi-member district, nomination and selection took place either at one or more meetings open to all members in the multi-member district or a ballot was held among the members in the multi-member district. Finally, in 1976, the principle of a ballot to be held among members was made obligatory both at the constituency level and at the multi-member district level. In addition, it was made optional to have either a party list or a parallel list. With only a few minor changes, these stipulations have been in effect ever since.

From a point of departure where party members, congregated at nomination and selection meetings, were almost sovereign, depending, however, on the subsequent approval of the selected candidates by the National Committee, the changes in the second half of the 1960s indicated a trend toward a centralization of the process. This was followed in the 1970s by a trend in the opposite direction, once again with empowerment of the local constituencies and with the introduction of a ballot to be held among members. It became possible for the individual member to influence the process without even attending a meeting. In conclusion, we can say that development in the SF has gone in the direction of democratization with increasing decentralization and the role of individual members.

In 1961 the rules of the *Social Democratic Party* (Socialdemokratiet (SD)) stipulated that individual party members could propose nominees via the local branch. The party members then selected among the nominees at a general meeting at which all members of the local branches in the constituency could participate and vote. The National Committee (Hovedbestyrelsen) had to approve all selected candidates and under special conditions might add names to the list of candidates.

In 1969, a closed primary was introduced and the parallel list system was made obligatory. In constituencies with only one local branch, the nomination took place at a general meeting if there was only one candidate. With two or more candidates, a postal ballot among the members was obligatory. In constituencies with more than one local branch, the nomination of candidates took place at a meeting of delegates from the local branches. With more than one candidate, a ballot was held among the party members. The multi-member district organization had the option to add names to the list selected at the meeting of delegates from the local branches and constituency organizations. In 1977 it was stipulated that these additional candidates must have an absolute majority at this meeting. The rules regarding the power of the national committee in the selection process remained the same. No significant changes have been adopted since 1969.

Rule changes in the SD point in the same direction as in the SF, although

the element of multi-member district and central control over the process is slightly more explicit in the SD than in the SF. Introduction of the obligatory postal ballot system in 1969 significantly increased the inclusiveness and role of individual party members in the candidate selection process. This marks the most important step toward democratization of the process.

There was no mention of candidate selection in the central party statutes of the *Social Liberal Party* (Det radikale Venstre (RV)) until 1970. Until then it was considered a matter for the local branches and the constituency organizations to adopt their own rules and procedures without any interference from the central party. In 1970, a provision that the selection of candidates was to take place at a general meeting in the constituency organization where all members could participate and vote was incorporated into the rules of the central party. If the same candidate was nominated in more than one constituency, the multi-member district organization was to give its approval. Neither the national committee (Hovedbestyrelsen) nor the national executive (Forretningsudvalget) had any say in the selection process. These rules have been in effect ever since; hence it makes no sense to talk about a process of democratization.

The 1965, the rules of the *Liberal Party* (Venstre (V)) stipulated that if two-thirds of the constituency organizations in a multi-member district preferred a joint multi-member district list of candidates, the selection as well as the form of the list was to be decided at a special multi-member district meeting composed of the boards of the constituency organizations plus one delegate per 25 members of the constituency organizations. Otherwise the selection took place at a special constituency meeting where the constituency board and one delegate per 25 members of the local branches in the constituency had the right to vote. The central party organizations had no role to play in the process.

In the 1973 rule change, it was stipulated that at both constituency and multi-member district levels a majority could decide to hold a membership ballot. In 1980, the stipulation of a two-thirds majority among the constituency organizations to make a joint multi-member district list was altered to a simple majority, thereby weakening the position of the constituency organizations in relation to the multi-member district organization.

In sum, the development in V has been contradictory. Individual members do not exercise their influence directly at a meeting, but via delegation primarily at constituency level. The autonomy of this level was slightly reduced in 1980, pointing in the direction of a minor increase of centralization at the subnational level. But the introduction of the option to hold a postal ballot among the members meant an increase in inclusiveness and in the role of the individual members. Together, however, these point in the direction of democratization of the process.

The central organs in the candidate selection process of the *Conservative People's Party* (Det konservative Folkeparti (KF)) were and still are the constituency organizations. Candidates are selected at a special nomination

meeting at which all members are allowed to attend and vote. Stipulations give the multi-member district and national organizations rights to influence the process, but they do not have the power directly to oppose a nomination or to add names to the list. The constituency organizations are sovereign. These rules have been in effect since the beginning of the 1960s.

Three new parties were founded in Denmark at the beginning of the 1970s, but none of them adopted a candidate selection procedure that differed in any significant way from that of the old parties. The *Christian People's Party* (Kristeligt Folkeparti (KRF)) was founded in 1970 and in 1973 the first rules were formally adopted. According to these rules, candidates are to be approved first by the board of the multi-member district organization, and second by the national committee. Besides the right of approval, these organs can add names to the list. The approved list of candidates is then sent to the party members. At a special meeting open to all members in the multi-member district, members choose among the names on the list. The parallel list form is obligatory. Although it is the members of the multi-member district/constituency organizations who make the final decision, centralization of the selection process is stronger in KRF than in most other Danish parties because of the prerogative of the board of the multi-member district organization and the national committee to veto a nominee as well as to add names to the list. Since these rules from 1973 have been in effect ever since, it is irrelevant to talk about a process of democratization.

The *Centre Democrats* (Centrum-Demokraterne (CD)) was founded in 1973. According to the rules adopted in 1974, the members chose candidates via a postal ballot held in the region. The national committee was to comment on the list before the ballot was held and the multi-member district organization decided what to do with the comments of the national committee, but the rules were ambiguous in that respect. The multi-member district organization could add names to the list.

In 1980 it was decided that the national committee with a two-thirds majority could recommend to the multi-member district organization that a candidate be dropped from the list. If the national committee disapproved the nomination of a candidate, a meeting of delegates in the multi-member district could drop the name from the list with a two-thirds majority before the membership ballot was held. From a position of total control by members over the nomination and selection of candidates, the rule changes point in the direction of a minor increase in the role played by the central party organ and the multi-member district meeting of delegates, i.e. a minor centralization at the national and local level and an even more modest decrease of the individual party member's role.

There are no specific stipulations as regards candidate selection for national elections in the central party rules of the *Progress Party* (Fremskridtspartiet (FRP)), founded in 1972. In practice, the constituency organizations have had total sovereignty, but an amendment adopted in 1991 gave the national

committee the power to veto a selected candidate, which meant an increase in centralization of the process without changing the inclusiveness.

In conclusion, individual members of Danish political parties have always played and still play an important and decisive role in the selection and nomination process. At the beginning of the 1960s, their influence was exercised mainly at general meetings at the subnational level. Since then, three parties (SF, SD, CD) have introduced obligatory postal balloting among members and one party (V) has adopted an option to use this method – indeed an increase in inclusiveness and in the role to be played by individual members. No party has significantly increased the role of the central party organs except the FRP. The role exercised by these organs has remained virtually unchanged during the period, which means that in four parties (SF, SD, KRF, FRP) the national committee has to approve the list of the candidates actually selected. In the remaining parties, the national bodies have no major direct role to play other than the right to comment on the list, propose changes or be represented at a meeting in the subnational organization. The increase in the centralization variable has only been marginal.

Based on this analysis it is reasonable to conclude, due mainly to the introduction of postal ballots among members, that the answer to the question of whether a process of democratization of the candidate selection process has taken place in Denmark is 'yes'. Despite the fact that the membership decline was higher in Denmark than in the other Western European countries, the democratization trend must be characterized as modest in Denmark as well.

Concluding Remarks

In the introduction, the question was raised whether democratization of the candidate selection process has actually occurred in Western European parties in general and in Denmark in particular. Myth or reality?

The analysis has demonstrated that the role of the individual party member in the candidate selection process was greater and the process was more decentralized at the beginning of the 1990s than it was around 1960. This is evidence supporting the assertion that democratization of candidate selection for national elections actually has taken place among Western European parties, although stability and modest adaptation, rather than major change, have characterized the majority of parties. In Denmark, an already democratic procedure was made even more democratic with expansion of the selectorate and of the role of individual members, markedly by the introduction of postal ballots in four of the parties, while the level of decentralization remained practically unchanged. Stability and modest change characterized the picture in Denmark. Democratization of the candidate selection process is a reality.

Note

- 1 The Western European parties analysed in this article are those covered in the project on party organizations directed by Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair. The analysis is based on all tables labelled D.5 in Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair (eds) (1992) plus Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair (1995) and correspondence with the individual country experts in the project.

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