MANAGED INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY: 
PRECURSORY DELEGATION AND PARTY LEADER SELECTION

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Abstract

The question of how party leaders are selected has recently, and belatedly, come under systematic comparative scrutiny. If it is the location of intra-party power that interests us, however, it might be that some of the more observable indicators in such processes, such as the identity of the selectorate, are not actually the most revealing ones. Using a delegation perspective, we thus present a framework for analysing prior steps in leader selection, and relate it to various ideal-typical constellations of intra-party power. The framework encompasses, first, what we call precursory delegation, with focus especially on an agent that, formally or informally, manages the selection process before its reaches the selectorate. Second, the framework takes account of the degree to which the process is managed rather than left open to free competition between leader candidates. We illustrate the framework primarily with instances of leader selection in two Swedish parties.

Key words: intra-party democracy – leaders – delegation – management – Sweden.

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INTRODUCTION

Party politics is about leadership. Yet it is only fairly recently that the selection of leaders by political parties has begun to receive the attention, in the form of systematic comparative study, that it deserves.

Scholarly interest has centred on the "selectorate", the organ within a party that, according to its statutes, decides who will be the leader. Yet no one claims that the part played by the selectorate is the only important one. Even when leader selection occurs entirely as party rules stipulate, the crucial decisions may have been made by others, prior to the entrance of the selectorate onto the scene. Moreover, even in established democracies, plenty of parties select their leaders in ways that are orchestrated surreptitiously, sometimes by actors external to the party. We call it a process of managed intra-party democracy.

Using insights offered by the delegation approach to understanding political organisation, our aim in this article is to develop a framework within which parties are classified according to how this prior intervention in leader selection occurs. Such a framework can illuminate extant intra-party power relations. Scholars have noted how – as in another basic party function, the selection of election candidates (Hazan and Rahat 2010) – members have been afforded an expanded role in leader selection. If greater inclusiveness has been offset by the management of an ostensibly democratic process, questions can legitimately be asked as to how much parties have really "democratised".

The article develops as follows. First, we review recent developments in the literature on party leader selection and identify lacunae that we might fill. We then outline our framework. Starting with a defence of the delegation perspective, we focus on two dimensions on which precursory delegation to a steering agent, to use our terms, can be classified. Next we illustrate the framework with two empirical examples, both from Sweden – a choice that we discuss further below. Finally, we present conclusions and next steps.

RESEARCH ON LEADER SELECTION

By and large, research on party leadership has been about organisation and elections (Lobo 2014). The first strand of literature, which is of more relevance to us, has addressed primarily the distribution of intra-party power. Michels (1962 [1915]), for example, argued that parties are bound to be centralised around their leaders. Later theories of cartels (Katz and Mair 1995) and presidentialisation (Passarelli 2015; Poguntke and Webb 2005) develop the similar idea that party leaders are becoming more autonomous and less reliant on the support of ordinary members. Elsewhere in this special issue, Somer-Topcu (2016) finds that a new leader can help to clarify what voters understand as a party's policy positions, which adds empirical weight to the intuition that leaders set the tone for their parties in various ways.
Yet for all their allegedly oligarchic tendencies, parties have increasingly allowed their members to participate directly in leader selection. Cross and Blais (2012:128) see "clear evidence of an ongoing shift in authority away from the parliamentary party towards grassroots members" in the selection of leaders (see also LeDuc 2001; Sandri and Seddone 2015), even if variation across countries and parties is apparent (Pilet and Cross 2014). Increasing transparency, participation and accessibility seem to be one result; but a decline in competition in leadership contests seems to be another (Kenig 2009b).

According to Kenig (2009a:434), the composition of the selectorate is "often regarded as the most important criterion for delineating party leader selection methods" (see also Kenig 2009b; Lisi et al 2015; Pilet and Cross 2014; Scarrow et al 2000). In some parties, the choice is made by a narrow circle of prominent people, while others open it up to include MPs, members or even non-members (Cross 2013).

However, as case studies have observed (Allern and Karlsen 2014:55; Jedenastik and Müller 2014:68), many selection processes have already been decided before they reach the selectorate, which means that the formal decision involves merely the "coronation" of a single contender. Kenig et al (2015:61) report that more than half of leader selections in a 13-country survey were uncontested, and that coronations "seem to be the norm in the established democracies of continental Europe". In such instances, the identity of the selectorate is probably not the most important aspects of leader selection. Furthermore, even when the selectorate has a choice between candidates, only about a fifth of such selections involve tight races, in which the margin between the top two candidates is less than 10 per cent of the votes (Pilet and Cross 2014:233; also Kenig et al 2015:65). By the time the decision reaches the selectorate, then, competition is often rather token, if it exists at all. Hence the argument that ostensibly "democratised" procedures, in which the party membership plays a major role, actually bypass other power centres and thus reinforce elite power (for example, Mair 1997:149-50).

Prior steps in leader selection are at least partly addressed in Kenig's (2009a:440) discussion of candidate requirements. He differentiates between eligibility requirements, such as being a longstanding member or a parliamentarian, and additional requirements, such as that candidates must receive intra-party endorsement. These requirements might serve a similar purpose to what we call precursory delegation and process management, in that they filter out some potential candidates. However, they do not explain how (or why) so many selections end in coronations. Anyway, most parties formally do not require anything more than that the candidate is a member (Pilet and Cross 2014:231).

We argue that leader selection is seldom an unguided decision. Formal rules and informal practices pertaining to stages prior to the involvement of the selectorate should be examined systematically in order to assess where real power over leader selection resides.
MANAGED INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY: ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this section and the next, we develop our framework. We first defend the general analytical perspective that we adopt, which is derived from theories of delegation.

Politics can be seen as a series of delegation relationships (Bergman and Strøm 2004; Lupia 2003; Strøm 2003). Principals, who want something done but who (for whatever reason) cannot do it themselves, delegate the task to selected agents. A principal seeks to ensure that the agent acts according to the principal's preferences rather than any other motive ("agency loss"). Some means of doing so apply after the act of delegation, and mainly involve checks that the agent is doing what it should be. Such *ex post* mechanisms, which are often described as ways of maintaining an actor's accountability, are highly germane to the topic of party leadership. In this article, however, we concentrate on mechanisms that operate *ex ante* – that is, before or during the act of delegation. These mechanisms are deployed, first, to reduce the chances of adverse selection (delegating to an erroneously chosen agent) and, second, to give the selected agent a mandate (instructions).

We envisage members as the ultimate intra-party principals (Müller 2000; also Aylott et al 2013:26-31), who delegate via separate channels to party leaders and to aspiring politicians (that is, election candidates).¹ We depict a simplified version of these power relations in Figure 1.

[Figure 1. Simplified intra-party delegation]

This is relatively straightforward in, say, the classic mass-type parties of Northern Europe. The leader is appointed by a congress decision, so she is ultimately the agent of the party membership (Müller 2000:319). The party programme, the contract that prescribes the leader's policy direction, is controlled by the congress. The executive organs, also elected by the congress, monitor her performance. True, the leader will often (though by no means always) also be a parliamentarian, and is thus subject to cross-pressure (Blomgren 2003). But the party in public office cannot formally remove the leader. When the British Labour Party selected the radical outsider Jeremy Corbyn in 2015, after rule changes had facilitated an influx of his supporters into the selectorate (Garland 2015), Labour's parliamentarians were forced to accept a leader for whom only a handful had any sympathy at all.

¹ This is not the only possible starting point, as Katz (2014) points out. For example, and in the tradition of Downs (1957), van Houten (2009) sees a party's public officials as its ultimate principals.
Not all parties have a mass-type tradition. Nevertheless, it is striking that in Europe, at least, with very few exceptions (such as the memberless Party of Freedom in the Netherlands), most statutes imply strongly that members are the ultimate principals. The statutes usually do this through designating members or their agent, such as a party congress, as both the highest decision-making body and as the selectorate in the party's choice of its leader. In this sense, our bottom-up perspective on intra-party delegation resembles the usual conceptual and operational definitions of intra-party democracy (von dem Berge et al 2013; Poguntke et al forthcoming), in which members are equated with the electorate in a democratic state.

Our focus is on the delegation relationship involved in leader selection. Above all, we examine what we call "precursory delegation", which occurs prior to the involvement of the formal selectorate. Delegation is to a "steering agent", which we define as an individual or a group that is charged by a party, or, more precisely, by some part or parts of the party, to oversee the process of selecting the leader. Its task involves actively encouraging, discouraging and perhaps blocking particular candidates who meet formal candidate requirements, and may also involve controlling information about the preferences of various actors – itself, its principal and prospective leader-agents. The act of delegation to the steering agent can occur formally, according to statutes, or informally, even secretly. It can also be decisive to the selectorate's eventual decision, or fairly marginal to it.

Among parties in democratic parliamentary systems, we suggest that precursory delegation in leader selection usually occurs in some form. In the next section, we outline the main components of our analytical framework.

MANAGED INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY: KEY QUESTIONS AND IDEAL TYPES

For our purposes, two fundamental questions are: from which section of the party does the steering agent derive its authority? and how strongly does it manage the selection process? An answer to each of these questions can be deduced through posing additional sub-questions.

(1) Deriving the authority to manage leader selection

An obvious indicator of the steering agent's authority is provided by asking who appointed and authorised it. In other words, which actor is the agent's principal? Is it the congress, or the parliamentary group, or the organisational headquarters – perhaps the incumbent leader, guiding her party's choice of her successor?

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2 We assume that the party leader is relatively easy to identify. Reflecting on their 13-country survey, Pilet and Cross (2014:224) conclude that, despite "complications", nearly all parties exhibited a "sufficient concentration of power to point to one single leader".
Parliamentary groups are often prominent in the selection, especially in Westminster-type democracies. For instance, parliamentarians alone chose the leader in each of the two main British parties until 1981 (Quinn 2012:1). In these scenarios, it might seem misleading to talk about precursory delegation. Yet the role of the steering agent was played informally by some conciliatory insider (or insiders), an equivalent to the informateur that, in some parliamentary systems, seeks out the person likeliest to lead a stable coalition government. Thus did Conservative leaders "emerge" prior to 1965, without any ballots being held (Quinn 2012:31). In any case, since the widespread "democratisation" of leader selection, there are few parties that retain this selection method. The two main British parties now clearly designate their parliamentary groups as steering agents and their memberships as their selectorates.

As we will see, the party congress often clearly delegates to a steering agent. Sometimes, however, the identity of the steering agent's principal is opaque, perhaps because the principal is an external sponsor. In some Latvian parties, for example, especially the newer ones, the formal procedures of leader selection, which involve congress decisions, somehow lead ultimately to the choice that the individual who bankrolls the party prefers. In such cases, the steering agent may be a figure within the higher echelons of the party who receives and sends signals from the external sponsor about which people, if any, would be welcome to promote themselves as candidates for leader.

However, identifying the steering agent's principal is not sufficient to understand the source of its authority. The composition of the steering agent is arguably just as important. It may be, for example, that it is selected by an organ within the extra-parliamentary party organisation, such as the national board or the party congress. However, if the agent – a committee or working group, say – is then packed with MPs or members of the executive committee or even collateral organisations, a clear inference is that these intra- or extra-party actors will influence process management. The principal's recruitment of their representatives to the steering agent is an acknowledgement of the power that these actors wield in the process. The implication is that there could be negative consequences for party unity if one or more of them were excluded from it. The steering agent thus becomes an arena for intra-party negotiation.

In sum, we see four ideal-typical patterns of steering-agent authority. These are largely drawn from Katz and Mair's (2002) conception of the "faces" of party organisation.

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3 In the main Australian parties (Gauja 2014:191-92), and the Democratic Unionist Party in Northern Ireland (Matthews 2015:6-8), parliamentary groups are still the sole selectorates.

4 However, it may be that a third British party, the Liberal Democrats, is one of those that does not use precursory delegation in selecting its leader. Instead, the party uses restrictive candidate requirements, including that which limits the field to national parliamentarians (Liberal Democrats 2012: article 10.5) – which, after the disastrous parliamentary election of 2015, amounted to just eight people, including the outgoing leader.

5 Thanks to XXX for his description of leader selection in Latvia.
Leader selection could be managed by the party on the ground — that is, by the individual members and the local or regional branches to which they affiliate, or, more likely, by the agent of the membership, the party congress. It could be managed by the party in central office — the leadership of the party organisation, including the leader herself and the executive committee, plus the party's leading managers and functionaries. Or it could be managed by the party in public office — above all, its parliamentary group, but also perhaps its government ministers. A variation on any of these models is one in which steering is conducted informally through negotiation between party faces — or, within the faces, between leading figures in ideological factions. These figures might be concentrated in central office, the parliamentary group, the party congress or among regional sections. Something like this seems to occur before the coronations that are common in German and Austrian parties (Detterbeck and Rohlfing 2014; Jedenastik and Müller 2014).

In addition, we suggest that the process could be managed by a fourth actor, what we call an external sponsor. Such a sponsor, which could be a trade-union confederation or an individual benefactor, is likely to provide a significant portion of the party's funding. The sponsor is likely to work through the party in central office, or the party in public office, or both.

(2) Hands on or a light touch? Process management

The way in which the steering agent manages the selection process is obviously critical to the final decision. Central to any account of political delegation is the issue of information — how it is obtained, how it is shared, by whom and at what stage. We suggest two key questions that help to determine how information is managed. The first concerns the mandate received by the steering agent — that is, how it discerns the preferences of the principal. This is closely related to the composition of the agent, but nevertheless distinct.

If the agent has a relatively unequivocal principal, and especially if the principal is compact in its own construction, the communication of preferences will probably be straightforward and the agent's scope for autonomous decision-making rather limited. (It will be even more limited if eligibility requirements — that the leader must be a member of the parliamentary group, for instance — are stated in party rules.) The preferences of the principal are likely to be conveyed discreetly but clearly to the agent. If, on the other hand, the agent is more of an intra-party arena, and thus has a looser relation with its (ostensible) principal or principals, its mandate might be much vaguer and its scope for autonomous actions greater.

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*We generally assume that the party congress represents the party on the ground. The congress tends to be the direct agent of the members. (In some parties, such as those in Estonia, the congress may actually comprise the membership: any interested member can participate in its meetings.) However, it is not always safe to make this assumption. The higher the proportion of individuals and groups represented at the congress in an ex officio capacity, such as parliamentarians and collateral organisations, the more questionable the assumption becomes (Bolin 2015:115-16).*
A similarly germane issue is the degree to which the steering agent shares with the selectorate information about leader candidates. At one end of this scale is the scenario in which the steering agent simply oversees an open campaign in which several leader candidates argue about where they want to take the party. At the other end is a process conducted in secrecy, without direct communication between aspiring candidates and the selectorate, and ends with the steering agent's endorsement of a single leader candidate.

True, even a leader formally selected in a coronation will usually be well known to her party. In that sense, information about her would be hard to control. Yet that it is not always the case. As we will see in our empirical illustrations, outsiders do sometimes spring surprises in selection processes. Moreover, a coronation denies the selectorate the crucial comparative aspect of knowledge about the single leader-designate. If the steering agent has not shared with the selectorate what it knows about the individuals who were interested in taking on the role but who were, for whatever reason, blocked by the steering committee, the risks of adverse selection, from the selectorate's perspective, are obvious. It is also hard to see how the selectorate can confer much of a mandate on a leader without having had the chance to express openly, through voting, a preference for that candidate's policy platform over some rival candidate's platform. Indeed, without the opportunity to develop and express a choice, the selectorate might even have trouble working out what its preferences are, never mind communicating them.7

When the process is heavily managed, the steering agent's extensive control of relevant information may depend not only on its role and powers as stipulated in the party statutes. It may require some additional constraint that dissuades aspiring leaders from circumventing the steering agent and pitching their appeals directly to the selectorate. That constraint might be the threat of informal but significant sanction by the incumbent leadership or an external sponsor. It might also relate to party culture. In some parties, certain deferential customs simply endure.

Measuring and comparing leader selection processes

A quality of our approach is that we take account not only of what is stated formally about procedure in party statutes, what Katz and Mair (1992:6-8) called the "official story", but also of what happens informally, the "real story". Certainly, this involves methodological challenges. Informal steering agents are likely to be less readily observable than ones that perform a statutorily defined function. This requires that data collection and analysis is performed by researchers with intimate knowledge of particular cases of leader selection, and that cross-national classifications are agreed through careful discussion between researchers.

7 Teorell's (1999) normative defence of intra-party democracy speaks to exactly this deliberative, preference-forming attribute.
We think that such challenges are worth meeting, even at the probable cost of empirical breadth.

It may be difficult to arrive at a single indicator that captures the closeness of resemblance to all ideal types of leader-selection management. However, we can assess in a single measure the degree to which the source of the steering agent's authority is concentrated in any particular place, whichever of the four ideal types that might be. If, for example, the steering agent's principal is clearly located in the party's leadership, and if, in addition, the agent is composed of people from central office, then we can say that the agent's authority is highly concentrated. However, in some parties, the source of the steering agent's authority is likely to be dispersed between various intra-party faces.

As for the strength of process management, this variable connects precursory delegation to the role of the selectorate. When process management is relatively weak, and something like free and open competition between leader candidates is permitted, then the selectorate becomes relatively stronger. When process management is strong, the role of the selectorate becomes weaker, up to the point where it becomes almost a rubber stamp. Certainly, the steering agent must, to some extent, anticipate the preferences of the selectorate. It cannot just anoint anyone as leader; the selectorate might be provoked into rebellion. As we will see, however, a selection committee with dispersed authority (and that is thus itself an arena for intra-party negotiation), and/or in a party with a disciplined, deferential culture, may be very confident that its choice will be accepted by the selectorate, which gives it a high level of discretion.

Clearly, if a party exhibits a steering agent with concentrated authority, plus strong management of the selection process up to the formal selectorate's decision, it will be highly indicative of where real power lies within that particular party. In many other parties, the picture will be more complex – but nevertheless, we argue, clearer after the application of our framework.

[Table 1. Summarising the framework]

Our framework and its informative questions are summarised in Table 1. We now illustrate the framework with descriptions of two examples of leader selection. Both are drawn from Sweden, for various reasons. We consider Swedish parties as somewhat extreme cases, especially in the degree of formality and visibility with which precursory delegation occurs. That makes them useful illustrations of the phenomenon in question, even if they are not representative of a wider population of parties (Gerring 2007:101-4). The two cases examined
here also exhibit notable variation on our two dimensions. For sure, analysis of a more diverse set of cases is a goal of our inquiry. But this is a first step.

**VARIETIES OF MANAGED DEMOCRACY: ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES**

At first glance, the generic elements in Swedish party-leader selection make it look pretty inclusive. Any intra-party unit or member can nominate a potential leader. The selectorate is the party congress, the highest decision-making organ. The party's regional or municipal units select delegates to the national congress; few if any places at the congress are reserved for incumbent leaders or other groups (Bolin 2015:115).

Usually, however, the congress has only a single leader candidate to vote for. As we noted above, this in itself is quite common in Europe. The difference in Sweden is that there is a formal steering agent specifically designed to engineer a coronation by the party congress. This agent, which would appear bizarrely undemocratic in some European countries, is what we call the "selection committee" – in Swedish, valberedning, literally, "selection [or election] preparation". As far as we know, it finds an equivalent only in Norwegian parties (Allern and Karlsen 2014:51-53; Strøm 1993).

*Social Democrats 2010-11*

Perhaps surprisingly in a 121-year-old party, the Social Democrats found themselves with an organisational problem when, in autumn 2010, after a second consecutive election defeat, the incumbent leader, Mona Sahlin, rather belatedly resigned. As Madestam recounts (2014:48-59), there had been unhappiness at how the selection process in 1996 had been steered, in ad hoc fashion, by a single person, the chair of the party's parliamentary group. The following year, the party congress had conferred on the party council (förtroenderåd), in which its constituency branches (partidistrikt) were represented, the right to appoint the selection committee. It would convene a few months before a party congress and then submit to that congress proposals for who should fill leading party positions. But this meant that, when Sahlin resigned, there was no selection committee *in situ*.

After her resignation, it fell to the party's secretary-general to propose a selection committee. A newspaper reported that "party headquarters" had urged the 26 constituency branches, which are often grouped into six regional clusters, to collaborate in proposing composite nominations (SvD 16 Nov. 2010). The chair of two northern branches immediately declared

8 We examine the instance of Social Democratic selection of a new leader in 2011 mainly because the subsequent occasion, in 2012-13, was even more unusual in character. The Greens' selection of new spokespeople in 2011 was, at the time of writing, their most recent.

9 Swedish parties have not been included in recent comparative surveys. So (2012) examines Sweden, but she asks why particular leaders are elected at certain moments, rather than concentrating on the process.
that they and five others from northern "forest counties" would do exactly that, and that they would then approach Scania, in the south-west, and Stockholm city to tie up the slate (DN 16 Nov. 2010*). Nominations to the selection committee were also accepted from auxiliary organisations within the party.

Within a fortnight, the secretary-general could propose a selection committee to a telephone conference of the party's constituency branch chairs (Exp. 1 Dec. 2010), then to the national board (partistyrelsen), and then formally to the party council (SvD 2 Dec. 2010), the body that was to approve it. The selection committee's 11 full members reflected a balance between the regions and the sexes (SR 1 Dec. 2010). Its most well-known figure was a former chair of Gothenburg city council. He was one of only two without parliamentary experience. Five were current MPs, and four more, including the chair, had either declined to run or lost their seats in the recent election. Of the five reserve members, who could attend meetings but only vote in the absence of a full member, one was another current MP.10

In our estimation, the source of the steering agent's authority was highly dispersed. The selection committee's formal principal was the party council, which represented the constituency branches. We equate that with the party on the ground. Moreover, their nominations to the committee clearly carried considerable weight.11 These nominees were fielded and shaped into a proposal by the secretary-general. The secretary-general is appointed by the congress, but can reasonably be identified with the leadership – that is, the party in central office. The party board, which we also equate with central office, vetted the proposal before its approval. Finally, the parliamentary group – the party in public office – was healthily represented in the selection committee. Not every part of the party was satisfied with the composition of the selection committee; the youth wing failed to secure a place for its nominee (SvD 2 Dec. 2010*). Still, this steering agent looked, in our framework, like an arena for broad intra-party negotiation. That, in turn, had implications for how the steering agent managed the selection process.

There were some calls for more open competition. One member of the party council urged that the new leader be chosen through a membership ballot. However, such suggestions made no headway. Indeed, the chair of the selection committee, a former minister for social security, famously rejected a ballot with a dismissive reference to a television talent show (GP 5 Dec. 2010*). That meant that the committee worked "traditionally". It met representatives of the various constituency and municipal party branches and collateral organisations. It invited suggestions about the characteristics that the next leader ought to have. It received nominations. It discreetly talked to some nominees. The objective was, as usual, to recommend a single candidate for the congress to approve.

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10 Information about the status of individual members of the parties' selection committees was collected through internet searches, which often led to Wikipedia entries.

11 One experienced observer pointed especially to the 15 constituency-branch chairs who held additional positions in either the board, the executive committee or the parliamentary group (Isaksson 2010).
That turned out to be difficult. There was no obvious successor to Sahlin, and several of the likeliest individuals ruled themselves out early on. Yet observers were unsure how seriously to take these denials of interest. A feature of party culture, which Madestam (2014:44) suggests might go back to the 1960s, is that self-promotion among leader candidates is taboo. Meanwhile, complex struggles between the party's ideological tendencies and regional clusters had, according to some accounts, been made still more arcane by the uncertainty surrounding other top positions in the party, which opened the possibility of horse trading (Madestam 2014:85; Nilsson 2011). The committee chair was apparently averse to recommending any candidate who could not command the committee's unanimous support (Madestam 2014:111-12).

The deadlock induced mounting alarm among Social Democrats. About ten days before the congress, however, the selection committee finally agreed on a completely unexpected candidate: Håkan Juholt, a vaguely left-wing parliamentarian.

We classify the steering agent's management of this process as especially strong. The Social Democrats' selection committee received virtually no mandate from its ostensible principal, the party on the ground, or from any other part of the party. It thus enjoyed great autonomy. As the remark from its chair about its *modus operandi* indicated, the committee drew on party custom to guide it and sought internal consensus. That demanded a secretive approach, in which internal bargaining could take place and a compromise eventually thrashed out. No acknowledgement of any contenders was made by the committee before Juholt alone was endorsed. After that, party culture made it almost unthinkable that he would be challenged. The formal selectorate, the delegates to a special party congress, could barely have been given any less information about their choice. They duly voted unanimously for Juholt.

*Greens 2011*

The Greens were formed in 1981, partly as a reaction against the allegedly oligarchic internal structures of the established parties (Lundgren 1991:56). Indeed, they were initially sceptical about leaders *per se*. Having subsequently accepted that some sort of leadership was needed, the Greens opted to have two spokespeople, a man and a woman (Bolin 2012:116). It may be that these spokespeople have, in practice, become increasingly like customary party leaders (Madestam 2014:171), but one important difference is the party's retention of term limits. A spokesperson can only be (re-) elected at the annual congress nine times, although three years out is enough for that count to be restarted (Miljöpartiet 2011a). The nine-year rule made it predictable that the Greens would have to replace their successful incumbents, Peter Eriksson and Maria Wetterstrand, at their 2011 congress.

The party's selection committee is chosen by the congress (Miljöpartiet 2011a). Each of the 29 constituency branches nominates one member, selected at an annual branch meeting. Of
these, the 15 full members, with voting rights, are to rotate among the branches. In addition, the Greens' youth wing nominates a man and a woman as full members.¹² The congress elects the convenor. The one in place in 2011 had joined the committee in 2007 and had become convenor in 2009.

Unlike in the Social Democrats, a position in the selection committee seems not to have been considered especially prestigious. Previous roles within the organisation appeared not to have been necessary (Madestam 2014:192-3). Instead, most were rather inexperienced local and regional figures. This chimes with the party's original organisational ambitions. The Greens' steering agent also inferred its mandate quite freely; there was no specific instruction to it from its ostensible principal, the congress, or any other part of the party. Yet its authority was significantly more concentrated than the Social Democrats' had been, with that authority clearly derived from the party on the ground. The Greens' selection committee was much less an arena for intra-party bargaining.

In accordance with the self-image of an internally democratic party, the selection committee stated early on that the process of finding successors to Wetterstrand and Eriksson would be an "open" one. A member ballot was considered. However, partly because some feared that this would disadvantage less well-known candidates, the selection committee decided against it (Madestam 2014:176).

Instead, a two-stage process was initiated. First, all members had the chance to propose candidates. In parallel, the selection committee held about 40 member meetings and conducted more than 100 interviews at various party levels in order to discern the qualities that members were looking for in the new spokespeople (Miljöpartiet 2011b). Seven men and four women declared their interest in standing, of whom the selection committee decided on a shortlist of six.¹³ In the second stage of the process, these six were not only interviewed by the selection committee (Madestam 2014:195-6), they were also invited to campaign openly against each other, through the media and in joint debates around the country. In this way, the candidates could communicate directly with the selectorate.

Process management in the Greens' selection was thus considerably weaker than in the Social Democrats. Allowing candidates to campaign publicly meant that the selectorate was far better informed about which potential leaders, and associated policy packages, they could choose between. The steering agent did not control information as the Social Democrats' equivalent had done.

True, the steering agent did still make a recommendation to the selectorate. Its endorsement of Gustav Fridolin was widely expected; but that of Åsa Romson, rather than the party's

¹² In fact, votes have only very rarely taken place. Almost all decisions are unanimous (interview).
¹³ The rejected nominees were fairly unknown, so this was not a controversial step. Indeed, some of those who survived the cut had been marginal figures in the party hitherto.
economic policy spokesperson, Mikaela Valtersson, was not *(SvD 25 Oct. 2010)*. Romson's competence in environmental issues trumped Valtersson's much higher public profile. In contrast to Social Democratic custom, a Green selection committee's proposal is not automatically confirmed by the congress (Madestam 2014:169). For example, Eriksson had been selected by the 2002 congress despite not being nominated by the selection committee. In 2011, moreover, although Fridolin and Romson were comfortably approved by the congress, most other nominees maintained their candidacy to the end. The formal selectorate is thus more significant in the Greens than in the Social Democrats.

*Comparing cases*

In Figure 3, we classify the two Swedish parties' processes. To summarise, we see the Social Democrats' process as being strongly managed by a steering agent with dispersed authority, while the Greens' was moderately managed by an agent with concentrated authority.

> [Figure 2. Two-dimensional classification of two Swedish parties' leader-selection procedures]

Although, as we argued above, intensive study of processes is necessary before they can be classified reliably, we have mentioned other examples during our outlining of the framework, and we can preliminarily estimate where two of them might fit into it.

The main British parties' steering agents, which, as mentioned earlier, are their parliamentary groups, could be seen has having very concentrated authority: their fulfilling the role of process management is stated in the party statutes, so the principals, the party congresses, can exercise no discretion in their appointment; and their composition is undiluted. Conservative parliamentarians' management is also rather strong in the sense that they send just two candidates to the party members, the selectorate; Labour nominees require endorsement by 15 per cent of the group (Quinn 2012). On the other hand, that is the end of the steering agents' involvement. In neither of these parties party is there any subsequent attempt to control information about the remaining candidates. Nor is there a recommendation to the selectorate (although it will be aware of which candidate the parliamentary group prefers, and how strongly). In Labour especially, that means fairly light process management – as Corbyn's triumph in 2015 amply illustrated.

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14 That Romson had been a member of the selection committee during the previous three years, including two as vice-convenor, may not have done her candidacy any harm. Still, Romson won the committee's nomination by only one vote, nine to eight *(AB 29 Mar. 2011)*.

15 Romson received 200 votes to Valtersson's 59. Fridolin received 277 votes; his nearest rival got 14 (Miljöpartiet 2011b).
CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

We argue that the extant literature has not yet appreciated the complexity of how, in reality, party leaders are selected. It has mostly dealt with the selectorate and how its composition matters for different outcomes, such as competitiveness and the characteristics of the selected leader. By contrast, the pre-selection phase has been addressed only in passing. This phase may often be more important than the formal decision made by the selectorate. Indeed, the selectorate only becomes significant to the process when process management is relatively weak.

Drawing on a principal-agent perspective, we have suggested an analytical framework that centres on an intra-party actor that we call the steering agent. In most parties, it will be distinct from both its principal and the selectorate, regardless of whether its existence is formally defined in party statutes. In our framework, we can identify (1) intra-party areas from which the steering agent derives its authority, plus how concentrated or dispersed that authority is; and (2) the extent to which the agent manages the selection process, especially regarding the control of information.

We have illustrated the framework using cases of recent leader selection in Swedish parties. Our classifications illuminate much about the varying power structures within the two parties. The Social Democrats comprise a coalition of interests, characterised by elite-level bargaining between them; the Greens remain a party with a relatively influential membership. Our framework is able to capture interesting, previously uncharted aspects of selection processes. Certainly, more work on precursory delegation in Swedish parties, especially the composition and modus operandi of the formal selection committees, would be well worth pursuing.

While the development of a classificatory schema is in itself an important contribution to the literature, it also has potential in causal analysis. First, it facilitates questions about how different types of precursory delegation come about – that is, using it as a dependent variable. We might, for instance, hypothesise that the ways in which party leaders are selected are rooted in party history or culture, or ideological character (party family), or whether a party is predominantly one of government or opposition, or the party model that it most resembles. It is also possible that only small within-country variations are observable and thus that we should instead look to national-level factors, such legal frameworks or political culture, in order to explain variation.

Second, questions about the consequences of different types of precursory delegation could usefully be examined using our framework. If formal changes to a party's selectorate do not appear to lead to much change in the outcome of selection processes, it could be that real power lies elsewhere. Pilet and Wauters (2014:45), for example, find that while Belgian parties "have opened up their leadership processes...the party elite have built-in control
mechanisms allowing them to push the selection process in their preferred direction." If the power of the formal selectorate is negatively correlated with the strength of process management after the act of precursory delegation, the framework lends itself to the formulation of hypotheses about the extent to which changes in formal leader-selection methods will actually affect selection outcomes. Degrees of party unity or division; ideological or organisational or strategic change; voters' perception of policy positions (Somer-Topcu 2016); or even electoral performance: all these might also be worth testing for correlation with the nature of precursory delegation and process management.

As Gerring (2012:735) asserts, any descriptive endeavour in political science "involves the twin goals of conceptualization and measurement". With the latter aspect in mind, we must work on more precise indicators and how they can be combined with each other in a systematic fashion. For now, our scoring has been based on expert judgement. In the longer term, leader selection needs also to be viewed more broadly. The ex ante phase is just one side of the coin. To assess more fully the position of leaders vis-à-vis their intra-party principals, we must also bring ex post mechanisms into our analysis. The way leaders are monitored once selected and held accountable are crucial to comprehending their discretion in modern party organisations.
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**ABBREVIATIONS OF MEDIA SOURCES**

- *AB* - *Aftonbladet*.
- *DN* - *Dagens Nyheter*.
- *GP* - *Göteborgs Posten*.
- *SR* - *Sveriges Radio*.
- *SvD* - *Svenska Dagbladet*.

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**INTERVIEW**

- Joakim Larsson, convenor of Green Party selection committee, 2007 to present, interviewed by telephone, 26 June 2015.
Figure 1. Simplified intra-party delegation

direction of delegation

delegation within party organisation

delegation into public office
Table 1. Summarising the comparative framework

Dimension 1. From which section of the party does the steering agent derive its authority?
   ● Which intra-party actor or actors (party on the ground, party in central office, party in public office, external sponsor) constitute the steering agent's principal?
   ● What is the composition of the steering agent?
Scale: steering agent's authority concentrated → dispersed

Dimension 2. How strongly does it manage the selection process?
   ● How does the steering agent infer its mandate?
   ● To what degree does the steering agent share with the selectorate information about leader candidates?
Scale: process management strong → weak
Figure 2. Two-dimensional classification of two Swedish parties' leader-selection procedures

Strength of process management

Concentration of steering agent's authority

Social Democrats
2011

Greens
2011

strong

weak

dispersed

concentrated