

The ‘freezing hypothesis’ revisited

Session 06

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- ① Overview of the last session
- ② Assessing party-system change
- ③ The freezing hypothesis revisited
- ④ Twenty years later: new evidence from a longer perspective
- ⑤ Measuring party-system change

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- 2 The main dimension of competition is the **left-right dimension**, that represents preferences for distributional policies deeply rooted in the **class cleavage**
- 3 Since this dimension cannot account for major changes in Western European party systems, many scholars agree that a new dimension representing **a new cultural cleavage is re-structuring political competition**
- 4 Hence, **political competition in Europe is better understood within a two dimensional political space**

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 - ③ The contribution of Bértola and Weber ([Bértola & Weber, 2019](#))

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 - ② However, there was a **huge criticism towards the freezing hypothesis** since the 1970s
 - ③ As we advanced in *session 3*, the **rise of new parties** plus patterns of **weakening party ties** and **higher electoral volatility** led many scholars to claim that party systems had indeed transformed

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- It is in this context that Peter Mair and Stefano Bartolini carry out a systematic comparative analysis and set the basis for analyzing party system change

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- Is party system change a “myth?” ([Mair, 1993, p. 123](#))

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- Importantly **higher in the inter-war period** (in which the frozen hypothesis is based on): 9.9

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- In addition, **most volatility happens within blocks**
- Average **cross-cleavage volatility** in the post-war and the interwar periods: 2.9 and 3.2 respectively
- Still, some differences across European countries, **although minor**

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- Particularly relevant given the generational replacement and the enfranchisement of new voters

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- “A frozen party system is a structurally consolidated or institutionalised system, but **if society changes**, it leads me to ask **how do parties manage to maintain or even strengthen their links with social groups?**” (Andrea’s response paper)

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- **But is the evidence summarised by Mair enough?**

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 - ① **Party system innovation** ([Emanuele & Chiaramonte, 2018, 2019](#))
 - ② **Volatility and its components** (**Type A** [from old to new parties] vs. **Type B** volatility [among old parties]) plus **sequential volatility** to assess **de-institutionalization** ([Chiaramonte & Emanuele, 2017](#))¹

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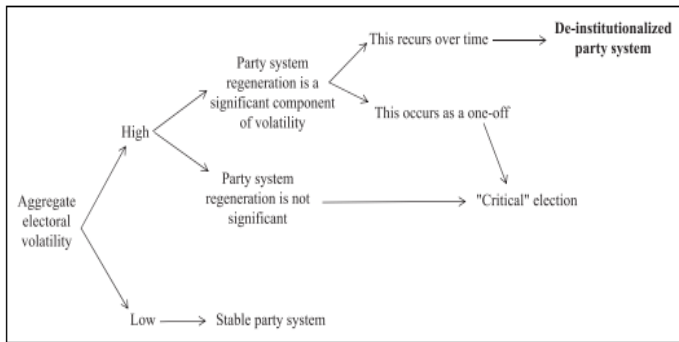


Figure 1. Electoral volatility, party system regeneration and (de-)institutionalization: Synthetic scheme of relations.

Figure 1: Figure 1 from Chiaramonte and Emanuele (2017)

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 - **however**, “there is a clear increase of both variables during the last electoral period (1992–2015), with further acceleration since 2010 that reveals a **general shift towards instability in the last years**”

Twenty years later: new evidence from a longer perspective

I Period (1946–1968)	II Period (1969–1991)	III Period (1992–2015)	Salience of RegV (Mean: 12.14%)	<i>Regeneration within stability</i> I Period 18 (18.2%) II Period 29 (23.6%) III Period 18 (15.8%) 65 (19.3%)	<i>Instability with regeneration</i> I Period 13 (13.1%) II Period 23 (18.7%) III Period 26 (22.8%) 62 (18.5%)
				<i>Stability</i> 135 (40.2%) I Period 51 (51.5%) II Period 49 (39.8%) III Period 35 (30.7%)	<i>Instability without regeneration</i> 74 (22%) I Period 17 (17.2%) II Period 22 (17.9%) III Period 35 (30.7%)
				TV (Mean: 10.25)	

Figure 4. Typology of elections by level of electoral instability and salience of party system regeneration.

Figure 2: Figure 4 from Chiaramonte and Emanuele (2017)

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 - ④ **Party system closure** (i.e., the degree to which govt. formation allows innovation: [1] alternation in govt., [2] government formulas stability [3] openness to new parties for govt. formation) ([Bértoa & Enyedi, 2021](#))

Twenty years later: new evidence from a longer perspective



Figure 5.3 Party system closure over time and by region, decade averages (1900–2019)⁸

Figure 3: Figure 5.4 from Bertoa and Zsolt (2021)

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 - ③ Party identification/membership ([Mair, 2013](#))
 - ④ Party system innovation
 - ⑤ Party system fragmentation
 - ⑥ Polarization
 - ⑦ Party system closure

Measuring party-system change

- A **summary of measures** to assess party system change:
 - ① Electoral volatility (cross-cleavage vs. between-cleavage/type A vs type B/electoral sequences)
 - ② Traditional parties strength
 - ③ Party identification/membership ([Mair, 2013](#))
 - ④ Party system innovation
 - ⑤ Party system fragmentation
 - ⑥ Polarization
 - ⑦ Party system closure
 - ⑧ **Conflict dimensionality?** (based on [Hutter & Kriesi, 2019](#))

Measuring party-system change

- One controversial arguments in Mair (1993) is that **even if the social alignment of parties have changed, this doesn't mean that cleavage politics is dead**. This argument doesn't consider whether *cleavage politics has changed*

Measuring party-system change

- One controversial arguments in Mair (1993) is that **even if the social alignment of parties have changed, this doesn't mean that cleavage politics is dead**. This argument doesn't consider whether *cleavage politics has changed*
- **Final activity!** Let's divide the class in two groups. You have 5-10 minutes to think of new indicator to assess party system change. Then, you will have to explain why this indicator and defend it while trying to (constructively) criticise the indicator proposed by the other group.

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