Supplementary Material

for the article "The Occasional Democratisation of Party Leadership Selection: A Mechanism-Centred Approach"

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Ex-ante Theorised Causal Mechanisms and Their Observable Implication

Note: Causal mechanisms consist of entities/actors and their activities. Actors are underlined, activities are in *italics*.

Table S.1 Expected mechanism when primary is used to circumvent delegates

Causal Mechanism	Theorised Observable Implication
*cause A** Incumbent party leader *wants to* become top candidate or *ensure* election of handpicked successor *cause B* Candidate A *wants to* seize power and *oust* the incumbent party leader. *cause C* Power vacuum, in which at least two candidates (A and B) *want to* seize power.	[1] Incumbent party chair announces his candidacy for electoral leader (A). • **High (high) uniqueness (hu):** self-evident • **High certainty (hc):** self-evident [2] Party leader nominates successor (A). • **Hu:** self-evident • **Low (low) Certainty (lc):** There are other reasons, why evidence might not be found e.g., incumbent refrains from nominating successor when this could harm successor (example: why Angela Merkel could not have nominated AKK in CDU leadership race 2018) [3] Candidate A announces his candidacy for electoral leader or party chair and challenges the incumbent leader (B). • **hu:** self-evident • **hc:** self-evident [4] Two or more candidates run to fill a power vacuum; there is no 'natural' candidate (C). • **hu:** self-evident • **hc:** self-evident
Part 1A Party leader *assumes* resistance by delegates or *is confronted* with real resistance by delegates. *Part 1 B & C* Candidate A *assumes* resistance by delegates or *is confronted* with real resistance by delegates	[1] Evidence of actual resistance among the middle-level activists (delegates). Possible evidence: polls (by newspapers) among delegates. • **hu:** self-evident • **lc:** If polls (or other evidence) show support for the candidate who demands the primary, then there would be no need to circumvent delegates. However, if no actual resistance is found (or measured) it can still be that one side of leadership race perceives resistance. [2] Actors report the feeling of a lack of support (e.g., in expert interviews, according to media reports, etc.). • **hu:** self-evident • **hc:** If they didn't feel resistance, no need to circumvent the delegates; however, they might not want to openly admit it.
Part 2A Party leader (and/ or supporters) *lobbies* for primary (to circumvent middle-level elites). *Part 2 B & C* Candidate A (and/ or supporters) *lobbies* for primary (to circumvent middle-level elites).	[1] Demands for primary elections were primarily raised by the candidate (or his supporters) who was favoured in the primary (evidence: e.g., explicit confessions in interviews or in media reports; meeting minutes). • **mu:** Can push for primary for other reasons (see it as tool for renewal, believe in grass-roots democracy); danger of ex-post rationalisation. • **?c:** *High*, if candidate who would benefit from primary was against it. Then it cannot be this mechanism. *Low* in case of not finding the evidence, because there might have been a consensus on the primary and thus the side that sees itself as benefitting from primary saw no need to push for it. Actors may also shy away from openly admitting the strategic use of the primary.
Part 3 Decision on primary is contested because disadvantaged side *wants to prevent* primary (and *prefers*	[1] Meeting minutes will contain evidence of extended discussion about primary. • **lu:** There can also be lengthy discussions about the primary for other reasons (e.g., about the technical aspects, including how a fair

decision by delegate convention).	procedure can be guaranteed or how so-called instant members can be prevented from joining). • **mc:** Disadvantaged side could informally aim to prevent primary before party board decision. [2] Interviews or press reports will report that disadvantaged side tried to prevent primary. • **lu:** There can also be lengthy discussions about the primary for other reasons (see [1]). • **mc:** Disadvantaged side may be reluctant to openly criticise decision to hold a primary as speaking out against more democracy is perceived as harmful. There may be differences between the parties here. It might be more accepted in the CDU to be against a primary (or in favour of the model of representative intra-party democracy) than in the SPD. [3] Decision to hold primary not adopted unanimously by party board. • **mu:** A non-unanimous decision says nothing about the reasons for this disagreement. • **lc:** Usually, decisions in the party board are taken by reaching a consensus and no formal vote is held. Also, it is possible that party wants to demonstrate to public that it is united.
Outcome	Membership ballot

Table S.2 Expected mechanism when primary is used to solve internal conflict peacefully

Causal Mechanism	Theorised Observable Implication
Cause Party *is split* into several camps; there is a conflict between different groups/camps.	[1] Media reports about intra-party conflict. • **lu:** The actors' perception matters more. • **lc:** We do not have to find negative news coverage. It is sufficient that the party elite expects the news coverage to become negative when the conflict continues. [2] Result of under 80% for the party chair at his/her last election at delegate convention and/or more than 4 different leaders within the last 10 years. • **lu:** That an election result of less than 80 percent for the party chair goes hand in hand with intra-party conflict is generally considered a truism, but has not been scientifically proven. The difficulty of measuring complex phenomena such as intra-party conflict has been discussed throughout the paper. • **lc:** There can be other explanations why the election result for the part chair was ≥ 80 per cent despite internal conflict (e.g., because the party wanted to show its unity to the outside world in the run-up to an election).
Part 1 Party leadership *perceives* internal conflict over leadership *as damaging* to the party's public image.	[1] We will find statements from intra-party actors that internal conflict over leadership was perceived to be damaging to the party (e.g., in the media, in meeting minutes or in the expert interviews). • **hu:** self-evident • **hc:** If party elite does not think that internal conflict is damaging, this mechanism will not be triggered.
Part 2 Decisive party actors *widely share the belief* that primary can be a means of peaceful conflict resolution due to its higher legitimacy and higher acceptance of its result; *fears* that open conflict at delegate convention will divide the party even further.	[1] Members of the party elite stress the higher legitimacy of the primary (compared to a decision by the delegates) (e.g., in the media, in meeting minutes or in the expert interviews). • **?u:** Higher legitimacy could for example be used as a fake argument to cover tactical use of the primary; *low:* in public statements, the members of the party elite will not necessarily reveal their true motives; *medium:* I expect greater honesty in the interviews. • **hc:** If the party elite does not do not believe in the higher acceptance and/or greater legitimacy of the results it cannot be this mechanism. [2] Evidence (e.g., meeting minutes) from internal debates, where several actors state that open conflict at delegate convention would divide the party even further. • **?u:** see [1] • **hc:** see [1] [3] Broad intra-party consensus on the primary. • **lu:** There can also be a consensus about the primary in the party board because opposition is not openly expressed there or because the party wants to prove its unity. • **lc:** Actors can reject the primary for other reasons (such as the very high costs of such a procedure).
Part 3 Party board *adopts measures* that ensure a fair procedure to avoid any suspicions on the legitimacy of the results.	[1] The fairness of different procedural measures was cautiously evaluated by the party board and that all precautions were undertaken to guarantee a fair and transparent procedure (evidence can be found e.g., in the media, in meeting minutes or in the expert interviews). • **hu:** Can also happen as part of any other mechanism to prevent a conflict from arising in the first place.

	• **lc:** Discussion of procedural measures may not matter at all because the party used the same procedural guideline as for a previous primary. [2] Evidence of lengthy debates about the technical aspects of the primary. • **lu: L**engthy debates can also be a sign of contested procedural guidelines that one side of the leadership contest wants to influence to its advantage (the party would not necessarily be looking for the fairest procedure then). Also, debates about procedural aspects can be lengthy because the party lacks experience with primaries. • **lc:** see [1] [3] Party will seek legal advice. • **lu:** The party could also do this because it is the first time that a primary is conducted. • **lc:** The party might not need external legal guidance because it has employees in the party headquarters or members in the party board possess sufficient legal knowledge. [4] Very detailed procedural guidelines. • **mu:** However, lengthy guidelines can also be used to disadvantage one of the competitors. • **lc:** Fair procedure can also be assured by short guideline. [5] Party will carefully check the eligibility of the voters, e.g., by checking their IDs. • **mu:** Could also be a sign of the strategic-use mechanism when one side wants to disadvantage the voters of the other side. • **mc:** The party can also find other ways to avoid any suspicions on the legitimacy of the results.
Outcome	Membership ballot

Table S.3 Expected mechanism when primary is used as opportunity for renewal after electoral defeat

Causal Mechanism	Theorised Observable Implication
Cause Party elite *perceives* election result as defeat (and *wants to regain* voters/ office).	[1] Official numbers show loss of votes/seats. • **lu:** What truly matters are perceptions of intra-party actors • **mc:** Not achieving one's election goal can also happen if votes were gained. [2] Party loses government responsibility or fails to achieve government participation (this is also possible if votes are gained). • **lu:** see [1] • **mc:** Result can also be considered a defeat if it is below the numbers predicted by the polls, if no coalition government with the desired partner is possible, or if another coalition partner has to be added. [3] Statements by party officials at election night framing outcome of election as defeat. • **mu:** One would rather expect that party leadership tries to whitewash defeat. However, it can only be election night rhetoric. • **mc:** Party elite might publicly whitewash defeat and only admit it internally. [4] Party officials frame election result as a defeat in interviews. • **mu:** It is possible that the actors reached this conclusion retrospectively; immediately after the election, they had perceived their party's result differently. • **hc:** Electoral defeat should have really been perceived as an external shock if the assessment of defeat persists weeks or years after the election. [5] Party chair or head of government resigns within short timespan after election. • **hu:** self-evident • **lc:** Not really harmful if not found. [6] Polling data shows declining poll numbers for the party. • **lu:** What matters is that the party elite perceives electoral success to be threatened. • **hc:** self-evident [7] Media reports about a scandal. • **lu:** What matters is that the party elite perceives the scandal as potentially threatening it electoral success. • **hc:** self-evident
Partl 1 Party leadership *initiates internal debate* or dialogue process. *Part 1A*** *Demands for reform/ primary are voiced* by rank-and-file, local branches, and/ or collateral organization.	[1] Debates about electoral result among members of the party elite (evidence to be found in, e.g., meeting minutes of party board, interview testimonies, strategy papers drafted by members of the party elite). • **hu:** It is unlikely that a good election result causes huge debate. • **mc:** Probably harmful if not found. Debate will most likely not be limited to discussions with rank-and-file/activists but take place in party board as well. [2] Open discussion formats where rank-and-file members can participate. • **lu:** Such open discussion formats can be used for other purposes as well (e.g., as part of a leadership contest). • **lc:** Members don't need to be involved; can also happen behind closed doors.

	[3] Party invites members to submit suggestions and criticism. • **hu:** self-evident. • **lc:** Members don't need to be involved. *[4] Press releases, public statements, etc. by rank-and-file, local branches, and/or collateral organisation demanding democratisation. • **lu:** Demands for democratization do not have to be a reaction to the electoral defeat (alternative e.g. strategic-use mechanism). • **hc:** self-evident.
Part 2 After *listening* to middle-level activists and/ or rank-and-file, party leadership *recognises* more open and transparent party as necessary for regaining support.	[1] Party officials stating in media that 'something' had to change after defeat. • **lu:** This could be only lip service. • **mc:** Actors recognise this for themselves and will also talk about their 'lessons learned' internally (behind closed doors) but shy away from doing so in public. [2] Newsletters or party newspaper talking about need to reform/democratisation of selection rules. • **lu:** This could be only lip service • **hc:** self-evident. [3] Timing: talks about "need to change/reform" after debates with rank-and-file and/or activists. • **?u** • **?c**
Part 3 Party leadership *triggers broader reform process* where suitability of different reform measures *is evaluated* and/ or best-practice examples from other parties *are considered*.	[1] Initiatives to change selection rules or re-structure party organisation launched by party elite (or other actors). • **mu:** Good evidence of reform process. However, literature shows that reform initiatives can be related to leadership change and new leader uses reforms to strengthen his/her position. • **lc:** The hypothesis that there was a reform process is not refuted by not finding evidence for [1]. Reform proposals by individual party board members may also be sufficient. [2] Initiatives to reform policy platform are launched and/or ad hoc reform/ review commissions formed with goal to draft proposals for party program. • **lu:** Changing programmatic direction of party can be reaction to changing cleavages/public opinion. • **lc:** Not harmful if not found. [3] Ad hoc reform/ review commissions formed with goal to draft proposals for organisational reform/reform of the selection rules. • **hu:** Good evidence of a reform process • **lc:** Not harmful if not found, proposals of leader or members of party board considered sufficient. [4] Party board discussed proposals for organisational reform. • **hu:** Good evidence of a reform process. • **mc:** It is possible that reform proposals will not even reach that stage. *[5] At party board meetings/meetings of reform commissions best-practice examples of other parties' reforms are considered (evidence found in meeting minutes or interview testimonies). • **hu:** Good evidence of contagion effect. • **hc:** A non-finding refutes the hypothesis that a contagion effect took place (assuming more honesty in the interviews).
Outcome	Membership ballot

QCA for Case Selection

Table S.4 Truth table for conducting a primary

VLOSS	GLOSS	OPP	RES	TURN	MLOSS	OUT	n	incl	Cases
1	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**SHB10, SBE99**
0	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**CNW94**
0	**0**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**SNI11**
1	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**CHB11**
1	**0**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**SBW09**
1	**1**	**1**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**CBW14**
1	0	0	0	1	1	0	3	0,67	SHB95, SBE95, SHB16
1	1	1	0	0	0	0	5	0,6	SSH11-P, SSH11-S, CBW11, CHH11, CNW10
0	0	0	1	1	1	0	2	0,5	SHB02, STH96
0	0	1	1	0	0	0	6	0,5	SBY17, SNI10, CRP04, CSH00, CHH00, CNW99
1	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	0,5	SBW00, SBW99
0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0,33	SBE12, SMV97, SBB96
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0,33	SBY15, STH08, CSH97
1	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	0,33	SBE98, SHH94, CBB07
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	SST94
0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	SST09
0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	SBE00
0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	CSN01
0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	STH94
0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	CBB15
0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	CMV03
1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	CHH16
1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	SHE06
1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	CST00
1	0	1	1	1	1	0	2	0	CHH15, CBB97
1	1	1	0	0	1	0	3	0	SST04, SBW97, CBE03

Notes: The column 'OUT' indicates whether a row of the truth table is sufficient for the outcome (primary): 1 = sufficient, 0 = not sufficient. The column 'n' indicates the number of cases in a certain row. The column 'incl' (inclusion); shows the so-called consistency-parameter. It reveals the degree to which a perfect set relation is approximated (Values range between 0–1; ideally, the value is close to 1). C = CDU, S = SPD; Baden-Wuerttemberg (BW), Bavaria (BY), Berlin (BE), Brandenburg (BB), Bremen (HB), Hamburg (HH), Hesse (HE), Lower-Saxony (NI), Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (MV), North Rhine-Westphalia (NW), Rhineland-Palatinate (RP), Saxony (SN), Saxony-Anhalt (ST), Schleswig-Holstein (SH), Thuringia (TH). Grey = Cases selected for process-tracing analysis.

Table S.5 Calibration of set membership for the QCA

Condition	Description	Threshold
	Electoral performance	
VLOSS	Votes lost/gained at the last regional election that predated the party primary	< -4,0 percentage points
GLOSS	Loss of government responsibility	yes
OPP	Opposition party status at the time of the party primary	yes
	Internal conflict	
RES	Most recent (re-)selection result of party chair at delegate convention	< 80,0 percent of the delegates' vote
TURN	Number of party chairs during the past 10 years	≥ 4 leaders
	Membership decline	
MLOSS	Severe loss of members in the year prior to the primary	CDU: < -2,25 percent SPD: < -2,75 percent

Figure S.1 Sufficient conditions for positive outcome (primary)

	Configurations					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
VLOSS	○	●	●	●		●
GLOSS		○	○		○	●
OPP	●	●	●	○	●	●
RES	●	○		●	○	○
TURN	●	○	○	○	○	●
MLOSS	○		●	○	●	○
Consistency	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00
Raw Cov.	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,10	0,05	0,05
Unique Cov.	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,10	0,05	0,05

Solution consistency: 1.00
Solution coverage: 0.35

SPD NI 2011 — **CDU BW 2014**

Note: Filled circle represents presence, and empty circle absence of a condition.

For a full overview of the QCA, see Küppers 2021b or contact the author for an English version. The R code and data to replicate the QCA are also available via the author upon request.

Data and Material

Table S.6 Additional information on data and material analysed in each case

CDU North Rhine-Westphalia	In total, 11 interviews with 8 different actors were conducted. Several members of the regional party board of 2010 as well as district chairmen were interviewed. Only the losing candidate was available for an interview. However, at least two fierce supporters of the victorious candidate could be interviewed. Important actors that could not be interviewed include the leader of the business association of the CDU (MIT) and the leader of the party's youth organisation (JU). The online archives of SZ, FAZ, as well as Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (WAZ) and Rheinische Post (RP) were searched using the following keywords: "Rüttgers," "Rüttgers Wahl" (Rüttgers election), "Rüttgers Landesvorstand" (Rüttgers party board), "Röttgen," "Laschet," "CDU Urwahl" (CDU primary), "CDU Mitgliederbefragung" (CDU membership survey), "CDU Mitgliedervotum", "CDU Mitgliederentscheid" (CDU membership ballot). Articles from the politics section of the above-mentioned newspapers and additional ones were searched for specific key events that emerged as important during the investigation (e.g., the district chairmen conference, party board meetings). The search covered articles published on the relevant day of the event (plus/minus 1 to 2 days). The CDU member magazine "Bei uns in NRW" as well as the guideline for the party primary (Urwahlrichtlinie) was provided by the party's headquarters. The researcher obtained the minutes of the regional party board meetings held on July 20th and August 30th, 2010 from one of the interviewees.
SPD Lower Saxony	In total, 11 interviews with 10 different interviewees were conducted. This included interviews with both candidates of the primary. Additionally, several members of the party board and district chairpersons were interviewed. It should be noted critically that most interviewed members of the party elite were supporters of Stephan Weil (who had broad support within the party elite). The online archives of SZ, FAZ, as well as the regional newspapers Nordwest Zeitung, Hannoveraner Allgemeine Zeitung, and Braunschweiger Zeitung were searched for the period from January 27, 2008, to November 30, 2011, using the following keywords: "Duin," "Weil Lies," "Olaf Lies," "Stephan Weil," "Heil Weil," "SPD Mitgliederbefragung" (SPD membership survey), "SPD Mitgliedervotum", "SPD Mitgliederentscheid" (SPD membership ballot), "SPD Urwahl" (SPD primary), "Klausur Achim", "Klausurtagung Achim" (Achim retreat), "Zukunftskommission", "Bulmahn," "Parteireform" (party reform), "Strukturreform" (structural reform), "SPD Bezirke" (SPD districts). Articles from the politics section of the above-mentioned newspapers and additional ones were searched for specific key events (such as the establishment of the Zukunftskommission, publication of the Oppermann-Weil paper).

	All volumes of the membership magazine "Niedersachsen Vorwärts" are available for the period under investigation. Additionally, the following party documents were provided by the interviewees: final report of the Zukunftskommission, the so-called Oppermann-Weil paper, the motion by the Hanover district for the 2008 state party convention proposing a reform of the organisational structure, the paper "Neue Stärke für die SPD in Niedersachsen" written by the Braunschweig district executive, excerpts from the motion adopted at the Achim retreat of the executive board, the procedural guideline for the primary, monthly membership figures, as well as a compilation of additional news articles on the SPD in Lower Saxony at the time under study.
CDU Baden-Wuerttemberg	A total of 10 interviews with 9 different actors was conducted. Only the candidate who won the primary was available for an interview. Other interviewees included members of the party board at the time under study, district chairmen, leading figures from the youth organisation, party staffers, as well as members of the so-called "Zukunftswerkstatt". Supporters of both candidates were represented in the sample of interviewees. The researcher was provided with several documents from the work of the "Zukunftswerkstatt" including approximately 300 pages of collected correspondence from local branches and individual members to the Zukunftswerkstatt. However, the requested minutes of the decisive party board meetings were not made available. The online archives of national newspapers (SZ, FAZ) as well as regional newspapers (Stuttgarter Zeitung, Schwäbische Zeitung, and Badische Zeitung) were searched for the period from March 27, 2011, to December 10, 2014, using the following keywords: "Mappus," "Mappus Wahl" (Mappus election), "Guido Wolf," "Strobl," "CDU Mitgliederbefragung" (CDU membership survey), "CDU Mitgliedervotum", "CDU Mitgliederentscheid" (CDU membership ballott), "CDU Urwahl" (CDU primary), "Sindelfingen," "Basiskonferenz," "Zukunftswerkstatt". Additional online media sources were consulted on key events (such as the conference in Sindelfingen).
SPD Bremen	A total of 8 interviews with 7 different interviewees was conducted. This included interviews with the winning candidate and several supporters of the defeated candidate. Among the interviewees were (former) members of the party board as well as party staff. The online archives of SZ, FAZ, and Weser Kurier were searched for the period from May 10, 2015, to May 3, 2016, using the following keywords: "Aulepp," "Güngör," "Böhrnsen," "Reinken," "Sieling," "SPD Mitgliederbefragung" (SPD membership survey), "SPD Mitgliedervotum," "SPD Mitgliederentscheid" (SPD membership ballot), "SPD Urwahl" (SPD primary). One challenge arose from the fact that Weser Kurier is the only significant regional newspaper in Bremen, and its coverage of internal party processes is rather scarce. Moreover, the national news coverage of internal party processes in Germany's smallest Bundesland is very limited. This made the reconstruction of internal decision-making processes more challenging and also indirectly affected interview preparation.

	Because the primary in Bremen was a rather recent event, party documents are easily available via the party’s website (this includes motions from party conventions, the primary guideline, as well as annual reports of the party organisation). Additionally, the membership magazine “bremerFORUM” is available digitally. The minutes of relevant party board meetings, or excerpts thereof, were provided by an interviewee. Interviewees also made available material from the internal debate about the party’s organisational structure.

Empirical Evaluation of Within-Case Evidence

Table S.7 Empirical evaluation of within-case evidence CDU North Rhine-Westphalia

Evidence	Empirical Evaluation
'There is no direct causal link between the scandal and the primary.'	No evidence for a causal link between corruption scandal and membership ballot in the expert interviews or in the accessible meeting minutes of the party board [hc].
'In retrospect the election outcome was seen as a severe defeat by all relevant actors (I-21, I-23).'	It is possible that the members of the party leadership came to a different assessment of the election results in the months (or years) after the defeat. This means that the perception of their party's electoral performance in the immediate aftermath of the election day did not yet cause any reform or renewal pressure [mu].
'The decision to hold a primary was, therefore, not embedded in a renewal process (with broad internal debates, ad-hoc reform commissions, etc.).'	Interviewees report that there was no or a 'rather unstructured' process to discuss the election result (I-31; I-33). In the event that a larger debate about the electoral result should have happened after the election, it can be assumed that the actors would still remember this [mc].
'However, one of the signatories of the local branches' call for a primary confesses that their initiative was intended to assist the federal minister (I-41).'	This piece of evidence shows the strength of the qualitative interviews, in which the members of the party elite can reveal their true motivations. Thus, only this quote reveals the 'true' purpose of the call. However, only one signatory could be interviewed. We do not know whether this is representative of all signatories [mu].
'Röttgen's supporters assumed that he could win a primary (I-38).'	This is an interpretation given by Röttgen's supporters. It is plausible from a theoretical point of view: Since members usually do not know the candidates personally and do not have detailed information about their political careers, they have to rely on other sources of information – such as the media coverage. It is thus reasonable to assume that the members would have known the federal politician Röttgen better than the regional politician Laschet. Consequently, they would have voted for the federal minister – or as an interviewee puts it: 'The most well-known candidate benefits the most from the membership ballot' (I-21) [hu].
'However, this view of a tactical use of the primary to circumvent a delegate decision may be the product of an ex-post rationalisation (I-35).'	It is questionable, whether Röttgens's supporters would have also admitted that the membership ballot's aim was to help him win the election if their favoured candidate had ultimately lost the membership ballot [mu].
'There is some evidence that supporters of Krautscheid (the third candidate who decided not to run in the membership ballot), namely the	First of all, the article in Rheinische Post (2010) contains only a vague description of its source. It is stated that this information is based on 'party

outgoing party chair Rüttgers and the party's youth wing, tried to prevent the primary (RP, 2010; Spiegel Online; 2010).'	circles.' Since Rüttgers had several opponents within the party, there could have been a smear campaign by people with an interest in portraying him badly. In an interview with the researcher, Rüttgers claims that he favoured a membership ballot [lu]. The article in Spiegel Online (2010) does not give any details about its source(s) as well. Whether the party's youth organisation leader spoke against the membership ballot during the party board meeting on July 20th cannot be verified since the meeting minutes are not a verbatim transcript. Since the youth organisation's chairman has already passed away, he could not be interviewed [lu].

Notes: In process-tracing, the empirical value of the observable implications or the evidence must be determined. This value depends on the degree of uniqueness (u) and the degree of certainty (c). In the context of uniqueness, it is evaluated which alternative explanations are possible. To assess certainty, possible reasons for the non-finding of a 'fingerprint' are determined. h = high, m = medium, l = low. [hc] thus stands for high certainty.

Table S.8 Empirical evaluation of within-case evidence SPD Lower Saxony

Evidence	Empirical Evaluation
'The overall result of the reform process was that the party congress in summer 2010 decided to strengthen the regional organisation moderately and to add the primary for the office of top candidate to the party's statute …'	This shows that the decision to write the primary into the statute was embedded in a larger reform process [hu].
'As party chair, he had travelled through the local district associations (he visited approx. 200 local party branches) and became convinced that he would have good chances to win a membership ballot. In contrast, he would not be able to win the informal nomination from the party elite (or at a delegate conference). The reason for this was his lack of political seniority (I-10; I-44; interview with Lies; Seng, 2011).'	Media reports also argue that Lies hoped to win a membership ballot: 'Lies, on the other hand, counts on his good chances in a 'casting' procedure.' (Randermann 2011)[1] One of the interviews confirmed this: 'If my memory is not mistaken, then Olaf Lies had put many hopes in it.' (I-12) The interviewee supported Weil. However, all of these are just someone else's speculation about Lies' 'true' motives [mu]. Importantly, Lies confirms himself that he would not have be able to win the informal nomination from the party elite and that his only chance was the membership ballot [hu].
'There is weak evidence that Weil (the other candidate and the party board's and district chairmen's favourite) did not want the primary (e.g., I-45; Seng, 2011).'	This was stated in only one of the interviews. Moreover, the sources given in the media reports – if any is given at all – are vague (e.g. 'party circles'). Lies' supporters may have been interested in wrongly accusing Weil of rejecting the membership ballot and thus portraying him as a 'bad' democrat. For Weil, this accusation was damaging, so he had to publicly speak out in favour of the primary and fend off the rumours. In an interview with the researcher, Weil claims that he favoured a membership ballot [lu].
'the party's executive board reached the conclusion that a membership ballot was the only way to settle the leadership dispute peacefully "it could also tear a party apart to decide this at a party congress, so we give the members the say" (I-34, similarly I-44). The higher democratic legitimacy of the primary is a frequently cited reason for this: "the party elite was aware that the level of discord had become so great that their own legitimacy would not have been sufficient for such an important decision" (e.g., I-27).'	This view is expressed by half of the interviewees (I-27; I-34; I-44; I-45) [hu].
'…the SPD in Lower Saxony was cautious to provide a fair procedure (I-16; I-44). However, there are alternative explanation for this caution (I-12; I-19).'	Two alternative explanations are given: First, the party lacked experience with membership ballots (I-12). Second, a scandal that had happened during the membership ballot of the Social Democratic Party in neighbouring Hamburg was still present. A ballot box had

[1] Randermann, H (2011): Weil stürzt Landes-SPD in Kandidaten-Dilemma. In: Neue Presse, 15.09.2011.

	mysteriously disappeared there, and the membership ballot had to be called off or annulled (I-16; I-19) [lu].

Table S.9 Empirical evaluation of within-case evidence CDU Baden-Wuerttemberg

Evidence	Empirical Evaluation
'The shock caused by the severe electoral defeat in 2011 (the CDU lost the office of prime minister after almost 60 years)…'	There is clear evidence that the electoral result was viewed as a severe defeat. It is described, e.g., as an 'earthquake' (I-39). Being in opposition was described as: a 'Completely new situation […] which the CDU Baden-Württemberg did not know.' (I-28) [hu]
'Thus, demands for democratisation were also motivated by instrumental concerns: to prevent Strobl as party chair (I-29; CDU Tuttlingen, 2011).'	I-29 suggests that the motive of the Tuttlingen branch could have been to open up an opportunity for an alternative candidate. However, the interviewee points out that (s)he could only speculate about the motives of the district association (albeit (s)he is from the same district association). In a press release, the Tuttlingen branch writes that Strobl's nomination was 'a slap in the face of all members who want to get involved constructively'. Further, it was stated that a new beginning includes a renewal of the party's personnel. [mu]
'Neither the outgoing party chair Mappus (because he wanted to leave the office as soon as possible) nor the secretary-general Strobl (he feared to lose) wanted a lengthy membership ballot to select a party chair (I-15; I-49).'	Officially, it was turned down due to costs and time (I-29). Neither Strobl nor Mappus could be interviewed personally [lu].
'Again, other members of the party board supported the primary because they did not see a 'natural' top candidate for the next regional election – a situation they had never experienced before, since, usually, the prime minister was their top candidate (I-22; I-28).'	I-28 convincingly explains: 'That [a 'natural' top candidate] was something we always had. There was either a prime minister who ran again, or there was a change during the legislative period. Then the new prime minister is elected by the parliamentary party group. That is why the leader of the PPG usually became the new prime minister. And this situation was different in 2014/15.' [hu]