# Social Democratic Party Exceptionalism and Transnational Policy Linkages

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Political parties learn from successful foreign parties. But does the scope of this cross-national policy diffusion vary with party family? We use a heuristics framework to argue that party family conditions transnational policy learning when it makes information on the positions of sister parties more readily available and relevant. Both conditions apply to social democracy, which, unlike other party families, faced major competitive challenges from the 1970s in the context of exceptionally strong transnational organizations – factors that, as we contend, uniquely facilitate cross-national policy learning from successful parties within the family. We analyze parties' policy positions using spatial methods and find that social democratic parties are indeed exceptional as they emulate one another across borders more than other families. These findings have important implications for our understanding of political representation and of social democratic parties' election strategies over the last forty years.

**Keywords**: Social Democracy; Party Families; Party Policy Positions; Policy Diffusion; Political Representation; Political Parties

> "[W]e are all united in the effort to create democratic systems in which not determination from outside or from above but responsible self-determination is to be the dominating social principle […]. We are not a closed society but an association of independent parties whose representatives feel they can learn from each other and can by joint effort achieve something useful […]." Willy Brandt (1978), Speech to the Socialist International Congress, Vancouver (Seidelmann 1998, p. 3).

> "The debate today is no longer about whether we modernise, but how and how fast. … My case is straightforward. The left and centre-left has to stay true to its values but rediscover fundamental radicalism in applying those values to the modern world and jettison outdated doctrine and dogma that stands in our way." Tony Blair (1999), Speech to the Socialist International Congress, Paris.[1]

Analyses of the Socialist International (Imlay 2018), of social democratic party cooperation at the European level (Hix 1996; Ladrech 1993), and of social democracy's reorientation towards "Third Way" policies during the 1990s (Giddens 1998) suggest strong policy linkages within the social democratic party family. However, studies of cross-national policy linkages between parties highlight that the mechanism driving transnational policy learning is *success* (Böhmelt et al. 2016; 2017), rather than party family. That is, in seeking to construct a winning electoral strategy at home, political parties take cues from foreign incumbents in general, i.e., successful political parties abroad (Ezrow et al. forthcoming), and not necessarily only those of the same party family. In this article, we revisit the role of party family in the policy diffusion process and argue that – due to their ideology, extensive transnational linkages, and unique challenges – *successful social democratic parties* transmit policies more strongly within their party family than successful parties in other families.

When politicians and party strategists make programmatic choices to position their party for electoral success, they work in the context of considerable uncertainty (Budge 1994, 445; see also Somer-Topcu 2009; 2015). Previous research emphasizes that political parties respond to the uncertainties of programmatic choice by employing the heuristic (Kahneman,

[1] Available online at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/508882.stm.

Slovic, and Tversky 1982; see also Rosenau 1990) of learning from and emulating other, successful parties' positions. This occurs not just in their *domestic* sphere (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; Laver 2005; Williams 2015; Williams and Whitten 2015), but also by looking to successful parties *abroad* (Böhmelt et al. 2016; 2017). Hence, the expectation is that success, operationalized as incumbency, drives policy diffusion for all political parties, i.e., political parties will emulate and learn from foreign incumbents.

Markedly absent from our understanding of cross-border policy diffusion between parties is the role of party family (see Senninger et al. 2019).[2] Parties cluster in "*familles spirituelles*" defined by their origins in the great ideological movements of the 19th and early 20th century, history, and transnational linkages (see, e.g., von Beyme 1985; Jacobs 1989; Gallagher et al. 2011; Ware 1996). We examine whether party family matters for international policy diffusion by combining the literature on party families, and specifically social democratic parties (Benedetto, Hix, Mastrorocco forthcoming; Kitschelt 1994; Pontusson 1995; Przeworski and Sprague 1986), with research on party policy diffusion (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; Meguid 2005; 2008; Laver 2005; Williams 2015; Williams and Whitten 2015; Böhmelt et al. 2016; 2017).

We expect party family to influence international policy diffusion for two reasons. First, the shared ideological ambitions and cross-border linkages within party families shape what information is *available* to party strategists through the *organizational channels* that exist to transmit policy ideas. These channels vary across party families. Second, the unique cross-national *challenges* faced by a party family condition the *relevance* party strategists

[2] Senninger et al. (2019) examine the role of the European Parliament (EP) in influencing national parties' policy positions, but similar to the other studies they do not report a party family effect.

attach to the success of foreign sister parties in their own search for a winning electoral strategy. Both mechanisms, we contend, make the social democratic party family an exception to the otherwise limited role of party families in cross-border policy diffusion. Defined by the shared internationalist goal of building more egalitarian capitalist democracies, social democracy developed exceptionally strong transnational organizational channels to facilitate policy exchange (Hix 1996, Ladrech 1993; Imlay 2018). This made information on the platforms of successful sister parties readily available to party strategists. Moreover, the unique challenges that social democracy has been facing from the 1970s – including the decline of the industrial working class, globalization, the fall of communism, and the rise of green parties (Benedetto et al. forthcoming; Ladrech 1993; Pontusson 1995; Przeworski and Sprague 1986) – made the platforms of successful sister parties within the family the most relevant precedent for leaders searching for winning platforms. Our theoretical and empirical arguments below suggest that, by contrast, transnational organizations have not remained as strong for the other major party families such as the Christian democrats and conservatives; nor were unique policy challenges as critical to them.[3]

We test our expectations using quantitative data on 26 established democracies in Europe from 1977-2017. The results show that social democracy is exceptional and, unlike other party families, characterized by extensive cross-national emulation of left-right policy positions from social democrats abroad who were incumbents in the recent past. A party family, we find, is important and influences cross-national learning when it shares (1)

[3] As we note below, there were pressures for policy diffusion also within these party families, for instance with respect to labor market liberalization and centrist social policies, but the modes of policy diffusion were significantly weaker.

sufficiently strong transnational organizations and (2) significant political challenges. This result has implications for four important political science literatures including studies of programmatic policy learning, social democracy, party election strategies, and policy diffusion in general. We expand on these contributions in the conclusion.

## Party Policy Diffusion, Heuristics, and Party Family

When parties seek to position themselves for electoral success in a changing environment, they face complex and uncertain choices (Budge 1994, 445; see also Somer-Topcu 2009; 2015). Parties' strategies may, for instance, focus on taking or altering ideological positions (Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005; Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; Bawn and Somer-Topcu 2012; Ezrow 2005), picking issues to prime voters or shift their attention (Aragonès, Castanheira, and Giani 2015), making clear or ambiguous policy commitments (Lo, Proksch, and Slapin 2016), choosing broad or narrow appeals (Somer-Topcu 2015), and focusing on valence, i.e., the party's image with respect to competence and ability to govern effectively (Stokes 1992; see also Calvo and Murillo 2019). Complexity and uncertainty make the calculation of optimal electoral strategies challenging (Laver and Sergenti 2012) and tax the decisional capacities of party strategists. Parties, therefore, use heuristics to identify relevant information in constructing winning strategies (Böhmelt et al. 2016; see also Weyland 2005). Heuristics are "cognitive shortcuts," i.e., guides to rational action in conditions of uncertainty and complexity with a fair chance of success (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; Gale and Kariv 2003). Two types of cognitive heuristics guide parties in their search for electorally successful strategies – the *availability* heuristic and the *representativeness* heuristic. Decision makers who use the availability heuristic estimate "frequency or probability by the ease with which instances or associations can be brought to mind" (Tversky and Kahneman 1982, 164). Under the representativeness heuristic,

“probabilities are evaluated by the degree to which A resembles B” (Tversky and Kahneman 1974, 1124). These heuristics have been shown to facilitate transnational policy diffusion, as party strategists look to foreign incumbents, particularly dominant governing parties, which won office alone or lead their coalitions, in their search for winning electoral strategies (Böhmelt et al. 2016; 2017).

Previous accounts of international policy diffusion downplay the role of party family and ideology (see Senninger et al. 2019) or do not find empirical support that party families matter for party policy diffusion (Böhmelt et al. 2016; 2017). This is compatible with a conception of different heuristics as competing with one another in an evolutionary environment (Fowler and Laver 2008; Laver and Sergenti 2012), where the use of successful heuristics spreads through “replicator dynamics” (Weibull 1995). At the transnational level, learning from or emulating foreign incumbent parties of the same ideological bloc may not be “ecologically rational” (Gigerenzer and Gaissmaier 2011) in a population of heuristics where there is widespread learning or emulating from foreign incumbents. At the same time, the “neglect” of party family is striking, given that parties pursue not only electoral success, but also policy goals (Strøm 1990). Clearly, the search for electoral victory can cause parties to assimilate *some* programmatic stances of successful parties from other ideological blocs (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; Laver 2005; Williams 2015; Williams and Whitten 2015; Böhmelt et al. 2016; 2017), as illustrated by the way some social democratic parties have adopted parts of the center-right’s neo-liberal economic program. However, to remain competitive, parties must negotiate the tension between pursuing policy and electoral success (Wittman 1983). In that respect, sister parties abroad with similar goals that succeed in winning office are likely to be particularly relevant precedents. Hence, learning from, or emulating their policies might be a relevant heuristic. At the domestic level, too, there is

evidence that parties pay close attention to the peers within their own ideological bloc (Adams 2001; Adams and Merrill 2009; Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; Williams 2015).

While it is plausible that ideological affinity matters for international policy diffusion, we argue that it is more influential for some party families than for others. Specifically, we contend that party strategists can be expected to privilege learning from successful sister parties abroad under two conditions. First, when transnational organizations within the *famille spirituelle* make information on sister parties abroad readily available and, second, when unique challenges faced by the family make the choices of sister parties the most relevant precedent. In these circumstances, party family links condition the *availability* and *representativeness* heuristics applied. Below, we discuss these two mechanisms and show that they apply to *social democracy*, but not to the other party families, and, in particular, the Christian democratic and conservative families that produced the majority of incumbents on the political right. This makes the social democratic party family the exception to the otherwise muted role of party families in transnational policy diffusion.

## Social Democratic Party Exceptionalism

### *Transnational Linkages and Learning from Available Precedents*

Comparative research clusters parties in families because of their shared origins in the ideological movements as of the 19th century and international linkages likely have consequences for their behavior (von Beyme 1985; Jacobs 1989; Gallagher et al. 2011; Ware 1996). Party families mobilizing to represent social groups in specific historical contexts developed organizational structures of varying strength to suit their goals. In cross-national policy diffusion, such family links may shape the information available to party strategists in their search for winning strategies, i.e., they shape how the availability heuristic is applied (Tversky and Kahneman 1982). Previous work assumes that information availability is driven

by the media coverage that successful incumbents receive compared to opposition parties (even when controlling for the level of electoral support; Green-Pedersen et al. 2017; Hopmann et al. 2011; Schoenbacher et al. 2001; Semetko 1996). We argue that strong transnational organizations specific to party families are an additional channel that makes information about the programs of successful incumbent sister parties easily available within the family. This increases the probability of learning and emulation from foreign incumbents by party leaders and their advisers in the same party family.

Social democracy, unlike other party families, featured exceptionally strong cross-national links from its inception for two reasons. Ideologically, social democracy retained from its revolutionary origins the shared ideological goal of transforming capitalism (Benedetto et al. forthcoming) and subscribed to socialist internationalism, i.e., cross-national collaboration to develop shared policy approaches (Imlay 2018). Organizationally, the party family developed transnational institutional links supporting this policy collaboration. The Socialist International channeled consultation between socialist parties on international issues (Imlay 2018). Regionally, social democratic parties formed an effective and powerful party federation in the EU, the Party of European Socialists (PES). The PES has not only been coordinating EU policies of national social democratic parties from the 1970s onward, but grew increasingly influential with the Maastricht Treaty negotiations with a statute that provides "for majority decision making in all areas of EC policy where qualified majority is used in the Council of Ministers, and in certain areas decisions can be made which are binding on the national socialist parties" (Hix 1996, 320).

These transnational organizations were used by successful leaders within the party family to disseminate policy ideas and influence sister parties abroad. Willy Brandt, for instance, made use of his presidency of the Socialist International (1976-1992) to promote the normalization of relations with the USSR, an extension of the objectives that he first pursued

through his “Ostpolitik” as German Chancellor. Similarly, in 1996, Tony Blair, addressing the Congress of the PES in Malmö, called on fellow European socialist leaders to “modernize or die,” and to embrace “Third Way” reforms by holding “our values dear, then revolutionize our method of implementing them.”[4]

The political right, in contrast, has traditionally been significantly less united ideologically and organizationally. Incumbents and parties representing that part of the political spectrum since 1945, drawn from the Christian democratic and conservative party families, display greater ideological heterogeneity than social democracy (Layton-Henry 1982; Kalyvas and van Kersbergen 2010). Key ideological fault lines among Christian democrats, for instance, concern the centrality they accord to their Christian roots (dividing, e.g., the Dutch CDA from the German CDU/CSU), anti-socialism (which for the Belgian, Dutch, and Italian parties contradicted their domestic Christian democratic-Socialist alliances), and different welfare state models (van Kersbergen and Manow 2009; Kalyvas and van Kersbergen 2010). Moreover, while Christian democrats embraced supranational cooperation and European integration, conservatives did not necessarily do so (Hix 1996). This hampered the creation of effective transnational organizations by these parties. While the conservatives formed the European Democratic Union, it remained weaker than other federations, and eventually merged in the 1990s with the European People’s Party (EPP) formed by the Christian democrats (Hix 1996). Thus, although Christian democratic parties had a strong transnational party organization, the EPP, it was less effective as a channel for policy diffusion than the equivalent organizational channels among social democrats for two reasons: ideologically, Christian Democracy was more heterogeneous; and, organizationally, it coalesced with another major party family at the European level from the 1990s onward.

[4] See online at: https://bbc.in/3cmnHvR.

In sum, the strength of transnational organizations within the social democratic party family is exceptional and instrumental in making information on the policy platforms adopted by successful sister parties abroad readily available to party strategists.

*Shared Policy Challenges and Learning from Representative Precedents*

In cross-national policy diffusion, the second type of short-cut applied by party strategists is the representativeness heuristic (Tversky and Kahneman 1974), i.e., the degree to which the ambition and strategic choices open to a foreign party *resemble* those of the focal party that is aiming to construct a winning platform. Existing research suggests that the representativeness heuristic leads party strategists, aiming to position their party for electoral success, to focus on foreign parties whose programmatic choices have won them office (Dolowitz, Greenwold, and Marsh 1999; Dolowitz and Marsh 2000; see also Ezrow et al. forthcoming). We argue that whether or not a winning foreign party's choices represent the dilemmas faced by the focal party can be mediated by party family. Specifically, when unique cross-national challenges are confronted by parties within a family, the choices of successful sister parties become a particularly relevant precedent.

Social democratic parties have faced significant and unique *competitive pressures* since the mid-1970s. In the post-war years, social democratic parties successfully adopted catch-all strategies that broadened their electoral support beyond the working class (Przeworski and Sprague 1986). This saw their support peak in the 1960s-1970s (Benedetto et al. forthcoming), expanded their coalition options, and propelled them into government across Europe. However, from the 1970s, the catch-all strategies of social democratic parties came under pressure (Przeworski and Sprague 1986). The challenges facing the party family in the 1970s and 1980s were economic, ideological, and political. Economic development precipitated a shift toward nonindustrial occupations (Pontusson 1995), that sent the

industrial working class, traditionally the core electorate of social democratic parties, into secular decline. The oil crisis of the 1970s was accompanied by high levels of unemployment, stagnation, and inflation, which challenged the assumptions of Keynesian economics and led to the adoption of neoliberal approaches that opened up national economies to global trade (Benedetto et al. forthcoming). The resulting pressures on social democratic parties were further compounded by the collapse of communism and the introduction of the Single European Market (Ladrech 1993). Ideologically, these developments questioned the programmatic identity of social democracy and the effectiveness of policies that they had traditionally espoused to promote workers' rights and social justice. Politically, competition from the left for socially liberal voters from rising Green parties put further strain on the electoral coalition underpinning social democracy. The confluence of these factors demanded a renewal of social democracy (Benedetto et al. forthcoming).

In response to these challenges, leaders within the movement proposed the reorientation of social democratic parties toward "Third Way" politics that generally accepted free markets, but also sought to regulate their effects. We argue that the rapid diffusion of many of these ideas within the party family, albeit with national differences (Keman 2011), was powerfully driven by the specificity of the challenges that social democracy faced. The strategists of social democratic parties across Europe learned from the programmatic choices of the first social democrats carried to power by the adoption of "Third Way" polities, because those choices resolved dilemmas that closely *resembled* those of their own party. Hence, social democratic party family mediated policy diffusion because successful social democratic parties were most *representative* of the precedent that party strategists aimed to emulate.

Anecdotally, there is ample evidence of the diffusion of "Third Way" policies within the social democratic party family. As Giddens (2000, 4) notes, "[w]hen New Labour first came into government, there was intense interest among social democratic parties in Continental Europe." In April 1999, Bill Clinton sponsored a dialogue in Washington D.C. on "Third Way" policies that was attended by five European heads of government, Tony Blair, Gerhard Schröder, Wim Kok, and Massimo D'Alema. Later that year, Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder published a joint vision for a reformed social democracy in "The Third Way/Die Neue Mitte" (Blair and Schröder, 1999), drafted by their strategists Peter Mandelson and Bodo Hombach.[5] Through the mid to late 1990s, the concomitant centrist policy shifts proved electorally successful: European social democratic parties dominated elections and entered governments, either solely or in coalition. In 1998, the only exceptions in Europe were Ireland, Norway, and Spain (Benedetto et al. forthcoming).

This success proved transient, however, and social democracy continued to face severe challenges. Since 2000, the electoral support of these parties has sunk to historical lows with the continued decline of the industrial working class, the defection of socially conservative socialist voters to populist parties, and a loss of public-sector support in light of severe constraints on public spending following the Great Recession (Benedetto, Hix, and Mastrorocco forthcoming; Berman and Snegovaya 2019). The uniqueness of these challenges to the social democratic party family can be expected to give powerful incentives to party

[5] For example, the pamphlet calls on social democrats to "learn from each other and measure our own performance against best practice and experience in other countries. With this appeal, we invite other European social democratic governments who share our modernizing aims to join us in this enterprise" (Blair and Schröder 1999).

strategists to learn from the first successful responses by sister parties abroad, once they emerge.

While the same social, economic, and geopolitical changes also affected the competitive environment of conservatives/Christian democrats, the impact on these parties was neither as uniform nor as existentially threatening as it was for the social democrats. The decline of the industrial working class represented more opportunities than challenges for the conservatives/Christian democrats (Kalyvas and van Kersbergen 2010, 189). While economic globalization forced the conservatives/Christian democrats to reform their welfare policies, individual parties were committed to different welfare state models (van Kersbergen and Manow 2009), which made the challenges that they faced heterogeneous. Globalization, with the spread of neo-liberalism and labor market liberalization, also represented a less fundamental threat to these parties, because they held economic positions to the right of their social democratic counterparts (Ward et al. 2011). The collapse of communism and post-material value change, including the rise of secularism, differed in how they influenced conservatives and Christian democrats based on whether anti-socialism, traditionalism, and/or their confessional roots remained central to their identities (Kalyvas and van Kersbergen 2010, 188). Thus, the challenges that conservatives/Christian democrats faced were more varied and less existentially threatening than those faced by social democrats, which weakened incentives for cross-national family-specific learning.

In sum, party leaders and strategists focus on successful foreign parties as a useful heuristic to develop a model for their own success. We argue that party family mediates this heuristic under two conditions: first, when the family features strong transnational organizational links (making information on successful programmatic choices within the family readily available to party strategists) and, second, when it faces significant and unique challenges to success (which makes successful responses by sister parties the most

representative precedents). Among the party families, which have generated significant numbers of incumbents throughout the post-war era, both conditions apply to social democracy from the 1970s onward, in contrast to Christian democrats/conservatives. Hence, we hypothesize that policy diffusion within the social democratic party family (through its members learning from foreign successful incumbents) is the exception to the otherwise muted role of party family in mediating transnational policy diffusion.

> *Social Democratic Party Family Hypothesis*: Policy diffusion within the social democratic party family from its incumbents is exceptionally strong, compared to the other party families.

## Research Design

The data set is based on the party-year as the unit of analysis, and it comprises 264 political parties in 26 European democracies over a forty-year period from 1977 to 2017. New parties enter the data set with the first election they compete in, while parties leave the data once they no longer participate in national elections. To define parties, their entry and exit dates, we rely on the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP; Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006; Volkens et al. 2015). All parties are included when data are available, including regional, agrarian, and other small specialized party families coded by the CMP investigators. The total number of observations is 4,049 (party-years). The two central components of our research design are: (1) the dependent variable, which captures left-right party policy positions of focal social democratic parties and Christian democrats/conservatives as well as the positions of all of these parties abroad, and (2) our empirical method, which tests whether social democratic parties and Christian democrats/conservatives (especially those with electoral success in the recent past) influence the positions of their sister parties "at home."

**Table 1. Social Democratic Parties Included in the Empirical Analyses**

| Country | Party | Entry | Exit |
|---|---|---|---|
| Austria | Austrian Social Democratic Party | 1996 | 2017 |
| Belgium | Belgian Socialist Party | 1977 | 2017 |
| Belgium | Flemish Socialist Party | 1977 | 2017 |
| Belgium | Francophone Socialist Party | 1981 | 2013 |
| Belgium | Socialist Party Different | 1977 | 2017 |
| Belgium | Socialist Party Different - Spirit | 2007 | 2009 |
| Bulgaria | BSP for Bulgaria | 2005 | 2017 |
| Bulgaria | Bulgarian Socialist Party | 2006 | 2008 |
| Bulgaria | Coalition for Bulgaria | 2005 | 2017 |
| Cyprus | Progressive Party of the Working People | 2005 | 2017 |
| Cyprus | United Democratic Union of Cyprus | 2005 | 2017 |
| Czech Republic | Czech Social Democratic Party | 2005 | 2017 |
| Denmark | Social Democratic Party | 1977 | 2017 |
| Estonia | People's Party Moderates | 2005 | 2017 |
| Estonia | Social Democratic Party | 2005 | 2017 |
| Finland | Finnish Social Democrats | 1994 | 2017 |
| France | Socialist Party | 1977 | 2017 |
| Germany | Social Democratic Party of Germany | 1977 | 2017 |
| Greece | Panhellenic Socialist Movement | 1981 | 2017 |
| Hungary | Hungarian Social Democratic Party | 1995 | 2013 |
| Hungary | Hungarian Socialist Party | 1995 | 2017 |
| Ireland | Labour Party | 1977 | 2017 |
| Italy | Democratic Party | 2013 | 2017 |
| Italy | Italian Democratic Socialist Party | 1977 | 1993 |
| Italy | Italian Socialist Party | 1977 | 1995 |
| Italy | Olive Tree | 2006 | 2007 |
| Italy | Pannella List | 1979 | 2000 |
| Italy | Pannella-Riformatori List | 1979 | 2000 |
| Italy | Pannella-Sgarbi List | 1979 | 2000 |
| Italy | Radical Party | 1979 | 2000 |
| Latvia | For Human Rights in a United Latvia | 2006 | 2009 |
| Luxembourg | Socialist Workers' Party of Luxembourg | 1977 | 2017 |
| Netherlands | Labour Party | 1977 | 2017 |
| Netherlands | Radical Political Party | 1977 | 1988 |
| Norway | Norwegian Labour Party | 1978 | 2011 |
| Poland | Democratic Left Alliance | 2006 | 2014 |
| Portugal | Democratic Renewal Party | 1987 | 1990 |
| Portugal | Popular Democratic Movement | 1986 | 1986 |
| Portugal | Socialist Party | 1986 | 2017 |
| Slovakia | Direction-Social Democracy | 2006 | 2015 |
| Slovakia | Party of the Democratic Left | 2005 | 2005 |
| Slovenia | Social Democratic Party | 2008 | 2017 |
| Spain | Spanish Socialist Workers' Party | 1980 | 2015 |
| Sweden | Social Democratic Labour Party | 1977 | 2017 |
| United Kingdom | Labour Party | 1977 | 2017 |
| United Kingdom | Social Democratic Party | 1987 | 1991 |

For the dependent variable in our models, the CMP provides a left-right measure on party positions (Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006; Volkens et al. 2015). It is the most important dimension for issue competition (Huber and Powell 1994; Powell 2000; see also McDonald and Budge 2005), and a common vocabulary for political elites and voters

relating to the salient issues of the government's role in the economy and the distribution of income (Huber and Inglehart 1995; Warwick 2002).[6] The CMP's left-right measure is broadly consistent with those derived using other methods (Hearl 2001; McDonald and Mendes 2001; Laver, Benoit, and Garry 2003). We rescale the original CMP data to an interval ranging from 1 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right) to make it consistent with the median voter scale we use (see below). We interpolate scores between election years under the assumption that party positions do not change until the next election year (see also Böhmelt et al. 2016; 2017).

Our main focus is on social democratic parties, but we examine models concentrating on Christian democrats/conservatives as well given our arguments developed in the previous section. We follow Benedetto et al. (forthcoming) and define social democratic parties as those that are "a member of the Socialist International or Party of European Socialists at a particular time." The terms socialism and social democracy are often used interchangeably, though social democrats are sometimes viewed as more centrist than other members of the Socialist International in a country. The CMP (Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006; Volkens et al. 2015) provides detailed information on the type and family of each party coded. We use this information to initially create a binary variable capturing whether a party is social democratic (1) or not (0). Out of the 4,049 party-years in your data, 747 pertain to

[6] Ideological structuring underlying the left-right scale in Eastern Europe may differ from that in Western Europe (Evans and Whitefield 1993) as well as across countries and time (Evans and Whitefield 1998; Harbers, De Vries, and Steenbergen 2012; Linzer 2008; Markowski 1997). However, there are strong arguments for using the left-right dimension to understand party competition in post-communist democracies (Marks et al. 2006: 169; Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2011; McAllister and White 2007).

social democratic parties, which equals 18.45% of all our observations. Table 1 gives a detailed overview of the social democratic parties that are included in our data with entry and exit years. Note that some countries have more than one social democratic party at the same time, but that this phenomenon affects only a small number of cases: specifically, pairing all parties in our data set with all others produces 431,780 cases – only 256 of those party-dyad years signify pairs of social democratic parties in the same country (0.0006%). The focus of the analysis is on international programmatic diffusion between social democratic parties, but domestic-level diffusion is controlled for in the Supporting Information (i.e., we control for the possibility that domestic rival parties influence one another as has been shown by Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; see also Williams 2015; see SI Table A6). To examine whether policy diffusion in the social democratic party family is indeed exceptional and different from the Christian democrats/conservatives, we draw on the party family information contained in the CMP data (Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006; Volkens et al. 2015), and create a binary variable that captures this group of parties. In our data set, 1,060 (26.18% of all party-years) cases are coded as Christian democrats/conservatives. In the Supporting Information, we also disaggregate this bloc of parties and examine conservatives and Christian democrats separately (SI Table A7).

To examine party policy diffusion and the role of social-democratic parties (as well as the Christian democrats/conservatives), we use spatio-temporal lag models (Franzese and Hays 2007; 2008), where a party's position at time *t* is a function of foreign parties' positions at an earlier time *e-1* and a weighting matrix specifies which subset of foreign parties exert influence. Hence, the core component in our models is $Wy_{e-1}$, which combines the data on parties' policy positions with information on (1) whether they are social-democratic or not or (2) whether they are Christian democrats/conservatives or not. To this end, we multiply a connectivity matrix ($\boldsymbol{W}$) with a temporally lagged dependent variable on parties' policy

positions ($y_{e-1}$). The temporal lag, *e-1*, pertains to the year before the last election in a sender country before time *t*. Developing party manifestos is a "time-consuming process [...] which typically takes place over a two-three year period during which party-affiliated research departments and committees draft sections of this manuscript, which are then circulated for revisions and approval upward to party elites and downward to activists" (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009: 832). Considering this argument, an instantaneous diffusion effect is unlikely and, thus, we use parties' policy positions of the year before the last election in their country when constructing spatial lags following earlier research (e.g., Böhmelt et al. 2016; 2017).

In a first matrix ***W***, which we multiply with the temporally lagged dependent variable on parties' policy positions ($y_{e-1}$), entries are set to 1 only if both parties *i* (receiver party) and *j* (sender party) are social democratic parties according to the CMP (Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006; Volkens et al. 2015) and they do not compete for office in the same country. This leads to the first spatial variable, $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Social Democrats}}$, which captures the policy position of all social democratic parties abroad as a potential influence on social democrats "at home." The influence of non-social democratic parties is set to 0, and the matrix does not allow for a social democratic influence from abroad on non-social democrats at home (as the matrix entries are set to 0 here, too). A second spatial variable captures the incumbency effect of parties abroad in the context of party policy diffusion (Böhmelt et al. 2016). That is, we modify the matrix ***W*** so that its entries only receive a value of 1 if both parties *i* and *j* are social democratic parties, *j* is active in another country, and *j* was recently in government (either forming the government on its own or as a member of a coalition). Data for incumbency are taken from Döring and Manow (2012). We denote this second spatial lag $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Incumbent Social Democrats}}$. A third and a fourth spatial variable mirror the setup of the first two items, but we now focus on Christian democrats/conservatives. That is, $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Christian Democrats/Conservatives}}$ captures the policy position of all Christian democratic/conservative parties

abroad as a potential influence on Christian democratic/conservative parties "at home;" and $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Incumbent Christian Democrats/Conservatives}}$ additionally requires that the "sending" Christian democratic/conservative party abroad was recently in power.

We do not row-standardize the spatial lags for theoretical reasons (Böhmelt et al. 2016; see also Williams 2015; Williams, Seki, and Whitten 2016). Row standardization implies that parties allocate a fixed amount of effort to considering other parties' positions independent of the number of such parties that might be relevant. However, rational strategists should only give consideration to other parties' positions if they expect the marginal value of the information gathered to exceed the marginal cost of obtaining it, which is not consistent with the allocation of a fixed amount of effort. We use spatial OLS (S-OLS) regression, which is justifiable because our explanatory variables are temporally lagged (Williams 2015; Williams and Whitten 2015; Böhmelt et al. 2016). Estimating spatial maximum-likelihood models instead (Franzese and Hays 2007, 163; see also 2008) does not affect the reported results. Following Franzese and Hays (2008), we account for the common exposure of parties to similar economic (and other exogenous) factors (Franzese and Hays 2007, 142), by including the (one-year) temporally lagged dependent variable, party-fixed effects, and time-fixed effects. Including these items, plus a set of control variables, credibly ensures that contagion "cannot be dismissed as a mere product of a clustering in similar [party or state] characteristics" (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008, 230; see also Plümper and Neumayer 2010, 427).

With respect to the control variables, parties respond to the positions of other domestic parties (e.g., Adams 2001; Adams and Merrill 2009; Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; Williams 2015) and there are likely more general influences across borders than the social-democratic ones we seek to capture (Böhmelt et al. 2016; 2017). To control for this, we define two additional spatial lags. In $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Domestic}}$, entries in $\boldsymbol{W}$ only receive a value of 1 if $i$

and *j* are different parties competing in the same political system (otherwise 0). Second, we specify $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Foreign}}$, which is defined in a similar manner except that in $\boldsymbol{W}$, cells contain 1 only if *i* and *j* are different parties not competing in the same system (0 otherwise).

We further control for the position of the median voter using Eurobarometer data on respondents' left-right self-placement on a scale of 1 (left) to 10 (right; Schmitt and Scholtz 2005). We use Tukey's method (see Böhmelt et al. 2016; 2017) to calculate the median from the individual level data, and then lag the median by one year to allow for delayed responses by parties. Finally, Ward et al. (2011; see also Williams 2015; Williams and Whitten 2015; Williams, Seki, and Whitten 2016) argue that globalization effects are conditioned by the position of the median voter. We thus control for the economic component of Dreher's (2006) Globalization Index, which is based on trade flows, portfolio and direct investment, tariff and invisible barriers to trade, and capital controls. Then, we include the multiplicative interaction *Lagged Median Voter * Lagged Economic Globalization* to directly capture the argument in Ward et al. (2011).

## Empirical Results

According to the *Social Democratic Party Family Hypothesis*, we expect that party-family specific cross-national policy diffusion from successful incumbents is exceptionally strong within the *social democratic family*. Table 2 presents the corresponding results. Model 1 focuses only on the control variables and we omit any of the core spatial variables. Model 2 adds , $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Social Democrats}}$, while Model 3 incorporates , $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Incumbent Social Democrats}}$. Finally, Model 4 considers all control variables and the social democratic spatial variables simultaneously. We can directly interpret signs and statistical significance in Table 2. However, in terms of effect sizes, because we do not row-standardize, the coefficients of the spatial lags have to be multiplied with the average number of neighbors to assess short-term impacts (Plümper and

Neumayer 2010, 430f; see also Ward and Gleditsch 2008, 39). The calculation of the long-term (asymptotic) effects of the spatial lags of interest is based on Plümper, Troeger, and Manow (2005, 336; see also Plümper and Neumayer 2010, 425). Both asymptotic long-term and short-term effects of the core spatial variables in Table 2 are presented in Figure 1. Finally, we also calculated spatial long-term equilibrium effects for the social-democratic spatial lags, which allow the "expression of estimated responses of the dependent variable across all units" (Hays, Kachi, and Franzese 2010, 409). These then capture the post-diffusion interdependence feedback impetus (Hays, Kachi, and Franzese 2010, 409). Our initial discussion of the effects focuses on the pre-spatial effects, but we present spatial long-term equilibrium effects of the core spatial variables of Table 2 in Table 3.

The two core spatial lags, $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Social Democrats}}$ and $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Incumbent Social Democrats}}$, are positively signed and statistically significant at conventional levels in Model 2 and 3, respectively. This suggests that party policy diffusion does occur across social democratic parties and borders, and that social democratic incumbents may be more influential than social democrats that have not been successful recently. This is confirmed in Model 4, our preferred specification which incorporates all explanatory variables: $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Social Democrats}}$ is no longer statistically significant while $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Incumbent Social Democrats}}$ remains significant at conventional levels and positively signed, highlighting that social democrats learn from and emulate the policies of other social democratic parties particularly if they were recently in power. Substantively, a social democratic party's left-right policy position would be 0.0025 points higher in the short run, if all foreign (neighboring) social democratic parties shift one unit to the right, compared to the year before (Ward and Gleditsch 2008, 38). This estimate is not statistically significant, however. The effect stemming from foreign social democratic parties that were recently in government is calculated at 0.0045 in the short run. Hence, incumbency almost doubles the overall policy diffusion impact for social democratic parties, and this effect is also

statistically significant. In the long run, as demonstrated with Figure 1, the effect associated with $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Social Democrats}}$ is estimated at 0.0141 (not statistically significant), the impact linked to $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Incumbent Social Democrats}}$ is raised by 0.0250 when a spatial lag is increased by one unit. These results are based on Model 4, but adding or dropping specific variables does not alter the findings crucially.

**Table 2. Party Policy Diffusion – Social Democratic Family**

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lagged Party Position | 0.8240 | 0.8226 | 0.8216 | 0.8215 |
| | (0.0106)*** | (0.0107)*** | (0.0107)*** | (0.0107)*** |
| Lagged Median Voter | 0.2955 | 0.2955 | 0.3076 | 0.3048 |
| | (0.1105)*** | (0.1105)*** | (0.1105)*** | (0.1106)*** |
| Lagged Economic Globalization | 0.0184 | 0.0183 | 0.0191 | 0.0189 |
| | (0.0076)** | (0.0076)** | (0.0076)** | (0.0076)** |
| Lag Median Voter * | -0.0039 | -0.0039 | -0.0040 | -0.0040 |
| Lagged Economic Globalization | (0.0015)*** | (0.0015)*** | (0.0015)*** | (0.0015)*** |
| $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Domestic}}$ | 0.1480 | 0.1493 | 0.1492 | 0.1495 |
| | (0.0105)*** | (0.0105)*** | (0.0105)*** | (0.0105)*** |
| $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Foreign}}$ | 0.1439 | 0.1452 | 0.1451 | 0.1455 |
| | (0.0104)*** | (0.0104)*** | (0.0104)*** | (0.0104)*** |
| $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Social Democrats}}$ | | 0.0015 | | 0.0008 |
| | | (0.0007)** | | (0.0008) |
| $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Incumbent Social Democrats}}$ | | | 0.0033 | 0.0025 |
| | | | (0.0012)*** | (0.0014)* |
| Observations | 4,049 | 4,049 | 4,049 | 4,049 |
| Year and Party FEs | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| $R^2$ | 0.884 | 0.884 | 0.884 | 0.884 |
| RMSE | 0.308 | 0.307 | 0.308 | 0.308 |

*Notes.* Table entries are coefficients; standard errors in parentheses; constant as well as year and party fixed effects included in all models, but omitted from presentation; the scale for party position (dependent variable) recalibrated from the left-right estimates reported by the CMP to fit on the 1-10 median voter scale; all explanatory variables are one-year lags, the spatial lags capture parties' policy positions of the year before the last election.

* p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

**Table 3. Spatial Long-Term Equilibrium Effects: $\mathbf{W}\mathbf{y}^{\text{Incumbent Social Democrats}}$**

| Country | Party | SPD Increase | Labour Increase |
|---|---|---|---|
| Austria | Austrian Social Democratic Party | 0.0664 | 0.0664 |
| Belgium | Socialist Party Different | 0.0664 | 0.0664 |
| Belgium | Francophone Socialist Party | 0.0664 | 0.0664 |
| Bulgaria | Coalition for Bulgaria | 0.0664 | 0.0664 |
| Cyprus | Progressive Party of the Working People | 0.0656 | 0.0656 |
| Cyprus | United Democratic Union of Cyprus | 0.0656 | 0.0656 |
| Czech Republic | Czech Social Democratic Party | 0.0672 | 0.0672 |
| Denmark | Social Democratic Party | 0.0672 | 0.0672 |
| Estonia | Social Democratic Party | 0.0672 | 0.0672 |
| Finland | Finnish Social Democrats | 0.0664 | 0.0664 |
| France | Socialist Party | 0.0672 | 0.0672 |
| Germany | Social Democratic Party of Germany | 4.5829 | 0.0664 |
| Greece | Panhellenic Socialist Movement | 0.0672 | 0.0672 |
| Hungary | Hungarian Socialist Party | 0.0664 | 0.0664 |
| Hungary | Hungarian Social Democratic Party | 0.0664 | 0.0664 |
| Ireland | Labour Party | 0.0672 | 0.0672 |
| Luxembourg | Socialist Workers' Party of Luxembourg | 0.0664 | 0.0664 |
| Netherlands | Labour Party | 0.0664 | 0.0664 |
| Norway | Norwegian Labour Party | 0.0664 | 0.0664 |
| Portugal | Socialist Party | 0.0664 | 0.0664 |
| Slovakia | Direction-Social Democracy | 0.0664 | 0.0664 |
| Slovenia | Social Democratic Party | 0.0672 | 0.0672 |
| Spain | Spanish Socialist Workers' Party | 0.0664 | 0.0664 |
| Sweden | Social Democratic Labour Party | 0.0672 | 0.0672 |
| United Kingdom | Labour Party | 0.0664 | 4.5829 |

*Notes.* Table entries pertain to spatial long-term equilibrium effects when raising the party policy position of one of the parties highlighted in the last two columns by 1. Entries are based on four decimal places and rounded accordingly. The table only captures a selection of parties and countries in 2010, and not the whole sample. Effects in Columns 1 and 2 are calculated based on one-unit shifts to the right for the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the UK Labour Party.

Table 3 summarizes the findings from two such experiments for the impact of a one-point increase in a social-democratic party's policy position in 2010 for a selected set of focal

parties: the German social democrats (SPD) and the UK's Labour Party. We report the median (50 percent) equilibrium impact, based on 1,000 random draws from the multivariate normal distribution of the spatial and temporal lags. The simulations suggest that a one-unit increase in the Labour Party's policy position would positively affect all other social democratic parties in the system. For instance, the German SPD would react to this by increasing its policy position by 0.0664 units to the right. If the British Labour Party had moved to the right by one unit, the Irish Labour party would have emulated this move by adjusting its position 0.0672 units to the right of the left-right placement. Linking these findings to our theory, we find strong and robust support for the *Social Democratic Party Family Hypothesis.*

The setup in Table 4 mirrors Table 2 except we now focus on the Christian democratic/conservative spatial variables instead of their social-democratic equivalents. The spatial lags, $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Christian Democrats/Conservatives}}$ and $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Incumbent Christian Democrats/Conservatives}}$, are all negatively signed and, depending on model specifications, statistically insignificant. This suggests that party policy diffusion does *not* occur across Christian democratic/conservative parties and borders, and that Christian democratic/conservative incumbents do not have a special influence either. In fact, these results mirror what Böhmelt et al. (2016; 2017) report in their study of party families and the role of electorally successful parties in party policy diffusion. These findings support the theory developed above: party-family specific cross-national learning from successful sister parties is strong only within the social democratic family and does not characterize the family of right-wing incumbents.

Finally, the results concerning the control variables mirror previous research (e.g., Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; Williams 2015; Ward et al. 2011). First, the coefficients of the domestic-level spatial lag, $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Domestic}}$, and of the foreign-level spatial lag, $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Foreign}}$, have positive coefficient estimates, which emphasizes that parties learn from and emulate not only

rival parties, but also other political parties in other countries. This replicates Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009), Williams (2015), or Böhmelt et al. (2016; 2017). Second, economic globalization conditions the effect of the median voter on parties' policy positions. The estimated interaction coefficient shows that the further to the left the median voter, the more globalization pushes parties' positions to the right (Ward et al. 2011).

**Table 4. Party Policy Diffusion – Christian Democratic/Conservative Party Family**

| | Model 5 | Model 6 | Model 7 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lagged Party Position | 0.8206 | 0.8229 | 0.8206 |
| | (0.0107)*** | (0.0106)*** | (0.0107)*** |
| Lagged Median Voter | 0.2673 | 0.2844 | 0.2674 |
| | (0.1106)** | (0.1105)*** | (0.1106)** |
| Lagged Economic Globalization | 0.0165 | 0.0176 | 0.0165 |
| | (0.0076)** | (0.0076)** | (0.0076)** |
| Lag Median Voter * | -0.0035 | -0.0037 | -0.0035 |
| Lagged Economic Globalization | (0.0015)** | (0.0015)*** | (0.0015)** |
| $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Domestic}}$ | 0.1503 | 0.1488 | 0.1503 |
| | (0.0105)*** | (0.0105)*** | (0.0105)*** |
| $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Foreign}}$ | 0.1463 | 0.1447 | 0.1463 |
| | (0.0104)*** | (0.0104)*** | (0.0104)*** |
| $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Christian Democrats/Conservatives}}$ | -0.0014 | | -0.0013 |
| | (0.0004)*** | | (0.0005)*** |
| $\mathbf{W}y^{\text{Incumbent Christian Democrats/Conservatives}}$ | | -0.0014 | -0.0000 |
| | | (0.0005)*** | (0.0008) |
| Observations | 4,049 | 4,049 | 4,049 |
| Year and Party Fes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| $R^2$ | 0.884 | 0.884 | 0.884 |
| RMSE | 0.307 | 0.308 | 0.307 |

*Notes.* Table entries are coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses. All models are estimated with a constant as well as year and party fixed effects included in all models (omitted from presentation). The scale for party position (dependent variable) is recalibrated from the left-right estimates reported by the CMP to fit on the 1-10 median voter scale. All explanatory variables are based on one-year lags, and the spatial lag variables capture parties' policy positions of the year before the last election.

* p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

In the Supporting Information, we discuss multiple additional analyses. The results further support our argument and are consistent with the findings presented here. First, we take the size of a source or "sending" party's country into account, as it may be plausible that parties, also social democratic ones, focus more on those from larger countries (SI Table A1). Second, we control for additional economic influences and model more thoroughly the international context by accounting for Cold-War developments and EU membership. We also restrict our analysis to the pre-2000 period and show that the diffusion of party policies among social democratic parties is greater for countries that have historically strong social democratic parties (SI Tables A2 to A4). Third, we examine the robustness of our findings after adjusting for uncertainty around the estimates of party position (SI Table A5). Finally, we control for the presence of more than one social democratic party in a focal country, and we disaggregate the group of Christian democrats and conservative parties and analyze intra-family diffusion separately for these party families (SI Tables A6 and A7).

## Conclusion

Our study redresses the neglect of party families in prior work on the cross-national diffusion of programmatic ideas, which represents a striking omission given that parties clearly pursue policy goals and not only office. We theorize that party family becomes an important channel for policy learning from successful sister parties abroad when it features strong transnational organizational ties and faces unique and powerful challenges. Both of these factors identify social democratic parties as unique compared to the other major party families, in particular Christian democratic and conservative parties. Our empirical findings support the *Social Democratic Party Family Hypothesis* that cross-national policy diffusion is more likely to occur from successful incumbents within the social democratic family than within other party families.

This finding makes contributions to four important literatures in political science. First, for work on programmatic policy diffusion, it clarifies under which conditions party families are (and are not) consequential for transnational policy emulation (Gallagher et al. 2011). Second, to the studies of social democracy, we add a systematic theoretical and empirical account of the exceptional amount of policy learning that occurs across borders from successful parties within this family since the mid-1970s in contrast to the other major party families. This analysis complements other prominent research that emphasizes the uniqueness of this party family (Kitschelt 1994; Przeworski and Sprague 1986; see also Adams et al. 2009). Third, with respect to the literature on political parties' election strategies, we demonstrate that parties can be powerfully influenced by sister parties abroad. This adds an international dimension to a body of work that otherwise naturally gravitates toward domestic-level explanations (Abou-Chadi and Orlowski 2016; Adams and Merrill 2009; Meguid 2008; Spoon 2011; see also Erikson et al. 2002). Finally, to the extent that social democratic parties account for a significant share of the incumbents who then influence governing policies, our results have broader implications for the literature on policy diffusion (Elkins and Simmons 2005; Gilardi 2010, 2012). Among social democrats, we show, party family is a channel that facilitates the emulation of policies adopted by foreign incumbents, in contrast to Christian democrats and conservatives.

Our work also raises several questions for future research. For example, our theory suggests that the continuing unique and existential challenges that have driven the decline of social democracy since 2000 generate strong incentives for cross-national emulation within this family of future programmatic choices that prove capable of carrying social democrats back to power. It may also be interesting to conduct analyses of policy diffusion within party families on more narrowly defined *issue dimensions* than the left-right, such as immigration, the environment, or European integration. The success of populist challengers, for example,

may be a by-product of cross-national policy transmission on the specific dimensions of EU integration or immigration within this bloc. Similarly, Green parties may influence environmental policies of Green parties elsewhere. The role of party organization also deserves further attention. Schumacher, De Vries, and Vis (2013), for instance, argue that the balance-of-power between party activists and party leaders affects parties' policy shifts (see also Lehrer 2012). Hierarchical parties may be more active in engaging in policy diffusion processes, because leaders have more authority to adopt successful party strategies. Alternatively, internally democratic and less hierarchical parties may develop more channels for emulation through transnational ties between their supporters (Ceron 2012; Lehrer et al. 2017). Depending on which intraparty mechanism is at work, there will be important consequences for our future understanding of how party policy diffusion occurs. Finally, to generate a comprehensive comparative understanding of cross-border policy learning within party families, our quantitative study would benefit from complementary qualitative and process-oriented comparisons to observe specific interactions (or the lack of interactions) between party elites.

In sum, our findings open several avenues for future research and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of social democracy, party families, parties' election strategies, and policy diffusion. We conclude that the social democratic party family is unique because successful incumbents have an exceptional level of influence on their sister parties' policies abroad.

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