The aim of the workshop is to contribute to a new area of research, namely the study of the gender effects of preferential systems on individual political behaviour and women's representation. The workshop invites participants to explore the magnitude and implications of gender-based voting (i.e. same-sex voting) in a comparative framework. In the following, we first briefly describe the state-of-the-art research concerning the role of electoral systems for women's representation. Next, we explain why the under-researched gender effects of candidate-based electoral systems, which allow for a gendered vote choice, are in need of scientific attention.

Electoral systems & Women's Representation: Electoral institutions make up the rules of the game in modern representative democracies. Scholars of politics unanimously agree that they matter for women's political representation. Not only do electoral rules 'translate' citizens' voices into legislative power, but they also affect the “type of people” who constitute the body of representatives and the extent to which the body's composition approximates “a representative sample of the population” (Farell and Scully 2007: 47). Hence, electoral institutions are crucial for descriptive representation (Pitkin 1967). Standpoints emphasizing the descriptive dimension of representation normatively assume that a parliament should be a microcosm of the demos, whereby representatives would resemble the represented in terms of demographic characteristics, such as gender. Moreover, it has been argued, for example, that descriptive representatives are, other things being equal, “more likely than non-descriptive representatives to act as they descriptive constituents would like them to act” (Mansbridge 1999: 646).

The substantive representation of women ('acting for', Pitkin 1967) and, consequently, the eradication of long-standing (socioeconomic and political) gender inequalities, are —at least partly-intertwined with the realization of descriptive representation ('standing for', ibid.; cf. Young 2000 Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1995). It is necessary to pay attention to the different institutional means for achieving it, which vary across countries. There is a growing literature on the institutional determinants of women's representation, and gender quotas in particular (for overview, Krook 2010). However, although there is vast evidence that, from a gender viewpoint, proportional representation (PR) systems are more beneficial than majoritarian systems (e.g. Norris 2006; Darcy et al. 19994; Rule 1987), much less attention has been paid to the gender effects of electoral arrangements beyond this crude dichotomy.

This workshop focuses on countries employing PR and ‘preferential voting’ systems in particular. Key differences between PR systems employed in different countries concern the ballot structure, which can be categorical/ordinal, and candidate-/party-based (e.g. Bowler and Farell 1993; Rae 1967). Crucially, candidate-centred systems (e.g. open list, STV) give voters the chance to choose among specific candidates, whereas party-centred (i.e. closed list) do not. In the former systems, women's representation can be promoted from below, i.e. via the choices of individual citizens whereas in the latter case it depends upon parties’ commitment to promoting women (e.g. party quotas, zippered lists) and/or electoral gender quotas. Although gender quotas are often considered as the best way to promote women's representation (e.g. Krook 2009), preferential voting systems can constitute an alternative channel for gender-balanced representation. Given that preferential systems provide greater legitimacy to elected deputies (Millard et al. 2011) and induce higher constituency concerns in their legislative behaviour (e.g. Jun and Hix 2010; Hix and Hagemann 2009; Farell and Scully 2007), it is essential to investigate the mechanics of women's representation in these contexts. Most importantly, the ‘preferential’ institutional setup allows individual female citizens to directly affect women’s political empowerment, by engaging in a specific type of political behavior, namely gender-based voting.

Gender-based Voting: In systems that use some form of preferential voting, citizens are entitled to choose not just their preferred party but also a candidate—an option entailing a choice
between male and female candidates. Provided that a sufficient pool of qualified candidates from both genders is available, such systems are unique in providing citizens with an opportunity to express their gender preferences. As Sanbonmatsu (2004) observed, such an option may change the structure of the vote choice, by bringing stereotypes into play (see below). *Gender-based voting* (Holli and Wass 2010; Plutzer and Zipp 1996) refers to the electoral decision of the voter to cast a vote for a candidate of his/her own gender. In such a situation, men vote for male and women for female candidates. The phenomenon can also be called same-gender or same-sex voting. The term has close links to Rosenthal’s (1995) ‘preference for same-gender descriptive representation’ and Sanbonmatsu’s (2002) ‘base-line gender preference’. Whereas these terms describe voters’ underlying predisposition and willingness to vote for either male or female candidates in a hypothetical, experimental context, gender-based voting targets the outcome of the real-life elections where there are both men and women candidates nominated by each party available for the voters to choose from. Moreover, it does this by focusing on two specific subsets (men for men, women for women) of the four possible sets of electoral behaviour produced by variations in baseline gender preferences among women and men. The remaining two types of outcomes, namely men for women or women for men, can be referred to as *cross-gender voting* (Holli and Wass 2010).

Although gender-based voting is crucial for understanding how individual political behaviour impacts gendered representation, information about it is still scarce. This is because most PR systems use closed candidate lists which are, by default, not amenable to empirical studies of the subject. Seminal works on the effects of candidate gender on vote choice in majoritarian systems, such as the US (Brians 2005; Dolan 2004; Paolino 1995; Plutzer & Zipp 1996; Sanbonmatsu 2002, 2004; Zipp & Plutzer 1985) are often restricted by the small number of female candidates. Key findings indicate, however, that various gender stereotypes affect both women’s and men’s vote choices (e.g. Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009: 492). As a result, same-sex voting can be used either for or against women’s electoral success (Sanbonmatsu 2004, 2002; Plutzer and Zipp 1996). Many questions, however, remain unanswered.

Firstly, when it comes to PR systems, we do not know how different preferential systems affect individual political behaviour in terms of gendered choices, and consequently, women’s representation. There exists a range of mechanisms that give voters various ‘degrees of choice’. For instance, Danish, Estonian, Finnish, and Polish voters can only cast a single vote for their chosen candidate (which also counts as a vote for the candidate’s party), whereas Czech and Slovak voters cast a party ballot, whereby they can, optionally, support several candidates on the party list (Millard et al. 2011; Holli and Wass 2010). Such variations might produce different impacts in terms of gendered choices, and consequently, have diverse impacts on women’s representation.

Secondly, even very similar preferential systems perform differently in increasing women’s representation, which suggests that we need to consider their interaction with contextual factors (Millard et al. 2011; Giger et al. 2011). For example, a comparative analysis by Schwindt-Bayer et al. (2010) on STV (single transferable vote) systems in Australia, Ireland and Malta shows that the preferential voting option has a different gender impact on the electoral outcome across countries: whereas a positive effect on women’s representation was observed in Australia, a negative effect in Ireland (see also McElroy and Marsh 2010), the results for Malta were non-significant. Although preferential voting options make room for gender concerns to influence selection, the actual electoral outcome might reflect various cultural predispositions towards women, depending on the context.

Finally, we do not know exactly how PR systems with preferential voting options affect the descriptive representation of women (or men) compared to those ones using top-down gender equality policies, such as quotas. Research provides evidence both in support of the claim that preferential systems score better in women’s representation (e.g. Kittilson 2006; Rule and Shugart
as well as against it (e.g. Thames and Williams 2010). For example, among the Nordic countries, which are regarded as pioneers regarding women’s parliamentary representation, Denmark and Finland (with partial or full form of open list PR and no electoral gender quotas) have achieved equally high descriptive representation of women as Norway and Sweden (with closed list PR and electoral gender quotas). An additional point of interest here is the fact that candidate-based systems with preferential voting, are by nature, more acquiescent to the possibility of a “backlash”: we also need to investigate changes that occur in settings where women’s representation is already high (Sanbonmatsu 2008).

Given the inconclusive findings and remaining open questions, a more in-depth understanding of the mechanics and effects of systems that enable gender-based voting, or gender choice more generally, is necessary for gaining knowledge of how social change is, can or should be pursued. Building on current research on gender equality in political representation, and extending it to new areas, the workshop focuses on individual political behaviour and citizens’ gendered choices in preferential systems. Participants in this workshop are invited to explore (one or more of) the following questions:

- **Are there differences regarding the degree of gender-based voting among women and men, and across preferential systems? What are the factors (individual/contextual) accounting for them?**
- **To what extent are there differences regarding the use of preferential voting options within one country (national/regional/municipal)? Do such differences impact gendered representation across levels of governance?**
- **What are the effects of gendered choices on the electoral results in terms of women’s and men’s representation in preferential systems? Moreover, how do these results relate to those achieved in other (e.g. closed list PR, majoritarian) systems?**
- **What are the methodological and/or theoretical challenges involved when studying gender and voting in systems with preferential voting options?**

We invite comparative or single-country case-study research papers analyzing the causes and/or effects of gendered choices in PR systems including preferential voting options, as well as papers engaging in theoretical or methodological reflections on the study of gender-based voting.

**References**


Schwindt-Bayer, Leslie A., Malecki, Michael and Crisp, Brian F. 2010. Candidate gender and electoral success in

Thames, Frank and Margaret Williams. 2010. Incentives for Personal Votes and Women's Representation in Legislatures. *Comparative Political Studies* 43 (12), 1575-1600.
