RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE DIFFERENTIATION OF PARTIES THROUGH THE LENS OF AN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN
Planning and implementation of Knockthevote in a European Election (Pes, 2014)

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ABSTRACT: Parties restructure their organizations to prepare themselves for new challenges. In many cases, the changes involve a reduction of the subsystems structure, dropping the number of territorial units or finding leaner solutions and outsourcing of activities which were once fulfilled within the boundaries of the party organization. Specifically, the phenomenon of outsourcing concerns, on the one hand, aggregation of interests and policymaking and, on the other, electoral mobilization and management of political communication. Looking for new solutions – flexible, without a unique centre – can lead to a process of de-differentiation that characterizes organization in postmodern society: a new definition of levels of hierarchy and "transgression of boundaries", through a continuous exchange of resources with the environment, which is unpredictable and constantly changing. As in other organizations, parties encourage the formation of horizontal links with new external actors - associations, informal groups, individuals and influencers - in order to build networks that cooperate to exchange essential resources for the party itself. In this framework, the study aims to interpret de-differentiation in political parties from a specific point of view: the analysis of political campaigns as indicators of this process. The "outside campaign", created by a set of non-party actors, is growing: the sector of organized interests, that, unlike in the past, is "de-aligned" from the political parties and does not respond to traditional socio-political cleavage, is present in parties and candidates' campaigns with greater resources than was the case formerly.

KEYWORDS: Parties, de-differentiation, networking, outside campaign, European election.
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1. New needs, new parties

Sociological analysis shows the emergence of a highly segmented society, linked to processes of individualization and a new articulation of the interests (Bauman 2000; Inglehart 1997; Micheletti 2003), which the political world has an "urgent" need to know. Since relations with traditional reference "blocks" are becoming looser, the parties try to remain in touch with attitudes through specific social research, consultation of big data or by taking advantage of the potential of ICT (Manin 2010; Avril and Zumello 2013). Political organization has to deal with a "shadowy mass in constant fibrillation, animated by changing moods, and above all, opaque" (Revelli 2013, 110) as has been shown by increased electoral volatility.

Political participation is not confined within complex organizational structures (association or party) or limited to the electoral ritual but becomes "subpolitics" (Beck 2000), or politics played out by representative institutions and in self-organized form. Participation becomes more intense with a reflective and competent approach, oriented to thematic areas, often for a limited time only. Educated social segments, often employed in areas of organizational dynamics with high technological skills, come into play: in this framework, self-directed and cognitive mobilization takes the place of mobilization induced from above through the territorial divisions of the political party. The base of participants widens but the meaning of participation changes assuming the meaning of control and surveillance on political power (Rosanvallon 2012). In this new context, temporary (ad hoc) organizations emerge, rather than parties and associations with traditional character.

How, then, to interpret this new form of participation, how to include spontaneous groups, forums and blogs that are traditionally resistant to the party "cage"? The parties encourage the formation of horizontal links with new external actors - associations, informal groups, individual and influencers - in order to build networks that cooperate to exchange essential resources for the party itself (Hatch 1997, 157-158), but most of all, parties redefine their internal structure to prepare themselves for new challenges.

De-differentiating the party structure can be understood as a response to these changes, similar to that undertaken by other traditional organizations[1], oriented to the production of intangible goods. Post modernity reduces the centrality of functional specialization, in the name of a system of tradable and flexible skills, obtained through a continuous exchange of resources with the organization's environment, which is un-

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predictable and constantly changing (Clegg 1990; Lash 1988; Hatch 1997). There is no new predictive model of organizations but a "new cultural paradigm", based on the crisis of the principle of rationality: this principle had configured bureaucratic mass organizations to the point where they had become, in parties, an element of order in the lives of militants (Duverger 1966). Like other organizations, political parties (especially those of the mass) were "the result of the combination between the processes of differentiation and integration" (Raniolo 2004, 2012): following the general trend of fordist organizations, they were characterized by large dimensions, deep labour division and rigidity in the production process. The high rates of membership correspond to a high degree of bureaucratization and pervasiveness that is based on the presence of professional politicians who deal with enrolment, education and communication for hundreds of thousands of people (Katz and Mair 2002). In short, the organizations adopted standardized procedures for problem-solving: efficient if the problems were known, and very ineffective if the issues were new. In this context, the tendency is to adopt "routine decision-making" which favours group "survival" rather than arriving at a quick and effective resolution of the problem in question. Party bureaucracy consists of "honest and efficient gardeners", who preserve and mobilize already acquired electoral support, and aim to "take care of electoral garden more than to capitalize politically distant areas" (Bellucci, Segatti, Maraffi 2000, 66).

This organisational model entered a phase of profound crisis with the end of party identification, for many reasons: the weakening of class cleavage, membership reduction, an altered relationship with the state, and the rise of informed and post-ideological citizens. All of these transformations mark the beginning of a new "critical juncture"[2].

In order for parties to survive, new organizational architectures were needed, more functional to win the support of those outside the traditional circuits of party affiliation (Scarrow 2000), and to exercise control over the increased complexity of elections. In this context, we can observe the birth of new party models: for example, electoral or catch-all, to better cope with a volatile electoral environment and with new scenarios of uncertainty (Kirchheimer 1966; Panebianco 1982; Katz and Mair 1995). Nevertheless, recent opinions (Poguntke 2006; Heidar and Saglie 2003; Mair, Muller, Plasser 2004) have stressed the inadequacy of any position that interprets this process as final, because it must still be established whether the conditions exist to foresee a definitive

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[2] This expression is linked to new cleavages, born after the process of de-nationalization (globalization, EU). The main new conflict is between "winners" and "losers" in globalization. Regarding this theory, new conflicts offer new resources to parties for political mobilization (Kriesi, Grande, Lachat, Dolezal, Bornschier, Frey 2008).

sunset of mass parties. It is, naturally, necessary to proceed with caution, focusing on empirical evidence. There is, therefore, no unique, obligatory destination for the party organizations (Mair, Muller, Plasser 2004; Heidar and Saglie, 2003) but it is possible to observe a profound resetting of the parties' configuration[3]. Following a phase characterized by excessive differentiation (Raniolo 2004) and by combined internal bureaucratic hypertrophy, which, in the end, have compromised the ability to take decisions in a reasonable time (Sampugnaro 2011), the internal structures have changed, both territorially and functionally.

2. The key of de-differentiation

Indicators of the de-differentiation may be different. For example, integration factors such as centralized leadership, decisional formalization or ideology lose their character of necessity in routine activities of the party. The problem of coordination remains but becomes less important because the organization is more interconnected, since it is less differentiated" (Hatch 1997, 157). Also in the de-differentiated parties, responsibility for the coordination and production of binding decisions does not fall only on executives. In a complex and volatile environment, subject to unexpected changes, it is necessary for parties to process outputs more quickly, in order to secure essential resources such as votes, funding and persons. For this reason, parties need the involvement of the lowest levels of the hierarchy, to whom parties granted organizational independence, which was unthinkable in traditional party machines.

Looking at the organizational dimension and from a territorial point of view, the process of de-differentiation involves a reduction of the subsystems structure, by reducing the number of units or finding leaner solutions. Concretely, there is "subtraction of the organizational party network from the living spaces" (Revelli 2013) with the partial closure of sections / clubs and with a radical reduction in activities. From the functional (or sectorial) point of view, the system of labour division is less rigid than that in mass integration parties. Post-bureaucratic parties, by contrast, are characterized by a flexible and informal division (Hyedebrand 1989), which largely reproduces the model of production company teams, where employees are divided into autonomous working groups for specific objectives. This flexibility sometimes leads to overlap between the functions performed by the executives and by membership. In parallel with the phe-

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[3] Neo-institutionalism highlights convergence of solutions for common problems such as globalization and media mutation. These latter phenomena open to a new era with deep revision of relations of authority.

nomena of de-bureaucratization, there has been outsourcing of activities once fulfilled within the boundaries of the party organization. To remain within an analogy of "from fordist to post-fordist" organization, the transformation of the party implies, on the one hand, the outsourcing of certain functions and "long networks of supply", on the other an overall rethinking of the organization to bring about "lean production". In response to a highly changeable external environment, this latter builds "short or very short chains of command" and a "responsive communication network", which loses its relationship with the local party network (Revelli 2013, 65-66; Raniolo 2006, 152). Specifically, the phenomenon of outsourcing concerns, on the one hand, aggregation of interests and policymaking and, on the other, electoral mobilization and management of political communication (par. 3).

Regarding production of policy, parties no longer hold a monopoly on activities of connection between citizens and state institutions (Poguntke 2002, 2006; Poguntke and Lawson 2004). They redefine their role, seeking relevance in new networks of dependencies: bonds (also informal) with new centres of power both in state and in civil society, such as research centres, foundations or think tanks (Massari 1981; McGann and Weaver 2000; Diletti 2009), the latter able to identify problems and emerging issues and to produce (by contrast with parties) projects and solutions. This inclusive process, in which formal procedures are of slight relevance, gave birth to the Network Party (Heidar and Saglie 2003), which combines some features of the cadre party (Koole 1994) and the mass party. Setting aside the formal procedures of mass party representative democracy, the new party aims "to widen the circle" (Sampugnaro 2011) of those who support it, forming alliances and organizational solutions which can also be only for a restricted time. Short term alliances with persons who have not completed "a lifestyle choice" but expressed a temporary and, often, sceptical option for a party" (Rodriguez 2014). The "transgression of boundaries" between generic supporters and members allows parties to acquire resources: those who have a partial relationship (short term or focused on achieving a specific goal) take part in important political processes (Scarrow 2000).

Specifically, network organization takes the place of vertical communication flows, transforming relations of control in lateral or horizontal connexions. Partnerships between many organizations have gradually replaced formal links that held the different units of an organization together (Hatch 1997). This allows the achievement of timely solutions in crisis events whose frequency and unpredictability are one of the hardest challenges for political organizations today. Information content and mutual obligations can be the springboard to more structured relationships, even if these are not always automatic (Powell 1990, 316).

De-differentiation favours an unprecedented opening to a constellation of (no-party) political actors in a position of mutual independence, whose coordination is no longer entrusted exclusively to the central party management (Thomas 2001; Allern and Saglie 2006). No party actors represent skills, new ways of aggregation of interests and ability in fundraising that the parties can no longer afford only to grow internally.

In summary, network advantages reside in the set of available resources and in their use: a particular product becomes a collective element in the network. Even as regards political mobilization and election campaigns, the quality of the "product" should improve because the network encourages the sharing and the exchange of information and stimulates innovation in solutions.

3. De-differentiation and electoral campaigns

Within the framework of the de-differentiation process, some functions are delegated to other agencies or associations outside the party and there is a practice of building networks of actors. Although responding to different relationships between actors (top-down vs horizontal), these practices are attributable to the same basic logic. Political parties adopted outsourcing strategies because many of their activities, once performed by their complex unitary organizations, are now carried out from their borders. In particular, the de-differentiation process involves the outsourcing of certain activities, for example, the management of election campaigns and political communication.

In these cases, two ways (not always alternatives) of solving the problem of communication also correspond to different stages of outsourcing and to the process of evolution of the parties. The first could be defined as a "buy logic": the eruption of television as the main instrument to influence the public sphere, required the acquisition of necessary expertise for communication[4]. The parties are compelled to rely on specialized professionals operating outside their boundaries: the training of professionals takes place outside the supervision of paid staff , also because "on the other hand, the apparatus is no longer able to provide technical-political expertise appropriate to needs" (Berlinguer 1983, 38-40) A process of professionalization of political communication, therefore, is a necessary consequence and, at times and in peculiar ways, affects the political parties (in Italy, in the late '80s). Also in "sales or market driven campaigns"

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[4] Panebianco (1982) highlights a new professionalization in the party: from burocracy, embedded in mobilization to professionals of political communication.

(Lees-Marshment 2011), the political parties and leaders still exercise at least partial control over communication content.

In a second phase, a "post-spin era", parties cope with high segmentation of the electorate and with the collapse of membership while parties' funds are reduced due to the membership crisis (Scarrow and Greznor 2010). In the network society of late modernity, organizations lose their grip on individuals and are replaced by broad and fluid social networks (Castells 2000) .

The aggregation of interests and the dialogue with new political subjects also become more difficult because of a parallel shift of media system. There is no more a homogeneous "media menu" differentiated according to age or gender that makes it possible to program a media presence, but rather a process of menu individualization and clear segmentation of the public, which is also due to an amplified media offer (Censis 2013). The political party, which was born as a "technically advanced" means of communication, solves this problem by activating groups, associations, parallel movements and also "individual membership", improving the degree of social penetration but, at the same time, losing control over what they communicate. Between the two forms of outsourcing, there is another fundamental difference: the first operates in a "persuasive" logic that considers the voter as a person to persuade; by direct mobilizing, the second form leads to indirect activation in which the party gives up control. In this context, Bennett and Segelberg (2012) speak of "connective action" in Web 2.0. The platform allows the user to produce and distribute content: the fundamental elements are the sharing of "personalized ideas, plans, images, and resources of network", the availability of new technologies and the individualization of action without the need for an identity frame or the economic resources of traditional organizations. The parties lose the centrality they had at the stage where they were the main actors of collective action: in different degrees, they become part of "self-organizing networks" in which the coordinated action of a single organization decreases or disappears so that the party "loosens" control.

To enlarge consensus, the parties have bet on new technologies which allow them to establish collaborative environments and "increase horizontal communication in place of the old pyramidal-hierarchical model" (Avril 2011), giving up the clear demarcation of organization boundaries. The path is not always linear because parties are afraid of affiliating with movements over which they have no control (Crouch 2013, 42), but many parties have embarked on this process. Abandoning "boundaries" would achieve two purposes: 1) the opening of some political processes (first reserved only for party members) to a broader electorate 2) improving target segmentation in order to increase the effectiveness of the party campaign (Duclos 2011; Sampugnaro 2011). In re-

cent years, we observe that the reduction of barriers between traditional membership and new aggregate subjects is a common denominator of many parties' activities. For this reason, some parties give new incentives in order to gain more supporters: for example, offering reduced rates to undecided participants, or proposing a new "status of affiliation" (Scarrow 2013) based on the period of registration (historic or recent) to those who are not interested in traditional forms of participation but show curiosity for the party or its leader.

The logic is that of making affiliation easily accessible and at low cost of enrolment. [5] "Multi-speed membership" (Scarrow 2014) is based on centralization of the relationship with "franchisees", providing in many cases a direct relationship with party central office. The digital platform facilitates this direct connection: the party makes available cyber-branches, direct enrolment to the party or mailing list subscription in return for information material. Indeed, a first step toward a greater inclusiveness of non-members is increasing the availability of information about the party and its specific campaigns. As a second step, there are initiatives which link the information to specific mobilization activities. In this case, in addition to traditional distribution of materials (prints, posters), the campaign aims to spread a "viral" (Arnesano 2007; De Rosa 2014) of materials thanks to the work of members and sympathizers, especially through the Internet platform (social networks, e-mail, YouTube). Through these instruments, the role of those who participate only online can become decisive: cyber-militants send party messages to great numbers of internet users with unthinkable speed compared to traditional methods of propaganda. The parties may provide not only the messages that "quickly travelled the world via personal stories and images shared on social networks such as Tumblr, Twitter, and Facebook"(Bennett and Segerberg 2012, 22). They may also create programs and tools that allow customization of the message and sharing on a wide scale to increase "netroot participation" (Zumello 2013, 56; Avril 2013). This strategy aims at message appropriation by the user. We have also noted openness to consultation activities such as Norwegian "open debate meetings" (Heidar and Saglie 2003) and "online discussion fora" (United Kingdom) (Gibson *et al*. 2009) and the attribution to bodies (such as councils or commissions) of a decision-making function, to ensure access for those who are not formally affiliated.

Political parties are not the sole agents promoting aggregation for electoral purposes. For example, the experience of the PAC in the United States represents a chance to participate without formal enrolment in a party: participants support a candidate or

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[5] Various solutions (rate diversified for age and for unemployed, increasing rate, …) have been experimented with by socialist parties in Europe (Ballarin Cereza 2014, 41).

collect funds for him or for a campaign. New political subjects therefore emerge: they can be spontaneous aggregations on the basis of interest to support campaigns, candidates or political parties, but they can also become long-term organizations, able to assist and support politicians from time to time. In this sense, Move On is an example of a postmodern campaign in which a multiplication of subjects and forms of participation can be observed (Bentivegna 2006; Cornfield 2004). In this context, we can analytically separate initiatives that aim at a simple virtual participation for those concerned, by web mobilizing, to press for fund-raising and mobilization in the territory. The outside campaign, created by a set of non-party actors, is growing: the sector of organized interests, that, unlike in the past, is "de-aligned" (Farrell and Schmitt-Beck 2006, 2008; see Gibson *et al.* 2009) from the political parties and does not respond to traditional socio-political cleavage, is present in parties and candidates' campaigns with greater resources than was the case formerly.

In the light of these considerations, the study aims to provide a key to understanding the process of de-differentiation that has invested political parties through the analysis of election campaigns. In the economy of this work, the analysis of outside campaigns will be conducted focusing on the strategies of the principal collective actor, in our case the European Socialist Party.

4. "To convince people you must include people": the Outside campaign of PES at the Europeans 2014

After more than 30 years of a directly elected Parliament, parties launched the first campaign to support candidacy to the presidency of the Commission. They had to define their communication strategy on a European basis, thus carrying out a transformation from many national parties (belonging to a single parliamentary group) to a single political subject. Parties shifted perspective because of recent European acts and resolutions: an elected parliament has to take account of the party winner in the selection of the Commission President; a reorganization of the system of economic support for European parties took place (Ciancio 2009; Allegri 2013; Fusacchia 2006). The parties reflected on the opportunities of a common and shared campaign, with the presidential candidate at its core[6] and with a real unitary "manifesto" [7]. In particular, this

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[6] A reflection on the topics by EPP in: *Factsheet, The story of the Spitzenkandidaten. How the legal preconditions for the Spitzenkandidaten-process came into the Treaty and into political reality.* The document highlights the European Parliament Resolution of 22 November 2012 on Elections to the European Parliament in 2014: "The European Parliament urges the European political parties to nominate candidates for

study aims to describe the recent "outside campaign" of the European Socialist Party (PES) at the 2014 European elections (De Sio *et al*. 2014): in order to support the candidate Schulz for President, a campaign (called "knockthevote") referred directly to partisans and, at a wider level, to political parties' supporters in each state.

With regard to this study, the goal is to reconstruct the strategy of the party, leaving in the background both the interesting role played by non-party actors and the election results' analysis. In passing, the Socialist and Democrats (Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats) achieved an election result of "stability without success", which concealed the success of some affiliated parties (Italy, Romania, United Kingdom, Portugal) and the contemporary crisis of many other parties (Spain, France, Greece, Poland, etc.) [8]. From the methodological point of view, the study involved the analysis of official (and public) documents on the election campaign, found on the websites of the PES and the FEPS, and some interviews with PES paid staff in Brussels (in April) and Pes activists in Rome (in June) to reconstruct the "logical" motivations of the planned activities.

Building a campaign (supranational in its aims) had, as its cornerstones: increasing supporters in order to enhance mobilization and, independently, to take part in the political campaign with innovations; the activation of wider networks than those of the national parties, and the building of a campaigners' community. The research, in particular by monitoring social networks, shows that the PES's outside campaign had a diversified impact with respect to every state and that, at the same time, it allowed a potential social base for the creation of a true Euro-Party to be identified.

In this case, campaign outsourcing, a consequence of the process of de-differentiation, is visible and is the product of a slow process of reflection about communication and mobilization tools. The central offices of national parties, which adhere to the PES, lost control over a portion of the European election campaign. This depends on a "double mandate": the first to a single communication board at European level for the planning phase of activities supporting the Commission Presidential Candidate; the second to the volunteers for the implementation of the election campaign. Young pro-

the Presidency of the Commission and expects those candidates to play a leading role in the parliamentary electoral campaign in particular by personally presenting their programme in all Member States of the Union; stresses the importance of reinforcing the political legitimacy of both Parliament and the Commission by connecting their respective elections more directly to the choice of the voters".

[7] In 2014 the EPP, for example, elaborated a unitary programs that has been deeply changed by affiliated parties and voted in the final version in Congress in Dublino.

[8] Electoral results in Carrieri (2014).

fessionals[9] (in part outside the party), coming from different nations, made up the great majority of staff. This latter coordinated the whole campaign in Brussels[10], without any formal contribution from the communication offices of the national parties.

The intention was to reduce the "chain of command", by interacting directly with the supporters' network. The campaign model was partially centrifugal: at the centre it was coordinated by external consultants and paid staff, while the campaign was implemented in a decentralized manner by supporters. This model coexisted with alternative patterns like that of the European People's Party (EPP) which undertook a highly centralized European campaign in its Brussels headquarters.

As far as the PES is concerned, the choice of the European People's Party to construct a unified campaign for all parties of the union appears as a unique event of its kind. The claim "Believe in People" was the leitmotif of the communication of parties linked to the EPP: it recalled the acronym of the party and confirmed a Europhile vision. However, the truly innovative elements were the constitution of a war room unit with headquarters in Brussels and the formation of a group of selected political consultants and a larger group of young media professionals from all EU Member States (e-campaigners). As far as communication was concerned, the campaign team planned dynamic action in the days of the "election race" and decided to act through social networks. The young e-campaigners were in charge of supporting the existing staff and of fostering communication flow between the EPP and its own affiliated parties. Furthermore, within a centripetal approach, the biggest European party changed its traditional campaign strategy. Facing the populist threat, combined with the foreseen growth of non-participation, the EPP's communication saw the national Anti-European Parties as their main opponent, and no longer the Socialists. This change of prospective produced an increment of political messages against opponents, whilst the other traditional political parties were found to be allies. On the other hand, this change contributed to a diminution of the differences between the traditional European Parties and candidates for the presidency of the European Commission. In this context, there was also the difficulty of merging all national campaigns, looking at the economic conditions among all member states. In particular, during the economic crisis, the states of southern Europe had to deal with growing euro-scepticism and xenophobic forces. The "reductio ad unicum" is not crucial in the centrifugal model experienced by the PES: in this case, the campaign bypassed national parties and let supporters have a wide mar-

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[9] In Schultz's war room, there are *officials*, regularly engaged in the party structures, and professionals from the world of public relations and communication.

[10] In particular Brian Synnott (responsible for communication), Marte Ingul (responsible for social media).

gin for formulating the message. In both cases, however, the choice of a unified campaign planned in Brussels introduced elements, which broke with the recent past, so that it becomes difficult to apply Katz and Mair's party model for the reading of the function of Euro-Parties (Bardi 2005).

The strategic dimension of the campaign can be appreciated by reading the documents produced by political parties belonging to "Galassia PES": these indicate a new orientation towards electoral mobilization[11]. For some time, Pes and other affiliated organizations (in particular think-tanks) have debated about downsizing the value of traditional media and about pointing out the new centrality of traditional tools (flyers, door to door, mass-meetings) or digital platforms, in a scientifically oriented approach. For example, knocking on doors to get the vote (Knockthevote) and enhancement of volunteers' roles both depend on empirical results about direct communication effectiveness (Green, Gerber, Nickerson 2003) and on the success in election campaigns of Obama and Hollande[12] (Liegey, Muller, Pons 2014). These, both closely monitored, underlined the usefulness of a return to the origins of mobilization, even if this assumed a different meaning in a technological context that has been greatly transformed (Sampugnaro 2006).

The European campaign of the PES followed the way of the recent (successful) French Socialist Party campaign. The logic for selecting techniques/tools and political consultants is close to the so-called "shopping model" (Plasser and Plasser 2002): the practice of introducing selectively - often also, uncritically - solutions that were winners in other political competitions. Making their contributions to the European campaign of the PES, young advisers of Hollande's campaign re-introduced the solutions adopted in French competitions: centrality of volunteers and, at the same time, IC Technology. The internet platform was used "to draw in volunteers, to coordinate their work with the help of field organizers, and to provide a dashboard that indicates to party HQ where the campaign is on target geographically and where it needs more resources"" (Liegey and Huggins 2013, 62).

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[11] In this article, it is not possible to analyze in depth the differences among parties of "Galassia". It is worth remembering the debate inside New *Labour* since the mid-90*s* (Sampugnaro 2006). A review on campaign modernization in Ballarin Cereza (2014) and Micus (2010); for the *Labour* Avril (2013). In site of Feps (think tank, linked to PES) many documents describe the debate on the efficacy of direct communication.

[12] Political consultants tried to validate utility of *frapper aux portes* in a campaign before the election of President Hollande (2009): in Ile de France, the campaign of Jean Paul Huchon aimed to plan electoral strategies through empirical evidence (Liegey *et al*. 2010, 6).

In this "snow ball" campaign model, then, centrality is attributed to volunteers, ready to become campaigners, and also to those who will be activated later to support the reasons of the party. The logic behind returning to the "face to face" relation is that "To convince people, you must include people" [13]. Moving from a "market driven" to a "political partnership model" means that parties build permanent volunteer-oriented organizations, develop engagement to suit the user, and view volunteers as partners in the campaign" (Lees-Marshment 2013, 227).

The goal is to increase the number of individuals, skilful in exercising mobilization and acting independently in an electoral campaign with innovative contents and tools, to enable wider networks than those of the parties. Recruitment activity becomes decisive: it begins with registration on the PES site (section-dedicated activists) by the volunteer, who immediately receives news about the closest organizer in the territory. In turn, the latter is informed of a new volunteer and of his availability to engage in field activities. The campaign is an opportunity to gather information and quantitative and qualitative data from the territories (for example, how many doors have been knocked on, and where, what voters' solicitations might be), in order to spread information and advice to field organizers, in the logic of a "real two- way exchange "(ibid), and to build new relationships.

The political consultants used the same techniques in the European campaign: emphasise scientific monitoring on the effects[14] of the campaign in European Union States[15] and political training for volunteers. In courses slides, there is a constant reference to "recent research" on the effectiveness of direct mobilization, to features of left abstentionism: studies, figures, significant examples help to motivate field organizers who become, in their turn, coordinators of volunteers, estimated in a ratio of 10 times more than the initial figure. However, intensive training is a precondition of this new phase: in Brussels the communication board and other experts carry on direct lessons to "Supertrainers" (from one to three people for every country). Training propagates rapidly to territories, thanks to the intervention of the "Supertrainers"[16]. In every union nation, the "Supertrainers" are the interface of the PES, assuming the role of national

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[13] Newsletter PES, 30 aprile 2013 on www.pes.eu.

[14] The PES set up a monitoring of outreach, conducted by volunteers, which included a collection of data on the activities in the area to compare with the results of the PES.

[15] I refer to the slides used in Italy and in other European countries for training that included exercises (role playing, brainstorming, problem solving ...). In many cases, training material was adapted to individual contexts. In Italy, for example, "Pes Activist: training # 10h4PES, NEWSJACKING" made by Eugenio Iorio (Digital Democracies).

[16] Interviews with Tommaso Giuntella (Italian Supertrainer), Estela Pineiro and Brian Synnott.

coordinators of the campaign in the territories, and they are responsible for the train-ing of volunteers. In turn, these are linked to a network of volunteers - spread throughout the nation, though not in a uniform fashion- volunteers, who only partly coordinate their activities together with those of the parties that support the PES na-tionally. The volunteers' role is crucial because they adapt content to territorial needs and disseminate it through traditional methods of mobilization, particularly, door to door. In this sense, there is a partial bypassing of traditional modes of vertical coordi-nation of election campaigns, which were once entrusted to the internal hierarchy of the party, and now to a horizontal network of relations.

In a relatively short time, the construction of the PES activists' network is due to previous attempts to build an autonomous European network of PES members, which would be partially autonomous from national political parties and would became the irradiation point of the campaign locally.

Although members of national parties were always enrolled, by default, in Pes[17], in fact adhesion mediated by the national parties has not permitted a real involvement of activists and supporters and new supranational forms of political integration, based on the association of European citizens.

Thanks to an intense financial review of European parties' tools, a program to initi-ate individual membership was introduced at Pes, which had already begun in the 90's with the goal of building networks of activists that could facilitate European Nationals identification and encourage voting in European Elections: "the aim of building net-works of activists, could facilitate the identification of European Nationals and encour-age them to vote in the European elections " (Hertner 2013, 147) thanks also to the digital platform (see Esteve del Valle 2014). This mode of adhesion means that the Eu-ropean party lost a key feature of a "second order party", namely the party without a base of subscribers.

The profile of the PES Activist is well defined: embedded within a local group (City Group[18]), coordinated by an activist who serves as a contact for the group, has a very strong participatory profile and is more present in some EU countries (France, Spain,

[17] Art. 15 of the Statute says "All members of Pes member parties are automatically members of the Pes. Those who wish to be active in the pes can register as PES ACTIVIST. PES ACTIVIST, and must be members of their national party. PES ACTIVIST can set up city groups. The PES Presidency adopts operating roles for PES activists".

[18] In effect, there are two types of City Group: local working groups of PES parties or activist groups (often belonging to different member parties) that are organized locally to carry out some events. These are not formal structures although the City Groups often constitute associations. The constitution of the group allows members to have a direct channel of communication with the PES in Brussels and to produce poli-cies through forums, training opportunities, online debates.

Romania, Sweden), countries where PES Activists are integrated into the branches of the national parties. In recent years the City Groups have grown considerably in recent years, to become 167 on the eve of the European Elections [Fig. 1], and offer spaces for direct participation in political life by inducing those who are also members of the National Party, to prefer this form of activism[19].

Over the years, the Pes leadership has become aware of the need to expand the number of activists and to stabilize relationships well beyond the election campaign. This consideration has led to increased solicitation through involvement in an "open consultation process" for defining the election Manifesto[20] and strengthening training events (Hertner 2013, 150-151). The most important step, however, is the adoption of a document "Pes Activist Initiatives" which establishes a kind of automatic link between a proposal from a defined threshold of activists and its insertion in the agenda of the Pes Presidency.

Fig. 1 C*ity Groups in Europe***–Pes Activist**

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[19] The double membership is resolved in favor of the Pes, according to a survey conducted for exploratory purposes in 2011 at a convention (Bargas and Le Deroff 2012).
[20] The national parties also move in this direction, with an enhancement of "Debating bodies". In SPD a share of members can hold referendums on particular issues; Labour in 1997 promote "Partnership into Power" with the opportunity for activists and supporters to take part in the drafting of the program; the Democratic Party in 2005, under the leadership of Prodi, organized the "Fabbrica del Programma", with similar purposes (Ballarin Cereza 2014, 43; Sampugnaro 2011, 55-57).

During the long campaign for the European elections, many activities aim at the building of a real community, thanks to slogans, sharing of programs and mutual inter-personal acquaintance. For this reason, in the electoral period, the traditional inter-change among City Groups was strengthened, and was also facilitated by an intensive training program for the joint management of mobilization (mainly realized in the Brus-sels office of the PES). Cross participation in the campaigns has become an "added val-ue" of local mobilization activities with Spanish youth alongside Italian militants on the streets of Rome[21], and young Romanians to support the French President.

In this context, the digital platform takes on new meaning: it is used for mobilization activities but, above all, for organizational aims, and for the construction of group iden-tity. If local groups build their activities according to their targets and territories[22], Fa-cebook and twitter become the space of a shared "common campaign". In addition to the main sites for sharing photos and movies, the PES also uses a specific account on Storify that collects contributions from all participants with respect to individual events[23]. The truly innovative aspect lies in the construction of a community of activists who are able to interact with each other using the Facebook pages of the party but, above all, join in conversation on twitter with specific hashtags.

The choice of a single Pes Facebook page for all activists and of English as a common language in which to interact (by contrast with the EPP, for example[24]) permits all vol-unteers of the parties - regardless of their nationality- to discuss texts, to share the most important events and to produce a "common sense" among the militants. The

[21]In the general elections campaign of 2013, a group of PES Activists from all over Europe, contributed to the mobilization activities of the Democratic Party in Rome, as had already happened in previous election campaigns in other European countries (Ireland, 2007; Romania, in 2012, France in 2012).

[22] Each local group has a Facebook page: sometimes open only to members, in others used as "windows" for the initiatives of the group. From the interviews, there is also extensive use of WhatsApp for local mo-bilization.

[23] Specifically, "Storify" collectively documented some events: for example, "Superactivists Superweekend" that brings together canvassing experiences (Cologne, Madrid, Trieste and Paris), a few weeks before the vote; "PES Congress Highlights" collects participants' images at the Rome conference that crowned Martin Shultz as candidate for the Presidency. The logic is also to add militants' selfies, personal experiences, cu-rious images, emotions regarding the campaign (Ex: bags open with personal items) to the official pictures of the events.

[24] The choice of the European People's Party is to create a unified campaign for all member parties, then translate the contents into national languages. This entails a multiplicity of platforms, one for each Union language. Facebook pages, for example, refer in general to the individual nation and are run by a single e-campaigner.

campaign went beyond supranational borders through the tour of Shultz[25] in the main European Capitals, which marked the election stages.

The analysis of the digital platform and, specifically, of the relationships and interaction that were created allowed an evaluation of the value of the "outside campaign", conceived by the PES. Monitoring of social networks regarded "message traffic", realized within three days before the end of the European campaign[26].

It must be remembered that, to measure the traffic flow in both the social networks analysed, analysis has taken into account all the "vertex" of the network[27], detected by the program NodeXL; those that produced messages independently (posts, tweets), and those who have commented, shared or merely expressed appreciation for a message or a photo (favourites or like).

As will be seen, the detected network includes both those who express a strong interest and those who, on the contrary, only provide an appreciation, often fleeting. Network reconstruction was very different because of the specific qualities of the social networks analysed.

The Facebook data refer to users of the official PES account, which regularly informed militants, supporters and press with news about the campaign. Albeit through a different tool, the Facebook page is as "a window site": its main function is to send messages in a one-way sense.

There are 7857 persons who interact with the "window site", while the number of actions is triple the number of active members (27382). All in all, the quality of participation is very low: compared to the actions identified, comments are only 7%, while the remaining are simple statements of sharing that, in the logic of the social network are only positive (likes).In Twitter, reconstruction of the supporters' network took place through the collection of conversations containing the hashtag #knockthevote, which was chosen by Pes to communicate events and was later used by militants to speak on campaign issues. Here the number - which corresponds to a less developed social network, used only by a self-selected group - is lower: 590 accounts, of which 177 are related to party organizations, 23 to associations, blogs, newspapers, and 388 are individuals.

With regard to individual states [tab. 1], the study speculates about the relationship between offline and online, by relating the extent of the territorial network (no. of the City Group) and number of users on the platforms. The numbers of the City Groups re-

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[25] The site of the candidate follows a different logic, since the messages are posted in different languages.

[26] On May 19, 20, 21 before of the start of the elections (22 to 25 May), for each individual state.

[27] I also consider "vertex" accounts related to political parties or associations while the "edges" correspond to the number of relationships detected by the program (see. Derek H. *et al.* 2010).

late strongly to the numbers of the vertex on the Facebook page of the Pes, using a comment or a like, and no form of relationship exists with the number of twitter accounts, engaged on the election campaign for each single state[28]. The relationship between the two social networks is rather significant and elevated. An analysis of the data shows how the campaign on social networks can overcome national boundaries: 10.5% of Facebook users are active in countries outside the European Union: mostly from the United States and Brazil. Facebook also actively involves states where the network of city groups is not developed, such as Poland, Hungary or Greece.

The analysis shows that the English language characterizes most of the interactions, especially on twitter. Instead, in the Facebook comments section, the language of belonging prevails: in conversations among users from different nationalities, disambiguation problems often arise in the interactions[29]. The propensity to use mother-tongue is most evident in the Mediterranean countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal) while it is less found among users in Eastern Europe (Hungary, Romania, the Baltic countries).

The latter have a tendency to combine more than one language in the comment posted. Even on Twitter we have the same tendency, especially in appeals to the final votes that are expressed by individual users in the original language. The most interesting aspect is that the final mobilization is mostly conducted not using the official account of the party, but through those individuals who often change the slogan of the party: they add incitements to vote including national elements, publish vignettes or photos of the mobilization, producing a personalized message.

The weight of organizations and individuals in the mobilization activities [tab. 2] can be conducted to centrality measures of social network analysis with respect to the two categories (Chiesi 1999; Salvini 2012; Gozzo 2013). The outside campaign foresees that mobilization flows from party organizations to other associations, groups, informal networks and, individual subjects. The hashtag "knockthevote" allows isolating the messages with political content on the platform, linked directly to the activities of mobilization. The actors considered - 590 Twitter accounts – interact in an egalitarian environment where, apparently, there is not a single direction of communication (more visible on Facebook thanks to the official account). On this platform, the centrality of collective actors (city groups, parties, office communication) remains. It is measurable

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[28] Correlation between City Groups isn't significant con Twitter, while it has a value of di 0,462 on Facebook. Correlation between two selected social network is higher (0,682), relating, for each nation, number of Twitter Users and number of Facebook accounts.

[29] Between many comments, there is a lapidary : "Occorre un traduttore multilingue".

from the average of the extent of the betweeness[30] of categories (individual actors or collective actors): collective subjects have higher betweeness because their role is to build "bridges" between distant groups, although among the top 10 highest values we report the presence of three individual users. Higher values for collective subjects are also visible in the in-degree and out-degree[31], partly influenced by a segment of the individual users - probably fake - with minimal interaction. The communicative potential of the individual is decidedly higher: considering the total number of people following our activists (regardless of the survey period), we have over a million contacts against 222,354 of all the accounts of the party.

Tab. 1 City Groups, Twitter Users and Facebook Users for Nation

Nation	Parties affiliated to PES–EU 2014 %	City groups % (V.A.)	Twitter Users % (V.A.)	Facebook Users % (V.A.)
Austria	24,09	0 (0)	2,0 (12)	0 0
Belgium	18,98	3,6 (6)	4,4 (26)	0,05 (4)
Bulgaria	18,93	3 (5)	0,2 (1)	1,69 (133)
Cyprus	18,51	0,6 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Croatia	29,93	2,4 (4)	0,2 (1)	1,49 (117)
Czech Rep.	14,17	1,8 (3)	1,2 (7)	0,42 (33)
Denmark	19,1	0,6 (1)	2,0 (12)	0,38 (30)
Estonia	13,6	0 (0)	0 (0)	0,01 (1)
Finland	12,3	0,6 (1)	0 (0)	0,37 (29)
France	13,98	29,9 (50)	4,4 (26)	8,2 (649)
Germany	27,3	10,2 (17)	0,2 (1)	7,3 (573)
Greece	8,2	0 (0)	0,8 (5)	1,6 (124)
Hungary	20,65	0 (0)	0,2 (1)	0,97 (76)
Ireland	5,30	1,2 (2)	1,2 (7)	0 (0)
Italy	40,81	4,2 (7)	28,0 (165)	24,43 (1920)
Latvia	13,04	0 (0)	0,2 (1)	0,03 (3)
Lithuania	17,26	0 (0)	0 (0)	0,16 (13)
Luxembourg	11,75	0 (0)	0 (0)	0,00 (0)
Malta	53,39	0 (0)	0,3 (2)	0,01 (1)
Netherlands (The)	9,40	0,6 (1)	0,7 (4)	1,02 (80)
Poland	9,44	0 (0)	0,3 (2)	1,50 (118)
Portugal	34,01	1,2 (2)	0,7 (4)	8,73 (686)
Romania	37,6	26,3 (44)	0,2 (1)	13,38 (1051)

[30] Betweeness is a property of the network nodes and serves to identify those who have a greater ability to act as intermediaries in the network.
[31] The first expresses how many times others chose the subject (retweets, favorites, mentions, etc.), the second number points to how many times the subject chooses others with favorites, mentions, etc.

Slovakia	24,09	0 (0)	0,2 (1)	0,22 (17)
Slovenia	24,88	1,2 (2)	0,2 (1)	0,75 (59)
Spain	23	2,4 (4)	21,9 (129)	8,08 (635)
Sweden	24,40	6 (10)	1,5 (9)	1,41 (111)
United Kingdom	24,74	1,8 (3)	2,0 (12)	6,93 (545)
Others	-	2,4 (4)	0,2 (1)	10,58 (831)
Total		100 (167)	100 (590)	100 (7857)

Tab. 2 Centrality Measures of twitter accounts, linked to "Knockthevote"(hashtag)

Type of Account Twitter		In-degree	Out-degree	Betweeness	N. Followed	N. Following	N. Twett
Individual (388)	Media	15,68	19,94	599,32	2578,37	4687,36	8011,64
	Dev. std.	26,973	22,560	4674,790	21816,250	31294,256	14857,330
	Somma	6085	7736	232536	1000409	1818695	3108518
Party (177)	Media	35,71	26,74	1525,64	1256,24	14410,34	4610,56
	Dev. std.	41,387	25,306	5684,532	2078,010	86728,275	7222,926
	Somma	6321	4733	270039	222354	2550630	816069
Blog/Forum (7)	Media	10,00	13,71	81,56	323,00	670,86	8049,71
	Dev. std.	12,247	19,576	122,472	306,181	815,650	19143,501
	Somma	70	96	571	2261	4696	56348
Press (5)	Media	20,00	15,60	240,03	1423,80	10191,20	16237,40
	Dev. std.	30,125	11,610	440,359	614,874	16969,155	14916,223
	Somma	100	78	1200	7119	50956	81187
Assoc./Movem. Syndicate (11)	Media	9,27	12,18	95,47	687,45	2355,45	6551,73
	Dev. std.	16,001	22,542	253,401	850,557	3035,498	8845,546
	Somma	102	134	1050	7562	25910	72069
Other (2)	Media	36,50	1,00	3205,10	557,50	21101347,00	13030,50
	Dev. std.	43,134	1,414	4532,694	64,347	29829631,905	3752,616
	Somma	73	2	6410	1115	42202694	26061
Total (590)	Media	21,61	21,66	867,47	2103,08	79073,87	7051,27
	Dev. std.	33,064	23,518	4926,457	17733,519	1737629,818	13056,574
	Somma	12751	12779	511806	1240820	46653581	4160252

5. Conclusions

In this study, election campaigns are a way of studying the process of parties' differentiation and especially the outsourcing of some functions, both seen as a result of the downstream "slimming" of party organizations. The need to build campaigns that put the party in tune with the citizens has enhanced the use of surveys in order to understand motivation, problems and wishes with regard to a strongly segmented and "unfaithful" electorate.

An alternative way (somewhat imposed by a drastic reduction in resources for the policy) is the partial dissolution of the party boundaries and the progressive inclusion of new militants: with innovative and highly diversified modes, there are militants for a brief time frame or only on specific issues that are available to take the party "part of the way." The logic of connective action pushes in this direction by recognizing new potential weak links and giving autonomy to the partners involved in campaign mobilization, thanks to the peculiarities of the web 2.0. In self-organizing networks, parties lose the centrality they had when they were the main actors of collective action, becoming one of the mobilization partners.

In this regard, the study shows that the outside campaign, conceived by the PES, had a differential impact on single states, highlighting a growing role of the individual militant compared to the party organization in the construction of mobilization activities on the web.

Double delegation - the campaign management to the communication board in Brussels and local mobilization to PES supporters - breaks the boundaries of traditional national mobilization campaigns, building the conditions for a campaign with a European outlook. Through the construction of a network of Pes activist - partially dropped by the national parties - the PES has the merit of having identified and connected a potential social base for the creation of a true Euro-Party. Although limited to the supporters of the Socialist Party, the outside campaign of the PES is able to give life to a European public sphere, without national boundaries, and to interpret EU policies differently.

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